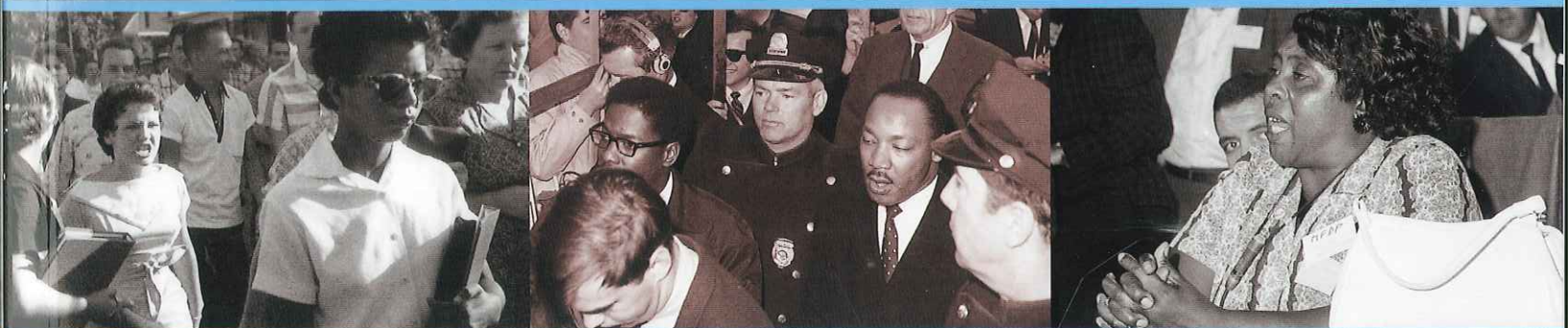




EYES ON THE PRIZE

America's Civil Rights Movement
1954-1985

A Study Guide to the Television Series



Written by Facing History and Ourselves



BLACKSIDE

A Blackside Publication

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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).



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 (CCCCO, which represented a coalition of local organizations) coordinated the campaign in Chicago. The CCCC was formed in 1962 to protest the segregationist policies of Chicago school superintendent, Benjamin Willis. By 1965, the CCCC 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).