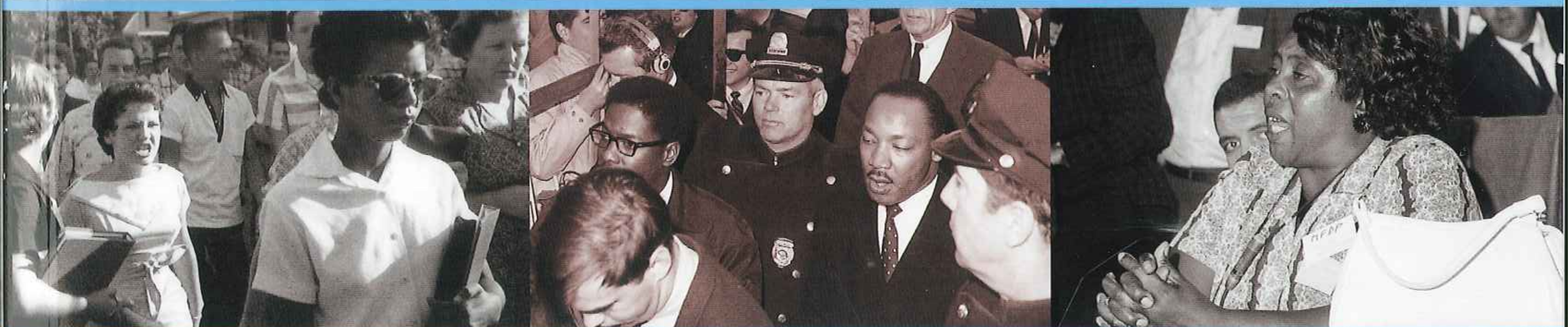
EYES ON THE PRIZE

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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1954-1985

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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.

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[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 11: AIN'T GONNA SHUFFLE NO MORE *(1964–1972)*

	1960
	Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Marcellus Clay) wins a gold medal at the Rome Olympics
	1964
	Clay wins his first heavyweight boxing championship title, defeating Sonny Liston. Shortly thereafter, he announces his membership in the Nation of Islam and changes his name to Muhammad Ali
	1967
Mar.	Muhammad Ali is drafted for the Vietnam War. Ali refuses to serve on the basis of his religious beliefs and is subsequently banned from boxing in the US and sentenced to five years in jail. He is freed on bail while the case is appealed
	1968
	The student movement on US campuses intensifies its protest against the Vietnam War; subgroups agitate for ethnic and gender studies, for democracy on and off campus, and for deeper connections with neighboring communities
Mar. 19	Howard University students take control of the administration building and stage a five-day sit-in. The protest ends when university officials agree to student demands
Nov.	Republican candidate Richard Nixon wins the presidential election. His election to office is seen as a backlash against the civil rights movement
	1970
	The US Supreme Court overturns Ali's conviction. He is permitted to resume professional boxing
	1972
Mar. 10-12	Eight thousand black delegates assemble in Gary, Indiana, for the NBPC and create a unified black agenda to advance black interests and independence

By the middle of the 1960s, a new generation of black activists who were educated after the first successes of the civil rights movement came of age. On college campuses around the nation they brought with them fresh voices and a quest for new forms of political and cultural expression. At the center of this quest were the issues of identity, the rejection of stereotypes, and the assertion of black pride.

The first segment of this episode chronicles the career of the charismatic heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., better known as Muhammad Ali. Clay first earned his position as a national hero when he won the Olympic gold medal for boxing in 1960. Then, in a display of extraordinary speed, cunning, and finesse, Clay defeated reigning champion Sonny Liston to earn his first heavyweight title in 1964. The morning after the match, Clay publicly announced what many had already suspected: that he was a follower of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam (see Episode 7). As part of his new religious identity, Clay changed his name to Muhammad Ali, renouncing the name given to his ancestors when they were slaves. Ali's public discussion of his religious beliefs troubled many admirers who had earlier enjoyed his showmanship, and most journalists refused to call him by his new name. Three years later, Ali was drafted to fight in Vietnam. He refused to serve, and instead petitioned to be classified as a religious consciousness objector. His petition was rejected; the government charged him with violating the Selective Service Act and sentenced him to five years in jail. Ali remained free on bail, but his career was suspended, and his titles were rescinded. Three years later, when the US Supreme Court overturned the ruling, Ali was able to resume boxing. Ali's steadfastness throughout the ordeal made him a symbol of sacrifice, resistance, and pride within the black community and later one of the most beloved champions in professional sports.

The second segment examines another aspect of black Americans' search for cultural self-determination. At Washington, DC's Howard University, the nation's preeminent black college (where

many civil rights activists were educated), students began to agitate for an overhaul of the school's curriculum. Their goal was to transform the traditionally black university from an aspiring "black Harvard" into a center for teaching black history, art, and culture. In a showdown with the university administration, students marched through the campus to the administration building and initiated a sit-in that lasted five days. Backed by much of the faculty, the students successfully negotiated a comprehensive overhaul of the school's curriculum. The push for greater community involvement in education (see Episode 9), and the struggle at Howard reflected a new interest in the historical role of minorities and women and in their contributions to fields as diverse as science and art. The changes that followed resulted in the expansion of the academic curriculum into new disciplines, including Asian studies, black studies, gender studies, and Latino studies. In less than two decades, the growth of these departments inspired a profound change in the educational landscape of the United States.

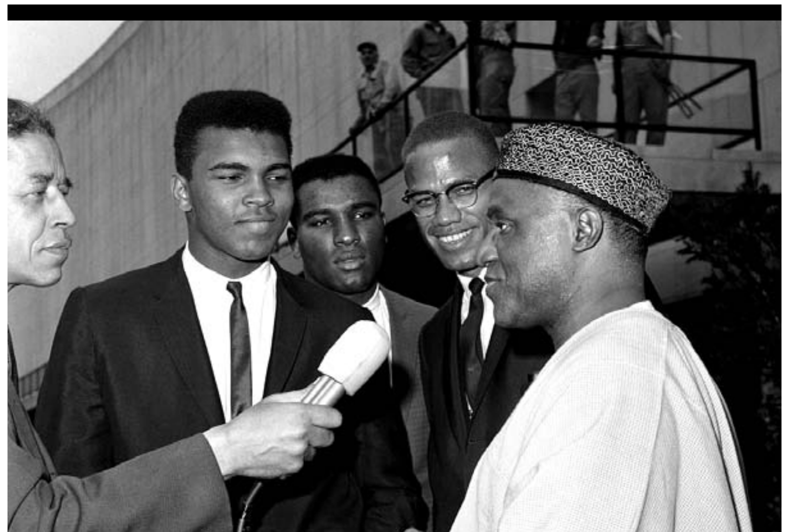
The third segment in this episode describes an attempt to set a new direction for black politics in America. In 1972—a presidential election year—eight thousand black activists gathered for the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) in Gary, Indiana. In a challenge to the Democratic and Republican national conventions, the NBPC sought to present a unified front and set a new agenda for black politics. Despite fierce debates, the NBPC helped transform the face of American government; within ten years after the 1972 convention, the number of black representatives in Congress had more than doubled.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the social and political implications when a group insists on determining its own identity?
2. Why did Muhammad Ali become an icon of resistance?
3. Why did black activists call for an "afro-centric" education? How did their demands influence the teaching of history, art, and culture in America?
4. Why did activists call for a national black political agenda? How did the National Black Political Convention reflect the growing cultural and political consciousness of black America?
5. What agenda did the NBPC set for black activists in 1972? What are its legacies today?

Document 1: FROM CASSIUS CLAY TO MUHAMMAD ALI

By the time he won the gold medal for boxing at the 1960 Olympics, Cassius Clay was already a larger-than-life figure. Clay was not only a gifted fighter, but also handsome, unapologetic, and provocative. Clay climbed the boxing world's ladder in a series of spectacular fights, an ascent that climaxed with his victory over heavyweight champion Sonny Liston on February 25, 1964. The next morning, Clay held a press conference in which a reporter asked, "Are you a card-carrying member of the Black Muslims?" to which Clay responded, "Card-carrying; what does that mean?



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March 4, 1964. Ali, Malcolm X, and S.O. Abedo, the Nigerian Ambassador to the UN. Many Black Nationalists reached out to African nations for solidarity.

I believe in Allah and in peace."[1] Reflecting back on his conversion, he explained how he became interested in the Nation of Islam:

> The first time I heard about Elijah Muhammad was at a Golden Gloves Tournament in Chicago [in 1959]. Then, before I went to the Olympics, I looked at a copy of the Nation of Islam newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. I didn't pay much attention to it, but lots of things were working on my mind.
>
> When I was growing up, a colored boy named Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi for whistling at a white woman. Emmett Till was the same age as me, and even though they caught the men who did it, nothing happened to them. Things like that went on all the time. And in my own life, there were places I couldn't go, places I couldn't eat. I won a gold medal representing the United States at the Olympic Games, and when I came home to Louisville [Kentucky], I still got treated like a nigger. There were restaurants I couldn't get served in. Some people kept calling me "boy." Then in Miami [in 1961], I was training for a fight, and met a follower of Elijah Muhammad named Captain Sam. He invited me to a meeting, and after that my life changed.[2]

Clay later announced that Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, had given him a new name. From then on, Clay refused to be called anything but Muhammad Ali. Later Ali explained, "changing my name was one of the most important things that happened to me in my life." Ali continued:

> It freed me from the identity given to my family by slave masters. If Hitler changed the names of the people he was killing, and instead of killing them made them slaves, after the war those people would have changed their slave names. That's all I was doing. People change their names all the time, and no one complains. […] [Black boxing champions] Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson changed their names. If I changed my name from Cassius Clay to something like Smith or Jones because I wanted a name that white people thought was more American, nobody would have complained. I was honored that Elijah Muhammad gave me a truly beautiful name. "Muhammad" means one worthy of praise. "Ali" was the name of a great general (a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad […]).[3]

Coupled with his conversion, the name change fueled controversy surrounding the new champion. Abe Greene, Commissioner of the World Boxing Association, was one of many people who staunchly refused to use Ali's new name. Like others, Greene felt that Ali's public embrace of Islam was a threat:

> Clay should be given a chance to decide whether he wants to be a religious crusader or the heavyweight champion. As a champion, he is neither a Muslim nor any other religionist because sports are completely nonsectarian. Clay should be given the choice of being the fighter who won the title or the fanatic leader of an extraneous force which has no place in the sports arena.[4]

For others, Ali's bold declaration represented the growing assertiveness of a new generation of black Americans. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Sonia Sanchez, a black poet and leading member of the Black Arts Movement, explained that Ali's appeal went well beyond the boxing world:

> When Muhammad Ali joined the Nation [of Islam] it was a continuation of what we knew was happening already. Everybody had seen Malcolm down in his camp. Everyone knew that he was teaching him, instructing him at that particular time, so when he changed his name, we said very simply, "That's his name." […] But the man [Ali] knew what he was doing […]. [W]hen he said, "I'm the greatest," you say, "Yes, you are. There's no doubt about that, Muhammad Ali. You are indeed the greatest, the greatest that ever done walk on this earth," whatever. And you believed that. Also, this man was a gentle man. I mean, he'd get out of the ring and then would grab your hand and be very gentle with you and say, "Did you like that, sister? Did you like what I just did? Did I tell them really off? Ha, ha, ha." And he'd laugh that laugh, that very infectious laugh, and you would say, "Yes, you did." And that was good.
>
> I don't like fights and fighters, but I love Muhammad Ali. And I love Muhammad Ali because he was not just a fighter, he was a cultural resource for everyone in that time, black students, white students, green students, brown students, blue students. He cut across every race, every religion, because he said, "No, I will not go," and then tried to continue to fight at the same time.[5]

CONNECTIONS

1. What did his name change symbolize for Ali (who was originally named after Cassius Marcellus Clay, a nineteenth-century abolitionist)? Why do you think some of Clay's supporters lashed out against him after he converted to the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali? Why did many people refuse to call Ali by his new name?
2. Create an identity chart for Ali (an example of an identity chart can be found in Episode 3). How did his identity change over time?
3. Robert Lipsyte, a sports reporter for the *New York Times*, remembers the effects of Ali's public declarations against the war:

> "The heavyweight championship was a way for the white establishment to say to black America […], 'Choke down your rage at how your people are getting screwed over, work very hard, make millions of dollars, have your pleasures in stereotypical ways, cars, women, wine, song, ultimately self-destruct, and keep our stereotypes in order.' And now […] these people were stuck with a heavyweight champion who said at the press conference the day after the fight […], 'I don't have to be what you want me to be; I'm free to be me.' And among the things he didn't have to be were Christian, a good soldier of American democracy […], or the kind of athlete-prince white America wanted."[6]

How did Ali challenge stereotypes? Why did so many people find Ali's new identity threatening?

Document 2: MUHAMMAD ALI SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE VIETNAM WAR

In 1966, the military informed Ali that he was fit for service and drafted him to fight in Vietnam. Ali had strong objections to the war in Vietnam, and he asked the draft board to release him from service as a conscientious objector (according to the law, a person who consistently objects to all wars on moral or religious grounds cannot, in principle, be forced to fight). His petition was denied, and Ali had to choose between five years in jail and fighting in what he considered an unjust war. Many fans turned against Ali, and some even threatened violence. Although he was free on bail, Ali's career was on hold. His legal expenses mounted while Ali was stripped of his titles and was prohibited from fighting. For a new generation of black activists, Ali's stance on the war, his religious beliefs, and his endorsement of Malcolm X made him an icon in their search for self-assertion and black pride.

In the letter below, Ali explained his position on the war:

> Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights? No, I am not going ten thousand miles from home to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slave masters of the darker people the world over. This is the day when such evils must come to an end. I have been warned that to take such a stand would put my prestige in jeopardy and could cause me to lose millions of dollars which should accrue to me as the champion. But I have said it once and I will say it again. The real enemy of my people is right here. I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom and equality. […]
>
> If I thought the war was going to bring freedom and equality to twenty-two million of my people, they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow. But I either have to obey the laws of the land or the laws of Allah. I have nothing to lose by standing up for my beliefs. So I'll go to jail. We've been in jail for four hundred years.[7]

Over twenty years before Ali's refusal to serve in the military, Bayard Rustin, a frequent critic of the Nation of Islam in the 1960s and a leading advocate of nonviolence, also refused to serve in the armed forces on religious grounds. In a 1967 essay entitled, *In Defense of Muhammad Ali*, Rustin outlined the principles of religious freedom that were at stake in Ali's legal battle:

> THOUGH WE MAY NOT AGREE with the politics of the Black Muslims, we cannot contest their right to consider themselves a genuine religious group. In any case, our belief in the principles of individual and religious liberty should be of more importance than any disagreements we might have with the Muslims. That is the basis on which all religious differences ought to be approached, for the more one disagrees with people, the more tempting it becomes to violate their privileges. This has not been sufficiently recognized in the case of Muhammad Ali. His efforts to seek deferment from the armed services are being judged less on their legitimate merits than on the basis of

personal and religious animosity.

The most fundamental example of this concerns his application to be deferred on the grounds of his Muslim ministry. There are many precedents for this in our society; hundreds of other ministers have sought deferment on the same grounds and have not been denied it. Because one of our traditions guarantees the separation of church and state, the authorities do not usually seek to determine for themselves the credentials of any Baptist, Presbyterian, or other minister. They recognize not only the definitions supplied by these religions, but also the autonomous privilege of these religions to make their own determinations. In the case of Ali and the Muslims, the authorities seem to be insisting on the right to make their own determination. The Constitution clearly warns against any official establishment of religion, but it would seem that the authorities, by now insisting on the right to determine what is or isn't a legitimate minister, or what is or isn't a legitimate religion, are taking a clear position on the establishment of religion.

Another reason for public hostility toward Muhammad Ali is that he changed his name. The great majority of the press and public have refused to respect his wishes or his right. This is rather strange, considering that no one refers to Cary Grant as "Archibald Alexander Leach who wants to be called Cary Grant" or to Billy Graham as "William Franklin alias Billy Graham." Nor did anyone contest the right of Norma Jean Baker to be known as Marilyn Monroe. The fact that neither the press nor the society shares a belief in Muhammad Ali's way of life is hardly a sufficient excuse for them to violate his personal privilege.

Considering how lucrative it would have been for him to become a "playboy boxer," and the great losses and penalties he now faces by deciding to confront the convictions in himself, his courage is more to be admired than vilified—particularly in a period when there is so little consistency between belief and action.

Finally, the boxing authorities, because of their contempt for due process, have further prejudiced the entire proceedings against Ali by depriving him of his heavyweight championship even while his case is still being determined in the courts. All this aside, we must be horrified, and to some extent amused, that men who control a sport that is not notable for its abundance of ethical scruples should now rush so quickly to cloak it in the mantle of piety and morality.[8]

The US Supreme Court overturned Ali's sentence in 1970, and Ali was allowed to return to the ring. Ali resumed his boxing career and became one of the most successful boxers of all time. He is remembered as one of the greatest and most beloved athletes of the twentieth century.

CONNECTIONS

1. On what grounds did Ali object to the Vietnam War? Why did he think it was unjust to send black soldiers to fight in this war?
2. Rustin believed Ali's request for deferment was a matter of religious freedom. On what grounds can

someone claim to be a conscientious objector? How should the government decide if such claims are valid?

3. According to Rustin, what democratic principles were violated when the draft board refused to recognize Ali as a conscientious objector?

Document 3: HOWARD UNIVERSITY, THE BLACK UNIVERSITY

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Howard University, March 22, 1968. During a takeover of the administration building, students declared Howard a "Black University."

Where could young black students—awakened by the civil rights movement—get an education that could satisfy their interest in their heritage? Black colleges and universities in the 1960s mirrored mainstream institutions of higher education, where teaching centered on Western thought, history, and achievement. The curriculum barely touched on topics that concerned many young blacks: slavery, African history, and the anti-colonial movement. Fashion and social conventions at the school reflected a traditional middle-class life style, which a growing number of black activists rejected as conservative and outdated.

In the mid-1960s, Howard University aspired to become the "black" Harvard University, and its curriculum reflected that desire. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Adrienne Manns and feminist scholar Paula Giddings recalled their experiences as young women at Howard University:

ADRIENNE MANNS

When I first came to Howard in 1964, I came there expecting a black environment. I came out of a white high school and white town; we were in a minority. I was coming to Howard because I wanted black people, black teachers, and positive role models and all of this. When I got there, first of all, I knew I was out of place because my roommates had to have an extra closet brought into the dormitory room. People were going to class in high heels. It was just a totally bourgeois [or middle-class] environment, unlike the one I'd come from. I really had never known any middle-class black people except for a doctor and a teacher. So I felt out of place. I felt alone. I didn't have any good friends for about a year and I thought I had made a mistake.

I came looking for black history courses, black literature, black music. It was a kind of void in my life I wanted filled. Black studies is what it was called. Sterling Brown was there, which was very exciting because he was a poet I had admired for a long time, and Arthur Davis. I was expecting to study black literature with Sterling Brown, and what I found was he told us that he could not teach black literature, that it did not fit into the curriculum and it was not offered. There was only one course and that was "Negro

History" and you had to be a history major or an upperclassman to take that. And you couldn't fit it in your schedule. After you got finished with all the humanities and the Western Civ. [civilization] type of courses, you couldn't fit that one course in. It was very hard to get in.

There was no music. You couldn't play jazz in the Fine Arts Building. All you heard when you passed the Fine Arts Building was opera—all day long, opera, opera, opera. And so-called classical music, National Symphony, and this kind of thing. So I was very disappointed and, well, I think they said they were making it the black Harvard or something like that. And it was just not what I wanted. […]

I heard [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Chairman] Stokely Carmichael in the summer of 1966 when I was at Harvard University for the summer school. When he started talking, it was as if I were talking—he was speaking for me, things that I had been feeling and thinking about, he was articulating them so well, especially about the attitude that we should have as black people toward ourselves and the country, and how we shouldn't be begging and pleading for our rights. But we ought to get together and organize and take what rightfully belonged to us. And I liked that […].[9]

PAULA GIDDINGS

I grew up in Yonkers, New York, in a predominantly white neighborhood, feeling very isolated for many reasons. I really wanted to go to a place where there was a like-minded black community, and I thought Howard would be that place. I had been very affected, growing up, by so much that was going on around me, particularly those Freedom Rides in 1961, that made me ask a lot of questions and made me curious to find out so much more and so many things that I certainly wasn't getting in my own experience in Yonkers. So I was determined to go to Howard in '65.

I was surprised when I first went to Howard. I mean, I expected it to be embroiled in this political ferment, because so much had happened, of course, by 1965.

Freshman assembly was one of those programs that all freshmen had to go to; we didn't have any choice. And they always dragged in these speakers or some kind of cultural program that seemed very, very, very irrelevant to us. You know, the traditional mission of black schools has been not only to educate blacks but to sort of acculturate them and socialize them for the wider industrial order. And those programs symbolized that. […] So many important things were happening all around us. Nothing was being explained in terms of the curriculum of Howard University, nothing was being talked about. It was business as usual going on […]. So most of us found it very, very offensive […].[10]

Paula Giddings, who has written extensively on women in black culture and history, described how feminism and Black Power collided with Howard's educational system in 1966. The conflict centered on the traditional homecoming beauty pageant. Activists at Howard rejected the traditional images of black beauty and sought a candidate with an image that better reflected the new black consciousness:

> The traditional homecoming campaign was quite a ritual. Each sorority or fraternity, for example, had their candidates, and other organizations had candidates as well. During the days of the campaign, each candidate would appear on campus at certain times of the afternoon. All the candidates, of course, had to get new wardrobes with the latest fashions. They usually came rolling in a latest model convertible. And everything was color-coordinated [. . .].
>
> Of course, [the activist students' candidate] Robin Gregory had no car and always looked sharp, but she was certainly not wearing those elaborate dresses. She had an Afro*, which of course was the statement that she made physically. And she was always flanked by two very handsome men, very serious, very well dressed [. . .]. And Robin talked about the movement. Robin talked about black politics. Robin was not the traditional homecoming queen candidate. She would also go around to the dorms in the evenings, which was something very, very different [. . .].
>
> [A]ll of us, with divided loyalties or not, felt very excited about Robin's campaign and about what it symbolized, not just in terms of politics but in terms of what women should be doing as well, the role of women. It was very, very important to us. I remember being confronted with the kind of situation where when you passed by men, especially as an underclassman, as a freshman, sophomore, they would actually give you a [beauty] grade. I mean, they would talk among themselves and say, "Well, that's an A," or "That's a B." There was a lack of respect in lots of instances. And there was a terrible degrading sense about all of that. And what Robin did was not only in terms of race but also talking about the role of women and what they should be doing and talking about and being taken very, very seriously, not just because of any physical attributes but because of her mind. And this I think was as important as the racial aspect of her campaign.
>
> I remember very much the evening when the homecoming queen was crowned. I was in Cramton Auditorium, which was filled to the hilt. For the last time all the candidates were announced and went up on the stage in the auditorium [. . .]. The lights went down. The candidates went back. Then you heard the curtains open. And you heard the crank of the revolving stage begin. And as the stage revolved and turned around toward the audience, the lights began to come up at the same time. Well, before you saw Robin, you saw the way the lights cast a silhouette on the curtains, and you saw the silhouette of her Afro before you saw her. Well, the auditorium exploded. It was a wonderful

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* The Afro was a popular hairstyle that celebrated the natual texture of black hair. It was seen as a cultural and politcal statement of black pride.

moment. People started jumping up and screaming and some were raising their fists, then spontaneously a chant began. The chant was "Umgawa, Black Power, Umgawa, Black Power," and a chain was created. People started to march to the rhythm of "Umgawa, Black Power," and there was a line that went all the way around the auditorium, and more and more people joined the line. I did too as it went around the auditorium. And finally out the door and into the streets of Washington, D.C., past the campus and still chanting, "Umgawa, Black Power," and that was really the launching of that movement at Howard.[11]

Gregory's election inspired Howard activists and helped them articulate values that went beyond the core issues of the civil rights movement.

Across the nation students at other colleges organized to promote a society that reflected their expanded ideas about democracy and participation. Students, galvanized by their opposition to the Vietnam War, exploded in demonstrations and peace rallies across the nation. They demanded broad changes, including more democratic decision making on campus, increased control over their own studies, and curriculums that addressed the history and identity of the student body.

At Howard, students reached out to the black community surrounding the university and agitated for curriculum reform. In their vision, Howard was to become a leading institution for the studies of everything black; Howard was to be "the black university" for the country. The Howard protest culminated with a takeover of the administration building and demands for radical change, including the resignation of some key university administrators. Students also demanded that "Howard should be the center of Afro-American thought. We demand that the economic, government, literature and social science departments begin to place more emphasis on how these disciplines may be used to effect the liberation of blackpeople [sic] in the country." They insisted on "the institution of non-prerequisite course in Negro history," student control over campus life, and that Howard "be made relevant to the black community."[12]

After five days, the sit-in ended peacefully and the administration agreed to open Howard's curriculum to its students' cultural and political interests. Protests on other campuses did not always end peacefully, but in many campuses, new curriculums were developed that included African American, gender, and ethnic studies.

CONNECTIONS

1. Why did many young students who came of age during the civil rights movement feel that the curriculum at Howard University was outdated? What were they looking for that Howard did not provide?
2. How did the election of Robin Gregory impact Howard students' self-image and their sense of political power? Why did the election of the homecoming queen become a catalyst for greater black activism on the Howard campus?
3. What did students mean when they demanded that Howard be a "black" institution? What role should identity play in education?
4. Imagine a school curriculum without the stories of the diverse groups that make up American history. What experiences and lessons would the students be missing? How do you think multicultural education has influenced the way you think about and understand history? The way you think about the world?

Document 4: THE NATIONAL BLACK POLITICAL CONVENTION

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March 1972. Reverend Jesse Jackson, President of Operation PUSH, is interviewed by media members. United behind the search for a common agenda, eight thousand black delegates convened in Gary, Indiana, to discuss the problems blacks faced in America.

On March 10–12, 1972, eight thousand black delegates convened at Westside High School in Gary, Indiana, for a National Black Political Convention. Attendees included such prominent black leaders as Gary's mayor, Richard Hatcher, Congressman Charles Diggs, Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale, scholar-activist Vincent Harding, and Cleveland mayor Carl Stokes. The convention focused on the lack of political power and economic opportunity for blacks in America. Touting the slogan "Unity Without Uniformity," the delegates formulated a political agenda that attempted to address their communities' needs.

The Gary Declaration proclaimed that "white politics" did not help black people achieve their social and political goals; rather, to succeed, blacks needed to work together and develop a separate agenda. Poet and activist Amiri Baraka (also known as LeRoi Jones) presided over some of the most contentious sessions and helped diverse delegations unite behind a common political program:

INTRODUCTION

The Black Agenda is addressed primarily to Black people in America. It rises naturally out of the bloody decades and centuries of our people's struggle on these shores. It flows from the most recent surging of our own cultural and political consciousness. It is our attempt to define some of the essential changes which must take place in this land as we and our children move to self-determination and true independence.

The Black Agenda assumes that no truly basic change for our benefit takes place in Black or white America unless we Black people organize to initiate that change. It assumes that we must have some essential agreement on overall goals, even though we may differ on many specific strategies.

Therefore, this is an initial statement of goals and directions for our own generation, some first definitions of crucial issues around which Black people must organize and move in 1972 and beyond. Anyone who claims to be serious about the survival and liberation of Black people must be serious about the implementation of the Black Agenda.

WHAT TIME IS IT?

We come to Gary in an hour of great crisis and tremendous promise for Black America. While the white nation hovers on the brink of chaos, while its politicians offer no hope of real change, we stand on the edge of history and are faced with an amazing and frightening choice: We may choose in 1972 to slip back into the decadent white politics of

American life, or we may press forward, moving relentlessly from Gary to the creation of our own Black life. The choice is large, but the time is very short.

Let there be no mistake. We come to Gary in a time of unrelieved crisis for our people. From every rural community in Alabama to the high-rise compounds of Chicago, we bring to this Convention the agonies of the masses of our people. From the sprawling Black cities of Watts and Nairobi in the West to the decay of Harlem and Roxbury in the East, the testimony we bear is the same. We are the witnesses to social disaster.

Our cities are crime-haunted dying grounds. Huge sectors of our youth—and countless others—face permanent unemployment. Those of us who work find our paychecks able to purchase less and less. Neither the courts nor the prisons contribute to anything resembling justice or reformation. The schools are unable—or unwilling—to educate our children for the real world of our struggles. Meanwhile, the officially approved epidemic of drugs threatens to wipe out the minds and strength of our best young warriors. Economic, cultural, and spiritual depression stalk Black America, and the price for survival often appears to be more than we are able to pay. On every side, in every area of our lives, the American institutions in which we have placed our trust are unable to cope with the crises they have created by their single-minded dedication to profits for some and white supremacy above all […].

THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

So we come to Gary confronted with a choice. But it is not the old convention question of which candidate shall we support, the pointless question of who is to preside over a decaying and unsalvageable system. No, if we come to Gary out of the realities of the Black communities of this land, then the only real choice for us is whether or not we will live by the truth we know, whether we will move to organize independently, move to struggle for fundamental transformation, for the creation of new directions, towards a concern for the life and the meaning of Man. Social transformation or social destruction, those are our only real choices.

If we have come to Gary on behalf of our people in America, in the rest of this hemisphere, and in the Homeland—if we have come for our own best ambitions—then a new Black Politics must come to birth. If we are serious, the Black Politics of Gary must accept major responsibility for creating both the atmosphere and the program for fundamental, far-ranging change in America. Such responsibility is ours because it is our people who are most deeply hurt and ravaged by the present systems of society. That responsibility for leading the change is ours because we live in a society where few other men really believe in the responsibility of a truly humane society for anyone anywhere.

WE ARE THE VANGUARD

[…] We come to Gary and are faced with a challenge. The challenge is to transform ourselves from favor-seeking vassals and loud-talking, “militant” pawns, and to take up the role

that the organized masses of our people have attempted to play ever since we came to these shores: That of harbingers of true justice and humanity, leaders in the struggle for liberation [...].

TOWARDS A BLACK AGENDA

So when we turn to a Black Agenda for the seventies, we move in the truth of history, in the reality of the moment. We move recognizing that no one else is going to represent our interests but ourselves. *The society we seek cannot come unless Black people organize to advance its coming*. We lift up a Black Agenda recognizing that white America moves towards the abyss created by its own racist arrogance, misplaced priorities, rampant materialism, and ethical bankruptcy. Therefore, we are certain that the Agenda we now press for in Gary is not only for the future of Black humanity, but is probably the only way the rest of America can save itself from the harvest of its criminal past.

So, Brothers and Sisters of our developing Black nation, we now stand at Gary as people whose time has come. From every corner of Black America, from all liberation movements of the Third World, from the graves of our fathers and the coming world of our children, we are faced with a challenge and a call: Though the moment is perilous we must not despair. We must seize the time, for the time is ours.

We begin here and now in Gary. We begin with an independent Black political movement, an independent Black Political Agenda, an independent Black spirit. Nothing less will do. We must build for our people. We must build for our world. We stand on the edge of history. We cannot turn back.[13]

CONNECTIONS

1. The basic principle of the National Black Political Convention was that there would be "Unity Without Uniformity." What does that mean? Is it possible?
2. Compare the National Black Political Convention to the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (see Episode 5) and Carl Stokes's campaign in Cleveland (see Episode 9). What are the similarities? What are the most striking differences?
3. How did the Black Agenda describe the existing political and social climate? How did the authors hope to influence the democratic process?
4. Why did the organizers believe that blacks needed an "independent Black Political Agenda"?
5. On the first day of the convention, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) issued a memorandum stating that the convention was at odds with the NAACP's principles. Afterwards, NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins wrote a letter calling the convention "openly separatist and nationalist." He explained:

   "We do not believe, from a purely pragmatic standpoint, that an isolated black population of eleven percent can survive and progress in a nation where the overwhelmingly white population is 89 percent."[14]

What point was he trying to make? How do you think the organizers of the convention would have responded?

6. The National Black Political Convention built on a tradition of racial and ethnic groups trying to find their political voice. One of the most famous of those political experiments is La Raza Unida, a political party founded in 1970 by Mexican Americans in Crystal City, Texas. When is it useful for racial and ethnic groups to organize politically? Why are these efforts often criticized as separatist?

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[1] Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 82.
[2] Ibid., 89.
[3] Ibid., 102.
[4] "New York Won't Join with WBA in Stripping Cassius Clay of Title," *Washington Post*, March 24, 1964.
[5] Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 327–28.
[6] Hauser, *Muhammad Ali*, 84.
[7] Mike Marqusee, "Muhammad Ali Speaks Out Against the War," *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 1999), 214–15.
[8] Bayard Rustin, "In Defense of Muhammad Ali," *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 182–83.
[9] Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 429–31.
[10] Ibid., 431–32.
[11] Ibid., 434–35.
[12] Howard University Ujammaa, "An Open Letter Sent to Howard President James M. Nabrit," *The Spear and Shield*, Volume 1, No.2, February 1968, as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 463–64.
[13] "The Gary Declaration," *The National Black Political Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: National Black Political Convention, 1972), as quoted in *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology*, Edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 492–96.
[14] Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 571.