

Tactics and Strategies in American Society

In reviewing the rubric for this paper, I was confused by the concepts of strategies and tactics. I found myself trying to explain to myself what the difference was between the two so that I could articulate a solid position on why one topic was such, and why another was another.

What is a strategy? The rubric cites Certeau whom relates strategies to the institutions and power structures. A strategy is formed and implemented by a larger body, beyond the scale of a single human. This body defines the fabric of society, builds cities, and dictates reality. Actually, calling it a body is dishonest, since it should not be related in anyway to a single “body”. Rather it is a conglomerate made of multiple bodies; multiple human bodies.

What is a tactic? Certeau places tactics as the human scale. Tactics are the actions taken to maneuver the maze created by the strategists. The tactics implemented by the individual are defined by the strategist to the point that strategists lay out the corners that are cut by tacticians. I guess that in shorts, a tactician is a doer, and the strategist sets forth the framework for the tactician to react to/against.

Looking at the sources that we covered in class, I was drawn to the statements by James Baldwin. Baldwin, in a debate at Cambridge, describes the American society. His description of the American society is defining a strategic body. The American society, is very much a strategic body against whom many people have enacted tactics for or against. Baldwin speaks on the difficulties and inequalities experienced by the African American community in the United States. In the video titled *Has the American dream been achieved at the expense of the American Negro*, Baldwin says that, “[they] must be insane to attack a system to which they owe their entire identity” Baldwin puts forth the idea that the American economy, particularly the south, have been built by the “American negro”. The very strategy that dictates the framework of their life, was built by them, but is controlled by someone else. To my surprise, Baldwin offers pity instead of anger. Baldwin pities

that southern white person whom has been as much of a victim to the strategies. He even goes so far as to state, “What has happened to white southerners is much worse than what has happened to Negroes there.” This truly perplexed me, how can our system of society be so truly deplorable that even the so called “privileged” are pitied by the less privileged. I began to look at the other sources that we covered in class, looking for someone else whom had a tactic to resolve the issues set by this American strategy.

Rick Lowe is a Houston based artist and community organizer. In 1993 Lowe founded Project Row Houses, and according to their website their mission statement is, “to be the catalyst for transforming community through the celebration of art and African-American history and culture.” What Lowe is doing can be considered a tactic. His work in the underprivileged communities of Houston is a reaction to the strategy implemented by the city years before that allowed those neighborhoods to fall to the state they are in now. Relating to Baldwin, Lowe battles stigmas and racism with art. Lowe believes that the same people whom set forth the strategies that caused it cannot solve this issue; rather he believes that only community involvement can fix this issue. The community working in a single unit, can rise above. This is a tactic, a reaction to a strategy.



The photo above is from Project Row Houses.org and is of work done by Rick Lowe and other artist to regenerate hurting communities in Houston.

In review, I defined what a tactic and strategy were. I next looked to give an example of a strategy by citing Baldwin’s statements about the American dream. Defining what Baldwin spoke about as a strategy, I then looked for a tactic that has

been developed because of that strategy. The tactic I chose was the work being done by Rick Lowe in Houston. I am optimistic for the future as the American people are pushing back that racist strategies pointed out by Baldwin. As more and more people like Lowe emerge, life for the American people will continue to improve

Sources:

Has the American Dream Been Achieved at the Expense of the American Negro. Perf. James Baldwin. Youtube. N.p., 16 Aug. 2013. Web. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOCZOHQ7fCE#action=share>>.

"Project Row Houses." Project Row Houses. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Sept. 2016. <<http://projectrowhouses.org/>>.