

Civil Disobedience Beyond Wikipedia

Civil disobedience is a contested form of political action. The English-language Wikipedia [entry](#) on it offers a good overview of how activists such as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as political theorists and philosophers have conceived of civil disobedience over the last century. But one voice is remarkably absent from the entry: that of contemporary activists, who have been reinventing the theory and practice of civil disobedience today. Here are three civil disobedience movements you are not going to learn about by reading the encyclopedia entry on the topic.



In many circumstances, Black Lives Matter activists have advocated forms of political protest that can be characterized as civil disobedience. Critics tend, however, to chastise the movement for not being as peaceful as the civil rights movement. The Wikipedia entry on civil disobedience is silent about such controversy around the concept – and around one of the main political movements of this century.

Since 2013, Hong Kong activists such as Joshua Wong and Nathan Law have been calling for civil disobedience against the Chinese government. As the pro-democracy movement became more radical and started to resort to violence, pundits and scholars have argued that it is not a civil disobedience movement. Hong Kong activists seem to think otherwise.

After the coup d'état in February 2021, the Civil Disobedience Movement quickly became the main democratic force in Myanmar. Traditionally, scholars tend to apply the concept of civil disobedience only to protest in democratic regimes. For Burmese activists, however, civil disobedience is rather a struggle for democratization. By reconciling peaceful protest and self-defense, they have been reconfiguring traditional conceptions of civil disobedience.

