

CHCC Black History Month Book Review/Discussion Guide:

SESSION I: The Unfinished War – Diagnosing the Conflict

This section presents Phillips' central historical argument: the American Civil War was never truly resolved, and the nation remains locked in a prolonged struggle between the forces of white supremacy and those of multiracial democracy. He asserts that opponents of multiracial democracy have employed a consistent, five-tactic "playbook" since 1865 to maintain power.

These tactics are:

1. Never give an inch;
2. Ruthlessly rewrite laws;
3. Distort public opinion to whitewash white supremacy;
4. Silently sanction terrorism; and
5. Play the long game.

Phillips draws direct lines from historical tactics like poll taxes and *The Birth of a Nation* to modern counterparts such as restrictive voting laws and racial disinformation on social media, arguing that recognizing this ongoing war is the first step to winning it.

Concept Review Questions for Part I:

1. What is the book's central premise regarding the historical conclusion of the American Civil War and its relevance today?
2. According to Phillips, what are two of the five consistent tactics used by opponents of multiracial democracy, and can you provide one historical and one contemporary example of each?
3. Why does Phillips argue that progressives must first acknowledge they are "in a war" as a prerequisite for political victory?

SESSION II: The Liberation Battle Plan – A Roadmap to Victory

Shifting from diagnosis to prescription, this section provides a practical, data-driven guide for building and sustaining multiracial democratic power. Phillips highlights successful local organizing in states like Georgia, Arizona, and Virginia, led by figures such as Stacey Abrams, as blueprints for national change.

He outlines a four-part strategy for replicating these successes:

1. Invest in visionary, long-term local leaders;
2. Build strong, permanent civic engagement organizations;

3. Develop detailed, data-driven plans to identify and mobilize underrepresented voters of color; and
4. "Play the long game" by committing to incremental goals over multiple election cycles.

The section emphasizes that demographic change alone is insufficient and that victory requires intentional investment in community-based organizing and rejecting the political strategy of chasing white swing voters at the expense of mobilizing the "New American Majority" (voters of color and progressive white voters).

Concept Review Questions for Part II:

1. What is the "New American Majority," and how does it form the basis of Phillips' recommended electoral strategy?
2. What are the four key strategic components of Phillips' "liberation battle plan" for securing multiracial democracy?
3. How do the case studies of Georgia or Virginia demonstrate the practical application of Phillips' theory, according to the book's analysis?

SESSION III: Context and Critical Perspective...NEXT STEPS

While not part of the book, a critical review by Spencer Overton praises the book's foundational contribution while adding crucial context. Overton agrees with Phillips' analysis but cautions that even successful local voter mobilization is not enough to fully "secure" multiracial democracy. He notes that entrenched structural barriers—such as the design of the U.S. Senate, the Electoral College, and a conservative Supreme Court—will persist and require broader, long-term transformation beyond any single election cycle. This perspective positions Phillips' work as a vital tactical manual while framing the overall struggle as a more complex, multi-front endeavor.

Concept Review Questions for this Critical Perspective:

1. How will the major institutional structures Overton identifies as ongoing obstacles not lead to a secure multiracial democracy, even if Phillips' electoral strategies succeed?
 - a. Design of the U.S. Senate?
 - b. The Electoral College?
 - c. A Conservative Supreme Court?
2. Why might, as Overton suggests, the project of building a multiracial democracy require a coalition of actors (e.g., historians, technologists, policymakers) beyond the community organizers centered in Phillips' book?
3. What strategic alliances can be made now to develop a long-range, multiracial democracy?
4. What might be the societal impact of the alliances formed in question 3?
5. How do the strategies used in the recent successful ballot initiative in Dayton, Ohio compare to the "best practices" Steve Phillips describes in Part II of the book?

6. What will it take to leverage the ballot initiative success into a long-term success?

How We Win the Civil War CASE STUDIES

****Case Studies & Modern Best Practices****

Phillips supports his argument with concrete examples of successful political transformation.

Georgia:

The work of ****Stacey Abrams**** and organizations like Fair Fight Action are highlighted as a blueprint for registering and mobilizing voters of color to flip a longtime red state.

Virginia:

Efforts by the ****New Virginia Majority**** are cited as a model for long-term, deep canvassing and civic engagement that turned the former seat of the Confederacy into a blue state.

Arizona:

The activism of leaders like ****Andrea Guerrero**** and organizations fighting for immigrant and voting rights demonstrates how coalition-building can change the political landscape.

Local Victories:

The book also points to successes in San Diego and Houston as examples of how local, data-driven organizing can build power.

The core “modern best practices” derived from these case studies are the four strategies outlined in Part II: investing in **committed local leadership, building permanent civic institutions, using data to guide mobilization, and committing to a long-term vision.**