UW Political Science Professor Megan Ming Francis authored a piece in The Washington Post on August 13th, “Donald Trump is no friend to black activists. They should engage him anyway.”

Prof. Francis notes that though the President Trump's comments after the Charlottesville, VA violence show his lack of concern for the cause of civil rights, activists can still achieve victories in the contemporary environment.

“In the Trump era, some have suggested...more emphasis on local politics to sow the seeds of social change.... Local and state politics are undoubtedly important avenues for developing activist strategies, fundraising and recruiting new members...But in our system of federalism, it is essential that local organizing continues to be connected to politics at the federal level.”

Prof. Francis uses the example of the Wilson administration early in the twentieth century where Jim Crow style policies seeped into the federal government. The NAACP organized protests that the public and government leaders could not ignore.

In New York July 1917, 10,000 African Americans lined up along Fifth Avenue to show their solidarity. Dubbed the “Silent Protest Parade,” it was, at the time, the largest mass demonstration of African Americans in the United States.

The march captured the public's attention. Major newspapers across the nation carried coverage of the protest. And afterward, Wilson, in a rare break from his adversarial stance toward civil rights, set up a meeting with a small NAACP delegation to discuss concerns about black deaths and state violence.

Prof. Francis reminds that local public demonstration is important in pressuring change at the federal level and puts leaders on notice not to support unjust systems.

Read the entire article here.

People Involved: Megan Ming Francis

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