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Violent vs. Non-Violent

***Which philosophy made the most sense for America in the 1960s?***



*Background Essay:*

Racial strife plagued the United States since its beginning. This strife became explosive during the 1950s and 60s. “Confrontation, violence, and social disorder indeed seemed almost ubiquitous in America during the mid- and late 1960s.”[[1]](#footnote-1) This era, known as the Civil Rights Movement, was an opportunity for African Americans to strive for equality among other Americans. The Civil Rights Movement encouraged African Americans to speak out against injustices caused by de jure and de facto discrimination. Different groups fought against this discrimination in a myriad of ways. Some groups chose a non-violent approach by utilizing civil disobedience measures, such as boycotts and sit-ins. Other groups chose a more militant approach, arguing that non-violence would not achieve the equality they longed for quickly enough. The nonviolent method was lead in large part by Martin Luther King Jr and Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC). The militant approach was spread among several groups, the most famous being the Black Panthers, who were largely impacted by the ideology of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael. Although both perspectives wanted to establish a more equal America, their methods and rationale varied greatly. The question then becomes: Violent vs. non-violent, which made more sense for America in the 1960s?

***DOCUMENT 1***

***Document Note:*** *Stokely Carmichael, at the time the national chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, wrote the following article for the New York Review of Books in September 1966. Entitled “What We Want,” the article tried to sum up the feelings and desires of younger African Americans throughout the country*

***Vocabulary:***

***Militancy-*** *extremely active and aggressive, especially in support of a cause*

**Stokley Carmichael from “What We Want” 1966**

One of the tragedies of the struggle against racism is that up to now there has been no national organization which could speak to the growing militancy of young black people in the urban ghetto. There has been only a civil rights movement, whose tone of voice was adapted to an audience of liberal whites. It served as a sort of buffer zone between them and angry young blacks. None of its so-called leaders could go into a rioting community and be listened to. In a sense, I blame ourselves--together with the mass media--for what has happened in Watts, Harlem, Chicago, Cleveland, Omaha. Each time the people in those cities saw Martin Luther King get slapped, they became angry; when they saw four little black girls bombed to death, they were angrier; and when nothing happened, they were steaming. We had nothing to offer that they could see, except to go out and be beaten again. We helped to build their frustration.

For too many years, black Americans marched and had their heads broken and got shot. They were saying to the country, “Look, you guys are supposed to be nice guys and we are only going to do what we are supposed to do--why do you beat us up, why don't you give us what we ask, why don't you straighten yourselves out?” After years of this, we are at almost the same point--because we demonstrated from a position of weakness. We cannot be expected any longer to march and have our heads broken in order to say to whites: come on, you're nice guys. For you are not nice guys. We have found you out.

1. What year did Carmichael deliver this speech?
2. What does Carmichael state “we” want?
3. Cite two specific ideas Carmichael presents as being examples of white oppression.
4. What is the “tragedy of the struggle against racism”?
5. Does Carmichael seem to favor non violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
6. Do you think Carmichael’s argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

***DOCUMENT 2***

***Document Note:*** *Malcolm X’s life changed dramatically in the first six months of 1964.  On March 8, he left the Nation of Islam.  In May he toured West Africa and made a pilgrimage to Mecca, returning as El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.  While in Ghana in May, he decided to form the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU).  Malcolm returned to New York the following month to create the OAAU and on June 28 gave his first public address on behalf of the new organization at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem.*

***Vocabulary:***

***Nationalism****- national spirit or aspirations*

**Malcolm X** [**Speech at Founding Rally**](http://www.panafricanperspective.com/mxoaaufounding.html) **of the** [**Organization of Afro-American Unity**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_Afro-American_Unity)[**1964**](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/1964)



http://youtu.be/TO6Co8v2XjY

1. What year was Malcolm X’s speech given?
2. Why does Malcolm X argue that they are not Americans?
3. What do you think Malcolm X means by “We didn’t land on Plymouth Rock, the rock was landed on us”?
4. How does Malcolm X say Africans gained freedom?
5. Does Malcolm X seem to favor non-violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
6. Do you think Malcolm X’s argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

***DOCUMENT 3***

***Document Note:*** *Letter from Birmingham City Jail, also known as The Negro Is Your Brother, is an*[*open letter*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_letter) *written on April 16, 1963. King wrote the letter from the city jail in*[*Birmingham*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham%2C_Alabama)*,* [*Alabama*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama)*, where he was held after being arrested for his part in the*[*Birmingham campaign*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_campaign)*, a planned*[*non-violent protest*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_resistance)*conducted by the* [*Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama_Christian_Movement_for_Human_Rights)*and King's*[*Southern Christian Leadership Conference*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Christian_Leadership_Conference)*against*[*racial segregation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_segregation)*by Birmingham's city government and downtown retailers. It was smuggled out of the jail in a toothpaste tube to avoid the jail's guards. King's letter is a response to a statement made by eight white Alabama clergymen on April 12, 1963, titled "*[*A Call For Unity*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Call_For_Unity)*". The clergymen agreed that social injustices existed but argued that the battle against racial segregation should be fought solely in the courts, not in the streets.*

***Vocabulary***

***Ominous****: evil or harm; threatening*

***Inferiority****: of comparatively low grade; poor in quality; substandard*

***Harried****: to harass, annoy, or prove a nuisance to by or as if by repeated attacks*

***Degenerating****: to fall below a normal or desirable level in physical, mental, ormoral qualities*

**Martin Luther King Jr. from “Letter from Birmingham Jail” 1963**

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. Perhaps 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-county 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 no 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 impatience.

1. What year was this letter written?
2. Describe two specific examples of racial injustice described by Martin Luther King Jr.
3. How does Dr. King feel about the progress of civil rights? Use at least one specific quote to support your answer.
4. King addresses having to explain to his daughter that “’Funtown’ is closed to colored children”. Why do you think King includes this point in his letter?
5. Does Dr. King seem to favor non violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
6. Do you think Dr. King’s argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

***DOCUMENT 4***

***Document Note:*** *“Message to the Grass Roots” was**a*[*public speech*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_speaking)*by*[*Malcolm X*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_X)*at the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference on November 10, 1963, in King Solomon Baptist Church in*[*Detroit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit)*,*[*Michigan*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michigan)*. In the speech, Malcolm X described the difference between the "Black revolution" and the "Negro revolution", he contrasted the "*[*house Negro*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_Negro)*" and the "field Negro" during*[*slavery*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_the_United_States)*and in the modern age, and he criticized the 1963*[*March on Washington*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_on_Washington_for_Jobs_and_Freedom)*.*

***Vocabulary:***

***Oppress****: to burden with cruel or unjust impositions or restraints*

***Exploit****: to use selfishly for one's own gains*

**Malcolm X from “Message to the Grass Roots” 1963**

So we are all black people, so—called Negroes, second—class citizens, ex—slaves. You are nothing but a [sic] ex—slave. You don’t like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex—slaves. You didn’t come here on the "Mayflower." You came here on a slave ship —— in chains, like a horse, or a cow, or a chicken. And you were brought here by the people who came here on the "Mayflower." You were brought here by the so—called Pilgrims, or Founding Fathers. They were the ones who brought you here.

We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have this common enemy, then we unite on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy —— the white man. He’s an enemy to all of us. I know some of you all think that some of them aren’t enemies. Time will tell.

1. What year did Malcolm X deliver this speech?
2. Who is the common enemy Malcolm X describes?
3. Malcolm X mentions that African Americans did not arrive on the “Mayflower”. Why do you think he includes this? What does that statement imply?
4. Does Malcolm X seem to favor non-violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
5. Do you think Malcolm X’s argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

***DOCUMENT 5***

***Document Note:*** *The Following document contains the basic beliefs of The Black Panther Party (originally the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.) It was an* [*African-American*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American) *revolutionary communist organization.* [*Federal Bureau of Investigation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Bureau_of_Investigation)*Director*[*J. Edgar Hoover*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._Edgar_Hoover)*called the party “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.” The rules said that members had to follow the Ten Point Program, and had to know it by heart.*

***Vocabulary:***

***Plebiscite-*** any expression or determination of public opinion on some matter

**Black Panther Party Platform and Program-1966**

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 man 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 community, 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 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.*

1. What year did the Black Panthers write their ten point platform?
2. What do the Black Panthers want to control most? (hint look at #1)
3. Which of the ten points stands out the most to you? Why?
4. Do you think the Black Panther Party’s requests are reasonable? Use at least one specific quote to justify your answer.
5. Does the Black Panther Party seem to favor non-violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
6. Do you think the Black Panthers’ argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

***DOCUMENT 6***

***Document Note:*** *"We Shall Overcome" is a*[*protest song*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protest_song)*that became a key*[*anthem*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthem)*of the*[*US civil rights movement*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_civil_rights_movement)*. The lyrics of the song are derived from the refrain of a*[*gospel song*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_music)*by*[*Charles Albert Tindley*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Albert_Tindley)*. The song became associated with the Civil Rights movement from 1959, when*[*Guy Carawan*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Carawan)*stepped in as song leader at Highlander, and the school was the focus of student non-violent activism. It quickly became the movement's unofficial anthem. Since its rise to prominence, the song, and songs based on it, have been used in a variety of protests worldwide.*

**We Shall Overcome-1947**

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome someday;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome someday.

The Lord will see us through, The Lord will see us through,
The Lord will see us through someday;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome someday.

We're on to victory, We're on to victory,
We're on to victory someday;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We're on to victory someday.

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand someday;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We'll walk hand in hand someday.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,
We are not afraid today;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We are not afraid today.

The truth shall make us free, the truth shall make us free,
The truth shall make us free someday;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
The truth shall make us free someday.

We shall live in peace, we shall live in peace,
We shall live in peace someday;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall live in peace someday.

1. What year was this song written?
2. What does the song say will “set us fee”?
3. What do you think “victory” is? (see the 3rd stanza)
4. Does the song seem to favor non-violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
5. Do you think the song’s argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

***DOCUMENT 7***

***Document Note:*** *On 15 March 15 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed Congress, calling for passage of the voting rights act. The speech came one week after a gathering in Selma, AL led to deadly violence when African-Americans preparing to march to Montgomery were attacked by police. A white Unitarian Minister from Boston, James J. Reeb, was killed.*

***Vocabulary:***

***Bigot-*** a person who is intolerantly devoted to his or her own opinions and prejudices

***Injustice-*** violation of right or of the rights of another

**Lyndon B Johnson- Address to Congress: We Shall Overcome-1965**

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.

As a man whose roots go deeply into southern soil, I know how agonizing racial feelings are. I know how difficult it is to reshape the attitudes and the structure of our society. But a century has passed -- more than 100 years -- since the negro was freed.

And he is not fully free tonight.

It was more than 100 years ago that Abraham Lincoln -- a great President of another party -- signed the Emancipation Proclamation. But emancipation is a proclamation and not a fact.

A century has passed -- more than 100 years -- since equality was promised, and yet the negro is not equal.

1. What was the date of Johnson’s address?
2. Who does Johnson say “must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice”?
3. What is the significance of Johnson including the words “we shall overcome” in his speech?
4. Why do you think Johnson speaks of Lincoln in this speech?
5. Does the Johnson seem to favor non-violence or violence? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.
6. Do you think Johnson’s argument seems to make sense for America during this time? Explain.

You are to create two poems/songs/raps.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All questions are answered well and completely5 | All questions are answered, but could use more detail4 | Most questions are answered3 | About half of the questions are answered2 | Less than half of the questions are answered1 |
| Poem/Song/Rap is well written and there are no grammar issues5 | Poem/Song/Rap is well written and there are few grammar issues4 | Poem/Song/Rap makes sense, but has many grammar issues3 | Poem/Song/Rap is difficult to read, but still can be understood2 | Poem/Song/Rap cannot be read because of grammatical issues1 |
| Poem/Song/Rap is well written accurately reflects information from the DBQ5 | Poem/Song/Rap is average, but accurately reflects information from the DBQ4 | Poem/Song/Rap is average, but does not accurately reflect information from the DBQ3 | Poem/Song/Rap is below average, and does not accurately reflect information from the DBQ2 | Poem/Song/Rap is poor, and does not accurately reflect information from the DBQ1 |

Each poem/songs/raps will describe one point of view shown by the DBQ sources (one violent and one non-violent).

Total Points \_\_\_\_/ 15

1. Patterson, James, Grand Expectations: The United States 1945-1974 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 449. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)