

HISTORICALLY

Document-Based Question Practice

ACTIVITY

The following question is based on the accompanying documents. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. **Suggested reading period: 15 minutes.**
Suggested writing time: 45 minutes.

Evaluate the extent of change within the movement for African American civil rights in the period 1945 to 1970.

DOCUMENT 1

Source: *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954.

“Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [slow] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system.

Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, this finding is amply supported by modern authority. Any language in *Plessy v. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected.

We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. . . .”

DOCUMENT 2

Source: Martin Luther King Jr., *Speech at Holt Street Baptist Church*, December 5, 1955

“My FRIENDS, we are certainly very happy to see each of you out this evening. We are here this evening for serious business. We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its meaning. We are here also because of our love for democracy, because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth.

But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. We are here because we are determined to get the situation corrected. This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fears on buses in our community. On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and impressed-oppressed-because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. . . .

And you know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. . . .

We are here, we are here this evening because we’re tired now. And I want to say that we are not here advocating violence. We have never done that. I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation that we are Christian people. We believe in the Christian religion, We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. That’s all.”

(Continued)

DOCUMENT 3

Source: *Sit-in at a Woolworth's Lunch Counter, Jackson, Mississippi, May 28, 1963*



The Granger Collection, New York

DOCUMENT 4

Source: Malcolm X, *Speech to Mississippi Youth*, December, 1964

"I myself would go for nonviolence if it was consistent, if everybody was going to be nonviolent all the time. I'd say, okay, let's get with it, we'll all be nonviolent. But I don't go along with any kind of nonviolence unless everybody's going to be nonviolent. If they make the Ku Klux Klan nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. If they make the White Citizens Council nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. But as long as you've got somebody else not being nonviolent, I don't want anybody coming to me talking any nonviolent talk. I don't think it is fair to tell our people to be nonviolent unless someone is out there making the Klan and the Citizens Council and these other groups also be nonviolent."

DOCUMENT 5

Source: Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, *Black Panther Party Platform and Program*, October 1966

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black community. . . .
2. We want full employment for our people.
We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. . . .
3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black community. . . .
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings. . . .
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. . . .

6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service. We believe that all black men should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. . . .
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people. . . . 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. . . .
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 . . .
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. . . .”

DOCUMENT 6

Source: *Chicago Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee Leaflet, 1967*

“The black man in America is in a perpetual state of slavery no matter what the white man’s propaganda tells us. . . .

We must not get hung-up in the bag of having one great leader who we depend upon to make decisions. This makes the Movement too vulnerable to those forces the white man uses to keep us enslaved, such as the draft, murder, prison or character assassination. . . .

We have got to begin to say and understand with complete assuredness what black is. Black in an inner pride that the white man’s language hampers us from expressing. Black is being a complete fanatic, who white society considers insane. We have to learn that black is so much better than belonging to the white race . . .

. . . We believe that we belong to the 90 percent majority of the people on earth that the white man oppresses and that we should not beg the white man for anything. We want what belongs to us as human beings and we intend to get it through BLACK POWER.”

DOCUMENT 7

Source: *Kerner Commission Report, 1968*

“This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.

Reaction to last summer’s [urban riots] has quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American. . . .

Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans.

What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain, and white society condones it. . . .

Our recommendations embrace three basic principles:

- To mount programs on a scale equal to the dimension of the problems;
- To aim these programs for high impact in the immediate future in order to close the gap between promise and performance;
- To undertake new initiatives and experiments that can change the system of failure and frustration that now dominates the ghetto and weakens our society.

These programs will require unprecedented levels of funding and performance, but they neither probe deeper nor demand more than the problems which called them forth. There can be no higher priority for national action and no higher claim on the nation’s conscience. . . .”