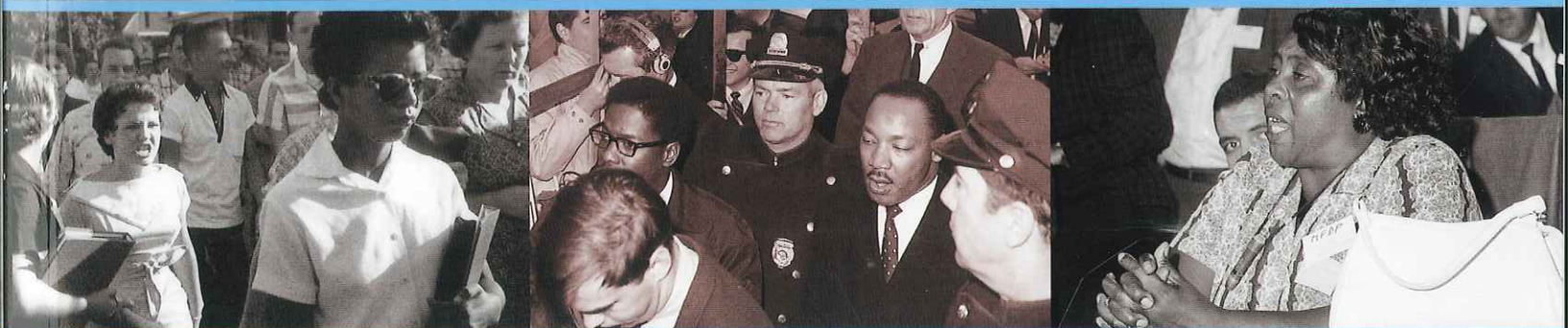




EYES ON THE PRIZE

America's Civil Rights Movement
1954-1985

A Study Guide to the Television Series



Written by Facing History and Ourselves



BLACKSIDE

A Blackside Publication

EYES ON THE PRIZE

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BLACKSIDE

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FOREWORD

REP. JOHN LEWIS
5th Congressional District, Georgia

"If you will protest courageously and yet with dignity and love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, 'There lies a great people, a black people, who injected new meaning and dignity into the very veins of civilization.' This is our challenge and our responsibility."

**Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Dec. 31, 1955
Montgomery, Alabama.**

The documentary series you are about to view is the story of how ordinary people with extraordinary vision redeemed democracy in America. It is a testament to nonviolent passive resistance and its power to reshape the destiny of a nation and the world. And it is the chronicle of a people who challenged one nation's government to meet its moral obligation to humanity.

We, the men, women, and children of the civil rights movement, truly believed that if we adhered to the discipline and philosophy of nonviolence, we could help transform America. We wanted to realize what I like to call, the Beloved Community, an all-inclusive, truly interracial democracy based on simple justice, which respects the dignity and worth of every human being.

Central to our philosophical concept of the Beloved Community was the willingness to believe that every human being has the moral capacity to respect each other. We were determined to rise above the internal injuries exacted by discriminatory laws and the traditions of an unjust society meant to degrade us, and we looked to a higher authority. We believed in our own inalienable right to the respect due any human being, and we believed that government has more than a political responsibility, but a moral responsibility to defend the human rights of all of its citizens.

When we suffered violence and abuse, our concern was not for retaliation. We sought to redeem the humanity of our attackers from the jaws of hatred and to accept our suffering in the right spirit. While nonviolence was, for some, merely a tactic for social change, for many of us it became a way of life. We believed that if we, as an American people, as a nation, and as a world community, are to emerge from our struggles unscarred by hate, we have to learn to understand and forgive those who have been most hostile and violent toward us.

We must find a way to live together, to make peace with each other. And we were willing to put our bodies on the line, to die if necessary, to make that dream of peaceful reconciliation a reality. Because of the fortitude and conviction of thousands and millions of ordinary people imbued with a dream of liberation, this nation witnessed a nonviolent revolution under the rule of law, a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas.

Fifty years have passed since the first days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the lynching of Emmett Till. Forty years have passed since that “Bloody Sunday” in Selma, Alabama and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Gone are the legal barriers of segregation, but our freedom as a nation has not yet been won. We have come a great distance, but we still have much further to go before we lay down the burden of race in America. And if we are to fulfill the true destiny of this nation, then that struggle must continue. In the civil rights movement we used to say that our struggle was not for a month, a season, or a year. We knew that ours was the struggle of a lifetime and that each generation had to do its part to build the Beloved Community, a nation at peace with itself.

Consider those two words: Beloved and Community. “Beloved” means not hateful, not violent, not uncaring, not unkind. And “Community” means not separated, not polarized, not locked in struggle. The most pressing challenge in our society today is defined by the methods we use to defend the dignity of humankind. But too often we are focused on accumulating the trappings of a comfortable life.

The men, women and children you witness in this documentary put aside the comfort of their own lives to get involved with the problems of others. They knew that if they wanted a free and just society, they could not wait for someone else to create that society. They knew they had to be the change that they were seeking. They knew they had to do their part, to get out there and push and pull to move this society forward.

As American citizens and citizens of the world community, we must be maladjusted to the problems and conditions of today. We have to find a way to make our voices heard. We have an obligation, a mission and a mandate to do our part. We have a mandate from the Spirit of History to follow in the footsteps of those brave and courageous men and women who fought to make a difference.

This study guide for *Eyes on the Prize* reminds us of our legacy and our commitment. These readings will help you examine the power you have as an individual citizen to make a difference in our society, and they will help you examine the tools of democracy that can create lasting change.

Eyes on the Prize serves as an important reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices one generation made for the cause of civil rights. It serves as a reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices we may have to make again, if we do not value the freedom we have already won. It serves as a reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices it takes to answer the call of justice.

Let this study of history inspire you to make some contribution to humanity. You have a mission and a mandate from the founders of this nation and all of those who came before who struggled and died for your freedom. Go out and win some victory for humanity, and may the Spirit of History and the spirit of the modern-day civil rights movement be your guide.

REP. JOHN LEWIS, 5TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, GEORGIA

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

JUDI HAMPTON

President, Blackside

When I read through the *Eyes on the Prize* study guide, it evokes emotional memories of my experiences as a young civil rights worker in Mississippi in the mid-1960's.

I remember the fear I felt about leaving my comfortable college life in New York and going down South to become a civil rights worker. I went down to Mississippi to work on the voter registration campaign and to build a Freedom School to provide remedial help to youngsters. It was shortly after the three civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner, had disappeared and tensions were high. Resentment was focused on us and there was an underlying threat of violence, but at the same time, community support was unparalleled.

I remember staying with an elderly couple who volunteered to have me in their home because they believed in the cause. The local police retaliated by sitting outside all night with their patrol car high beams glaring into the couple's house. This was, of course, terrifying for the volunteers—yet despite their fear they still wanted to shelter me.

I remember the day I felt I had truly made a contribution. A young black man with cataracts was going blind because he was afraid to go into Jackson to the “white” hospital to get his surgery. I went with him and together we met this challenge. He came by the Freedom House one day to hug me and say thanks. What a privilege for me!

I remember creating a Freedom School from a burned-out building. Members of the community came to help and together we cleaned up the site, got donations of books—and suddenly I was teaching. I loved it, and have continued to find innovative ways to educate and mentor throughout my career.

Learning, teaching, and giving back to the community have always been very important in our family. Our father, Henry Hampton, Sr., was the first black surgeon to become a Chief Hospital Administrator in St. Louis, Missouri. After the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, my parents decided it would be in our best educational interest if my brother, Henry, my sister Veva, and I were to attend a previously all-white school. Later, in high school (which I integrated with a few other students), my classmates elected me class president, but the restaurant where the reception in my honor was to be held turned me away at the door because of my color. It was one of many experiences that strengthened our family's commitment to civil rights—and to spreading the message through education.

Although Henry Hampton was widely known and acclaimed as a brilliant filmmaker, he was also an educator at heart. Now, with this new study guide written by Facing History and Ourselves, the educational influence of *Eyes on the Prize* will be extended through many generations. This thorough and

balanced guide will teach young people the history and significance of the civil rights epoch. But beyond the historical value, the study guide and film series have another purpose: to provoke discussion about *today's* pressing human rights concerns. When Henry first made *Eyes*, his goal was to spark a national dialogue. This guide will help to rekindle it.

I would like to thank Margot Stern Strom, Adam Strom, Brooke Harvey and the staff and interns at Facing History and Ourselves for their excellent work on this study guide. Thanks also to Robert Lavelle and James Jennings for their careful reading and editorial guidance.

My deep thanks to Sandra Forman, Project Director and Legal Counsel for the *Eyes on the Prize* re-release, who took on the many challenges involved with bringing *Eyes* back before the public after a long absence. She raised funds, managed all aspects of the project, and was the driving force behind the return of *Eyes on the Prize* to public television and educational distribution.

Many thanks to the other dedicated and hard-working people on the re-release team, without whom the return of *Eyes* would not have been possible. I am also grateful to all the talented people who worked to create the *Eyes on the Prize* films and books in the 1980's and '90's.

Thanks to the Zimmermans: my sister Veva, David, Tobias and Jacob, and to the memory of our dear parents, who would expect nothing less than for us to continue to fight for what we believe in.

Since my brother's death in 1998, it has been my primary goal to preserve his legacy. In particular, I have struggled to make *Eyes on the Prize* available to a wide audience. With the rebroadcast and this superb study guide to accompany the educational distribution of *Eyes*, I feel assured that this monumental series will be a permanent resource for all generations.

Much love and gratitude to my big brother and soul mate, Henry Hampton, for giving me an opportunity to extend his great gifts to the world.

JUDI HAMPTON
PRESIDENT, BLACKSIDE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
AUGUST, 2006

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MARGOT STERN STROM

President and Executive Director, Facing History and Ourselves

A black-and-white photograph of Henry Hampton sits perched on a shelf overlooking the table where the Facing History and Ourselves writing team assembled to create these educational materials to accompany the film *Eyes on the Prize*, Henry’s magnificent, truly groundbreaking documentary series on the history of the civil rights movement in the United States. I knew Henry; he was my friend and understood Facing History’s mission. We both believed education must help citizens confront controversial and difficult aspects of our history if we are ever to understand the responsibility of living in a just society. He demanded the highest standards and would have been pleased with the process that Adam Strom and Brooke Harvey have led for the “*Eyes on the Prize*” team at Facing History.

We are grateful for the trust and support of Judi Hampton, President of Blackside, the production company founded by Henry in 1968, and Sandra Forman, Project Director and Legal Counsel for the *Eyes on the Prize* re-release project, and are honored to have spent this collaborative year together. Facing History’s partnership with Blackside will enable us to deliver workshops for teachers and the community and continue to offer timely and relevant resources online for students and teachers.

As stacks of books, videos, and computers invaded our writing table, the conversations deepened. The learning community that emerged from this project included Facing History staff who had assembled from our offices worldwide, both face-to-face and virtually. This team included Dan Eshet, a historian and writer; photo and archival researcher Jennifer Gray; Dadjie Saintus, who interned as a researcher; Aliza Landes, who interned as an editor; the editorial team of Phredd Matthews-Wall, Howard Lurie, Jennifer Jones Clark, Jimmie Jones, Tracy Garrison-Feinberg, Marty Sleeper, Marc Skvirsky, and myself. We met regularly to read aloud drafts—often many drafts—for each of the fourteen parts of this series. We searched memoirs, biographies, and histories of the movement and considered the viewpoints of the advisors Adam had consulted. The comments of historian and activist Vincent Harding, Robert Lavelle, former head of publishing at Blackside, and James Jennings, Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, helped us interpret our perspectives and evoked memories of the events depicted in the series. Congressman John Lewis, our friend who accompanied the staff and board of Facing History and Ourselves on a trip to the South in 2001 to learn more about the civil rights movement, agreed to pen the introduction to these materials.

Together we meditated in a group setting—black and white, young and old—marveling at the beautiful principles of freedom exemplified by the moral dilemmas that faced not only the leaders, but also the ordinary men, women, and children who, dedicated to nonviolence, struggled to force a nation to reckon with brutal injustice and to transform itself. Indeed, we were all students. For the younger

among us this was “ancient” history—it happened before they were born. For others of us, we were rediscovering new meaning for the history we had come of age in. For me the work was personal.

I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, before the civil rights movement began—at a time when separate meant never equal. For it was in Memphis that simple childhood notions of logic and fairness were shattered. It was there that water fountains for “colored only” didn’t spout water which reflected the colors of the rainbow as the child might expect but instead, as one learned later, stood as symbols of the unchallenged dogmas and practices of racism—dogmas that attempted to instill indignity, shame, and humiliation in some and false pride and authority in others, and practices that reflected centuries of unchallenged myth and hate.

I grew up in Memphis at a time when black libraries housed books discarded from the white library; when there were empty seats in the front of the bus for young white girls on a shopping trip downtown, while those of darker skin color crowded the back of the bus on their way to work; when Thursdays were “colored day” at the zoo and a rear entrance led to a colored section in the movie theatre balcony—if admission was allowed at all.

I remember an officer of the law in that Memphis explaining to me that I shouldn’t ride in the front seat of the family car with a colored man—a man who had worked for my family and with whom I had ridden in the front since I was very young, but was suddenly suspect now that I was an adolescent. (I felt his discomfort—part shame, part anger, part humiliation—as the policeman righteously walked away from the car.) Later I listened when the phone call came from family friends in Mississippi warning my parents to keep my brother, then a Justice Department lawyer working on voting rights legislation, out of Mississippi (They, like Judge Cox of the Circuit Court, questioned why a white Southerner and a Jew would be causing such “trouble.”) Later, I read the letters sent to our home declaring that my brother’s work for Negroes must be inspired by the Jewish-communist conspiracy and that he would have to be cremated, for his body, if buried, would contaminate the earth just as fluoridation had done.

All this and more I brought to our writing table. Each of the other team members brought their own experiences, and the sum of these experiences—and more—can be felt in these educational resources.

At our editing sessions we all found a renewed appreciation for the contribution—the gift—of “Eyes.” Our appreciation grew as we saw how carefully and honestly Henry and Blackside had prepared their teaching tool—their documentary of history for a new generation of students of all ages who, in classroom, home, and community settings, will use their work to confront the fundamental reality that a strong democracy depends on the education of its youth to the meaning and responsibility of freedom. This is the “Prize” Henry left us. Facing History and Ourselves is dedicated to bringing important and challenging history to the teachers who will tap the next generation of moral philosophers ready to be engaged in the hard work of thinking and acting with head and heart.

That is the promise we make to Henry and to the future.

MARGOT STERN STROM
PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

USING THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide serves as a classroom companion to the acclaimed *Eyes on the Prize* film series, the most comprehensive television documentary ever produced on the American civil rights movement. The series was created and executive produced by Emmy award-winning filmmaker and historian Henry Hampton, who endeavored to honor the voices and perspectives of those who shaped the civil rights movement in the United States.¹ The guide focuses on the individuals and groups that over three decades fought to dismantle the laws and customs used to discriminate against black Americans. Often at great personal risk, these civil rights activists forced America to face its entrenched culture of racial injustice and extend its promise of equal rights to all its citizens.

Each episode in the series has a corresponding chapter in the study guide. Each chapter includes a brief overview of the episode and a series of questions designed to stimulate a discussion on its basic themes. A timeline in each chapter identifies the episode's key events and dates.

The documents were selected to reflect themes and events in the episode. A brief introduction frames the documents, each of which is followed by "connections"—a list of questions that underline the broader themes within the episodes. These questions are also designed to promote personal engagement with particular aspects of the events described in the episodes and to encourage viewers to explore their own perspectives, as well as the national and international context of these developments.

The readings were selected from memoirs, oral histories, public documents, declarations, and news stories. In addition to a number of recent reflections and commentaries, many documents came directly from the interviews and other materials produced for the series.² Others were selected from earlier *Eyes on the Prize* study guides edited by Steve Cohen.

Most episodes cover two stories. In an effort to update the stories, we elected in some cases to include materials produced after the series was originally aired. In a few cases, we highlighted aspects we deemed especially important for contemporary viewers. Sample lesson plans using the film and the guide are available on the Facing History and Ourselves website: www.facinghistory.org.

The introduction to the study guide was written by Congressman John Lewis, who, like the individuals discussed in the series, aspired to compel America to fulfill its promises of equality and justice for all its citizens. By shattering stereotypes, opening public dialogue, and striving to empower black citizens politically and economically, Lewis and other activists in the civil rights movement transformed the attitudes of both black and white Americans and inspired other

groups around the world to explore their ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage.

Over 50 years ago, civil rights movement leaders articulated a vision for social change in America. Embedded in their vision was the belief that voting is the primary engine for nonviolent change in a democracy. We hope that the series and the new study guide will inspire a new generation of students to explore this idea, to become informed citizens, and to aspire to fulfill the movement's commitment to a diverse and tolerant democracy.

In addition to this study guide and to *The Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (published by Bantam Books), educators will find the first series' companion book quite useful. That book, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965*, by Juan Williams with the *Eyes on the Prize* Production Team (published by Penguin Books) is now in its twenty-third printing and has been a resource to countless secondary and post-secondary students.

¹ Blackside, Inc., founded by the late Henry Hampton in 1968, is a production company devoted to raising awareness about America's social issues and history through documentary films and other educational materials.

² Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991); Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990).



Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, American society was sharply segregated along color lines. Supported by both law and custom, the Jim Crow system—late nineteenth-century rules and regulations that codified a long tradition of prejudice, dehumanization, and discrimination—created separate and unequal services, employment, and housing for blacks and whites. The first episode traces events that brought this discrimination and violence to public awareness and the awakening of the nascent civil rights movement.

1954	
May 17	In <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> , the Supreme Court declares that segregated schools are inherently unequal and thus unconstitutional
1955	
Aug. 28	Emmett Till, a black boy from Chicago visiting his uncle Moses Wright in Mississippi, is murdered for inappropriately addressing a white woman
Sep. 23	Two white men are tried in the murder of Emmett Till but are quickly acquitted
Dec. 1	Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to relinquish her seat in the front of the bus to a white person
Dec. 5	King leads the blacks of Montgomery in a rally to boycott city buses. In response to the blacks' bus boycott, many whites join White Citizens' Councils to uphold segregation and white control of the region
1956	
Nov. 13	The Supreme Court rules that segregation on buses in Montgomery is against the law
Dec. 21	The Supreme Court rules that segregation on Montgomery buses is illegal and the boycott ends

By the early 1950s, change was in the air. Thousands of black soldiers who had fought to liberate Europe from the grip of Nazi fascism and racism in World War II, returned home determined to fight bigotry and injustice. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP)* legal victory in *Brown v. Board of Education* helped to legitimize the emerging struggle: this decision overturned an 1896 Supreme Court ruling known as *Plessy v. Ferguson* which legalized “separate but equal” facilities and services for blacks and whites. The 1954 ruling, in effect, challenged all Americans to live up to the Constitutional vision of a society that promised “liberty and justice for all.”

Many white Southerners felt that the tide was turning, that their culture and traditions were under attack, and many responded with violence. The episode's first segment relates the story of one such reaction: the lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till, a black Northerner from Chicago who, during a visit to Money, Mississippi in 1955, was accused of talking to a white woman “disrespectfully.”** The allegation suggested that Till had crossed the racial lines in the South—an act of transgression that many segregationists often used to justify terror and violence against black citizens and maintain the Jim Crow system. Episode 1 traces the trial of the two

suspects in the lynching, their rapid acquittal, and the public outcry that followed, due in large part to the courageous protest of Emmett Till's family in court and in the media. Their actions stirred a deep sense of outrage among blacks and some whites, and inspired them to organize for a comprehensive struggle for freedom and justice.

The second segment of this episode begins with Rosa Parks's historic 1955 bus ride. Parks, an

* Under the leadership of Harvard University scholar W. E. B. DuBois and the antilynching advocate Ida B. Wells, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1909. The NAACP's goals include the promotion of equality and justice in America and the eradication of prejudices among all its citizens. Its charter calls for the protection of the interests and opportunities of citizens of color and for the promotion of progressive policies in the fields of education, housing, and employment. For more information see “NAACP,” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9372942> (accessed on April 18, 2006).

** Lynching may be defined as an execution without legal sanction. In this case, however, as in others associated with racial violence, lynching describes ritualized murder, often by hanging, intended to enforce the social domination of one group over another.

NAACP activist and secretary in the Montgomery, Alabama chapter, boarded a segregated bus and, in defiance of the law, refused to give up her seat to a white man. Parks's quiet protest sparked a citywide boycott of the bus system that lasted twelve-and-a-half months. During that time, the young Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as the movement's most eloquent leader; together with Montgomery's Baptist clergy and the Women's Political Council he led a successful battle that ended segregation on buses in Montgomery.

Although some historians point to the origins of the civil rights movement in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, many others trace the "awakening" of the civil rights movement to the murder of Emmett Till, the arrest of Rosa Parks, and the successful Montgomery bus boycott. These events in Mississippi and Alabama galvanized civil rights activists to begin articulating an alternative vision for America and lay plans to implement it. In the years that followed, the struggle to achieve black freedom would alter the very foundations of the social order in the United States.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Segregation, a social system based on a long history of prejudices and discrimination, was deeply entrenched in people's minds as well as in the culture. How did segregation manifest itself in daily life in the South? How did segregation disenfranchise black Americans?***
2. Why do you think the lynching of Emmett Till became a catalyst in the national movement for civil rights?
3. What choices did the family of Emmett Till and their supporters make in exposing the brutality of his murder? How did these choices shape public reaction to the murder?
4. In what ways did the media educate the nation about the events in Mississippi and Montgomery?
5. What means were available to disenfranchised blacks in America to fight segregation?
6. How did people summon the courage to confront the intimidation, brutality, and injustice they faced under the Jim Crow system?
7. This series is called "*Eyes on the Prize*." What is the prize being sought in this episode?

Document 1: BLACK BOYS FROM CHICAGO

In the South, terror and violence were used to enforce segregation and white power. On August 20, 1955, fourteen-year-old Emmett Till boarded a train in Chicago. Till, nicknamed Bo (or Bobo), traveled to Money, Mississippi with his cousin Curtis Jones to visit relatives who stayed in the South when the rest of the family migrated North. When he arrived with Jones on August 21, 1955, racial tensions were reaching a boiling point. Till, who grew up in the North, did not appreciate the strictness of racial mores in the South, nor did he recognize the risks involved in violating them. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Jones recalled:

We was going to Money, Mississippi, to have a good time. I'd never picked cotton before and I was looking forward to that. I had told my mother that I could pick two hundred pounds, and she told me I couldn't. Emmett Till was fourteen years old, had just graduated out of the grammar school.

My grandfather in Mississippi was a preacher. He had a church and he had a little raggedy

***Disenfranchised persons are deprived of voting rights, and therefore, political power. The term is also used more broadly to describe groups that are denied access to the political process, regardless of their formal voting rights.

'41 Ford, if I'm not mistaken. And he took all of us to church that day, including my grandmother, my three uncles, myself, my cousin Emmett, and my cousin Willa Parker. While he was in the pulpit preaching, we get the car and drive to Money. Anyway, we went into this store to buy some candy. Before Emmett went in, he had shown the boys round his age some picture of some white kids that he had graduated from school with, female and male. He told the boys who had gathered round this store—there must have been maybe ten to twelve youngsters there—that one of the girls was his girlfriend. So one of the local boys said, "Hey, there's a white girl in that store there. I bet you won't go in there and talk to her." So Emmett went in there. When he was leaving out the store, after buying some candy, he told her, "Bye, baby."

I was sitting out there playing checkers with this older man. Next thing I know, one of the boys came up to me and said, "Say, man, you got a crazy cousin. He just went in there and said 'Bye, baby' to that white woman." This man I was playing checkers with jumped straight up and said, "Boy, you better get out of here. That lady'll come out of that store and blow your brains off."

It was kind of funny to us. We hopped in the car and drove back to the church. My grandfather was just about completing his sermon.

The next day, we was telling some youngsters what had happened, but they had heard about it. One girl was telling us that we better get out of there 'cause when that lady's husband come back gonna be big trouble. We didn't tell our grandfather. If we had told our grandfather, I'm sure he would have gotten us out of there. That was Wednesday. So that Thursday passed, nothing happened. Friday passed, nothing happened. Saturday, nothing happened. So we forgot about it.

Saturday night we went to town. The closest town was Greenwood. We must have stayed there till approximately three o'clock that morning. We returned and—my grandfather didn't have but three rooms, the kitchen and two bedrooms—it must have been about three-thirty, I was awakened by a group of men in the house. I didn't wake completely, youngsters, they sleep hard, you know. When they came, my grandfather answered the door and they asked him did he have three boys in there from Chicago? And he stated yes. He said I got my two grandsons and a nephew. So they told him get the one who did the talking. My grandmother was scared to death. She was trying to protect Bo. They told her get back in bed. One of the guys struck her with a shotgun side of the head. When I woke up the next morning, I thought it was a dream.

I went to the porch and my grandfather was sitting on the porch. I asked him, "Poppa, did they bring Bo back?" He said, "No." He said, "I hope they didn't kill that boy." And that's when I got kind of scared.

I asked him, “Ain’t you going to call the police?” He said, “No, I can’t call the police. They told me that if I call the sheriff they was going to kill everybody in this house.” So I told him, I say, “I’ll call.”

That happened Sunday.¹

CONNECTIONS

1. What did the reactions to the brief interaction between Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant, the white woman in the store, expose about the social system that supported segregation? Why do you think Till’s actions sparked such violence?
2. Curtis Jones was playing checkers with an older man who warned him that Bryant was likely to react violently to Till’s innocent comments. What did he know that the two boys did not? How do people learn the rules and customs of a society? How are these rules and customs enforced?
3. What is the role of intimidation, lynching, and fear in a segregated society?
4. Till’s uncle, Mose Wright, would not go to the police. In a democracy, what institutions are responsible for protecting the vulnerable? What options do individuals and groups have when these institutions cannot be trusted?

Document 2: MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY GOES PUBLIC

In an interview with CBS News, Mamie Till-Mobley recalled her first response to the sight of her son’s mutilated corpse: “instead of fainting, I realized that here’s a job that I got to do now and I don’t have time to faint; I don’t have time to cry [...] I’ve got to make a decision and my decision was that there is no way I can tell the world what I see. The world is going to have to look at this. They’re going to have to help me tell the story.”² In her grief, Till-Mobley made two choices that changed the course of American history: first, she insisted on an open casket funeral for her son, and second, a week later, she had *Jet* magazine and the *Chicago Defender* publish the grisly images of her son’s tortured body. These photographs quickly became a symbol of the violence that simmered just under the surface of segregated communities in the South.

Charles Diggs, one of the first black congressmen after Reconstruction,^{****} argued that “the picture in the *Jet* magazine [...] was probably one of the greatest media products in the last forty or fifty years, because that picture stimulated a lot of interest and a lot of anger on the part of blacks all over the country. And the fact that the Till boy was just a child also added to this mat-



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December 1955. Mamie Till-Mobley weeping over Emmett Till’s casket. Her courageous decision to publish the images of her son’s tortured body made Emmett Till a powerful symbol of racial violence in the South.

^{****}In US history, Reconstruction is the period during and after the American Civil War in which attempts were made to solve the political, social, and economic problems arising from the readmission to the Union of the eleven Confederate states that had seceded at or before the outbreak of war. For more information see “Reconstruction” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062908> (accessed on August 1, 2006).

ter.”³ Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Halberstam, who spent much of his earlier career as a journalist covering the civil rights movement, argues that the sensation caused by the Till photographs was the first great media event of the civil rights movement.⁴

Julian Bond, a civil rights activist and chairman of the NAACP, remembers the impact reading about Till’s death had upon him as a young man growing up in Pennsylvania:

My memories are exact—and parallel those of many others my age—I felt vulnerable for the first time in my life—Till was a year younger—and [I] recall believing that this could easily happen to me—for no reason at all.⁵

In a *New York Times* article about the notorious photographs, Chris Metress, the editor of “The Lynching of Emmett Till,” notes: “You get testimony from white people coming of age at the time about how the case affected them, but you don’t get them testifying, like countless blacks, that the *Jet* photo had this transformative effect on them, altering the way they felt about themselves and their vulnerabilities and the dangers they would be facing in the civil rights movement. Because white people didn’t read *Jet*.”⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. Why do you think Mamie Till-Mobley decided to show the public her son’s mutilated body?
2. What was the role of the black press in exposing the violence of the Jim Crow system? Why do you think the mainstream press was initially reluctant to publish the photographs of Emmett Till?
3. What role can the press play in exposing injustice? Are there news stories that have led you to express outrage or influenced you to take action?

Document 3: MOSE WRIGHT STANDS UP

James Hicks, a black journalist, was sent by the National News Association to cover the Till trial. He recalled the courageous decision of Mose Wright to identify his nephew’s murderers at the trial. Hicks points out that in doing so, Wright defied Southern tradition that not only treated blacks as inferior citizens, but also forced them to accept blatant violations of their basic rights.

Somebody had said that Mose Wright had told them from the git-go that he wanted to testify. He wanted to tell how these people got Emmett Till out of his house that night. All the people in Mound Bayou were saying, “Look, this is it. This man gets up there and identifies J. W. Milam and this other man, Bryant, we don’t know what’s going to happen. His life won’t be worth a dime if he testifies against these two white men.” We had been told that this was going to happen, this was a point when the stuff would hit the fan. We black reporters devised our own plan. We were seated in this Jim Crow setup, near a window. On this particular day, every able-bodied white man you saw in the courtroom had a .45 or a .38 strung on him. They were expecting something to happen. One of these young deputies who was wearing a gun, there was only an aisle between us. I said the first thing I will do is grab that .45. Snatch that safety off and then battle as far as we could, because it was almost hopeless. I didn’t know if it would come out too well, but if you blasted a few of them, then

somebody might think you meant business.

When Uncle Mose testified, electricity came over the courtroom. This elderly, gray-haired man sitting up there. The prosecutor said, “Now, Uncle Mose, I am going to ask you, is it a fact that two men came to your house? Now what did they say?”

“They asked, ‘You have a nigger here from Chicago?’”

And he told them, “My little nephew is here from Chicago.”

“And what did they say then?”

“He ask me where he was, and I said he was in there in the bed ’cause it was nighttime, and so they said get him up. I got him up and then he, they took him away and they said, ‘I’m going to take this nigger with us.’ I couldn’t do anything.”

The key point came when they said to him, “I’m going to ask you to look around in the courtroom and see if you see any man here that came to you and knocked on your door that night.” And so this old man—I mean, talk about courage—he looked around and in his broken English he said, “Dar he,” and he pointed so straight at J. W. Milam. It was like history in that courtroom. It was like electricity in that courtroom. The judge, he was pounding on his gavel and he was saying “Order, order,” like that. There was a terrific tension in the courtroom but nothing happened. I mean, no outbreak came. I think that was because of the judge.⁷



Mose Wright identifying his nephew’s murderers. Wright defied Southern tradition that forced blacks to accept silently violations of their rights.

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The defendants were acquitted at the trial. Later, in a story they sold to *Look* magazine, they proudly confessed to the murder.

CONNECTIONS

1. Why were black Americans afraid to testify against whites in the South? What does their fear reveal about justice in the South at that time?
2. What, in your opinion, compelled Wright, who knew the dangers of speaking out, to step up and testify against the murderers?
3. How did Wright’s actions and testimony make him a symbol of the emerging civil rights movement?

Document 4: ROSA PARKS REMEMBERS

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-109643



December 1, 1955. Rosa Parks cited the murder of Emmett Till as a motivation for her refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger.

Black citizens in Alabama endured daily legal and physical abuse under the degrading Jim Crow system. In schools, restaurants, theaters, public transportation, and almost every other area they were segregated from whites and treated as second-class citizens. In the interview below, Rosa Parks—who often referred to the Emmett Till lynching as a catalyst for her actions—tells the story of her decision to challenge the regulations that segregated public transportation. Parks, an experienced civil rights activist who worked for years with the NAACP, was well aware of the potential consequences of her actions. Nevertheless, she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man.

Having to take a certain section [on a bus] because of your race was humiliating, but having to stand up because a particular driver wanted to keep a white person from having to stand was, to my mind, most inhumane.

More than seventy-five, between eighty-five and I think ninety, percent of the patronage of the buses were black people, because more white people could own and drive their own cars than blacks.

I happened to be the secretary of the Montgomery branch of the NAACP as well as the NAACP Youth Council adviser. Many cases did come to my attention that nothing came out of 'cause the person that was abused would be too intimidated to sign an affidavit, or to make a statement. Over the years, I had had my own problems with the bus drivers. In fact, some did tell me not to ride their buses if I felt that I was too important to go to the back door to get on. One had evicted me from the bus in 1943, which did not cause anything more than just a passing glance.

On December 1, 1955, I had finished my day's work as a tailor's assistant in the Montgomery Fair department store and I was on my way home. There was one vacant seat on the Cleveland Avenue bus, which I took, alongside a man and two women across the aisle. There were still a few vacant seats in the white section in the front, of course. We went to the next stop without being disturbed. On the third, the front seats were occupied and this one man, a white man, was standing. The driver asked us to stand up and let him have those seats, and when none of us moved at his first words, he said, "You all make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats." And the man who was sitting next to the window stood up, and I made room for him to pass by me. The two women

across the aisle stood up and moved out.

When the driver saw me still sitting, he asked if I was going to stand up and I said, “No, I’m not.”

And he said, “Well, if you don’t stand up, I’m going to call the police and have you arrested.”

I said, “You may do that.”

He did get off the bus, and I still stayed where I was. Two policemen came on the bus. One of the policemen asked me if the bus driver had asked me to stand and I said yes.

He said, “Why don’t you stand up?”

And I asked him, “Why do you push us around?”

He said, “I do not know, but the law is the law and you’re under arrest.”⁸

CONNECTIONS

1. Often Rosa Parks’s motivation for her refusal to relinquish her seat has been trivialized as “Rosa Parks was tired.” How did she explain her decision?
2. Why did the early struggle against segregation focus on buses and other forms of public accommodations? What leverage were protesters in Montgomery able to use against the bus company?
3. Why do you think Parks became a symbol of the civil rights movement? Why did so many people identify with her cause? How did that identification build support for the emerging movement?

Document 5: A NEW LEADER EMERGES

Four days after Rosa Parks was arrested for her defiant bus ride, local activists recruited a young minister to lead their struggle against segregation in Montgomery. Twenty-six-year-old Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. hesitated but finally accepted their invitation to lead the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association. Word of Parks’s arrest spread. On December 5, 1955, more than 5,000 people showed up at the Holt Street Baptist Church to hear King give the keynote speech where he laid out the plan for the Montgomery bus boycott and a new vision for American democracy:

We are here this evening for serious business. We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens, and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its means. We are here because of our love for democracy, because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth. But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. We are here because we are determined to get the situation corrected.

This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fear on buses in our community. On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and oppressed because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. I don’t have time this evening to go into the history of these numerous cases. [...] But at least one stands before us now with glaring dimensions. Just the other day, just

last Thursday to be exact, one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—not one of the finest Negro citizens but one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—was taken from a bus and carried to jail and arrested because she refused to get up to give her seat to a white person. [...] Mrs. Rosa Parks is a fine person. And since it had to happen I'm happy it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks, for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity. Nobody can doubt the height of her character, nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus. [...]

And just because she refused to get up, she was arrested.[...] You know my friends there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time my friends when people get tired of being flung across the abyss of humiliation where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amidst the piercing chill of an Alpine November.

We are here, we are here this evening because we're tired now. Now let us say that we are not here advocating violence. We have overcome that. I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation that we are Christian people. We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. And secondly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic [sic] nation we couldn't do this. If we were trapped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right.

My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we ought to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens' Councils. There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out to some distant road and murdered. There will be nobody among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist.

My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and firm determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, then the Supreme Court of this Nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer and never came down to earth. If we are wrong, justice is a lie. And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I want to say that with all of our actions we must stick together. Unity is the great need of the hour. And if we are united, we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. And don't let anybody frighten you. We are not afraid of what we

are doing, because we are doing it within the law. There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. We reserve that right. [...]

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. [...] In all of our doings, in all of our deliberations [...] whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. Let us be Christian in all of our action. And I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love. Love is one of the pinnacle parts of the Christian faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in [application]. Justice is love correcting that which would work against love. [...] Standing beside love is always justice. And we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion but we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education but it is also a process of legislation.

And as we stand and sit here this evening, and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together. We are going to work together. Right here in Montgomery when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, black people, fleecy locks and black complexion, of people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights." And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization. And we're gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it's too late.⁹



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-135428

February 1956. Audience at Montgomery's First Baptist Church, cheering leaders of the bus boycott. The Montgomery boycott marked King's emergence as a leader of the civil rights movement.

CONNECTIONS

1. What words, phrases, or images stand out in King's speech? What did King mean by a transformation from "thin paper to thick action"?
2. What kind of struggle did King propose? What principles did King cite as a foundation for the struggle?
3. Why was the church so central to the struggle for black freedom?
4. What was the role of religion and faith in the arguments King presented? To what religious values and democratic principles did he appeal in his speech?
5. Lillian Smith, the author of *Killers of the Dream* and an outspoken white supporter of civil rights, wrote to King in the early months of the Montgomery boycott. In her letter, she shared her thoughts about the role of religion in the struggle for black freedom:

Dear Dr. King:

I have with a profound sense of fellowship and admiration been watching your work in Montgomery. I cannot begin to tell you how effective it seems to me, although I must confess I have watched it only at long distance.

It is the right way. Only through persuasion, love, goodwill, and firm nonviolent resistance can the change take place in our South. Perhaps in a northern city this kind of nonviolent, persuasive resistance would either be totally misinterpreted or else find nothing in the whites which could be appealed to. But in our South, the whites, too, share the profoundly religious symbols you are using and respond to them on a deep level of their hearts and minds. Their imaginations are stirred: the waters are troubled.

You seem to be going at it in such a wise way. I want to come down as soon as I can and talk quietly with you about it. For I have nothing to go on except television reports and newspaper reports. But these have been surprisingly sympathetic to the 40,000 Negroes in Montgomery who are taking part in this resistance movement. But I have been in India twice; I followed the Gandhian movement long before it became popular in this country. I, myself, being a Deep South white, reared in a religious home and the Methodist church, realize the deep ties of common songs, common prayer, common symbols that bind our two races together on a religio-mystical level, even as another brutally mythic idea, the concept of White Supremacy, tears our two people apart.¹⁰

6. Why does Smith believe that religion and nonviolence would be useful strategies for change? What impact did she suggest that King's religious symbolism would have on white Southerners?
7. What ideology did the White Supremacists espouse? Who were they? Why did Smith and many others believe that this ideology tears blacks and whites apart?

Document 6: WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER

The long bus boycott in Montgomery took a heavy toll on black citizens, yet they chose to walk the many miles to and from work rather than succumb to continued humiliation. Some white women who relied on black domestic help supported the boycott. While the police attempted to crack down on people who provided transportation for the marchers, a system of carpooling quickly developed to offset some of the effects of the boycott. Virginia Durr and her husband Clifford bailed Rosa Parks out of jail after her arrest and were among the most public white supporters of the boycott. In this interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Virginia Durr described the strange interplay between blacks and whites in the boycott:

The strange thing that happened was a kind of a play between white women and black women, in that none of the white women wanted to lose their help. The mayor of the town issued an order that all the black maids had to be dismissed to break the boycott. Well, their reply was, "Tell the mayor to come and do my work for me, then." So the white women went and got the black women in the car. They said they did it because the bus had broken down, or any excuse you could possibly think of. And then the black women, if you picked one of them up who was walking, they'll tell you that they were walking because the lady that brought them to work, her child was sick. So here was this absurd sort of dance going on. I saw a woman that worked for my mother-in-law, and they were asking her, "Do any of your family take part in the boycott?" She said, "No ma'am, they don't have anything to do with the boycott at all." She said, "My brother-in-law, he has a ride every morning and my sister-in-law, she comes home with somebody else, and they

just stay off the bus and don't have nothing to do with it." And so when we got out of the room, I said to Mary, "You know, you had been really the biggest storyteller in the world. You know everybody in your family's involved in the boycott." And she says, "Well, you know, when you have your hand in the lion's mouth, the best thing to do is pat it on the head." Always thought that was a wonderful phrase.

The boycott took off some of the terrible load of guilt that white southerners have lived under for so many generations, such a terrible load of shame and guilt that we won't acknowledge. But you can't do things like that to people and pretend to love them too. It's created such a terrible schizophrenia, because when you're a child, particularly if you have blacks in the house, you have devotion to them. Then when you get grown, people tell you that they're not worthy of you, they're different. And then you're torn apart, because here are the people you've loved and depended on. It's a terrible schizophrenia. That's why I think so much of the literature of the South is full of conflict and madness, because you can't do that to people. You can't do that to children. At least under the Nazis they never even pretended to like the Jews, but in the South it was always that terrible hypocrisy. You know, we love the blacks and we understand them and they love us. Both sides were playing roles which were pure hypocrisy. So I thought the boycott was absolutely marvelous.¹¹

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Durr, what tensions in the white community did the bus boycott expose? Why did some whites choose to help the boycotters?
2. Durr argued that as children, Southern whites were encouraged to develop loving relationships with blacks who cared for them. As adults, however, they were told to refrain from interacting with blacks because, it was argued, blacks were inferior. What conflicts and tensions did this message create? What does this message tell us about whites in the South at that time?
3. What did Durr mean by the "pure hypocrisy" that ruled relationships between blacks and whites?

¹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 3–4.

² Malcolm West, "Mamie Till-Mobley, Civil Rights Heroine, Eulogized in Chicago," *Jet*, January 27, 2003.

³ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 7.

⁴ Shaila Dewan, "How Photos Became Icon of Civil Rights Movement," *New York Times*, August 28, 2005.

⁵ "Do You Remember?," *The American Experience*, PBS, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_remember.html (accessed on April 25, 2006).

⁶ Dewan, "How Photos Became Icon of Civil Rights Movement."

⁷ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 11–12.

⁸ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 19–20.

⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Speech at the Holt Street Baptist Church," quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 48–51.

¹⁰ Margaret Rose Gladney, *How Am I to Be Heard? Letters of Lillian Smith* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1993), 193.

¹¹ Henry Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 27–28.



Episode 2 focuses on the struggle to enforce federal civil rights legislation across the South. During the first half of the century, the American social system was sharply segregated along color lines. Enacted into law with such Supreme Court rulings as the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (which

sanctioned segregated seating in railroad cars), this system provided “separate but equal” facilities and services for blacks and whites.

In the 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed a legal team to systematically challenge segregation in the nation’s courts.* The team, led first by Charles Houston and later by Thurgood Marshall, believed the best way to attack segregation was to contest the central premise of *Plessy v. Ferguson*—the idea that separate would ever be equal. By the early 1950s, the NAACP focused on segregation in US public schools. In a series of rulings know as *Brown v. Board of Education*, the US Supreme Court declared the doctrine of “separate but equal” unconstitutional. The rulings had widespread implications; activists saw it as the first step toward desegregation, but many white Southerners interpreted it as an infringement on their states’ rights. The ruling’s implications for the particularly sensitive issue of children and education ignited segregationists’ rage and fed their sense of imminent threat.

The episode begins in 1956 when Autherine Lucy, a black woman, enrolled in the all-white University of Alabama. In response to widespread hostility and mob violence, the university board suspended Lucy, ostensibly for her safety, and then later expelled her for challenging the decision in court. The struggle for school desegregation continued in Arkansas. In 1957, the Little Rock Board of Education decided to comply with the Supreme Court decision

* Under the leadership of Harvard University scholar W. E. B. DuBois and the antilynching advocate Ida B. Wells, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1909. The NAACP’s goals include the promotion of equality and justice in America and the eradication of prejudices among all its citizens. Its charter calls for the protection of the interests and opportunities of citizens of color and for the promotion of progressive policies in the fields of education, housing, and employment. For more information see “NAACP,” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9372942> (accessed April 18, 2006).

1955	
May 31	The Supreme Court issues <i>Brown II</i> proclaiming that districts must “make a prompt and reasonable start towards full compliance with our May 17, 1954 ruling.”
1956	
Feb. 3	Autherine Lucy becomes the first black woman to enroll at the University of Alabama but is soon suspended “for her safety”
1957	
Jan. 11	Martin Luther King and other religious leaders form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to lead the struggle against segregation
Sept. 4	In Arkansas, nine black students are prevented from attending Little Rock Central High School by a mob of neighborhood whites
Sept. 25	President Dwight D. Eisenhower sends federal troops to Little Rock to escort the nine black students into the school and protect them for the rest of the school year
1958	
Sept. 9	President Eisenhower signs into law the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which gave the federal government some power to enforce equal voting rights
1960	
Nov. 8	With a strong black voter base, Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy defeats Republican candidate Richard Nixon
1962	
Sept. 20	James Meredith, a black man, applies for admission to the traditionally all white University of Mississippi, but is met with opposition by school officials
Sept. 30	President John F. Kennedy sends federal troops to intervene on behalf of Meredith, forcing the school administration to allow him to enroll

and admitted nine black students to the prestigious Little Rock Central High School. Governor Orval E. Faubus, courting the segregationist vote for his reelection campaign, responded with a blatantly political decision: in defiance of federal laws, he called in the Arkansas National Guard to stop the “Little Rock Nine” (as the press dubbed the students) from entering the school. In these actions, the governor adopted extreme segregationist rhetoric, and incited a near-riot atmosphere. During the first several days, the black students were forced into the hands of the mob and only narrowly escaped physical harm. In response to the crisis, President Dwight D. Eisenhower called in the 101st Airborne Division to ensure the students’ safety and enforce compliance with the federal ruling.

The episode ends with the story of James Meredith, who successfully used the courts to fight for the right to enroll in the University of Mississippi. Despite on-campus riots, Meredith persevered and became the first black student to attend “Ole Miss” (as the university was known).

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between desegregation and integration? What is required for each?
2. Why was school desegregation so explosive?
3. The NAACP chose to contest segregation in federal courts. What myths did it force people to confront? What other avenues of protest were open to blacks in America?
4. How can a democracy ensure that it is not undermined by mob rule?
5. What is the role of the federal government in protecting the freedoms guaranteed to all American citizens when the state fails to do so? What role does the US Constitution play in protecting the rights of American citizens?

Document 1: OVERTURNING SEGREGATION IN THE SUPREME COURT

The 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling had legally legitimized the “separate but equal” policy in American public life. The ruling stipulated that blacks and whites could receive separate services so long as they had equal access to resources. While ostensibly blacks may have been entitled to equivalent resources and opportunities, in actuality the policy preserved “separate and unequal” racial divisions.

By the early 1950s, the NAACP had decided to undermine the “separate but equal” doctrine through legal challenges to educational segregation in US public schools, primarily because the gaps between white and black educational institutions were so glaring. The NAACP legal team argued to the US Supreme Court that “separate but equal” violated the Fourteenth Amendment clause, which states that the freedoms and privileges of US citizens must be equally protected. In the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, the US Supreme Court declared the doctrine of “separate but equal” unconstitutional on the grounds that it provided inferior education



A mother explaining the *Brown v. Board* decision on the steps of the Supreme Court. The ruling declared that the doctrine “separate but equal” was unconstitutional.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-127042

to African-Americans. The landmark decision initiated the process that dismantled the legal segregation of schools in America.

US Supreme Court

BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

347 U.S. 483

BROWN ET AL. v. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA ET AL.

**APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF
KANSAS. No. 1.**

Segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment—even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors of white and Negro schools may be equal.

(a) The history of the Fourteenth Amendment is inconclusive as to its intended effect on public education.

(b) The question presented in these cases must be determined, not on the basis of conditions existing when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted, but in the light of the full development of public education and its present place in American life throughout the Nation.

(c) Where a State has undertaken to provide an opportunity for an education in its public schools, such an opportunity is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

(d) Segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race deprives children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal.

(e) The “separate but equal” doctrine adopted in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 has no place in the field of public education.

[...]

In approaching this problem, we cannot turn the clock back to 1868 when the Amendment was adopted, or even to 1896 when *Plessy v. Ferguson* was written. We must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout [347 U.S. 483, 493] the Nation. Only in this way can it be determined if segregation in public schools deprives these plaintiffs of the equal protection of the laws.

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.

[...]

To separate [black children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. [...]

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether such segregation also violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.¹

CONNECTIONS

1. The Supreme Court is the highest legal authority in the United States. It hears cases that have wide constitutional implications. How significant was the Supreme Court’s decision to take up the case of segregation in schools?
2. As you read the court’s decision, what words or phrases stand out? How did the court explain its ruling?
3. Seven years before the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Mendez family, Mexican Americans in California, fought public school segregation in the courts. Supported by the United Latin American Citizens (ULAC) with the help of the NAACP (Thurgood Marshall co-authored the legal brief), The American Jewish Congress, The Japanese American League and other civil rights organizations, the Mendezes argued that California’s schools were in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Federal Judge Paul McCormick sided with Mendez in his ruling. He explained:

“The equal protection of the laws pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, text books and courses of instruction to children of Mexican ancestry that are available to the other public school children regardless of their ancestry. A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage.”²

Compare Judge McCormick’s ruling to the Supreme Court’s ruling *Brown v. Board of Education*. What language strikes you?

4. In the *Brown* decision, how did the Justices write about the role of education in a democracy?
5. Why do you think the court ruled that the doctrine of “separate but equal” had no place in the field of public education? Why was this decision hard to enforce?
6. The courts dismantled official segregation, but many American students still attend schools that have a strong ethnic, religious, or class imbalances. What is the difference between desegregation and integration? What can be done to further break down cultural and ethnic barriers between students? How can institutions and individuals promote dialogue between racial and ethnic groups?

Document 2: THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

In 1955, Virgil Blossom, the Little Rock, Arkansas school superintendent, announced a plan to integrate the state’s schools gradually, beginning with Little Rock Central High School. The school board selected nine outstanding black students to be the first to attend the all-white institution. Among the nine was 15 year-old Elizabeth Eckford. The night before the first day of school, Governor Orval Faubus delivered an inflammatory speech to incite white segregationists to protest the integration attempt. Rumors of riots spread across town, but Elizabeth Eckford could not be contacted and warned. The next morning she arrived by herself, unprotected. Segregationists crowded the streets leading to Central and surrounded her. Facing taunts, racial epithets, and threats, Eckford only narrowly escaped physical harm. In the excerpt below, she recalled the dreadful day:

I am part of the group that became known as the Little Rock Nine. Prior to the desegregation of Central, there had been one high school for whites, Central High school, and one high school for blacks, Dunbar. I expected that there may be something more available to me at Central that was not available at Dunbar; that there might be more courses I could pursue; that there were more options available. I was not prepared for what actually happened.

I was more concerned about what I would wear, whether we could finish my dress in time. [...] What I was wearing, was that okay? Would it look good? The night before when the governor went on television [September 2] and announced that he had called out the Arkansas National Guard, I thought he had done this to insure the protection of all the students. We did not have a telephone. So, inevitably we were not contacted to let us know that Daisy Bates of NAACP had arranged for some ministers to accompany the students in a group. And so it was I that arrived alone.

On the morning of September 4th, my mother was doing what she usually did. My mother was making sure everybody's hair looked right and everybody had lunch money and notebooks and things. But she did finally get quiet and we had family prayer. I remember my father walking back and forth. My father worked at night and normally he would have been asleep at that time, but he was awake and he was walking back and forth chomping on a cigar that wasn't lit.



Elizabeth Eckford attempting to enter Little Rock Central High School. Facing taunts, racial epithets, and threats, Eckford narrowly escaped violence.

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I expected I would go to school as I did before on a city bus. So, I walked a few blocks to the bus stop, got on the bus, and rode to within two blocks of the school. I got off the bus and I noticed along the street that there were many more cars than usual. And I remember hearing the murmur of a crowd. But, when I got to the corner where the school was, I was reassured seeing these soldiers circling school grounds. And I saw students going to school. I saw the guards break ranks as students approached the sidewalks so that they could pass through to get to school.

And I approached the guards at the corner, as I had seen other students do, they closed ranks. So, I thought maybe I am not supposed to enter at this point. So, I walked further down the line of guards to where there was another sidewalk and I attempted to pass through there. But when I stepped up, they crossed rifles. And again I said to myself maybe I'm supposed to go down to where the main entrance is. So I walked toward the center of the street and when I got to about the middle and I approached the guard he directed me across the street into the crowd. It was only then that I realized that they were barring me so that I wouldn't go to school.

As I stepped out into the street, the people who had been across the street start surging forward behind me. So, I headed in the opposite direction to where there was another bus stop. Safety to me meant getting to the bus stop. I think I sat there for a long time before the bus came. In the meantime, people were screaming behind me. What I would have described as a crowd before, to my ears sounded like a mob.³

CONNECTIONS

1. What did Elizabeth Eckford say was her motivation for attending Little Rock Central?

2. How did she describe her preparations for her first day of school? What did she expect would happen? Why didn't things go as she expected?
3. As you study the photo of Elizabeth trying to make her way into the school, what details stand out? If you were there, what sounds might you have heard? If you were one of the reporters at the scene, whom would you want to interview? What questions might you have asked?
4. How do you explain the mob's reaction to Elizabeth's arrival at school? What do you think white protestors were trying to accomplish?
5. What is a mob? What is the difference between a mob and a crowd? Which term best describes the people Eckford faced on her first day at school? Have you ever been caught up in a mob? How do mobs express their power?
6. Hazel Bryan was the young woman shouting at Elizabeth in the photograph. In 1962, five years later, Bryan apologized to Eckford. Bryan later said:

“I don't know what triggered it, but one day I just started squalling about how she must have felt. I felt so bad that I had done this that I called her [...] and apologized to her. I told her I was sorry that I had done that, that I was not thinking for myself [...]. I think both of us were crying.”⁴

What do you think might have prompted Bryan's apology? How important do you think the apology was to Eckford? To Bryan?

Document 3: **MOB RULE CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO OVERRIDE THE DECISIONS OF OUR COURTS**

Orval E. Faubus was elected governor of Arkansas in 1954. He pursued a progressive agenda that included increased spending on public services and the integration of public transportation. Pressure from segregationists, however, pushed him to resist federal calls for school integration. In a calculated appeal to Arkansas's segregationists, Faubus sent in National Guardsmen to stop the attempts to desegregate Little Rock Central. Defying federal laws, the governor incited a near-riot atmosphere. Prompted by the crisis, President Dwight Eisenhower delivered the following speech:

Good evening, my fellow citizens. For a few minutes this evening I should like to speak to you about the serious situation that has arisen in Little Rock. [...] In that city, under the leadership of demagogic extremists, disorderly mobs have deliberately prevented the carrying out of proper orders from a federal court. Local authorities have not eliminated that violent opposition and, under the law, I yesterday issued a proclamation calling upon the mob to disperse. [...]

Whenever normal agencies prove inadequate to the task and it becomes necessary for the executive branch of the federal government to use its powers and authority to uphold federal courts, the president's responsibility is inescapable. In accordance with that responsibility, I have today issued an executive order directing the use of troops under federal authority to aid in the execution of federal law at Little Rock, Arkansas. This became necessary when my proclamation of yesterday was not observed, and the obstruction of justice still continues. [...]

As you know, the Supreme Court of the United States has decided that separate public

educational facilities for the races are inherently unequal, and therefore compulsory school segregation laws are unconstitutional. Our personal opinions about the decision have no bearing on the matter of enforcement; the responsibility and authority of the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution are very clear. Local federal courts were instructed by the Supreme Court to issue such orders and decrees as might be necessary to achieve admission to public schools without regard to race and with all deliberate speed.

During the past several years, many communities in our Southern states have instituted public school plans for gradual progress in the enrollment and attendance of school children of all races in order to bring themselves into compliance with the law of the land. [...] Here I might say that in a number of communities in Arkansas, integration in the schools has already started, and without violence of any kind. [...]

The very basis of our individual rights and freedoms rests upon the certainty that the president and the executive branch of government will support and insure the carrying out of the decisions of the federal courts, even, when necessary with all the means at the president's command. Unless the president did so, anarchy would result. There would be no security for any except that which each one of us could provide for himself. The interest of the nation in the proper fulfillment of the law's requirements cannot yield to opposition and demonstrations by some few persons.

Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decisions of our courts. [...]

A foundation of the American way of life is our national respect for law. [...] [I]t would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed to the safety, of our nation and the world. Our enemies are gloating over this incident and using it everywhere to misrepresent our whole nation. We are portrayed as a violator of those standards of conduct, which the peoples of the world united to proclaim in the Charter of the United Nations. There they affirmed faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and they did so without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. [...]⁵

CONNECTIONS

1. How did President Eisenhower explain his decision to bring federal troops to Little Rock? What arguments did he make? Which arguments resonate with you?
2. What dangers did the president foresee when mob rule “override[s] the decisions of our courts”?
3. What is the role of the president when states and local officials defy federal law?
4. Many segregationists claimed that the federal government was imposing its will and that they had rights as well. How do you think President Eisenhower might have responded to that argument? How might you respond?

Document 4: CONFRONTING DESEGREGATION STUDENT TO STUDENT

A few weeks after the showdown in Little Rock, NBC News invited several students to a nationally-televised roundtable discussion. Of these students, Sammy Dean Parker, Kay Bacon, Robin Woods, and Joseph Fox were white, and Ernest Green and Minniejean Brown were black. The discussion centered on the constitutional rights of blacks and whites and the impact the Little Rock desegregation had on them.

MRS. RICKETTS: Do you think it is possible to start working this out on a more sensible basis than violent demonstration?

SAMMY: No, I don't because the South has always been against racial mixing and I think they will fight this thing to the end. [...] We fight for our freedom—that's one thing. And we don't have any freedom any more.

ERNEST: Sammy, you said that you don't have any freedom. I wonder what do you mean by it—that you don't have any freedom? You are guaranteed your freedom in the Bill of Rights and your Constitution. You have the freedom of speech—I noticed that has been exercised a whole lot in Little Rock. The freedom of petition, the freedom of religion and the other freedoms are guaranteed to you. As far as freedom, I think that if anybody should kick about freedoms, it should be us: Because I think we have been given a pretty bad side on this thing as far as freedom.

SAMMY: Do you call those troops freedom? I don't. And I also do not call free when you are being escorted into the school every morning.

ERNEST: You say why did the troops come here? It is because our government—our state government—went against the federal law.[...] Our country is set up so that we have forty eight states and no one state has the ability to overrule our nation's government. I thought that was what our country was built around. I mean, that is why we fight. We fought in World War II together—the fellows that I know died in World War II, they died in the Korean War. I mean, why should my friends get out there and die for a cause called "democracy" when I can't exercise my rights—tell me that.

ROBIN: I agree with Ernest.

JOE: Well, Sammy, I don't know what freedom has been taken away from you because the truth there—I know as a senior myself—the troops haven't kept me from going to my classes or participating in any school activity. I mean, they're there just to keep order in case—I might use the term "hotheads"—get riled up. But I think as long as—if parents would just stay out of it and let the children of the school at Central High figure it out for themselves, I think it would be a whole lot better. I think the students are mature enough to figure it out for themselves.... As far as I'm concerned, I'll lay the whole blame of this trouble in Governor Faubus's lap.

SAMMY: I think we knew before this ever started that some day we were going to have to integrate the schools. And I think that our Governor was trying to protect all of us when he called out the National Guard—and he was trying to prepare us, I think.

ERNEST: [...] Well, I have to disagree. [...] I know a student that's over there with us, Elizabeth, and that young lady, she walked two blocks, I guess—as you all know—and the mob was behind her. Did the troops break up the mob?

ROBIN: [...] And when Elizabeth had to walk down in front of the school I was there and I saw that. And may I say, I was very ashamed—I felt like crying—because she was so brave when she did that. And we just weren't behaving ourselves just jeering her. I think if we had had any sort of decency, we wouldn't have acted that way. But I think if everybody would just obey the Golden Rule—do unto others as you would have others do unto you—might be the solution. How would you like to have to [...] walk down the street with everybody yelling behind you like they yelled behind Elizabeth?

MRS. RICKETTS: Sammy, why do these children not want to go to school with Negroes?

SAMMY: Well, I think it is mostly race mixing.

MRS. RICKETTS: Race mixing? What do you mean?

SAMMY: Well, marrying each other.

MINNIEJEAN: Hold your hand up. I'm brown, you are white. What's the difference? We are all of the same thoughts. You're thinking about your boy—he's going to the Navy. I'm thinking about mine—he's in the Air Force. We think about the same thing.

SAMMY: I'll have to agree with you.

ERNEST: Well, getting back to this intermarriage and all that. I don't know [where] people get all that. Why do I want to go to school? To marry with someone? I mean, school's not a marriage bureau. [...] I'm going there for an education. Really, if I'm going there to socialize, I don't need to be going to school. I can stand out on the corner and socialize, as far as that.

MINNIEJEAN: Kay, Joe and Rob, do you know anything about me, or is it just that your mother has told you about Negroes?

MRS. RICKETTS: [...] Have you ever really made an effort to try to find out what they're like?

KAY: Not until today.

SAMMY: Not until today.

MRS. RICKETTS: And what do you think about it after today?

KAY: Well, you know that my parents and a lot of the other students and their parents think that the Negroes aren't equal to us. But—I don't know. It seems like they are, to me.

SAMMY: These people are—we'll have to admit that.

ERNEST: I think, like we're doing today, discussing our different views [...] if the people of Little Rock [...] would get together I believe they would find out a different story—and try to discuss the thing instead of getting out in the street and kicking people around and calling names—and all that sort of thing. If [...] people got together it would be smoothed over.

KAY: I think that if [...] our friends had been getting in this discussion today, I think that maybe some of them—not all of them—in time, they would change their mind. But probably some of them would change their mind today.

SAMMY: I know now that it isn't as bad as I thought it was—after we got together and discussed it.

KAY: We [Sammy and I] both came down here today with our mind set on it [that] we weren't going to change our mind that we were fully against integration. But I know now that we're going to change our mind.

MRS. RICKETTS: What do your parents say to that?

KAY: I think I'm going to have a long talk with my parents.⁶

"Integration: Central Students Talk It Out," *New York Times*, October 20, 1957 © 1957 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted with permission.

CONNECTIONS

1. The roundtable discussion organized by NBC was one of the few opportunities Little Rock Central High School students had to express their concerns. They discussed issues of equality, states' rights, "race mixing," and the conflict between free speech and free association on the one hand and individual rights on the other. None of these issues were discussed at school. How do you think the students learned about them? What did the roundtable discussion add to their understanding of these issues? What did it add to the understanding of those who heard their discussion?
2. How do students get the message that some people deserve more than others?
3. Whose responsibility was it to prepare the students—black and white—for integration?
4. Suppose a community group, the school, or the students themselves had organized informal conversations like NBC's roundtable discussion. Who might have benefited? What might the students have learned from one another? How could teachers educate students about racial, cultural, and other

Document 5: PRESIDENT CLINTON REMEMBERS LITTLE ROCK

Former President Bill Clinton grew up near Little Rock, Arkansas. The crisis surrounding the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School left a deep impression on the 11 year-old and permanently impacted the way he thought about race and racism. On September 25, 1997, then President Clinton spoke at Little Rock Central to mark the 40th anniversary of the integration of the school:

Forty years ago, a single image first seared the heart and stirred the conscience of our nation. So powerful, most of us who saw it then recall it still. A 15 year-old girl, wearing a crisp black and white dress, carrying only a notebook, surrounded by large crowds of boys and girls, men and women, soldiers and police officers. Her head held high, her eyes fixed straight ahead. And she is utterly alone.

On September 4, 1957, Elizabeth Eckford walked through this door for her first day of school, utterly alone. She was turned away by people who were afraid of change, instructed by ignorance, hating what they simply could not understand. [...] Elizabeth Eckford, along with her eight schoolmates, [was] turned away on September 4th, but the Little Rock Nine did not turn back. Forty years ago today, they climbed these steps, passed through this door and moved our nation. And for that, we must all thank them.

Today, we honor those who made it possible, their parents first. As Eleanor Roosevelt said of them, to give your child for a cause is even harder than to give yourself. To honor my friend Daisy Bates and Wiley Branton and Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP and all who guided these children.

To honor President Eisenhower, Attorney General Brownell and the men of the 101st Airborne who enforced the Constitution; to honor every student, every teacher, every minister, every Little Rock resident, black or white, who offered a word of kindness, a glance of respect or a hand of friendship; to honor those who gave us the opportunity to be part of this day, a celebration and rededication.

But most of all, we come to honor the Little Rock Nine. Most of those who just watched these events unfold can never understand fully the sacrifice they made. Imagine, all of



Honoring the Little Rock Nine. Federal troops were sent to ensure that the students were safe and that Arkansas authorities complied with the desegregation ruling.

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you, what it would be like to come to school one day and be shoved against lockers, tripped down stairways, taunted day after day by your classmates, to go all through school with no hope of going to a school play or being on a basketball team, or learning in simple peace. [...]

But let me tell you something else that was true about that time. Before Little Rock, for me and other white children, the struggles of black people, whether we were sympathetic or hostile to them, were mostly background music in our normal, self-absorbed lives. We were all, like you, more concerned about our friends and our lives day in and day out. But then we saw what was happening in our own backyard, and we all had to deal with it. Where did we stand? What did we believe? How did we want to live? It was Little Rock that made racial equality a driving obsession in my life. [...]

Well, 40 years later we know that we all benefit, all of us, when we learn together, work together and come together. That is, after all, what it means to be an American. Forty years later, we know, notwithstanding some cynics, that all our children can learn, and this school proves it.

Forty years later, we know when the Constitutional rights of our citizens are threatened, the national government must guarantee them. Talk is fine, but when they are threatened, you need strong laws, faithfully enforced, and upheld by independent courts.

Forty years later we know there are still more doors to be opened, doors to be opened wider, doors we have to keep from being shut again now.

Forty years later we know freedom and equality cannot be realized without responsibility for self, family and the duties of citizenship, or without a commitment to building a community of shared destiny, and a genuine sense of belonging.

Forty years later, we know the question of race is more complex and more important than ever, embracing no longer just blacks and whites, or blacks and whites and Hispanics and Native Americans, but now people from all parts of the earth coming here to redeem the promise of America.

Forty years later, frankly, we know we are bound to come back where we started. After all the weary years and silent tears, after all the stony roads and bitter roads, the question of race is, in the end, still an affair of the heart.

But [...] if these are lessons, what do we have to do? First, we must all reconcile. Then, we must all face the facts of today, and finally, we must act. [...]

And what are the facts?

It is a fact, my fellow Americans, that there are still too many places where opportunity for education and work are not equal, where disintegration of family and neighborhood make it more difficult. [...]

There is still discrimination in America.

There are still people who can't get over it, who can't let it go, who can't go through the day unless they have somebody else to look down on. And it manifests itself in our streets and in our neighborhoods, and in the workplace, and in the schools. And it is wrong. And we have to keep working on it, not just with our voices, but with our laws. And we have to engage each other in it. [...]

We have to decide...all you young people have to decide, will we stand as a shining example or a stunning rebuke to the world of tomorrow? For the alternative to integration is not isolation or a new Separate but Equal, it is disintegration.

Only the American idea is strong enough to hold us together. We believe—whether our ancestors came here in slave ships or on the Mayflower, whether they came through the portals of Ellis Island or on a plane to San Francisco, whether they have been here for thousands of years—we believe that every individual possesses a spark of possibility. [...]

We must be one America. The Little Rock Nine taught us that. [...]

We have to act. All of us have to act, each of us has to do something, especially our young people must seek out people who are different from themselves and speak freely and frankly to discover they share the same dreams.⁷

CONNECTIONS

1. What did Clinton describe as the lasting legacy of Little Rock for him? For the country?
2. Some people argue it is better to forget difficult episodes in our nation's history. How do you imagine Clinton would respond to this suggestion? How would you respond?
3. In 1999, each of the Little Rock Nine received the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress's highest civilian honor for their "selfless heroism" in 1957. To what extent do such honors make a difference? Are they merely symbolic? In what ways do they reflect our nation's values?
4. Who benefits from preaching hate and fear? Who is harmed by it?

¹ US Supreme Court, "Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)" *Find Law*, http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/printer_friendly.pl?page=us/347/483.html (accessed on April 26, 2006).

² United States District Court for the Southern District of California, "Mendez v. Westminster School Dist. of Orange County, 64 F Supp. 544 D.C.CAL. (1946)", <http://www.mendezwestminster.com/> (accessed on August 15, 2006).

³ Elizabeth Eckford, interview by Facing History and Ourselves, June 28, 2000.

⁴ Sara Alderman Murphy, *Breaking the Silence: Little Rock's Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools, 1958–1995* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 58.

⁵ President Dwight Eisenhower, "Ike on Little Rock," *American Radio Works*, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/marshall/ike.html> (accessed on April 26, 2006).

⁶ "Integration: Central Students Talk It Out," *New York Times*, October 20, 1957.

⁷ Facing History and Ourselves, *Choices in Little Rock* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2005), 156–58.



EPISODE 3:

AIN'T SCARED OF YOUR JAILS (1960-1961)

By 1960, a new generation of black activists joined the civil rights struggle: students who had grown up after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling (see Episode 2). They emerged on the scene with a fresh sense of possibility and determination. On February 1, 1960, four black students made history by sitting down at a “whites only” lunch counter in a Greensboro, North Carolina Woolworth’s store. Soon afterward students began to challenge segregation in other college towns throughout the South.

1954

- May 17** In *Brown v. The Board of Education*, the Supreme Court declares that segregated schools are inherently unequal and thus unconstitutional
- May 10** Nashville begins desegregating many of its public facilities, marking an early victory for the civil rights movement
- Dec. 5** The Supreme Court decides in *Boydton v. Virginia* that segregation in public transportation is an unlawful violation of the Interstate Commerce Act

1961

- May 4** The Congress of Racial Equality initiates the Freedom Rides to challenge the practice of segregated buses. Freedom Riders persist throughout the summer despite intense and violent opposition
- Sep. 22** The Interstate Commerce Commission outlaws segregation in all interstate transportation terminals starting November 1

In their search for inspiration, activists in Nashville, Tennessee turned to Amos and Isaiah, the biblical “social justice” prophets, studied Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s* philosophy of nonviolence, and adopted American philosopher Henry David Thoreau’s writings on civil disobedience. Led by Reverend James Lawson, who studied nonviolence during his years in India, they prepared for confrontations with segregationists through workshops on civil disobedience and non-violent action. These lessons were quickly applied as hundreds of well-dressed black and white students converged on segregated lunch counters and insisted on being served regardless of where they sat. Almost immediately and throughout the lunch-counter campaign, angry mobs attacked the student protesters, who, despite taunts, physical intimidation, and arrest, refrained from fighting back. To further dramatize the injustice of segregation, students refused bail and crowded Nashville’s jails to capacity.

Prompted by the protests, Nashville’s mayor, Ben West, called for law and order as students organized a boycott of the city’s downtown shops

and drew unprecedented attention from the national media. The boycott was followed by a dramatic march on city hall, where students challenged West to publicly acknowledge the immorality of segregation and lift Nashville’s segregation laws. Struck by the students’ actions and moral determination, the mayor relented.

The victory in Nashville inspired student leaders to form a new organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).** Devoted to the principles of nonviolence, SNCC became a leading force in the campaign against segregation in the South and spurred massive support for the civil rights movement.

*Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) was a British-educated Indian lawyer who led his country’s successful struggle for independence from Britain. His strategies of nonviolence, noncooperation, civil disobedience, and self-sacrifice were based on his interpretation of Hinduism and were embraced by civil rights activists in the 1940s and widely used through the 1950s and 1960s. Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist in 1948.

**SNCC was an American political organization that played a central role in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Begun as an interracial group advocating nonviolence, it adopted greater militancy late in the decade, reflecting nationwide trends in black activism, and in 1969 officially changed its name to the Student National Coordinating Committee. For more information see “Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee,” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9399806> (accessed on July 25, 2006).

In 1960, the US Supreme Court expanded upon previous rulings and declared segregation in bus terminals, waiting rooms, restaurants, restrooms, and other interstate travel facilities unconstitutional. A year later, SNCC joined forces with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)^{***} in an effort to test the will of local and federal officials to enforce the new legal decisions. Black and white “Freedom Riders” (as they called themselves) traveled together on bus rides into the deep South. During these rides, the Freedom Riders challenged the government to protect participants from mobs of Klansmen (members of the Ku Klux Klan) and violent segregationists.^{****} The gamble culminated in a crisis when riders were attacked and bombed while the FBI and local police stood by. In a showdown with Alabama Governor John Peterson, President John F. Kennedy decided to intervene to ensure the safety of the riders and enforce the Supreme Court rulings.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What were the strategic choices student leaders made in their battle to overcome segregation in Nashville? How did their choices affect the terms of the larger struggle against discrimination?
2. The students called their strategy nonviolent direct action. What does this term mean? What was necessary for their strategy to be successful? Why do you think the leaders of the civil rights movement used Nashville as a model for their nonviolent strategy?
3. How did the activists hope to change the way people throughout America thought about segregation?
4. How do you explain Nashville Mayor Ben West’s change of heart in response to the protests?
5. Both local and federal officials were unwilling to enforce legal decisions that outlawed segregation. How did the students try to pressure the government to enforce the law?

Document 1: NASHVILLE LUNCH COUNTER SIT-INS: AN INTERVIEW WITH DIANE NASH

The sit-in movement brought a new generation of mobilized college students into the civil rights struggle. These students began to systematically challenge segregation in college towns throughout the South. Lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina were only their first target. Students held sit-ins, boycotted segregated stores, and entered “whites only” restaurants where they demanded service for both blacks and whites at lunch counters.

In this *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Diane Nash, who with Ella Baker, Marion Berry, James Lawson, and John Lewis helped found the SNCC, recalled her introduction to the sit-in movement. A Chicagoan who transferred to Fisk University, located in Nashville, Nash remembered her first experiences with Southern segregation and her search for methods to protest the unjust system:

Because I grew up in Chicago, I didn’t have an emotional relationship to segregation. I understood the facts and stories, but there was not an emotional relationship. When I went south and saw the signs that said “white” and “colored,” and I actually could not drink out of that water fountain or go to that ladies’ room, I had a real emotional reac-

^{***} CORE was established in 1941 by an interracial group that drew its inspiration from the philosophy of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as well as religious traditions that espoused peaceful resolutions of social conflicts. They pioneered the application of Gandhi’s tactics in America and inspired King to adopt them. The first interracial bus rides were carried out by CORE. In 1947, CORE placed black and white volunteers on buses in a “Journey of Reconciliation” to challenge local authorities in the South to uphold the recent Supreme Court decision to desegregate interstate bus travel.

^{****} The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is a hate organization that seeks to assert the supremacy of Christian whites through symbolic displays, which include ceremonial garb of white gowns and hoods, church and cross burning, intimidation campaigns, and ritualized killings known as lynchings. Such antisemitic, anti-Catholic, and anti-black organizations originated in the middle of the nineteenth century when members of the former Confederacy established branches of the KKK to resist the emancipation of slaves. A revival of the KKK was sparked with the release of D. W. Griffin’s racist silent film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915.



Sit-in at a Nashville lunch counter, 1960. Students held sit-ins in “whites only” restaurants where they demanded service for both blacks and whites at lunch counters.

tion. I remember the first time it happened was at the Tennessee State Fair. I had a date with a young man, and I started to go to the ladies’ room. And it said, “white” and “colored,” and I really resented that. I was outraged.

In Chicago, at least, I had had access to public accommodations and lunch counters. So, my response was, “Who’s trying to change these things?” I remember getting depressed because I encountered what I thought was so much apathy. At first I couldn’t find anyone, and many of the students were saying, “Why are you concerned

about that?” They were not interested in trying to effect some kind of change, I thought.

And then I talked to Paul LePrad, who told me about the nonviolent workshops that Jim Lawson was conducting. They were taking place a couple of blocks off campus. Jim had been to India, and he had studied the movement [of] Mohandas Gandhi. He also had been a conscientious objector and had refused to fight in the Korean War. He really is the person that brought Gandhi’s philosophy and strategies of nonviolence to this country. He conducted weekly workshops where students in Nashville, as well as some of the people who lived in the Nashville community, were trained and educated in these philosophies and strategies. There were many things I learned in those workshops that I have used for the rest of my life.

I remember realizing that with what we were doing, trying to abolish segregation, we were coming up against governors of seven states, judges, politicians, businessmen, and I remember thinking, “I’m only 22 years old. What do I know? What am I doing?” I felt very vulnerable. So when we heard that other cities had demonstrations, it really helped, because there were more of us. And I think we started feeling the power of an idea whose time had come.

The sit-ins were really highly charged, emotionally. In our nonviolent workshops, we had decided to be respectful of the opposition and try to keep the issues geared toward desegregation. And the first sit-in we had was really funny, because the waitresses were nervous. They must have dropped \$2,000 worth of dishes that day! I mean, literally, it was almost a cartoon. I can remember one in particular. She was so nervous, she picked up the dishes and dropped one, and she’d pick up another one and drop it. It was really funny, and we were sitting there trying not to laugh, because we thought that laughing would be insulting. At the same time, we were scared to death.

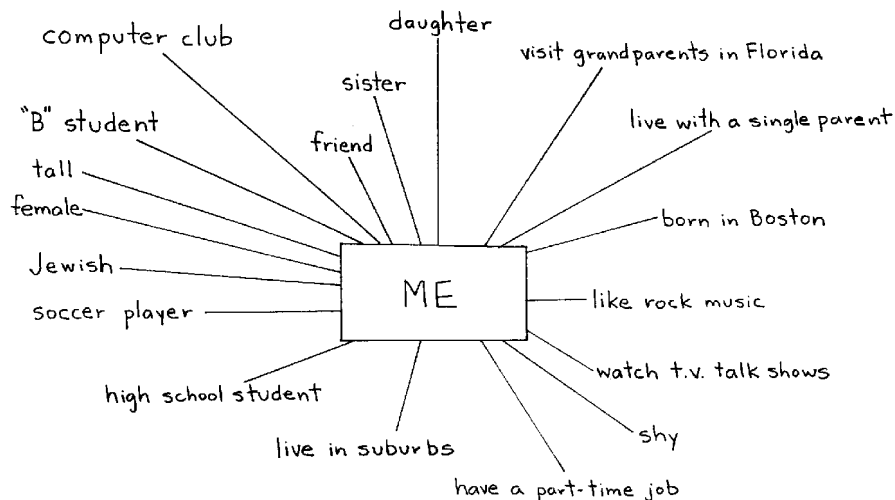
The day that the police first arrested us was interesting, too. They had made a decision they were going to arrest us if we sat in that day, and so they announced to us, "O.K., all you nigras, get up from the lunch counter or we're going to arrest you." And of course we were prepared for this. So they said, "Well, we warned you, you won't move. Everybody's under arrest." So everybody who was at the lunch counter was arrested. [...] And then they turned and they looked around the lunch counter again, and the second wave of students had all taken seats. They were confounded [...] and said, "Well, we'll arrest those, too," and they did. No matter what they did and how many they arrested, there was still a lunch counter full of students. They didn't quite know how to act and pretty soon it just got to be a problem for them. [...]

The movement had a way of reaching inside me and bringing out things that I never knew were there. Like courage, and love for people. It was a real experience to be seeing a group of people who would put their bodies between you and danger. And to love people that you work with enough that you would put your body between them and danger. I was afraid of going to jail. I said, "I'll do telephone work, and I'll type, but I'm really afraid to go to jail." But when the time came to go to jail, I was far too busy to be afraid. And we had to go, that's what happened.

I think it's really important that young people today understand that the movement of the sixties was really a people's movement. The media and history seem to record it as Martin Luther King's movement, but young people should realize that it was people just like them, their age, that formulated goals and strategies, and actually developed the movement. When they look around now, and see things that need to be changed, they should say: "What can I do? What can my roommate and I do to effect that change?"¹

CONNECTIONS

1. Create an identity chart for Diane Nash similar to the hypothetical one below. What words did Nash use to describe herself? What words would you use to describe her? How did her move to the South change her? How did her activism in Nashville change her understanding of the world and of herself?



2. Which particular memories stood out for Nash about her first encounters with segregation in the South?
3. What was Nash's original reaction to the ways in which blacks were treated in the South? How was this different from her earlier understanding of segregation as a Northerner? What motivated her to get involved in the movement to overthrow segregation?
4. How did Nash overcome her sense of powerlessness as a young student?
5. What did Nash learn from being involved in nonviolent protests? After her experience in Nashville she proposed the formation of a voluntary nonviolent army to tackle injustice in the United States. Are there causes for which you would volunteer?
6. In this episode, Leo Lillard, a student activist who grew up in Nashville, describes his childhood and his developing interest in the civil rights movement. Compare his story to Nash's. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

Document 2: **NONVIOLENCE IN NASHVILLE**

James Lawson, who was one of the few black theology students at Vanderbilt University, helped conceive of the idea of sit-ins. In his twenties, Lawson became interested in Gandhi's resistance to British rule in India, and traveled there to study his philosophy of nonviolence. Lawson became an authority on nonviolence and ran workshops where students were exposed to both its philosophical and practical applications in the South.

In the excerpts below Lawson discusses the inception of SNCC. Lawson recounts the philosophy behind the sit-in movement and the preparations for clashes with the police:

In early 1959 we decided that we needed to begin a movement to desegregate downtown Nashville. We planned a series of workshops on nonviolence to begin to start that process. Through those workshops in the fall came adults in the community and students from Tennessee State and American Baptist Theological Seminary and Fisk University.

We met weekly for much of September, October, November. We tried to give people a fairly good view of nonviolence, and we mixed that with role-playing of various kinds. We also added to it the first series of forays into downtown to test which restaurants we would decide to work on. In November, everyone who attended the workshop was given the experience of going to a Nashville restaurant and sitting in. These were very small groups, no more than usually four people. And they were not supposed to be arrested. They were supposed to sit, ask for service, and if it did not come—which of course it didn't—then talk with customers around them, and talk with the waiter, waitresses, see what their attitudes were, and then ask to see the manager or somebody in authority and talk with them about the policy of the place.

Why use nonviolence? The most practical reason is that we're trying to create a more just society. You cannot do it if you exaggerate the animosities. Martin King used to say, "If you use the law 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' then you end up with everybody

blind and toothless,” which is right. So from a practical point of view, you don’t want to blow up Nashville downtown, you simply want to open it up so that everybody has a chance to participate in it as people, fully, without any kind of reservations caused by creed, color, class, sex, anything else. So going past any theoretical notions for nonviolence, which many of us hold, is the practical issue. How do you achieve a community where people are people, where they have a fair chance?²

CONNECTIONS

1. Why did Lawson and his peers focus on segregated lunch counters? How did the choice to target lunch counters force citizens in Nashville and throughout the South to confront the indignities of segregation?
2. How did Lawson’s comments illuminate the strategic decisions behind the Nashville movement?
3. Lawson’s strategy was informed by Henry David Thoreau’s ideas about civil disobedience and Gandhi’s adaptation of those ideas. Civil disobedience calls for intentionally breaking “unjust” laws. In what ways were the lunch counter sit-ins acts of civil disobedience?
4. Gandhi’s theory of nonviolent resistance, known as Satyagraha^{****} (Sanskrit for a struggle for the truth), was based on the following three principles:
 1. Satya – truth or openness and fairness
 2. Ahimsa – refusal to inflict injury upon others
 3. Tapasya – willingness for self-sacrificeHow were these principles reflected in students’ actions?
5. Why do you think Gandhi emphasized fairness, nonviolence, and self-sacrifice in the face of overwhelming physical force? What elements of Gandhi’s philosophy did the student movement in Nashville adopt?
6. According to Lawson, what was the goal of the students’ actions in Nashville? Why did he and others feel that nonviolence was the best strategy for achieving those goals?
7. To support the sit-ins, activists called for a boycott of national chains that conducted business in Nashville. In an interview, Adam Clayton Powell, a black congressman (D-NY), was asked if he encouraged blacks to stay out of national chain stores. Powell responded in the negative, “I’m advocating,” he said, “that American citizens interested in democracy stay out of these stores.”³ Why did Powell call upon all US citizens to boycott stores that practiced discrimination? Why did he believe that this was a democratic issue?
8. What does segregation say about a community’s values? How does living in a segregated society shape the way people think about themselves and about members of other ethnic or racial groups? In your town, are there places that feel segregated today? What creates this feeling?
9. The nonviolent march to city hall climaxed when Diane Nash asked Mayor West, “Do you feel that it’s wrong to discriminate against a person solely on the basis of his race or color?” West later explained that when asked, “I had to answer it frankly and honestly—that I could not agree that it was right for someone to sell them merchandise and refuse to serve them.”⁴ His honest answer earned him the respect of the marchers. Three weeks later, black customers were served for the first time at lunch counters in downtown Nashville. How do you explain West’s answer? Early in the

^{****}Satyagraha, (Hindi: “truth force”) is a philosophy introduced in the 20th century by Mohandas K. Gandhi of India; in practice, it is manifested as a determined but nonviolent resistance to some specific evil. For more information see “Satyagraha,” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9065872> (accessed on August 3, 2006).

episode West expresses his agitation with the protests; what do you imagine had changed? How does West's transformation reflect the change that Lawson, Nash, and others were seeking?

Document 3: STUDENT POWER

In 1960, students formed SNCC. The organization was dedicated to protest tactics of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience. Founded during a conference organized by Ella Baker (who worked closely with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Raleigh, North Carolina, the organization was led by a new generation of activists including James Lawson, John Lewis, Marion Barry, and Diane Nash. SNCC was a grassroots, decentralized student organization that cooperated frequently with the elder statesmen of the movement. The following statement reflects SNCC's commitment to a Judeo-Christian tradition that focused on solidarity and harmony between all people:

Come Let Us Build a New World Together, Ellin Freedom Summer Collection Posters, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Courtesy of Danny Lyon and Edwynn Houk Gallery, request permission for additional printings.



A poster depicting SNCC members praying before they engage in a protest. SNCC was founded in 1960 by students dedicated to nonviolent action.

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the pre-supposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from Judaic-Christian traditions seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.

Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality.

Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the force by which God binds man to himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil; all the while persisting in love.

By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.⁵

CONNECTIONS

1. What religious traditions did the authors reference in this statement?
2. The SNCC statement of purpose calls for the establishment of “a social order of justice permeated by love.” What does that mean? What values are reflected in the SNCC statement?
3. What did SNCC see as the relationship between love and social justice?
4. Research other nonviolent movements in the US and abroad during the 1960s including the farm workers movement led by Caesar Chavez and the women’s liberation movement. How did these efforts transform American democracy? Where they successful? What do you think attracted activists to the principles of nonviolence?

Document 4: A NEW LEADER EMERGES

The sit-in movement attracted students from different backgrounds: while the leadership came from among Southern black activists, white students from the North and South also played a significant role in the movement. In the interview below, Robert Zellner, a white southerner, recalls his growing interest in the struggle for black freedom. Zellner’s metamorphosis into a civil rights activist is noteworthy not only because he stood up to the majority of whites in his community but also because members of his family actively supported the Ku Klux Klan.

My father’s father was a Klansman and my father’s father’s father might have been a Klansman [...] but I do know my grandfather was a Klansman, and he was in Birmingham, Alabama. So my father grew up in Birmingham, which [...] is [a] very rough kind of town [with] a terrorist conservative tradition. [...]

One of the reasons... I was a little bit different from my peers [was that] we were poor. Now, my mother was a schoolteacher and my father was a preacher and there were five boys in the family. [But] my daddy never was a first church minister. He was always the circuit rider preacher with six, seven, sometimes twelve churches, mostly in the country and always in small towns.

When I was in tenth grade we moved to Mobile [Alabama], where I got my first taste of big city life and I graduated high school there in '57 and went to Huntington College in Montgomery, Alabama. It was while I was in college in Montgomery that I first got involved in the civil rights movement.

In my senior year, which was 1960 and 1961, in a sociology class, I was assigned [...] to study the racial problem and write a paper presenting my ideas of solutions to the problem. Now, this was in Montgomery, Alabama—the heart of the Confederacy, heart of Dixie—but it was an academic thing, and you are supposed to have enough sense to know that you looked in the books and stuff like that, and I did all that. And then some of the students went to the Klan headquarters, and they came back with literally wheelbarrows full of Klan literature. So I said okay, we’ll do that, too. So we went and got our Klan literature, too, and the Citizens’ Council’s. We said, “Well what about the

Montgomery Improvement Association?” That was the other side of the question. Being good academicians, we figured [we] should check that out, too.

Anyway, to make a long story short, we did go to the Montgomery Improvement Association and we went to a federal court hearing in Montgomery where Dr. King, Reverend [Ralph] Abernathy, and Reverend [Solomon] Seay, and many other local and national leaders had been charged with libel of the Montgomery city commissioners and the county commissioners and so forth. [...] Four or five of us from campus went there and in the process we met Dr. King and Reverend Abernathy and [...] we asked them if it was possible for us to maybe meet with some students from Alabama State, which was a black campus near our campus. In the back of our minds this was in keeping with our assignment. They gave us the names of students and we just went over there and met with them. By this time the police got interested, and they were following us; it became sort of an adventure thing. Eventually it wound up that a nonviolence workshop was to be held at the [...] Baptist Church.

So right after the workshop [...] we told Rev. Abernathy and the other ministers that we wanted to come to the meetings and they said, “Well, we’d like you to come, too, but you will be arrested if you come.”

We said, “Oh, we don’t believe it. We have a right to come. We know the Constitution and everything.” They said, “Well, we want you to come, but we want you to know what’s going to happen.” We’d come to the meetings after they started, and the people would take us to the balcony, or they would hide us out at the corner somewhere because state investigators were in the meetings. [...] By the end of the week they knew who we all were and after the Saturday workshop the whole church was surrounded by police. There were five of us in the church—five white students—and the Rev. Abernathy told us that the police were going to arrest us when we left and that the police told him that we would be placed under arrest. So we said, “Well, you know we’re willing to be arrested,” but we said that it’s important to make an attempt to escape. [...] This seemed important at the time. It’s ridiculous now. We went to the back door. All the police were up in the front. Sure enough we got back to campus and after we were on campus for about an hour the administration came and collected all of us and said, “The police think you are still trapped in the [...] church.” So there was a big meeting with the administration, and we were asked to resign from the school on the grounds [that] what we were doing [was illegal].

So out of the five guys involved in that particular incident, I was the only person out of the five that graduated. One attempted suicide. [The others] got tremendous pressure from their families. Mine was the only family that backed me up in the whole thing. In a sense [...] they gave no white southerner of that period any choice. If you backed the system at all you had two choices: you either capitulated absolutely and completely, or you

became a rebel, a complete outlaw, and that's the way I went because I was contrary enough and had backing from my family, which was very important.

[In the] early spring of '61, SNCC was looking for someone to do white campus traveling. I had already met some of the SNCC people at the nonviolence workshop and SNCC already had a name and an image before it was even basically an organization. One thing that had gotten me involved in this whole thing was the whole p.r. [public relations] thing of the sit-ins [in] the spring of '60, actually the end of my junior year in college. So here were all these students. They all wore trench coats and suits and ties. They never went to a sit-in without their books. [...] I know they're studying biology and sociology and psychology and everything like I'm studying and [...] going out and going up against this authority. That was exciting to me, because I was in an authoritarian state, and I was in an authoritarian college. And here these guys sit down and say, "If you don't feed me I'm going to tie up your place of business. And if you're going to haul me to jail, then let's go on to jail, and we'll sing and everything." That was really inspiring.

[...] Spring of '61 was the end of my senior year in college. Here I am in Montgomery, and the [Freedom Riders] buses are coming. [...] I'm in the direct path of all this and still I'm a civilian. The Freedom Rides are coming through. They eventually get to Montgomery, and here is a riot going on in my own city, and people are getting stoned. I'm here. I'm seeing this. I'm hearing it on the radio so I go down to the city to see if I could put my body between some Klansmen and some Freedom Rider. And cars are being burned up, and churches are being torn and everything. How could you fail to get involved?⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. Why do you think Zellner was open to listening to black activists in Montgomery, Alabama?
2. How did Zellner become interested in the civil rights movement? (Look for words or phrases that offer insight into his thinking.)

Document 5: **FREEDOM RIDES**

Inspired by the sit-ins and boycotts of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Gordon Carey and Tom Gaither—two field secretaries of the CORE on their way to New York from nonviolence workshops in South Carolina—conceived a new tactic designed to draw attention to the blatant disregard of a recent Supreme Court ruling banning segregated interstate travel. In the interview below, Carey recalls the evolution of this new strategy:

There were several things that had happened shortly before this time. One was that the Supreme Court had ruled that not only should the interstate buses be integrated but also facilities for those buses had to be integrated. Tom and I happened to be riding on this bus when we got caught in a snowstorm, stranded on the New Jersey Turnpike for some-



Freedom Riders gather near a burning bus in Anniston, Alabama. Members of CORE and SNCC, in interracial groups, rode buses across the South to protest noncompliance with the Supreme Court ruling banning segregated interstate travel.

ever got back to New York City. Tom knew the black colleges in the South very well and laid out a potential route for the trip. We planned to go to New Orleans because that was the ocean and that was analogous to Gandhi's salt march to the sea. So we went back to the CORE office and talked to some people there.⁷

thing like twelve hours. I opened my briefcase and the one book I had to read was Louis Fischer's biography of Gandhi. Tom and I were reading and talking about it, and a combination of sitting on a bus, the recent Supreme Court decision, and reading about Gandhi's march to the sea got us talking about an analogous march to the sea in the South. We began talking about something that would be a bus trip, and of course we were also inspired by the Journey of Reconciliation, which CORE and the Fellowship of Reconciliation had sponsored back in '47. Somehow the drama of the whole thing caught us up, and the two of us planned most of the Freedom Ride before we

James Farmer started his political activism with the pacifist organization Fellowship for Reconciliation. In 1942, Farmer helped to form CORE. The group pioneered the use of Gandhi's method of nonviolent resistance in America and inspired King to adopt it. In 1961, Farmer became CORE's director; during that same year he recruited and led members who joined the Freedom Rides into the deep South. In the *Eyes on the Prize* interview below, Farmer explained the rationale behind the Freedom Rides:

Federal law said that there should be no segregation in interstate travel. The Supreme Court had decided that. But still state laws in the southern states and local ordinances ordered segregation of the races on those buses. Why didn't the federal government enforce its law? We decided it was because of politics. If we were right in assuming that the federal government did not enforce federal law because of its fear of reprisals from the South, then what we had to do was to make it more dangerous politically for the federal government not to enforce federal law. And how would we do that? We decided the way to do it was to have an interracial group ride through the South. This was not civil disobedience, really, because we would be doing merely what the Supreme Court said we had a right to do. The whites in the group would sit in the back of the bus, the blacks would sit in the front of the bus, and would refuse to move when ordered. At every rest stop, the whites would go into the waiting room for blacks, and the blacks into the waiting room for whites, and would seek to use all the facilities, refusing to leave. We felt that we could then count upon the racists of the South to create a crisis, so that the federal government

would be compelled to enforce federal law. That was the rationale for the Freedom Ride.

We recruited a small group, thirteen persons, carefully selected and screened, because we wanted to be sure that our adversaries could not dig up derogatory information on any individual and use that to smear the movement. Then we had a week of arduous training, to prepare this group for anything. They were white, they were black, they were from college age up to their sixties. One professor from Wayne State University in Michigan, Dr. Walter Bergman, was sixty-one. His wife was approximately the same age. At least two of the college students had participated in the sit-in movement: John Lewis from Nashville, and Hank Thomas, who was a senior at Howard University and had participated in the sit-ins in Washington, D.C.

Following the Gandhian program of advising your adversaries or the people in power just what you were going to do, when you were going to do it, and how you were going to do it, so that everything would be open and above board, I sent letters to the president of the United States, John Kennedy; the attorney general, Robert Kennedy; the director of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], Mr. J. Edgar Hoover; the chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission, which regulated interstate travel; and the president of Greyhound Corporation and the president of Trailways Corporation. Those were the carriers that we would be using on this bus ride. We got replies from none of those letters.

We hoped that there would be protection. Indeed, that was one of the reasons we sent a letter to the FBI. We had thought that the FBI would provide protection for us, would see to it at each stop that we were not brutalized or killed.⁸

CONNECTIONS

1. How did the Freedom Riders' strategy test the government's willingness to enforce the law?
2. How did the Freedom Riders' strategy anticipate the violent response of white segregationists? How did they plan to use that response to their advantage?
3. Farmer explained the difference between the Freedom Riders' approach—to challenge the federal government to uphold the court's decision—and civil disobedience, a strategy in which protesters violate what they hold to be unjust laws. Why do you think he made the distinction? To whom do you think the difference mattered? How do you feel about one approach versus the other?
4. Some people argued that the Freedom Riders took unnecessary risks with their own lives; others felt that such risks were necessary to force the federal government to take responsibility for enforcing the law. How do you evaluate their decision to risk injury?

¹ Steve Cohen, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Right Years, 1954–1965: A Sourcebook* (Boston: Blackside, 1987), 20–2.

² Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 54.

³ Adam Clayton Powell, "Ain't Scared of Your Jails," *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Right Years*, VHS, Produced by Henry Hampton (Boston, MA: Blackside, 1989).

⁴ Ben West, *ibid.*

⁵ Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 119–20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 127–30.

⁷ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 74–5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75–6.



EPISODE 4:
NO EASY WALK (1961–1963)

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Birmingham, Alabama, May 7, 1963. In Birmingham the SCLC faced Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene “Bull” Connor, who used fire hoses to disperse antisegregation demonstrators.

“No Easy Walk” follows the expansion of the Southern civil rights campaign into a mass movement. Late in 1961, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)* and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined William Anderson and the Albany Movement in a comprehensive campaign against the city’s strict racial laws. Unlike some earlier protests, however, the demonstration in Albany, Georgia did not spark the usual bout of police brutality: shrewdly, local police chief Laurie Pritchett had studied the movement’s tactic of nonviolence and did not allow physical attacks on the demonstrators—thereby avoid-

ing violent confrontations and negative publicity. Without a clear victory, King decided to leave Albany and wait for new opportunities to challenge segregation.

From the impasse in Albany, the story moves to the high-stakes confrontation in Birmingham, Alabama—the largest industrial town in the South. In 1962, King and the SCLC joined the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth’s attempt to suspend commerce in downtown Birmingham using nonviolent tactics. Opposing them was the segregationist Commissioner

*The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed in 1957 after the successful bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama (see Episode 1). The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was selected as its leader. The SCLC represented a coalition of local church members and reflected the religious nature and structure of black communities in the South. The organization’s goal was to lead the struggle against segregation using tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience.

1961	
Nov.	In Albany, Georgia, black activist groups (later joined by King and the SCLC) form the Albany Movement to campaign for the desegregation of their city
Dec.	Protests in Albany are not met with the usual bout of police brutality, and although 500 demonstrators are arrested, no clashes are reported
1962	
Aug	Unable to achieve definitive gains in Albany, King and the SCLC leave the city
1963	
Apr.-May	King and the SCLC organize massive demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, rallying thousands of young black students. King is arrested
Apr. 16	While imprisoned, King publishes a <i>Letter from Birmingham Jail</i> defending the act of nonviolent civil disobedience in response to criticism of the movement by white clergy
May 3	In Birmingham, police under the orders of Eugene “Bull” Connor retaliate harshly against the student marchers with police dogs and fire hoses
May 10	Birmingham begins taking measures to desegregate downtown businesses
Aug. 28	King, A. Philip Rudolph, and Bayard Rustin lead over 200,000 people to Washington, DC in a march for “jobs and freedom.” On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivers his most renowned speech, “I Have a Dream”
Sep. 15	Four young black girls are killed when the Ku Klux Klan bombs the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham
Nov. 22	President Kennedy is assassinated during a presidential motorcade through Dallas, Texas, and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson assumes the presidency

of Public Safety, Eugene “Bull” Connor. When Connor had King and other leaders hauled off to prison, the SCLC sent children to the streets of Birmingham. During the demonstrations, the media played a crucial role in exposing the brutality used by law enforcement in confronting the young demonstrators. Through television and the press Americans were exposed to scenes of children battered by high-power fire hoses and of protestors mauled by snarling dogs. The incendiary combination of Connor’s violent response and the extensive media coverage prompted President John F. Kennedy to address the crisis for the first time on national television.

“No Easy Walk” then turns to the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963). In a moment of exceptional unity, civil rights leaders drew nationwide attention to the economic and civic grievances of black Americans. The episode concludes with the tragic death of four black girls in the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How did participants evaluate the success and failure of the events in Albany, Birmingham, and Washington? How would you evaluate them?
2. What strategies did movement activists employ in their efforts to transform Albany, Birmingham, and the nation? What kinds of resistance did they meet?
3. What compromises were civil rights leaders pressured to make in pursuit of a common goal?
4. Must a nonviolent movement provoke a violent backlash in order to achieve its goals? What other strategies could the protestors have used to expose the violence and injustice of segregation?
5. What is the role of the media in exposing injustice and influencing public opinion?
6. This episode tracks the expansion of the Southern civil rights campaign into a true mass movement. What events and factors contributed to this change?

Document 1: THE ALBANY MOVEMENT

The Albany Movement was a coalition of civil rights organizations that took its name from the small rural town in Georgia. Formed in the fall of 1961 and led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the SCLC and local activist groups, the Albany Movement conducted a campaign against segregation. The demonstrators in Albany faced off against local police chief Laurie Pritchett, who purposely avoided excessive violence and negative publicity. The Albany Movement met with only limited success; despite massive participation, none of the facilities in town were desegregated (see the William G. Anderson excerpt below). In the summer of 1962, with no clear victory at hand, King and the SCLC left Albany. The Albany Movement ended, but the lessons learned there were applied to later struggles. While some saw it as King’s lowest point, others saw great value in the experience. The excerpts below reflect on the legacy of the Albany campaign:

WILLIAM G. ANDERSON

— *Head of the Albany Movement and a longtime friend of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The Albany Movement was a qualified success. Qualified in that at the time the movement came to an end—and it didn’t come to an abrupt end; it was sort of phased out, marked by the cessation of the mass demonstrations and the picketing—none of the facilities had

been voluntarily desegregated. The buses had become desegregated, the train station, the bus station. But these were being desegregated by federal edict. It was not a voluntary move on the part of the people of Albany. But the lunch counters, the parks, and other public accommodations were not desegregated and there were no blacks employed as clerks in the stores at the time the Albany Movement came to an end, that is, in the sense of no more mass demonstrations.

But the Albany Movement was an overwhelming success in that, first of all, there was a change in the attitude of the people: the people who were involved in the movement, the people involved in the demonstrations, because they had made a determination within their own minds that they would never accept that segregated society as it was, anymore. There was a change in attitude of the kids who saw their parents step into the forefront and lead the demonstrations. They were determined that they would never go through what their parents went through to get the recognition that they should have as citizens. Secondly, the Albany Movement was a success in that it served as a trial or as a proving ground for a subsequent civil rights movement. It gave some direction. The mistakes that were made in Albany were not to be repeated. For example, that settlement on a handshake in December 1961. That would never be repeated anytime in the future.

Bringing in Dr. King was probably the smartest thing that we ever did. Not only did we get the benefit of having a well-established, well-experienced civil rights organization as a part of the Albany Movement, but it also brought in world attention. The eyes of the world were focused on Albany primarily because of Dr. King. There was not a major newspaper in the world that was not represented in Albany. Not a major television network in the United States that was not represented in Albany. Having seen the results of his coming there in terms of the increase in the number of media people present, I know that they came there because Dr. King was there. He was a media event. We needed the media attention because we thought that we could not get what we were looking for by appealing to the local people. There would have to be outside pressure, and the only way we could get the pressure would be for the media to call to the attention of those outside people what was happening in Albany.¹

ANDREW YOUNG

– Former executive director of the SCLC and a Georgia Congressman

When Martin left Albany he was very depressed. But he knew what had happened. He really felt that it was a federal judge that called off that movement. He had a very emotional exchange with Burke Marshall over that, because he felt that the Kennedy administration had helped to undercut the possibility of continuing in Albany.

The weakness of the Albany Movement was that it was totally unplanned and we were total-

ly unprepared. It was a miscalculation on the part of a number of people that a spontaneous appearance by Martin Luther King could bring change—that it wasn't just a spontaneous appearance by Martin Luther King, it was the planning, the organizing, the strategy that he brought with him that brought change. The weakness was not understanding that.

The strength was that I don't know that there were any more powerful and beautiful people. Albany was one of those areas where blacks seemed to be still intact culturally. The singing, the folklore, had a kind of indigenous power to it that meant you couldn't walk away from Albany, Georgia.²

CHARLES SHERROD

— *Former SNCC Field Secretary in Albany*

Some people talk about failure. Where's the failure? Are we not integrated in every facet? Did we stop at any time? What stopped us? Did any injunction stop us? Did any white man stop us? Did any black man stop us? Nothing stopped us in Albany, Georgia. We showed the world.³

CONNECTIONS

1. Scholars and activists describe the activities of civil rights participants as “campaigns.” How is a civil rights campaign different than from a political campaign? What constitutes victory in a civil rights campaign?
2. What were the goals of the campaign in Albany?
3. How would you evaluate the success of the Albany campaign? Why did some regard the Albany Movement as a failure? What lessons did King and the SCLC learn in Albany about effective methods to confront segregation? What lessons did others learn? How do you explain the different perspectives?
4. What tensions within the civil rights movement did the Albany campaign expose?
5. Andrew Young—former executive director of the SCLC and a US congressman—recently attempted to analyze the goals of the movement. Young argues that its nonviolent approach sought to avoid emotional reactions to violence. It aims to transform the oppressor rather than defeat it:

“Any kind of emotional outburst—violence, arrogance, intentional martyrdom—endangers the process of transformation. Emotionalism confirms the prejudices of those that nonviolence aims to transform. The oppressed must be transformed too. They must learn to value and respect themselves, to understand the way they support an oppressive system, and they must learn to forgive those who have hurt them. In the process of citizenship schooling, the boycott, mass meetings, and demonstrations, people grew in understanding and gained a sense of their own worth, power, and dignity.”⁴

What goals did Young set for civil rights protests? Based on these goals, how would you evaluate the successes and failures of the Albany Movement?

Document 2: LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL

In 1963, following the inconclusive struggle in Albany, Georgia, King and members of the SCLC went to bolster the campaign against the unyielding government of Birmingham, Alabama. King drew upon the lessons learned from Albany, and in order to draw media attention, he deliberately got himself arrested.

While King was in jail, a group of clergymen published an open letter to him in the *Birmingham News*. The letter charged that the “demonstrations are unwise and untimely” and urged black citizens to act peacefully, “withdraw support from these demonstrations,” and “unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham.”⁵ Written on the margin of a *New York Times* article, King’s reply reflected deep disappointment with the call for restraint in the face of the inhumanity of Birmingham segregation. King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” gave voice to the distress and frustration of Southern blacks and explained the rationale for confronting segregation in the streets:

April 16, 1963 Birmingham, Alabama

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas [...] But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

[...] You may well ask, “Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?” You are quite right in calling for negotiations. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. [...]

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely [. . .] My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is a historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but as

Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.[...] We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. How did King respond to the charge that the protests in Birmingham were "unwise and untimely"? How would you respond? What rationale did King offer for his actions? Why did he think that the struggle against segregation could not be confined to courtrooms and polite negotiations?
2. King describes the challenges of explaining the brutality of segregation and violence to his six-year-old daughter? How would you explain segregation and violence to a child? What would you want him or her to know?
3. Why did King think it was necessary to create "constructive nonviolent tension" in order to effect change? How can tension help to change people's perspectives?

4. King wrote about the “degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness’” prevalent among blacks in America. What did he mean by the term ‘nobodiness’? How, according to the King’s letter, do indignities like name-calling rob blacks of their individuality and humanity? Can you think of other examples in which people are made to feel like “nobodies” because of the way they’re treated?

Document 3: **PRESIDENT KENNEDY ADDRESSES CIVIL RIGHTS**

Throughout May of 1963, the media broadcast horrific images of young black protestors assaulted by the powerful spray of fire hoses, attacked by ferocious police dogs, and brutalized by “Bull” Connor’s police in Birmingham. The images and news reports of police officers and firemen assaulting their black neighbors created a painful dissonance in the minds of many Americans. In the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and the escalating conflict in Vietnam—both carried out in the name of freedom and democracy—the legally sanctioned violence against blacks threatened to expose America’s war rhetoric as hypocritical and self-serving. By June, segregationist violence compelled President John F. Kennedy to publicly respond to the civil rights crisis. For the first time, a president declared that segregation had no place in American life and urged firm action to address its damaging and lasting effects.

Good evening, my fellow citizens:

[...]Today we are committed to a worldwide struggle to promote and protect the rights of all who wish to be free. And when Americans are sent to Vietnam or West Berlin, we do not ask for whites only. It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops.

It ought to be possible for American consumers of any color to receive equal service in places of public accommodation, such as hotels and restaurants and theaters and retail stores, without being forced to resort to demonstrations in the street, and it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to register and to vote in a free election without interference or fear of reprisal.

It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color. In short, every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated. But this is not the case.

The Negro baby born in America today, regardless of the section of the Nation in which he is born, has about one-half as much chance of completing a high school education as a white baby born in the same place on the same day, one-third as much chance of completing college, one-third as much chance of becoming a professional man, twice as much chance of becoming unemployed, about one-seventh as much chance of earning \$10,000 a year, a life expectancy which is 7 years shorter, and the prospects of earning only half as much.

This is not a sectional issue. Difficulties over segregation and discrimination exist in every city, in every State of the Union, producing in many cities a rising tide of discontent that

threatens the public safety. Nor is this a partisan issue. In a time of domestic crisis men of good will and generosity should be able to unite regardless of party or politics. This is not even a legal or legislative issue alone. It is better to settle these matters in the courts than on the streets, and new laws are needed at every level, but law alone cannot make men see right.

We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution.

The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?

One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is a land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes?

Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them.

The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South, where legal remedies are not at hand. Redress is sought in the streets, in demonstrations, parades, and protests which create tensions and threaten violence and threaten lives.

We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the street. It cannot be quieted by token moves or talk. It is a time to act in the Congress, in your State and local legislative body and, above all, in all of our daily lives.

[...] I am, therefore, asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public—hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail

stores, and similar establishments.

This seems to me to be an elementary right. Its denial is an arbitrary indignity that no American in 1963 should have to endure, but many do. [...]

I am also asking Congress to authorize the Federal Government to participate more fully in lawsuits designed to end segregation in public education. We have succeeded in persuading many districts to desegregate voluntarily. Dozens have admitted Negroes without violence. Today a Negro is attending a State-supported institution in every one of our 50 states, but the pace is very slow.

[...] We cannot say to 10 percent of the population that you can't have that right; that your children can't have the chance to develop whatever talents they have; that the only way that they are going to get their rights is to go into the streets and demonstrate. I think we owe them and we owe ourselves a better country than that.⁷

CONNECTIONS

1. President Kennedy points to several contradictions inherent in twentieth-century American democracy. What were they? Why did they become especially significant in June 1963?
2. Who did President Kennedy address in his speech? How did he frame the problem of segregation? If you were to address the nation on the problems of racism today, how would you frame the problem? What arguments would you use to support your position?
3. What moral principles did President Kennedy articulate in his speech? What was his democratic vision for post-segregation America?
4. What role did President Kennedy assign to the federal government in promoting a society with equal opportunity for all Americans?

Document 4: WE WANT OUR FREEDOM AND WE WANT IT NOW!

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-111234



August 28, 1963. Roy Wilkins, NAACP Executive Director, on the Mall, leading protestors to the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington. The massive demonstration led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

By the summer of 1963, John Lewis was recognized as one of the most prominent leaders of the civil rights movement. The third chairman of SNCC, Lewis spoke for a new generation of activists who advocated a more confrontational nonviolent approach in the fight against segregation. Lewis was slated to speak at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, along with King, A. Philip Randolph, and executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Roy Wilkins. The day before the march, however, Lewis was told that some felt his speech was too critical of the administration and that it threatened the fragile alliance between

mainstream civil rights leaders and President Kennedy.

A. Philip Randolph, an elder civil rights statesman who first conceived of the March on Washington for Civil Rights in 1941, urged Lewis not to jeopardize the march with radical rhetoric. He requested that Lewis rewrite his speech, and reluctantly Lewis agreed. In his memoir, *Walking with the Wind*, Lewis recalled what it was like to finally step up to the podium:

As I began, I actually wondered if I'd be able to speak at all. My voice quavered at first, but I quickly caught the feeling, the call and response, just like at church. The crowd was with me, hanging on every word, and I could feel that. [...]

The speech itself felt like an act of protest to me. After going through what I had been through during the past sixteen or so hours, after feeling the pressures that had been placed on me and finally stepping out and delivering these words, it felt just like a demonstration, a march. It felt like defiance. [...] I felt defiance in every direction: against the entrenched segregation of the South; against the neglect of the federal government; also against the conservative concerns of the establishment factions, black and white, that were trying to steer the movement with their own interests in mind rather than they needs of the people.

By the time I reached my closing words, I felt lifted both by a feeling of righteous indignation and by the heartfelt response of those hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children before me, who burst into cheers with each phrase:

We will not stop. If we do not get meaningful legislation out of this Congress, the time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South, through the streets of Jackson, through the streets of Danville, through the streets of Cambridge, through the streets of Birmingham. But we will march with the spirit of love and with the spirit of dignity that we have shown here today.

By the force of our demands, our determination, and our numbers, we shall splinter the desegregated South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of God and democracy.

We must say, "Wake up, America. *Wake up!!!*" For we will not stop and we *will* not be patient.⁸

Forty years after this speech, Lewis—now a congressman— was asked to give the keynote address in a commemorative ceremony for the fortieth anniversary of the March on Washington. In his speech, he reflected on what had changed in 40 years, and on what work still remained:

In 1963, I was on the outside protesting, looking in. I could not even register to vote in my native state of Alabama. Now, because of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, because of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, I am on the inside making laws.

Forty years ago, hundreds of thousands of ordinary Americans came to Washington to demand justice of their leaders. The President—the Congress—heard their words—caught their spirit—and made our country a better place.

Because of the March, because of the involvement of hundreds and thousands of ordinary citizens, we experienced what I like to call a nonviolent revolution under the rule of law—a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas. We have made much of Dr. King’s dream come true. I wish Medgar Evers, President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were here today to see just how far we have come.

And while we have come a great distance—while we have made great progress—we still have a distance to go.

As the leaders of our people—as Members of Congress—we must recall the passion, the vision, and the determination that made the United States the greatest nation on earth.

Call it the spirit of our Founding Fathers. Call it the spirit of Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt or FDR [President Franklin D. Roosevelt]. Call it the spirit of the March on Washington. Call it the spirit of history.

We must recapture this spirit. As a nation and a people, we must take this spirit and make it part of our thoughts, our actions and our lives. If we do this, we can make Dr. King’s Dream come true. We can build what we liked to call the Beloved Community—a truly interracial democracy—a community at peace with itself.

And when we reach that Beloved Community—when we are one nation, one people, one house and one family—we will come to the end of a March that our nation started some forty years ago.⁹

CONNECTIONS

1. Why was Lewis asked to change his speech? What does his story reveal about the delicate balance between politicians and activists in the context of a movement for social change?
2. What was Lewis asked to compromise? When is it important to compromise? How do you know when to compromise and when to stand on principle? Is it possible to do both?
3. Leaders of the March on Washington sought comprehensive civil rights, full and fair employment and integrated education and housing for all blacks. Forty years later, how did Lewis evaluate the accomplishments on the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom? What message did he want his audience to understand?
4. Lewis dreamed that America would one day be a “Beloved Community—a truly interracial democracy—a community at peace with itself.” What does the term “Beloved Community” mean? What is the role of politicians in helping America achieve that goal? What is the role of ordinary citizens?

Document 5: WE ALL DID IT

On a Sunday morning in September 1963, a bomb exploded in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Four black girls, preparing for church, were killed: Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins. A few days after the bombing, Charles Morgan, Jr., a white lawyer, addressed the Young Men's Business Club, calling on his peers to think deeply about their responsibility for the bombing:

Four little girls were killed in Birmingham Sunday. A mad, remorseful, worried community asks, "Who did it? Who threw that bomb? Was it a Negro or a white?"

The answer should be "We all did it." Every last one of us is condemned for that crime and the bombing before it and the ones last month, last year, a decade ago. We all did it.

A short time later, white policemen kill a Negro and wound another. A few hours later two young men on a motor bike shoot and kill a Negro child. Fires break out and, in Montgomery, white youths assault Negroes. And all across Alabama, an angry guilty people cry out their mocking shouts of indignity and say they wonder, "Why?" "Who?" Everyone then "deploras" the "dastardly" act.

But, you know the "who" of "who did it?" is really rather simple. The "who" is every little individual who talks about the "niggers" and spreads the seeds of his hate to his neighbor and his son. The jokester, the crude oaf whose racial jokes rock the party with laughter. The "who" is every governor who ever shouted for lawlessness and became a law violator.

It is every senator and every representative who in the halls of Congress stands and with mock humility tells the world that things back home aren't really like they are. It is courts that move ever so slowly and newspapers that timorously defend the law. It is all the Christians and all the ministers who spoke too late in anguished cries against violence.

It is the coward in each of us who clucks admonitions. We are ten years of lawless preachments, ten years of criticism of law, of courts, of our fellow man, a decade of telling school children the opposite of what the civics books say. We are a mass of intolerance and bigotry and stand indicted before our young. We are cursed by the failure of each of us to accept responsibility, by our defense of an already dead institution.

Sunday, while Birmingham, which prides itself on the number of its churches, was attending worship service, a bomb went off and an all-white police force moved into action, a police force which has been praised by city officials and others at least once a day for a month or so. A police force which has solved no bombings. A police force which many Negroes feel is perpetrating the very evils we decry. And why would Negroes think this?

There are no Negro policemen; there are no Negro sheriff's deputies. Few Negroes have served on juries. Few have been allowed to vote, few have been allowed to accept

responsibility, or granted even a simple part to play in the administration of justice. Do not misunderstand me. It is not that I think that white policemen had anything whatsoever to do with the killing of these children or previous bombings. It's just that Negroes who see an all-white police force must think in terms of its failure to prevent or solve the bombings and think perhaps Negroes would have worked a little bit harder. They throw rocks and bottles and bullets. And we whites don't seem to know why the Negroes are so lawless. So, we lecture them[...]

Those four little Negro girls were human beings. They have lived their fourteen years in a leaderless city; a city where no one accepts responsibility; where everybody wants to blame somebody else. A city with a reward fund [for information on capturing the bombers] which grew like Topsy as a sort of sacrificial offering, a balm for the conscience of the "good people." The "good people" whose ready answer is for those "right-wing extremists" to shut up. People who absolve themselves of guilt. The liberal lawyer who told me this morning, "Me? I'm not guilty," then proceeded to discuss the guilt of the other lawyers, the ones who told the people that the Supreme Court did not properly interpret the law. And that's the way it is with the southern liberals. They condemn those with whom they disagree for speaking while they sigh in fearful silence.

Birmingham is a city in which the major industry, operated from Pittsburgh, never tried to solve the problem. It is a city where four little Negro girls can be born into a second-class school system, live a segregated life, ghettoed into their own little neighborhoods, restricted to Negro churches, destined to ride in Negro ambulances, to Negro wards of hospitals or to a Negro cemetery. Local papers, on their front and editorial pages, call for order and then exclude their names from obituary columns.

And who is really guilty? Each of us. Each citizen who has not consciously attempted to bring about peaceful compliance with the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, each citizen who has ever said, "They ought to kill that nigger," every citizen who votes for the candidate with the bloody flag; every citizen and every school-board member and school teacher and principal and businessman and judge and lawyer who has corrupted the minds of our youth; every person in this community who has in any way contributed during the past several years to the popularity of hatred, is at least as guilty, or more so, than the demented fool who threw that bomb.

What's it like living in Birmingham? No one ever really has and no one will until this city becomes part of the United States.

Birmingham is not a dying city; it is dead.¹⁰

In his memoir *Leaving Birmingham* journalist Paul Hemphill recalled:

As soon as Morgan had finished, an eager young businessman jumped to his feet and moved that the YMBC go out and find itself a black member immediately, right now. When the motion failed even to get a second, Morgan knew his days in Birmingham were over. The speech made the *New York Times* the next day, *Life* magazine two weeks later; and in December of that year Morgan wrote a stinging essay in *Look* magazine, entitled “I Saw a City Die.” It was more or less his public announcement that he, like so many other promising young men before him, was leaving Birmingham.¹¹

CONNECTIONS

1. Who did Morgan hold responsible for the bombing? How did he explain his opinion? What examples did he use to underscore his argument?
2. What did his speech reveal about the ways in which racism was sustained and reinforced by good citizens who say they oppose racial violence and abuse?
3. Did Morgan lose his leverage to influence the future of Birmingham when he decided to leave? How can ordinary citizens change attitudes and conditions in their communities?
4. What does it take to stand up against a group that tolerates racism and hate? Have you ever stood up to peers when you felt their actions were immoral?

¹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 113–14.

² *Ibid.*, 112–13.

³ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴ Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1996), 252.

⁵ “Letter to Dr. King from Clergymen,” *Birmingham Public Library*, <http://www.bplonline.org/Archives/faqs/letterrespondedtobymartin-lutherking.asp> (accessed on May 4, 2006).

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute*, Stanford University, http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/liberation_curriculum/pdfs/letterfrombirmingham_wwcw.pdf (accessed on July 20, 2006).

⁷ John F. Kennedy, “Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights,” *John F. Kennedy Library and Museum*, <http://www.cs.umb.edu/~rwhealan/jfk/j061163.htm> (accessed on May 4, 2006).

⁸ John Lewis with Michael D’Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 227–28.

⁹ John Lewis, “Commemoration Speech of the March on Washington,” *U.S. Department of State International Information Programs*, <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/civilrights/s072403.htm> (accessed on May 8, 2006).

¹⁰ Anthony Lewis and *The New York Times*, *Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1964) 200–2.

¹¹ Paul Hemphill, *Leaving Birmingham* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1993), 154.



Episode 5 takes the viewer to Mississippi, a state notorious for the brutality of its citizens' responses to desegregation. In 1954, just weeks after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, segregationists in

the Mississippi Delta formed the first White Citizens' Council (WCC), an organization devoted to the preservation of white political power and to resisting all forms of integration. As the WCC was forming to thwart racial equality, civil rights activists were implementing a plan to register black voters in a bid to open "the closed society." Episode 5 focuses on the voter registration drive and the racist backlash of intimidation and violence that followed.

"Mississippi" opens with the murder of Medgar Evers, an officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)* who organized a boycott of downtown businesses in Jackson (Mississippi's capital) as part of the fight against segregation. Amidst escalating tensions between the NAACP and Jackson's white leadership, Evers was shot and killed in his own driveway. His assassination prompted Bob Moses, a math teacher turned field director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** to join local activists (including Amzie Moore and others) in a high-risk voter registration drive.

Moses's efforts attracted the attention of a number of white Northern students who sought to join the movement and work with black Mississippians to ensure their right to vote. The presence of college-educated whites—many of them from America's elite families—exposed internal tensions over the appropriate role of whites in the movement. While some welcomed the media attention white activists could attract, others feared their involvement would undermine efforts to develop a new generation of black leaders. In spite of the

concerns, Moses, along with activists from the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)*** and SNCC, announced plans for an interracial "Freedom Summer" campaign to register black Mississippian

1962	
	The NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, and CORE form the Council of Federated Organizations and start a voter education and registration project in Mississippi
1963	
Jun. 12	In Jackson, Mississippi civil rights activist and NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers is murdered outside his home
1964	
Jan. 23	The 24th Amendment is ratified and eliminates the poll tax, which had been used to keep minority groups from voting
Summer	A coalition of civil rights groups launches the Mississippi Freedom Summer, a campaign that draws hundreds of black and white volunteers
Jun. 21	Freedom Summer volunteers Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner (both white) and James Chaney (a black man) disappear; during a national search their bodies are discovered buried near Philadelphia, Mississippi
Jul. 2	President Johnson signs into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bolsters the federal government's power to enforce equal voting rights and eliminate segregation and discrimination in public facilities
Aug.	The MFDP, an interracial group which challenged the all-white Mississippian delegation to the Democratic National Convention, is denied seats at that convention
Dec. 10	King is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

*The NAACP's goals include the promotion of equality and justice in America and the eradication of prejudices among all its citizens. Its charter calls for the protection of the interests and opportunities of citizens of color and for the promotion of progressive policies in the fields of education, housing, and employment. For more information see "NAACP," at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9372942> (accessed April 18, 2006).

**SNCC is an American political organization that played a central role in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Begun as an interracial group advocating nonviolence, it adopted greater militancy late in the decade, reflecting nationwide trends in black activism, and in 1969 changed its name to the Student National Coordinating Committee. For more information see "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9399806> (accessed August 4, 2006).

voters. This segment describes the coalition’s careful preparations for confrontation with white segregationists in the Mississippi Delta, plans that included comprehensive plans to counter decades of white supremacy through law, education, and the ballot. One of the major innovations of the campaign was the establishment of 41 “Freedom Schools,” which educated blacks of all ages on history, literacy, and the principles of democracy. In the midst of this effort, the disappearance and murder of three student activists—two white, one black—near Philadelphia, Mississippi drew unprecedented national attention to Freedom Summer.

The episode concludes with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party’s (MFDP) struggle for official inclusion into the Democratic Party, which led to an open political confrontation with President Lyndon Johnson at the 1964 Democratic Party convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. At the height of the crisis, MFDP interracial representatives petitioned the credentials committee to replace Mississippi’s all-white delegation.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this episode is titled “Mississippi: Is This America?” How were the challenges in Mississippi similar to those in other Southern states? How did the situation in Mississippi highlight the racial barriers and attitudes faced by the nation as a whole?
2. Why did activists focus on voter registration in their efforts to dismantle segregation in the South? What obstacles did blacks face as they tried to exercise this basic freedom?
3. What was the role of white activists in a movement that focused on black freedom? What leverage did they bring? Why did some activists challenge their participation? What do you think about their involvement?
4. What strategies were employed during Freedom Summer to reverse years of intimidation, segregation, and discrimination in Mississippi? How did the various components of the program connect?
5. What tensions and conflicts in the mid-twentieth century democratic process did the MFDP expose in its struggle for recognition by the Democratic Party?

Document 1: THE WHITE CITIZENS’ COUNCILS

In response to *Brown v. Board of Education* and other rulings against segregation in the South, a small group of whites met in the town of Indianola, Mississippi. In July 1954, they formed the first White Citizens’ Council (WCC)—a formal organization designed to defend white supremacy in the Delta. The WCC attained a degree of respectability and legitimacy when various business and community leaders joined its ranks. Within a few months, the organization had established branches in most towns in the Deep South.

The WCC maintained a civilized façade, and in contrast to the overt violence of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK),**** it employed political means to maintain white supremacy. William Simmons was one of the founders of the WCC. Near the beginning of Episode 5, he explains his objections to integration:

*** CORE was established in 1941 by an interracial group that drew its inspiration from the philosophy of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as well as religious traditions that espoused peaceful resolutions of social conflicts. They pioneered the application of Gandhi’s tactics in America and inspired King to adopt them. The first interracial bus rides were carried out by CORE. In 1947, CORE placed black and white volunteers on buses in a “Journey of Reconciliation” to challenge local authorities in the South to uphold the recent Supreme Court decision to desegregate interstate bus travel. For more information see “Congress of Racial Equality,” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062372> (accessed August 4, 2006).

**** The KKK is a hate organization that seeks to assert the supremacy of Christian whites in the South through symbolic displays, which include ceremonial garb of white gowns and hoods, church and cross burning, intimidation campaigns, and ritualized killings known as lynchings. Such antisemitic, anti-Catholic, and anti-black organizations originated in the middle of the nineteenth century when members of the former Confederacy established branches of the KKK to resist the emancipation of slaves. A revival of the KKK was sparked with the release of D. W. Griffin’s racist silent film “Birth of a Nation” in 1915. For more information see “Ku Klux Klan,” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9046315> (accessed August 4, 2006).

I was born in Mississippi in the United States. And I am the product of my heredity and education in which I was raised. And I have a vested interest in that society and I along with a million other White Mississippians will do everything in our power to protect that vested interest. It's just as simple as that.¹

In its pamphlet, the WCC laid out its principles and objectives:

FIVE POINT ACTION PROGRAM

1. *Prevent Race-Mixing.* Racial integrity is essential to civilization and liberty. The fate of the white man (and woman) in the Congo and other new African nations is a stern warning!

2. *Avoid Violence.* Experience has proved that where integration occurs, violence becomes inevitable. Peaceful operation of segregated schools in the South proves that social separation of the races is best for all concerned.

3. *Maintain and Restore Legal Segregation.* As growing disorder in Washington, D.C., shows, if segregation breaks down, the social structure breaks down. The Communists hope to achieve [this] in America!

4. *Defend States' Rights.* The states are the source of all governmental power, local and Federal. Under the Tenth Amendment, the states have the reserved power to decide questions of segregation. Federal usurpation of any such power is a violation of the Constitution.

5. *Reverse the "Black Monday" Decision.* The Supreme Court's school integration decision of May 17, 1954 is a patent perversion of the Constitution, based on false "science": If it stands, social segregation and laws against racial intermarriage will be subject to judicial condemnation. Such a prospect is intolerable!

JOIN THE CITIZENS' COUNCIL

Organization is the Key to Victory! WORK ... HOPE ... PRAY FOR WHITE MONDAY!²

CONNECTIONS

1. How does Simmons explain his objections to integration? Simmons begins by stating, "I was born in Mississippi." What does Simmons see as the relationship between his home, his culture, his values, and his actions?
2. What were the primary objectives of the WCC? How did they differ from those of the KKK?
3. What does the term "states' rights" mean? Why did the WCC seek to defend states' rights? What threats to states' rights did they perceive?
4. Why did the WCC refer to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision as "Black Monday"?
5. How did groups like the WCC support a climate in which violence against civil rights activists was able to thrive?

6. After reading the objectives of the WCC, do you think they were a hate group? Should groups like the WCC be outlawed? Should advocating “white supremacy” be permitted in America? Does banning the expression of this ideology conflict with freedom of speech?

Document 2: TRYING TO VOTE IN MISSISSIPPI

At the center of Mississippi’s struggle for power was the black vote. Deprived of a political voice, blacks were subjected to the whims of the powerful white elite. In some counties, blacks outnumbered whites four to one, yet almost none of them were registered to vote. In a state known for its extreme segregationist tradition, black activists Moore, Evers, and Moses struggled to register black voters. They and other black activists hoped that under the leadership of President John F. Kennedy, the US Justice Department would force the state of Mississippi to protect the federally mandated rights of its black citizens. Yet, because Southern senators had dominated the federal judiciary committee for years, legal challenges to the state’s discriminatory policies were routinely blocked or ignored. Fearing any change to the Jim Crow system, these senators used their power to pressure the president to appoint segregationists to become federal court judges. One of the most notorious of those judges was Justice William Harold Cox of the Fifth Circuit.

In 1961, Gerald Stern, a young, white Southern Jewish lawyer from Memphis, Tennessee, joined the civil rights division of the Justice Department. He was assigned to investigate voter discrimination and intimidation in Mississippi. Stern interviewed activists about their attempts to register black citizens and worked with his colleagues to bring those cases to court. Stern described several of them in an essay called “Mississippi” from the book *Outside the Law: Narratives on Justice in America*:

[...] In Walthall County, John Hardy, a young black college student from Nashville, Tennessee, along with some other students set up a voter registration school to teach local blacks how to register. For three weeks they conducted classes for several hours a day, teaching from twenty-five to fifty Walthall County residents each evening how to fill out registration forms and explaining sections of the Mississippi Constitution. Finally, John Hardy accompanied the first five blacks to try and register to vote in Walthall County. At that time, none of the county’s 2,490 black persons of voting age were registered to vote, while a substantial majority of 4,536 voting age white persons were registered. The first five black applicants were rejected, as were the three who tried the next time, and the one who tried the next time. The next effort, by two blacks accompanied by John Hardy, marked the last time blacks would try and register in Walthall County for a long time.

An elderly black man, Mose McGee, had been in town on that last day and had seen what had happened to John Hardy and the two black applicants. I found Mose McGee way back in the hills, plowing his fields behind a mule with the plow lines hitched over his shoulders. He was embarrassed for me to see him like that. He did not utter a single word. He just unhitched himself from his plow, went into his shack, cleaned up, and then came out. He said, “It’s not right for anyone to be seen as an animal. I want you to see me as a human being.”

He wanted to tell me what he had seen in town that day. He wanted blacks to get the right to vote so they could force the county supervisors to pave his dirt road and the dirt roads that led to other black people’s homes like they paved the roads to white men’s property.

He said his dirt road became impassably muddy when the rains came. One day a black neighbor's baby got sick. No doctor could get up the road to them. And they couldn't drive out to get to the doctor. So he had bundled the baby up and walked over the hills, for miles and miles, to get to town. The baby died in his arms before he got there.

Mose McGee said John Hardy had accompanied Mrs. Edith Simmons Peters, a sixty-three-year-old black woman who owned an eighty-acre farm, and Lucius Wilson, a sixty-two-year-old black man who owned a seventy-acre farm, to register to vote. When they got to the registrar's office, he refused to allow them to apply. When the registrar saw John Hardy, he went into his office, got a gun from his desk, and ordered him to leave the office. As John Hardy turned to leave, the registrar followed him and struck him on the back of the head with his gun, saying, "Get out of here you damn son-of-a-bitch and don't come back in here."³

John Hardy, bleeding from the head, staggered out of the building, helped by Mrs. Peters and Lucius Wilson, where he was soon met by the sheriff. When he told the sheriff what had happened, the sheriff pointed to Lucius Wilson and said, "If that boy wants to register he know how to go down to that courthouse and he don't need you to escort him. You don't have a bit of business in the world down there." Then the sheriff arrested John Hardy "for disturbing the peace and bringing an uprising among the people."

After some legal wrangling, the case against Hardy was dropped. Stern then requested Judge Cox to order Whithall County to cease discriminating against black voters. Judge Cox rejected Stern's motion, arguing that the reason only two of the 2,490 blacks in the county were registered was due to the fact that blacks "have not been interested in registering to vote." He also summarily dismissed evidence that the sheriff's actions against Hardy had scared people who wanted to register: "that incident did not frighten or deter any Negro in the county from registering or attempting to register."⁴

Stern explained:

The Department of Justice continued to pursue these voter discrimination cases, county by county, case by case, but it was obvious that there had to be a quicker, more effective way than battling Judge Cox and the Mississippi legislature while they constantly erected new barriers to black voter registration.⁵

CONNECTIONS

1. How does Stern's story illustrate the enforcement of white supremacy in Mississippi?
2. What does Hardy's story suggest about the obstacles that prevented blacks from voting in Mississippi? In the United States, what resources could a civil rights lawyer contribute? What does this story suggest about the limits of their power?
3. Why did Mose McGee think it was so important for blacks in Walthall County to get the right to vote? For him, what was at stake?
4. How do you explain the sheriff's treatment of Hardy?

5. Allard Lowenstein, a political activist who helped to focus public attention on Mississippi, explained, “What we have discovered is that the people who run Mississippi today can only do so by force. They cannot allow free elections in Mississippi, because if they did, they wouldn’t run Mississippi.”⁶ What did his comments reveal about the relationship between violence, politics, and the law in Mississippi?
6. How do you think voting rights cases like the one Stern described helped to build consensus that the country needed new protections to guarantee essential freedoms for black Americans in the South?

Document 3: FREEDOM SUMMER

As a result of the sit-ins in Nashville, SNCC’s membership and organizational capabilities had grown extensively. Increasingly, SNCC adopted riskier projects in its campaign to raise awareness of the second-class status of black Americans. Early in 1964, SNCC announced the launch of its most ambitious project to date: a multipronged assault on racism in Mississippi. Led by project director Bob Moses, SNCC attempted to recruit students from Northern universities and enlist their skills and enthusiasm in the movement’s activities. The following excerpts were taken from SNCC’s recruitment pamphlet:

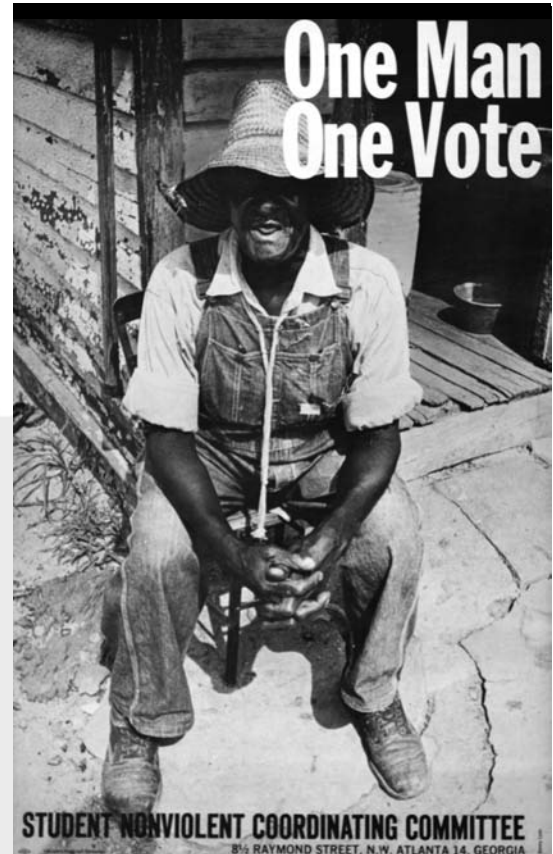
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI PROJECT

Although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has active projects in thirteen Southern states, it has achieved its most dynamic success in the state of Mississippi. A state where individual political life is non-existent, where the economic condition of a vast majority of the population is appalling, the home of white supremacy, Mississippi has become the main target of SNCC’s staff and resources.

In August 1961, SNCC went into Mississippi under the leadership of Project Director Robert Moses.

Overcoming violence and hardship, SNCC workers have been able to expand their activity into all five of Mississippi’s congressional districts. By fall 1963, SNCC had joined with CORE, SCLC, the NAACP and many voting and civic groups in forming a statewide organization, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), and through COFO conducted a Freedom Vote campaign in which 80,000 disenfranchised Negroes cast ballots for Aaron Henry for Governor.

Preparation for real democracy calls for additional programs in the state. Literacy projects have been instituted, and food and clothing drives. But much more comprehensive programs are needed to combat the terrible cultural and economic deprivation of Negro communities in Mississippi.



SNCC Poster used in campaign to register blacks to vote during Freedom Summer in Mississippi.

One Man, One Vote Photograph, Elinor Freedom Summer Collection Posters, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Courtesy of Danny Lyon and Edwyn Houk Gallery, request permission of additional printings

This summer, SNCC, in cooperation with COFO, is launching a massive Peace Corps-type operation in Mississippi. Students, teachers, technicians, nurses, artists and legal advisors will be recruited to come to Mississippi to staff a wide range of programs that include voter registration, freedom schools, community centers and special projects.

VOTER REGISTRATION

The struggle for freedom in Mississippi can only be won by a combination of action within the state and a heightened awareness throughout the country of the need for massive federal intervention to ensure the voting rights of Negroes. This summer's program will work toward both objectives.

Voter registration workers will operate in every rural county and important urban area in the state. These workers will be involved in a summer-long drive to mobilize the Negro community of Mississippi and assist in developing local leadership and organization.

Forty thousand dollars must be raised for a Freedom Registration campaign. The registration campaign which was launched in February will be implemented by summer workers. Freedom Registrars will be established in every precinct, with registration books closely resembling the official books of the state. The Freedom Registration books will serve as a basis for challenging the official books and the validity of "official" federal elections this fall.

Finally, voter registration workers will assist in the summer campaigns of Freedom Candidates who will be running for congressional office.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS

An integral part of SNCC's voter registration work is the development of leadership for politically emerging communities. Freedom Schools will begin to supply the political education which the existing system does not provide for Negroes in Mississippi.

The summer project will establish ten daytime Freedom Schools and three resident schools. The daytime schools will be attended by 10th, 11th, and 12th grade pupils; the schools will operate five days a week in the students' home towns. Instruction will be highly individualized—each school will have about fifteen teachers and fifty students. The program will include remedial work in reading, math and basic grammar, as well as seminars in political science, the humanities, journalism and creative writing. Wherever possible, studies will be related to problems in the students' own society.

The three resident schools will be attended by more advanced students from throughout the state. The program will be essentially the same as that of the day schools, with emphasis on political studies.

The students who attend the schools will provide Mississippi with a nucleus of leadership committed to critical thought and social action.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

In addition to the Freedom Schools, Community Centers will provide services normally denied the Negro community in Mississippi. Staffed by experienced social workers, nurses, librarians and teachers in the arts and crafts, the centers will provide educational and cultural programs for the community. Instruction will be given in pre-natal and infant care, and general hygiene; programs will provide adult literacy and vocational training. The thirty thousand books now in SNCC's Greenwood office library will be distributed to these centers, and others will be obtained. The centers will serve as places of political education and organization, and will provide a structure to channel a wide range of programs into the Negro community in the future.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The program of voter registration and political organization will attempt to change the fundamental structure of political and economic activity in Mississippi. In order to accurately picture this structure, extensive research must be done into Mississippi's suppressive political and economic life. Skilled personnel are needed to carry out this program both from within and outside the state.

WHITE COMMUNITY PROJECT

The effort to organize and educate Mississippi whites in the direction of democracy and decency can no longer be delayed. About thirty students, Southern whites who have recently joined the civil rights movement, will begin pilot projects in white communities. An attempt will be made to organize poor white areas to make steps toward eliminating bigotry, poverty and ignorance.

LAW STUDENT PROJECT

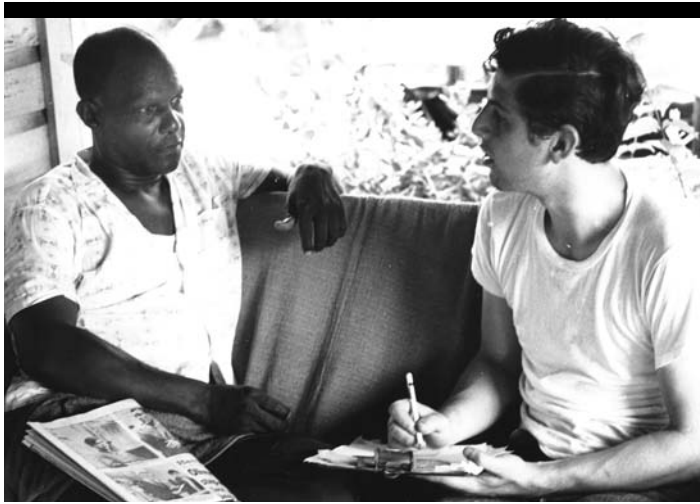
A large number of law students will come to Mississippi to launch a massive legal offensive against the official tyranny of the state. The time has come to challenge every Mississippi law which deprives Negroes of their rights, and to bring suit against every state and local official who commits crimes in the name of his office.⁷

CONNECTIONS

1. What were the main objectives and key principles of Freedom Summer? How did each component of the plan seek to address years of injustice?
2. If you participated in Freedom Summer, to which area would you lend your support? Write an application to the project organizers.
3. The SNCC brochure references the need for political education in Freedom Schools. What might their curriculum include? What was SNCC's educational vision? Whom did it seek to educate?
4. How was Freedom Summer designed to change the political structure of Mississippi?
5. Between 800 and 1,000 black and white college students from around the country participated in Freedom Summer. What do you think attracted them to such dangerous work?
6. What opportunities are available for people today who want to get involved in social justice projects?

Document 4: AN INTEGRATED MOVEMENT

Voter Registration Canvassing, Herbert Randall Freedom Summer Photographs, McCain Library Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Used with permission of Herbert Randall.



During Freedom Summer, white college students joined SNCC volunteers in a voting drive in the most neglected black communities in Mississippi.

As SNCC staff planned the Mississippi Summer Project, organizers repeatedly debated the role of white participants in the movement. Some argued that the media attention whites received would overshadow the efforts of black activists who had fought local authorities over voter rights for years. Others feared that Northern whites would be unaware of the local culture and the risks they would face—and that they might inadvertently endanger themselves and those they were trying to help.⁸ With the decision to intensify the voter registration campaign in Mississippi, this issue came to the fore. In the interview below, Bob Moses explained the process that resulted in the inclusion of whites in the campaign:

What was in the offing was whether SNCC could integrate itself, as it were, and live as a sort of island of integration in a sea of separation. And SNCC was trying to work itself out as an organization which was integrated in all levels. The question of white volunteers, or white SNCC staffers, came up in this context. Are they to be confined to the Atlanta office? And they're pushing, those that are there, to get out in the field. If they come over to Mississippi, are they to be confined to Jackson? Is there a way for them to work in the field? There was constant pressure about what the goals of the organization were.

I think it was January 1964, and we were in Hattiesburg having a demonstration, picketing the courthouse. Mrs. Hamer [a sharecropper turned activist from Hattiesburg, Mississippi] was there and staff from all around the state, and we were taking up the question again. We got a telephone call that Louis Allen [black witness to the 1961 shooting of Herbert Lee] had been murdered on his front lawn in Liberty. I went over there to speak to his wife, who then moved down to Baton Rouge, and in the process of helping her and thinking through this, I felt like I had to step in and make my weight felt in terms of this decision about the summer project. Because up to then I had just been letting the discussion go on. I guess what I felt was that, as we were going now, we couldn't guarantee the safety of the people we were working with. There were larger things that were happening in the country: there was the 1963 civil rights bill. Mississippi was reacting to that, and we were feeling the backlash that was growing in Mississippi against gains that were being made nationally but which were not having any immediate effect in Mississippi in terms of people being able to participate in some of those gains. But what they were feeling was the oppression, the backlash that was rising up in Mississippi—burning churches, the murder

of two boys from Alcorn State occurred at that same time, Louis Allen down there in Liberty. We felt that we had to do something. And I felt that in that context that I had to step in between this loggerhead between the staff on the one hand and the people that we were working with. And so that's how the decision was made to invite the students down for the summer of 1964.⁹

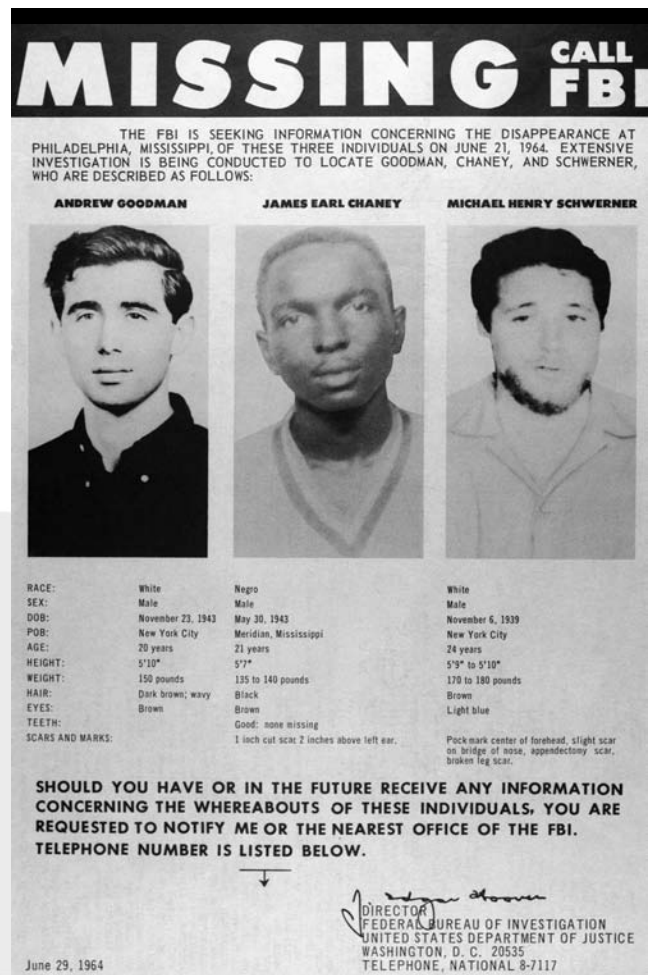
During Freedom Summer, SNCC volunteers worked in integrated teams—blacks and whites together—visiting churches, running schools, and trying to register voters. On June 21, three civil rights workers went missing: James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Mickey Schwerner. Chaney was black; Goodman and Schwerner were white Northerners. Their disappearance quickly became national news.

Rita Schwerner, Mickey Schwerner's wife (and later widow), responded to the attention aroused by her husband's disappearance:

It's tragic as far as I am concerned that White Northerners have to be caught up in the machinery of injustice and indifference in the South before the American people register concern. I personally suspect that if Mr. Chaney [...] had been alone at the time of his disappearance, that this case, like so many others that have come before it, it would have gone completely unnoticed.¹⁰

On August 4, 1964, 44 days after their disappearance, the bodies of the three activists were found on a farm outside the town of Philadelphia, Mississippi. Reports revealed that James Chaney, the lone black victim, had been beaten. Chaney's and Schwerner's parents requested that their children be buried side by side in Meridian, Mississippi, but local laws prohibited it. Integration was illegal—even for the dead. Martha Honey, a white SNCC volunteer from Oberlin College who attended Chaney's funeral, reflected on the challenges outsiders experienced while working to reform Mississippi's social system. She expressed her confusion in a letter to a classmate:

There is such an overpowering task ahead of these kids that sometimes I can't do anything but cry for them. I hope they are up to the task, I'm not sure I would be if I were a



An FBI missing persons poster displaying the pictures of Freedom Summer volunteers Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner. The murder of white volunteers drew attention to this centuries old practice of racially motivated killing.

Mississippi Negro. As a white northerner I can get involved whenever I feel like it and run home whenever I get bored or frustrated or scared. I hate the attitude and position of the Northern whites and despise myself when I think that way.

Lately I've been feeling homesick and longing for pleasant old Westport and sailing and swimming and my friends. I don't quite know what to do because I can't ignore my desire to go home and yet I feel I am a much weaker person than I like to think I am because I do have these emotions. I've always tried to avoid situations which aren't so nice, like arguments and dirty houses and now maybe Mississippi. I asked my father if I could stay down here for a whole year and I was almost glad when he said "no" that we couldn't afford it because it would mean supporting me this year in addition to three more years of college. I have a desire to go home and to read a lot and go to Quaker meetings and be by myself so I can think about all this rather than being in the middle of it all the time. But I know if my emotions run like they have in the past, that I can only take that pacific sort of life for a little while and then I get the desire to be active again and get involved with knowing other people.

I guess this all sounds crazy and I seem to always think out my problems as I write to you. I am angry because I have a choice as to whether or not to work in the Movement and I am playing upon that choice and leaving here. I wish I could talk with you 'cause I'd like to know if you ever felt this way about anything. I mean have you ever despised yourself for your weak conviction or something. And what is making it worse is that all those damn northerners are thinking of me as a brave hero.¹¹

Unita Blackwell grew up as a sharecropper in Mississippi; she became involved in the civil rights movement shortly after SNCC activists first spoke in her town and was later one of the founding members of the MFDP. In an interview for the radio documentary *Oh Freedom Over Me* she recalled how white activists influenced her work:

[W]hen the whites came in, I think it was a reassurance that all white people was not like the ones that we were dealing with. That was, to me, that was an interesting situation, you know, to sit in a room and talk to white people, not they talking down to me or I'm talking up, looking up to them. We're trying to figure out some strategies for us to all stay alive and work out, you know, how we're going to get things done and registered and vote and all that.

I think we all have hang-ups on color—who's black, white, whatever. And I call that prejudice and hang-ups and so forth. And in communities and so forth to see white people, for our people it was a strategy, because we, we didn't want them to stay too long in some cases because their life was truly in danger because they was white, and because they call them nigger lovers and all these other kinds of things. But also it was a way for people to see that because we had been so isolated.¹²

CONNECTIONS

1. What were the challenges and dangers of organizing an integrated movement in an environment hostile to integration?
2. What influenced Moses's decision to invite the white students to participate in Freedom Summer?
3. What did the presence of white volunteers contribute to the Mississippi Freedom movement? What challenges did their participation create?
4. With what feelings and impulses was Honey struggling in the letter to her friend? How would you respond if you were her friend? Write a response.
5. How did Blackwell's experiences in working on integrated teams affect her? How did she assess the impact of whites on the Mississippi movement?

Document 5: FREEDOM SONGS

Civil rights workers maintained their spirits by singing freedom songs which bolstered their courage and fostered a sense of community. Music had a deep and lasting effect on the hearts and minds of participants; in interviews, many civil rights activists still remembered the songs they sang, at mass meetings, before a march, or as they were taken to prison. Andrew Young remembered how James Bevel, Sam Block, and Willie Peacock used music to help them organize in Mississippi:

[T]hey often brought in singing groups to movement friendly churches as a first step in their efforts. They were natives of the Delta and they knew how little chance they stood of gaining the people's trust if they presented themselves as straight out organizers; people were too afraid to respond to that approach. So they organized gospel groups and hit the road. Both Peacock and Block were fine singers; under the cover of a musical group they sang and spoke their way through the black communities of the Delta, from Greenville to Greenwood.¹³

The radio documentary *Oh Freedom Over Me* discussed the role of music in the Mississippi movement:

Hollis Watkins often led the singing at Mississippi civil rights meetings. There's a recording of a 1963 rally in Jackson, for example, in which he leads in the singing of "Oh, Freedom Over Me." More than thirty years later, Watkins explains that most of the freedom songs were adapted from gospel, blues, and folk, as tools for organizing and mobilizing people.

"In the mass meetings you wanted to raise the interest, you wanted to raise the spirit," Watkins says. "And in doing that, it coincided with what would be going on in your daily activities." He sings: "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round, turn me 'round, turn me 'round. Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round, I'm gonna keep on walkin', keep on talkin', fightin' for my equal rights.

"And as you sang the different songs getting the spirit and the momentum goin', you

could eventually get to the song where you sang the question that kind of locked people in. 'Will you register and vote?' 'Certainly Lord.' 'Will you march downtown?' 'Certainly Lord.'

"The late Fanny Lou Hamer," Watkins adds, "she was good about that. After we'd get people to singing certain songs, if they made certain commitments in songs, then she would hold them to that after the meeting."¹⁴

CONNECTIONS

1. How can music build community and bolster morale?
2. How do you think music was able to help civil rights activists gain the trust of people who were reluctant to follow community organizers?
3. How do you think singing about activism at a meeting or in a church encouraged people to make a commitment to march or to register to vote?

Document 6: **INCOMPLETE JUSTICE: FORTY YEARS LATER**

In 2005, 41 years after James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Mickey Schwerner were killed, Edgar Ray Killen, a Klansman and felon, was finally convicted for his role in their murder. After the trial, Rita Bender, a former CORE member and Mickey Schwerner's widow, told reporters, "I hope that this conviction helps to shed some light on what has happened in this state."¹⁵ Despite the conviction, Bender was troubled that Killen's conviction was for the lesser charge of manslaughter rather than murder. After the trial she sent an open letter to Governor Haley Barbour, challenging his suggestion that it was now time for "closure."

July 17, 2005

Dear Gov. Barbour:

I am writing this letter because of recent and past actions of yours which are impediments to racial justice in Mississippi and our nation.

Recently, after the verdict and sentencing in the Edgar Ray Killen trial in Neshoba County, you indicated your belief that this closed the books on the crimes of the civil rights years, and that we all should now have "closure."

A day or so earlier, when Ben Chaney, the brother of the murdered African American, James Earl Chaney, criticized you for wearing a Confederate battle flag pin on your lapel daily, you responded by saying it was the symbol of the Mississippi National Guard, and if anyone didn't like your wearing it, "tough."

Not long ago, you actively resisted the effort in Mississippi to remove that Confederate symbol from the state flag. The Confederate battle flag has long been the banner of segregation and racism, not to mention that it has been widely embraced by the Ku Klux Klan throughout the Klan's hateful history.

While chairman of the National Republican Party, you attended functions of the Council of Conservative Citizens [CCC], known as the successor to the White Citizens' Councils in the state of Mississippi. When called on your participation with the CCC, you publicly refused to apologize or disassociate yourself.

Nor, it must be said, have you acted alone. In the same week that the Neshoba jury returned its guilty verdicts, your two Republican colleagues, U.S. Senators Trent Lott and Thad Cochran, refused to join 92 other senators in a resolution of apology for the Senate's repeated failures to pass anti-lynching legislation. Had such federal legislation been passed, it is possible that many lives would have been saved.

Mississippi had the highest number of lynchings of any state in the country; The Clarion-Ledger counted 581, and presumably there were others never included in the count. The message to those who would continue to do harm is loud and clear: Murder of African Americans deserves no apology.

So long as such symbols and coded messages are conveyed by high public officials, your state continues to encourage racism, and the potential for violence which it spawns. The venom is spread, and hatred continues to flourish.

Restorative justice can only come with recognition of the past, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, and acceptance of responsibility in the present by government and individuals to ameliorate the harm done.

People in positions of public trust, such as you, must take the lead in opening the window upon the many years of criminal conduct in which the state, and its officials, engaged. Only with such acknowledgement will the present generation understand how these many terrible crimes occurred, and the responsibility which present officials, voters and, indeed, all citizens, have to each other to move forward.

It is unfortunate that it is not yet well known that the state of Mississippi funded the state Sovereignty Commission from 1957 through 1973. The funding came from taxes paid by the citizenry—which means that the African-American population of the state, some 40 percent of Mississippi's population, was forced to pay for the governmental entity which spied upon them; caused them to lose jobs and to be forced off the land they farmed; and participated in crimes of beatings, church burnings and murder.

The Sovereignty Commission funded the White Citizens['] Councils, which used this money to launch a campaign of disinformation both within the state and in the Northern states. The councils spread racist ideology which served to encourage violence.

The Sovereignty Commission used its funds to hire staff investigators and private detectives. It employed informants. Information gathered included license numbers and vehicle

descriptions for persons identified as civil rights activists, as well as physical descriptions of these persons and their day-to-day activities. Medgar Evers was spied upon in this manner for years before his death. So were Mickey Schwerner and I.

The information gathered was passed on to law enforcement officers around the state, many of whom were themselves members of the Ku Klux Klan. There was no secret that the Klan and the police, sheriffs' departments and state highway patrol officers were often one and the same.

Bankers were notified of the identity of African Americans who attempted to register to vote, and bankers then called in loans. The commission contacted employers and land owners about persons attempting to register, or who were otherwise engaged in civil rights activities, resulting in people losing jobs or being forced off land which they had share-cropped for generations.

At the request of the defense, the commission investigated the jury panel in the first trial of Byron De La Beckwith for the murder of Medgar Evers in 1964. The commission reported back to the defense its findings as to which members of the panel were not expected to be favorable to Beckwith.

The defense was then in a position to eliminate these jurors from the panel. An arm of the state was assisting the defense in a case the state was supposed to be prosecuting. This is a grotesque perversion of the criminal justice system.

The commission provided its investigative reports to The Clarion-Ledger and other newspapers in the state until 1967, and those reports were then used by the newspapers to distort and defame the civil rights movement. (The Clarion-Ledger has apologized for its activities.)

The commission requested newspapers to suppress the reporting of violence against black persons. For example, the commission succeeded in preventing the reporting of the beatings and church burning in Philadelphia on June 16, 1964. This coverage was omitted from news reports to accommodate the request of a Philadelphia banker, who was seeking to convince an out-of-state investor to bring his business to Mississippi.

Each successive governor served as the Sovereignty Commission chairman. He was sent the investigative reports of the commission. Each governor had knowledge of the full range of shameful, illegal, and often violent activities encouraged or directly engaged in by the commission staff.

Why else can there not yet be closure? There were many acts of brutality, and far too many murders, which were never acknowledged. There are many violent criminals, living their lives among their neighbors in communities throughout the state, who have never been

charged or punished for their crimes.

After 41 years, the state brought murder charges against one man, Edgar Ray Killen, for the Neshoba murders. However, some seven other men known to be involved in those murders are still alive but have never been charged. The bodies of at least four other young men were found during the search for Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. Their killers have never been brought to justice. The men who burned the Mt. Zion Church in Philadelphia and the scores of other black churches throughout the state were never charged with those crimes.

Certainly, as the present governor, you must be aware of this history. This history must be known and understood by everyone.

I spoke with many people in Neshoba County who are striving to understand the truth, and who are burdened by the responsibility they carry with them for the actions of their community and their state.

But, there are still too many people who see only what they are comfortable recognizing. Just as some members of the jury in Philadelphia could refuse to acknowledge the premeditation in Edgar Ray Killen's acts, some of the people I met are unable to acknowledge any responsibility for the many horrors which occurred. Until individuals and their government understand why they do have responsibility, they cannot ensure racial justice and equality.

So, please do not assume that the book is closed. There is yet much work to be done. As the governor of Mississippi, you have a unique opportunity to acknowledge the past and to participate in ensuring a meaningful future for your state.

Please don't squander this moment by proclaiming that the past does not inform the present and the future.

Respectfully,

Rita L. Bender (formerly Rita L. Schwerner)

Seattle, Washington¹⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. Is justice still possible 41 years after the brutal murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner? What would constitute justice?
2. Why do you think it took 41 years to finally convict someone for the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner?
3. Why did Bender address her letter to Governor Barbour? What does she want him to consider? How did the conditions she described—impunity, spying, etc.—undermine the foundation of a democratic society?

4. What does the Confederate flag represent according to Bender? What does the Council of Conservative Citizens represent? The Sovereignty Commission?
5. According to Bender, what are the signs that Mississippi's government has not fully addressed the legacy of segregation? What do these symbols, attitudes, and other vestiges of segregation suggest about the relationship between history and contemporary culture?

Document 7: TAKING IT FOR OURSELVES

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Fannie Lou Hamer speaking at a Credential Committee meeting during the DNC in 1964. She and other members of the MFDP were elected by voters newly registered during the Mississippi Freedom Summer. The MFDP was denied seats at the DNC.

Due to the severity of segregation in Mississippi, black residents could not register to vote through normal channels. In their efforts to increase black voter registration, local and national civil rights leaders formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party as an alternative to the official, but all-white Mississippi Democratic Party. The MFDP adhered to all the rules and guidelines of the Democratic Party in the hopes that they would be officially accepted at the Democratic National Convention (DNC).

The COFO, SNCC, and Freedom Summer volunteers registered tens of thousands of black Mississippians through the MFDP. The MFDP then selected delegates to attend the 1964 DNC in Atlantic City, New Jersey and pleaded their case as the true democratic representatives of

Mississippi's voters to the DNC's Credential Committee. Fannie Lou Hamer was among the MFDP delegates. In the following excerpt she describes her journey from sharecropper to MFDP delegate:

I was born October sixth, nineteen and seventeen in Montgomery County, Mississippi. My parents moved to Sunflower County when I was two years old, to a plantation about four and a half miles from here, Mr. E. W. Brandon's plantation.

[...] My parents were sharecroppers and they had a big family. Twenty children. Fourteen boys and six girls. I'm the twentieth child. All of us worked in the fields, of course, but we never did get anything out of sharecropping. [...]

My life has been almost like my mother's was, because I married a man who sharecropped. We didn't have it easy and the only way we could ever make it through the winter was because Pap had a little juke joint and we made liquor. That was the only way we made it. I married in 1944 and stayed on the plantation until 1962 when I went down to the courthouse in Indianola to register to vote. That happened because I went to a mass meeting one night.

Until then I'd never heard of no mass meeting and I didn't know that a Negro could register and vote. Bob Moses, Reggie Robinson, Jim Bevel and James Forman were some of the SNCC workers who ran that meeting. When they asked for those to raise their hands

who'd go down to the courthouse the next day, I raised mine. Had it up as high as I could get it. I guess if I'd had any sense I'd a-been a little scared, but what was the point of being scared? The only thing they could do to me was kill me and it seemed like they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember.

Well, there was eighteen of us who went down to the courthouse that day and all of us were arrested. Police said the bus was painted the wrong color—said it was too yellow. After I got bailed out I went back to the plantation where Pap and I had lived for eighteen years. My oldest girl met me and told me that Mr. Marlow, the plantation owner, was mad and raising sand. He had heard that I had tried to register. That night he called on us and said, "We're not going to have this in Mississippi and you will have to withdraw. I am looking for your answer, yea or nay?" I just looked. He said, "I will give you until tomorrow morning. And if you don't withdraw you will have to leave. If you do go withdraw, it's only how I feel, you might still have to leave." So I left that same night. Pap had to stay on till work on the plantation was through. Ten days later they fired into Mrs. Tucker's house where I was staying. They also shot two girls at Mr. Sissel's.

That was a rough winter. I hadn't a chance to do any canning before I got kicked off, so didn't have hardly anything. I always can more than my family can use 'cause there's always people who don't have enough. That winter was bad, though. Pap couldn't get a job nowhere 'cause everybody knew he was my husband. We made it on through, though, and since then I just been trying to work and get our people organized.

I reckon the most horrible experience I've had was in June of 1963. I was arrested along with several others in Winona, Mississippi. That's in Montgomery County, the county where I was born. I was carried to a cell and locked up with Euvester Simpson. I began to hear the sound of licks, and I could hear people screaming. [...]

After then, the State Highway patrolmen came and carried me out of the cell into another cell where there were two Negro prisoners. The patrolman gave the first Negro a long blackjack that was heavy. It was loaded with something and they had me lay down on the bunk with my face down, and I was beat. I was beat by the first Negro till he gave out. Then the patrolman ordered the other man to take the blackjack and he began to beat. [...]

After I got out of jail, half dead, I found out that Medgar Evers had been shot down in his own yard.

I've worked on voter registration here ever since I went to that first mass meeting. In 1964 we registered 63,000 black people from Mississippi into the Freedom Democratic Party. We formed our own party because the whites wouldn't even let us register. We decided to challenge the white Mississippi Democratic Party at the National Convention. We followed all the laws that the white people themselves made. We tried to attend the precinct meetings

and they locked the doors on us or moved the meetings and that's against the laws they made for their own selves. So we were the ones that held the real precinct meetings. At all these meetings across the state we elected our representatives, to go to the National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. But we learned the hard way that even though we had all the law and all the righteousness on our side—that white man is not going to give up his power to us.

We have to build our own power. We have to win every single political office we can, where we have a majority of black people.

The question for black people is not, when is the white man going to give us our rights, or when is he going to give us good education for our children, or when is he going to give us jobs—if the white man gives you anything just remember when he gets ready he will take it right back. We have to take for ourselves.¹⁷

The DNC nominated Lyndon B. Johnson (who had assumed office after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963). Under pressure from Johnson, the Credential Committee rejected an appeal for an open vote on the MFDP petition, and offered, instead, to seat two of the MFDP delegates. Disappointed, the MFDP delegation returned to Mississippi.

John Lewis, the onetime head of SNCC, believed, as did many others, “that had the decision to seat the MFDP delegates reached a floor vote, especially after Fannie Lou Hamer’s testimony, the Mississippi regulars would have been ousted and replaced.” Many activists saw the MFDP delegation to the DNC as the culmination of many years of hard work, and the refusal of the Democratic Party even to vote on the issue shook their confidence in the US political process as a whole. Lewis recalled the devastating impact the dismissal of the MFDP had on SNCC and many other civil rights activists:

As far as I’m concerned, this was the turning point of the civil rights movement. I’m absolutely convinced of that. Until then, despite every setback and disappointment and obstacle we had faced over the years, the belief still prevailed that the system would work, the system would listen, the system would respond. Now, for the first time, we had made our way to the very center of the system. We had played by the rules, done everything we were supposed to do, had played the game exactly as required, had arrived at the doorstep and found the door slammed in our face. [...] That loss of faith would spread through Lyndon Johnson’s term in office, from civil rights and into the issue of Vietnam. [...] That crisis of confidence, the spirit of cynicism and suspicion and mistrust that infects the attitude of many Americans toward their government today, began, I firmly believe, that week in Atlantic City. Something was set in motion that week that would never go away.¹⁸

CONNECTIONS

1. Create an identity chart (an example of an identity chart can be found in Episode 3) for Fannie Lou Hamer. How did her identity change over time?

2. Politics is often considered to be the art of compromise. Although the Credential Committee did not allow MFDP's delegates to replace Mississippi's all-white representatives, it did offer to compromise and give them two seats at the convention. The MFDP refused to accept this offer. What do you think about its decision?
3. What does Hamer's story suggest about the difficulties in changing an unjust system?
4. Why did Lewis think that the failure of the DNC to recognize the MFDP caused such widespread despair among black and white activists? Why does he trace contemporary indifference and cynicism regarding the democratic process back to that convention?
5. Despite the immediate setback to the MFDP, many people in America and around the world were inspired by the values and actions of the Freedom Summer, and the Democratic Party never seated a segregated delegation after the 1964 convention. How would you evaluate the success of the MFDP? How would you assess the legacy of the Freedom Summer?

¹ "Mississippi: Is This America?" (1962–64), *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, VHS, Produced by Henry Hampton (Boston, MA: Blackside, 1986).

² E. David Cronon (ed.), *Twentieth Century America Selected Readings* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1965), 460–61.

³ Gerald Stern, "Mississippi," from *Outside The Law: Narratives on Justice in America*, edited by Susan Richard Shreve and Porter Shreve (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 164–65.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 166–67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶ Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954–1965* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 228.

⁷ Cronon (ed.), *Twentieth Century America*, 460–61.

⁸ John Lewis with Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 249.

⁹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 183–84.

¹⁰ "Mississippi: Is This America?"

¹¹ Martha Honey, "Letter from Mississippi Freedom Summer," August 9, 1964, as quoted in Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, *Voices of a People's History of the United States* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), 402–3.

¹² John Blewen, "Oh Freedom Over Me—Selected Interviews: Unita Blackwell," *American Radio Works*, http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/oh_freedom/interview_blackwell.html (accessed on May 1, 2006).

¹³ Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 150–51.

¹⁴ John Blewen, "Oh Freedom Over Me," *American Radio Works*, http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/oh_freedom/story9.html (accessed on May 5, 2006).

¹⁵ Junious Ricardo Stanton, "Justice Delayed, Justice Denied," *The Black World Today*, <http://www.tbwt.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=506&Itemid=41> (accessed on August 16, 2006).

¹⁶ Rita Schwerner Bender, "After trial, Bender challenges Barbour," *The Clarion-Ledger*, July 17, 2005, <http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050717/OPINION/507170339/1002> (accessed August 4, 2006).

¹⁷ Fannie Lou Hamer, *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Jackson: KIPCO, 1967), as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 176–79.

¹⁸ Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 291.



Episode 6 concludes the saga of black Americans' struggle for a comprehensive voting rights bill. The first segment chronicles clashes between legal and political officials in Selma, Alabama, and local activists. Years of bigotry, discrimination, and intimidation left the black population of

1965	
Jan.	SNCC and the SCLC initiate a voter registration campaign in Selma, Alabama
Jan. 4	In his State of the Union address, President Lyndon Johnson proposes to "eliminate every remaining obstacle to the right and the opportunity to vote"
Feb. 25	Malcolm X is assassinated in New York
Mar. 7	On "Bloody Sunday," civil rights activists, attempting a march to Montgomery, Alabama, are beaten by state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma
Mar. 21	With protection from federal troops, King leads thousands on a successful march from Selma to Montgomery
Mar. 25	Viola Luzzio, a white civil rights activist from Michigan, is murdered while driving marchers back to Selma
Aug. 6	President Lyndon Johnson signs the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965, which eliminates all voting tests used to discriminate against minorities
Aug. 11	The black neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles, California, explodes in a riot that leaves thirty-four people dead

Alabama disenfranchised and politically marginalized; in Dallas County (where Selma is located), fewer than ten percent of eligible blacks were registered to vote. In 1964, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)* and local activists intensified the voter registration drive, hoping to dismantle Alabama's white supremacist political structure along with its discriminatory social system. Early in 1965, Alabama activists invited the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)** and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to bolster the campaign. While Selma was chosen as the focal point, similar voter registration activities were held in nearby towns and counties. Tensions reached fever pitch in February, when police killed Jimmie Lee Jackson, a 26-year-old army veteran, at a demonstration in Marion, twenty miles northwest of Selma. Outraged by this latest act of police violence, activists decided to march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital, in protest and in honor of Jackson. The march was scheduled for Sunday, March 7, 1965.

Some SNCC members, however, voiced concerns that the 40-mile march entailed too much risk for too little gain. Despite opposition from within his own organization, SNCC chairman John Lewis decided to lead the march with the SCLC's

field director Hosea Williams. Together they led marchers to face two of the state's most dangerous men: George Wallace, Alabama's arch-segregationist governor, and Jim Clark, a police sheriff known for his hot temper and unusual brutality.

On March 7, some six hundred protestors marched out of Selma only to be met by state troopers and Clark's officers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. With little warning, the marchers were tear-gassed, chased, and cruelly beaten. Images of the incident became national news and prompted hundreds of sympathizers to come to Selma in support of the march. Two weeks after what the press called "Bloody Sunday," and with the support of the federal government, the marchers crossed

*The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed in 1961 by students dedicated to the protest tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience. The organization emerged out of the sit-ins and Freedom Rides of 1960 and was led by Ella Baker, James Lawson, Marion Barry, and Diane Nash. The organization became influenced by nonreligious, Marxist, and ethnic ideas, which separated it from the SCLC. Under Stokely Carmichael's leadership it embraced an ideology of Black Power and Black Nationalism and dropped its commitment to nonviolence.

**The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed in 1957 after the successful bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama (see Episode 1), and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was chosen its leader. The SCLC represented a coalition of local churches and reflected the religious nature and structure of black communities in the South. The organization's goal was to lead the struggle against segregation using the tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience.

Edmund Pettus Bridge and proceeded to Montgomery.

The last segment of this episode depicts President Johnson delivering his historic speech in which he used the civil rights slogan, “we shall overcome,” to urge Congress to adopt a comprehensive voting rights bill. The program ends with the explosion of riots in Los Angeles, California—riots that made many within SNCC question the effectiveness of nonviolence.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What different strategies did activists in Selma use to draw national attention to discrimination in voting rights?
2. How did nonviolent direct action force people in Selma and around the country to assess their accepted customs and their consciences? What role did the press play?
3. What choices did local and national leaders make in response to the events in Selma?
4. Why did activists demand federal intervention in Selma?
5. How effective were the nonviolent tactics in Selma? How did they help reshape American democracy?

Document 1: MEMORIES OF THE MARCH

In 1964, SNCC and local activists intensified their campaign to register black voters. Local black leaders asked the SCLC to join the campaign in Selma, Alabama, to protest discriminatory voting practices. Selma Sheriff Jim Clark responded to the nonviolent protests with physical force. In response to the arrest of an SCLC activist, protestors held a nighttime rally in the nearby town of Marion. The rally was entirely peaceful until the crowd left the Zion Methodist church. Then, mysteriously, the streetlights went out and a mob of white segregationists and police assaulted the protestors. One of their victims was 26-year-old army veteran Jimmie Lee Jackson, who died from his injuries a few days later. The Reverend James Bevel, an SCLC strategist, recalled how activist leaders struggled to find a way for the community to constructively express their grief and outrage:



A staunch protector of segregation, Sheriff Jim Clark prods blacks who attempt to register to vote with his police baton and a cattle prod.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division,
LC-USZ62-135700

I had to preach, because I had to get the people back out of the state of negative violence and out of a state of grief. If you don't deal with negative violence and grief, it turns into bitterness. So what I recommended was that people walk to Montgomery [the state capital], which would give them time to work through their hostility and resentments and get back to focus on the issue. The question I put to them was, “Do you think Wallace sent the policemen down to kill the man? Or do you think the police overreacted? Now, if they overreacted, then you can't go around assuming that Wallace sent the men down to kill.

So what we need to do is to go to Montgomery and ask the governor what is his motive and intentions.”

It’s a nonviolent movement. If you went back to some of the classical strategies of Gandhi, when you have a great violation of the people and there’s a great sense of injury, you have to give people an honorable means and context in which to express and eliminate that grief and speak decisively and succinctly back to the issue. Otherwise the movement will break down in violence and chaos. Agreeing to go to Montgomery was that kind of tool that would absorb a tremendous amount of energy and effort, and it would keep the issue of disenfranchisement before the whole nation.

The whole point of walking from Selma to Montgomery is it takes you five or six days, which would give you the time to discuss in the nation, through papers, radio, and television and going around speaking, what the real issues were.¹

The SCLC decided to march on Sunday, March 7, 1964. SNCC leaders, many of whom resented the SCLC’s presence in Selma, were reluctant to participate in the march. They questioned the benefits of the march and claimed that it was too risky. They also suspected that King and the SCLC would grab the media spotlight and leave before the campaign was finished. John Lewis, then the chairman of SNCC, remembered:

On a Saturday night, March the sixth, the SNCC executive committee met all night in the basement of a restaurant in Atlanta, debating whether we should participate in the march. It was the decision of the committee that we shouldn’t participate in this matter. Some people felt a lot of people would get hurt. Some people started saying the SCLC would have this march and then they would leave town, and the people would be left holding the bag. I took the position that people we had been working with in the heart of the Black Belt for more than three years wanted to march and we should be there with them. The decision was made that if I wanted to go, I could go as an individual but not as a representative of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. I felt I had an obligation; I had gone to jail in Selma on several occasions. So I made the decision with three other members of that committee to leave Atlanta early Sunday morning, and we drove to Selma.²

Governor Wallace blocked the march on the pretext that his forces would not be able to guarantee the safety of the demonstrators. Despite the ban, six hundred marchers responded to the SCLC’s call. Unfortunately King, faced with a death threat and pressed to attend to his own congregation in Atlanta, could not lead the march. In King’s absence, John Lewis and the SCLC’s Hosea Williams were selected to lead the marchers over the Edmund Pettus Bridge and onto U.S. 80, the road to Montgomery. Lewis remembered:

When we arrived at the apex of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, we saw a sea of blue: Alabama state troopers. About six hundred of us were walking in twos. It was a very peaceful,

orderly protest. The moment we got within shouting distance of the state troopers, we heard one state trooper identify himself. He said, "I'm Major John Cloud [the commander in charge]. This is an unlawful march. It will not be allowed to continue. I'll give you three minutes to disperse and go back to your church." In about a minute and a half he said, "Troopers, advance." And we saw the state troopers and members of Sheriff Clark's posse on horseback. The troopers came toward us with billy clubs, tear gas, and bullwhips, trampling us with horses. I felt like it was the last demonstration, the last protest on my part, like I was going to take my last breath from the tear gas. I saw people rolling, heard people screaming and hollering. We couldn't go forward. If we tried to go forward we would've gone into the heat of battle. We couldn't go to the side, to the left or to the right, because we would have been going into the Alabama River, so we were beaten back down the streets of Selma, back to the church.³

Sheyann Webb, an eight-year-old who had defied her parents' order not to participate, was caught in the fray. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview she recalled that, "Bloody Sunday was one of the scariest days of my life":

I'll never forget that day simply because I saw some things that I never thought I would see. I remember that on the night prior to Bloody Sunday, there was a mass meeting and several speakers were talking about what our procedures would be for the march. [They said] it would be possible that we would not be successful with that march. But I was still determined as a child to march. [...]

As we approached the bridge, I was getting more and more frightened, and as we got to the top of the bridge, I could see hundreds of policemen, state troopers, billy clubs, dogs, and horses, and I began to just cry. I remember the ministers who were at the front of the line [told us to] kneel down and pray. I knelt down and I said to myself, "Lord, help me." Once we had gotten up, all I can remember is outbursts of tear gas. I saw people being beaten and I began to just try to run home as fast as I could. And as I began to run home, I saw horses behind me, and I will never forget a Freedom Fighter picked me up, Hosea Williams, and I told him to put me down, he wasn't running fast enough. And I ran, and I ran, and I ran. It was like I was running for my life.⁴



March 7, 1965. "Bloody Sunday." A state trooper prods a black woman to her feet after demonstrators were brutally attacked and tear-gassed during the first attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-127736

By the time the attack was over, nearly 60 marchers were treated for injuries at a local hospital; of those, seventeen were hospitalized, including John Lewis, whose skull had been fractured. Later that evening, the ABC television network interrupted the documentary film *Judgment at Nuremberg*—a film about Nazi racism—to show the shocking footage of police in Alabama attacking American citizens. Andrew Young remembers, “The film was interrupted several times to interject updates and replays of the violence in Selma, and many viewers apparently mistook these clips for portions of the Nuremberg film. The violence in Selma was so similar to the violence in Nazi Germany that viewers could hardly miss the connection.”⁵

John Lewis recalled the public outcry in the aftermath of the march:

The response we had gotten nationally in the wake of the Bloody Sunday attack was so much greater than anything I’d seen since I’d become part of the civil rights movement. [...] The country seemed truly aroused. People were really moved. During the first forty-eight hours after Bloody Sunday, there were demonstrations in more than eighty cities protesting the brutality and urging the passage of a voting rights act. There were speeches on the floors of both houses of Congress condemning the attack and calling for voting rights legislation. A telegram signed by more than sixty congressmen was sent to President Johnson, asking for “immediate” submission of a voting rights bill.⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. Many SNCC staffers feared that the 40-mile march from Selma to Montgomery was not worth the risk. What did Bevel hope the march would accomplish? What is the role of a mass march in a non-violent movement? What similarities does this march share with the bus rides into the Deep South?
2. Why did Lewis decide to march? How did he understand his obligation as a leader in the movement? To his organization? To the people of Selma?
3. Lewis emphasizes that the marchers were “peaceful and orderly.” Why do you think he and others considered discipline essential if the march was to be successful?
4. The march provided opportunities to participate in the movement for ordinary people who, like Sheyann Webb, were too young to vote. How do you imagine participating in the movement changed the way they thought about themselves and about their role in society?

Document 2: THE SECOND MARCH

In his autobiography, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., outlined his goals and expectations for the Selma campaign:

The goal of the demonstrations in Selma, as elsewhere, is to dramatize the existence of injustice and to bring about the presence of justice methods of nonviolence. Long years of experience indicate to us that Negroes can achieve this goal when four things occur:

1. Nonviolent demonstrators go into the streets to exercise their constitutional rights.
2. Racists resist by unleashing violence against them.

3. Americans of conscience in the name of decency demand federal intervention and legislation.
4. The administration, under mass pressure, initiates measures of immediate intervention and remedial legislation.⁷

Images of “Bloody Sunday” sent shockwaves throughout the country. Like many around the world, King was shaken by the brutality of the state troopers during the first march. Shaken was also some activists’ belief in nonviolence as a few SNCC members began to entertain Malcolm X’s argument that nonviolence was ineffective in the face of extreme brutality. At the same time, however, many “Americans of good conscience” responded by bombarding the president with telegrams demanding that something be done, while others flew to Selma to stand side by side with the nonviolent demonstrators.

King returned to Selma determined to lead a second march to demonstrate, yet again, the obstacles Southern blacks faced as they exercised their rights. In the following excerpt from his autobiography, King recounted the challenges he faced as a leader of a nonviolent campaign for justice in Selma:

The next question was whether the confrontation had to be a violent one; here the responsibility of weighing all factors and estimating the consequences rests heavily on the civil rights leaders. It is easy to decide on either extreme. To go forward recklessly can have terrible consequences in terms of human life and also can cause friends and supporters to lose confidence if they feel a lack of responsibility exists. On the other hand, it is ineffective to guarantee that no violence will occur by the device of not marching or undertaking token marches avoiding direct confrontation.

We determined to seek the middle course. We would march until we faced the troopers. We would not disengage until they made clear that they were going to use force. We would disengage then, having made our point, revealing the continued presence of violence, and showing clearly who are the oppressed and who the oppressors, hoping, finally, that the national administration in Washington would feel and respond to the shocked reactions with action.

On Tuesday, March 9, Judge Frank M. Johnson of the federal district court in Montgomery issued an order enjoining me and the local Selma leadership of the nonviolent voting rights movement from peacefully marching to Montgomery. The issuance of Judge Johnson's order caused disappointment and bitterness to all of us. We had looked to the federal judiciary in Alabama to prevent the unlawful interference with our program to expand elective franchise for Negroes throughout the black belt.

I consulted with my lawyers and trusted advisors both in Selma and other parts of the country and discussed what course of action we should take. Information came in that troopers of the Alabama State Police and Sheriff James Clark’s possemen would be arrayed in massive force across Highway 80 at the foot of Pettus Bridge in Selma. I reflect-

ed upon the role of the federal judiciary as a protector of the rights of Negroes. I also gave thoughtful consideration to the hundreds of clergymen and other persons of good will who had come to Selma to make a witness with me in the cause of justice by participating in our planned march to Montgomery. Taking all of this into consideration, I decided that our plans had to be carried out and that I would lead our march to a confrontation with injustice to make a witness to our countrymen and the world of our determination to vote and be free.

As my associates and I were spiritually preparing ourselves for the task ahead, Governor Leroy Collins, chairman of the newly created Community Relations Service under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and John Doar, Acting Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, came to see me to dissuade me from the course of action which we had painfully decided upon.

Governor Collins affirmed and restated the commitment of President Johnson to the achievement of full equality for all persons without regard to race, color, or creed, and his commitment to securing the right to vote for all persons eligible to do so. He very strongly urged us not to march. I listened attentively to both Mr. Doar and Governor Collins. I explained to them why, as a matter of conscience, I felt it was necessary to seek a confrontation with injustice on Highway 80. I asked them to try to understand that I would rather die on the highway in Alabama than make a butchery of my conscience by compromising with evil. The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth said to the Governor that instead of urging us not to march, he should urge the state troopers not to be brutal toward us and not attempt to stop our peaceful march. Governor Collins realized at this point that we were determined to march and left the room, saying that he would do what he could to prevent the state troopers from being violent. [...]

[J]ust as we started to march, Governor Collins rushed to me and said that he felt everything would be all right. He gave me a small piece of paper indicating a route that I assume Mr. Baker, Public Safety Director of Selma, wanted us to follow. It was the same route that had been taken on Sunday. The press, reporting this detail, gave the impression that Governor Collins and I had sat down and worked out some compromise. There were no talks or agreements between Governor Collins and me beyond the discussions I have just described. I held on to my decision to march despite the fact that many people in the line were concerned about breaking the court injunction issued by one of the strongest and best judges in the South. I felt that we had to march at least to the point where the troopers brutalized the people on Sunday even if it would mean a recurrence of violence, arrest, or even death. As a nonviolent leader, I could not advocate breaking through a human wall set up by the policemen. While we desperately desired to proceed to Montgomery, we knew before we started our march that this human wall set up on Pettus Bridge would make it impossible for us to go beyond it. It was not that we didn't

intend to go on to Montgomery, but that, in consideration of our commitment to nonviolent action, we knew we could not go under the present conditions.

As to our next step:

As soon as we had won legal affirmation of our right to march to Montgomery, the next phase hinged on the successful completion of our mission to petition the governor to take meaningful measures to abolish voting restrictions, the poll tax, and police brutality.⁸



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March 21, 1965. King and Abernathy finally lead the march to Montgomery. President Johnson sent federal troops to protect the marchers and ensure their safety.

CONNECTIONS

1. How do King's comments on nonviolence explain the choices that the SCLC staff made in Selma? In King's vision, what needed to happen before the federal government would take action to protect the constitutional rights of black Americans?
2. How did the march on March 9 illustrate the dilemmas King faced as a leader of a nonviolent movement in Selma? What were they? To whom did King feel a moral obligation? How did he try to resolve these dilemmas?
3. Governor Wallace prohibited the march from Selma to Montgomery, explaining that he would be unable to protect the protestors. After the first march, Federal Judge Johnson issued an injunction prohibiting future marches while he studied Wallace's argument. How did King balance the desire to "make a witness" to the "cause of justice," respect for the judge's ruling, and his responsibility to those who had volunteered to march?
4. Why do you think some activists began to question the effectiveness of nonviolence in the aftermath of the first march?
5. Before the Selma campaign began, Malcolm X explained his views on nonviolence. He said, "In the areas of the country where the Government has proven itself unable or unwilling to defend Negroes when they are brutally and unjustly attacked, then Negroes themselves should take whatever steps necessary to defend themselves."⁹ How do you think King would respond to Malcolm X's comments?

Document 3: "WE SHALL OVERCOME"

After "Bloody Sunday," President Lyndon B. Johnson recognized the need to take action. As important as the 1964 Civil Rights Act was, it was not enough; events in Selma exposed the numerous ways local registrars prevented black Americans from voting. It was obvious that the federal government had to take action in order to ensure truly universal suffrage for all citizens of the United States.

On March 15, 1964, six days after King led the second march in Selma, President Johnson addressed both houses of Congress about the urgent need for new legislation:

I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of Democracy. I urge every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause.

At times, history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama. There, long suffering men and women peacefully protested the denial of their rights as Americans. Many of them were brutally assaulted. One good man—a man of God—was killed.

There is no cause for pride in what has happened in Selma. There is no cause for self-satisfaction in the long denial of equal rights of millions of Americans. But there is cause for hope and for faith in our Democracy in what is happening here tonight. For the cries of pain and the hymns and protests of oppressed people have summoned into convocation all the majesty of this great government—the government of the greatest nation on earth. Our mission is at once the oldest and the most basic of this country—to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man. In our time we have come to live with the moments of great crises. Our lives have been marked with debate about great issues, issues of war and peace, issues of prosperity and depression.

But rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, or our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue. And should we defeat every enemy, and should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation. For, with a country as with a person, “what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.

And we are met here tonight as Americans—not as Democrats or Republicans; we're met here as Americans to solve that problem. This was the first nation in the history of the world to be founded with a purpose.

The great phrases of that purpose still sound in every American heart, North and South: “All men are created equal.” [...] And those are not just clever words, and those are not just empty theories. In their name Americans have fought and died for two centuries and tonight around the world they stand there as guardians of our liberty risking their lives. Those words are promised to every citizen that he shall share in the dignity of man. This dignity cannot be found in a man's possessions. It cannot be found in his power or in his position. It really rests on his right to be treated as a man equal in opportunity to all oth-

ers. It says that he shall share in freedom. He shall choose his leaders, educate his children, provide for his family according to his ability and his merits as a human being.

To apply any other test, to deny a man his hopes because of his color or race or his religion or the place of his birth is not only to do injustice, it is to deny Americans and to dishonor the dead who gave their lives for American freedom. Our fathers believed that if this noble view of the rights of man was to flourish it must be rooted in democracy. This most basic right of all was the right to choose your own leaders. The history of this country in large measure is the history of expansion of the right to all of our people. [...]

I have had prepared a [...] bill [that] will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections, federal, state and local, which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote. This bill will establish a simple, uniform standard which cannot be used, however ingenious the effort, to flout our Constitution. It will provide for citizens to be registered by officials of the United States Government, if the state officials refuse to register them. It will eliminate tedious, unnecessary lawsuits which delay the right to vote. Finally, this legislation will insure that properly registered individuals are not prohibited from voting. I will welcome the suggestions from all the members of Congress—I have no doubt that I will get some—on ways and means to strengthen this law and to make it effective. [...]

And we ought not, and we cannot, and we must not wait another eight months before we get a bill. We have already waited 100 years and more and the time for waiting is gone. So I ask you to join me in working long hours and nights and weekends, if necessary, to pass this bill. [...] What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life. Their cause must be our cause too. Because it's not just Negroes, but really it's all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.

And we shall overcome.¹⁰

On August 6, 1965, following what many consider his finest speech, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. Section 2 of the act reads: “No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.”¹¹ The act put an end to the various tests which Southern authorities used for years to stop black Americans from voting.

CONNECTIONS

1. Sociologist Helen Fein writes that individuals, groups, and nations each have a “universe of obligation”—a circle of individuals and groups toward whom obligations are owed, rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.¹² Whom did President Johnson include in his “universe of obligation”?

2. How did President Johnson frame the issue of civil rights? What values does he articulate? Compare his speech to the nation after Selma to President Kennedy's address (see Episode 3) after Birmingham. What similarities do you find? What differences are most striking?
3. Why did he think that previous legislation denied people their democratic rights? How did voter literacy and knowledge tests undermine the foundation of democracy?
4. What were the historical precedents President Johnson drew upon to make his case?

Document 4: THE WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY

In his book entitled *The Children*, David Halberstam discussed the experiences of young people during the civil rights era, and updated some of their stories. In the following chapter, Halberstam describes the personal relationships between former adversaries within the movement and how some of these evolved into close friendships:

IN 1995, ON THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF SELMA, the Reverend James Luther Bevel returned to that city along with Jamese, his sixteen-year-old daughter, to be a part of the ceremonies commemorating both the past and the future. There he had received a surprisingly warm welcome from one of his old adversaries, Joseph Smitherman, who was still the mayor, and who told Jamese, "All of us were more afraid of your father than we were of any of the others. Your father's a small man physically, but when he would ride that bike by himself in the morning, with that hard look on his face, it scared us; not only because we had no idea what he was up to on those rides, but because we knew he didn't fear us. I mean, he was not supposed to be riding around by himself—Selma was dangerous for black people in those days, but he didn't seem to know it. We were more scared of him than of Dr. King.

Amazingly enough Smitherman, by 1997, had been mayor for thirty-two years. He was exhausted by the job, he said, but he wanted to hold on to it at least until the year 2000. He had long ago made his accommodation to the region's new political forces, which he had once so strenuously fought. He numbered John Lewis, he said, as one of his close friends, and on occasion during political events, the two of them would ride together in open cars.

Smitherman presided over a city of some 27,000 people, which was 55 percent black and 45 percent white, with slightly more whites in the voting age population. His transition from old, hard-line segregationist to new-age racial pluralist had been steady over the past thirty years, starting with simple things—paving streets and bringing decent lighting as well as a sewage system to the black neighborhoods: "One thing Joe Smitherman can do that George Wallace could always do is count votes," said James Chestnut, the black attorney. Over the years Smitherman, pushed by local black politicians, learned how to sell Selma's past. He would promote the town's unique history—it was, the promotional campaign emphasized, the place where the 1965 Voting Rights Act was born. That, after all, he

added, “was the most important piece of legislation to be passed by the Congress in one hundred years.” There was a monument to Martin Luther King now, and tourists visiting the city were told of the importance of the Pettus Bridge.

Smitherman turned out to be extremely skillful in tapping into the federal bureaucracy and getting money for integrated public housing units. Accompanied in Washington by local black officials, he became gifted at telling some of the black HUD [Housing and Urban Development] officials he met that they got their jobs because of what happened in Selma. Therefore, like it or not, Selma was a showplace city, and the feds owed the city. Over the years, with significant help from local black leaders, he was able to tap into the federal treasury for some \$75 million in federal funds, a remarkable amount for so small a town, enough to build seven integrated housing units, which by HUD decree were scattered through out the city, in rich white neighborhoods as well as poor black ones.¹³

On September 12, 2000, Smitherman was voted out after 36 years. His replacement was black. Before the election Smitherman explained, “I was on the wrong side of history.”¹⁴

CONNECTIONS

1. Why did Smitherman change? What do you imagine the change from “hard-line segregationist to new-age racial pluralist” looked like? What accommodations do you think he had to make?
2. What do you think Smitherman meant when he said, “I was on the wrong side of history”?
3. What needs to happen for enemies to become allies?

Document 5: VOTING AND DEMOCRACY

In the excerpts below, Andrew Young, the former SCLC executive director and congressman, attempted to evaluate the importance of the events in Selma. In his memoir of the civil rights era entitled, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America*, Young battled skeptics who thought the march accomplished very little:

[T]hree decades later, Selma remains indelibly impressed upon our memories because of its unforgettable images—the violence at Pettus Bridge, the long march to Montgomery—and also because it was the strongest single dramatization of the need for new legislation protecting the right to the ballot for all citizens. Thirty years later, the importance of Selma clearly stands out. There were those who had thought a campaign in Alabama in 1965 to demonstrate the need for protection of the right to vote was premature. There were also many of our brothers and sisters who were upset because they thought we ended the Selma campaign too soon, the same criticism leveled against us in Birmingham. There were always movement workers who wanted to continue demonstrating and keep campaigns going. But knowing the proper time to make settlements and bring demonstrations to a conclusion hinges on having a strong and precise concept of the objectives of the campaign. If the objectives were too broad, then there could be no

end to demonstrating, for the search for full justice is an ever-continuing struggle.

Our conflicts with SNCC in Selma once again had to do with the breadth of some of their objectives. Our objectives were simple: we wanted to clearly demonstrate to the nation that black citizens were being effectively deprived of their right to register and vote in Selma, Alabama, and that Selma was not an anomaly: it was representative of many other Southern towns in the black belt. Finally, we wanted everyone to know that we would continue to protest these conditions until the federal government passed legislation guaranteeing and protecting our right to the ballot. In my mind, we achieved those goals in Selma. The settlement was always the most contentious point in a movement. As in Birmingham, there were activists who wanted to keep marching, for whom incremental progress was unacceptable. But I always stressed that nonviolent social change requires reconciliation and forgiveness. The people in Selma had a lot to forgive, but without forgiveness, no real change could take place.

The monumental Voting Rights Act, which Congress passed and President Lyndon Johnson signed on August 6, 1965, just a few months after the Selma-to-Montgomery march, remains a lasting achievement of the civil rights movement. The Voting Rights Act helped to change the face of Southern politics in ways we could hardly imagine while we were still bogged down in Selma. In Alabama, in the space of just one year, black voter registration practically doubled—from 116,000 in August 1965 to 228,000 in August 1966. By 1990, there were more than 7,300 black elected officials nationwide, including the governor of Virginia. An amended voting rights act produced black members of Congress from Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina for the first time since Reconstruction. Rural black voters in Georgia and Louisiana sent black representatives to Congress as well.

The very real achievements under the Voting Rights Act must be attributed to the courage, vigilance, and persistence of local black leaders and a small number of attorneys in the states covered by the act. The provisions of the Voting Rights Act called for the placement of federal referees and monitors in counties with a clear practice of disenfranchisement. In my experience, that was virtually all of the more than seven thousand political jurisdictions covered by the Voting Rights Act. However, the Civil Rights Division began with a sadly limited view of its mandate and adopted an enforcement strategy that relied on the “smallest possible federal intrusion into the conduct of state affairs.” The weak enforcement practices of the Civil Rights Division reinforced my belief that President Johnson had stopped the Southern filibuster against the Voting Rights Act by promising federal restraint in its enforcement.

The Voting Rights Section of the Civil Rights Division was put in the position of encouraging cooperation from the same officials who had been beating people for attempting to register. Not surprisingly, white officials in the South resisted the Voting Rights Act, con-

tinuing to change polling places without notice, closing registration offices at times it might be convenient for blacks to register, disqualifying black candidates running for office on spurious grounds, annexing or deannexing communities to prevent a black majority, and purging voter lists between the presidential elections, when voter participation is highest. The civil rights leadership in each county bore the burden of alerting the Justice Department to irregularities, begging for election monitors, and finally finding lawyers to bring lawsuits against local officials. Largely effective when brought, lawsuits by private groups to force implementation of the Voting Rights Act cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and research and often took years. To this day, this burden is borne by private citizens who contribute to organizations like the NAACP [National Association for Advancement of Colored People] Legal Defense Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union. Lawsuits must be brought in each individual jurisdiction, and a successful lawsuit in one county does not ensure compliance in the neighboring county.

One area where the Justice Department has been assertive is in the enforcement of the preclearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act. This has served as a critical enforcement tool to prevent Southern officials from using race-neutral actions designed to reduce black voting strength. Changes in districts, voting procedures, or voting eligibility have to be submitted to the Justice Department for preclearance and opponents of such measures are given an opportunity to explain their objections. Still, local jurisdictions often ignore the preclearance provisions and local black leaders have to take the initiative to inform the Justice Department when these provisions are being violated.

The preclearance provisions are also used to monitor the redistricting of congressional and state legislative districts that occurs after every national census. In the redistricting that took place under the 1990 census, the Justice Department during the administration of President George Bush [Sr.] took a very aggressive line on Voting Rights Act enforcement, which resulted in a dozen new black members of Congress from the Southern states. States like North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama sent blacks to Congress for the first time since Reconstruction. As of this writing, the conservative justices of the Supreme Court have declared many of those districts unconstitutional.

We still await full enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. There were and are so many subtle tools to discourage blacks, other minorities, and poor people from voting. Local political establishments use many tactics: annexation; deannexation of black neighborhoods; petty crimes provisions in eligibility; consolidation of polling places to an area inconvenient for black voters; enactment of at-large election statutes; raising bonds for qualification to stand for office; purging voter lists; raising residency requirements. All these and more undermine the impact of black voters.

In Selma, our goal was to overcome the selective enfranchisement that had been charac-

teristic of the United States throughout its history. It is my belief that a limited franchise and limited voter participation hurts our nation: in order to function as a true democracy, we must have full participation. Voting is not just a right, it's an obligation, like paying taxes. In this country, despite the passage of simplified voter registration provisions in 1992, there is a reluctance to see all Americans registered and voting. A nation committed to full voter participation would experiment with weekend voting, mail-in voting, proportional representation, and full enforcement of the Voting Rights Act until our participation levels were closer to ninety percent rather than below sixty percent.¹⁵

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Young, what were the objectives of the campaign in Selma?
2. Young stressed, "Nonviolent social change requires reconciliation and forgiveness." What do you think he means? Do you agree?
3. In Young's view, to what extent was the Voting Rights Act a success? What is the role of ordinary citizens in enforcing this kind of an act?
4. Why does Young think voting is not just a right, but an obligation? Despite the passage of the Voting Rights Act, voter participation is nowhere near universal. What would it take to reach Young's challenge of 90 percent voter participation?

¹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 226.

² *Ibid.*, 227.

³ *Ibid.*, 227-28.

⁴ Sheyann Webb "Running For Her Life," *Eyes on the Prize: PBS Video Database Resource*, <http://videoindex.pbs.org/resources/eyes/primary/tp3.html> (accessed on July 24, 2006).

⁵ Andrew Young, *Any Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 358.

⁶ John Lewis with Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 349.

⁷ Martin Luther King, Edited by James M. Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writing and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1986), 127.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 129-31.

⁹ "Bridge to Freedom" (1965), *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, VHS, Produced by Henry Hampton (Boston, MA: Blackside, 1986).

¹⁰ President Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to Congress: The American Promise," March 15, 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650315.asp> (accessed on July 24, 2006).

¹¹ Voting Rights Act of 1965, *United States Department of Justice*, http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/eousa/foia_reading_room/usam/title8/cvr00019.htm (accessed on July 24, 2006).

¹² Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.

¹³ David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Random House, 1998), 684-85.

¹⁴ Brian Cabell, "After 36 years in office, Selma Mayor Voted Out," CNN.com <http://transcripts.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/09/12/smitherman.loss/index.html> (accessed on July 24, 2006).

¹⁵ Young, *An Easy Burden*, 368-71.



EPISODE 7:

THE TIME HAS COME (1964–1966)

Episode 7 is the first installment of the original *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads 1965–85*. The eight episodes of *Eyes on the Prize II* examine the challenges activists faced as they worked to translate the legal and legislative victories in the 1950s and early 1960s to social and economic policies and assume greater control over their lives. Those efforts would expand the reach of American democracy and inspire other minorities to fight for recognition and influence. Despite their legal and constitutional successes, black Americans still were subjected to discrimination and terror as they attempted to live out their constitutionally guaranteed rights. Frustration with the slow pace of change and perceived indifference to their cause would lead some black Americans to question many of the key assumptions of the Southern freedom movement, including the need for integration with the white community and the role of nonviolence in the freedom struggle.

Episode 7 focuses on black militancy and the roots of the black power movement. It also tracks the influence of ideas such as black separatism and black nationalism on a new generation of black Americans and analyzes the long-term impact they had on whites who supported the freedom movement.

The first segment of episode 7 introduces Malcolm X and describes how his views challenged the nonviolent tradition of the civil rights movement. Born Malcolm Little in 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska, he grew up in Michigan, Boston, and New York. As a young adult, Little became involved in a life of crime and violence for which he was jailed for several years. While in prison he joined the Nation of Islam* (NOI) and changed his name to Malcolm X. Under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam made inroads into black communities in the urban North by advocating a program of self-help, black separatism, and black nationalism. In the 1950s, the Nation of Islam grew in popularity in these communities and began to challenge long-held beliefs in integration and reconciliation.

In this segment, Malcolm X presents his thoughts on black nationalism and independence.

1946

Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little) is convicted of burglary and sent to prison, where he becomes influenced by the teachings of Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad

1959

Jul. 13-17 The program “The Hate That Hate Produced” airs on television and dramatically depicts the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X to the American public

1964

In Alabama, black activists form the Lowndes County Freedom Organization to mobilize local blacks to register to vote and gain political control of the area

Mar. - Apr. Malcolm X publicly severs ties with the Nation of Islam, undertakes a pilgrimage to Mecca, and converts to Sunni Islam

Jun. 28 Malcolm X publicizes the establishment of the Organization of Afro-American Unity to promote black nationalism and human rights

1965

Feb. 21 Malcolm X is assassinated in New York
Co-author Alex Haley publishes *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

1966

Jun. 5 James Meredith begins a “March Against Fear” from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, but is shot on the second day and confined to a hospital

Jun. 7-26 The SCLC and SNCC, headed by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Stokely Carmichael, lead thousands in a protest designed to complete Meredith’s march

*The Nation of Islam was established in 1930 with the goal of improving the social and economic conditions of blacks in America. Preaching a racially focused version of Islam, the NOI prospered during the 1950s and early 1960s when the organization, under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, attracted disillusioned blacks in urban centers by advocating pride and self-empowerment.

Challenging advocates of nonviolence, Malcolm X declared that blacks could not be expected to respond nonviolently when attacked. The segment also chronicles his break with the Nation of Islam and his evolving vision of black political participation and social change.

The second half of the episode describes Malcolm X's influence on members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).** Black nationalism and the militancy of Malcolm X appealed to SNCC members, many of whom had been beaten and terrorized by segregationists.

After the march from Selma to Montgomery (see Episode 6), SNCC targeted one of the poorest communities of Alabama—Lowndes County, where blacks constituted 80 percent of the population and as of 1965 not a single black person was registered to vote. Testing federal enforcement of the new Voting Rights Act, local farmer John Hulett, with the help of SNCC activists, founded the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO). The LCFO was conceived as an independent political party whose goal was to offer an alternative to the Alabama Democratic Party, which continued to block black voter participation. Seeking an image to represent the party, LCFO members adopted the black panther as their symbol. Despite harassment and threats of violence, LCFO had registered 2000 new black voters by the spring of 1966.

Following the Lowndes County campaign, Stokely Carmichael replaced John Lewis as chairman of SNCC. Carmichael's new, militant vision of black nationalism changed the tone and direction of SNCC.

The episode concludes with the story of James Meredith's "March Against Fear." Meredith, the first black American to enroll at the previously all-white University of Mississippi, had set out on a 200-mile march from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. Meredith hoped his example would encourage blacks to stand up against intimidation and to register to vote. On the second day of his march, Meredith was shot and wounded. Leaders from all the major civil rights organizations came to Mississippi to continue the march, register voters, and protest the violent backlash against the civil rights struggle. Along the route, conflicts over strategy between the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and SNCC rose to the surface. Those tensions—over white participation and the efficacy of nonviolence—became public at a rally in Greenwood, Mississippi. Challenging the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the SCLC, Carmichael announced the arrival of the black power movement.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How do the various people featured in this episode describe the obstacles black Americans faced in their pursuit of freedom?
2. What are the different visions of freedom and democracy articulated in this episode?
3. How did the call for black power shape the direction of the freedom struggle?
4. How did Malcolm X's vision challenge practitioners of nonviolent direct action? Why do you think his ideas resonated with many SNCC activists?
5. Did black separatism and black nationalism offer a long-term, democratic solution to racism and discrimination in America? Did these strategies offer a way to the "prize" the civil rights movement sought?
6. What role should group identity and racial pride have in politics?

**SNCC was a political organization that played a central role in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Begun as an interracial group advocating nonviolence, it adopted greater militancy late in the decade, reflecting nationwide trends in black activism. For more information see "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9399806> (accessed on July 21, 2006)

Document 1: THE FUTURE OF THE MOVEMENT

As a young man, Malcolm X had become involved in a life of crime and violence. In 1946, he was sentenced to seven years in prison for burglary. During his time in prison, Malcolm X converted to Islam and became a disciple of Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Nation of Islam developed a strong following in America's urban centers; the organization offered a powerful vision of black separatism and suggested that blacks needed to develop an independent, black identity. Within a few years, Malcolm X emerged as the Nation of Islam's most prominent spokesman.

In November 1960, WBAI, a New York radio station, hosted Malcolm X and the black activist Bayard Rustin for a discussion on the future of the civil rights movement. Rustin, who was raised as a Quaker, was a tireless campaigner for civil rights. One of the leading strategists of nonviolent direct action, Rustin is best known for organizing the 1963 March on Washington. While Malcolm X and Rustin cared deeply about the plight of black Americans, they differed fundamentally on the right strategy to achieve social change.



May 10, 1963. Malcolm X speaks to the press at Washington, DC's National Airport. Malcolm X became the most prominent spokesman of the Nation of Islam and urged all blacks to adopt a militant approach in defending their rights.

BAYARD RUSTIN: I am very happy to be here and I think Malcolm X can clarify some of the questions he has brought up in my mind. I believe the great majority of the Negro people, black people, are not seeking anything from anyone. They are seeking to become full-fledged citizens. Their ancestors have toiled in this country, contributing greatly to it. The United States belongs to no particular people, and in my view the great majority of Negroes and their leaders take integration as their key word—which means that rightly or wrongly they seek to become an integral part of the United States. We have, I believe, much work yet to do, both politically and through the courts, but I believe we have reached the point where most Negroes, from a sense of dignity and pride, have organized themselves to demand to become an integral part of all the institutions of the U.S. We are doing things by direct action which we feel will further this cause. We believe that justice for all people, including Negroes, can be achieved.

This is not a unique position, and while a controversial one it is certainly not as controversial as the one Malcolm X supports. Therefore I would like to ask him this question: the logic of your position is to say to black people in this country: "We have to migrate and set up some state in Africa." It seems to me that this is where you have to come out.

[MALCOLM] X: Well, Mr. Rustin, let me say this about "full-fledged" or as they say "first-class" citizenship. Most of the so-called Negro leaders have got the Negro masses used to thinking in terms of second-class citizenship, of which there is no such thing. We who fol-

low the Honorable Elijah Muhammad believe that a man is either a citizen or he is not a citizen. He is not a citizen by degree. If the black man in America is not recognized as a first-class citizen, we don't feel that he is a citizen at all. People come here from Hungary and are integrated into the American way of life overnight, they are not put into any fourth class or third class or any kind of class. The only one who is put in this category is the so-called Negro who is forced to beg the white man to accept him. We feel that if 100 years after the so-called Emancipation Proclamation the black man is still not free, then we don't feel that what Lincoln did set them free in the first place.

RUSTIN: This is all well and good but you are not answering my question.

X: I am answering your question. The black man in America, once he gets his so-called freedom, is still 9,000 miles away from that which he can call home. His problem is different from that of others who are striving for freedom. In other countries they are the majority and the oppressor is the minority. But here, the oppressor is the majority. The white man can just let you sit down. He can find someone else to run his factories.

So we don't think the passive approach can work here. And we don't see that anyone other than the so-called Negro was encouraged to seek freedom this way. The liberals tell the so-called Negro to use the passive approach and turn the other cheek, but they have never told whites who were in bondage to use the passive approach. They don't tell the whites in Eastern Europe who are under the Russian yoke to be passive in their resistance. They give them guns and make heroes out of them and call them freedom fighters. But if a black man becomes militant in his striving against oppression then immediately he is classified as a fanatic.

[...]

RUSTIN: Then what you are saying is that you are opposed to integration because it is not meaningful and can't work. If you believe that integration is not possible, then the logic of your position should be that you are seeking to find a piece of territory and go to it. Either you are advocating the continuation of slavery, since you feel we cannot get integration by the methods that I advocate—which is to say the slow, grinding process of integration—or you are proposing separation.

X: We believe integration is hypocrisy. If the government has to pass laws to let us into their education system, if they have to pass laws to get the white man to accept us in better housing in their neighborhoods, that is the equivalent of holding a gun to their head, and that is hypocrisy. If the white man were to accept us, without laws being passed, then we would go for it.

RUSTIN: Do you think that is going to happen?

X: Well, your common sense tells you, sir, that it's not going to happen.

RUSTIN: But if you cannot do it through the constitutional method, and you cannot do it through brotherhood, then what do you see as the future of black people here and why should they stay?

X: As any intelligent person can see, the white man is not going to share his wealth with his ex-slaves. But God has taught us that the only solution for the ex-slave and the slave master is separation.

RUSTIN: Then you do believe in separation.

X: We absolutely do believe in separation.¹

CONNECTIONS

1. Compare the way that Bayard Rustin and Malcolm X view the impediments to black freedom and equality. What led each man to form his particular view? How did their different views influence the strategies they used and their willingness to work within the system? What do you think America would look like had each accomplished his goals?
2. How did Malcolm X characterize the nonviolent movement? Do you agree with his assessment that the movement was “passive”?
3. Why did Malcolm X believe that separation was the only solution to racial discrimination in the United States? Compare the way that Malcolm X and Rustin viewed white people: who were these people in each man's eyes?
4. What questions would you ask Rustin and Malcolm X?

Document 2: **BLACK NATIONALISM**

Malcolm X's brilliance and militancy began to overshadow the leadership of his mentor, Elijah Muhammad. By late 1963, conflicts between Malcolm X and Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad exploded. Malcolm X became increasingly isolated within the NOI and, in early 1964, decided to leave. A few months later, he formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity. The purpose of the new organization was to promote black nationalism—a vision of social and political autonomy among blacks. Malcolm X argued in an interview:

The black man should control the politics of his own community and control the politicians who are in his own community. My personal economic philosophy is [...] that the black man should have a hand in controlling the economy of the so-called Negro community. He should be developing the type of knowledge that will enable him to own and operate the businesses and thereby be able to create employment for his own people, for his own kind.²

In 1964, Malcolm X embarked on a hajj to Mecca (the hajj is the pilgrimage that is required of all Muslims) and converted to Sunni Islam—the largest denomination of Islam. On his hajj, Malcolm X was struck by the interracial harmony he experienced in Mecca. The stark contrast between the “spir-

of unity and brotherhood” among Muslims and race relations in America led Malcolm X to entertain the possibility of black cooperation with white people.³

On his return from the hajj, Malcolm X began to develop a new vision of black political engagement, a vision that had its roots in the ideas of Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and W.E.B. DuBois. In his assessment, the barriers to black freedom were no longer legal (segregation was already against the law) but problems of political power and enforcement. Frustrated with the lack of response to the movement’s appeals to the moral conscience of the nation, Malcolm X believed that blacks needed new allies. During travels through Africa, Malcolm X brought the plight of black Americans to an international audience. By appealing to African nations and the United Nations, he hoped to extend the scope of the freedom struggle and to shift its focus from civil rights (an American, legal issue) to human rights (an international, universal issue). He explained after a trip to Africa:

My purpose is to remind the [...] African heads of state that there are 22 million of us in America who are also of African decent and to remind them also that we are the victims of [...] America’s colonialism or American imperialism and that our problem is not an American problem, it’s a human problem. It’s not a Negro problem. It’s a problem of humanity. It’s not a problem of civil rights, but a problem of human rights.⁴

But this vision was crippled by the harsh oppression of blacks, he exclaimed in front of students in a public debate held in Oxford, England, in December 1964. He continued:

I live in a society whose social system is based upon the castration of the black man, whose political system is based on the castration of the black man, and whose economy is based upon the castration of the black man.

They came up with what they call a civil rights bill in 1964, supposedly to solve our problem and after the bill was signed, three civil rights workers were murdered in cold blood (see Episode 5). Civil rights bill down the drain. No matter how many bills passed, black people in that country where I’m from, our lives were not worth two cents. Well any time you live in a society supposedly based upon law and it does not enforce its own law because the color of a man’s skin happens to be wrong, then I say those people are justified to resort to any means necessary to bring about justice where the government can’t give them justice.⁵

At the invitation of SNCC, on February 14, 1965, Malcolm X visited protestors in Selma, Alabama (see Episode 6). There he met Coretta Scott King, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s wife, and expressed a desire to support other civil rights leaders. Speaking to reporters, he explained:

I think the people in this part of the world would do well to listen to Dr. Martin Luther King and give him what he’s asking for and give it to him fast before some other factions come along and do it another way. What he’s asking for is right, that’s the ballot. And if he can’t get it the way he’s trying to get it, then it’s going to be gotten, one way or the other.⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. What did black nationalism mean to Malcolm X? What did he believe were the political, economic, and social goals of black nationalism?
2. How did Malcolm X's rhetoric change between the interview with Rustin and his break with the Nation of Islam?
3. What is the difference between civil rights and human rights? Why did Malcolm X think that black Americans should focus on human rights rather than civil rights? Why did he think they should turn to the United Nations for support?
4. Malcolm X was born in 1925 as Malcolm Little. He changed his name three times during his lifetime:
 - During the early 1940s, he was known as Detroit Red—a reference to the color of his hair.
 - On his release from prison in 1953, he took the name Malcolm X—a symbolic break from the name “Little,” which he considered to be a slave name.
 - After his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964, he changed his name to el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz (in Arabic, *hajj* is the pilgrimage devout Muslims are obliged to take; *malik* means king or monarch; and *shabazz* refers to holy people, presumably of an ancient Asian nation from which blacks descended).

What can names tell us about a person's identity? What identities did Malcolm X adopt in the names he chose for himself? What political stances were involved in his name changes? How did they represent his transformation as a person, leader, and activist?

Document 3: MALCOLM AND MARTIN

Tensions between the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X, which had already become public following Malcolm X's comments on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963, reached new heights when Malcolm X's house was fire-bombed on February 14, 1965. Fortunately, Malcolm X and his family escaped physical harm. A week later, during a speech in Harlem's Audubon Ballroom, three men, all with ties to the Nation of Islam, rushed the stage and shot him. He was pronounced dead in a nearby hospital.

In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Coretta Scott King remembered Malcolm X. She used that opportunity to talk about the similarities and differences between her husband's and Malcolm X's views of the freedom struggle:

I think that Martin and Malcolm agreed in terms of the ultimate goal of the freedom struggle. I don't think there was any difference there. I think it was basically one of strategy. My husband believed that to accomplish the goals of freedom and justice and equality it was necessary to use nonviolent means, particularly in a society such as ours, where we were ten percent of the population. And he believed finally that nonviolence was the only alternative that oppressed people had in this kind of society. I think Malcolm felt that people had a right to use any means necessary, even violence, to achieve goals of their freedom. I think that was the basic difference. Martin, I don't think, ever spoke publicly against Malcolm in any forum. I think Malcolm did against Martin, unfortunately. But Martin never held that against him.

I think they respected each other. I know Martin had the greatest respect for Malcolm and he agreed with him in terms of the feeling of racial pride and the fact that black people should believe in themselves and see themselves as lovable and beautiful. Martin had a strong feeling of connectedness to Africa and so did Malcolm. I think that if Malcolm had lived, at some point the two would have come closer together and would have been a very strong force in the total struggle for liberation and self-determination of black people in our society.⁷

James Cone, the author of *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, was asked what are the most common misperceptions about King, Malcolm X, and their visions of social change in American democracy. Cone responded:

The most common misperception about Martin King is that he was nonviolent in the sense of being passive. That is incorrect and he would have rejected it absolutely. In fact, Martin King would say that if nonviolence means being passive, he would rather advocate violence. Nonviolence for him meant direct action, not passivity in the face of violence, so the world would understand how brutal the system is upon those who are poor and weak.

The most common misunderstanding of Malcolm X is that he advocated violence. Malcolm did not advocate violence but rather self-defense. He did not believe that oppressed people could gain their dignity as human beings by being passive in the face of violence. There was some tension between Malcolm and Martin largely because they tended to accept these perceptions of [each other]. But what is revealing is that Martin King came to realize that Malcolm did not really advocate violence in the same way as [for example,] the Ku Klux Klan did. Even though he could not go along with self-defense as a form of social change, Martin King did advocate self-defense in terms of individuals who protect their home, their children, and their loved ones [from] people who would hurt them. Malcolm X came to see that Martin King's idea of nonviolence was not passive. Actually, he wanted to join up with the civil rights movement and Martin King largely because [he saw] that nonviolent activists actually created more fear and more change than some of [the] people within the Muslim movement. So he came to see Martin King in a much more positive light than is generally understood.⁸

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Coretta Scott King, how did Malcolm X's view of the struggle against discrimination and exploitation differ from that of her husband? What did the two have in common?
2. Why do you think Cone makes a distinction between nonviolence and passivity? How does he explain the differences?
3. Cone believes that "[t]he most common misunderstanding of Malcolm X is that he advocated violence. Malcolm did not advocate violence but rather self-defense." Why is this distinction important?

Document 4: SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES

Lowndes County's history of raw violence and exploitation earned it the nickname "Bloody Lowndes." During the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama organizers agreed to comply with Judge Johnson's request to cut the number of marchers through Lowndes County to 300, fearing that the authorities would be unable to keep them safe. Hours after the march, Viola Liuzzo, a white civil rights volunteer, was shot by four Klansmen while driving through the county with Leroy Moton (a young black man). As late as 1965, not one black citizen in Lowndes County was registered to vote, despite the fact that black people were 80 percent of the county's population. Bob Mants, a SNCC activist, remembers:

Lowndes County had the reputation of being the most violent county in the state of Alabama. It had a long history of violence and repression. It was in Selma [during the march to Montgomery] that we decided we wanted to tackle Lowndes County. [...] Here was an opportunity, especially with the Voting Rights Act in the making, where it seemed to us that it would be a lot more appropriate to deal with that group of people who were able to register their vote. So this was a major contributing factor to our coming into Lowndes County. That and the abject fear that black people had there.⁹

Days before the Selma to Montgomery March, John Hulett became the first black person since Reconstruction to register to vote. A courageous local farmer, Hulett, with the help of Mants, Stokely Carmichael, and other SNCC activists, founded an alternative to Alabama's all-white Democratic Party: The Lowndes County Freedom Organization. In a 1966 speech, he described the impact of the organization:

Too long Negroes have been begging, especially in the South, for things they should be working for. So the people in Lowndes County decided to organize themselves—to go out and work for the things we wanted in life—not only for the people in Lowndes County, but for every county in the state of Alabama, in the Southern states, and even in California. [...]

In Lowndes County, the sheriff is the custodian of the courthouse [...] who walks around and pats you on the shoulder, who does not carry a gun [...]. After talking to the sheriff about having the use of the courthouse lawn for our mass nominating meeting, not the courthouse but just the lawn, he refused to give the Negroes permission. We reminded him that last year in August, that one of the biggest Klan rallies that has ever been held in the state of Alabama was held on this lawn of this courthouse. And he gave them permission. A few weeks ago an individual who was campaigning for governor—he got permission to use it. He used all types of loudspeakers and anything that he wanted.

But he would not permit Negroes to have the use of the courthouse. For one thing he realized that we would build a party—and if he could keep us from forming our own political group then we would always stand at the feet of the Southern whites and of the

Democratic Party. So we told him that we were going to have this meeting, we were going to have it here, on the courthouse lawn. And we wouldn't let anybody scare us off. We told him, we won't expect you to protect us, and if you don't, Negroes will protect themselves.

Then we asked him a second time to be sure he understood what we were saying. We repeated it to him the second time. [...] And he said, I will not give you permission to have this meeting here. I can't protect you from the community.

Then we reminded him that according to the law of the state Alabama, that this mass meeting which was set up to nominate our candidates must be held in or around a voters' polling place. And if we decide to hold it a half a mile away from the courthouse, some individual would come up and protest our mass meeting. And our election would be thrown out.

So we wrote the Justice Department and told them what was going to happen in Lowndes County. All of a sudden the Justice Department started coming in fast into the county. They said to me, John, what is going to happen next Tuesday at the courthouse? I said, We are going to have our mass meeting. And he wanted [to] know where. And I said on the lawn of the courthouse. He said, I thought the sheriff had told you couldn't come there. And I said, Yes, but we are going to be there. Then he wanted to know, if shooting takes place, what are we going to do. And I said, that we are going to stay out here and everybody die together. And then he began to get worried, and I said, Don't worry. You're going to have to be here to see it out and there's no place to hide, so whatever happens, you can be a part of it.

And then he began to really panic. And he said, There's nothing I can do. And I said, I'm not asking you to do anything. All I want you to know is we are going to have a mass meeting. If the sheriff cannot protect us, then we are going to protect ourselves. And I said to him, through the years in the South, Negroes have never had any protection, and today we aren't looking to anybody to protect us. We are going to protect ourselves. [...]

That was on Saturday. On Sunday, at about 2 o'clock, we were having a meeting, and we decided among ourselves that we were going to start collecting petitions for our candidates to be sure that they got on the ballot. The state laws require at least 25 signatures of qualified electors and so we decided to get at least 100 for fear somebody might come up and find fault. And we decided to still have our mass meeting and nominate our candidates.

About 2:30, here comes the Justice Department again, and he was really worried. And he said he wasn't satisfied. He said to me, John, I've done all I can do, and I don't know what else I can do, and now it looks like you'll have to call this meeting off at the courthouse.

And I said, we're going to have it.

He stayed around for a while and then got in his car and drove off, saying, I'll see you tomorrow, maybe. And we stayed at this meeting from 2:30 until about 11:30 that night. About 11:15, the Justice Department came walking up the aisle of the church and said to me, Listen. I've talked to the Attorney General of the state of Alabama, and he said that you can go ahead and have a mass meeting at the church and it will be legal.

Then we asked him, Do you have any papers that say that's true, that are signed by the Governor or the Attorney General? And he said no. And we said to him, Go back and get it legalized, and bring it back here to us and we will accept it.

And sure enough, on Monday at 3 o'clock, I went to the courthouse and there in the sheriff's office were the papers all legalized and fixed up, saying that we could go to the church to have our mass meeting.

To me, this showed strength. When people are together, they can do a lot of things, but when you are alone you cannot do anything. [...] We have seven people who are running for office this year in our county: namely, the coroner, three members of the board of education—and if we win those three, we will control the board of education—tax collector, tax assessor, and the individual who carries a gun at his side, the sheriff.

Let me say this—that a lot of persons tonight asked me, Do you really think if you win that you will be able to take it all over, and live?

I say to the people here tonight—yes, we're going to do it. If we have to do like the present sheriff, if we have to deputize every man in Lowndes County 21 and over, to protect people, we're going to do it. There was something in Alabama a few months ago they called fear. Negroes were afraid to move on their own, they waited until the man, the people whose place they lived on, told them they could get registered. They told many people, don't you move until I tell you to move and when I give an order, don't you go down and get registered. [...]

I would like to let the people here tonight know why we chose this black panther as our emblem [...]. But this black panther is a vicious animal as you know. He never bothers anything, but when you start pushing him, he moves backwards, backwards, and backwards into his corner, and then he comes out to destroy everything that's before him. Negroes in Lowndes County have been pushed back through the years. We have been deprived of our rights to speak, to move, and to do whatever we want to do at all times. And now we are going to start moving [...].

We've decided to stop begging. We've decided to stop asking for integration. Once we control the courthouse, once we control the board of education, we can build our school sys-

Where is Lowndes County?

Lowndes County is in the "Heart of Dixie." It is a county in Alabama, and its population is 80% black, while its government is 100% white. Although Negroes do most of the work in Lowndes, they have nothing to show for it. They own but a tiny portion of the land; they attend school in dilapidated, overcrowded, and understaffed schools; and the roads in front of their homes are unpaved. In brief, they live under conditions of poverty, poor housing, over work, under pay, high taxation, with little hope for the future. This life is in striking contrast to the life of the white minority, which owns most of the land, has good jobs, has paved streets, and attends spacious, modern schools.



Lowndes is not a poor county. It has rich plantations, and the \$30 million Dan River Textile Mill. The county government could easily eliminate all remnants of poverty, pave all roads, recondition all schools if it wanted to; but so far it has not seen fit to do so. One reason is that all large land holdings and the Dan River Mill goes untaxed; consequently, there is little money for government, and almost all this goes for the white community.

What is the L.C.F.O.?

For the first time since Reconstruction, the Negro in the South has the vote. But they reason that, "Having the vote without having a say as to who is running is as good as no vote at all." "Negroes in the North have the vote, but they're no better off than we are," they observe. So they have decided to start the Freedom Organization which they control, that they can call their own. For the first time these people have gotten together to form an organization that is truly democratic and responsive to their needs.

The Afro-American community of Lowndes County lives in constant fear. Fear of not having enough to eat. Fear of not having enough to wear. Fear of not having a roof over one's head. Fear of disease. And fear of police suppression if it tries to do anything about its problems.

But the black people have decided that things have to change. They are "sick and tired of being sick and tired." So they have formed the LOWNDES COUNTY FREEDOM ORGANIZATION in order to fight for political power -- the only way to change social conditions.

The L.C.F.O. means the beginnings of a new life for the people who live there. A new hope for a better future: better jobs, better schools, better neighborhoods, better lives! It means an over all feeling of dignity and self-respect.

The L.C.F.O. is a vitally encouraging example to all people, black and white. It is an example of "little people" getting together to solve their problems, to control their government, and hence control their own lives.

What is L.C.F.O. doing?

• **Registering Voters.** Two years ago there were no Negroes registered. Today after SNCC initiated a registration drive, the LCFO has registered over 2600 of the 5000 eligible Negroes. Even though over 130% of the whites are registered (!), Negroes still have the majority!

• **Running Candidates.** Negroes came together democratically to nominate candidates that would honestly represent them. The candidates are for: Sheriff, Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Coroner, and three members of the Board of Education. These candidates are running on a program of tax reform, school reform, and general social-civic reform.

ONE MAN - ONE VOTE



Their symbol is the "Black Panther" which stands for courage, determination, and freedom. It was chosen as an appropriate response to the racist Alabama Democratic Party symbol, the white rooster and its slogan, "White Supremacy/ For the Right."

• **Health Clinics.** Over 90% of the children in the county are undernourished. Most of the adults suffer with high blood pressure. There is a high mortality rate among black people. LCFO is doing things for the people NOW! It is initiating a health campaign, and it is setting up a clinic with doctors and other medical staff.

An LCFO pamphlet explaining its mission. The organization chose a black panther as its emblem—a symbol of "courage, determination and freedom"—in contrast with the Democratic Party's white rooster.

tem where our boys and girls can get an education in Lowndes County. There are 89 prominent families in this county who own 90 percent of the land. These people will be taxed. And we will collect these taxes. And if they don't pay them; we'll take their property and sell it to whoever wants to buy it [...].

We aren't asking any longer for protection—we won't need it—or for anyone to come from the outside to speak for us, because we're going to speak for ourselves now and from now on. And I think not only in Lowndes County, not only in the state of Alabama, not only in the South, but in the North—I hope they too will start thinking for themselves. And that they will move and join us in this fight for freedom [...].¹⁰

CONNECTIONS

1. How did the lawlessness and violence in Lowndes County reveal the betrayal of the promises of American democracy to its citizens?
2. How did Hulett and the supporters of the LCFO hope to use the power of the ballot— newly protected by the Voting Rights Act—to transform Lowndes County?
3. Hulett explained that the people in Lowndes County decided to organize and "work for the things we wanted in life" not just for the people of their county, or their state, but for the people of

California as well. What does he mean? How did he hope the group's actions would expand the application of American democracy?

4. Why did Hulett insist on holding the LCFO meeting in front of the courthouse? How did he hope the LCFO would transform the way individuals and communities regard, and exercise, their political power?
5. According to Hulett, 89 families out of a population of approximately 15,000 owned 90 percent of the land in Lowndes County. Why did Hulett and others feel that concentration of wealth was harmful to democracy? How did Hulett relate that issue to questions of civil and human rights?

Document 5: **BLACK POWER**

By the time John Lewis returned home from a trip with SNCC leaders to Africa in the fall of 1965, it was clear that he was becoming increasingly isolated in the organization. Some openly questioned the effectiveness of Lewis's steadfast commitment to an integrated, nonviolent movement. In May 1966, SNCC staff voted to remove Lewis as chairman and replace him with Stokely Carmichael. Carmichael—fresh from his experiences in Lowndes County—explained why Lewis had to go:

[I]f you took a clear look at John Lewis, he looked more like a young Martin Luther King, Jr. than anything else. A role which he himself was quite happy and pleased with. Because of his policies and the space between SNCC's field workers and himself, he had become alienated from the SNCC staff. So the vote against him represented that. More importantly, it represented the SNCC organizers who understood that the question of morality upon which

King's organization depended to bring about changes in the community was not possible. The SNCC people had seen raw terror and they understood properly this raw terror had nothing to do with morality but had to do clearly with power. It was a question of economic power, of the exploitation of our people, and they clearly saw that the route to this liberation came first through political organization of the masses of the people.

We saw the political organization of the masses as the only route to solving our problem. We placed a strong emphasis on the fact that nonviolence for us was a tactic and not a philosophy [...]. Our direction was clear, with a heavy emphasis on nationalism.¹¹

Carmichael tested his message during James Meredith's "March Against Fear" through Mississippi. During the 220-mile march Carmichael replaced SNCC's famous chant: "We want our freedom and we want it now" with "Black Power." The call for black power, as Carmichael later acknowledged in his autobiography, was received with fear and suspicion.



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November 1966. Stokely Carmichael addresses a crowd in Watts, Los Angeles. Carmichael replaced John Lewis as chairman of SNCC, and his new, militant vision of black nationalism changed the tone and direction of the organization.

Pressed to clarify the meaning of the term, Carmichael wrote a paper with Michael Thelwell in which the two attempted to define black power and dispel a host of misconceptions that surrounded its introduction into America's political lexicon. The position paper, entitled "Toward Black Liberation," called for separating the struggle for black liberation from the terms, tactics, and ideas endorsed by the older generation of black and white activists. It also called for a redefinition of black identity:

[...] Our concern for black power addresses itself directly to this problem: the necessity to reclaim our history and our identity from the cultural terrorism and depredation of self-justifying white guilt. To do this we shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend. [...] Thus the victimization of the Negro takes place in two phases—first it occurs in fact and deed, then, and this is equally sinister, in the official recording of those facts.[...]

Negroes are defined by two forces: their blackness and their powerlessness. There have been traditionally two communities in America. The white community, which controlled and defined the forms that all institutions within the society would take, and the Negro community, which has been excluded from participation in the power decisions that shaped the society, and has traditionally been dependent upon, and subservient to the white community.

This has not been accidental. The history of every institution of this society indicates that a major concern in the ordering and structuring of the society has been the maintaining of the Negro community in its condition of dependence and oppression. This has not been on the level of individual acts of discrimination between individual whites against individual Negroes, but as acts by the total white community against the Negro community. This fact cannot be too strongly emphasized—that racist assumptions of white supremacy have been so deeply ingrained in the structure of the society that it infuses its entire functioning, and is so much a part of the national subconscious that it is taken for granted and is frequently not even recognized.

[...] It is more than a figure of speech to say that the Negro community in America is the victim of white imperialism and colonial exploitation. This is in practical economic and political terms true. There are over twenty million black people comprising 10 percent of this nation. They for the most part live in well-defined areas of the country—in the shantytowns and rural black belt areas of the South, and increasingly in the slums of northern and western industrial cities. If one goes into any Negro community, whether it be in Jackson, Mississippi, Cambridge, Maryland, or Harlem, New York, one will find that the same combination of political, economic, and social forces are at work. The people in the Negro community do not control the resources of that community, its political decisions, its law enforcement, its housing standards; and even the physical ownership of the land,

houses, and stores *lies outside that community*.

It is white power that makes the laws, and it is violent white power in the form of armed white cops that enforces those laws with guns and nightsticks. The vast majority of Negroes in this country live in these captive communities and must endure these conditions of oppression because, and only because, *they are black and powerless*. I do not suppose that at any point the men who control the power and resources of this country ever sat down and designed these black enclaves and formally articulated the terms of their colonial and dependent status, as was done, for example, by the apartheid government of South Africa. Yet, one can not distinguish between one ghetto and another. As one moves from city to city, it is as though some malignant racist planning unit had done precisely this—designed each one from the same master blueprint. [...] [The ghetto is] the result of identical patterns of white racism which repeat themselves in cities as distant as Boston and Birmingham. [...]

In recent years, the answer to these questions which has been given by most articulate groups of Negroes and their white allies, the “liberals” of all stripes, has been in terms of something called “integration.” According to the advocates of integration, social justice will be accomplished by “integrating the Negro into the mainstream institutions of the society from which he has been traditionally excluded.” [...]

This concept of integration had to be based on the assumption that there was nothing of value in the Negro community and that little of value could be created among Negroes, so the thing to do was to siphon off the “acceptable” Negroes into the surrounding middle-class white community. Thus the goal of the movement for integration was simply to loosen up the restrictions barring the entry of Negroes into the white community. [...] The civil rights movement saw its role as a kind of liaison between the powerful white community and the dependent Negro one. The dependent status of the black community apparently was unimportant since—if the movement were successful—it would blend into the white community anyway. We made no pretense of organizing and developing institutions of community power in the Negro community, but appealed to the conscience of white institutions of power. The posture of the civil rights movement was that of the dependent, the suppliant. [...]

As long as people in the ghettos of our large cities feel that they are victims of the misuse of white power without any way to have their needs represented—and these are frequently simple needs: to get the welfare inspectors to stop kicking down their doors in the middle of the night, and the cops from beating their children, to get the landlord to exterminate the vermin in their home, the city to collect their garbage—we will continue to have riots. These are not the product of “black power,” but of the absence of any organization capable of giving the community the power, the black power, to deal with its problems.

SNCC proposes that it is now time for the black freedom movement to stop pandering to the fears and anxieties of the white middle class in the attempt to earn its “good will,” and to return to the ghetto to organize these communities to control themselves.¹²

CONNECTIONS

1. John Lewis and other proponents viewed nonviolence as a way of life and a moral principle of the movement. In contrast, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and others saw nonviolence as a tactic. Believers in nonviolent direct action understood that their actions could prompt a violent response. For them, the violent backlash sharpened the moral question at the heart of the freedom movement. How did proponents of nonviolence hope to build broader support for the expansion of democracy? Why do you think Carmichael and other SNCC members were skeptical about the power of nonviolence to transform the country?
2. What did it mean for the movement when SNCC changed its slogan from “Freedom Now” to “Black Power”?
3. What do you think caused Carmichael to rethink his vision for the future of SNCC?
4. Carmichael and Thelwell argued that black power was a call for blacks to reclaim their history and identity. From whom did they have to reclaim it? Why was the assertion of black identity critical for the struggle for liberation?
5. Carmichael and Thelwell argued that the “racist assumptions of white supremacy have been so deeply ingrained in the structure of the society that it infuses its entire functioning.” What did they mean by that statement? If the problems in black communities were not the result of the sinister actions of individual whites, what caused them?
6. Why were Carmichael and Thelwell critical of integration as a strategy for the black freedom movement? What concerns did they address about integration? What role do you think integration should play in a democratic struggle for justice and equal rights?

¹ Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise (eds.), *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 164–68.

² Malcolm X, “The Time Has Come,” *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads-1965 to 1985*, VHS, Produced by Henry Hampton (Boston, MA: Blackside, 1989).

³ Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with assistance of Alex Haley, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), 339.

⁴ Malcolm X, “The Time Has Come”

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 264.

⁸ “Malcolm and Martin: Still Teachers of Resistance: The Satya Interview with James H. Cone,” <http://www.satyamag.com/mar04/cone.html> (accessed on May 26, 2006).

⁹ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 270-271.

¹⁰ John Hulett, “How the Black Panther Party Was Organized,” *The Black Panther Party* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1966) as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 273-78.

¹¹ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 279–80.

¹² Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, “Toward Black Liberation,” *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 7 (Autumn 1966), 639-49.



EPISODE 8:

TWO SOCIETIES (1965–1968)

Northern cities served as the backdrop for confrontations on a scale the civil rights movement had never seen before the mid-1960s. Scarred by widespread discrimination, black inner-city neighborhoods became sites of crumbling houses, poverty, and street violence. Although the black-led movement for social change and equality in the North had a long history, it had not received the same media attention the struggle in the South had. In the mid-1960s, however, many activists who participated in the Southern freedom struggle headed north determined to refocus the nation’s attention on the plight of urban blacks. Additional impetus came after the summer of 1964, when riots swept urban centers across the nation, and in the wake of the 1965 August riot in Watts, Los Angeles. These riots also made the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., keenly aware of the need for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to extend the scope of its operation beyond the confines of the South.

When the SCLC brought their nonviolent movement to the North, they selected Chicago, Illinois, where a pre-existing grassroots movement eagerly awaited their leadership and support. Together, they decided to organize a campaign against unemployment, discrimination, and inadequate housing. The activists faced a host of obstacles including the political machine of Mayor Richard Daley, Chicago’s longest-serving mayor, and a pervasive distrust among some black leaders. Mayor Daley, who had supported Southern civil rights campaigns, was nevertheless wary of the SCLC’s efforts in Chicago. His half-hearted and evasive responses sent King a clear message of disapproval. As activists focused their campaign on the slums, anger in black communities built up.

In July 1966, King led a massive demonstration in a dramatic march from Soldier’s Field to city hall, where he posted a list of comprehensive demands on business, local, and national leaders. This episode then follows the Chicago

1965

Aug. 11-17 Following a confrontation with the LA police, a riot breaks out in the district of Watts in Los Angeles destroying large areas of the neighborhood; 34 residents are killed

1966

Jan. King and the SCLC shift their attention to Northern urban centers and join the Chicago Freedom Movement to campaign against poverty and discrimination

Jul. 10 King leads a march of 5,000 to the City Hall and posts a list with the group’s demands for ending discrimination

Jul. 12-16 When Chicago police officers attempt to close off fire hydrants black residents were using to cool off from the summer heat, a four-day riot breaks out

Aug. 5 King leads a march in southwest Chicago to protest the deplorable living conditions in the slums and widespread discrimination against black homebuyers

Aug. 26 The Chicago Freedom Movement signs a 10-point agreement with Mayor Daley to implement open housing laws and other measures. King leaves Chicago. Activists are disappointed that the SCLC has moved on and lead an independent march into the hostile white suburb of Cicero

1967

Jul. 23 A raid by Detroit police officers on an illegal night club explodes into a devastating race riot that results in 43 deaths and millions of dollars of property damage

Jul. President Lyndon B. Johnson establishes the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, commonly known as the Kerner Commission, to investigate the causes of the 1967 race riots

1968

Feb. The Kerner Commission reports that economic disparities and racial discrimination were the cause of the civil unrest behind the race riots of 1967, asserting that the country was being divided into two separate and unequal societies, one white and one black

campaign as it moved beyond the ghetto.* Frustrated with their efforts to improve living conditions in the slums, organizers looked for ways to challenge housing segregation in Chicago's white neighborhoods. For, in the North, segregation wasn't written into law; rather, it was often enforced by government agencies and maintained by long-standing customs followed by ordinary people in the private and commercial sectors. In many cases, banks and real estate agents simply refused to offer fair loans to black customers (a practice common throughout the North). In others, home sellers attached "covenants" (private agreements) on their properties which prevented selling the house to blacks. These unofficial policies drove up housing prices in the ghettos and kept blacks out of white neighborhoods. In an attempt to draw attention to these discriminatory strategies, the SCLC decided to hold marches in the traditionally white neighborhoods of Gage Park and Marquette Park. In Gage Park, the peaceful protestors encountered white residents who carried Nazi swastikas and set off homemade bombs. After the violent outbreak, Mayor Daley brokered a tenuous peace agreement with King. Assured that nonviolent resistance could work in the North, the SCLC redirected its attention to other locations.

But local organizers thought the struggle was far from over. Despite King's objections, activists from Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) decided to lead a march into the Chicago suburb of Cicero, a town notorious for its hostile segregationist attitudes (15,000 blacks worked in the area, but none of them lived there). In a shift from the Chicago movement's earlier nonviolent approach, when the demonstrators were attacked by angry mobs, some fought back.

The second segment of the episode focuses on Detroit, Michigan, in 1967, where 40 percent of the population was black. Although the black community had several elected officials and two black congressmen, it faced widespread discrimination in almost every area. Moreover, despite a prosperous auto industry, black citizens continued to struggle for decent livelihoods. Their feelings of powerlessness were reinforced by widespread police brutality and regular raids on black-owned businesses. In July, pressure reached a boiling point when police raided an after-hours club during a reception for black veterans. The raid turned into an all-out confrontation. Over the course of five days of rioting, gun battles and fires raged throughout the city. In an effort to stem the violence, President Lyndon B. Johnson sent federal troops to aid National Guardsmen and local firefighters. In the wake of the riot, forty-three people were dead, seven thousand had been arrested, and thousands were left homeless.

Following the events in Detroit, President Johnson established an advisory commission headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner to investigate the root causes of the riots in Detroit. In late February 1968, the Kerner Commission on Civil Disorders published a report stating that America is "moving towards two societies: black and white—separate and unequal." The report urged the nation to remove racial barriers in education, employment, housing, and all other areas of public services. By then, however, President Johnson had turned his attention to the war in Vietnam.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What new challenges did the movement face when it shifted its focus to urban centers in the North? How did the struggle there differ from the struggle in the South? What factors were similar?
2. What were the characteristics of discrimination in Northern urban slums? How does discrimination differ from segregation? Was the struggle against discrimination harder than the battle against segregation in the South?
3. In what ways did the civil unrest in the mid-1960s challenge the leadership, strategies, and philosophy of King and the SCLC?
4. What is the distinction between a protest and a riot? What conditions make it most likely for a protest to turn violent? Why did the conflicts in Los Angeles and Detroit escalate into riots?

*The producers of *Eyes on the Prize* use the word "ghetto" to describe racially distinct poor urban neighborhoods.

5. What role did the riots play in the movement for black freedom?

Document 1: KING IN WATTS

On Wednesday August 11, 1965, a California Highway Patrol Officer pulled Marquette Frye over on 116th Street in Watts, a neighborhood in South Central Los Angeles. Frye's brother, Ronald, had just been discharged from the Air Force and the two were celebrating. The officer taunted the Fryes while he administered a sobriety test to Marquette. When the two reportedly laughed, the backup officer pointed a shotgun just as their mother, Rena, arrived on the scene. Before long, a crowd of over 1,000 onlookers gathered. Events escalated and an officer hit Marquette with a nightstick. In the confrontation that ensued both Ronald and his mother were bruised, and all three Fryes were taken into custody. When additional police arrived, they were barraged with insults and rocks. Unable to control the crowd, the police pulled out; in the chaos that followed, crowds chanted, "burn, baby, burn," and six hundred buildings were either destroyed or damaged in six days of rioting.

King felt compelled to respond to the riots. Despite warnings, King flew to Los Angeles to meet with local leaders in an effort to encourage them to use nonviolent tactics to protest police brutality. Nearly a week after the Fryes' arrest, King was able to deliver his message to locals. Taylor Branch describes the reception King received in his book *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68*:

King pushed through a crowd that engulfed the Westminster Neighborhood Association in the burned-out heart of Watts, and climbed on a small platform with [Bayard] Rustin a step behind, just above heads packed within reach of their chins. A man shouted, "Get out of here, Dr. King! We don't want you." A woman shouted at the man, "Get out, psycho."

Rustin pleaded with the crowd to hear King, who tried several times to begin. "All over America," he said, "Negroes must join hands and—"

"And burn!" shouted a young man near him.

"And work together in a creative way," King persisted.

A young woman called out that "[Police Chief] Parker and [Mayor] Yorty" should come themselves to "see how we're living." Another cried, "They'll burn the most." A third scoffed that big shots never would bring air-conditioned Cadillacs to Watts.

King promised to do "all in my power" to persuade the police chief and mayor to talk with residents. "I know you will be courteous to them," he said with a smile, which brought howls of laughter. He asked about living conditions, police relations, and details of the riots, then shouted out that he believed firmly in nonviolence. "So maybe some of you don't quite agree with that," said King. "I want you to be willing to say that."

"Sure, we like to be nonviolent," called out one man, "but we up here in the Los Angeles area will not turn that other cheek." He denounced local Negro leaders as absentees: "They're selling us again, and we're tired of being sold as slaves!"

Over cheers and cross-talk, another man's voice prevailed. "All we want is jobs," he yelled. "We get jobs, we don't bother nobody. We don't get no jobs, we'll tear up Los Angeles, period."

King continued when the exchanges died down. "I'm here because at bottom we are brothers and sisters," he said. "We all go up together or we go down together. We are not free in the South, and you are not free in the cities of the North."

This time he ignored interruptions. "The crowd hushed, though," observed reporters for the *Los Angeles Times*, "as Dr. King began to speak in an emotion-charged voice." A correspondent for the Negro weekly *Jet* agreed: "The jeering had stopped, and the cynics were drowned out by applause and cheers." King preached on the suffering purpose of the movement to build freedom above hatred. "Don't forget that when we marched from Selma to Montgomery," he intoned, "it was a white woman who died." He called the roll of white martyrs who had joined black ones, crying out that James Reeb had followed Jimmie Lee Jackson in Selma, as Schwerner and Goodman were lynched with James Chaney in Mississippi, the year after Medgar Evers was shot. "Elijah Muhammad [the leader of the Nation of Islam] is my brother, even though our methods are different," King shouted to a thunderclap of surprise, and his peroration built hope on boundless redemption. "There will be a brighter tomorrow," he cried. "White and black together, we shall overcome."¹

CONNECTIONS

1. What is a riot? Why do some incidents become riots?
2. Why do you think King felt it was essential to go to Watts and spread his message of nonviolence? What do you think he hoped to accomplish? Based on this account, how would you judge the results?
3. Branch writes that King spoke about "the suffering purpose of the movement to build freedom above hatred." What does he mean? How do his comments relate to the religious philosophy behind the nonviolent movement?

Document 2: THE CHICAGO PLAN

As one of the world's leading commercial centers, Chicago, Illinois, attracted Southern blacks who moved north in search of opportunities and greater freedoms. What they encountered, however, was the harsh reality of those racially isolated, neglected, low-income neighborhoods known as urban ghettos. The novelist James Baldwin grew up in the historically black neighborhood of Harlem in New York City. In his essay "Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter From Harlem," about life in the ghetto, Baldwin recalled being asked, "Why don't all the Negroes in the South just move North?" He responded that they invariably, "do not escape Jim Crow: they merely encounter another, not-less-deadly variety. They do not move to Chicago, they move to the South Side; they do not move to New York, they move to Harlem."²

Segregated not by law but by social and economic customs, blacks were forced to live within the confines of a ghetto, where they faced inadequate education, unlivable apartments, and chronic unemployment. White Northerners, Baldwin warned,

indulge in an extremely dangerous luxury. They seem to feel that because they fought on the right side during the Civil War, and won, they have earned the right merely to deplore what is going on in the South, without taking any responsibility for it; and that they can ignore what is happening in Northern cities [...].³

Despite the prosperous national economy, a decline in several industrial sectors in the 1950s led to high rates of unemployment among black Chicagoans; in its decrepit ghettos, poverty, gang crime, and disillusion held sway. In 1966, the SCLC joined grassroots organizations in Chicago in the hopes that nonviolent direct action would bring national attention to the plight of the Northern urban poor. King explained that “if we can break the backbone of discrimination in Chicago, we can do it in all the cities in the country.”⁴ In January 1966, the SCLC’s Reverend James Bevel drafted the *Chicago Plan*. In the excerpt below, Bevel offered an overview of the situation in Chicago:

Chicago is a city of more than a million Negroes. For almost a century now it has been the northern landing place for southern migrants journeying up from the Mississippi Delta. It was the Promised Land for thousands who sought to escape the cruelties of Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee; yet, now, in the year 1966, the cycle has almost reversed. Factories moving South, employment and opportunities on the increase, and recent civil rights legislation are rapidly disintegrating the cruelties of segregation. The South is now a land of opportunity, while those who generations ago sang, “Going to Chicago, sorry but I can’t take you,” now sink into the depths of despair.

Educational opportunities in Chicago, while an improvement over Mississippi, were hardly adequate to prepare Negroes for metropolitan life. A labor force of some 300,000 have found little beyond low paying service occupations open to them, and those few who possessed skills and crafts found their ranks rapidly being depleted by automation and few opportunities for advancement and promotion. In 1960, Negroes represented twenty-three percent of the population and accounted for forty-three percent of the unemployed. This was not including the thousands of new migrants and young adult males who were entering the laboring market, but who had not yet made their way to an unemployment office, knowing full well in advance that only a few dirty jobs were available to them.

Those few Negroes who were fortunate enough to achieve professional and managerial status found themselves victimized in their search for adequate housing. Two distinct housing markets were maintained by Chicago real estate interests, carefully separate and controlled; and those who were able to make what should have been a living wage found that they had to pay ten to twenty percent more on rental of homes, purchase of property, and insurance and interest rates than their white counterparts.

Langston Hughes asks, “What happens to a dream deferred?” But these dreams were not deferred, they were denied and repudiated by vicious though subtle patterns of exploitation. So the dreams do not “dry up like raisins in the sun.” They decay like sun-ripened oranges that are devoured by worms and birds until they fall to the ground, creating a rot-

ten mess. But centuries ago Victor Hugo proclaimed that, “When men are in darkness, there will be crime; but those who have placed them in darkness are as much responsible for the crime as those who commit it.” And so the social consequences of our repudiated dreams, denied opportunities and frustrated aspirations are very much present.

Chicago is not alone in this plight, but it is clearly the prototype of the northern urban race problem [...].

THE SCLC PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

In our work in the South two principles have emerged: One, the crystallization of issues, and two, the concentration of action. In Birmingham we confronted the citadel of southern segregation. In 1963, not one aspect of Birmingham community life was desegregated. In approaching this complex segregated society, the issue was simplified deliberately to: Segregation. Early newspaper critiques challenged the simplification and offered a thousand rationalizations as to why such complex problems could not be dealt with so simply and suggested a hundred more “moderate, responsible” methods of dealing with our grievances. Yet it was the simplification of the issue to the point where every citizen of good will, black and white, north and south, could respond and identify that ultimately made Birmingham the watershed movement in the history of the civil rights struggle.

The second point was the concentration of action, and we chose lunch counters, a target which seemed to most social analysts the least significant but one to which most people could rally. It was a target wherein one might achieve some measure of change yet which sufficiently involved the lines of economic and social power to a point beyond itself—to the larger problem. The concentration of action led to an immediate local victory at the level of the lunch counter, but pointed beyond the lunch counter to the total problem of southern segregation and produced a ten-title legislative victory on a national level in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

THE PROBLEM IN CHICAGO

For the past months the SCLC staff has been working in Chicago trying to apply the SCLC philosophy to the problem of Chicago. Their work has been concerned with strengthening community organizations and recruiting new forces to join in a nonviolent movement, but they have also given a great deal of thought to the crystallization and definition of the problem in Chicago in terms which can be communicated to the man on the street, who is most affected. The Chicago problem is simply a matter of economic exploitation. Every condition exists simply because someone profits by its existence. This economic exploitation is crystallized in the SLUM.

A slum is any area which is exploited by the community at large or an area where free

trade and exchange of culture and resources is not allowed to exist. In a slum, people do not receive comparable care and services for the amount of rent paid on a dwelling. They are forced to purchase property at inflated real estate value. They pay taxes, but their children do not receive an equitable share of those taxes in educational, recreational and civic services. They may leave the community and acquire professional training, skills or crafts, but seldom are they able to find employment opportunities commensurate with these skills. And in the rare occasions when they do, opportunities for advancement and promotion are restricted. This means that in proportion to the labor, money and intellect which the slum pours into the community at large, only a small portion is received in return benefits. [James] Bevel and our Chicago staff have come to see this as a system of internal colonialism, not unlike the exploitation of the Congo by Belgium.

This situation is true only for Negroes. A neighborhood of Polish citizens might live together in a given geographic area, but that geographic area enters into free exchange with the community at large; and at any time services in that area deteriorate, the citizens are free to move to other areas where standards of health, education and employment are maintained. [...]⁵

CONNECTIONS

1. Baldwin wrote, “one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one’s own.”⁶ What do you think he meant? How do his comments relate to his perception of the prevailing American view of life in the ghetto? According to Baldwin, why didn’t many Northerners recognize the systematic discrimination that led to the formation of Northern ghettos?
2. How did the SCLC distinguish the problems of black residents of a Northern city like Chicago from those in a Southern city like Birmingham?
3. According to the SCLC’s Chicago Plan, what made Chicago a “prototype of the northern urban race problem”? What do you think has changed since the SCLC drafted the Chicago Plan? What obstacles remain?
4. In the Chicago Plan, Reverend Bevel made a reference to the Langston Hughes poem “Harlem.” Hughes concluded his 1951 poem with the question “What happens to a dream deferred?” Why do you think Bevel used this metaphor? What are the consequences of deferred dreams and ambitions? Read the poem and consider Hughes’s description of life in Harlem. Compare it to the analysis of the Chicago Plan. How do the different accounts build a picture of life for black citizens in the ghettos of the North?
5. How did the Chicago Plan define a “slum”? How did slums embody the problems in Chicago and other Northern cities?

Document 3: DEMANDS

An umbrella organization called the Chicago Freedom Movement, the SCLC, and the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO, which represented a coalition of local organizations) coordinated the campaign in Chicago. The CCCO was formed in 1962 to protest the segregationist policies of Chicago school superintendent, Benjamin Willis. By 1965, the CCCO reached out to the

SCLC in an effort to breathe new life into their organization. Under the Chicago Plan, the battle against Chicago's racial and economic problems spread to all facets of life. Led by the Reverend Jesse Jackson, one of the first initiatives of CCCO—Operation Breadbasket—was designed to improve economic opportunities for blacks. Other initiatives dealt with school reform, welfare programs, and equal housing opportunities. On July 10, 1965, King led a massive march from Soldiers Field (the home of the Chicago Bears Football Team), to city hall, where he posted a list of demands for Mayor Daley, the city council, and other city and state institutions:

REAL ESTATE BOARDS AND BROKERS

1. Public statements that all listings will be available on a nondiscriminatory basis.

BANKS AND SAVINGS INSTITUTIONS

1. Public statements of a nondiscriminatory mortgage policy so that loans will be available to any qualified borrower without regard to the racial composition of the area.

THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

1. Publication of headcounts of whites, Negroes and Latin Americans for all city departments and for all firms from which city purchases are made.
2. Revocation of contracts with firms that do not have a full scale fair employment practice.
3. Creation of a citizens review board for grievances against police brutality and false arrests or stops and seizures.
4. Ordinance giving ready access to the names of owners and investors for all slum properties.
5. A saturation program of increased garbage collection, street cleaning, and building inspection services in the slum properties.

POLITICAL PARTIES

1. The requirement that precinct captains be residents of their precincts.

CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE CHICAGO DWELLING ASSOCIATION

1. Program to rehabilitate present public housing including such items as locked lobbies, restrooms in recreation areas, increased police protection and child care centers on every third floor.
2. Program to increase vastly the supply of low-cost housing on a scattered basis for both low and middle income families.

BUSINESS

1. Basic headcounts, including white, Negro and Latin American, by job classification and income level, made public.
2. Racial steps to upgrade and to integrate all departments, all levels of employment.

UNIONS

1. Headcounts in unions for apprentices, journeymen and union staff and officials by job classification. A crash program to remedy any inequities discovered by the headcount.
2. Indenture of at least 400 Negro and Latin American apprentices in the craft unions.

GOVERNOR

1. Prepare legislative proposals for a \$2.00 state minimum wage law and for credit reform, including the abolition of garnishment and wage assignment.

ILLINOIS PUBLIC AID COMMISSION AND THE COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AID

1. Encouragement of grievance procedures for the welfare recipients so that recipients know that they can be members of and represented by a welfare union or a community organization.
2. Institution of a declaration of income system to replace the degrading investigation and means test for welfare eligibility [...].⁷

CONNECTIONS

1. In the South, discrimination against blacks was codified in the Jim Crow system and state laws. In the North, racism assumed an economic form; it was encoded in practices and economic policies that primarily benefited whites (although the North had its share of poor whites). In Chicago, to whom did the SCLC appeal in order to break the link between race and poverty? Where did the power lie?
2. How can economic policies (such as discriminatory lending and housing practices) divide a community? How can such practices legitimize the exploitation of one group by another? How do policies like the ones used in Chicago conflict with basic democratic principles?

Document 4: ON TO CICERO

By August, city leaders, embarrassed by the violence and national attention their city received after the Chicago Freedom Movement's open-housing marches, decided to discuss a settlement. Andrew Young, a top SCLC aide, recalled the event:

SCLC went to Chicago to see if non-violence would work in the North [...]. The marches were part of an open-housing effort. But we were also trying to end slums and create home-ownership opportunities for poor people. We were trying to generate



1966: Whites protesting the open-housing campaign. In the first massive civil rights campaign outside the South, activists marched through hostile white neighborhoods to protest discriminatory housing practices.

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jobs. We were trying to integrate the economic opportunities through Operation Breadbasket [...]. And all of these were working enough to know that we could do many of the same things in the North that we'd done in the South. But Chicago was much bigger than any city we'd worked in the South. We knew we couldn't do it all at the same time. And that we couldn't sustain an aggressive movement much longer. So we were trying to find a way to wind it up, maybe institutionalize it. We wanted to get some settlement and some response and agreements from Daley. And then commit to a slow, long-term change period.⁸

Linda Bryant Hall, a Chicago native and member of CORE, worked with other activists to improve conditions in Chicago's slums. After King and the SCLC left the campaign in 1966, some groups felt it was time to try new tactics in the struggle. In an attempt to keep the pressure on, CORE's Bob Lucas announced plans to march through Cicero, an all-white community of 15,000, just outside the city of Chicago. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Hall remembered the expectations and tensions surrounding the march to Cicero:

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel when Dr. King came to Chicago?

LINDA BRYANT HALL: Well, when I first heard that Dr. King was going to come to Chicago, I was elated. I said, Oh, my gosh, Chicago is going to get involved in all of this. You know, Dr. King has got a powerful following, a powerful message, and he's going to bring it to Chicago to help with the movement here. We sure need it. I was looking forward to his coming.

INT: Now, what were the differences between the southern communities and the northern community that he was coming to here in Chicago?

L.B.H.: Well, I didn't really understand how different the communities were until he came and the people he brought with him, I got a chance to meet them, and see what kinds of people they were. In the South I got the impression that that community was more monolithic. After he came here, it was quite obvious—at least to me—that this was a more diversified community and the tactics were going to have to be a little different here. [...] We had blacks who lived in Chicago public housing, we had blacks who lived in very poor slum areas, and we had blacks who lived on Chicago's gold coast [...]. In Chicago—as I said—there are people who are very diversified. And some people in Chicago didn't even believe in churches, didn't believe in God; I mean, they were avowed atheists; and for [Martin Luther King, Jr.] to come in now and ask them to come into the church and follow his movement through that mechanism, it didn't wash so well with a lot of people. And then, too, the churches might have—in Chicago—represented something different from what they did in the South. In Chicago, the churches, many of the black churches—not all of them—many of them had very close connections to the political machine. The political machine supported many of the churches. I mean they did so much as buy the

pews where the people set. They provided the church with a storefront. They provided the minister, in some cases, with a salary. So for him, now, to turn to the community people who had been fighting against this kind of setup and say, Come and follow me—you know, it just wouldn't go over. [...]

INT: When Dr. King called off the march [to Cicero on September 4, after the open housing agreement had been signed], how did you feel?

L.B.H.: When he called off the march, we were surprised; we were shocked. This is the march we looked forward to. The other marches were nice. But the one in Cicero had special meaning for us. The Cicero community has been a very hostile community to blacks for years—ever since I can remember. And I looked forward to the time that I could march down those streets in defiance of all those people there. When I was a little girl, we were told never go to Cicero—and, especially, don't go there by yourself. So when Dr. King said he wasn't going to march in that neighborhood, I said, My gosh, well, what's it all about? This is the neighborhood to march in. They've been known to have "toughs" in that neighborhood, and even some gangster connections there. But we were saying, you know, we're talking to all of those white bigots, and whether they're Mafia people, or whether they're just, ah, some white hecklers, we want them to know, yeah, we're going to come to Cicero; Cicero's got to yield, too, like the rest of the country.

So when we decided that we were going to go that morning when we gathered for the march, we had made this big statement, saying we were going to defy Dr. King and march to Cicero. Well, that took a lot more than just conversation to do. So we got in the park at the gathering point, where we had announced to the city in public press releases, we were going to march. There were practically more reporters than there were people; there were about six or seven of us who showed up to go on this march, and we just knew we were going to fall flat on our faces, and just, this is going to be the ultimate in embarrassment. We waited around, we were supposed to start I think about twelve o'clock; we waited around and waited around and waited around until, finally, we had to go. [...]

As we got into Cicero, the hecklers got so bad that everybody decided, well, you know, I'm not going to let my people go over there and maybe I need to go with them. I think it was sort of a groundswell. [...] So as we got into Cicero, we noticed that the National Guard had been alerted, of course. [Chicago CORE president Bob] Lucas had promised the city that there was going to be no violence. [...] When we got there, we noticed that all of the bayonets and the guns that were out were aimed at the marchers and not at the hecklers. The hecklers were throwing bottles and rocks and spitting and calling us all kinds of filthy names and doing some other things that I wouldn't even repeat. But what happened is that people became so excited and [there] was a closeness in that march. Even the Chicago police, I think, saw some of the things that were going on and felt that those

things were unjust, and they decided, for the first time—Chicago police did not beat the marchers, did not throw the marchers around. Chicago police decided to protect us. Because it was obvious who the National Guard were there to protect; they were there to protect Cicero and those people who were heckling us. [...]

INT: How was the character of the Cicero march different from Dr. King's [...] marches in Chicago?

L.B.H.: Well, Dr. King's marches in Chicago were usually made up of movement people. This march was community people. These people had not attended any workshops on non-violence; they had not listened to any lectures on love and loving your fellow man and all; they were just people who were angry about what was happening and wanted to do something. And when they all decided to go on this march, and people started to throw bricks and bottles at us, a couple of people caught the bricks and threw them back, threw rocks back; they even would jump in-between a lady sometimes. Women who were on the march were very protected. [...] These people were saying, you know, yeah, we're going to come to Cicero and we're not going to go limp. We're going to march through Cicero, and we're going to march to the point that we said we were going to march to, and we're going to come back. And that in itself was a triumph, because people just didn't do that in Cicero.⁹

CONNECTIONS

1. Why did local activists want King to come to Chicago? What tensions and expectations did his presence create?
2. How does Hall describe the differences between the black community in the North and the South? How did those differences affect the movement for equality in both sections of the country?
3. What happens to a movement when leaders have decided that they are ready to compromise and the community has not?
4. Hall explains that the Cicero march was not made up of movement people, but was made up of "community people". What does she mean? How did the differences manifest themselves in Cicero?

Document 5: RIOTS

On July 12, 1965, two days after the march to city hall, police shut down a fire hydrant used by youngsters on Chicago's West Side to cool off in the summer heat. Soon, clashes between police and residents exploded; eleven people were injured, including six policemen. During the riot, movement leaders, including Al Raby, took to the streets to calm tensions. Al Raby remembered:

We understood their [the people's] frustration, we were trying to address it and find avenues for that energy and frustration and anger to be channeled in a constructive way.

The riots were a threat to the movement and to everything we were trying to do. The only way we had been successful [...] whether it was voting rights or public accommodations was by garnering the support and understanding of the broader society. There was no way in which a riot promotes that understanding.¹⁰

While leaders were able to quell riots in Chicago, riots in Detroit changed the way people looked at the problems of race and poverty in America. Detroit, Michigan, home to a prosperous car industry, was an unlikely site for riots. Black Americans made up 40 percent of the population and were served by officials who had a reputation for negotiating racial tensions better than many other cities. But conflicts still brewed under the surface: many successful blacks were forced to live in slums; an “urban renewal” project and a new expressway undermined the structure of the black community; and outsourcing and new mechanized production processes in the motor industry left many blacks out of work. In this environment, black militancy held strong appeal.

In addition, a predominantly white police force continually harassed and brutalized blacks. Notorious “elite” teams, ‘Tacs’ or Tactical Squads comprised of four officers, patrolled black communities for illegal alcohol sales, prostitutes, and drugs. During these patrols, suspects were regularly harassed and beaten; in a few cases, blacks were even shot and killed. In July 1967, a ‘tac’ squad entered a club serving alcohol after hours to a reception for black Vietnam War veterans. When they attempted to make arrests, the officers were met with hostile reactions, which attracted a large crowd outside the bar. The confrontation escalated, and blacks from neighboring streets began to riot and set fire to stores known for their discriminatory practices.

Activist and bookstore owner Edward Vaughn remembers the riots that followed:

During the riots, the people who were looting or taking, the people who were in the streets, the people who were making the rebellion, by and large, were people who lived in the community, just average people. I came across a group of brothers [black men], for example, who said they were just fed up and that they did not want to live like they had before, and every night they went out with their guns, and they shot at police, shot at National Guardsmen, and of course, went back into their homes. [...] Most of the people were just community people who just had a sense that they were fed up with everything and they decided they would strike out. That was the way that they would strike back at the power structure.¹¹

By the time calm was restored, forty-three people had been killed. According to the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, estimates for the number of injured was as high as six hundred people, four thousand residents had been arrested, five thousand people were homeless, and 682 buildings were damaged. Property loss from fires ran over \$45 million. Vaughn explained:

It wasn't Black Power that caused the rebellion, it was the lack of power that caused the rebellions around the country. People did not see any hope for themselves. People were beginning to be unemployed more and more. We had no access to government. We were



Detroit, July 1967. Black residents put out a fire during the riots. The Detroit riots were born of black citizens' frustration over unemployment, inadequate housing, and regular harassment by the police.

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still pretty much confined to the ghetto, and then our consciousness was being raised at the same time, and I think the masses of people made a decision that they would do something, and I think that they did.

We felt that we had accomplished something, that the riots had paid off, that we finally had gotten the white community to listen to the gripes and to listen to some of the concerns that we had been expressing for many years. I don't think it was the call for Black Power that did it. I think it was the lack of power that did it.¹²

CONNECTIONS

1. Raby and Vaughn both believed that social change required the understanding of the larger community. However, Al Raby argued that “the riots were a threat to the movement and to everything we were trying to do,” whereas Edward Vaughn felt that the riots “paid off”. How do you explain their different perspectives?
2. What “avenues” could have been found to channel “the energy, frustration, and anger” that Raby describes?
3. Vaughn says of the riots, “I don't think it was the call for Black Power that did it. I think it was the lack of power that did it.” What does he mean?
4. Vaughn uses two different words to describe what happened in Detroit: riots and rebellion. What does each word mean? How are they similar? What are the key differences? Others use the term civil disturbances. Does it matter which word you use?

Document 6: **TWO SOCIETIES: SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL**

In riots that would be surpassed by only the Los Angeles riots of 1992, looting and arson spread to many neighborhoods in Detroit, leaving forty-three people dead, hundreds injured, thousands jailed, and hundreds of buildings damaged or burned down. It took five days and the assistance of federal troops for local firefighters and National Guardsmen to restore peace and order.

In response to the Detroit riots, President Johnson convened an eleven-member commission in July 1967 to investigate root causes of the race riots that had plagued American cities since 1964. The commission, headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, submitted its final report in late February 1968—a little more than a month before dozens of American cities were again lit in flames following the assassination of King. The report warned that discrimination and segregation “now threaten the future of every American” and ended with a call for urgent action. Below are excerpts from the report's introduction:

The summer of 1967 again brought racial disorders to American cities, and with them shock, fear and bewilderment to the nation.

The worst came during a two-week period in July, first in Newark and then in Detroit. Each set off a chain reaction in neighboring communities.

On July 28, 1967, the President of the United States established this Commission and directed us to answer three basic questions:

- What happened?

- Why did it happen?
- What can be done to prevent it from happening again?

To respond to these questions, we have undertaken a broad range of studies and investigations. We have visited the riot cities; we have heard many witnesses; we have sought the counsel of experts across the country.

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.

Reaction to last summer's disorders has quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American.

This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values.

The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society.

This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will.

The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted.

Violence cannot build a better society. Disruption and disorder nourish repression, not justice. They strike at the freedom of every citizen. The community cannot—it will not—tolerate coercion and mob rule.

Violence and destruction must be ended—in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.

Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans.

What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

It is time now to turn with all the purpose at our command to the major unfinished business of this nation. It is time to adopt strategies for action that will produce quick and visible progress. It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens—urban and rural, white and black, Spanish-surname, American Indian, and every minority group.

Our recommendations embrace three basic principles:

- To mount programs on a scale equal to the dimension of the problems;
- To aim these programs for high impact in the immediate future in order to close the gap between promise and performance;
- To undertake new initiatives and experiments that can change the system of failure and frustration that now dominates the ghetto and weakens our society.

These programs will require unprecedented levels of funding and performance, but they neither probe deeper nor demand more than the problems which called them forth. There can be no higher priority for national action and no higher claim on the nation's conscience. [...]

As Commissioners we have worked together with a sense of the greatest urgency and have sought to compose whatever differences exist among us. Some differences remain. But the gravity of the problem and the pressing need for action are too clear to allow further delay in the issuance of this Report.¹³

CONNECTIONS

1. The Kerner Commission concluded that America “is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” What were the causes? Who was responsible for the division?
2. The Commission asserted that “it is time now to turn with all the purpose at our command to the major unfinished business of this nation.” What was America’s “unfinished business”? What actions did the Commission recommend in order for America to finish this “business”?
3. Why do you think the Commission concluded that the process of polarization in America undermined basic democratic values? What solutions would reverse it and bring unity to America?

¹ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68* (New York: Simon Schuster, 2006), 296–97.

² James Baldwin, *Vintage Baldwin* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴ King Encyclopedia, “Chicago Campaign,” *The King Institute*, http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/encyclopedia/chicago.htm (accessed on June 14, 2006).

⁵ “A Proposal by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for the Development of a Nonviolent Action Movement for the Greater Chicago Area,” *King Library and Archives, Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change* as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 291–95.

⁶ Baldwin, *Vintage Baldwin*, 25.

⁷ “Dr. King's Demands of the City of Chicago (1966),” *CFM40, Loyola University Chicago*, <http://www.luc.edu/curl/cfm40/issue1.html> (accessed on June 2, 2006).

⁸ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 314–15.

⁹ “Interview with Linda Bryant Hall,” Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 310–15.

¹⁰ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 309–10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 387.

¹² *Ibid.*, 397.

¹³ Kerner Commission, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), *University of Washington*, <http://faculty.washington.edu/qtaylor/documents/Kerner%20Report.htm>, (accessed on July 24, 2006).



Episode 9 explores the influence of the idea of black power on the freedom movement. It follows leaders of three black communities in their efforts to gain the political and economic power that would enable advancements in employment, housing, and education. Some communities sought power by building coalitions and developing strategies to elect black politicians to public office. For others, black power meant community control over local programs and services: black people taking charge of their own destiny. The first segment illustrates this strategy by tracing the mayoral race in Cleveland, Ohio, between black state legislator Carl Stokes and the Republican candidate, Seth Taft.

In 1966, one year before the city’s municipal election, riots broke out in the predominantly black community of Hough. For several nights, Cleveland’s streets were ablaze. When the riots finally subsided, Carl Stokes, a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, launched a campaign for mayor. The Stokes campaign simultaneously ran a comprehensive voter registration drive among blacks and worked to build support in the white community. Despite setbacks, Carl Stokes won the election by a narrow margin and became the first black mayor of a large city in the United States.

The second segment of this episode takes viewers to Oakland, California, whose police force was known for its harassment of black residents. In October 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP), named in reference to the symbol of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (see Episode 7). The BPP’s calls for community control and armed self-defense to protect residents against police brutality attracted many young blacks from poor communities around the country. Calling themselves revolutionaries, the Panthers fused ideas from the freedom struggles in the US, China and the third world. As the party grew, the BPP’s militant public image overshadowed their many self-help projects, which included health clinics, educational programs, and free breakfasts for children. In a nation that had become accustomed to the language and tactics of nonviolent protest, the Panthers were met with fear and suspicion.

In October 1967, the police stopped Newton during a routine traffic check. The traffic check escalated into a shootout in which one officer died and Newton and a second policeman were injured. Newton was arrested and convicted of voluntary manslaughter. While the charges against Newton were later overturned, government surveillance of the Panthers increased. Despite government attempts to

1966	
Oct.	Huey Newton and Bobby Seale form the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California
1967	
	An interracial governing board is formed in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York, in an effort to submit public schools to community control.
May	A group of armed Black Panthers march into the capital building in Sacramento, California, to protest legislation that would rescind the right of civilians to carry firearms in public
Nov. 7	Democratic candidate Carl Stokes wins the mayoral election in Cleveland, Ohio, and becomes the first black mayor of a major city in the country
1968	
Apr. 6	The BPP and policemen clash in West Oakland, California, in a conflict that leaves three policemen and two Panthers wounded and one Panther dead
Sep.	In protest over the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community school board’s decision to transfer a number of white teachers, the New York teachers’ union organizes a citywide strike
Nov.	In response to the teacher strike, the New York City board of education dismisses the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community board

disrupt party activities (see Episode 12), membership grew as young black men and women set up new Panther chapters across the country.

While the Panthers worked outside of the political system, the final segment of Episode 9 presents an attempt to reconcile the quest for community control of education within a citywide school system. In Ocean Hill–Brownsville, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, 95 percent of the student population was black and Latino. The majority of schoolteachers in the region were white, and many were Jewish. In 1968, as an alternative to integration plans that would involve moving children out of their neighborhoods, New York City officials proposed an experimental school district in Ocean Hill–Brownsville: along with the first black superintendent in New York City, a locally elected, interracial governing board was to control both the school curriculum and district administration. Soon after the plan went into effect, the school board decided to create programs that reflected the cultural and educational needs of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community and to integrate its teaching staff.

Tensions between the United Federation of Teachers (UFT, the New York teachers' union) and the school board surfaced after the board proposed transferring a number of white (and predominantly Jewish) teachers and assistant principals out of the district. Concern over the treatment of Jewish teachers ignited accusations of antisemitism and strained old alliances between black and Jewish communities within the city. While the district argued that it sought to respond to years of discrimination by reshaping the school environment to meet the educational and cultural needs of students, the UFT insisted on job security and fair treatment of its members. Unable to reach an agreement, the UFT called for a citywide strike. The strike pitted the predominantly white, middle-class teachers against the mostly lower middle-class and poor black neighborhood of Ocean Hill–Brownsville. And, despite orders to reinstate the teachers, the school board stood by its original decision. In the fall of 1968, fearing continued disruption and another year of strikes, the city stripped the board of its authority and ended this experiment in community-controlled schools.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why did the producers of *Eyes on the Prize* name this episode “Power!”?
2. What were the various definitions of black power within the movement?
3. What steps did black Americans take to gain control of their lives? How did their efforts inspire others?
4. In a democracy, what can people do when they lose faith in the government?
5. How much community control do you think is workable in a multiethnic democracy?
6. What issues did the community-controlled school initiative in Ocean Hill–Brownsville try to resolve? What tensions did it expose?

Document 1: HOW TO GET ELECTED BY WHITE PEOPLE

Black citizens made up a third of Cleveland’s heterogeneous population of 800,000 residents, which also included Poles, Germans, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Irish, and Italians. While the black community enjoyed some political success, the city had never had a black mayor. Moreover, despite the millions of black citizens who lived in urban centers across the United States, there had never been a black mayor in any major city.

Carl Stokes, a lawyer who grew up in Cleveland, entered politics in the late 1950s. Stokes broke onto the scene when he became the first black American elected to serve in the Ohio House of Representatives. In 1967, Stokes decided to run for mayor in Cleveland. In excerpts from his memoir *Promises of Power: A Political Autobiography*, Stokes reflected on his rise to power:

In the summer of 1957, thirty years old, still poor, but with my law degree, I began to move into Cleveland's political arena. Ten years later I was elected the first black mayor of a major American city with a predominantly white population. I did things other men could or would not do. It came to me not because I had a new politics but because the old politicians had forgotten the most basic lesson: people, acting together, are power. They don't just have power. They *are* power.

With \$120, my brother and I formed the law partnership of Stokes and Stokes, with offices at 10604 St. Clair Avenue, in a lower-middle-class neighborhood at the northern frontier of the ghetto called Glenville. [...] In that first year, although I made much more money than other freshman lawyers, and as much as some veteran practitioners, my more serious efforts were political. I ran the campaign for Lowell Henry, a black man on my ward who was running for city councilman. It was an easy campaign, pure majority politics. Henry was running against a complacent Jewish councilman who, it was to turn out, owned more than eighty thousand dollars in slum properties. We used that and beat him. [...]

But the most effective political work I did on my own behalf in those first years didn't look like political work at all. Jackson and Payne had advised me to get involved with civic groups, the Boy Scouts, the charity drives, and NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and the Urban League. And the churches, always the churches. There is no more effective political force in the black community than the church. When you need good zeal, when you need people out there working for you, having a hundred black preachers out there rallying them up for you is invaluable, unbeatable. So, during the years after I started the practice of law, I did anything I was asked to do in the community.

Judge Jackson would call me and tell me that some small church group needed a speaker and I would accept always and without question. There were plenty of times that I would end up talking to only two or three people, but I would talk and give them my whole load. For the civic and civil-rights groups. I would agree to be a chairman or co-chairman of particular drives, always volunteer work, never elected office. Long before I ran for anything, politics was for me a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. [...]

[In 1958] I was determined to run for public office [...]. It was a marvelous experience. Those white people had never been confronted with a Negro campaigning in their [white-only] clubs before. When I entered the room, there was a chill. The chairman would rarely know what to do, so I would walk over to the other candidates and ask whom I should see about being called to speak. Because of the natural camaraderie that had developed as we saw each other every night, I could depend on finding the right person. Once I opened my mouth, I had an advantage over the other candidates. I was the alien, the exotic, and I knew I could count on their complete attention. Then the amazing thing

happened. I spoke English. Enough has happened since 1960 that it is hard to remember now what a shock I was to them. But in those days whites, especially suburbanites, had lived in pure isolation from blacks. [...]

Some years later I read Robert Dahl's *Who Governs?* which presents a theory of ethnic politics in America, based on a study of the political history of one town, New Haven, Connecticut. When I read that book, I understood instantly that what I was doing was what ethnic groups on the way up had always done. Politics today may not be what it was before the old machine broke down and civil-service procedures ruined the old corrupt patronage systems. But the ladder is still there, even if all of the rungs aren't. [...] When the predominant ethnic group moved up the social and economic ladder, it moved out of organized politics. The people moving out may, at the most, leave one of their own in politics as a kind of boss. But it is always true that the group, having moved up economically, moves out—out geographically as well as politically. And as they move out they are no longer interested in being ward leaders, councilmen, and judges, clerks of court or members of the school board, and they leave a vacuum for the next group. [...]

And I played my appeals the way they have always been played in ethnic coalition politics. The Italian politician would go to his own people and talk about the need for Italian participation in government, he would rant and rave and cry and moan about his Italian pride, about injustice, about Italian culture, all of the things that stir the loyalty of the people. He would let his people know that he felt Italians should take care of Italians. Then he would go all over the rest of the city and talk about democracy, about how government

is for all of the people, about the need for new coalitions for the common good. To outsiders he talked about the great melting pot; to Italians he talked about Italians. That's how we came to have Italian mayors, and Irish and German mayors. It's a game well defined and well understood by the people who play it, each in his own turn. It's the way things have been done for two hundred years. All the black community of Cleveland needed in 1960 was someone who could do that same old thing for them.¹

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October 1967. Carl and Shirley Stokes casting their ballots in the mayoral race in Cleveland. Carl Stokes won the hearts of many whites and became the first black mayor of a major city in the United States.

CONNECTIONS

1. In what ways did Stokes's election represent a milestone for black power? What do you think his election meant for black citizens?

2. Historian and civil rights activist Vincent Harding explains that the election of Carl Stokes and other black politicians have helped to “expand” American democracy: “Somehow, at least for a moment, the intense organizing and the joyful grasping of the reins of the office have symbolized for us a certain coming of age, a claiming of responsibility for ourselves and others.”² What did he mean by “expanded democracy”? How do events like Mayor Stokes’s election change people’s ideas about democracy?
3. What lessons did Mayor Stokes learn about getting elected in a city where white voters outnumbered blacks two to one? How did he balance his appeal to the black community with his message to the city at large?

Document 2: A DELICATE BALANCE

The 1967 Cleveland mayoral race posed a serious problem for Stokes: while he had to secure black loyalty, he could not risk alienating white voters. His dilemma was further complicated by memories of the Cleveland riots the year before. Thus, when the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) decided to come to Cleveland, Stokes “explained to them that they could only bring problems for us.”³ He recalled:

We were juggling a delicate situation that could, with the slightest wrong move, come down around our heads. We had asked them not to come. We had understood why they wanted to come. Cleveland was where the action was, at the focus of the eyes of the black world [...].

When Dr. King made his decision [to come to Cleveland], Dr. Clement [former head of the NAACP and Stokes’s campaign manager] tried to talk to some of his aides, to convince them that we already had a winner, but that it could be lost if black pride started prodding white fears. Dr. Clement told them that we had for the first time the opportunity to seize real power by winning a city hall. Dr. King’s coming would only release the haters and the persons looking for an issue to excite racist reaction to what we were doing.

He was not successful. Dr. King came to town. W. O. Walker arranged a meeting between Dr. King and me in his *Call & Post* office. I had met Dr. King at various national conferences since 1965, but we had never worked together. I felt a towering respect for the man, even awe. Facing down the bigots in Cleveland is one thing, but I knew I would never have had the nerve to walk across that Selma bridge or lead the people against Birmingham’s Bull Connor. King’s courage was of a different order from mine, suitable to different places, different actions. [...] “Martin,” I told him, “if you come in here with these marches and what not, you can just see what the reaction will be. You saw it in Cicero and other northern towns. We have got to win a political victory here. This is our chance to take over a power that is just unprecedented among black people. But I’m very concerned that if

³The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed in 1957 after the successful bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was selected its leader. The SCLC represented a coalition of local church members and reflected the religious nature and structure of black communities in the South. The organization’s goal was to lead the struggle against segregation using tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience.

you come here you're going to upset the balance we've created. You're going to create problems that we do not have now and may not be able to handle. I would rather that you not stay."

How on earth can any black American say that to Martin Luther King? I can tell you it was hard. But I knew I had my own way to make it hard for whites to live with their own prejudices. I knew that Dr. King and I wanted the same things. Finally, I knew my own situation, my own town, and I knew I had it in my hand. Once I [won the mayoral race], I knew I could do things that no civil-rights march ever did. "Carl [...] I will have to stay," he said, "but I promise you there will be nothing inflammatory. We'll try to do a job here and our people will get in touch with your people, and any time that you feel there is something harmful to your overall campaign, just let me know."

Dr. King did limit his visits and he did conduct his activities in a very restrained manner. He helped a great deal in not creating more problems than those posed by his mere presence. And those problems were real. Letters with the signature of the Democratic Party county Chairman, Albert S. Porter, went out, saying that the election of Carl Stokes would mean turning over the city to Martin Luther King, a calamity that was meant to sound on the order of turning over a daughter or sister.

Ever since Dr. King's death, I had had to grapple with the problem of dealing with a small group of black leaders who grew out of the SCLC movement, because they knew of my not wanting Dr. King here. Asking Dr. King not to stay was one of the toughest decisions I ever had to make. It was a confrontation with a man whose recorded words I turn to for solace and inspiration at moments of depression. But it came down to the hard game of politics—whether we wanted a cause or a victory. I wanted to win. Our people needed me to win. I had been the architect for a unique assembly of interests, and I knew with one wrong move it would be just another house of cards.³

CONNECTIONS

1. What was Stokes's concern about King's presence in Cleveland? As a candidate? As a black person who cared about civil rights? As an American?
2. Stokes's concern about the SCLC's activities in Cleveland was political. What does Stokes's dilemma suggest about his understanding of the politics of getting elected?
3. Compare Stokes's response with the reaction of officials in Chicago to SCLC's campaign there (see Episode 8). What is similar about these responses? What are the key differences?

Document 3: THE ORIGINS OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE

Born in Louisiana, Huey P. Newton was named after Huey P. Long, the populist governor and senator from that state. In 1966, while a part-time law student and volunteer at the North Oakland

Neighborhood Anti-Poverty Center in Oakland, California, he and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. As part of their efforts to empower the black community, the BPP protested rent evictions, counseled welfare recipients on their rights, and taught courses in black history. On neighborhood patrols, they carried weapons, tape recorders, and law books. When the police stopped blacks in their community, BPP activists intervened, advised the detainees of their constitutional rights and attempted to prevent police abuse. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Newton remembered the BPP's origins:

It was in 1953, I think, that Oakland had its first black policeman, who was a friend of my father's. His name was Kinner. My father broke friendship with Kinner because of his membership in the Oakland police. Not because he was a policeman, but because at the time the policy was that Kinner could only arrest black people. He could detain a white, but he would have to call a white officer. And my father thought that this was degrading. It was no change from what was happening in the South.

The police, not only in the Oakland community but throughout the black communities in the country, were really the government. We had more contact with the police than we did the city council. The police were universally disliked. In Oakland, in October '66, when the party was founded, there was about one percent blacks on the police department. The police were impolite and they were very fast to kill a black for minor offenses, such as black youth stealing automobiles. They would shoot them in the back and so forth. [...]

Bobby Seale and I used the North Oakland service center as the original work spot to put together our program. They had all the machinery—mimeograph machines and typewriters. The North Oakland service center was a part of the poverty program. The service centers collected names of people on welfare, elderly people who needed aid. We used those lists to go around and canvass the community in order to find out the desires of the community. So we would go from house to house and explain to people our program. We printed up the first program at the North Oakland service center.

Our program was structured after the Black Muslim program—minus the religion. I was very impressed with Malcolm X, with the program that Malcolm X followed. I think that I became disillusioned with the Muslims after Malcolm X was assassinated. I think that I was following not Elijah Muhammad or the Muslims, but Malcolm X himself. [...]

Most of the African countries were liberated during the sixties from colonialism. And we felt there was a need not for a separate nation, but for control of our dispersed communities. We wanted control of the communities where we were most numerous, and the institutions therein. At the same time, we felt that we were due, because of taxpaying, free access to and equal treatment in public facilities.

We felt that the Black Panther party would quickly become a national organization when blacks across the country saw what we were doing in Oakland—driving out what we called

the “oppressive army” of police and controlling the institutions in the community. We felt that the government’s next move would be to bring in the National Guard to recapture these institutions, and this would connect us to the international workers movement, the international proletarian movement, such as was happening in Cuba. We were very impressed by the Cuban revolution. At the time of the creation of the Black Panther party, I was introduced to Marxism and I think I had read a book called *Materialism and Imperial [sic] Criticism* by V. I. Lenin. At that time, it was pointed out that there were many contradictory social forces, and if you knew what to increase or decrease at a particular time, that you could cause the transformation. So we were trying to increase the conflict that was already happening and that was between the white racism, the police forces in the various communities, and the black communities in the country. And we felt that we would take the conflict to so high a level that some change had to come.⁴

CONNECTIONS

1. Newton and Seale called their party the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. What does the full name of the party suggest about its mission? What does it suggest about the members’ attitudes? How did Newton connect the BPP to other global movements?
2. Newton explained that:
“We were trying to increase the conflict that was already happening and that was between the white racism, the police forces in the various communities, and the black communities in the country. And we felt that we would take the conflict to so high a level that some change had to come.”

What did he mean? What was his strategy for change?

Document 4: THE BLACK PANTHERS’ TEN-POINT PLATFORM

Bobby Seale, chairman and co-founder of the BPP, remembered sitting with Huey Newton to articulate a platform for their new movement:

We sat down and began to write out this ten-point platform and program: We want power to determine our own destiny in our own black community. We want organized electoral power. Full employment. Decent housing. Decent education to tell us about our true selves. Not to have to fight in Vietnam. An immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people. The right to have juries of our peers in courts.

We summed it up: We wanted land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. Then we flipped a coin to see who would be chairman. I won chairman.⁵

Their ten-point platform read as follows:

What We Want, What We Believe

1. *We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.*

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. *We want full employment for our people.*

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. *We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.*

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment as currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over twenty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. *We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.*

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. *We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society.*

We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. *We want all black men to be exempt from military service.*

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist



July 1968. Members of the Black Panther Party demonstrated outside the Alameda County Courthouse and demanded the release of the party's cofounder Huey Newton. Newton was later cleared of murder charges.

government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.

We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the “average reasoning man” of the black community.

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to

effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariable the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. After reading the Ten-Point Platform, how would you summarize the party's essential message? Do any of the demands surprise you? What do you agree or disagree with? What do you think people found threatening?
2. The last paragraph of the Panthers' demands was taken directly from the Declaration of Independence (1776). How did their use of this text shed new light on the meaning of the Declaration of Independence? How did it add legitimacy to their demands?
3. Vincent Harding explains:

“The young Panthers had bought into much of America's worst romance with the gun [and] perceived themselves as a vanguard force who had to demonstrate armed, fearless, macho confrontation with the police. [...] But the story must not be taken out of the context of the struggle for democracy. [Their experience helps us explore] crucial relationships among race (and racism), the quest for local community control, and the expansion of democracy among an economically, politically, and racially constricted people.”⁷

Harding also asks:

“How shall we best evaluate a movement that encouraged young Black urban males to see themselves not simply as victims but as prime actors in the unfolding drama of the transformation of America and the world?”⁸

How would you answer his question?
4. The Black Panthers inspired the birth of a number of organizations that sought to assert independence and seek remedies for injustice. These groups included the Brown Berets (a Chicano activist group), the Gay Liberation Front (a group that advocated for gay rights), Students for a Democratic Society, and the Young Lords (a Puerto Rican activist group). How would you explain the Panthers' appeal among such diverse populations?

Document 5: WHY WE ARE NOT RACISTS

In 1968, Seale wrote a book which addressed what he believed were common misconceptions about the BPP. As a group that openly supported communism during the Cold War, the BPP was concerned that media depictions of the party distorted their efforts. Seale explained that their goal was to force people to confront the racism and exploitation that they believe tainted America's democracy:

The Black Panther Party is not a black racist organization, not a racist organization at all. [...] What the Black Panther Party has done in essence is to call for an alliance and coalition

with all of the people and organizations who want to move against the power structure. It is the power structure who are the pigs and hogs, who have been robbing the people; the avaricious, demagogic ruling-class elite who move the pigs upon our heads and who order them to do so as a means of maintaining their same old exploitation.

In the days of worldwide capitalistic imperialism, with that imperialism also manifested right here in America against many different peoples, we find it necessary, as human beings, to oppose misconceptions of the day, like integration. If people want to integrate—and I'm assuming they will fifty or 100 years from now—that's their business. But right now we have the problem of a ruling-class system that perpetuates racism and uses racism as a key to maintain its capitalistic exploitation. They use blacks, especially the blacks who come out of the colleges and the elite class system, because these blacks have a tendency to flock toward a black racism which is parallel to the racism the Ku Klux Klan or white citizens groups practice.

It's obvious that trying to fight fire with fire means there's going to be a lot of burning. The best way to fight fire is with water because water douses the fire. The water is the solidarity of the people's right to defend themselves together in opposition to a vicious monster. Whatever is good for the man, can't be good for us. Whatever is good for the capitalistic ruling-class system, can't be good for the masses of the people.

We, the Black Panther Party, see ourselves as a nation within a nation, but not for any racist reasons. We see it as a necessity for us to progress as human beings and live on the face of this earth along with other people. We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism. And we do not fight imperialism with more imperialism. We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism. These principles are very functional for the Party. They're very practical, humanistic, and necessary. They should be understood by the masses of the people.

We don't use our guns, we have never used our guns to go into the white community to shoot up white people. We only defend ourselves against anybody, be they black, blue, green, or red, who attacks us unjustly and tries to murder us and kill us for implementing our programs. All in all, I think people can see from our past practice, that ours is not a racist organization but a very progressive revolutionary party [...].

Racism and ethnic differences allow the power structure to exploit the masses of workers in this country, because that's the key by which they maintain their control. To divide the people and conquer them is the objective of the power structure. It's the ruling class, the very small minority, the few avaricious, demagogic hogs and rats who control and infest the government. [...] These are the ones who help to maintain and aid the power struc-

ture by perpetuating their racist attitudes and using racism as a means to divide the people. But it's really the small, minority ruling class that is dominating, exploiting, and oppressing the working and laboring people.

All of us are laboring-class people, employed or unemployed, and our unity has got to be based on the practical necessities of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, if that means anything to anybody. It's got to be based on the practical things like the survival of people and people's right to self-determination, to iron out the problems that exist. So in essence it is not at all a race struggle. We're rapidly educating people to this. In our view it is a class struggle between the massive proletarian working class and the small, minority ruling class. Working-class people of all colors must unite against the exploitative, oppressive ruling class. So let me emphasize again—we believe our fight is a class struggle and not a race struggle.⁹

CONNECTIONS

1. The BPP was founded at the same time that King and others were exploring ways to use the lessons they had learned in the South to confront discrimination in America's Northern urban centers. Compare the SCLC's analysis of the "Northern race problem" (see Episode 8) with the BPP's message. What are the similarities? What differences do you find most striking?
2. Why did the BPP's approach appeal to many young black men who felt left out of the democratic process? Do you think there are opportunities for young people to participate meaningfully in democratic change today? If so, who is creating those opportunities?
3. Explain what Seale meant by each of the following:
 - "We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity."
 - "We do not fight exploitive capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism."
 - "We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism."
4. Seale was adamant that while he rejected all forms of racism, he did not believe that integration was possible. Why not? Do you think these two viewpoints are compatible or contradictory?

Document 6: TEACHING IN THE SOUTH AND IN THE NORTH

In 1967, well over a decade after *Brown v. Board of Education*, integration in New York City still had a long way to go; the city schools served very diverse student populations, but they were divided by geography, race, and class. In black and Puerto Rican communities, failing schools, low reading scores, basic equipment shortages, and perceived racism and apathy among the teaching staff created bitterness and hostility.

C. Herbert Oliver was a minister from Birmingham, Alabama, who moved to New York City. In an interview with *Eyes on the Prize*, Oliver discussed the differences between education for blacks in the South and in the North:

When my family moved here from Birmingham in 1965, they came from totally segregated schools. The children were all black. The teachers were all black. The principals were all

black. One of my sons was above the national average in mathematics. But when he came to the schools here in Brooklyn, within one year he was flunking math.

In Alabama, when I went to a school, I was welcomed. The principal was glad to see a parent there, and I could discuss any problem with my children there. But when I came to the school here in Brooklyn, I couldn't get to see the principal. Someone wanted to know why I came, what I wanted to see him for, and said that he was not available. So I simply said "I will wait for him." I had expected to see the principal. That was my custom. But here I couldn't see a principal.

In about half an hour, the principal came. And I talked with the principal and told him what the problem was. We went and talked with the teacher. The teacher said my son was doing fine. I said, "He's not bringing home assignments, and he's flunked math. He came here from Alabama and he was ahead of the national average, and you're telling me he's doing fine. Something is wrong." And that just made me fired up to do something to change the system, because I could see it was destroying children and it was hurting my own child.

There were almost no black principals in the schools. No role models. Tremendous discipline problems. And we found that most of the teachers in the district came into the district, taught, and then went out of the district to their homes. And, of course, this is altogether different from the southern situation, because in the South, the teachers lived among the people. And the principals—all black—lived somewhere among the people, and you got to know them. But this was a vast problem here. And we thought that the best thing that we could do for our young people would be to call for the community control of the schools, and seek through that means to better the education of our children. That's how the cry for community control got under way.¹⁰

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Oliver's account, what were the key differences between the education of blacks in the South and in the North?
2. Why do you think Oliver's son achieved a better academic outcome in the South than in the North? What does his story suggest about the relationship between academic accomplishments and a supportive educational environment?
3. How do you think community involvement in education for blacks in the South affected students' learning experiences?

Document 7: **SCHOOLS FOR THE COMMUNITY**

In response to the failing schools in the North, blacks and Latinos demanded the same control that smaller, less diverse suburban communities had over their schools. Cultural issues were also at stake: many blacks and other minorities felt that their cultural heritage was neglected by "white dominated" classroom curriculums. Advocates for decentralization questioned New York's commitment to integra-

tion and argued that locally controlled schools would boost students' pride and enrich their learning experience. As an alternative to moving children out of their neighborhoods, New York City officials agreed to an educational experiment in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and granted the community control over the district.

The New York City school system never had a black district superintendent before Rhody McCoy, the former acting principal of a special needs school, was selected in August 1967, to head the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment. McCoy's Deputy Superintendent was Luis Fuentes, the first Puerto Rican to hold that position in New York. Despite prejudice and a suspicious administration, McCoy set out to change the philosophy of the district. In the *Eyes on the Prize* interview below, McCoy discussed his teaching philosophy:

I had an idea about education, and my idea was very simple. The schools were not there to teach the skills, i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic, but to present or prepare a learning environment where youngsters would be educated. Too often, we got caught up in saying, "Our kids can't read and write, and they don't do well on standardized tests," and we lost sight of the fact that we've got millions of our kids who can read and write, and who can pass standardized tests, who are basically not educated in terms of what's going on in the real world.

When I talked to Malcolm X as well as [black nationalist] Herman Ferguson and [black educator] Wilton Anderson, we had the same idea. It was not skills we were interested in, because the material that they were giving our youngsters wasn't worth the time of day. It wasn't going to do anything for their lives. So what we were looking at is how do we educate our youngsters, and Malcolm's posture, what he said from day one, was, "Wake up. And let's learn, get educated."¹¹

In 1968, during the first year of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment, Karriema Jordan was in eighth grade. She had been a member of the African American Student Association and was active in the struggle to reform the school's curriculum. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Jordan discussed the new curriculum in her school (JHS 271) and how it attempted to address the relationship between history and identity:

[With so many new black teachers at JHS 271] you learned a lot more. You identified more. You learned that teachers were human beings, not some abstract something. They stayed after school. At three o'clock, they didn't run downstairs and punch out. You know, they gave you more time. I mean, you felt more accepted. You weren't an outsider in your own school. They were part of



The Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment in community control led to a confrontation between the school board and the teachers' union when the board attempted to transfer several white teachers.

Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
Sam Reiss Photographs Collection. Photograph by Sam Reiss.

your environment. I mean, they were black. You can identify with them and they can identify with you. It's as simple as that. There's no big mystery, you know. [...]

The police, the UFT teachers, the media—they taught us that we weren't worth anything. What the black teachers did was to broaden us, our perspective of looking at things. We were no longer members of the small community called Ocean Hill–Brownsville. We were broadened to W.E.B. Du Bois, his writings, Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, H. Rap Brown, Mao Tse-tung, the Red Book. I mean, we became international, and it was a good thing, because black people are the Third World. The Third World is much larger than European history. They brought us back to ancient African history, I mean ancient world history, which didn't any longer start at Rome. It started with the Benin society, its melting of ore and silver and gold and things like that. We became much larger than just the community, and still today, when I look at things, I look at it from an international perspective. And that was what those teachers taught us.¹²

CONNECTIONS

1. Is it possible to guarantee educational equity in racially imbalanced schools? If so, how? Do different ethnic groups require a different educational environment and curriculum?
2. What was the traditional approach to education that McCoy rejected? Why did he reject the idea that school ought to teach students skills? Do you agree with his educational philosophy?
3. What, according to McCoy, were the most important things that schools needed to teach? Why did McCoy turn to Malcolm X and black nationalists for inspiration?
4. What did the new environment offer Karriema Jordan?
5. In 1968, the battle over education was not limited to New York. The documentary film *Chicano!* (a four-part history of the Mexican American civil rights movement) depicts the story of students in East Los Angeles. Risking expulsion, these students organized a series of nonviolent “walkouts” to protest the lack of connection between the subject matter taught in school and the students’ cultural and historical background.

Document 8: THE END OF THE EXPERIMENT

A cultural and racial divide was exposed in Ocean Hill–Brownsville: while the majority of the teachers were white and Jewish, the new board wanted to develop a distinct ethnic identity among its students. In May 1968, when the board attempted to transfer nineteen white teachers and administrators, suspicions grew. Soon, accusations of racism and antisemitism by teachers, parents, and administrators from all sides fueled an increasingly hostile atmosphere. The New York teachers’ union, which sought to protect its teachers, called for a citywide strike.

In an attempt to stem the divisive effects of the conflict, New York Mayor John Lindsay appointed a Special Committee on Racial and Religious Prejudice, chaired by former judge Bernard Botwin. Issued in early 1969, the committee’s report discussed the escalation of racial tensions in Brooklyn and the possible long-term effects the conflict could have on relations between different ethnic groups:

An appalling amount of racial prejudice—black and white—in New York City surfaced in and about the school controversy. Over and over again we found evidence of vicious anti-

white attitudes on the part of some black people, and vicious anti-black attitudes on the part of some white people.

The anti-white prejudice has a dangerous component of anti-Semitism. Black leaders sincerely tend to regard this anti-Semitism as relatively unimportant in the school controversy, since in their struggle for emergence their preoccupation is with discrimination, notably in education, employment, and housing, and not with defamation, oral or written. Jews, in turn, are outraged by anti-Semitic defamation itself, fearful that such apparent indifference may spark violence and other forms of anti-Semitism well beyond defamatory expressions.

The black-white hostility also has a small measure of bigotry emanating from or directed against Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans found themselves split in their relationships between whites and Negroes.

Further, although it has long been known that bigotry has many shapes, it has become clear to us, at least in this controversy, that the prejudice emanating from blacks generally takes a form somewhat different from that which has emerged among whites. The countless incidents, leaflets, epithets, and the like in this school controversy reveal a bigotry from black extremists that is open, undisguised, nearly physical in its intensity—and far more obvious and identifiable than that emanating from whites.

On the other hand, anti-black bigotry tended to be expressed in more sophisticated and subtle fashion, often communicated privately and seldom reported, but nonetheless equally evil, corrosive, damaging, and deplorable [...].

The present state of affairs, with hostility escalating on all sides, presents an intolerable situation. Of course, these tensions did not spring full blown from the current school confrontation. In a city inhabited by so many diverse groups, so many underprivileged people, it would appear that a certain amount of resentment and hatred has been simmering below the surface for many years. It is likely that similar emotions in some other cities spread and were spent, if only temporarily, in bloody riots. But in any event, there can be no doubt that the recent school conflict touched off the spate of religious and racial bigotry this city is now experiencing. It is ironic that this conflict should develop so speedily and massively between Jews and blacks—two groups who for many years have so successfully cooperated with each other in attempting to promote a higher level of human dignity, racial and religious understanding, and equality of opportunity for men of all colors and creeds. With these groups on edge, with new antagonisms fired by the school decentralization controversy, with some people using bigotry as a weapon, racial antagonism to some extent has been encouraged as an echo of the main struggle.¹³

CONNECTIONS

1. What was the goal of the experimental school district? The teachers' union was initially supportive of the district's goals; how do you explain the escalation of the conflict?
2. What were the benefits and costs of the experiment in Ocean Hill–Brownsville? What lessons do you draw from the experiment?
3. The report of the mayor's committee notes:

“It is ironic that this conflict should develop so speedily and massively between Jews and blacks—two groups who for many years have so successfully cooperated with each other in attempting to promote a higher level of human dignity, racial and religious understanding, and equality of opportunity for men of all colors and creeds.”

How do you explain the rapid escalation of this confrontation between two groups that had been longtime allies? What do you think could have been done to mediate this confrontation?

¹ Carl B. Stokes, *Promises of Power: A Political Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 42–54; The Cleveland Memory Project, <http://www.clevelandmemory.org/ebooks/stokes/Ch3.html> (accessed on June 7, 2006).

² Vincent Harding, *Hope and History* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 50.

³ Stokes, *Promises of Power*, 101–3, The Cleveland Memory Project, <http://www.clevelandmemory.org/ebooks/stokes/Ch7.html> (accessed on June 7, 2006).

⁴ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 351–55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁶ Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1970), 66–9.

⁷ Harding, *Hope and History*, 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁹ Seale, *Seize the Time*, 69–72.

¹⁰ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 488–89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 491–92.

¹² *Ibid.*, 499–502.

¹³ Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Girrell (eds.), *Confrontation at Ocean Hill–Brownsville: The New York School Strikes of 1968* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1969), 174–75.



Episode 10 reviews the final months of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and the immediate aftermath of his assassination. This period marked an intensification of the nonviolent struggle in two areas: the struggle against poverty and the efforts to end the Vietnam War. For King, these two issues became inseparable.

By 1967, the United States was deeply entrenched in the Vietnam War. Invoking the fear of communist expansion and the threat it posed to democracy, President Lyndon B. Johnson increased the number of US troops in Vietnam. In response, some civil rights leaders charged that President Johnson's domestic "war on poverty" was falling victim to US war efforts abroad.

Episode 10 opens with King's internal dilemma about finding a proper way to publicly denounce America's involvement in Vietnam. In a speech delivered on April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church in New York, King told the gathered clergy that it was "time to break the silence" on Vietnam. Drawing connections between the resources spent on the war and the rampant poverty in America, King warned that the objectives of the movement were undermined by the use of force abroad. Many of King's allies criticized his stance; they argued that it would split the movement and weaken its support base. President Johnson, who had previously supported civil rights, saw King's public stance on Vietnam as a personal betrayal.

The second segment of the episode covers the "Poor People's Campaign," the first national economic campaign led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Building on their experiences in Chicago and other cities, the SCLC embarked on a drive designed to highlight the consequences of entrenched poverty. The organization planned a multiracial campaign which would adapt nonviolence to the struggle for economic equality in America. For King, the Poor People's Campaign was a bridge between civil rights and economics. The campaign was to end in a massive demonstration of solidarity in Washington, DC.

While organizing the campaign, King had received a call from his friend Reverend James Lawson (the man who had organized the trainings in nonviolence in Nashville during the sit-ins; see Episode 3). Lawson invited King to Memphis, Tennessee, in support of a black sanitation workers' strike. King, believing the strike would highlight the link between race and poverty, accepted the invitation. On March 18, 1968, King delivered a speech to a crowd of seventeen thousand; ten days later he led pro-

1965	
Jan. 8	In his State of the Union address, newly elected President Lyndon B. Johnson declares a "War on Poverty" campaign
Aug. 4	The US Congress passes the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution." The resolution opened the way to large-scale involvement of US forces in Vietnam
1966	
Aug.	President Johnson authorizes the deployment of more troops to Vietnam, bringing the total to 429,000
1967	
Apr. 4	At Riverside Church in New York City, King publicly denounces the war in Vietnam
Jul. 12-17	In Newark, New Jersey, blacks riot over poverty and inequality
Dec. 4	The SCLC proposes a poor people's march to Washington, DC
1968	
Feb. 12	A union of black sanitation workers initiates a 64-day labor strike in Memphis, Tennessee, to protest poor wages and living conditions
Apr. 4	King is assassinated at his hotel in Memphis
Apr. 5	Riots break out in numerous cities throughout the country
May 14	The Poor People's Campaign arrives in Washington, DC
Jun. 5	Senator Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles, California

testors in a march through the city. For the first time, however, one of King's marches descended into violence. Disturbed, he flew back home, but vowed to return and lead a nonviolent march in Memphis.

Two weeks later, King was back. On April 3, the night before the planned march, King delivered his prophetic "Mountaintop" speech at the Mason Temple in Memphis. The next day, during a meeting with Andrew Young, Rev. Jesse Jackson, and other SCLC leaders at the Lorraine Motel, King stepped out onto his balcony. Seconds later he was hit by a sniper's bullet; he died an hour later at a nearby hospital. The country was in shock: America had lost its most public voice of moral conscience. Disbelief quickly became fury, and on April 5, riots broke out in more than sixty cities across the US. For several days fires raged, leaving behind a desolate urban landscape of burnt cars, broken storefronts, and scorched buildings.

The final segment of the episode chronicles the SCLC's efforts to recover after King's death. Struggling to regroup, the SCLC made the final arrangements for the Poor People's Campaign. Five weeks after King's assassination, thousands of protestors—the majority of them black—arrived in Washington, DC. There, in makeshift sheds and tents and drenching rain, they built Resurrection City on the Mall, the site of the March on Washington five years earlier (see Episode 4). In early June, the movement suffered yet another blow when Senator Robert F. Kennedy—considered a close ally of the freedom movement—was assassinated shortly after winning the California Democratic presidential primary elections. On June 24, 1968, with Kennedy and King gone, a saddened and confused nation watched police and public authorities raze Resurrection City.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Are poverty and economic inequality civil rights issues?
2. What relationship did King see between the war overseas and poverty at home?
3. What dilemmas did King encounter when he spoke out against the Vietnam War? How did he wrestle to reconcile his moral objection to the war with his responsibility as a leader?
4. What strategies did the SCLC employ in its campaign against poverty? Why did the Poor People's Campaign face so much resistance?
5. How can a movement continue after the death of its charismatic leader?

Document 1: A TIME TO BREAK THE SILENCE

The 1960s marked an intensification of US engagement in Vietnam. Between 1962 and 1967, the number of US troops in Vietnam swelled to nearly half a million, increasingly diverting domestic economic resources overseas. Many felt that the war's escalating costs undermined President Johnson's "War on Poverty." For King, the issues of Vietnam and poverty were inseparable and had to be addressed. He faced a dilemma, however, since speaking out against the war would alienate close allies of the movement, including President Johnson, who viewed any criticism of his Vietnam policy as a personal betrayal. While earlier King had called for support of a peace process in Vietnam, in 1967, he decided it was time to speak about the moral costs of the war.

On April 4, at an event organized by a group called Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, King delivered a powerful speech denouncing the war. King opened by quoting from a statement issued by the group's executive committee:

"A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us [too] in relation to Vietnam. The truth of these words is beyond doubt but the mission to which they call us is

a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover when the issues at hand seem as perplexed as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We

must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement well and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live. [...]

Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have several reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others,



April 1967. King is surrounded by policemen and protesters who objected to his statements against the Vietnam War. In April 1967, King decided to speak about the moral costs of the war. He declared that "a time comes when silence is betrayal."

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have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the poverty program [Johnson’s War on Poverty]. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the build-up in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demoniacal destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. [...]

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years—especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my convictions that social change comes most meaningfully through non-violent action. But they asked—and rightly so—what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn’t using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government. [...]

For those who ask the question, “Aren’t you a civil rights leader?” and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: “To save the soul of America.” We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself unless the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear.¹

CONNECTIONS

1. How did King describe his dilemma about speaking out against the war? What did he mean when he said he must “move on”? What did he mean by the “mandates of conscience and the reading of history”?
2. How did King respond when asked, “Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King?” On what principles and perceptions did he base his opposition to the war?
3. Why did many people think it was unpatriotic to speak out against the Vietnam War? Is it unpatriotic to oppose a war, or other government policies, that one thinks are unjust? Why or why not?
4. America was engaged in two wars in 1967: the war in Vietnam and the war on poverty in the United States. King estimated that America spent \$322,000 for each enemy soldier killed in Vietnam but only \$53 on each US citizen classified as poor. What was King suggesting about the nation’s priorities? Are poverty and economic injustice religious issues? Are they civil rights issues?

Document 2: KING’S MOUNTAIN TOP SPEECH

In March 1968, King arrived in Memphis, Tennessee, to aid the civil rights struggle of black sanitation workers. The workers, spurred by the accidental deaths of two co-workers, began a strike in February. They sought to improve their wages and get the city to recognize the sanitation workers’ union. James Lawson, King’s longtime friend and a leading practitioner of nonviolence, was chairman of the strike committee and asked King to join the struggle to boost morale among the workers and heighten the visibility of their strike. King agreed and led a demonstration in Memphis on March 28. That protest, uncharacteristically, turned violent. Disappointed, King made plans for another march in the upcoming weeks. When Memphis city officials acquired a court injunction against the marches, however, King returned to the city to encourage the workers to continue their protest. On April 3, the evening before his assassination, King delivered a passionate and prophetic speech to a crowd at the Mason Temple Church:

We mean business now, and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God’s world. And that’s all this whole thing is about. [...] We aren’t engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. We are saying that we are God’s children. And that we don’t have to live like we are forced to live.

Now, what does all of this mean in this great period of history? It means that we’ve got to stay together. We’ve got to stay together and maintain unity. You know, whenever Pharaoh wanted to prolong the period of slavery in Egypt, he had a favorite, favorite formula for



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March 1968, Memphis, Tennessee. Surrounded by troopers and tanks, sanitation workers declared themselves “men” and demonstrated against low wages and unfair working conditions. King, who came to Memphis to aid the workers’ strike, was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

doing it. What was that? He kept the slaves fighting among themselves. But whenever the slaves get together, something happens in Pharaoh's court, and he cannot hold the slaves in slavery. When the slaves get together, that's the beginning of getting out of slavery. Now let us maintain unity.

Secondly, let us keep the issues where they are. The issue is injustice. The issue is the refusal of Memphis to be fair and honest in its dealings with its public servants, who happen to be sanitation workers. Now, we've got to keep attention on that. That's always the problem with a little violence. You know what happened the other day, and the press dealt only with the window-breaking. I read the articles. They very seldom got around to mentioning the fact that one thousand, three hundred sanitation workers were on strike, and that Memphis is not being fair to them [...].

I call upon you to be with us Monday. Now about injunctions: We have an injunction [against the demonstration] and we're going into court tomorrow morning to fight this illegal, unconstitutional injunction. All we say to America is, "Be true to what you said on paper." If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. And so just as I say, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on.

We need all of you. And you know what's beautiful to me, is to see all of these ministers of the Gospel. It's a marvelous picture. Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and say, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Somehow, the preacher must say with Jesus, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor." [...]

It's alright to talk about "long white robes over yonder," in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the [new] New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do. [...]

Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness. [In the story known as *The Good Samaritan*, Jesus] talked about a certain man, who fell among thieves. [...] [A] Levite and a priest passed by on the other side. They didn't stop to help him. And finally a man of

another race came by. He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying, this was the good man, this was the great man, because he had the capacity to project the “I” into the “thou,” and to be concerned about his brother. Now you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn’t stop. [...] I’m going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It’s possible that these men were afraid. You see, the Jericho road is a dangerous road. [...] Or it’s possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the Levite asked was, “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?”

That’s the question before you tonight. Not, “If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?” The question is not, “If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me?” “If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?” That’s the question. [...]

Well. I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.²

CONNECTIONS

1. What did King mean by “a dangerous unselfishness”? What did King try to teach his audience about empathy through the story of the Good Samaritan? What does he mean by the great man’s ability to project the “I” into the “thou”? What does it take to help people see a situation from someone else’s perspective?
2. How did King justify his decision to violate the federal injunction against the planned demonstrations? What democratic traditions did he cite in defense of civil disobedience?
3. What was King’s charge to the religious community in the struggle for social justice? According to King, when is it the role of the clergy to side with the poor?
4. What did “the promised land” stand for in his speech? What do you think King meant when he said he had seen “the promised land”?

Document 3: **ROBERT KENNEDY AND THE ASSASSINATION OF REVERED DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

Throughout 1967, New York Senator Robert Kennedy (brother of slain President John F. Kennedy) became increasingly outspoken about the problems facing the poor in the United States. After a fact-finding trip to the South where he witnessed firsthand the living conditions of blacks and whites in the Mississippi Delta, Senator Kennedy suggested that King bring an army of poor people to Washington in order to pressure the Johnson administration to address their plight.

Later that year, Senator Kennedy announced he would run for president. For many in the movement, including former Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee John Lewis, Senator Kennedy's candidacy offered hope for a renewed commitment to social justice. Lewis, working with the Kennedy campaign, helped organize an event for the senator in Indianapolis, Indiana. Just as an audience of nearly one thousand gathered, Lewis learned of King's assassination in Memphis. The staff agreed that Senator Kennedy would break the news of the tragedy to the predominantly black crowd. Lewis remembered Senator Kennedy reaching out to his audience:

He had no notes. He spoke simply and honestly, completely extemporaneously, straight from his heart. And the crowd hung on his every word. It didn't matter that he was white or rich, or a Kennedy. At that moment he was just a human being, just like all of us, and he spoke that way.³

Kennedy began:

I have bad news for you, for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice for his fellow human beings, and he died because of that effort.

In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black—considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people who were responsible—you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization—black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another.

Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love.

For those of you who are black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man. But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to go beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He wrote: “In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black.

So I shall ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King, that’s true, but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love—a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times; we’ve had difficult times in the past; we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; it is not the end of disorder.

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land.

Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savagery of man and make gentle the life of this world.

Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.⁴

The grieving crowd affectionately applauded Senator Kennedy, but neither he nor other leaders could soothe the rage that spread across the nation. Within hours of King’s assassination, riots broke out in more than sixty cities. In a press conference held the next morning, Stokely Carmichael declared that “when white America killed Dr. King, she declared war on us [...] Black people have to survive, and the only way they will survive is by getting guns.”⁵ America now risked a war with its own citizens.

Two months later, Sirhan Sirhan assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy after a campaign speech in Los Angeles, California.

CONNECTIONS

1. After King’s assassination Senator Robert Kennedy stated, “it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in.” What did Kennedy see as the solution to the moral and political crisis in the wake of King’s assassination?
2. In his remarks, Senator Kennedy chose to quote the Greek poet Aeschylus, who wrote “Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.” What message did he hope the crowd would take from these words? What wisdom did Kennedy hope would come from the pain and despair over King’s death?
3. The evening before King’s funeral, Kennedy held a meeting with SCLC leaders and several other civil rights activists. He explained, “I know we must bury Dr. King tomorrow. I don’t want to talk politics,

but I do want to ask, what can I do? What *should* I do?"⁶ What do you think the SCLC should have advised him to do?

4. What are the difficulties that movements face with the death of a charismatic leader?

Document 4: THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

In 1968, before his death, King and the SCLC traveled across the nation to promote the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, DC. King hoped that the campaign would begin the second phase of the civil rights movement. This new phase "must not be just black people," he declared, "it must be all poor people. We must include American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and even poor whites."⁷ Andrew Young, then a top assistant at the SCLC, explained the goal of the campaign:

The Poor People's Campaign was to be a more massive, long-range campaign of civil disobedience than we had ever previously undertaken. [...] The demonstrators would live in Washington in temporary housing we would construct and begin the petitioning of government agencies and Congress for what was, in effect, an economic Bill of Rights. During the Great Depression, Bonus Marchers, Veterans of World War I, had come to Washington and camped out, demanding a promised "bonus." In many ways, the Poor People's Campaign was part of a constitutionally protected tradition of Americans petitioning the government for the redress of grievances.⁸

The pamphlet below was developed to attract support for the campaign:

WHO ARE THE POOR?

The poorest Americans are 35 million persons who do not have enough money for a decent life. The government says they fall below the "poverty line," earning less than \$3130 a year for a family of four, or \$1540 for an individual.

WHY ARE PEOPLE POOR?

Poor people are kept in poverty because they are kept from power. We must create "Poor People's Power."

WHAT HAPPENS TO POOR PEOPLE?

Poor people do not get decent jobs, decent incomes, decent housing, decent schools, decent health care, decent government, decent police. Poor people do not even get respect as human beings.

WHAT DO POOR PEOPLE DO?

Most poor American adults work hard every day but are not paid enough for a decent life for their families. Unemployment is a severe problem, especially among men, and the unemployment rate in many places, especially most big cities, is so high that there is Great Depression. Seven million people are on welfare (mostly children, old people, the sick, and mothers unable to work). Less than 1 percent of these people are able to work—if they get proper training.

RICH PEOPLE AND POOR PEOPLE

There is a great contrast in the lives of rich and poor people in America. For example, a U.S. Congressman is paid nearly \$600 a week, but a Southern sharecropper's family sometimes earns less than \$600 a year. A maid in a big Northern city may earn \$50 a week, while her rich boss may get \$50 an hour.

CAN AMERICA END POVERTY?

Yes. Many nations that are poorer than rich America provide decent incomes and services for all poor people. America spends 10 times as much money on military power as it does on welfare. The government subsidizes big companies and farms, and gives tax favors to rich people, but punishes the poor. America spends more money in one month to kill in Vietnam than it spends in a year for the so-called "war on poverty." [...]

POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

The poor people of America will demand decent jobs and income in massive demonstrations in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., this spring.

The Poor People's Campaign, starting in April, is being organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with the support and participation of many local groups and individuals.

WHO WILL BE IN THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN?

At the start, several thousand poor people will go to Washington. We will be young and old, jobless fathers, welfare mothers, farmers and laborers. We are Negroes, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, [and] poor white people.

WHERE DO THESE POOR PEOPLE LIVE?

All across the nation, SCLC is recruiting poor people in 10 big cities and five Southern states. Poor People in all other communities and cities are also invited to join the Campaign.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE POOR TO BE IN THIS CAMPAIGN?

No. Most persons at the start of the Campaign in Washington will be poor, but other people from all walks of life must be prepared to take their place in the lines of this campaign.

WHY ARE WE GOING TO WASHINGTON?

Washington is the center of government power, and the national government has the money and resources to end poverty and fight racism. But that government has failed to do this. Therefore the Poor People's Campaign will demand government reforms.

WHAT WILL THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN DO IN WASHINGTON?

We will build powerful nonviolent demonstrations on the issues of jobs, income, welfare, health, housing, education, human rights. These massive demonstrations will be aimed at government centers of power, and they will be expanded if necessary. We must make the

government face up to the fact of poverty and racism. In order to carry out our demonstrations, we will not reveal to the government in advance exactly what we plan to do and where we will demonstrate.

WHAT WILL WE DEMAND?

We will present to the government a list of definite demands involving jobs, income, and a decent life for all poor people so that they will control their own destiny. This will cost billions of dollars, but the richest nation of all time can afford to spend this money if America is to avoid social disaster.

WHAT IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOTHING?

We will stay until the government responds, building up the pressure for action by calling for thousands upon thousands of people, rich and poor, to come to Washington or stand up and be counted in demonstrations in their home communities.⁹

Reverend Ralph Abernathy succeeded King after his assassination on April 4, 1968, and led over two thousand participants in the Poor People's Campaign to Washington. There, the marchers built a shantytown they called "Resurrection City" and demonstrated in the capital from March through June. On June 19, 1968—called "Solidarity Day"—some fifty thousand people rallied in the Capitol to protest the consequences of economic inequality in America.

Over time, however, conditions at Resurrection City worsened as many days of rain rendered the city muddy and unsanitary. After violence and near-riots broke out, the Poor People's Campaign finally ended. The police entered the camp, made numerous arrests, sent many home, and razed the city to the ground. Andrew Young discussed the failures and accomplishments of Resurrection City:

Years later, when I read my daughter Andrea's college thesis on the Poor People's Campaign [...] I remembered again the extraordinary extent to which we were opposed by members of Congress, the administration, and the media. As they saw it, the conditions of poverty and oppression in America weren't the enemy—we had become the enemy. We did not realize the extent of the panic we were engendering in the capital. Had we understood the level of concern, we might have acted to either soothe the fear or at least take advantage of it. We wanted to challenge the president and the Congress enough to make them take seriously the problems of poverty and act to help poor people. We believed that as segregation was immoral in a democracy, poverty was immoral in a nation as wealthy as the United States of America.

What had begun as a movement for racial equality had evolved until Martin could no longer ignore the role that war and poverty played in the oppression of people of color in America and around the world. Racism, war, and poverty were intertwined. Only when we removed the first layer of segregation did we see clearly the cancer of poverty eating away at the hope and strength of black people in America. Segregation nourished that cancer, but the elimination of segregation could not eradicate it. But, by attacking poverty, Martin

was calling into question fundamental patterns of American life. There was scarcely any power center that was unaffected by his challenge.¹⁰

CONNECTIONS

1. How did the Poor People's Campaign seek to address poverty in the United States? In what ways was the campaign similar to other campaigns that the SCLC had organized? What do you see as the key differences? How would you address the issues of poverty today?
2. What did the SCLC see as the greatest challenge to achieving "poor people's power"? Compare the SCLC's program against poverty with the Black Panther Party's programs in Oakland, California (see Episode 9).
3. How did the SCLC explain its assertion that wide economic gaps infringed upon the rights of poor Americans? What parallels does Andrew Young draw between segregation and poverty?
4. Young believes that people who opposed the Poor People's Campaign did not see poverty and oppression as the enemy; instead they saw the protestors as the problem. Why do you think this was the case?

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Time to Break Silence," Edited by James Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986), 231–33.

² Martin Luther King, Jr., "I See the Promised Land," *ibid.*, 280–86.

³ John Lewis with Michael D'Orso. *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 406.

⁴ Robert F. Kennedy, "On the Death of Martin Luther King," Robert F. Kennedy Memorial, <http://www.rfkmemorial.org/lifevision/assassinationofmartinlutherkingjr/> (accessed on June 16, 2006).

⁵ Lewis, *Walking With the Wind*, 408.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁷ King Encyclopedia, "The Poor People's Campaign", http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/encyclopedia/poorpeoples.html (accessed on August 15, 2006).

⁸ Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 443.

⁹ "Poor People's Campaign Pamphlet," The University of Southern Mississippi McCain Library and Archives, <http://anna.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/adams/vga044b.html> (accessed on June 13, 2006).

¹⁰ Young, *An Easy Burden*, 446–47.



1960

Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Marcellus Clay) wins a gold medal at the Rome Olympics

1964

Clay wins his first heavyweight boxing championship title, defeating Sonny Liston. Shortly thereafter, he announces his membership in the Nation of Islam and changes his name to Muhammad Ali

1967

Mar. Muhammad Ali is drafted for the Vietnam War. Ali refuses to serve on the basis of his religious beliefs and is subsequently banned from boxing in the US and sentenced to five years in jail. He is freed on bail while the case is appealed

1968

The student movement on US campuses intensifies its protest against the Vietnam War; sub-groups agitate for ethnic and gender studies, for democracy on and off campus, and for deeper connections with neighboring communities

Mar. 19 Howard University students take control of the administration building and stage a five-day sit-in. The protest ends when university officials agree to student demands

Nov. Republican candidate Richard Nixon wins the presidential election. His election to office is seen as a backlash against the civil rights movement

1970

The US Supreme Court overturns Ali's conviction. He is permitted to resume professional boxing

1972

Mar. 10-12 Eight thousand black delegates assemble in Gary, Indiana, for the NBPC and create a unified black agenda to advance black interests and independence

By the middle of the 1960s, a new generation of black activists who were educated after the first successes of the civil rights movement came of age. On college campuses around the nation they brought with them fresh voices and a quest for new forms of political and cultural expression. At the center of this quest were the issues of identity, the rejection of stereotypes, and the assertion of black pride.

The first segment of this episode chronicles the career of the charismatic heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., better known as Muhammad Ali. Clay first earned his position as a national hero when he won the Olympic gold medal for boxing in 1960. Then, in a display of extraordinary speed, cunning, and finesse, Clay defeated reigning champion Sonny Liston to earn his first heavyweight title in 1964. The morning after the match, Clay publicly announced what many had already suspected: that he was a follower of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam (see Episode 7). As part of his new religious identity, Clay changed his name to Muhammad Ali, renouncing the name given to his ancestors when they were slaves. Ali's public discussion of his religious beliefs troubled many admirers who had earlier enjoyed his showmanship, and most journalists refused to call him by his new name. Three years later, Ali was drafted to fight in Vietnam. He refused to serve, and instead petitioned to be classified as a religious consciousness objector. His petition was rejected; the government charged him with violating the Selective Service Act and sentenced him to five years in jail. Ali remained free on bail, but his career was suspended, and his titles were rescinded. Three years later, when the US Supreme Court overturned the ruling, Ali was able to resume boxing. Ali's steadfastness throughout the ordeal made him a symbol of sacrifice, resistance, and pride within the black community and later one of the most beloved champions in professional sports.

The second segment examines another aspect of black Americans' search for cultural self-determination. At Washington, DC's Howard University, the nation's preeminent black college (where

many civil rights activists were educated), students began to agitate for an overhaul of the school's curriculum. Their goal was to transform the traditionally black university from an aspiring "black Harvard" into a center for teaching black history, art, and culture. In a showdown with the university administration, students marched through the campus to the administration building and initiated a sit-in that lasted five days. Backed by much of the faculty, the students successfully negotiated a comprehensive overhaul of the school's curriculum. The push for greater community involvement in education (see Episode 9), and the struggle at Howard reflected a new interest in the historical role of minorities and women and in their contributions to fields as diverse as science and art. The changes that followed resulted in the expansion of the academic curriculum into new disciplines, including Asian studies, black studies, gender studies, and Latino studies. In less than two decades, the growth of these departments inspired a profound change in the educational landscape of the United States.

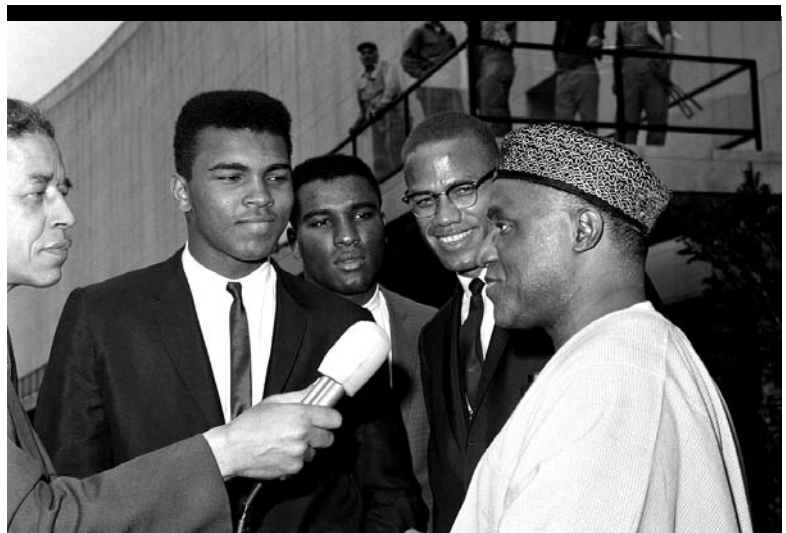
The third segment in this episode describes an attempt to set a new direction for black politics in America. In 1972—a presidential election year—eight thousand black activists gathered for the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) in Gary, Indiana. In a challenge to the Democratic and Republican national conventions, the NBPC sought to present a unified front and set a new agenda for black politics. Despite fierce debates, the NBPC helped transform the face of American government; within ten years after the 1972 convention, the number of black representatives in Congress had more than doubled.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the social and political implications when a group insists on determining its own identity?
2. Why did Muhammad Ali become an icon of resistance?
3. Why did black activists call for an "afro-centric" education? How did their demands influence the teaching of history, art, and culture in America?
4. Why did activists call for a national black political agenda? How did the National Black Political Convention reflect the growing cultural and political consciousness of black America?
5. What agenda did the NBPC set for black activists in 1972? What are its legacies today?

Document 1: FROM CASSIUS CLAY TO MUHAMMAD ALI

By the time he won the gold medal for boxing at the 1960 Olympics, Cassius Clay was already a larger-than-life figure. Clay was not only a gifted fighter, but also handsome, unapologetic, and provocative. Clay climbed the boxing world's ladder in a series of spectacular fights, an ascent that climaxed with his victory over heavyweight champion Sonny Liston on February 25, 1964. The next morning, Clay held a press conference in which a reporter asked, "Are you a card-carrying member of the Black Muslims?" to which Clay responded, "Card-carrying; what does that mean?"



March 4, 1964. Ali, Malcolm X, and S.O. Abedo, the Nigerian Ambassador to the UN. Many Black Nationalists reached out to African nations for solidarity.

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I believe in Allah and in peace.”¹ Reflecting back on his conversion, he explained how he became interested in the Nation of Islam:

The first time I heard about Elijah Muhammad was at a Golden Gloves Tournament in Chicago [in 1959]. Then, before I went to the Olympics, I looked at a copy of the Nation of Islam newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. I didn’t pay much attention to it, but lots of things were working on my mind.

When I was growing up, a colored boy named Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi for whistling at a white woman. Emmett Till was the same age as me, and even though they caught the men who did it, nothing happened to them. Things like that went on all the time. And in my own life, there were places I couldn’t go, places I couldn’t eat. I won a gold medal representing the United States at the Olympic Games, and when I came home to Louisville [Kentucky], I still got treated like a nigger. There were restaurants I couldn’t get served in. Some people kept calling me “boy.” Then in Miami [in 1961], I was training for a fight, and met a follower of Elijah Muhammad named Captain Sam. He invited me to a meeting, and after that my life changed.²

Clay later announced that Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, had given him a new name. From then on, Clay refused to be called anything but Muhammad Ali. Later Ali explained, “changing my name was one of the most important things that happened to me in my life.” Ali continued:

It freed me from the identity given to my family by slave masters. If Hitler changed the names of the people he was killing, and instead of killing them made them slaves, after the war those people would have changed their slave names. That’s all I was doing. People change their names all the time, and no one complains. [...] [Black boxing champions] Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson changed their names. If I changed my name from Cassius Clay to something like Smith or Jones because I wanted a name that white people thought was more American, nobody would have complained. I was honored that Elijah Muhammad gave me a truly beautiful name. “Muhammad” means one worthy of praise. “Ali” was the name of a great general (a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad [...]).³

Coupled with his conversion, the name change fueled controversy surrounding the new champion. Abe Greene, Commissioner of the World Boxing Association, was one of many people who staunchly refused to use Ali’s new name. Like others, Greene felt that Ali’s public embrace of Islam was a threat:

Clay should be given a chance to decide whether he wants to be a religious crusader or the heavyweight champion. As a champion, he is neither a Muslim nor any other religionist because sports are completely nonsectarian. Clay should be given the choice of being the fighter who won the title or the fanatic leader of an extraneous force which has no place in the sports arena.⁴

For others, Ali's bold declaration represented the growing assertiveness of a new generation of black Americans. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Sonia Sanchez, a black poet and leading member of the Black Arts Movement, explained that Ali's appeal went well beyond the boxing world:

When Muhammad Ali joined the Nation [of Islam] it was a continuation of what we knew was happening already. Everybody had seen Malcolm down in his camp. Everyone knew that he was teaching him, instructing him at that particular time, so when he changed his name, we said very simply, "That's his name." [...] But the man [Ali] knew what he was doing [...]. [W]hen he said, "I'm the greatest," you say, "Yes, you are. There's no doubt about that, Muhammad Ali. You are indeed the greatest, the greatest that ever done walk on this earth," whatever. And you believed that. Also, this man was a gentle man. I mean, he'd get out of the ring and then would grab your hand and be very gentle with you and say, "Did you like that, sister? Did you like what I just did? Did I tell them really off? Ha, ha, ha." And he'd laugh that laugh, that very infectious laugh, and you would say, "Yes, you did." And that was good.

I don't like fights and fighters, but I love Muhammad Ali. And I love Muhammad Ali because he was not just a fighter, he was a cultural resource for everyone in that time, black students, white students, green students, brown students, blue students. He cut across every race, every religion, because he said, "No, I will not go," and then tried to continue to fight at the same time.⁵

CONNECTIONS

1. What did his name change symbolize for Ali (who was originally named after Cassius Marcellus Clay, a nineteenth-century abolitionist)? Why do you think some of Clay's supporters lashed out against him after he converted to the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali? Why did many people refuse to call Ali by his new name?
2. Create an identity chart for Ali (an example of an identity chart can be found in Episode 3). How did his identity change over time?
3. Robert Lipsyte, a sports reporter for the *New York Times*, remembers the effects of Ali's public declarations against the war:

"The heavyweight championship was a way for the white establishment to say to black America [...], 'Choke down your rage at how your people are getting screwed over, work very hard, make millions of dollars, have your pleasures in stereotypical ways, cars, women, wine, song, ultimately self-destruct, and keep our stereotypes in order.' And now [...] these people were stuck with a heavyweight champion who said at the press conference the day after the fight [...], 'I don't have to be what you want me to be; I'm free to be me.' And among the things he didn't have to be were Christian, a good soldier of American democracy [...], or the kind of athlete-prince white America wanted."⁶

How did Ali challenge stereotypes? Why did so many people find Ali's new identity threatening?

Document 2: MUHAMMAD ALI SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE VIETNAM WAR

In 1966, the military informed Ali that he was fit for service and drafted him to fight in Vietnam. Ali had strong objections to the war in Vietnam, and he asked the draft board to release him from service as a conscientious objector (according to the law, a person who consistently objects to all wars on moral or religious grounds cannot, in principle, be forced to fight). His petition was denied, and Ali had to choose between five years in jail and fighting in what he considered an unjust war. Many fans turned against Ali, and some even threatened violence. Although he was free on bail, Ali's career was on hold. His legal expenses mounted while Ali was stripped of his titles and was prohibited from fighting. For a new generation of black activists, Ali's stance on the war, his religious beliefs, and his endorsement of Malcolm X made him an icon in their search for self-assertion and black pride.

In the letter below, Ali explained his position on the war:

Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights? No, I am not going ten thousand miles from home to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slave masters of the darker people the world over. This is the day when such evils must come to an end. I have been warned that to take such a stand would put my prestige in jeopardy and could cause me to lose millions of dollars which should accrue to me as the champion. But I have said it once and I will say it again. The real enemy of my people is right here. I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom and equality. [...]

If I thought the war was going to bring freedom and equality to twenty-two million of my people, they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow. But I either have to obey the laws of the land or the laws of Allah. I have nothing to lose by standing up for my beliefs. So I'll go to jail. We've been in jail for four hundred years.⁷

Over twenty years before Ali's refusal to serve in the military, Bayard Rustin, a frequent critic of the Nation of Islam in the 1960s and a leading advocate of nonviolence, also refused to serve in the armed forces on religious grounds. In a 1967 essay entitled, *In Defense of Muhammad Ali*, Rustin outlined the principles of religious freedom that were at stake in Ali's legal battle:

THOUGH WE MAY NOT AGREE with the politics of the Black Muslims, we cannot contest their right to consider themselves a genuine religious group. In any case, our belief in the principles of individual and religious liberty should be of more importance than any disagreements we might have with the Muslims. That is the basis on which all religious differences ought to be approached, for the more one disagrees with people, the more tempting it becomes to violate their privileges. This has not been sufficiently recognized in the case of Muhammad Ali. His efforts to seek deferment from the armed services are being judged less on their legitimate merits than on the basis of

personal and religious animosity.

The most fundamental example of this concerns his application to be deferred on the grounds of his Muslim ministry. There are many precedents for this in our society; hundreds of other ministers have sought deferment on the same grounds and have not been denied it. Because one of our traditions guarantees the separation of church and state, the authorities do not usually seek to determine for themselves the credentials of any Baptist, Presbyterian, or other minister. They recognize not only the definitions supplied by these religions, but also the autonomous privilege of these religions to make their own determinations. In the case of Ali and the Muslims, the authorities seem to be insisting on the right to make their own determination. The Constitution clearly warns against any official establishment of religion, but it would seem that the authorities, by now insisting on the right to determine what is or isn't a legitimate minister, or what is or isn't a legitimate religion, are taking a clear position on the establishment of religion.

Another reason for public hostility toward Muhammad Ali is that he changed his name. The great majority of the press and public have refused to respect his wishes or his right. This is rather strange, considering that no one refers to Cary Grant as "Archibald Alexander Leach who wants to be called Cary Grant" or to Billy Graham as "William Franklin alias Billy Graham." Nor did anyone contest the right of Norma Jean Baker to be known as Marilyn Monroe. The fact that neither the press nor the society shares a belief in Muhammad Ali's way of life is hardly a sufficient excuse for them to violate his personal privilege.

Considering how lucrative it would have been for him to become a "playboy boxer," and the great losses and penalties he now faces by deciding to confront the convictions in himself, his courage is more to be admired than vilified—particularly in a period when there is so little consistency between belief and action.

Finally, the boxing authorities, because of their contempt for due process, have further prejudiced the entire proceedings against Ali by depriving him of his heavyweight championship even while his case is still being determined in the courts. All this aside, we must be horrified, and to some extent amused, that men who control a sport that is not notable for its abundance of ethical scruples should now rush so quickly to cloak it in the mantle of piety and morality.⁸

The US Supreme Court overturned Ali's sentence in 1970, and Ali was allowed to return to the ring. Ali resumed his boxing career and became one of the most successful boxers of all time. He is remembered as one of the greatest and most beloved athletes of the twentieth century.

CONNECTIONS

1. On what grounds did Ali object to the Vietnam War? Why did he think it was unjust to send black soldiers to fight in this war?
2. Rustin believed Ali's request for deferment was a matter of religious freedom. On what grounds can

someone claim to be a conscientious objector? How should the government decide if such claims are valid?

3. According to Rustin, what democratic principles were violated when the draft board refused to recognize Ali as a conscientious objector?

Document 3: HOWARD UNIVERSITY, THE BLACK UNIVERSITY



Howard University, March 22, 1968. During a takeover of the administration building, students declared Howard a “Black University.”

Where could young black students—awakened by the civil rights movement—get an education that could satisfy their interest in their heritage? Black colleges and universities in the 1960s mirrored mainstream institutions of higher education, where teaching centered on Western thought, history, and achievement. The curriculum barely touched on topics that concerned many young blacks: slavery, African history, and the anti-colonial movement. Fashion and social conventions at the school reflected a traditional middle-class life style, which a growing number of black activists rejected as conservative and outdated.

In the mid-1960s, Howard University aspired to become the “black” Harvard University, and its curriculum reflected that desire. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Adrienne Manns and feminist scholar Paula Giddings recalled their experiences as young women at Howard University:

ADRIENNE MANNS

When I first came to Howard in 1964, I came there expecting a black environment. I came out of a white high school and white town; we were in a minority. I was coming to Howard because I wanted black people, black teachers, and positive role models and all of this. When I got there, first of all, I knew I was out of place because my roommates had to have an extra closet brought into the dormitory room. People were going to class in high heels. It was just a totally bourgeois [or middle-class] environment, unlike the one I’d come from. I really had never known any middle-class black people except for a doctor and a teacher. So I felt out of place. I felt alone. I didn’t have any good friends for about a year and I thought I had made a mistake.

I came looking for black history courses, black literature, black music. It was a kind of void in my life I wanted filled. Black studies is what it was called. Sterling Brown was there, which was very exciting because he was a poet I had admired for a long time, and Arthur Davis. I was expecting to study black literature with Sterling Brown, and what I found was he told us that he could not teach black literature, that it did not fit into the curriculum and it was not offered. There was only one course and that was “Negro

History” and you had to be a history major or an upperclassman to take that. And you couldn’t fit it in your schedule. After you got finished with all the humanities and the Western Civ. [civilization] type of courses, you couldn’t fit that one course in. It was very hard to get in.

There was no music. You couldn’t play jazz in the Fine Arts Building. All you heard when you passed the Fine Arts Building was opera—all day long, opera, opera, opera. And so-called classical music, National Symphony, and this kind of thing. So I was very disappointed and, well, I think they said they were making it the black Harvard or something like that. And it was just not what I wanted. [...]

I heard [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Chairman] Stokely Carmichael in the summer of 1966 when I was at Harvard University for the summer school. When he started talking, it was as if I were talking—he was speaking for me, things that I had been feeling and thinking about, he was articulating them so well, especially about the attitude that we should have as black people toward ourselves and the country, and how we shouldn’t be begging and pleading for our rights. But we ought to get together and organize and take what rightfully belonged to us. And I liked that [...].⁹

PAULA GIDDINGS

I grew up in Yonkers, New York, in a predominantly white neighborhood, feeling very isolated for many reasons. I really wanted to go to a place where there was a like-minded black community, and I thought Howard would be that place. I had been very affected, growing up, by so much that was going on around me, particularly those Freedom Rides in 1961, that made me ask a lot of questions and made me curious to find out so much more and so many things that I certainly wasn’t getting in my own experience in Yonkers. So I was determined to go to Howard in ’65.

I was surprised when I first went to Howard. I mean, I expected it to be embroiled in this political ferment, because so much had happened, of course, by 1965.

Freshman assembly was one of those programs that all freshmen had to go to; we didn’t have any choice. And they always dragged in these speakers or some kind of cultural program that seemed very, very, very irrelevant to us. You know, the traditional mission of black schools has been not only to educate blacks but to sort of acculturate them and socialize them for the wider industrial order. And those programs symbolized that. [...] So many important things were happening all around us. Nothing was being explained in terms of the curriculum of Howard University, nothing was being talked about. It was business as usual going on [...]. So most of us found it very, very offensive [...].¹⁰

Paula Giddings, who has written extensively on women in black culture and history, described how feminism and Black Power collided with Howard's educational system in 1966. The conflict centered on the traditional homecoming beauty pageant. Activists at Howard rejected the traditional images of black beauty and sought a candidate with an image that better reflected the new black consciousness:

The traditional homecoming campaign was quite a ritual. Each sorority or fraternity, for example, had their candidates, and other organizations had candidates as well. During the days of the campaign, each candidate would appear on campus at certain times of the afternoon. All the candidates, of course, had to get new wardrobes with the latest fashions. They usually came rolling in a latest model convertible. And everything was color-coordinated [...].

Of course, [the activist students' candidate] Robin Gregory had no car and always looked sharp, but she was certainly not wearing those elaborate dresses. She had an Afro*, which of course was the statement that she made physically. And she was always flanked by two very handsome men, very serious, very well dressed [...]. And Robin talked about the movement. Robin talked about black politics. Robin was not the traditional homecoming queen candidate. She would also go around to the dorms in the evenings, which was something very, very different [...].

[A]ll of us, with divided loyalties or not, felt very excited about Robin's campaign and about what it symbolized, not just in terms of politics but in terms of what women should be doing as well, the role of women. It was very, very important to us. I remember being confronted with the kind of situation where when you passed by men, especially as an underclassman, as a freshman, sophomore, they would actually give you a [beauty] grade. I mean, they would talk among themselves and say, "Well, that's an A," or "That's a B." There was a lack of respect in lots of instances. And there was a terrible degrading sense about all of that. And what Robin did was not only in terms of race but also talking about the role of women and what they should be doing and talking about and being taken very, very seriously, not just because of any physical attributes but because of her mind. And this I think was as important as the racial aspect of her campaign.

I remember very much the evening when the homecoming queen was crowned. I was in Cramton Auditorium, which was filled to the hilt. For the last time all the candidates were announced and went up on the stage in the auditorium [...]. The lights went down. The candidates went back. Then you heard the curtains open. And you heard the crank of the revolving stage begin. And as the stage revolved and turned around toward the audience, the lights began to come up at the same time. Well, before you saw Robin, you saw the way the lights cast a silhouette on the curtains, and you saw the silhouette of her Afro before you saw her. Well, the auditorium exploded. It was a wonderful

*The Afro was a popular hairstyle that celebrated the natural texture of black hair. It was seen as a cultural and political statement of black pride.

moment. People started jumping up and screaming and some were raising their fists, then spontaneously a chant began. The chant was “Umgawa, Black Power, Umgawa, Black Power,” and a chain was created. People started to march to the rhythm of “Umgawa, Black Power,” and there was a line that went all the way around the auditorium, and more and more people joined the line. I did too as it went around the auditorium. And finally out the door and into the streets of Washington, D.C., past the campus and still chanting, “Umgawa, Black Power,” and that was really the launching of that movement at Howard.¹¹

Gregory’s election inspired Howard activists and helped them articulate values that went beyond the core issues of the civil rights movement.

Across the nation students at other colleges organized to promote a society that reflected their expanded ideas about democracy and participation. Students, galvanized by their opposition to the Vietnam War, exploded in demonstrations and peace rallies across the nation. They demanded broad changes, including more democratic decision making on campus, increased control over their own studies, and curriculums that addressed the history and identity of the student body.

At Howard, students reached out to the black community surrounding the university and agitated for curriculum reform. In their vision, Howard was to become a leading institution for the studies of everything black; Howard was to be “the black university” for the country. The Howard protest culminated with a takeover of the administration building and demands for radical change, including the resignation of some key university administrators. Students also demanded that “Howard should be the center of Afro-American thought. We demand that the economic, government, literature and social science departments begin to place more emphasis on how these disciplines may be used to effect the liberation of blackpeople [sic] in the country.” They insisted on “the institution of non-prerequisite course in Negro history,” student control over campus life, and that Howard “be made relevant to the black community.”¹²

After five days, the sit-in ended peacefully and the administration agreed to open Howard’s curriculum to its students’ cultural and political interests. Protests on other campuses did not always end peacefully, but in many campuses, new curriculums were developed that included African American, gender, and ethnic studies.

CONNECTIONS

1. Why did many young students who came of age during the civil rights movement feel that the curriculum at Howard University was outdated? What were they looking for that Howard did not provide?
2. How did the election of Robin Gregory impact Howard students’ self-image and their sense of political power? Why did the election of the homecoming queen become a catalyst for greater black activism on the Howard campus?
3. What did students mean when they demanded that Howard be a “black” institution? What role should identity play in education?
4. Imagine a school curriculum without the stories of the diverse groups that make up American history. What experiences and lessons would the students be missing? How do you think multicultural education has influenced the way you think about and understand history? The way you think about the world?

Document 4: THE NATIONAL BLACK POLITICAL CONVENTION

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March 1972. Reverend Jesse Jackson, President of Operation PUSH, is interviewed by media members. United behind the search for a common agenda, eight thousand black delegates convened in Gary, Indiana, to discuss the problems blacks faced in America.

On March 10–12, 1972, eight thousand black delegates convened at Westside High School in Gary, Indiana, for a National Black Political Convention. Attendees included such prominent black leaders as Gary’s mayor, Richard Hatcher, Congressman Charles Diggs, Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale, scholar-activist Vincent Harding, and Cleveland mayor Carl Stokes. The convention focused on the lack of political power and economic opportunity for blacks in America. Touting the slogan “Unity Without Uniformity,” the delegates formulated a political agenda that attempted to address their communities’ needs.

The Gary Declaration proclaimed that “white politics” did not help black people achieve their social and political goals; rather, to succeed, blacks needed to work together and develop a separate agenda. Poet and activist Amiri Baraka (also known as LeRoi Jones) presided over some of the most contentious sessions and helped diverse delegations unite behind a common political program:

INTRODUCTION

The Black Agenda is addressed primarily to Black people in America. It rises naturally out of the bloody decades and centuries of our people’s struggle on these shores. It flows from the most recent surging of our own cultural and political consciousness. It is our attempt to define some of the essential changes which must take place in this land as we and our children move to self-determination and true independence.

The Black Agenda assumes that no truly basic change for our benefit takes place in Black or white America unless we Black people organize to initiate that change. It assumes that we must have some essential agreement on overall goals, even though we may differ on many specific strategies.

Therefore, this is an initial statement of goals and directions for our own generation, some first definitions of crucial issues around which Black people must organize and move in 1972 and beyond. Anyone who claims to be serious about the survival and liberation of Black people must be serious about the implementation of the Black Agenda.

WHAT TIME IS IT?

We come to Gary in an hour of great crisis and tremendous promise for Black America. While the white nation hovers on the brink of chaos, while its politicians offer no hope of real change, we stand on the edge of history and are faced with an amazing and frightening choice: We may choose in 1972 to slip back into the decadent white politics of

American life, or we may press forward, moving relentlessly from Gary to the creation of our own Black life. The choice is large, but the time is very short.

Let there be no mistake. We come to Gary in a time of unrelieved crisis for our people. From every rural community in Alabama to the high-rise compounds of Chicago, we bring to this Convention the agonies of the masses of our people. From the sprawling Black cities of Watts and Nairobi in the West to the decay of Harlem and Roxbury in the East, the testimony we bear is the same. We are the witnesses to social disaster.

Our cities are crime-haunted dying grounds. Huge sectors of our youth—and countless others—face permanent unemployment. Those of us who work find our paychecks able to purchase less and less. Neither the courts nor the prisons contribute to anything resembling justice or reformation. The schools are unable—or unwilling—to educate our children for the real world of our struggles. Meanwhile, the officially approved epidemic of drugs threatens to wipe out the minds and strength of our best young warriors. Economic, cultural, and spiritual depression stalk Black America, and the price for survival often appears to be more than we are able to pay. On every side, in every area of our lives, the American institutions in which we have placed our trust are unable to cope with the crises they have created by their single-minded dedication to profits for some and white supremacy above all [...].

THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

So we come to Gary confronted with a choice. But it is not the old convention question of which candidate shall we support, the pointless question of who is to preside over a decaying and unsalvageable system. No, if we come to Gary out of the realities of the Black communities of this land, then the only real choice for us is whether or not we will live by the truth we know, whether we will move to organize independently, move to struggle for fundamental transformation, for the creation of new directions, towards a concern for the life and the meaning of Man. Social transformation or social destruction, those are our only real choices.

If we have come to Gary on behalf of our people in America, in the rest of this hemisphere, and in the Homeland—if we have come for our own best ambitions—then a new Black Politics must come to birth. If we are serious, the Black Politics of Gary must accept major responsibility for creating both the atmosphere and the program for fundamental, far-ranging change in America. Such responsibility is ours because it is our people who are most deeply hurt and ravaged by the present systems of society. That responsibility for leading the change is ours because we live in a society where few other men really believe in the responsibility of a truly humane society for anyone anywhere.

WE ARE THE VANGUARD

[...] We come to Gary and are faced with a challenge. The challenge is to transform ourselves from favor-seeking vassals and loud-talking, “militant” pawns, and to take up the role

that the organized masses of our people have attempted to play ever since we came to these shores: That of harbingers of true justice and humanity, leaders in the struggle for liberation [...].

TOWARDS A BLACK AGENDA

So when we turn to a Black Agenda for the seventies, we move in the truth of history, in the reality of the moment. We move recognizing that no one else is going to represent our interests but ourselves. *The society we seek cannot come unless Black people organize to advance its coming.* We lift up a Black Agenda recognizing that white America moves towards the abyss created by its own racist arrogance, misplaced priorities, rampant materialism, and ethical bankruptcy. Therefore, we are certain that the Agenda we now press for in Gary is not only for the future of Black humanity, but is probably the only way the rest of America can save itself from the harvest of its criminal past.

So, Brothers and Sisters of our developing Black nation, we now stand at Gary as people whose time has come. From every corner of Black America, from all liberation movements of the Third World, from the graves of our fathers and the coming world of our children, we are faced with a challenge and a call: Though the moment is perilous we must not despair. We must seize the time, for the time is ours.

We begin here and now in Gary. We begin with an independent Black political movement, an independent Black Political Agenda, an independent Black spirit. Nothing less will do. We must build for our people. We must build for our world. We stand on the edge of history. We cannot turn back.¹³

CONNECTIONS

1. The basic principle of the National Black Political Convention was that there would be “Unity Without Uniformity.” What does that mean? Is it possible?
2. Compare the National Black Political Convention to the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (see Episode 5) and Carl Stokes’s campaign in Cleveland (see Episode 9). What are the similarities? What are the most striking differences?
3. How did the Black Agenda describe the existing political and social climate? How did the authors hope to influence the democratic process?
4. Why did the organizers believe that blacks needed an “independent Black Political Agenda”?
5. On the first day of the convention, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) issued a memorandum stating that the convention was at odds with the NAACP’s principles. Afterwards, NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins wrote a letter calling the convention “openly separatist and nationalist.” He explained:

“We do not believe, from a purely pragmatic standpoint, that an isolated black population of eleven percent can survive and progress in a nation where the overwhelmingly white population is 89 percent.”¹⁴

What point was he trying to make? How do you think the organizers of the convention would have responded?

6. The National Black Political Convention built on a tradition of racial and ethnic groups trying to find their political voice. One of the most famous of those political experiments is La Raza Unida, a political party founded in 1970 by Mexican Americans in Crystal City, Texas. When is it useful for racial and ethnic groups to organize politically? Why are these efforts often criticized as separatist?

¹ Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 82.

² *Ibid.*, 89.

³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴ "New York Won't Join with WBA in Stripping Cassius Clay of Title," *Washington Post*, March 24, 1964.

⁵ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 327–28.

⁶ Hauser, *Muhammad Ali*, 84.

⁷ Mike Marqusee, "Muhammad Ali Speaks Out Against the War," *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 1999), 214–15.

⁸ Bayard Rustin, "In Defense of Muhammad Ali," *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 182–83.

⁹ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 429–31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 431–32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 434–35.

¹² Howard University Ujammaa, "An Open Letter Sent to Howard President James M. Nabrit," *The Spear and Shield*, Volume 1, No.2, February 1968, as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 463–64.

¹³ "The Gary Declaration," *The National Black Political Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: National Black Political Convention, 1972), as quoted in *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology*, Edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 492–96.

¹⁴ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 571.



The stories in Episode 12 investigate the relationship between racism and the criminal justice system—the police, courts, and prisons. Exploring the systematic targeting of political dissenters, civil rights activists, and minorities, the episode questions the assumption that the law in mid-twentieth-century America was universally and uniformly applied. It also links inequity in the criminal justice system to the discontent and distrust members of these groups harbored.

1968	
Apr. 4	Widespread riots follow the assassination of King
Apr. 22-30	The antiwar movement stages a massive demonstration against the Vietnam War at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois
Nov.	Republican candidate Richard Nixon is elected president
1969	
Jul. 31	Chicago police raid Black Panther headquarters on Monroe Street; five police officers and three Panthers are wounded
Dec. 4	A police raid on BPP leader Fred Hampton's apartment leads to the deaths of Hampton and Mark Clark. Other Panthers in the apartment are beaten and arrested
1970	
Aug.	Activist Angela Davis is put on the FBI's most wanted list. She is arrested two months later
1971	
Mar.	Political activists break into an FBI office in Pennsylvania and uncover confidential documents on the bureau's counterintelligence program COINTELPRO. Shortly after the discovery the program is officially discontinued
Aug. 21	George Jackson, a Black Panther, is killed in San Quentin Prison, California
Sep. 9	At the Attica Correctional Facility, New York, twelve hundred inmates take over the prison and hold several guards hostage
Sep. 13	The Attica prison revolt is violently suppressed; twenty-nine inmates and ten hostages die of gun wounds inflicted by guards and state troops
1972	
	After spending 16 months in jail, Angela Davis is acquitted of all charges

In the spring and early summer of 1968, as US involvement in the Vietnam War continued to expand, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated. Their murders sparked riots and protests in streets across the nation. Further violence flared later that summer at the Democratic National Convention when antiwar protestors clashed with Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's police force. Republican candidate and former Vice President Richard Nixon responded to the turmoil by campaigning on a platform of "law and order"; that fall, he was elected president.

The first segment describes the killing of Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago on December 4, 1969. Earlier, in 1967, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director J. Edgar Hoover launched a new, secret program under a domestic surveillance initiative called Counter Intelligence Program or COINTELPRO. The new program was designed to crush what the department called "militant black nationalist organizations," which included the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). With President Nixon's approval, COINTELPRO intensified years of covert surveillance of civil rights organizations in an effort to undermine their leadership.

By late 1968, members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the police had clashed in several cities. The BPP, which Hoover called "the single greatest threat to the internal security of the United States," became the focus of the FBI's attention.

Using the Oakland chapter as a model (see Episode 9), the BPP opened a new branch in Chicago's West Side in 1968. Under the leadership of Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush, the new chapter started social service programs, including a free breakfast program. In the fall of 1969, after several

police raids and other confrontations, the conflict between the BPP and the police escalated. In December, Chicago police raided Fred Hampton's apartment. Hampton and Clark were shot dead. Despite police attempts to portray the shootings as self-defense, evidence produced by independent investigators indicated that the police had likely murdered the two Panthers.

Following Hampton's death, critics of the criminal justice system expressed growing distrust of the FBI and its "counterintelligence" program. In March 1971, political activists broke into the FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, and uncovered evidence that the FBI engaged in widespread spying and civil rights violations. The scale of FBI surveillance and harassment of radicals, civil rights activists, and black Americans suspected of "subversive" activities highlighted the connections between law enforcement and racial oppression in the United States. Further analysis by social scientists exposed the disproportionate incarceration of minorities in the US penal system. As a result, some activists shifted their focus from working in the streets to reforming the criminal justice system and clamored for its reform.

In the Attica State Correctional Facility, in upstate New York, black and Latino inmates, who constituted the majority of prisoners, lived in inhumane conditions and were subjected to routine abuse by the predominantly white correctional staff. Influenced by the ideas of black power (see Episodes 7 and 11), the prisoners began to agitate for more humane and dignified treatment. When news of the killing of Black Panther George Jackson by correctional officers in a California prison reached Attica on August 21, 1971, troubled prisoners protested his death. Three weeks later, a fight between two prisoners and guards sparked a full-scale revolt in the prison. After a violent takeover, inmates subdued guards and established new prison leadership. They then demanded that the state negotiate a resolution of their demands, which included an amnesty for the insurgents, increased wages, and educational opportunities for prisoners.

Negotiations with state officials broke down, however, when New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller refused to grant amnesty for those participating in the uprising. The standoff continued until Rockefeller ordered two hundred state troopers to storm the prison. During the assault, thirty-nine people died (ten of whom were hostages), and eighty-eight were seriously injured. Evidence produced subsequently proved that all casualties had been inflicted by state troopers and prison guards. Testimonies and news footage also showed that all prisoners were subjected to barbaric treatment in the wake of the uprising.

Despite the termination of COINTELPRO in 1971, the murder of Black Panthers by local police, other revelations of FBI illegal activity, and the criminalization of minorities in the 1960s and 1970s, provided strong evidence that there were fundamental flaws in the US law enforcement system.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How do abuses by law enforcement agencies undermine the foundations of democracy?
2. What connects the stories in this episode? How did the people in the episode explain the relationships between these events?
3. What did Nixon and his supporters mean when they stressed a need for "law and order"? How do you think the civil rights activists would have defined "law and order"?
4. How do you explain the abuses of power that are depicted in this episode? To whom is law enforcement (the police, the courts, and the prison system) accountable?
5. What civil rights and civil liberties are essential for a healthy democracy? What rights should prisoners possess?

Document 1: THE PEOPLE HAVE THE POWER

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August 1969. A door is riddled with bullets after a police raid on the BPP headquarters in Chicago. In 1969, Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush opened a branch of the BPP in Chicago. Their offices became the target of several FBI raids.

In 1966, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton opened the first chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP) in Oakland, California (see Episode 9). Their organization was highly influenced by Black Nationalism and the militancy of Malcolm X. The Panthers declared themselves a revolutionary party and developed close connections with other radical groups.

In 1969, twenty-one-year-olds Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush opened a branch of the BPP in Chicago's predominantly black West Side. The declared purpose of the organization was to defend blacks against police brutality. At the same time, Hampton and his colleagues started a free breakfast program, health clinics, and educational programs for blacks. Soon, however, the organization

became a target of law enforcement agents who tried to portray it as a band of thugs and, in an attempt to destroy its reputation, pitted it against local armed gangs.

William O'Neal, grew up in Chicago. After he stole a car, an FBI agent recruited him to serve as an informant and, in return, cleaned up his police record. O'Neal's assignment was to join the BPP in Chicago and report to his FBI supervisor on its actions. In this *Eyes on the Prize* interview, O'Neal described the organization:

Almost immediately after I joined the Panthers, probably within ten days, I began to realize that the Black Panther party was a little bit more sophisticated than a gang. I think the first set of reference books I saw inside the Black Panther party was the selected works of Mao Tse-tung, which I had begun to associate with communism. It wasn't too long thereafter that I started to see books like the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx, and the collected works of Lenin. And every night, after the office had closed, the Panthers would sit down and they would study these books. We'd go through political orientation, and we would read certain paragraphs, and then Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush would explain to us, the new membership, basically what it meant and what was happening. And they'd draw parallels to what was going on in the past revolutions in the various countries, for instance China or Russia. So I understood them to be a little bit more sophisticated than a gang. I expected that there'd be weapons and we would be out there doing turf battles with the local gang members. But they weren't about that at all. They were into the political scene—the war in Vietnam, Richard Nixon, and specifically freeing Huey [Newton]. That was the thing.¹

Much like other radical groups in the 1960s, the organization developed a revolutionary theory which called for violent struggle to bring about fundamental change. In the speech below (entitled "The People Have to Have the Power"), the charismatic Fred Hampton explained his Marxist inter-

pretation of the Black Panthers' struggle.* Hampton's revolutionary theory assigned the role of the working class to blacks and other minorities. Racism, in his mind, was designed to exploit the poor.

His interpretation was influenced by twentieth-century interpreters of Marxism, including the leaders of the Soviet Union and China—Vladimir Illych Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung. As heads of states, however, these figures had been involved in their countries' massive violations of human rights, and the antidemocratic and territorial nature of their regimes made many Americans abhorrent of Marxism, socialism, and communism (especially during the Cold War).

In speeches filled with Marxist rhetoric, Hampton expanded on the connection between racism and economic exploitation, which King and the SCLC highlighted in the 1968 Poor People's Campaign (see Episode 10). His speech also discussed the incredible risks he and other activists endured in the struggle to liberate black Americans:

A lot of people get the word revolution mixed up and they think revolution's a bad word. Revolution is nothing but like having a sore on your body and then you put something on that sore to cure that infection. I'm telling you that we're living in a sick society. We're involved in a society that produces ADC [Aid to Dependent Children (welfare)] victims. We're involved in a society that produces criminals, thieves and robbers and rapers. Whenever you are in a society like that, that is a sick society [...].

We're gonna organize and dedicate ourselves to revolutionary political power and teach ourselves the specific needs of resisting the power structure, arm ourselves, and we're gonna fight reactionary pigs with international proletarian revolution. That's what it has to be. The people have to have the power—it belongs to the people [...].

We have to understand very clearly that there's a man in our community called a capitalist. Sometimes he's black and sometimes he's white. But that man has to be driven out of our community because anybody who comes into the community to make profit off of people by exploiting them can be defined as a capitalist. [...]

You know, a lot of people have hang-ups with the Party because the Party talks about a class struggle. [...] We say primarily that the priority of this struggle is class. That Marx and Lenin and Che Guevara and Mao Tse-tung and anybody else that has ever said or knew or practiced anything about revolution always said that a revolution is a class struggle. It was one class—the oppressed, and that other class—the oppressor. And it's got to be a universal fact. Those that don't admit to that are those that don't want to get involved in a revolution, because they know as long as they're dealing with a race thing, they'll never be involved in a revolution. [...]

We never negated the fact that there was racism in America, but we said that the by-prod-

*Karl Marx (1818–83)—the most influential socialist thinker—argued that societies are made of classes and that these classes have conflicting interests. Modern society, he contended, is defined by a conflict between the capitalist class (the bourgeoisie), which owns the means of production, and the working class (the proletariat) whose property-less members are forced to sell their labor at any cost in order to survive. The source of conflict in modern society—which Marx called “class struggle”—is the economic exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class. Marx went on to argue that the capitalist class would not voluntarily give up its control over society's resources and that it must be coerced to do so, a process he called a revolution.

uct, what comes off of capitalism, that happens to be racism [...] that capitalism comes first and next is racism. That when they brought slaves over here, it was to make money. So first the idea came that we want to make money, then the slaves came in order to make that money. [...]

Like I always said, if you're asked to make a commitment at the age of 20, and you say I don't want to make no commitment only because of the simple reason that I'm too young to die, I want to live a little bit longer. What you did is [...] you're dead already.

You have to understand that people have to pay the price for peace. You dare to struggle, you dare to win. If you dare not struggle, then goddammit you don't deserve to win. Let me say to you peace if you're willing to fight for it.

Let me say in the spirit of liberation—I been gone for a little while, at least my body's been gone for a little while. But I'm back now, and I believe I'm back to stay. I believe I'm going to do my job. I believe I was born not to die in a car wreck. I don't believe I'm going to die in a car wreck. I don't believe I going to die slipping on a piece of ice. I don't believe I going to die because I have a bad heart. I don't believe I'm going to die because I have lung cancer.

I believe I'm going to be able to die doing the things I was born for. I believe I'm going to die high off the people. I believe I'm going to die a revolutionary, in the international revolutionary proletarian struggle. I hope each one of you will be able to die [in] the international revolutionary proletarian struggle, or you'll be able to live in it. And I think that struggle's going to come.²

CONNECTIONS

1. How did Hampton and the Chicago branch of the BPP hope to inspire people in their community to make a difference?
2. What terms in Hampton's speech do you think listeners found threatening? What parts of his speech resonate with you? Are there parts that you disagree with?
3. Like King and others, Hampton linked racism and poverty. Compare the way King addressed questions of racial and economic justice with Hampton's analysis of the problem.
4. Many people remember Hampton as an inspirational leader. Elaine Brown, a member of the BPP from Los Angeles, remembers:

"He was unbelievable. You could not not be moved by Fred Hampton. It was like Martin Luther King. You just had to see Fred Hampton mobilize people who wouldn't have moved for anything else that I could imagine on the planet, much less get up and cook breakfast [for a free breakfast program]."³

What qualities make a person a good leader? Why do you think people felt inspired to follow King? To follow Hampton? What qualities did they have in common, and how did they differ?

5. Like many leaders of the time, Hampton often used language that was perceived as threatening, yet his followers insist that he only advocated self-defense in the face of police brutality. How do you account for this discrepancy?

Document 2: SEARCH AND DESTROY

In 1956, the FBI started a covert program called COINTELPRO. The purpose of COINTELPRO was to disrupt the work of domestic dissidents and radicals. In July 1969, after a long period of surveillance, the FBI initiated a campaign to destroy the Black Panther Party, slandering its leaders and pitting armed street gangs against it. On December 4, 1969, using floor plans and intelligence obtained by the FBI, the local police raided the apartment of BPP Chicago branch leader Fred Hampton. Hampton and his bodyguard, Mark Clark, were killed, and other Panthers were wounded.

The police accused the Panthers of initiating the shooting, but their claims were immediately challenged. A commission, co-chaired by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) executive secretary Roy Wilkins and former attorney general Ramsey Clark, was formed to investigate the events. In 1973, the Commission of Inquiry into the Black Panthers and the Police issued a report entitled *Search and Destroy*. In their report, the commissioners addressed the facts of the raid and criticized the investigation that followed the death of the two Panthers. Their findings indicated clearly that the responsibility for the killings fell squarely on the shoulders of the police.

Furthermore, attempts to find the truth about the raid were severely hindered by the police whose investigations, the report claimed, “were designed not to determine the facts but solely to establish the innocence of the police.”⁴ The authors concluded that the false reports produced by police investigators had sown deep seeds of distrust in the black community. For, the commissioners argued:

Of all violence, official violence is the most destructive. It not only takes life, but it does so in the name of the people and as the agent of the society. It says, therefore, this is our way, this is what we believe, we stand for nothing better. Official violence practices violence and teaches those who resist it that there is no alternative, that those who seek change must use violence. Violence, the ultimate human degradation, destroys our faith in ourselves and our purposes. When society permits its official use, we are back in the jungle.⁵

The question of who will police the police (as the commissioners put it) echoed loudly in a series of reports published between 1975 and 1976 by the US Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. The committee, led by US Senator Frank Church investigated intelligence gathering operations by the CIA and the FBI including COINTELPRO. The Church Committee asserted that:

[s]ince the end of World War II, governmental power has been increasingly exercised



In 1969, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover viewed the BPP as “the single greatest threat to the internal security of the United States.”

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through a proliferation of federal intelligence programs. The very size of this intelligence system, multiplies the opportunities for misuse.⁶

The Committee charged that the FBI systematically misused its authority: “The Committee’s fundamental conclusion [was] that intelligence activities have undermined the constitutional rights of citizens.” It also declared that the COINTELPRO’s “domestic intelligence activity has threatened and undermined the constitutional rights of Americans to free speech, association and privacy.”⁷

The author went on to analyze the effects of these violations of constitutional rights on American democracy:

That these abuses have adversely affected the constitutional rights of particular Americans is beyond question. But we believe the harm extends far beyond the citizens directly affected.

Personal privacy is protected because it is essential to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our Constitution checks the power of Government for the purpose of protecting the rights of individuals, in order that all our citizens may live in a free and decent society. Unlike totalitarian states, we do not believe that any government has a monopoly on truth.

When Government infringes those rights instead of nurturing and protecting them, the injury spreads far beyond the particular citizens targeted to untold numbers of other Americans who may be intimidated.

Free government depends upon the ability of all its citizens to speak their minds without fear of official sanction. The ability of ordinary people to be heard by their leaders means that they must be free to join in groups in order more effectively to express their grievances. Constitutional safeguards are needed to protect the timid as well as the courageous, the weak as well as the strong. While many Americans have been willing to assert their beliefs in the face of possible governmental reprisals, no citizen should have to weigh his or her desire to express an opinion, or join a group, against the risk of having lawful speech or association used against him.⁸

COINTELPRO was officially dismantled in April 1971. In October 2002, Robert S. Mueller, III, then director of the FBI, expressed his belief that COINTELPRO’s actions targeted “persons involved in civil disobedience with investigative measures that crossed the line.”⁹ Nearly forty years after his death, a Chicago group is working to honor Fred Hampton by naming a street after him.

CONNECTIONS

1. The authors of *Search and Destroy* concluded that the police cover up of the killing of the Chicago’s Panthers had created deep distrust in the black community. What do you think can be done to build bridges between the community and the police?
2. The authors of the *Search and Destroy* argued, “of all violence, official violence is the most destructive.” How do they explain their argument? Do you agree with their assertions?

3. According to the Church Committee how did intelligence programs like COINTELPRO harm American democracy?
4. Considering the arguments made by the Church Committee, are there conditions when the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly should not apply? If so, what legacy would their suspension leave?
5. Why do you think a Chicago group wants to name a street after Hampton? What do they hope it will accomplish? What role would it play in helping to rebuild trust?

Document 3: **RACE AND THE LAW**

Angela Davis, a black activist who was born in Birmingham, Alabama, attended the Little Red Schoolhouse in New York's Greenwich Village and studied philosophy in France before becoming a lecturer at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the late 1960s. At the time, Davis was associated with the BPP and was a member of the American Communist Party. She was concerned about the inhumane treatment of prisoners in the United States and became a vocal supporter of George Jackson, a BPP member who, while in prison, published letters on prison reform. In 1970, Davis was falsely accused of supplying a gun to Jackson during an attempt by his brother to help him escape. Davis fled and was placed on the FBI Most Wanted Fugitives list in 1971. After her arrest, she spent 16 months in prison before all charges against her were dropped.

After her imprisonment, Davis wrote many books on black culture, feminism, and the abolition of the prison system in America. The winner of numerous honors and awards, Davis is now a tenured professor at the University of California in Santa Cruz. In this interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Davis analyzed the relationship between racism and the criminal justice system:

We had talked about police brutality, the Black Panther party talked about the police as an occupying force in the community, but we had not really understood the extent to which the whole criminal justice system—the police, the courts, the prison system—is very much intertwined with the economic oppression of black people. There are no jobs for certain numbers of young people in our community. What happens to them? There's no recreation available. The schooling is not the kind of enlightening process that it should be. So, what happens to these young people? They might go out and get involved in petty criminal activity as a result of the lack of these facilities in the community. And then they end up, of course, spending, many of them, the rest of their lives in prison.

When *Soledad Brother* was published, the collection of George Jackson's letters, it was an extremely important moment for the prison movement, both inside and outside. For the first time, there was an attempt to develop an analysis of the relationship between what was going on in our communities, in the streets, in the factories, in the schools, on the campuses, and what was happening inside the prison. Large numbers of prisoners, of course, could relate to what George Jackson said in his letters, the stories about the horrible repression that he suffered, the fact that he was never able to spend time with his younger brother Jonathan outside of the manacles and chains that he wore. So that there was a very important emotional effect of his book on people, both inside prison and, perhaps more importantly, outside.

Because those of us on the outside had generally not taken the time to try to understand what the experience was. We might have, at that time, been fighting for the freedom of political prisoners or challenging the prison system. But what George Jackson managed to do was to make that experience palpable, make it concrete, so that it became something that people could relate to as human beings.

There's always the tendency to push prisons to the fringes of our awareness so that we don't have to deal with what happened inside of these horrifying institutions. And there is the tendency also to look at the prisoners as having deserved what they have met with there. So that the criminal is a figure in our society who has very little credibility. And what George Jackson demonstrated with his letters was that prisoners are human beings. Prisoners are intelligent human beings. Prisoners have families. They have feelings.¹⁰

CONNECTIONS

1. What does Angela Davis see as the connection between oppressive social conditions, racism, and incarceration?
2. What does Davis's critique of the criminal justice system suggest about the importance of equal protection for all citizens in a democracy?
3. Another word for prison is *penitentiary*. The root of the word is penitence, which means to show remorse for past offenses. What function did Davis believe prisons serve? What role do you think they should play?
4. Davis has spent much of her career advocating for prison reform and prisoner rights. She explains, "There's always the tendency to push prisons to the fringes of our awareness so that we don't have to deal with what happens inside of these horrifying institutions." Why do you think many people tend to push such thoughts aside?

Document 4: "WE ARE MEN"

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September 1971. Inmates at the Attica Correctional Facility gave the Black Power salute during the prison takeover. Black and Latino inmates were subjected to inhumane conditions and routine abuse by white correctional staff. On September 9, they took hold of the prison.

On September 9, 1971, twelve hundred inmates of the Attica Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison in New York with a majority of black and Latino inmates, rebelled against prison authorities, and took over the facility, taking a number of guards hostage.

Trouble had been brewing at the facility for a long time due to the poor conditions and openly hostile, all-white correctional staff. A week prior to the revolt, inmates, angered over the death of Black Panther George Jackson at the San Quentin Prison in California, had worn armbands, held a moment of silence, and refused to eat. The takeover was triggered two weeks later after

the brutal beating of two Attica prisoners. Once they had control of the facility, inmates drafted a list of demands that began with a cry that echoed the civil rights struggles: “WE are MEN,” and demanded that their dignity be secured in more humane prison regulations. They also called for practical changes: they demanded things as basic as free supply of toilet paper and an increase in work wages and better healthcare services. With remarkable discipline, the inmates quickly installed new prison leadership and called for open negotiations with full media coverage:

THE FIVE DEMANDS

To the people of America

The incident that has erupted here at Attica is not a result of the dastardly bushwhacking of the two prisoners [on] Sept. 8, 1971 but of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administration network of the prison throughout the year.

WE are MEN! We are not beasts and do not intend to be beaten or driven as such. The entire prison populace has set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalization and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and throughout the United States. What has happened here is but the sound before the fury, of those who are oppressed.

We will not compromise on any terms except those that are agreeable to us. We call upon all the conscientious citizens of America to assist us in putting an end to this situation that threatens the lives of not only us, but each and every one of us as well.

We have set forth demands that will bring closer to reality the demise of these prisons, institutions that serve no useful purpose to the People of America but to those who would enslave and exploit the people of America.

Our Demands Are Such:

1. We want complete amnesty, meaning freedom from any physical, mental and legal reprisals.
2. We want now, speedy and safe transportation out of confinement, to a non-imperialistic country.
3. We demand that the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT intervene, so that we will be under direct FEDERAL JURISDICTION.
4. WE demand the reconstruction of ATTICA PRISON to be done by inmates and/or inmate supervision.
5. [...] We invite *all the people* to come here and witness this degradation, so that they can better know how to bring this degradation to an end.

THE INMATES OF ATTICA PRISON

THE FIFTEEN PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

Practical Proposals:

1. Apply the New York State minimum wage law to all state institutions. STOP SLAVE LABOR.
2. Allow all New York State prisoners to be politically active, without intimidation or reprisals.
3. Give us true religious freedom.
4. End all censorship of newspapers, magazines, letters and other publications coming from the publisher [...].¹¹

CONNECTIONS

1. Why do you think the prisoners felt a need to declare, “WE are MEN,” using capital letters? What point did they hope to make? Was their point similar to the one made by sanitation workers in Memphis who carried signs reading, “I AM a MAN” (see Episode 10)? Historically, black men in the United States had been frequently called “boy.” Is this why members of both groups needed to assert their identity as men? Were there other reasons?
2. How did the prisoners hope to appeal to the conscience of the American nation? What reasons did the prisoners give for their revolt?
3. What were the prisoners’ general demands? What were their practical demands? What civil rights and constitutional tenets were echoed in these demands? Do they seem fair to you?
4. What rights should people who break the law possess?

Document 4: “DEHUMANIZING”: AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK “BIG BLACK” SMITH

The revolt in Attica came to a violent end on September 13, 1971, when New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller refused to grant amnesty to any of the inmates and sent state troopers to storm the prison. A bloodbath followed, during which thirty-nine people died and the prison inmates were humiliated and abused.

Newspapers falsely reported that the deaths of ten hostages had come at the hands of the insurgents. An investigation into the storming of the prison proved that all thirty-nine men who died during raid were victims of police gunfire. None of the troops were prosecuted; those who had participated in the revolt were given life sentences. The events at Attica challenged the nation to take a closer look at the state of prisons throughout the country.

Frank Smith—known as “Big Black” for his size—was sentenced to prison in 1966 for robbing a dice game. A gentle giant, Smith became a popular figure in the prison, where he worked as a laundryman. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Smith described the conditions in Attica:

Conditions in 1971 was bad—bad food, bad educational programs, very, very low, low wages. What we called slave wages. Myself, I was working in the laundry and I was making like thirty cent a day, being the warden’s laundry boy. And I’m far from a boy.

You get one shower a week. You know, a shower to use in Attica state prison is a bucket of water, and if you lucky and you get the right person outside of your cell that would bring you a second bucket, then you can wash half of your body with one bucket. What we would

do is wash the top of our body with one bucket, and if we get a second bucket then we will wash the bottom part of our body. And you get one shower a week.

The books in the library was outdated. They didn't have any kind of positive recreation for us. If there was any recreation, it was minimum. It would only be on the weekends. And Attica is four prisons in one. You got A yard, B yard, C yard, and D yard and two mess hall[s]. And the only time you would see a person that's in A block if you in B block, like I were, is when you would go to the mess hall and sometime you might run into him.

"Dehumanizing," the word would be for the conditions in Attica in 1971.

During the prison revolt, representatives of the inmates tried to negotiate a reform of prison rules with Russell G. Oswald, commissioner of corrections for New York State. But they received the same treatment as before—their demands were flatly denied. Smith and the other prisoners quickly realized that negotiations were futile. Smith, who was nominated chief of security to protect negotiators during the prison revolt, continued:

After Oswald left the taped message to the brothers in Attica, we'd say, "Aw, you know, he ain't high jivin', he thinks somebody's head is screwed on." He was going with that same rhetoric, you know. This ex-commissioner of parole, he's shooting us a lot of whitewash again. He's not going to do anything. The situation that we're talking about or any manifesto that was given to him, he's not going to adhere to it. He's not going to go with any of the demands or the suggestions. He's not going to go with any of it. I thought he was going to take it as a laughing matter. The conditions in Attica—he knew. It wasn't the first time that it was thrown out there. Long before 1971, there'd been a lot of letters, even from our families, talking about the conditions in Attica—the over crowdedness, and the slave wages, and not being able to get any kind of productive programs in Attica. The system knew we been talking about it. The Oswald tape-recorded message was a bunch of hogwash. We never took it serious because we knew he didn't take it serious. It was another dupe situation. Period.¹²

But the prisoners did not expect the kind of attack that Commissioner Oswald and Governor Rockefeller were planning. When Smith was interviewed by producers at Public Television's *The Rockefeller Series*, he discussed the violent assault on the prison and the treatment he and other prisoners received from the troopers long after they surrendered:

FRANK SMITH: The first thing I seen and hear was a helicopter circling over the yard, you know, and then gas, and then a loudspeaker, "Put your hand on your head and you won't be harmed," and all that type of stuff: But shooting at the same time, you follow, and everybody hit the ground, I hit the ground over by the observers' table.

And then they were coming over the wall, the assault forces, coming over the wall, shooting, and eventually I start hearing my name, you know, and then some friends of mine told me, you know, take my clothes off, because that gas that everybody burning and what

we were doing we was putting milk on ourself, that supposedly, you know, prevented a lot of burns and stuff. So I finally got my clothes off.

But they were making people strip anywhere, as you come out of D Yard and go into A Block, and, and you [were ordered to] fall on your stomach when you go through the door to A Block and [you] had to crawl, and I'm in A Block now and then I hear my name and the person that I worked for in the laundry said, "Here's Black, here he is," and they made me get up, beat me, and beat me into an area of the yard and laid me on the table and put a football under my neck, up under the catwalk, and told me that if it fall, they was going to kill me, and they spit on me and dropped [...] on me, and went through the torture word, you know, while I was laying there, "Nigger, why did you castrate the officers, why did you bury them alive? We going to castrate you," and I'm laying on the table spread-eagle, buck naked. But everybody in the yard was naked, the majority of the people, you know, and that went on for, like, three, four, five hours.

You know, and right behind me, I'm laying here, and here's the catwalk, and right here's the hallway, they had a gauntlet set up and it had glass broke on the floor, and they was running everybody through the gauntlet, beating them—they had 20, 30 people each side—with what they called their nigger sticks.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: So even if Rockefeller did go, all it would have done is delay the inevitable, and what happened pretty much had to happen.

FRANK SMITH: He made a bad mistake. He made a very bad mistake [...], the conditions in prison had to be changed, you know, because humans don't need to live that way. So don't tell all the lies, you know. We need to get some factual stuff out of this, something has got to come out of this other than just people moving around, casting the blame, and moving the blame around. You know, Attica is more than that. Attica was a slaughter and it didn't have to be. And if the governor would have took it on, and would have really did the executive job that he's supposed to do, then it wouldn't have happened that way, instead of sending some cronies like the commissioner and people to come there, to give up some token, to give up some lineament [sic]. And now you got, you know, forty-three peoples in all, thirty-nine they say that got killed on the retaking, that's dead today.¹³

In the wake of the revolt, Smith joined lawyer Elizabeth Fink and a group of former inmates known as the Attica Brothers. Together they filed a lawsuit against the state of New York for the abuses committed during the retaking of the prison. In 2000, after a twenty-six-year legal battle, the Federal District Court awarded a twelve-million-dollar settlement to the plaintiffs.¹⁴ Smith died of cancer on July 31, 2004, but was remembered by those who knew him as a gentle crusader for human rights.

CONNECTIONS

1. What inhumane conditions existed in Attica? Why did people allow these conditions to exist? How were these conditions justified? What prejudices made it easy to treat prisoners as outcasts?

2. Why were the prisoners' demands before and during the takeover dismissed by state officials?
3. Frank Smith and the other prisoners in Attica sued the state in proceedings that began in 1974 and ended in 2000. Why do you think the proceedings took so long?
4. What did the assault on the prisoners by the state troopers say about the way public authorities viewed the prison population? How did prejudice and racism make it easier for troopers to humiliate and torture the prisoners?
5. What do you think the rights and privileges of prisoners should be? What can people do to remedy the attitudes that relegate criminals to the margins of society?

¹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 522–23.

² Fred Hampton, "Fred Speaks": *Fred Hampton 20th Commemoration* (Chicago: December 4th Committee, 1989), as quoted in Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (eds.), *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1990), 479–82.

³ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 527.

⁴ Roy Wilkins and Ramsey Clark, *Search and Destroy: A Report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Black Panthers and the Police* (New York: Metropolitan Applied Research Center, 1973), as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 526.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 519.

⁶ Churchill Committee Reports, "Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book II," *Cointel.org*, <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/cointelpro/churchfinalreportIIa.htm> (accessed on August 15, 2006).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Robert S. Mueller, III, "Speech at Stanford Law School" October 18, 2002, www.fbi.gov, <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/speeches/speech101802.htm> (accessed on July 24, 2006).

¹⁰ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 542–43.

¹¹ Tom Wicker, *A Time to Die*, (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1975), 315–17.

¹² Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 545–46.

¹³ Interview with Frank "Big Black" Smith, *The Rockefellers: The American Experience*, DVD, directed by Elizabeth Deane and Adriana Bosch (Boston: PBS, 2000), as quoted in Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, *Voices of a People's History of the United States* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), 499–502.

¹⁴ Douglas Martin, "Frank Smith, 71, Is Dead; Sought Justice After Attica," *New York Times*, August 3, 2004.



EPISODE 13:
THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM (1974-1980)

Episode 13 highlights attempts to remedy the historical disadvantages black Americans continued to endure after the major legal battles against segregation were won. In doing so, it moves from questions

about the best way to secure equal rights to questions about the best way to guarantee equal opportunity for all Americans. Twenty years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that racially separate schools were both unconstitutional and unequal, educational institutions across America remained racially imbalanced.

Boston, Massachusetts, where neighborhoods were segregated along racial and ethnic lines, was a particular hotbed of racial conflicts and a focus of media attention. Black educators argued that the school system operated in a manner that amounted to de facto segregation and that the majority of students in “black” schools were squeezed into overcrowded classrooms where they received far fewer resources than schools with predominantly white student populations. The Boston School Committee, which was responsible for policy in the Boston Public Schools (BPS), refused to discuss de facto segregation and plans to remedy the situation. Their grievances ignored, black parents filed a complaint with the Federal District Court. They asked the presiding Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. to compel the school committee to integrate the schools. Judge Garrity ruled in their favor, stating that the school committee was guilty of consciously maintaining two separate school systems. Without an alternative from the school committee, Judge Garrity ordered the implementation of a plan previously drafted by the State Board of Education. The plan called for busing of students, black and white, from Boston’s poorest neighborhoods to public schools outside their neighborhoods.

The busing policy caused a crisis in Boston; groups of white Bostonians objected to what they considered an infringement of their rights and bemoaned the loss of their

1848-50	
	In <i>Roberts v. The City of Boston</i> , Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw rules that racially segregated schools are constitutional
1965	
Sep. 24	President Johnson signs Executive Order 11246 (later amended by Executive Order 11375), which sanctions affirmative action policies for federal employment
1972	
	In Boston, Massachusetts black parents enlist the Harvard Center for Law and Education to sue the city's school committee in the Federal District Court to contest school segregation
1973	
Oct.	In Atlanta, Georgia Maynard Jackson becomes the first black mayor of a major Southern city
1974	
Jun. 21	Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity rules that the Boston school committee has knowingly thwarted desegregation in the public schools and authorizes busing as a means of integrating the Boston Public Schools
Sep. 9	White parents in Boston demonstrate at the federal building in outrage over what they call “forced busing”
Sep. 12	Conflicts between the predominantly black Roxbury community and predominantly white communities in Charlestown and South Boston community erupt when children are transported to schools outside of their neighborhoods Antibusing demonstrations and violence continue for months
1978	
Jun. 28	In <i>Regents of the University of California v. Bakke</i> , the US Supreme Court rules that racial quotas are unconstitutional and that race can be only one of many factors used for admissions decision
1980	
Sep.	Atlanta’s Hartsfield airport is completed on time and on budget

neighborhood schools. When busing began in September 1974, white families in the target areas removed their children from school and started a citywide boycott. White residents of the close-knit community South Boston (known locally as Southie)—the majority of them working class and of Irish descent—violently protested the arrival of black students from Roxbury, regularly attacking school buses. The months of intimidation and racially motivated violence fueled growing tensions in the neighborhoods and schools, which culminated in December when a white boy was stabbed during a fight in South Boston High School. Although the overt violence ebbed over time, thirty years later neighborhood segregation continues to hamper achievement of meaningful school integration in Boston.

The second and third segments of Episode 13 introduce viewers to the era of affirmative action. Beginning with the Lyndon B. Johnson administration (1963-69), the government instituted policies and legislation designed to open educational and economic opportunities to blacks and other disadvantaged groups. In October 1973, Atlanta, Georgia, made history by electing its first black mayor, Maynard Jackson. In an atmosphere of exaggerated expectations and anxiety, Mayor Jackson was burdened with the task of integrating blacks into Atlanta's social and economic life. In a town evenly populated by blacks and whites, only 0.5 percent of city contracts went to black businesses. Plans to build a new airport forced Mayor Jackson to tackle what he called the "white power structure" that blocked competition from black businesses. He insisted on a plan that mandated a minimum of 20 percent black participation in every phase of the airport construction. Yet challenges came from every quarter, including a strike by the city's black sanitation workers. Despite the pressure from blacks and whites, the airport was completed on time and on budget and proved to many that affirmative action was a viable policy.

The third segment discusses the first major challenge to affirmative action in higher education. In the early 1970s, after roughly ten years—during which time the number of black students in American colleges more than doubled—the principles of affirmative action came under attack. At the University of California at Davis (U.C. Davis), Allan Bakke, a twice-rejected medical school applicant, filed a complaint against the school. In it he argued that the school's affirmative action policy amounted to a racial quota, and infringed on his equal protection rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. The case reached the Supreme Court, inciting a national debate on the merits and limitations of the program. While some saw the program as a remedy for years of oppression and discrimination, others claimed that a racial quota system (or, as they called it, a program of "reverse discrimination") was as racist as the system it was designed to remedy. Finally, a divided US Supreme Court issued a decision that ordered U.C. Davis to admit Bakke. The ruling left a cloud of uncertainty over the issue since the court found affirmative action permissible but not mandatory. The battle over the constitutionality of race-based hiring and admission policies continues to this day.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why weren't some Northern schools integrated in the 1970s? How do you explain the resistance to school integration?
2. What underlying challenges made school integration hard to achieve in Boston?
3. What can a government do to guarantee equal opportunities for all its citizens?
4. What is the rationale for affirmative action? Why did many people resist the program in Atlanta and elsewhere?
5. What were the advantages and disadvantages of basing affirmative action on racial categories? Do you feel that affirmative action was justified? Why or why not?

Document 1: DE FACTO SEGREGATION

In the 1970s, Boston was divided into competing, hostile ethnic enclaves. “The real story of Boston,” stated writer and journalist Alan Lupo, “is the story of two cities. It’s a story of the traditional, alleged liberal, abolitionist Boston, the progressive Boston [...]. But the other Boston is a very hidebound, distrustful, turf-conscious, class-conscious, parochial city.”¹

The first major challenge to racial segregation in the city’s public schools had been *Roberts v. The City of Boston* in 1850, a case in which Benjamin Roberts, a black printer, sued the city school system for barring his daughter from attending the local white school. The Robert’s family lost the lawsuit, however, and in his ruling, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw asserted that racial prejudice “is not created by law, and probably cannot be changed by law.”²

A century later, Ruth Batson, who served as the head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s (NAACP) Public School Committee and whose children attended BPS, led the new struggle against segregation in Boston. At a freedom rally that featured the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in April 1965, Batson highlighted the racial problems in Boston. She argued that “education represents our strongest hope of breaking out of the bond we have been placed in by discrimination and prejudice, we intend to fight with every means at our disposal to ensure the future of our children.”³ In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Batson recalled her attempts to get the school committee to respond to the de facto segregation in Boston Public Schools:

When we would go to white schools, we’d see these lovely classrooms, with a small number of children in each class. The teachers were permanent. We’d see wonderful materials. When we’d go to our schools, we would see overcrowded classrooms, children sitting out in the corridors, and so forth. And so then we decided that where there were a large number of white students, that’s where the care went. That’s where the books went. That’s where the money went.

We formed a negotiating team. I was chair of the team. Paul Parks and Mel King, both men who had been deeply involved in public school educational concerns, joined me, and we sat down and we decided that we would bring these complaints to the Boston School Committee. This was in 1963.

We said to them that this condition that we were talking about was called de facto segregation, and that by that we didn’t mean at all that anybody on the school committee or any official was deliberately segregating students, but this was caused by residential settings and so forth, but that we felt that this had to be acknowledged and that something had to be done to alleviate the situation.

We were naive. And when we got to the school committee room I was surprised to see all of the press around. We thought this is just an ordinary school committee meeting, and we made our presentation and everything broke loose. We were insulted. We were told our kids were stupid and this was why they didn’t learn. We were completely rejected that night. We were there until all hours of the evening. And we left battle-scarred, because we found out that this was an issue that was going to give their political careers stability for a long time to come [...].

Louise Day Hicks was chairperson of the school committee at that time. Some of the people on the NAACP general committee felt that she would meet our concerns favorably. She had been endorsed by the Citizens for Public Schools before. And so they thought that, Oh, Louise'll be fine. Well, Louise turned out to be not fine at all. She was an enemy from the minute that we stepped into that door. And this shocked a lot of people [...]. At one point she [Louise Day Hicks] said, "The word that I'm objecting to is *segregation*. As long as you talk about segregation I won't discuss this." Well, remember now, we didn't get past the de facto segregation issue. And so, we would drop these little sentences saying, "Where there is a majority of black students, these students are not being given the education that other people are given," and so forth and so on. And she'd say, "Does that mean segregation?" And so the whole thing would be dropped. We went through all these routines with her. Mrs. Hicks's favorite statement was, "Do you think that sitting a white child beside a black child, by osmosis the black child will get better?" That was her favorite statement.

And then there were black people and a lot of our friends who said, "Ruth, why don't we get them to fix up the schools and make them better in our district?" And, of course, that repelled us because we came through the separate but equal theory. This was not something that we believed in. Even now, when I talk to a lot of people, they say we were wrong in pushing for desegregation. But there was a very practical reason to do it in those days. We knew that there was more money being spent in certain schools, white schools—not all of them, but in certain white schools—than there was being spent in black schools. So therefore, our theory was [to] move our kids into those schools where they're putting all of the resources so that they can get a better education. We never seemed to be able to get that point across. [...]

It was a horrible time to live in Boston. All kinds of hate mail. Horrible stuff. I also got calls from black people in Boston. They would call up and they'd say, "Mrs. Batson, I know you think you're doing a good thing. And maybe where you came from there was segregation, but we don't have segregation in Boston." And I would say to them, "Well, where do I come from?" And invariably they would say South Carolina or North Carolina. Of course, now, I was born in Boston. So there were people who could not accept the fact that this horrible thing was happening to Boston, the city of culture.⁴

CONNECTIONS

1. Batson described the situation in the Boston Public Schools as de facto segregation. What is the difference between de facto segregation and legally sanctioned segregation? How did Batson account for the situation in Boston?
2. In Boston, what was the difference between integration and desegregation?
3. Why did Hicks and others object to Batson's description of the schools as segregated?

4. Why do you think Batson insisted that the schools needed to be desegregated? Why did she believe it wasn't enough to fix schools in their local communities?
5. In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton argued there was a public interest in sustaining integrated schools. What is it? Is there an educational value to school integration?

Document 2: DESEGREGATION: RESPONSES TO THE COURT ORDER

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April 5, 1976. Joseph Rakes, then 17, swinging a flagpole bearing the American flag at Ted Landsmark during a protest against school integration in Boston. Whites reacted violently when Judge Garrity ruled that the BPS “intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation.”

In 1972, lawyers for the Harvard University Center for Law and Education argued before Hon. Judge W. Arthur Garrity of the Federal District Court that the city of Boston was in breach of the Supreme Court ruling against segregated schools. In June 1974, Judge Garrity ruled that the Boston Public Schools “intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation.”⁵

Facing resistance from the school committee and a September deadline, Judge Garrity was obliged to adopt a desegregation plan drafted by the Massachusetts Board of Education. The plan entailed integrating schools by busing students from nearby neighborhoods. Among the neighborhoods marked for busing were Roxbury, a working-class, black neighborhood, and South Boston,

where the majority of the residents were blue collar Irish-Americans. A white, anti-busing group called Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR) formed and agitated against the court order. ROAR called for a citywide boycott of the schools and set up an alternative program of tutoring they defiantly compared to the “freedom schools” set up by civil rights advocates in Mississippi during the 1960s.

Alan Lupo, then a *Boston Globe* journalist, wrote about the desegregation crisis in a book entitled *Liberties Chosen Home*. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Lupo recalled the furor of whites protesting Judge Garrity’s decision:

It was an ironic thing to watch and listen to the people actively opposing busing. A number of them said, essentially, “If Martin Luther King was a hero for sitting on the street, or blocking traffic, or picketing or demonstrating, how come we’re not heroes? How come the media are treating us differently than it did the white college students who opposed Vietnam, or the blacks who had sit-ins?” Some people were very sincere when they raised that question. They felt there was no difference. They felt they were demonstrating for their homes, their neighborhoods, their children, their view of education. Their civil rights. Some people, I fear, were not so sincere—perhaps some of the leaders who thought they were being cute, and may or may not have seen any parallels, but decided to run that guilt trip on the media, and say, “Oh, so now you’re discriminating against us.” So you had both. You had those who honestly saw no difference and believed that their civil rights were in danger and they had a right to demonstrate. And you had those who were maybe playing it for all it was worth.

We were going up a hill one day in South Boston. I think it was probably the second or third or fourth week of busing. And I was with Bob Kiley, who was essentially the deputy mayor, sitting in one of the mayor's cars, heading up the hill. There had just been yet another incident. Cops, white cops, dealing with their white neighbors, and police screaming, "Get out of the way!" and mothers and fathers screaming, "Police brutality!" Sort of a replay of the white college kids fighting with cops earlier, or blacks dealing with cops in the street. History was repeating itself in interesting ways, and a crowd of kids were moving up the hill, and our window was open. And we clearly heard one kid say to another, "No, that'll be too late to make the six o'clock, but it'll be on the eleven o'clock news." And Kiley turned to me and shook his head and said, "Don't tell me these people aren't aware." In other words, they're out there for a principle, bad or good, but folks also get out because they want to be on TV. There's no question about it. Now, I would argue that were there no television, there would still have been fighting in the street. There still would have been hatred; there still would have been moments of accommodation. But the presence of the camera is startling, and for a lot of people who will have their names in the newspaper only when they die, and there will be a little paid death notice, almost anything, any kind of access to becoming a star, even for thirty seconds, is quite important to them, white or black.⁶

Defying "forced busing" became a matter of pride and those who broke the boycott faced isolation. Kathy Downs Stapleton, a senior at South Boston High School, was one of the few white students who continued to go to school. In her interview with *Eyes on the Prize*, she explained why she refused to join the boycott:

There was pressure from all sorts of people, from the media as well as the civic groups. Nobody said, "Don't do this. Don't act up. This isn't nice." People wanted to see a story. People encouraged it. Nobody said, "Don't do this." Political people said, "You children should boycott. You children should not do this. This is not right." "This is the mayor or this is the police. Don't do this." And so it put pressure on everybody. No one knew the right thing to do. [...] I wanted to go to school. I was trying to go to school, but I resented people telling me I shouldn't be in the school. I resented people telling us where we should go to school. And I hated picking up the paper every day and seeing it in the paper. It was really kind of a disgrace. I'm very proud of my community, but I did not like what I saw on the media. I think it hurt us all. The attention was negative. The kids were the ones being hurt and being told what to do. I mean, kids will do what they're told, usually. These adults say we shouldn't go to school, let's not go to school today. Or we should do this, or we should fight, or we should stand up for ourselves. But it was not coming from the kids within. I think we were all being pulled in many different directions between what was right and what was wrong.⁷

Judge Garrity was compelled to oversee desegregation in Boston because the BPS refused to pursue his rulings in good faith. He issued his last ruling on the case in 1985 (the same year that Laval Wilson was appointed the first black superintendent of the BPS). In 1994, the U.S. Federal District Court of Massachusetts issued its final ruling in the case *Morgan v. Hennigan*, permanently barring the practice of racial discrimination in BPS. Despite the legal ruling, many teachers, parents, and scholars note that the legacy of segregation lingers in the schools.

CONNECTIONS

1. What rights did the “forced busing” protesters think they had lost? What were the similarities and dissimilarities between the campaign against desegregation and the civil rights struggle?
2. Do you think that the white majority had a moral and legal responsibility to help blacks in Boston’s impoverished neighborhoods? Do civic responsibilities cross community boundaries or is each community responsible for only itself?
3. How do you think young students would have reacted to the busing without pressure from their parents and the presence of the media?
4. In *Milliken v. Bradley*, a case involving school desegregation in Detroit, Michigan, in 1974, the US Supreme Court ruled that busing procedures were confined to school districts within the city. In Boston, desegregation busing had also involved only city schools. What do you think would have happened if suburban communities had been affected by court-ordered busing?

Document 3: TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS

Less than three months after he sent a comprehensive voting rights bill to the legislature in response to the violence in Selma, Alabama (see Episode 6), President Lyndon B. Johnson announced another groundbreaking initiative. On June 4, 1965, in a commencement address at Howard University, President Johnson introduced a new approach to America’s racial problems, an approach known as “affirmative action.”

President Johnson recounted the progress made in previous years: black enrollment in universities had almost doubled, as had the number of nonwhite professionals, and similar progress had been made in the area of public offices. “But,” he insisted, “for the great majority of Negro Americans—the poor, the unemployed, the uprooted, and the dispossessed—there is a much grimmer story. They still, as we meet here tonight, are another nation.” For these people, “the walls are rising and the gulf is widening.”⁸ The passage of voting rights and other legislation, he announced, was just the beginning:

That beginning is freedom; and the barriers to that freedom are tumbling down [...]. But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, “you are free to compete with all the others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.

Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. This is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and

equality as a result. For the task is to give 20 million Negroes the same chance as every other American to learn and grow, to work and share in society, to develop their abilities—physical, mental and spiritual, and to pursue their individual happiness. To this end equal opportunity is essential, but not enough, not enough. Men and women of all races are born with the same range of abilities. But ability is not just the product of birth. Ability is stretched or stunted by the family that you live with, and the neighborhood you live in—by the school you go to and the poverty or the richness of your surroundings. It is the product of a hundred unseen forces playing upon the little infant, the child, and finally the man. [...]

THE CAUSES OF INEQUALITY

We are not completely sure why this is. We know the causes are complex and subtle. But we do know the two broad basic reasons. And we do know that we have to act. First, Negroes are trapped—as many whites are trapped—in inherited, gateless poverty. They lack training and skills. They are shut in, in slums, without decent medical care. Private and public poverty combine to cripple their capacities. [...]

But there is a second cause—much more difficult to explain, more deeply grounded, more desperate in its force. It is the devastating heritage of long years of slavery; and a century of oppression, hatred, and injustice.

SPECIAL NATURE OF NEGRO POVERTY

For Negro poverty is not white poverty. Many of its causes and many of its cures are the same. But there are differences—deep, corrosive, obstinate differences—radiating painful roots into the community, and into the family, and the nature of the individual. These differences are not [biological] racial differences. They are solely and simply the consequence of ancient brutality, past injustice, and present prejudice. They are anguishing to observe. For the Negro they are a constant reminder of oppression. [...] Nor can we find a complete answer in the experience of other American minorities. They made a valiant and a largely successful effort to emerge from poverty and prejudice. The Negro, like these others, will have to rely mostly upon his own efforts. But he just can not do it alone. For [other minorities] did not have the heritage of centuries to overcome, and they did not have a cultural tradition which had been twisted and battered by endless years of hatred and hopelessness, nor were they excluded—these others—because of race or color [...].

TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS

There is no single easy answer to all of these problems. Jobs are part of the answer. They bring the income which permits a man to provide for his family. Decent homes in decent surroundings and a chance to learn—an equal chance to learn—are part of the answer. Welfare and social programs better designed to hold families together are part of the answer. Care for the sick is part of the answer. An understanding heart by all Americans is another big part of the answer. And to all of these fronts—and a dozen more—I will dedi-

cate the expanding efforts of the Johnson administration. But there are other answers that are still to be found. Nor do we fully understand even all of the problems. Therefore, I want to announce tonight that this fall I intend to call a White House conference of scholars, and experts, and outstanding Negro leaders—men of both races—and officials of Government at every level. [...]. Its object will be to help the American Negro fulfill the rights which, after the long time of injustice, he is finally about to secure. To move beyond opportunity to achievement. To shatter forever not only the barriers of law and public practice, but the walls which bound the condition of many by the color of his skin.⁹

In the now famous Executive Order No. 11246 (September 1965, later amended by Executive Order 11375), President Johnson signed his revolutionary approach into formal law. Among other things, the Order stipulated:

The [federal] contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. The contractor agrees to post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment, notices to be provided by the contracting officer setting forth the provisions of this nondiscrimination clause.¹⁰

CONNECTIONS

1. How did President Johnson use his administration to assert moral leadership on issues of race and equity?
2. Why did Johnson claim that the poor blacks of America constituted “another nation”? What contributed to their being socially and economically isolated from the rest of America’s ethnic and racial groups?
3. Why did Johnson claim that freedom was just the beginning? How were his ideas about “opportunity” meant to complement freedom?
4. Why did President Johnson believe that all citizens must enjoy equal rights? What kinds of equality did he believe in? Why did he think that formal, legal equality was insufficient?
5. Why did Johnson think that black Americans suffered greater disadvantages than other minorities? What does the term “affirmative action” mean? What other groups have benefited from affirmative action?

Document 4: **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN ATLANTA**

In January 1974, Maynard Jackson was sworn in as mayor of Atlanta, Georgia. As the first African American mayor of a major Southern city, his election inspired high hopes among blacks and deep anxiety among whites. While blacks sought new social and economic opportunities, white businessmen

feared that the mayor's progressive policies would hurt their interests. In his inaugural address, Mayor Jackson laid out his vision for the city's future. In an appeal for mutual respect and understanding, he asked Atlantans to work together to create new opportunities for all:

We [Atlantans] use the [...] slogan, "A City too busy to hate," but equally as important, we must ask during the difficult days ahead, are we a City too busy to love? That is no mere rhetorical question. For if we are to make this evening a meaningful beginning, we must make a conscious decision to start to change the way we live. We must do more than *say* we are concerned and that we care. We must begin to translate that concern into action, because we know that injustice and inequality are not vague and shadowy concepts that have no tangible dimensions. Behind every unjust act and behind all unequal treatment there are conscious decisions made by conscious men and women who choose not to care.

So, we must be a City of *love* and our definition of love must be a definition of *action*. Love must be strong economic growth and prosperity for *all*. Love must be giving the young a voice in City Government and restoring their faith in the electoral process. Love must be concern for the welfare of our senior citizens and a renewed commitment to make their years productive and rewarding for all of us. Love must be a balanced diet for all of our children. Love must be decent, safe and sanitary housing for all Atlantans. Love must be working to rid a community of the rats that attack babies while they sleep. Love must be a good education available to all who wish to learn. Love must be an open door to opportunity instead of a closed door of despair. Love must be good jobs, equal treatment and fair wages for all working people. Love must be safe streets and homes where our families can be secure from the threat of violence. Love must be a decision to care for the sick, the infirm and the handicapped. Love must be a city filled with people working together to improve the quality of all our lives. Love must be the absence of racism and sexism. Love must be a chance for everybody to be *somebody*.

To insure a clear reflection of this essential ethic, this administration must place priority upon serving the needs of the masses as well as the classes. The pending reorganization of our City Government will be designed to open wide the doors of City Hall to all Atlantans and make our City Government more responsive to "people needs" and "people problems."¹¹



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October 17, 1973. Maynard and Bunie Jackson celebrate the victory after Jackson was elected the first black mayor of Atlanta. As a mayor, Jackson successfully used the federal government's affirmative action principles to build the city's airport.

When Jackson became mayor, Atlanta was in the midst of an economic recession. Many Atlantans were unemployed and reliant on government assistance. Mayor Jackson decided to use the federal government's affirmative action principles in an attempt to "open wide the doors of city hall." Mayor Jackson explained:

When I became mayor, zero-point-five percent of all the contracts of the city of Atlanta went to Afro-Americans, in a city which at that time was fifty-fifty. There were no women department heads. This was not only a question of race; it was a question also of sexual discrimination and, you know, all the typical "isms." If there's one, normally there's a whole bunch of them, and they were all there. We had to change dramatically how the appointments to jobs went, normal hiring practices in city government went, the contracting process—not to reduce the quality, by the way, ever. We never ever, ever set up a lower standard. And those who say, "Well, affirmative action means you've got to lower the standard"—that's a real insult, in my opinion, to African-Americans and other minority Americans. We never did it, didn't have to do it.¹²

Dillard Munford, like many other white Atlanta businessmen, believed that the affirmative action program was racist. He explained: "I didn't accept the affirmative action program at all, because it was unfair to white people—to white contractors." Munford argued that affirmative action "was very abusive to white contractors who saw jobs going at higher prices than they were bidding, because they were black."¹³ The stakes over affirmative action were raised with the announcement for a major airport expansion project of Atlanta's airport. Mayor Jackson resisted pressure and insisted that without black participation there would be no new airport.

Despite vocal concerns the airport was completed on September 21, 1980—on time and under budget. Even with the success of the airport, however, challenges to affirmative action in Atlanta and across the country continue to this day.

CONNECTIONS

1. Mayor Jackson talked about the need for Atlanta to go beyond being "a city too busy to hate" and become a "city of love." What did a "city of love" look like to him?
2. Mayor Jackson believed that "behind every unjust act and behind all unequal treatment there are conscious decisions made by conscious men and women who choose not to care." What is he suggesting about the way that ordinary people are responsible for discrimination?
3. What tools does a mayor have to translate "concern into action"? What remedies did Mayor Jackson propose? What power do ordinary citizens have?
4. What did Mayor Jackson hope to accomplish with his affirmative action program? Whose opportunities did he believe the program would promote?
5. What arguments did Mayor Jackson make to support his decision to implement affirmative action in Atlanta? What arguments did Munford make against the policy? How do you think Mayor Jackson would have responded to Munford's comments? What do you believe?
6. What reasoning did Munford give for his belief that affirmative action was racist?

Document 5: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OR “REVERSE DISCRIMINATION”?

By 1978, the debate over affirmative action finally reached the Supreme Court. While proponents of the policy lauded it as a just measure to counteract the effects of racism and discrimination, others contested it as a form of “reverse discrimination.” The dispute attained unprecedented media coverage when Allan Bakke, a young white man, challenged the affirmative action policy of the U.C. Davis Medical School.

The U.C. Davis Medical School had implemented an affirmative action policy that designated 16 out of 100 seats for minorities under a “special program.” Through this program, 63 minority applicants had been admitted.* Allan Bakke had applied twice to the U.C. Davis Medical School but had been rejected both times. In 1978, Bakke sued the school, contending that the special program was a “racial quota” that violated his rights, since it admitted students based on their skin color rather than their grades (Bakke’s grades and test scores were higher than those of other applicants admitted through the special program). When the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of Bakke, U.C. Davis appealed the case to the US Supreme Court.

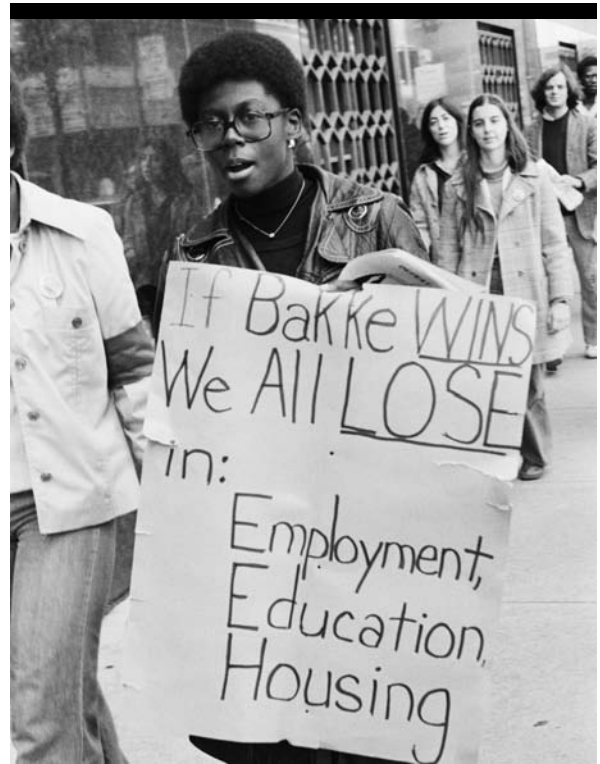
The Supreme Court’s decision was unusually fractured: the nine Supreme Court Justices issued six different opinions, none of which represented a majority. Four justices opposed the program as a racial quota, while four others supported it as a legitimate application of affirmative action. Justice Lewis Powell took the middle ground, and announced the Supreme Court’s complicated decision on June 28, 1978:

REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA V. ALLAN BAKKE

(The Supreme Court Judgment) June 28, 1978

The special admissions program [at U.C. Davis] is undeniably a classification based on race and ethnic background. To the extent that there existed a pool of at least minimally qualified minority applicants to fill the 16 special admissions seats, white applicants could compete for only 84 seats in the entering class, rather than the 100 open to minority applicants. Whether this limitation is described as a quota or a goal, it is a line drawn on the basis of race and ethnic status. [...]

There are serious problems of justice connected with the idea of preference itself. First, it may not always be clear that a so-called preference is in fact benign. [...] Nothing in the Constitution supports the notion that individuals may be asked to suffer otherwise impermissible burdens in order to enhance the societal standing of their ethnic groups. Second,



October 1977. Protests against the admission of Allan Bakke to the University of California Medical School at Davis. Bakke, whose application was rejected twice, claimed that the school’s affirmative action policies were discriminatory.

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* Other minority members had been admitted through the general applicant pool.

preferential programs may only reinforce common stereotypes holding that certain groups are unable to achieve success without special protection based on a factor having no relationship to individual worth. Third, there is a measure of inequity in forcing innocent persons in respondent's position to bear the burdens of redressing grievances not of their making [...].

The special admissions program purports to serve the purposes of: (i) "reducing the historic deficit of traditionally disfavored minorities in medical schools and in the medical profession"; (ii) countering the effects of societal discrimination; (iii) increasing the number of physicians who will practice in communities currently underserved; and (iv) obtaining the educational benefits that flow from an ethnically diverse student body. It is necessary to decide which, if any, of these purposes is substantial enough to support the use of a suspect classification. [...]

The experience of other university admissions programs, which take race into account in achieving the educational diversity valued by the First Amendment, demonstrates that the assignment of a fixed number of places to a minority group is not a necessary means toward that end. An illuminating example is found in the Harvard College program. [...]

In such an admissions program, race or ethnic background may be deemed a "plus" in a particular applicant's file, yet it does not insulate the individual from comparison with all other candidates for the available seats. [...] In short, an admissions program operated in this way is flexible enough to consider all pertinent elements of diversity in light of the particular qualifications of each applicant, and to place them on the same footing for consideration, although not necessarily according them the same weight. Indeed, the weight attributed to a particular quality may vary from year to year depending upon the "mix" both of the student body and the applicants for the incoming class. [...]

It has been suggested that an admissions program which considers race only as one factor is simply a subtle and more sophisticated—but no less effective—means of according racial preference than the Davis program. A facial intent to discriminate, however, is evident in petitioner's preference program and not denied in this case. No such facial infirmity exists in an admissions program where race or ethnic background is simply one element—to be weighed fairly against other elements—in the selection process. [...] And a Court would not assume that a university, professing to employ a facially nondiscriminatory admissions policy, would operate it as a cover for the functional equivalent of a quota system.¹⁴

The Supreme Court ruled that the U.C. Davis program was unconstitutional, but did not invalidate affirmative action altogether. Its decision stipulated that race could feature in admissions decisions, but only as one of many other factors. This subtle distinction allowed the affirmative action debate to continue for years to come.

CONNECTIONS

1. In its description of the special program at U.C. Davis, the Court said that whether this program is “a quota or a goal, it is a line drawn on the basis of race and ethnic status.” What is a “quota system”? Why did the Court describe the program at U.C. Davis as racist? Do you think it was right to call such programs “discriminatory”?
2. The Court argued that “there is a measure of inequity in forcing innocent persons [...] to bear the burdens of redressing grievances not of their making.” Do you agree? Are individuals responsible for actions that *indirectly* benefit them (and deprive others of these benefits)?

Document 6: DEBATING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

In 1954, lawyer Thurgood Marshall—a graduate of the prestigious (historically black) Howard University—argued for education rights in the case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This landmark case led the Supreme Court to rule that “separate but equal” educational facilities for blacks and whites were unconstitutional. In 1978, as an Associate Supreme Court Justice, Marshall passionately defended the U.C. Davis affirmative action program. In a dissenting opinion to the Supreme Court decision, Marshall explained that affirmative action was instrumental in achieving racial equality:

I agree with the judgment of the Court only insofar as it permits a university to consider the race of an applicant in making admissions decisions. I do not agree that petitioner’s admission’s program violates the Constitution. For it must be remembered that, during most of the past 200 years, the Constitution as interpreted by this Court did not prohibit the most ingenious and pervasive forms of discrimination against the Negro. Now, when a State acts to remedy the effects of that legacy of discrimination, I cannot believe that this same Constitution stands as a barrier. [...] While I applaud the judgment of the Court that a university may consider race in its admissions process, it is more than a little ironic that, after several hundred years of class-based discrimination against Negroes, the Court is unwilling to hold that a class-based remedy for that discrimination is permissible. [...] Most importantly, had the Court been willing in 1896, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, to hold that the Equal Protection Clause forbids differences in treatment based on race, we would not be faced with this dilemma in 1978 [...].

It has been said that this case involves only the individual, Bakke, and this university. [...] I cannot even guess the number of state and local governments that have set up affirmative action programs, which may be affected by today’s decision. I fear that we have come full circle. After the Civil War our government started several “affirmative action” programs. This Court in the *Civil Rights Cases* and *Plessy v. Ferguson* destroyed the movement toward complete equality. For almost a century no action was taken, and this nonaction was with the tacit approval of the courts. Then we had *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Acts of Congress, followed by numerous affirmative action programs. Now, we have this Court again stepping in, this time to stop affirmative action programs of the type used by the University of California.¹⁵

Mary Frances Berry served as Commissioner on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights during President Jimmy Carter’s administration. She left the commission in 2004. The Bakke case was adjudicated and debated during her lengthy tenure:

One of the things that happened in the civil rights struggle and the use of remedies for the lack of opportunity was a quarrel and dispute and struggle over language. Now, if people can define you, they can confine you. Or as we say, “If you let me set the terms of the debate, I’ll always win.” So that when you start talking about affirmative action as being “preferential treatment,” you have already set up a situation where anybody who is the beneficiary of preferential treatment will lose. If you say “reverse discrimination” against somebody, it already sounds like a bad thing is happening, and you don’t focus on what the injustice was. So affirmative action was not preferential treatment for blacks. What it was, was trying to do something about remedying preferential treatment for whites, the injustice that had occurred in the past.

By 1979, the climate of opinion had changed almost completely in the country on issues related to civil rights and the advancement toward equality for blacks in American society—college-going rates down for black students, the unemployment rates up for blacks in general, and for youth in particular. People who had jobs and had gotten them through the civil rights and affirmative action programs found themselves stuck and stranded, not able to get promotions, under attack everywhere for complaints about things like reverse discrimination and the like. So it was a very terrible time for the black community.

You would see the reaction everywhere, the backlash against the progress that had been made. You would see rationales being used for why nothing more needed to be done. For example, people would say, “Well, we can’t have equal opportunity and excellence at the same time, and since we want excellence, I guess we have to stop all of this emphasis on civil rights.” And what did they mean by excellence? In many cases, it seemed that they meant an absence of black folk at every level of any importance in the society.¹⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. What irony did Marshall find in the Courts’ objection to the program at U.C. Davis? What did he call this program? Why did he think it did not violate the Constitution?
2. What did Marshall mean when he called affirmative action “a class-based remedy”? What did such programs seek to remedy?
3. In his dissenting opinion Marshall also wrote, “The majority of the Court [ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896] rejected the principle of color blindness and for the next 60 years [...] ours was a Nation where, by law, an individual could be given ‘special’ treatment based on the color of his skin.” What did Marshall mean by the term “color-blindness”? What are the implications of a color-blind society in a democracy?

4. Berry argues that much of the debate on affirmative action is a debate about language. She argued that, “if people can define you, they can confine you.” What do you think she means by this statement? How does defining affirmative action as “reverse discrimination” or “preferential treatment” influence the debate?
5. What did Berry refer to when she talked about a backlash? What were the reasons for a white backlash against the civil rights movement’s achievements?

¹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 594.

² “Sarah Roberts vs. Boston,” *The Long Road to Justice: The African American Experience in the Massachusetts Courts*, <http://www.masshist.org/longroad/02education/roberts.htm> (accessed on July 25, 2006).

³ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 588.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 588–91.

⁵ Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr.: Papers on the Boston School Desegregation Case 1972–97, Healy Library at University of Massachusetts, <http://www.lib.umb.edu/archives/garrity2.html> (accessed on July 14, 2006).

⁶ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 611–12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 612.

⁸ Lyndon Johnson, “To Fulfill These Rights,” Commencement Address at Howard University, June 4, 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650604.asp> (accessed on July 5, 2006).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ “Equal Opportunity Clause,” US Department of Labor, http://www.dol.gov/dol/allcfr/ESA/Tide_41/Part_60-1/41CFR60-1.4.htm (accessed on July 14, 2006).

¹¹ Maynard Jackson, “Inaugural Address,” *Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 614–18.

¹² Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 631.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 634–35.

¹⁴ *Regents of the University of California v. Allan Bakke* Supreme Court Judgment, June 28, 1978, Find Law, <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=438&invol=265> (accessed July 5, 2006).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 644–45.

¹⁷ *Regents of the University of California v. Allan Bakke* Justice Marshall’s dissent, June 28, 1978, *Find Law*, <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=438&invol=265> (accessed July 5, 2006).



Episode 14 explores new and old challenges that black communities faced twenty-five years after the civil rights struggle began. The program follows the black communities of Miami and Chicago and chronicles their dramatically different responses to these challenges.

1960s	
	The construction of interstate highway I-95 breaks apart the once-vibrant black neighborhoods in Miami, causing rapid decline during the 1970s
1979	
Dec.	Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance executive and former US Marine, dies from injuries inflicted by police in Miami, Florida
1980	
May 17	All police officers charged with involvement in McDuffie's murder are acquitted. A protest outside of the local justice department escalates into a three-day riot
Nov. 4	Republican candidate Ronald Reagan defeats President Jimmy Carter in his bid for the presidency
1982	
Oct. 5	One hundred thousand blacks are newly registered to vote in Chicago following a black-led voter registration campaign
1983	
Feb. 22	In Chicago, Harold Washington is elected the city's first black mayor

In the 1980s, after years of social and economic progress, many urban centers were on the decline again: lack of investment in local businesses, cuts in social programs, discriminatory housing practices, and chronically neglected schools led to widespread disillusionment and rising unemployment and crime. While many people fled to the suburbs, waves of Asian and Latino immigrants moved to the cities and introduced new political and economic challenges for black Americans.

In Miami, Florida, decades of racial tension, exacerbated by poor housing and limited opportunities, set the stage for yet another scene of police brutality and riots. Overtown, a neighborhood in central Miami, had long been a nexus of black economic, social, and cultural life. In the early 1960s the construction of interstate highway I-95 through the middle of the town displaced hundreds of black families and tore the commercial and cultural fabric that had held the thriving community together. Many of the displaced Overtown inhabitants moved into nearby Liberty City. By the late 1970s, many white residents of Liberty City (along with some black professionals) were moving out, leaving behind a struggling community (despite overall economic growth in Miami, the unemployment rate for blacks was 17 percent, double that for whites). In the spring of 1980, new challenges emerged as new

waves of refugees from Cuba altered the political, cultural, and economic dynamics of the city.

Tensions between Miami's police force and the city's black residents came to a head on December 17, 1979, when Arthur McDuffie, a former Marine and insurance agent, was killed during a high-speed chase. The police reported that McDuffie had had a motorcycle accident and then violently resisted arrest. However, the medical examiner's report showed conclusively that McDuffie had died from multiple severe blows to the head by a blunt object. The police officers involved in the case were charged with manslaughter, tampering with evidence, and, in one case, second-degree murder. Despite compelling medical evidence and testimony by other officers that McDuffie had been beaten brutally while in custody, an all-white jury acquitted the defendants of all charges. The tensions between Miami's police force and the city's black population came to a boil, as furious black residents poured into the streets to protest the unjust ruling. In the three-day riot that ensued, seventeen people died and the city sustained one hundred million dollars in damage. The death of McDuffie and the treatment of his killers was a reminder of the routine humiliation of racial profiling but also echoed the painful his-

tory of lynching in the United States. The trial and its aftermath threatened to unravel many of the earlier achievements of the civil rights movement in Miami.

But the 1980s saw signs of progress elsewhere in the country. The second segment of the episode depicts developments in Chicago, where the black community struggled with poverty, a lack of economic power and political representation, and the legacy of the political machinery of Mayor Richard Daley (see Episode 8). The black community's initial support for Jane Byrne, Chicago's first female mayor, eroded when she failed to appoint black representatives in her administration. In 1982, in a political climate hostile to the progressive policies advanced by the civil rights movement, the Byrne administration prepared measures to cut back public aid and funding for social programs. Determined to assume a greater role in the city's leadership, black political activists started a voter registration drive with the goal of electing a new generation of black officials. They persuaded a reluctant Harold Washington, a black congressman, to run for mayor. After a massive mobilization effort and a racially charged campaign, Washington beat Bernard O. Epton and became the first black mayor of Chicago.

The program concludes with America at a racial crossroads. The civil rights movement had achieved remarkable gains. Signs of progress included Washington's historic election, which revitalized black political activism and the return of Unita Blackwell, one of the original members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, to the democratic national convention which had been denied seats just twenty years before. Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition energized a new generation of voters, tying the civil rights struggle to the plights of other marginalized communities across the nation. But the path to progress was not clearly marked, and challenges of both leadership and strategy lay ahead. As the Miami riots of 1980 revealed, undercurrents of frustration and isolation roiled very close to the surface. And, twelve years later, the same frustrations exploded in Los Angeles, California, where public outrage and violent protest followed the acquittal of police officers involved in the beating of Rodney King.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why is this episode called "Back to the Movement"?
2. Compare the choices made by groups and individuals in Miami and Chicago in response to racial injustice. What lessons can we learn?
3. How did the changing demographics of the United States in the 1980s create new challenges and new opportunities for those who hoped to improve the lives of black Americans?
4. In what ways was the civil rights struggle in the 1980s similar and dissimilar to the struggles during the 1960s and 1970s?
5. How did the election of Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago reflect the changes America had undergone between 1950 and 1980?
6. How did the black-led freedom movement create new opportunity for other groups in America? What challenges lie ahead?

Document 1: GROWING UP IN THE GHETTO

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and Run-DMC, founded in the late 1970s and early 1980s, respectively, were two of the earliest hip-hop groups in the United States with a popular following. Like many early hip-hop groups, their lyrics were filled with social and political commentary. *The Message*, from an album released in 1982 of the same name, was one of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's breakout hits. Released in 1984, *Hard Times* was the first track on Run-DMC's debut album. In

an oppressive atmosphere of poverty and blighted opportunity, many young people in inner city neighborhoods turned to graffiti art, hip-hop music, and dance for self-expression. Songs like *The Message* and *Hard Times* spoke to the frustrations and desperation that characterized their lives in the early 1980s.

The Message

A child was born, with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind [...]
You grow in the ghetto, living second rate
And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate [...]
You'll admire all the number book takers
Thugs, pimps, pushers and the big money makers [...]
You say: "I'm cool, I'm no fool!"
But then you wind up dropping out of high school [...]
Being used and abused, and served like hell
Till one day you was find hung dead in a cell
It was plain to see that your life was lost
You was cold and your body swung back and forth
But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song
Of how you lived so fast and died so young.¹

Like Grandmaster Flash, Run DMC rapped about the challenges facing young people growing up in America's ghettos, yet their songs often reinforced the importance of education and hope for the future.

Hard Times

Hard times spreading just like the flu
Watch out homeboy, don't let it catch you
P-p-prices go up, don't let your pocket go down
When you got short money you're stuck on the ground
Turn around, get ready, keep your eye on the prize [...]

Hard times is nothing new on me
I'm gonna use my strong mentality [...]
Hard times in life, hard times in death
I'm gonna keep on fighting to my very last breath.²

CONNECTIONS

1. How did these songs depict life in the ghetto during the 1980s? What words and images resonate with you? What issues (social, economic, institutional) did their lyrics call attention to?
2. Why do you think Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five named their song "The Message"? What message was it trying to convey? What audience do you think these two songs were appealing to?

Why you think they resonated with the American public?

- Both “The Message” and “Hard Times” describe the struggle faced by young people growing up in the ghetto. What support would help kids growing up in the ghetto keep their “eyes on the prize”? What is the prize? What skills would they need? How do you account for the different tones of the two songs?
- When do depictions of social problems help to make a difference? When do they reinforce stereotypes?

Document 2: THE ARTHUR MCDUFFIE TRIAL

In December 17, 1979, Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance salesman and former US Marine, was spotted by the Miami police doing stunts on his motorcycle. Following a high-speed chase, McDuffie was injured. He died a few days later in a hospital. The officers involved reported that McDuffie had crashed his motorcycle and then resisted arrest. The medical examiner’s report, however, concluded that McDuffie had been beaten to death. In the spring of 1980, four policemen were charged in connection with McDuffie’s death. Despite the coroner’s report and the testimonies of the witnessing officers that McDuffie had been brutally beaten by other policemen, the defendants were acquitted by an all-white jury. When the news became public, Liberty City, Overtown, and other black neighborhoods erupted in a riot. The Miami riot was larger in scope and damages than the worst riots of the mid-1960s. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Maurice Ferre, who was mayor of Miami at the time of the riot, recounted the shock waves the jury’s verdict sent throughout the city:

The McDuffie trial was one of the critical points in the history of Miami. And the reason, of course, is that for weeks on end the newspapers and especially the television stations in the evening would report what was going on in the trial, so that the people of Miami and especially the black community were patently aware of every gruesome detail of how that poor man had died—that they had held his head, what kind of a flashlight, with how many batteries, they had beaten him with, where the blood was splattering. It was just horrible. There was no question but that this was a terrible thing that had occurred, it was tragic. I don’t think anybody had any question but that there was guilt. These police officers had no right to kill that man the way he was killed. He was not resisting at that point, and yet they battered his head in. And they’re all of a sudden [found] not guilty. It was a shock.

All the things that had built up to that, all of the many problems that Miami had in the black community—poverty, the underclass, racism—all these things were coming together. The Mariel [Cuban] refugees coming in, the advent of economic competition between the Cubans and the blacks—or the perception of it, because a lot of times it wasn’t real but just a perception of it. The lack of opportunity, the lack of jobs, the lack of upward mobility, unemployment, underemployment, single-parent homes, pregnant teenagers, drugs. All the Pandora’s boxes of problems that were coming together. All of a sudden, this is the tinderbox that somebody strikes a light and all of a sudden there’s an explosion. And that’s exactly what occurred. There’s no question but that McDuffie was a major turning point in our history. And as it occurred, those of us that had positions of responsibility were painfully aware of the potential, but frankly I’ve got to tell you, it never occurred

to me that those four officers on trial in Tampa would be found not guilty, totally not guilty. I thought somehow they'd end up doing some time in jail or there would be some consequences of this, but nothing. So that was a shock to me as well as to the rest of the community.³

CONNECTIONS

1. Mayor Ferre described the McDuffie trial as a “major turning point” in the history of Miami. How did he describe the climate that led to the riots? Based on his description of the environment, which factors do you think contributed to the riot?
2. What is the message to the community when there is no accountability for police brutality? In the aftermath of the verdict, what do you think Mayor Ferre could have done to promote peace, dignity, and respect?
3. Why do you think people in the community responded to the officers' acquittal with violence? What other means did the community have to show its disapproval?
4. In 1992, riots broke out in Los Angeles after police were acquitted of beating Rodney King. Research the trial and the riots that followed. What similarities are there between the events in Los Angeles and in Miami? What are the differences?

Document 3: CONFRONTING RACIAL ISOLATION IN MIAMI

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May 1980. The National Guard in Liberty City, Miami. When the policemen involved in the murder of Arthur McDuffie were acquitted, the black community in Miami erupted in a riot. The riot was one of the worst America had ever witnessed.

In Miami, the riot that erupted over the acquittal of the policemen in the McDuffie murder trial ruined black neighborhoods and destroyed white-owned businesses. After three days of rioting, seventeen people—ten white and seven black—were dead, more than a thousand had been arrested, and the city incurred over one hundred million dollars in property damage.

The US Commission on Civil Rights launched an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the riot. They released a report, *Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami*, which, among other things, described the plight of the city's black communities. The riot and the Commission's report exposed the overwhelming challenges faced by Miami's

black citizens: poverty, high levels of unemployment, lack of political representation and educational opportunities, police brutality, and racial discrimination:

The black community in Miami is characterized chiefly by its isolation from the city as a whole. Blacks are in the city, but in a crucial sense, they are not part of Miami. They are not politically and economically powerful sectors that control community resources and make community policies. Their concerns have not been a priority for the city, the county, or for the private sector. Their frustration fed the violence that recently erupted in the

wake of what was viewed as yet another in a long line of abuses suffered at the hands of an unresponsive and uncaring officialdom.

The isolation of Miami's black community results from a series of events that have contributed to the deterioration of what was once a vibrant and viable community. [...] One of the events that precipitated the isolation was the physical destruction of a large portion of the black community by the municipal government. Under the urban renewal program, the city tore down a massive amount of low-cost housing, forcing large numbers of blacks to leave their traditional neighborhoods and move into other areas that could not accommodate them. New units of low-cost housing were never built to replace all that had been demolished. In a city with a vacancy rate of less than one percent, the remaining low-cost housing has become severely deteriorated and overcrowded. The consequences are isolated and disparate ghettos.

Neither the children who are transported to schools outside of these communities nor those who remain in neighborhood schools receive, in many respects, an education that addresses their needs. The city has not allocated enough resources and effort to provide adequate vocational-technical programs and well-trained guidance counselors or to address the myriad other needs of students from low-income families. [...]

Blacks are isolated in Miami's economy, as well. Although the local economy continues to grow at a rate higher than that for the Nation as a whole, there are few black entrepreneurs, and the black unemployment rate remains high. Stymied by their own lack of capital and their inability to obtain capital from commercial lenders, would-be black businesspeople fall through the cracks of unimaginative and nonaccommodating programs of the State, local and Federal government. Blacks with the education and talent to succeed in business often leave Miami for other parts of the country that appear to offer more opportunities for blacks. [...]

Compounding this situation is the fact that justice in Miami is administered in a way that excludes blacks and appears incapable of condemning official violence against them. Black complaints of police violence are common in the city. The incident that took the life of Mr. McDuffie was one of many confrontations between black residents and the system that is supposed to protect all of Miami's inhabitants. The underlying causes range from employment practices to inadequate police training and evaluation. The department screens applicants for the police force with an allegedly biased test. [...] The proportion of the youth in the Miami juvenile justice system who are black is more than three times as great as [that of blacks] in the Dade County population. Counseling for such youth is inadequate, in part, because the system employs counselors who meet minimal educational and experience requirements. Services for rehabilitating juveniles are grossly inadequate.

Many of Miami's problems have answers—more and better-qualified teachers and counselors, better selection and training of police officers, rehabilitation of housing, and so on. But remedial steps cost money. The housing situation is a good example of the cost-benefit approach that appears to have taken hold in Miami. Because it is a seller's market, landlords can rent or sell any housing they choose to make available, no matter how deteriorated. As a result, they do not appear to view rehabilitating housing as being to their advantage. In the rare instances when they are brought before municipal authorities for violation of housing ordinances, landlords generally find it cheaper to pay the fine than to make the repairs. The question is whether one approach is indeed “cheaper” than another when the trade-off involves human suffering and frustration. [...]

As indicated throughout the report, Miami suffers the range of urban problems that seem endemic to all major American cities today. The vast majority of the black community, regardless of economic status, feels powerless and frustrated. It is possible to identify and perhaps to ameliorate some of the sources of tension, but any long-term solution requires a coordinated attack on the underlying causes of racial isolation and exclusion. [...]

The same groups, individuals, and units of government that worked together to rebuild downtown Miami can—if they want to—work together with the black community to bring about that community's participation in all aspects of growth and progress in Dade County. The knowledge and skills are available; the question is one of commitment. This report unmistakably demonstrates that without such a commitment, conditions will worsen, isolation will increase and violence will recur.¹⁴

CONNECTIONS

1. The authors of the report *Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami* wrote that “blacks are in the city, but in a crucial sense, they are not part of Miami.” What did they mean?
2. What key words did the Commission use to describe the problems facing Miami's black citizens? Why did the commissioners think that isolation was the main problem? What did they mean by “isolation”?
3. What factors do the authors of the report believe contributed to the isolation of the black community?
4. What solutions to the isolation and marginalization of blacks in Miami did the Commission offer? What do you think about the Commission's recommendations? Can you think of other ideas that would have helped to make a difference?
5. How is a community harmed when all groups are not provided equal protection?

Document 4: **HAROLD WASHINGTON FOR MAYOR!**

In 1982, Chicago's black minority experienced the same neglect, discrimination, and political marginalization that the black community in Miami faced. Frustrated with poor living conditions and the lack of black representatives in the city's offices, black activists decided to take action. They organized a massive voter registration drive that enlisted over one hundred thousand new black vot-

ers, and recruited Harold Washington, a Democratic Congressman, to run for mayor. Although initially reluctant, Washington declared his candidacy on November 10. At a rally, he explained his decision to run for mayor:

Chicago is a divided city. Chicago is a city where [some] citizens are treated unequally and unfairly. Chicago is a city in decline. Each year for the last decade, we have lost 11,500 jobs, 3,500 housing units and nearly 36,000 people.

Since 1955 [the year Mayor Daley took office], women, Latinos, Blacks, youth and progressive whites have been left out of the Chicago government. Since 1979 [the year Mayor Byrne took office], the business, labor and intellectual communities have been allowed but token involvement in Chicago government. Sadly, we have learned what happens when there is no governmental stability—and when the few rule over us. The results are that more people don't have jobs, more are out of food, out of their homes and out of hope.

Our businesses are failing at the highest rate since the Depression, in part from high interest rates, and the only answer the city government provides is fat consultant contracts for a few politically connected firms and jobs for a few patronage workers.

We have a school system which does not educate, in which students continue to lag far behind the rest of the country in tests of reading and math ability.

We have a continuing crime problem in the city. Despite a drop in crime statistics, it's still not safe to walk the streets or run a business. Even at home, Chicagoans are robbed, mugged and beaten.

We no longer have dependable housing in this city. There has been an epidemic of abandoned buildings and rents have skyrocketed. Subsidized housing is no longer being built. And, with interest rates as they are, no one can afford to buy their own home anymore.

Finally, "the city that works" doesn't work anymore. City services cost more than in any other city in America, and yet they just aren't there—sewers are in disrepair, streets are marred with giant potholes. We have one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country, and traffic appears to be permanently snarled.

We have these terrible problems in Chicago, partly because leadership has not striven for unity and pointed boldly to the new directions. Instead, it has perpetuated outdated politics and pie-in-the-sky financing. [...]

I would prefer not to run. But, there is a sense of urgency which moves me. Chicago can only be rebuilt if all the people of Chicago and her leaders work together. I was born, raised and educated in this city, and I have served it on three levels of government. I love

representing Chicago in Washington, where we need courageous voices to speak out [...] but I can't watch the city of Chicago be destroyed by petty politics and bad government.

I have heard the earnest pleas of thousands of people to enter the race. Therefore, I declare that I am a candidate for the mayor of Chicago. Not to do so would be a mockery of my longstanding dedication to public service. I see a Chicago that runs well, in which services are provided as a right, not as a political favor.

I see a Chicago of educational excellence and equality of treatment in which all children can learn to function in this ever more complex society, in which jobs and contracts are dispensed fairly to those that want and qualify for them, and in which justice rains down like water.

I see a Chicago in which the neighborhoods are once again the center of our city, in which businesses boom and provide neighborhood jobs, in which neighbors join together to help govern their neighborhood and their city.

Some may say this is visionary—I say *they* lack vision. [...]

Thousands of Chicagoans have beseeched me to undertake this task. Their faith is not misplaced.⁵

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February 1983. Harold Washington gives a victory sign during his campaign to become Chicago's first black mayor. His victory that year symbolized a dramatic increase in blacks' political power.

Overcoming both prejudices and personal and racist attacks, Washington waged a strong grassroots campaign and won the election. In April 1983, he became Chicago's first black mayor. In his inaugural speech, he called on the people from every walk of life to get involved in rebuilding Chicago:

[...] My election was the result of the greatest grassroots effort in the history of the city of Chicago. It may have been equaled somewhere in this country, but I know not where. My election was made possible by thousands and thousands of people who demanded that the burdens of mismanagement, unfairness and inequity be lifted so that the city might be saved.

One of the ideas that held us all together said that neighborhood involvement has to replace the ancient, decrepit and creaking machine. City government, for once in our lifetime, must be made equitable and fair. The people of Chicago asked for more responsibility and more representation at every city level.

It's a good thing that philosophy prevailed, because otherwise I'm not sure the city could solve the financial crisis at hand. Reluctantly, I must tell you that because of circumstances thrust upon us, each and every one of us, we must immediately cut back on how much money the city can spend. [...] But these measures are not enough to make up the enormous deficits we have inherited. Like other cities across the state, we simply cannot provide adequate public service without additional sources of revenue. During the election I said that there was no alternative to higher state income taxes. [...]

But when it finally comes down to basic issues, I'm only going to be successful if you are involved. The neighborhoods and the people who reside in them are going to have to play an active, creative role in this administration. I am asking you now to join that team. [...] Business as usual will not be accepted by the people of this city. Business as usual will not be accepted by any part of this city. Business as usual will not be accepted by this chief executive of this great city. [...] The city's books will be open to the public because we don't have a chance to institute fiscal reform unless we all know the hard facts. I believe in the process of collective bargaining when all the numbers are on the table and the city and its unions sit down and hammer out an agreement together. The only contracts that ever work are the ones that are essentially fair. [...]

We are a multiethnic, multiracial, multilanguage city and that is not a source to negate but really a source of pride, because it adds stability and strength to a metropolitan city as large as ours. Our minorities are ambitious, and that is a sign of a prosperous city on the move. Racial fears and divisiveness have hurt us in the past. But I believe that is a situation that will and must be overcome. [...] In our ethnic and racial diversity, we are all brothers and sisters in a quest for greatness. Our creativity and energy are unequalled by any city anywhere in the world. We will not rest until the renewal of our city is done.

Today, I want to tell you how proud I am to be your mayor. [...] It makes me humble, but it also makes me glad. I hope some day to be remembered by history as the mayor who cared about people and who was above all fair, a mayor who helped to heal our wounds, who stood the watch while the city and its people answered the greatest challenge in more than a century—and who saw that city renewed. [...]

Let's go to work!⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Washington, what were the causes of the decline of Chicago? What groups were especially affected? What were the similarities between the problems minorities faced in Chicago and in Miami?
2. Washington discussed the “grassroots” efforts that contributed to his election. What does that term mean? How can grassroots efforts lead to political success?

3. What vision did Washington articulate for Chicago? What were the key policies to which he was committed?
4. Washington described Chicago's identity as a "multiethnic, multiracial, multilanguage city" and believed that diversity adds "stability and strength" to a city. How does diversity strengthen a city? How can diversity be harnessed for the public good?

Document 5: FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO THE RAINBOW COALITION

In 1984, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a former staff member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and founder of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), became the second black American to run for President. Jackson's campaign, coupled with a massive voter registration project, used the image of a rainbow to represent the diversity of the United States. While the campaign was marred by accusations of antisemitism, he used his address at the 1984 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco to reaffirm the historical alliance between black and Jewish Americans and tie the civil rights movement to the new coalition he hoped to build. In the following excerpts from his speech, Jackson described his new multicultural "rainbow coalition":

Our flag is red, white and blue, but our nation is a rainbow—red, yellow, brown, black and white—and we're all precious in God's sight.

America is not like a blanket—one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt—many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread. The white, the Hispanic, the black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay and the disabled make up the American quilt.

[...]From Fannie Lou Hamer in Atlantic City in 1964 (see Episode 5) to the Rainbow Coalition in San Francisco today; from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we have experienced pain but progress as we ended American apartheid laws, we got public accommodation, we secured voting rights, we obtained open housing, as young people got the right to vote. We lost Malcolm [X], Martin [Luther King], Medgar [Evars], Bobby [Kennedy], John [Kennedy] and Viola [Liuzzo]. The team that got us here must be expanded, not abandoned.

Twenty years ago, tears welled up in our eyes as the bodies of Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney were dredged from the depths of a river in Mississippi (see Episode 5). Twenty years later, our communities, black and Jewish, are in anguish, anger and pain. Feelings have been hurt on both sides.

There is a crisis in communications. Confusion is in the air. But we cannot afford to lose our way. We may agree to agree; or agree to disagree on issues; we must bring back civility to these tensions.

We are co-partners in a long and rich religious history—the Judeo-Christian traditions.

Many blacks and Jews have a shared passion for social justice at home and peace abroad. We must seek a revival of the spirit, inspired by a new vision and new possibilities. We must return to higher ground.

We are bound by Moses and Jesus, but also connected with Islam and Mohammed. These three great religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were all born in the revered and holy city of Jerusalem.

We are bound by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Heschel, crying out from their graves for us to reach common ground. We are bound by shared blood and shared sacrifices. We are much too intelligent; much too bound by our Judeo-Christian heritage; much too victimized by racism, sexism, militarism and anti-Semitism; much too threatened as historical scapegoats to go on divided one from another. We must turn from finger pointing to clasped hands. We must share our burdens and our joys with each other once again. We must turn to each other and not on each other and choose higher ground.

Twenty years later, we cannot be satisfied by just restoring the old coalition. Old wine skins must make room for new wine. We must heal and expand. The Rainbow Coalition is making room for Arab Americans. They, too, know the pain and hurt of racial and religious rejection. They must not continue to be made pariahs. The Rainbow Coalition is making room for Hispanic Americans [...].

The Rainbow is making room for the Native American, the most exploited people of all, a people with the greatest moral claim amongst us. We support them as they seek the restoration of their ancient land and claim amongst us. We support them as they seek the restoration of land and water rights, as they seek to preserve their ancestral homelands and the beauty of a land that was once all theirs. They can never receive a fair share for all they have given us. They must finally have a fair chance to develop their great resources and to preserve their people and their culture.

The Rainbow Coalition includes Asian Americans, now being killed in our streets, scapegoats for the failures of corporate, industrial and economic policies.

The Rainbow is making room for the young Americans. Twenty years ago, our young people were dying in a war for which they could not even vote. Twenty years later, young America has the power to stop a war in Central America and the responsibility to vote in great numbers. Young America must be politically active in 1984. The choice is war or peace. We must make room for young America.

The Rainbow includes disabled veterans. The color scheme fits in the Rainbow. The disabled have their handicap revealed and their genius concealed; while the able-bodied have their genius revealed and their disability concealed. But ultimately, we must judge people

by their values and their contribution. Don't leave anybody out [....].

The Rainbow includes small farmers. They have suffered tremendously under the Reagan regime. They will either receive 90 percent parity or 100 percent charity. We must address their concerns and make room for them.

The Rainbow includes lesbians and gays. No American citizen ought to be denied equal protection from the law.

We must be unusually committed and caring as we expand our family to include new members. All of us must be tolerant and understanding as the fears and anxieties of the rejected and of the party leadership express themselves in so many different ways. Too often what we call hate—as if it were some deeply-rooted philosophy or strategy—is simply ignorance, anxiety, paranoia, fear and insecurity.

To be strong leaders, we must be long-suffering as we seek to right the wrongs of our Party and our Nation. We must expand our Party, heal our Party and unify our Party. That is our mission in 1984.

We are often reminded that we live in a great nation—and we do. But it can be greater still. The Rainbow is mandating a new definition of greatness. We must not measure greatness from the mansion down, but from the manger up.

[...] When we think, on this journey from slave ship to championship, that we have gone from the planks of the Boardwalk in Atlantic City in 1964 to fighting to help write the planks in the platform in San Francisco in 1984, there is a deep and abiding sense of joy in our souls in spite of the tears in our eyes. Though there are missing planks, there is a solid foundation upon which to build. Our party can win, but we must provide hope, which will inspire people to struggle and achieve; provide a plan that shows a way out of our dilemma and then lead the way.⁷

CONNECTIONS

1. What did Jackson's rainbow flag symbolize? What other images in his speech stand out? How was Jackson's vision of a rainbow coalition similar to or different from the message and symbolism of the civil rights movement? Whom did his organization seek to embrace?
2. How did Jackson's idea of a rainbow coalition address the changing demographics of the United States in the 1980s?
3. After reading Jackson's address, what questions would you like to ask him? What would you like to tell him?
4. Based on what you have learned from *Eyes on the Prize*, what are the challenges of holding a broad coalition together? What can be done to strengthen the bonds between the various groups that make up a coalition?

Document 6: NONVIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY

Taylor Branch, Pulitzer Prize winner and civil rights historian, concluded his civil rights history trilogy with a book entitled *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68*. In the introduction to this final volume, Branch evaluated the unique contributions of the civil rights movement, nonviolent direct action, and the Reverend. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, leadership to American democracy:

Nonviolence is an orphan among democratic ideas. It has nearly vanished from public discourse even though the most basic element of free government—the vote—has no other meaning. Every ballot is a piece of nonviolence, signifying hard-won consent to raise politics above firepower and bloody conquest. Such compacts work more or less securely in different lands. Nations gain strength from vote-based institutions in commerce and civil society, but the whole architecture of representative democracy springs from the handiwork of nonviolence.

America's Founders centered political responsibility in the citizens themselves, but, nearly two centuries later, no one expected a largely invisible and dependent racial minority to ignite protests of steadfast courage—boycotts, sit-ins, Freedom Rides, jail marches—dramatized by stunning forbearance and equilibrium into the jaws of hatred. During the short career of Martin Luther King, Jr., between 1954 and 1968, the nonviolent civil rights movement lifted the patriotic spirit of the United States toward our defining national purpose.

James Madison, arguing in 1788 to ratify the novel Constitution of the United States, called upon “every votary of freedom to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government.” This revolutionary premise challenged the once universal hierarchy of rulers and subjects along with its stubborn assumption that a populace needs discipline by superior force or authority. [...] There remains debate about the relative sturdiness of self-governance and public trust as bedrock features of constitutional design. [...] However, nonviolent pioneers from the civil rights era stand tall in the commitment to govern oneself and develop political bonds with strangers, rather than vice versa. Teenagers and small children sang freedom songs in the Birmingham jail. Workshops trained nonviolent pilgrims to uphold democratic beliefs against the psychology of enemies. Demonstrators faced segregationist oppressors in the utmost spirit of disciplined outreach, willing to suffer and even die without breaking witness for civil contact. [...]

Martin Luther King famously exhorted the nation to “rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed,” but he paid tribute to vanguard students for teaching him that oratory alone was not enough. He reinforced a cry for democracy with political sacrifice, and dreams of brotherhood collided in his anguished voice with the cruelties of race. To combat distortions in historical perception, King balanced an imperative for equal votes with the original prophetic vision of equal souls before God. He grounded one foot in

patriotism, the other in ministry, and both in nonviolence. The movement he led climbed from obscurity to command the center stage of American politics in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy declared racial segregation a moral issue “as old as the Scriptures and ... as clear as the American Constitution.” A year later, after President Lyndon Johnson signed a landmark law to abolish segregation by sex as well as race, King accepted the Nobel Peace Prize. “I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality,” he said, echoing the Founders’ lyrical hopes for freedom. “But what,” wrote Madison, “is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary.”⁸

The nonviolent movement was inspired by ideas from outside the United States. In turn, the movement strengthened democracy activists in China and Eastern Europe, in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and elsewhere around the world. Shen Tong, born in Beijing in 1968, was a leading student activist in the movement for democracy in China. He escaped the Chinese government’s deadly response to the nonviolent demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and came to study in the United States. Later, in 1990, as chairman of the Democracy for China Fund, he gave a speech at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta (where King had been minister). In it, he discussed the influence of the philosophy of nonviolence in the global struggle for democratic change:

My first encounter with the concept of nonviolence was in high school when I read about Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. At the time this method of nonviolence seemed, to my superficial understanding, extremely logical and beautiful. Here was a method which would clearly win in the end, no matter how long the struggle may last. Although the process may take longer, you get the true result—a real and lasting change—not a fake result.

At the time, Dr. King’s ideas seemed very idealistic to me from my simple understanding of his principles. Just like the sense of nonviolence which Albert Einstein gave to me, which Gandhi gave to me.

But that was the first step in my life, and that was the first step in the lives of many young Chinese seeking some beautiful way for China. We were exposed to the principles of nonviolence and it gave us inspiration. It was something very pure, very idealistic in our minds.⁹

CONNECTIONS

1. Branch wrote that “nonviolence is an orphan among democratic ideas.” What did he mean?
2. How did Branch connect the nonviolent struggle to the principles of American democracy? For Branch, what values are at the heart of the nonviolent movement? How do violence and lawlessness diminish these values?
3. Why did Branch argue that “the most basic element of free government—the vote—has no other meaning” than the principle of nonviolence?
4. What did Branch suggest are the lasting legacies of King’s leadership?

5. What did Shen Tong mean when he said that nonviolent change “may take longer” but in the end will get the “true result?” To what other approaches might he have been comparing nonviolence in this case?

¹ Grand Master Flash & The Furious Five, “The Message,” *The Message*, compact disc, Sugar Hill Records, 1982 as quoted from Metrolyrics, http://www.metrolyrics.com/lyrics/161869/Grandmaster_Flash/The_Message (accessed July 19, 2006).

² Run D.M.C., “Hard Times,” *Run D.M.C.*, compact disc, Profile Records, 1984 as quoted from Song Teksten, http://www.song-teksten.com/song_lyrics/run_d_m_c/run_d_m_c/hard_times (accessed July 19, 2006).

³ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 653–54.

⁴ “Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, June 1982), as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 682–87.

⁵ Travis Dempsey, *Harold: The People’s Mayor* (Chicago: Urban Research Press, 1989), 157–58.

⁶ Harold Washington, “Inaugural Address,” April 29, 1983, *Chicago Public Library*, <http://www.chicagopubliclibrary.org/004chicago/mayors/speeches/hw83.html> (accessed on August 18, 2006).

⁷ Rev. Jesse Jackson, “Address before the Democratic National Convention,” July 18, 1984, *The Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson, Frontline*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/jesse/speeches/jesse84speech.html> (accessed on June 20, 2006).

⁸ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68* (New York: Simon Schuster, 2006), xi–xiii.

⁹ Shen Tong, “Address to the National College and University Student Conference,” as quoted in Clayborne Carson, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader*, 712–13.