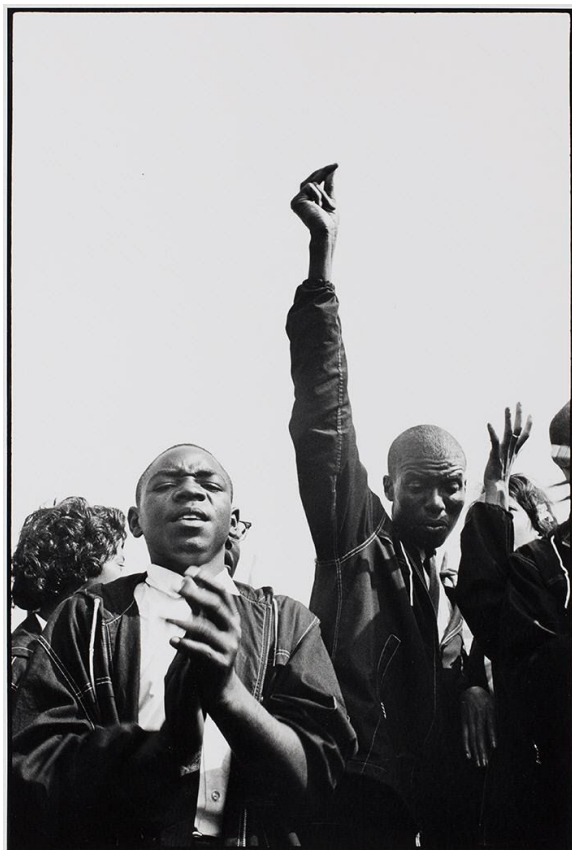


A CLOSER LOOK

Danny Lyon



Danny Lyon (American, b. 1942)

Singing Group at the March on Washington.
Basis for the SNCC Poster, "Now," 1963,
printed 2003

Gelatin silver print

SBMA, Museum purchase, 2012.41.14

Themes

- Civil Rights
- Liberation
- Social Movements
- African American History

About the Artist

Danny Lyon was born in Brooklyn, New York. After studying history and philosophy at the University of Chicago, he decided to join the growing civil rights movement in the South, becoming the first staff photographer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). From 1962 to 1964, he documented influential protests, marches, and sit-ins. In both film and photography, Lyon has spent his career documenting subjects ranging from activists and artists, to bikeriders and outlaws.

Overview

While traveling with the SNCC, Danny Lyon documented the violence facing the student-led organization, creating complex portraits of an era and its activists. Lyon's immersion in the lives of civil rights activists offers an intimate and unguarded look at the tension and risk involved in the struggle for equality.

This photograph documents the March on Washington on August 28, 1963, in which over two hundred thousand people marched for civil rights in Washington D.C. It was there that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The photograph focuses on two young men in a singing group who clap and snap their fingers as they sing. The photograph was reproduced widely and later used as a poster for the SNCC.

Watch:

In this three-minute video, listen to US Congressman and SNCC activist John Lewis reflect on the March on Washington:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV_8zSA3pyU

Research: The Fight for Civil Rights in America

The SNCC was formed to give younger African Americans a greater voice in the Civil Rights Movement. It was founded in 1960 by Ella Baker, after she left the more established Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

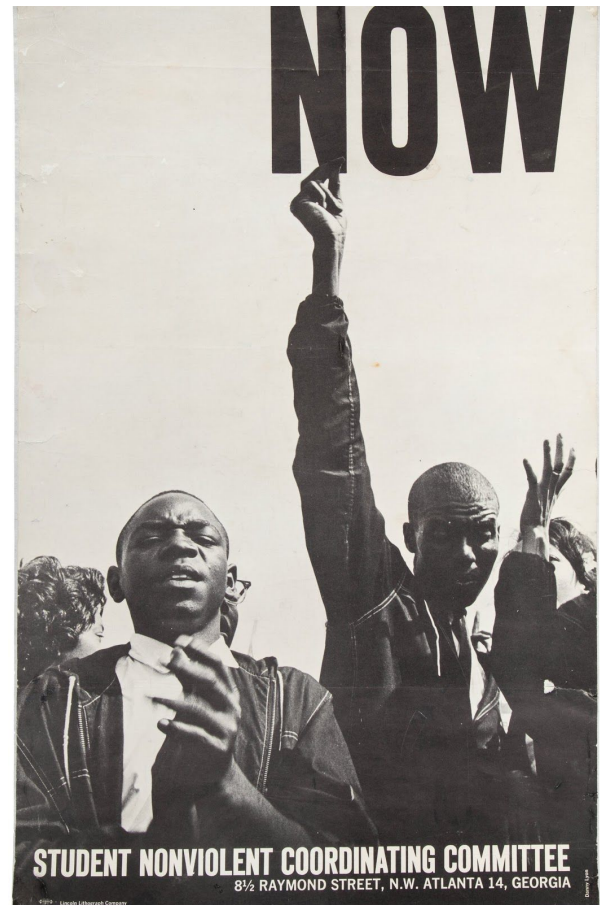
Research the two groups. How were their views on non-violence different? Where were they the same? Which group do you think you would have been a member of? Why?

Read: Speech by John Lewis

At 23 years old, John Lewis was the youngest person to give a speech at the March on Washington in 1963. Read the following excerpt from his speech:

“To those who have said, ‘Be patient and wait,’ we have long said that we cannot be patient. We do not want our freedom gradually, but we want to be free now! We are tired. We are tired of being beaten by policemen. We are tired of seeing our people locked up in jail over and over again. And then you holler, ‘Be patient.’ How long can we be patient? We want our freedom and we want it now. We do not want to go to jail. But we will go to jail if this is the price we must pay for love, brotherhood, and true peace. I appeal to all of you to get into this great revolution that is sweeping this nation.”

Reflect on Lewis’ words and the idea of waiting. How is his speech relevant today? If you were fighting for a cause, what would you say to the crowd? **Write a 200-word speech.**



Activity: Re-Imagining

Lyon’s photograph was reimagined as a poster for the SNCC. Compare the original photograph with the poster. What is different? What is the same? How does the added text change the impact or meaning of the photograph?

Look at different documentary photographs in newspapers or online. You can even compare this photograph with others in SBMA’s permanent collection. What do the photographs have in common? What is different about them? Choose one image and reimagine it as a poster for a political movement. How would you change the image? What would you add? What would you take away? **Sketch your new poster.**

