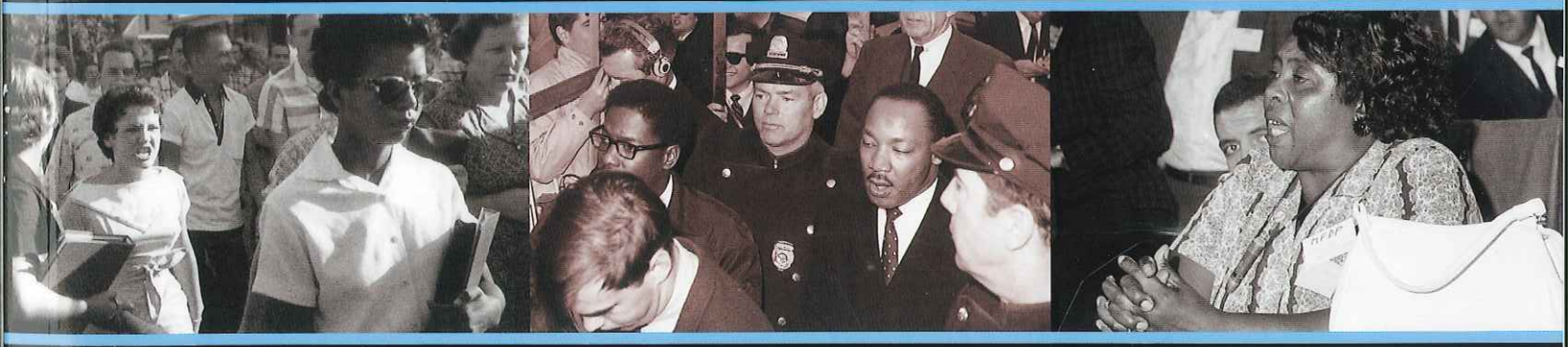
EYES ON THE PRIZE

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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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 9:

POWER! *(1966–1968)*

Episode 9 explores the influence of the idea of black power on the freedom movement. It follows leaders of three black communities in their efforts to gain the political and economic power that would enable advancements in employment, housing, and education. Some communities sought power by building coalitions and developing strategies to elect black politicians to public office. For others, black power meant community control over local programs and services: black people taking charge of their own destiny. The first segment illustrates this strategy by tracing the mayoral race in Cleveland, Ohio, between black state legislator Carl Stokes and the Republican candidate, Seth Taft.

In 1966, one year before the city's municipal election, riots broke out in the predominantly black community of Hough. For several nights, Cleveland's streets were ablaze. When the riots finally subsided, Carl Stokes, a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, launched a campaign for mayor. The Stokes campaign simultaneously ran a comprehensive voter registration drive among blacks and worked to build support in the white community. Despite setbacks, Carl Stokes won the election by a narrow margin and became the first black mayor of a large city in the United States.

The second segment of this episode takes viewers to Oakland, California, whose police force was known for its harassment of black residents. In October 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP), named in reference to the symbol of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (see Episode 7). The BPP's calls for community control and armed self-defense to protect residents against police brutality attracted many young blacks from poor communities around the country. Calling themselves revolutionaries, the Panthers fused ideas from the freedom struggles in the US, China and the third world. As the party grew, the BPP's militant public image overshadowed their many self-help projects, which included health clinics, educational programs, and free breakfasts for children. In a nation that had become accustomed to the language and tactics of nonviolent protest, the Panthers were met with fear and suspicion.

1966	
Oct.	Huey Newton and Bobby Seale form the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California
1967	
	An interracial governing board is formed in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York, in an effort to submit public schools to community control.
May	A group of armed Black Panthers march into the capital building in Sacramento, California, to protest legislation that would rescind the right of civilians to carry firearms in public
Nov. 7	Democratic candidate Carl Stokes wins the mayoral election in Cleveland, Ohio, and becomes the first black mayor of a major city in the country
1968	
Apr. 6	The BPP and policemen clash in West Oakland, California, in a conflict that leaves three policemen and two Panthers wounded and one Panther dead
Sep.	In protest over the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community school board's decision to transfer a number of white teachers, the New York teachers' union organizes a citywide strike
Nov.	In response to the teacher strike, the New York City board of education dismisses the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community board

In October 1967, the police stopped Newton during a routine traffic check. The traffic check escalated into a shootout in which one officer died and Newton and a second policeman were injured. Newton was arrested and convicted of voluntary manslaughter. While the charges against Newton were later overturned, government surveillance of the Panthers increased. Despite government attempts to

disrupt party activities (see Episode 12), membership grew as young black men and women set up new Panther chapters across the country.

While the Panthers worked outside of the political system, the final segment of Episode 9 presents an attempt to reconcile the quest for community control of education within a citywide school system. In Ocean Hill–Brownsville, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, 95 percent of the student population was black and Latino. The majority of schoolteachers in the region were white, and many were Jewish. In 1968, as an alternative to integration plans that would involve moving children out of their neighborhoods, New York City officials proposed an experimental school district in Ocean Hill–Brownsville: along with the first black superintendent in New York City, a locally elected, interracial governing board was to control both the school curriculum and district administration. Soon after the plan went into effect, the school board decided to create programs that reflected the cultural and educational needs of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community and to integrate its teaching staff.

Tensions between the United Federation of Teachers (UFT, the New York teachers' union) and the school board surfaced after the board proposed transferring a number of white (and predominantly Jewish) teachers and assistant principals out of the district. Concern over the treatment of Jewish teachers ignited accusations of antisemitism and strained old alliances between black and Jewish communities within the city. While the district argued that it sought to respond to years of discrimination by reshaping the school environment to meet the educational and cultural needs of students, the UFT insisted on job security and fair treatment of its members. Unable to reach an agreement, the UFT called for a citywide strike. The strike pitted the predominantly white, middle-class teachers against the mostly lower middle-class and poor black neighborhood of Ocean Hill–Brownsville. And, despite orders to reinstate the teachers, the school board stood by its original decision. In the fall of 1968, fearing continued disruption and another year of strikes, the city stripped the board of its authority and ended this experiment in community-controlled schools.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why did the producers of *Eyes on the Prize* name this episode "Power!"?
2. What were the various definitions of black power within the movement?
3. What steps did black Americans take to gain control of their lives? How did their efforts inspire others?
4. In a democracy, what can people do when they lose faith in the government?
5. How much community control do you think is workable in a multiethnic democracy?
6. What issues did the community-controlled school initiative in Ocean Hill–Brownsville try to resolve? What tensions did it expose?

Document 1: HOW TO GET ELECTED BY WHITE PEOPLE

Black citizens made up a third of Cleveland's heterogeneous population of 800,000 residents, which also included Poles, Germans, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Irish, and Italians. While the black community enjoyed some political success, the city had never had a black mayor. Moreover, despite the millions of black citizens who lived in urban centers across the United States, there had never been a black mayor in any major city.

Carl Stokes, a lawyer who grew up in Cleveland, entered politics in the late 1950s. Stokes broke onto the scene when he became the first black American elected to serve in the Ohio House of Representatives. In 1967, Stokes decided to run for mayor in Cleveland. In excerpts from his memoir *Promises of Power: A Political Autobiography*, Stokes reflected on his rise to power:

In the summer of 1957, thirty years old, still poor, but with my law degree, I began to move into Cleveland's political arena. Ten years later I was elected the first black mayor of a major American city with a predominantly white population. I did things other men could or would not do. It came to me not because I had a new politics but because the old politicians had forgotten the most basic lesson: people, acting together, are power. They don't just have power. They *are* power.

With $120, my brother and I formed the law partnership of Stokes and Stokes, with offices at 10604 St. Clair Avenue, in a lower-middle-class neighborhood at the northern frontier of the ghetto called Glenville. […] In that first year, although I made much more money than other freshman lawyers, and as much as some veteran practitioners, my more serious efforts were political. I ran the campaign for Lowell Henry, a black man on my ward who was running for city councilman. It was an easy campaign, pure majority politics. Henry was running against a complacent Jewish councilman who, it was to turn out, owned more than eighty thousand dollars in slum properties. We used that and beat him. […]

But the most effective political work I did on my own behalf in those first years didn't look like political work at all. Jackson and Payne had advised me to get involved with civic groups, the Boy Scouts, the charity drives, and NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and the Urban League. And the churches, always the churches. There is no more effective political force in the black community than the church. When you need good zeal, when you need people out there working for you, having a hundred black preachers out there rallying them up for you is invaluable, unbeatable. So, during the years after I started the practice of law, I did anything I was asked to do in the community.

Judge Jackson would call me and tell me that some small church group needed a speaker and I would accept always and without question. There were plenty of times that I would end up talking to only two or three people, but I would talk and give them my whole load. For the civic and civil-rights groups. I would agree to be a chairman or co-chairman of particular drives, always volunteer work, never elected office. Long before I ran for anything, politics was for me a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. […]

[In 1958] I was determined to run for public office […]. It was a marvelous experience. Those white people had never been confronted with a Negro campaigning in their [white-only] clubs before. When I entered the room, there was a chill. The chairman would rarely know what to do, so I would walk over to the other candidates and ask whom I should see about being called to speak. Because of the natural camaraderie that had developed as we saw each other every night, I could depend on finding the right person. Once I opened my mouth, I had an advantage over the other candidates. I was the alien, the exotic, and I knew I could count on their complete attention. Then the amazing thing

happened. I spoke English. Enough has happened since 1960 that it is hard to remember now what a shock I was to them. But in those days whites, especially suburbanites, had lived in pure isolation from blacks. […]

Some years later I read Robert Dahl's *Who Governs?* which presents a theory of ethnic politics in America, based on a study of the political history of one town, New Haven, Connecticut. When I read that book, I understood instantly that what I was doing was what ethnic groups on the way up had always done. Politics today may not be what it was before the old machine broke down and civil-service procedures ruined the old corrupt patronage systems. But the ladder is still there, even if all of the rungs aren't. […] When the predominant ethnic group moved up the social and economic ladder, it moved out of organized politics. The people moving out may, at the most, leave one of their own in politics as a kind of boss. But it is always true that the group, having moved up economically, moves out—out geographically as well as politically. And as they move out they are no longer interested in being ward leaders, councilmen, and judges, clerks of court or members of the school board, and they leave a vacuum for the next group. […]

And I played my appeals the way they have always been played in ethnic coalition politics. The Italian politician would go to his own people and talk about the need for Italian participation in government, he would rant and rave and cry and moan about his Italian pride, about injustice, about Italian culture, all of the things that stir the loyalty of the people. He would let his people know that he felt Italians should take care of Italians. Then he would go all over the rest of the city and talk about democracy, about how government is for all of the people, about the need for new coalitions for the common good. To outsiders he talked about the great melting pot; to Italians he talked about Italians. That's how we came to have Italian mayors, and Irish and German mayors. It's a game well defined and well understood by the people who play it, each in his own turn. It's the way things have been done for two hundred years. All the black community of Cleveland needed in 1960 was someone who could do that same old thing for them.[1]

October 1967. Carl and Shirley Stokes casting their ballots in the mayoral race in Cleveland. Carl Stokes won the hearts of many whites and became the first black mayor of a major city in the United States.

CONNECTIONS

1. In what ways did Stokes's election represent a milestone for black power? What do you think his election meant for black citizens?

2. Historian and civil rights activist Vincent Harding explains that the election of Carl Stokes and other black politicians have helped to "expand" American democracy: "Somehow, at least for a moment, the intense organizing and the joyful grasping of the reins of the office have symbolized for us a certain coming of age, a claiming of responsibility for ourselves and others."[2] What did he mean by "expanded democracy"? How do events like Mayor Stokes's election change people's ideas about democracy?
3. What lessons did Mayor Stokes learn about getting elected in a city where white voters outnumbered blacks two to one? How did he balance his appeal to the black community with his message to the city at large?

Document 2: A DELICATE BALANCE

The 1967 Cleveland mayoral race posed a serious problem for Stokes: while he had to secure black loyalty, he could not risk alienating white voters. His dilemma was further complicated by memories of the Cleveland riots the year before. Thus, when the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) decided to come to Cleveland, Stokes "explained to them that they could only bring problems for us."* He recalled:

> We were juggling a delicate situation that could, with the slightest wrong move, come down around our heads. We had asked them not to come. We had understood why they wanted to come. Cleveland was where the action was, at the focus of the eyes of the black world […].
>
> When Dr. King made his decision [to come to Cleveland], Dr. Clement [former head of the NAACP and Stokes's campaign manager] tried to talk to some of his aides, to convince them that we already had a winner, but that it could be lost if black pride started prodding white fears. Dr. Clement told them that we had for the first time the opportunity to seize real power by winning a city hall. Dr. King's coming would only release the haters and the persons looking for an issue to excite racist reaction to what we were doing.
>
> He was not successful. Dr. King came to town. W. O. Walker arranged a meeting between Dr. King and me in his *Call & Post* office. I had met Dr. King at various national conferences since 1965, but we had never worked together. I felt a towering respect for the man, even awe. Facing down the bigots in Cleveland is one thing, but I knew I would never have had the nerve to walk across that Selma bridge or lead the people against Birmingham's Bull Connor. King's courage was of a different order from mine, suitable to different places, different actions. […] "Martin," I told him, "if you come in here with these marches and what not, you can just see what the reaction will be. You saw it in Cicero and other northern towns. We have got to win a political victory here. This is our chance to take over a power that is just unprecedented among black people. But I'm very concerned that if

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

you come here you're going to upset the balance we've created. You're going to create problems that we do not have now and may not be able to handle. I would rather that you not stay."

How on earth can any black American say that to Martin Luther King? I can tell you it was hard. But I knew I had my own way to make it hard for whites to live with their own prejudices. I knew that Dr. King and I wanted the same things. Finally, I knew my own situation, my own town, and I knew I had it in my hand. Once I [won the mayoral race], I knew I could do things that no civil-rights march ever did. "Carl […]I will have to stay," he said, "but I promise you there will be nothing inflammatory. We'll try to do a job here and our people will get in touch with your people, and any time that you feel there is something harmful to your overall campaign, just let me know."

Dr. King did limit his visits and he did conduct his activities in a very restrained manner. He helped a great deal in not creating more problems than those posed by his mere presence. And those problems were real. Letters with the signature of the Democratic Party county Chairman, Albert S. Porter, went out, saying that the election of Carl Stokes would mean turning over the city to Martin Luther King, a calamity that was meant to sound on the order of turning over a daughter or sister.

Ever since Dr. King's death, I had had to grapple with the problem of dealing with a small group of black leaders who grew out of the SCLC movement, because they knew of my not wanting Dr. King here. Asking Dr. King not to stay was one of the toughest decisions I ever had to make. It was a confrontation with a man whose recorded words I turn to for solace and inspiration at moments of depression. But it came down to the hard game of politics—whether we wanted a cause or a victory. I wanted to win. Our people needed me to win. I had been the architect for a unique assembly of interests, and I knew with one wrong move it would be just another house of cards.[3]

CONNECTIONS

1. What was Stokes's concern about King's presence in Cleveland? As a candidate? As a black person who cared about civil rights? As an American?
2. Stokes's concern about the SCLC's activities in Cleveland was political. What does Stokes's dilemma suggest about his understanding of the politics of getting elected?
3. Compare Stokes's response with the reaction of officials in Chicago to SCLC's campaign there (see Episode 8). What is similar about these responses? What are the key differences?

Document 3: THE ORIGINS OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE

Born in Louisiana, Huey P. Newton was named after Huey P. Long, the populist governor and senator from that state. In 1966, while a part-time law student and volunteer at the North Oakland

Neighborhood Anti-Poverty Center in Oakland, California, he and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. As part of their efforts to empower the black community, the BPP protested rent evictions, counseled welfare recipients on their rights, and taught courses in black history. On neighborhood patrols, they carried weapons, tape recorders, and law books. When the police stopped blacks in their community, BPP activists intervened, advised the detainees of their constitutional rights and attempted to prevent police abuse. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Newton remembered the BPP's origins:

> It was in 1953, I think, that Oakland had its first black policeman, who was a friend of my father's. His name was Kinner. My father broke friendship with Kinner because of his membership in the Oakland police. Not because he was a policeman, but because at the time the policy was that Kinner could only arrest black people. He could detain a white, but he would have to call a white officer. And my father thought that this was degrading. It was no change from what was happening in the South.
>
> The police, not only in the Oakland community but throughout the black communities in the country, were really the government. We had more contact with the police than we did the city council. The police were universally disliked. In Oakland, in October '66, when the party was founded, there was about one percent blacks on the police department. The police were impolite and they were very fast to kill a black for minor offenses, such as black youth stealing automobiles. They would shoot them in the back and so forth. […]
>
> Bobby Seale and I used the North Oakland service center as the original work spot to put together our program. They had all the machinery—mimeograph machines and typewriters. The North Oakland service center was a part of the poverty program. The service centers collected names of people on welfare, elderly people who needed aid. We used those lists to go around and canvass the community in order to find out the desires of the community. So we would go from house to house and explain to people our program. We printed up the first program at the North Oakland service center.
>
> Our program was structured after the Black Muslim program—minus the religion. I was very impressed with Malcolm X, with the program that Malcolm X followed. I think that I became disillusioned with the Muslims after Malcolm X was assassinated. I think that I was following not Elijah Muhammad or the Muslims, but Malcolm X himself. […]
>
> Most of the African countries were liberated during the sixties from colonialism. And we felt there was a need not for a separate nation, but for control of our dispersed communities. We wanted control of the communities where we were most numerous, and the institutions therein. At the same time, we felt that we were due, because of taxpaying, free access to and equal treatment in public facilities.
>
> We felt that the Black Panther party would quickly become a national organization when blacks across the country saw what we were doing in Oakland—driving out what we called

the "oppressive army" of police and controlling the institutions in the community. We felt that the government's next move would be to bring in the National Guard to recapture these institutions, and this would connect us to the international workers movement, the international proletarian movement, such as was happening in Cuba. We were very impressed by the Cuban revolution. At the time of the creation of the Black Panther party, I was introduced to Marxism and I think I had read a book called *Materialism and Imperial* [sic] *Criticism* by V. I. Lenin. At that time, it was pointed out that there were many contradictory social forces, and if you knew what to increase or decrease at a particular time, that you could cause the transformation. So we were trying to increase the conflict that was already happening and that was between the white racism, the police forces in the various communities, and the black communities in the country. And we felt that we would take the conflict to so high a level that some change had to come.[4]

CONNECTIONS

1. Newton and Seale called their party the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. What does the full name of the party suggest about its mission? What does it suggest about the members' attitudes? How did Newton connect the BPP to other global movements?
2. Newton explained that:

   "We were trying to increase the conflict that was already happening and that was between the white racism, the police forces in the various communities, and the black communities in the country. And we felt that we would take the conflict to so high a level that some change had to come."

   What did he mean? What was his strategy for change?

Document 4: THE BLACK PANTHERS' TEN-POINT PLATFORM

Bobby Seale, chairman and co-founder of the BPP, remembered sitting with Huey Newton to articulate a platform for their new movement:

We sat down and began to write out this ten-point platform and program: We want power to determine our own destiny in our own black community. We want organized electoral power. Full employment. Decent housing. Decent education to tell us about our true selves. Not to have to fight in Vietnam. An immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people. The right to have juries of our peers in courts.

We summed it up: We wanted land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. Then we flipped a coin to see who would be chairman. I won chairman.[5]

Their ten-point platform read as follows:

What We Want, What We Believe

1. *We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.*

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

July 1968. Members of the Black Panther Party demonstrated outside the Alameda County Courthouse and demanded the release of the party's cofounder Huey Newton. Newton was later cleared of murder charges.

2. *We want full employment for our people.*
We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. *We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.*
We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment as currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over twenty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. *We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.*
We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. *We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society.*
We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. *We want all black men to be exempt from military service.*
We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist

government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. *We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.*
We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

8. *We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.*
We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

9. *We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.*
We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.

10. *We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.*
When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to

effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariable the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.[6]

CONNECTIONS

1. After reading the Ten-Point Platform, how would you summarize the party's essential message? Do any of the demands surprise you? What do you agree or disagree with? What do you think people found threatening?
2. The last paragraph of the Panthers' demands was taken directly from the Declaration of Independence (1776). How did their use of this text shed new light on the meaning of the Declaration of Independence? How did it add legitimacy to their demands?
3. Vincent Harding explains:

   "The young Panthers had bought into much of America's worst romance with the gun [and] perceived themselves as a vanguard force who had to demonstrate armed, fearless, macho confrontation with the police. [...] But the story must not be taken out of the context of the struggle for democracy. [Their experience helps us explore] crucial relationships among race (and racism), the quest for local community control, and the expansion of democracy among an economically, politically, and racially constricted people."[7]

   Harding also asks:

   "How shall we best evaluate a movement that encouraged young Black urban males to see themselves not simply as victims but as prime actors in the unfolding drama of the transformation of America and the world?"[8]

   How would you answer his question?
4. The Black Panthers inspired the birth of a number of organizations that sought to assert independence and seek remedies for injustice. These groups included the Brown Berets (a Chicano activist group), the Gay Liberation Front (a group that advocated for gay rights), Students for a Democratic Society, and the Young Lords (a Puerto Rican activist group). How would you explain the Panthers' appeal among such diverse populations?

Document 5: WHY WE ARE NOT RACISTS

In 1968, Seale wrote a book which addressed what he believed were common misconceptions about the BPP. As a group that openly supported communism during the Cold War, the BPP was concerned that media depictions of the party distorted their efforts. Seale explained that their goal was to force people to confront the racism and exploitation that they believe tainted America's democracy:

The Black Panther Party is not a black racist organization, not a racist organization at all. [...] What the Black Panther Party has done in essence is to call for an alliance and coalition

with all of the people and organizations who want to move against the power structure. It is the power structure who are the pigs and hogs, who have been robbing the people; the avaricious, demagogic ruling-class elite who move the pigs upon our heads and who order them to do so as a means of maintaining their same old exploitation.

In the days of worldwide capitalistic imperialism, with that imperialism also manifested right here in America against many different peoples, we find it necessary, as human beings, to oppose misconceptions of the day, like integration. If people want to integrate—and I'm assuming they will fifty or 100 years from now—that's their business. But right now we have the problem of a ruling-class system that perpetuates racism and uses racism as a key to maintain its capitalistic exploitation. They use blacks, especially the blacks who come out of the colleges and the elite class system, because these blacks have a tendency to flock toward a black racism which is parallel to the racism the Ku Klux Klan or white citizens groups practice.

It's obvious that trying to fight fire with fire means there's going to be a lot of burning. The best way to fight fire is with water because water douses the fire. The water is the solidarity of the people's right to defend themselves together in opposition to a vicious monster. Whatever is good for the man, can't be good for us. Whatever is good for the capitalistic ruling-class system, can't be good for the masses of the people.

We, the Black Panther Party, see ourselves as a nation within a nation, but not for any racist reasons. We see it as a necessity for us to progress as human beings and live on the face of this earth along with other people. We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism. And we do not fight imperialism with more imperialism. We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism. These principles are very functional for the Party. They're very practical, humanistic, and necessary. They should be understood by the masses of the people.

We don't use our guns, we have never used our guns to go into the white community to shoot up white people. We only defend ourselves against anybody, be they black, blue, green, or red, who attacks us unjustly and tries to murder us and kill us for implementing our programs. All in all, I think people can see from our past practice, that ours is not a racist organization but a very progressive revolutionary party […].

Racism and ethnic differences allow the power structure to exploit the masses of workers in this country, because that's the key by which they maintain their control. To divide the people and conquer them is the objective of the power structure. It's the ruling class, the very small minority, the few avaricious, demagogic hogs and rats who control and infest the government. […] These are the ones who help to maintain and aid the power struc-

ture by perpetuating their racist attitudes and using racism as a means to divide the people. But it's really the small, minority ruling class that is dominating, exploiting, and oppressing the working and laboring people.

All of us are laboring-class people, employed or unemployed, and our unity has got to be based on the practical necessities of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, if that means anything to anybody. It's got to be based on the practical things like the survival of people and people's right to self-determination, to iron out the problems that exist. So in essence it is not at all a race struggle. We're rapidly educating people to this. In our view it is a class struggle between the massive proletarian working class and the small, minority ruling class. Working-class people of all colors must unite against the exploitative, oppressive ruling class. So let me emphasize again—we believe our fight is a class struggle and not a race struggle.[9]

CONNECTIONS

1. The BPP was founded at the same time that King and others were exploring ways to use the lessons they had in learned in the South to confront discrimination in America's Northern urban centers. Compare the SCLC's analysis of the "Northern race problem" (see Episode 8) with the BPP's message. What are the similarities? What differences do you find most striking?
2. Why did the BPP's approach appeal to many young black men who felt left out of the democratic process? Do you think there are opportunities for young people to participate meaningfully in democratic change today? If so, who is creating those opportunities?
3. Explain what Seale meant by each of the following:

   "We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity."
   "We do not fight exploitive capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism."
   "We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism."
4. Seale was adamant that while he rejected all forms of racism, he did not believe that integration was possible. Why not? Do you think these two viewpoints are compatible or contradictory?

Document 6: TEACHING IN THE SOUTH AND IN THE NORTH

In 1967, well over a decade after *Brown v. Board of Education*, integration in New York City still had a long way to go; the city schools served very diverse student populations, but they were divided by geography, race, and class. In black and Puerto Rican communities, failing schools, low reading scores, basic equipment shortages, and perceived racism and apathy among the teaching staff created bitterness and hostility.

C. Herbert Oliver was a minister from Birmingham, Alabama, who moved to New York City. In an interview with *Eyes on the Prize*, Oliver discussed the differences between education for blacks in the South and in the North:

When my family moved here from Birmingham in 1965, they came from totally segregated schools. The children were all black. The teachers were all black. The principals were all

black. One of my sons was above the national average in mathematics. But when he came to the schools here in Brooklyn, within one year he was flunking math.

In Alabama, when I went to a school, I was welcomed. The principal was glad to see a parent there, and I could discuss any problem with my children there. But when I came to the school here in Brooklyn, I couldn't get to see the principal. Someone wanted to know why I came, what I wanted to see him for, and said that he was not available. So I simply said "I will wait for him." I had expected to see the principal. That was my custom. But here I couldn't see a principal.

In about half an hour, the principal came. And I talked with the principal and told him what the problem was. We went and talked with the teacher. The teacher said my son was doing fine. I said. "He's not bringing home assignments, and he's flunked math. He came here from Alabama and he was ahead of the national average, and you're telling me he's doing fine. Something is wrong." And that just made me fired up to do something to change the system, because I could see it was destroying children and it was hurting my own child.

There were almost no black principals in the schools. No role models. Tremendous discipline problems. And we found that most of the teachers in the district came into the district, taught, and then went out of the district to their homes. And, of course, this is altogether different from the southern situation, because in the South, the teachers lived among the people. And the principals—all black—lived somewhere among the people, and you got to know them. But this was a vast problem here. And we thought that the best thing that we could do for our young people would be to call for the community control of the schools, and seek through that means to better the education of our children. That's how the cry for community control got under way.[10]

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Oliver's account, what were the key differences between the education of blacks in the South and in the North?
2. Why do you think Oliver's son achieved a better academic outcome in the South than in the North? What does his story suggest about the relationship between academic accomplishments and a supportive educational environment?
3. How do you think community involvement in education for blacks in the South affected students' learning experiences?

Document 7: SCHOOLS FOR THE COMMUNITY

In response to the failing schools in the North, blacks and Latinos demanded the same control that smaller, less diverse suburban communities had over their schools. Cultural issues were also at stake: many blacks and other minorities felt that their cultural heritage was neglected by "white dominated" classroom curriculums. Advocates for decentralization questioned New York's commitment to integra-

tion and argued that locally controlled schools would boost students' pride and enrich their learning experience. As an alternative to moving children out of their neighborhoods, New York City officials agreed to an educational experiment in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and granted the community control over the district.

The New York City school system never had a black district superintendent before Rhody McCoy, the former acting principal of a special needs school, was selected in August 1967, to head the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment. McCoy's Deputy Superintendent was Luis Fuentes, the first Puerto Rican to hold that position in New York. Despite prejudice and a suspicious administration, McCoy set out to change the philosophy of the district. In the *Eyes on the Prize* interview below, McCoy discussed his teaching philosophy:

> I had an idea about education, and my idea was very simple. The schools were not there to teach the skills, i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic, but to present or prepare a learning environment where youngsters would be educated. Too often, we got caught up in saying, "Our kids can't read and write, and they don't do well on standardized tests," and we lost sight of the fact that we've got millions of our kids who can read and write, and who can pass standardized tests, who are basically not educated in terms of what's going on in the real world.
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> When I talked to Malcolm X as well as [black nationalist] Herman Ferguson and [black educator] Wilton Anderson, we had the same idea. It was not skills we were interested in, because the material that they were giving our youngsters wasn't worth the time of day. It wasn't going to do anything for their lives. So what we were looking at is how do we educate our youngsters, and Malcolm's posture, what he said from day one, was, "Wake up. And let's learn, get educated."[11]

In 1968, during the first year of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment, Karriema Jordan was in eighth grade. She had been a member of the African American Student Association and was active in the struggle to reform the school's curriculum. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Jordan discussed the new curriculum in her school (JHS 271) and how it attempted to address the relationship between history and identity:

> [With so many new black teachers at JHS 271] you learned a lot more. You identified more. You learned that teachers were human beings, not some abstract something. They stayed after school. At three o'clock, they didn't run downstairs and punch out. You know, they gave you more time. I mean, you felt more accepted. You weren't an outsider in your own school. They were part of

Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, Sam Reiss Photographs Collection. Photograph by Sam Reiss.

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment in community control led to a confrontation between the school board and the teachers' union when the board attempted to transfer several white teachers.

your environment. I mean, they were black. You can identify with them and they can identify with you. It's as simple as that. There's no big mystery, you know. […]

The police, the UFT teachers, the media—they taught us that we weren't worth anything. What the black teachers did was to broaden us, our perspective of looking at things. We were no longer members of the small community called Ocean Hill–Brownsville. We were broadened to W.E.B. Du Bois, his writings, Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, H. Rap Brown, Mao Tse-tung, the Red Book. I mean, we became international, and it was a good thing, because black people are the Third World. The Third World is much larger than European history. They brought us back to ancient African history, I mean ancient world history, which didn't any longer start at Rome. It started with the Benin society, its melting of ore and silver and gold and things like that. We became much larger than just the community, and still today, when I look at things, I look at it from an international perspective. And that was what those teachers taught us.[12]

CONNECTIONS

1. Is it possible to guarantee educational equity in racially imbalanced schools? If so, how? Do different ethnic groups require a different educational environment and curriculum?
2. What was the traditional approach to education that McCoy rejected? Why did he reject the idea that school ought to teach students skills? Do you agree with his educational philosophy?
3. What, according to McCoy, were the most important things that schools needed to teach? Why did McCoy turn to Malcolm X and black nationalists for inspiration?
4. What did the new environment offer Karriema Jordan?
5. In 1968, the battle over education was not limited to New York. The documentary film *Chicano!* (a four-part history of the Mexican American civil rights movement) depicts the story of students in East Los Angeles. Risking expulsion, these students organized a series of nonviolent "walkouts" to protest the lack of connection between the subject matter taught in school and the students' cultural and historical background.

Document 8: THE END OF THE EXPERIMENT

A cultural and racial divide was exposed in Ocean Hill–Brownsville: while the majority of the teachers were white and Jewish, the new board wanted to develop a distinct ethnic identity among its students. In May 1968, when the board attempted to transfer nineteen white teachers and administrators, suspicions grew. Soon, accusations of racism and antisemitism by teachers, parents, and administrators from all sides fueled an increasingly hostile atmosphere. The New York teachers' union, which sought to protect its teachers, called for a citywide strike.

In an attempt to stem the divisive effects of the conflict, New York Mayor John Lindsay appointed a Special Committee on Racial and Religious Prejudice, chaired by former judge Bernard Botein. Issued in early 1969, the committee's report discussed the escalation of racial tensions in Brooklyn and the possible long-term effects the conflict could have on relations between different ethnic groups:

An appalling amount of racial prejudice—black and white—in New York City surfaced in and about the school controversy. Over and over again we found evidence of vicious anti-

white attitudes on the part of some black people, and vicious anti-black attitudes on the part of some white people.

The anti-white prejudice has a dangerous component of anti-Semitism. Black leaders sincerely tend to regard this anti-Semitism as relatively unimportant in the school controversy, since in their struggle for emergence their preoccupation is with discrimination, notably in education, employment, and housing, and not with defamation, oral or written. Jews, in turn, are outraged by anti-Semitic defamation itself, fearful that such apparent indifference may spark violence and other forms of anti-Semitism well beyond defamatory expressions.

The black-white hostility also has a small measure of bigotry emanating from or directed against Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans found themselves split in their relationships between whites and Negroes.

Further, although it has long been known that bigotry has many shapes, it has become clear to us, at least in this controversy, that the prejudice emanating from blacks generally takes a form somewhat different from that which has emerged among whites. The countless incidents, leaflets, epithets, and the like in this school controversy reveal a bigotry from black extremists that is open, undisguised, nearly physical in its intensity—and far more obvious and identifiable than that emanating from whites.

On the other hand, anti-black bigotry tended to be expressed in more sophisticated and subtle fashion, often communicated privately and seldom reported, but nonetheless equally evil, corrosive, damaging, and deplorable […].

The present state of affairs, with hostility escalating on all sides, presents an intolerable situation. Of course, these tensions did not spring full blown from the current school confrontation. In a city inhabited by so many diverse groups, so many underprivileged people, it would appear that a certain amount of resentment and hatred has been simmering below the surface for many years. It is likely that similar emotions in some other cities spread and were spent, if only temporarily, in bloody riots. But in any event, there can be no doubt that the recent school conflict touched off the spate of religious and racial bigotry this city is now experiencing. It is ironic that this conflict should develop so speedily and massively between Jews and blacks—two groups who for many years have so successfully cooperated with each other in attempting to promote a higher level of human dignity, racial and religious understanding, and equality of opportunity for men of all colors and creeds. With these groups on edge, with new antagonisms fired by the school decentralization controversy, with some people using bigotry as a weapon, racial antagonism to some extent has been encouraged as an echo of the main struggle.[13]

CONNECTIONS

1. What was the goal of the experimental school district? The teachers' union was initially supportive of the district's goals; how do you explain the escalation of the conflict?
2. What were the benefits and costs of the experiment in Ocean Hill–Brownsville? What lessons do you draw from the experiment?
3. The report of the mayor's committee notes:

   "It is ironic that this conflict should develop so speedily and massively between Jews and blacks—two groups who for many years have so successfully cooperated with each other in attempting to promote a higher level of human dignity, racial and religious understanding, and equality of opportunity for men of all colors and creeds."

   How do you explain the rapid escalation of this confrontation between two groups that had been longtime allies? What do you think could have been done to mediate this confrontation?

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[1] Carl B. Stokes, *Promises of Power: A Political Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 42–54; The Cleveland Memory Project, http://www.clevelandmemory.org/ebooks/stokes/Ch3.html (accessed on June 7, 2006).
[2] Vincent Harding, *Hope and History* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 50.
[3] Stokes, *Promises of Power*, 101–3, The Cleveland Memory Project, http://www.clevelandmemory.org/ebooks/stokes/Ch7.html (accessed on June 7, 2006).
[4] Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 351–55.
[5] Ibid., 353.
[6] Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1970), 66–9.
[7] Harding, *Hope and History*, 43.
[8] Ibid., 44.
[9] Seale, *Seize the Time*, 69–72.
[10] Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 488–89.
[11] Ibid., 491–92.
[12] Ibid., 499–502.
[13] Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Girrell (eds.), *Confrontation at Ocean Hill–Brownsville: The New York School Strikes of 1968* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1969), 174–75.