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Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ History/Writing

***Civil Rights Movement Then, Black Lives Matter Today***

**Today’s Goal**: In our study of the Civil Rights Movement, we will shift our focus to the present and learn about the ongoing social movement called **Black Lives Matter**. We will seek to make connections to what we have learned so far about the struggle to end white supremacy and the oppression of Black people in America in the past, while preparing to write a final essay demonstrating what you have learned in this History unit.

**Do Now:** Choose one of the following prompts to respond to. Please answer in at least 3 sentences.

1. What are your thoughts and feelings around the killing of people like Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and Freddie Gray?
2. What do you already know about the Black Lives Matter movement?

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***Writing Project***

For your final Writing project and History final exam, you will be **conducting research and developing an argument for or against one of these topics:**

1. Is there a right way to create social change?
2. Do students and youth have the power to create social change?
3. Does the relationship between police and civilians/communities need to change?
4. Is a contemporary movement for Black equality needed?

**Topic Overview**

[**Creating Social Change**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f1AE-vDlPMPcqCm0oy0JG6WC2VB4S6HCapOZ_TVu28c/edit)

In which avenues did Civil Rights activists work- political, social and economic? What tactics and strategies of protest did activists in the Civil Rights Movement use to achieve their goals? How does this compare to modern day and is there a right way to protest? Use past events as well as current events to support your argument.

**WRITING FINAL ESSAY (created by Mr. Marino)**

**Civil Rights: *CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE***

**DOCUMENT PACKET**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

HOMEROOM: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Our Demand is Simple, Stop Killing Us** http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/magazine/our-demand-is-simple-stop-killing-us.html
3. **Black Lives Matter Must Move Past Protests** - <http://mic.com/articles/107382/black-lives-matter-must-move-beyond-protests-or-risk-losing-the-fight-for-racial-justice>

**Creating Social Change Essay Questions**

*(Your essay must answer all of these questions with specific evidence taken from these documents/History class discussions!!!)*

In which institutions did Civil Rights activists work- *political*, *social* and *economic*?

What tactics and strategies of protest did activists in the Civil Rights Movement use to achieve their goals?

How does this compare to modern day and is there a right way to protest?

Use past events as well as current events to support your argument.

**DOCUMENT 1:**

**Letter from Birmingham Jail/A Call for Unity Background**

 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested on April 12, 1963, in Birmingham, Ala., by Bull Connor, the public safety commissioner, for parading without a permit and for defying a state order banning demonstrations. The same day that King was arrested, a letter, signed by eight white ministers from Birmingham and titled “A Call for Unity,” was printed in The Birmingham News. The letter called for an end to protests and demonstrations for civil rights in Birmingham. King spent eight days in jail in Birmingham. On April 16, 1963, King responded to “A Call for Unity” with a his own call which has come to be known as his “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” This letter was thought to be originally published in The Christian Century and was reprinted soon after in Atlantic Monthly magazine under the title “The Negro is Your Brother.”

**A Call for Unity April 12, 1963**

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued “an appeal for law and order and common sense,” in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and fi nd proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that “hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions,” we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

Signed by: C. C. J. Carpenter, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Alabama

Joseph A. Durick, D.D.,Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham

Rabbi Milton L. Grafman, Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama

Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the Methodist Church

Bishop Nolan B. Harmon, Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church

George M. Murray, D.D., LL.D., Bishop Coadjutor, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

Edward V. Ramage, Moderator, Synod of the Alabama Presbyterian Church in the United States

Earl Stallings, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

# **Letter From Birmingham Jail Summary**

*“Letter from Birmingham Jail”* is addressed to several clergymen who had written an open letter criticizing the actions of [Dr. King](http://www.gradesaver.com/letter-from-birmingham-jail/study-guide/character-list#dr-king) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during their protests in Birmingham. Dr. King tells [the clergymen](http://www.gradesaver.com/letter-from-birmingham-jail/study-guide/character-list#the-clergymen) that he was upset about their criticisms, and that he wishes to address their concerns.

First, he notes their claim that he is an “outsider” who has come to Birmingham to cause trouble (170). He defends his right to be there in a straightforward, unemotional tone, explaining that the SCLC is based in Atlanta but operates throughout the South. One of its affiliates had invited the organization to Birmingham, which is why they came.

However, he then provides a moral reason for his presence, saying that he came to Birmingham to battle “injustice.” Because he believes that “all communities and states” are interrelated, he feels compelled to work for justice anywhere that injustice is being practiced. Dr. King believes the clergymen have erred in criticizing the protestors without equally exploring the racist causes of the injustice that is being protested (170-171).

He then explains in detail his process of organizing nonviolent action. First, the SCLC confirmed that Birmingham had been practicing institutionalized racism, and then attempted to negotiate with white business leaders there. When those negotiations broke down because of promises the white men broke, the SCLC planned to protest through “direct action.” Before beginning protests, however, they underwent a period of “self-purification,” to determine whether they were ready to work nonviolently, and suffer indignity and arrest. When they decided they could, they then prepared to protest (171).

However, the SCLC chose to hold out because Birmingham had impending mayoral elections. Though the notorious racist [Eugene “Bull” Connor](http://www.gradesaver.com/letter-from-birmingham-jail/study-guide/character-list#eugene-bull-connor) was defeated in the election, his successor, [Albert Boutwell](http://www.gradesaver.com/letter-from-birmingham-jail/study-guide/character-list#albert-boutwell), was also a pronounced segregationist. Therefore, the protests began.

Dr. King understands that the clergymen value negotiation over protest, but he insists that negotiations cannot happen without protest, which creates a “crisis” and “tension” that forces unwilling parties (in this case, the white business owners) to negotiate in good faith. He admits that words like “tension” frighten white moderates, but embraces the concepts as “constructive and nonviolent.” He provides examples that suggest tension is necessary for humans to grow, and repeats that the tension created by direct action is necessary in this case if segregation is to end (171-172).

He next turns to the clergymen criticism that the SCLC action is “untimely.” After insisting that Albert Boutwell was not different enough to warrant patience, he launches into an extended claim that “privileged groups” will always oppose action that threatens the status quo. They will always consider attacks on their privilege as “untimely,” especially because groups have a tendency towards allowing immorality that individuals might oppose (173).

In particular, the black community has waited long enough. Dr. King insists that the black man has waited “more than 340 years” for justice, and he then launches into a litany of abuses that his people have suffered both over time and in his present day. Amongst these abuses is his experience explaining to his young daughter why she cannot go to the “public amusement park” because of her skin color. Because the black man has been pushed “into the abyss of despair,” Dr. King hopes that the clergymen will excuse his and his brethren’s impatience (173-174).

Dr. King then switches gears, noting that the clergymen are anxious over the black man’s “willingness to break laws.” He admits that his intention seems paradoxical, since he expects whites to follow laws that protect equality, while breaking others.

However, he then distinguishes between just and unjust laws, insisting that an individual has both a right and a responsibility to break unjust laws. He defines just laws as those that uphold human dignity, and unjust laws as those that “degrade human personality.” Unjust laws, he argues, hurt not only the oppressed, but also the oppressors, since they are given a false sense of superiority (175).

He then speaks specifically of segregation, describing it as unjust. Because it is a law that a majority forces the minority to follow while exempting itself from it, it is a law worth breaking. Further, because Alabama’s laws work to prohibit black citizens from fully participating in democracy, the laws are particularly unjust and undemocratic. Next, he adds that some just laws become unjust when they are misused. For instance, the law prohibiting “parading without a permit,” which he was arrested for breaking, is a just law that was used in this case solely to support the injustice of segregation (175-176).

Dr. King understands that flouting the law with wanton disregard would lead to “anarchy,” but he insists that he is willing to accept the penalty for his transgression. This distinction makes his civil disobedience just. He then provides a list of allusions that support his claim. To sum up his point on just and unjust laws, he notes that the laws of Nazi Germany allowed for Jewish persecution, and that he would have gladly broken those laws to support the oppressed class had he lived there (176).

The next topic Dr. King addresses is that of white moderates, who have greatly disappointed him. He argues that they value “order” over “justice,” and as a result have made it easier for the injustice of segregation to persist. He believes that moderates cannot distinguish between the nonviolent action and the violence of the oppressors. In particular, he is shocked that the clergymen would blame the black victims for the violence of segregation, as he believes they did in their open letter (177).

He further attacks moderates over their demands for patience. Moderates believe that time will get better if the oppressed blacks are patient, but Dr. King insists that “time itself is neutral” and that change only happens when good men take action (178).

He then addresses the clergymen's claim that SCLC action is “extreme.” Dr. King describes himself as standing between two opposing forces for black change. On one hand are the complacent blacks, who are either too demeaned to believe change possible or who have some modicum of success that they are unwilling to sacrifice for true equality. On the other hand are the more violent factions, exemplified by Elijah Muhammad and his Black Muslim movement. Dr. King argues that he stands between these two extremes, offering a path towards nonviolent, loving protest. He implicitly warns that blacks will turn to the more violent option if Dr. King’s path is not favored by the population at large (179).

However, Dr. King goes further and proudly embraces the label of “extremist.” He argues that it is possible to be a “creative extremist” and provides a list of unimpeachable figures whom he considers extremists for positive causes. These include Jesus and Abraham Lincoln. Dr. King is disappointed that white moderates cannot distinguish between these types of extremism, but wonders whether whites can ever truly understand the disgrace that blacks have suffered in America (180).

He next lists a second disappointment, in the white church. Though he once expected the Southern church to be one of his movement’s primary allies, they have time and again either opposed his cause of remained “silent”, therefore facilitating injustice. Too many of the white church leaders have seen Civil Rights as a social movement, irrelevant to their church, but Dr. King believes this cowardice will eventually make their churches irrelevant unless they change. Whereas the church should be a force for change, a challenge to the status quo, it has become too comfortably a reflection of the prevailing conditions, a de facto supporter of those in power (181-182). Though these doubts make him pessimistic, Dr. King has found some hope in the whites who*have* joined his mission.

Further, Dr. King finds optimism when reflecting on the history of blacks in America. They have survived slavery and persisted towards freedom despite centuries of atrocities, and have in fact provided the center of American history.

Before closing, Dr. King addresses the clergymen’s commendation of the Birmingham police, whom they claim were admirably nonviolent when confronting the protests. Dr. King implies that the clergymen are ignorant of the abuses the clergymen used, but also insists that their “discipline,” their restraint from violence in public, does not make their actions just. Instead, they use that restraint to perpetuate injustice, which makes them reprehensible (184).

Dr. King is upset that the clergymen did not see fit to also commend the brave black people who have fought injustice nonviolently. Believing that history will ultimately show this latter group to be the real heroes of the age, he hopes the clergymen will eventually realize what is actually happening.

Finally, he apologizes for the length and potential overstatement of his letter, but hopes they will understand the forces that have led him to such certainty. He signs the letter, “Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood” (185).

**DOCUMENT 2:**

**The Civil Rights Movement Strategy & Tactics**

In the early days of the civil rights movement, litigation and lobbying were the focus of integration efforts. The 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education led to a shift in tactics, and from 1955 to 1965, "direct action" was the strategy--primarily bus boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, and social movements.

Locally initiated boycotts of segregated buses, especially the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956, were designed to unite and mobilize black communities on a commonly-shared concern. Protestors refused to ride on the buses, opting instead to walk or carpool. The nearly one year-long boycott ended bus segregation in Montgomery and triggered other bus boycotts such as the highly successful Tallahassee, Florida boycott of 1956-1957.

Student-organized sit-ins like the February 1960 protest at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, offered young men and women with no special skills or resources an opportunity to display their discontent and raise white awareness. Protestors were encouraged to dress up, sit quietly, and occupy every other stool so potential white sympathizers could join in. The success of the Greensboro sit-in led to a rash of student campaigns all across the South. By the end of 1960 the sit-ins had spread to every southern and border state and even to Nevada, Illinois, and Ohio. Demonstrators focused not only on lunch counters but on parks, beaches, libraries, theaters, museums, and other public places. When they were arrested, student demonstrators made "jail-no-bail" pledges to call attention to their cause and to reverse the cost of protest (putting the financial burden of jail space and food on the "jailors").

The 1961 Freedom Rides on public buses tested compliance with court orders to desegregate interstate transportation terminals. The trips enabled students from both the South and the North to protest away from campus and to form a tightly-knit community of activists, many of whom would participate in the last protest phase, which began in 1961. National civil rights leaders launched these efforts to involve poor blacks and other blacks who had been uninvolved until then. The movements included door-to-door voter education projects in rural Mississippi, "The Birmingham Campaign" to desegregate public accommodations in the city, and "Freedom Summer," to try to unseat the regular delegation at the 1964 Democratic Convention and to publicize the disenfranchisement of southern blacks.

While some groups and individuals within the civil rights movement advocated Black Power, black separatism, or even armed resistance, the majority of participants remained committed to the principles of nonviolence -- a deliberate decision by an oppressed minority to abstain from violence for political gain. The commitment to nonviolence gave the civil rights movement great moral authority. Using nonviolent strategies, civil rights activists took advantage of emerging national network-news reporting, especially television, to capture national attention and the attention of Congress and the White House. In 1955, journalists covered the Mississippi trial of two men accused of murdering 14-year-old Emmett Till from Chicago. The cover of *Jet* magazine featured a photo of the boy's mutilated face. A few years later, Americans watched the live footage of violent unrest at [Little Rock High School](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/ar1.htm) as whites rioted to prevent nine black students from entering the school. Radio, television, and print journalism exhaustively covered such 1960s events as police dogs attacking children in Birmingham, former sharecropper Fannie Lou Hammer describing her jail beatings to delegates at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, and a mounted posse charging["Bloody Sunday" demonstrators in Selma, Alabama.](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al4.htm)

**DOCUMENT 3:**

# **On Violence and Nonviolence: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi**

*By Curtis J. Austin*

The American Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and 1960s represents a pivotal event in world history. The positive changes it brought to voting and civil rights continue to be felt throughout the United States and much of the world. Although this struggle for black equality was fought on hundreds of different “battlefields” throughout the United States, many observers at the time described the state of Mississippi as the most racist and violent.

Mississippi's lawmakers, law enforcement officers, public officials, and private citizens worked long and hard to maintain the segregated way of life that had dominated the state since the end of the Civil War in 1865. The method that ensured segregation persisted was the use and threat of violence against people who sought to end it.

## Philosophy of nonviolence

In contrast, the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement chose the tactic of nonviolence as a tool to dismantle institutionalized racial segregation, discrimination, and inequality. Indeed, they followed Martin Luther King Jr.'s guiding principles of nonviolence and passive resistance. Civil rights leaders had long understood that segregationists would go to any length to maintain their power and control over blacks. Consequently, they believed some changes might be made if enough people outside the South witnessed the violence blacks had experienced for decades.

According to Bob Moses and other civil rights activists, they hoped and often prayed that television and newspaper reporters would show the world that the primary reason blacks remained in such a subordinate position in the South was because of widespread violence directed against them. History shows there was no shortage of violence to attract the media.

## History of violence

In 1955, Reverend George Lee, vice president of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership and NAACP worker, was shot in the face and killed for urging blacks in the Mississippi Delta to vote. Although eyewitnesses saw a carload of whites drive by and shoot into Lee's automobile, the authorities failed to charge anyone. Governor Hugh White refused requests to send investigators to Belzoni, Mississippi, where the murder occurred.

In August 1955, Lamar Smith, sixty-three-year-old farmer and World War II veteran, was shot in cold blood on the crowded courthouse lawn in Brookhaven, Mississippi, for urging blacks to vote. In *Local People*, John Dittmer writes “although the sheriff saw a white man leaving the scene 'with blood all over him' no one admitted to having witnessed the shooting” and “the killer went free.”

On September 25, 1961, farmer Herbert Lee was shot and killed in Liberty, Mississippi, by E.H. Hurst, a member of the Mississippi State Legislature. Hurst murdered Lee because of his participation in the voter registration campaign sweeping through southwest Mississippi. Authorities never charged him with the crime. According to Charles Payne in his book, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, “black witnesses had been pressured by the sheriff and others to testify that Lee tried to hit Hurst with a tire tool. They testified as ordered. Hurst was acquitted by a coroner's jury, held in a room full of armed white men, the same day as the killing. Hurst never spent a night in jail.”

NAACP State Director Medgar Evers was gunned down in 1963 in his Jackson driveway by rifle-wielding white Citizens Council member Byron De La Beckwith from Greenwood, Mississippi.

## Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner

Perhaps the most notable episode of violence came in Freedom Summer of 1964, when civil rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner left their base in Meridian, Mississippi, to investigate one of a number of church burnings in the eastern part of the state. The Ku Klux Klan had burned Mount Zion Church because the minister had allowed it to be used as a meeting place for civil rights activists. After the three young men had gone into Neshoba County to investigate, they were subsequently stopped and arrested by Neshoba County Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price. After several hours, Price finally released them only to arrest them again shortly after 10 p.m. He then turned the civil rights workers over to his fellow Klansmen. The group took the activists to a remote area, beat them, and then shot them to death. Dittmer suggests that because Schwerner and Goodman were white the federal government responded by establishing an FBI office in Jackson and calling out the Mississippi National Guard and U. S. Navy to help search for the three men. Of course this was the response the Freedom Summer organizers had hoped for when they asked for white volunteers.

After several weeks of searching and recovering more than a dozen other bodies, the authorities finally found the civil rights workers buried under an earthen dam. Seven Klansmen, including Price, were arrested and tried for the brutal killings. A jury of sympathizers found them all not guilty. Some time later, the federal government charged the murderers with violating the civil rights of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney. This time the Klansmen were convicted and served sentences ranging from two to ten years.

In addition to these murders, violence persisted through mass arrests, jail beatings, lynchings, and church bombings. Eventually, national public exposure brought about substantive change. Once the cameras began to capture incidents similar to the ones described here, progress in the movement became a reality. President John F. Kennedy, and later President Lyndon Johnson, moved to put a halt to at least some of the violence by supporting the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

## Arms in defense

Nonetheless, many blacks had already taken it upon themselves to defend their lives and property with whatever weapons they could muster. Despite their adherence to the philosophy of nonviolence, Mississippi blacks understood too well the implications of not being armed to defend their lives and property. Civil rights workers throughout the state set up around-the-clock surveillance of some of the churches and homes they used as meeting places. As far as they were concerned, not striking back while participating in a public protest was quite different from not defending one's home, church, or community center from imminent attack.

Griffin McLaurin, a Covington County activist, recalled his experiences for the University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Oral History. He said civil rights activists “were guarding all of our houses” and “we formed a little group that was patrolling the community and keeping an eye on our community center.” McLaurin noted that there was still plenty of fear because they received threats on their lives every day. He added that although individual citizens and racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan “blew up a lot of cars on the road going to the center,” they did not succeed in bombing it because they kept a 24-hour watch on the building. McLaurin stated that “they'd come in late at night and try to get to the center, but we had our guards. We stood our ground, and whenever we heard something that we thought wasn't right, we had our firepower.”

Walter Bruce, a Durant native and former chair of the Holmes County Freedom Democratic Party, told the Center for Oral History the story of how “fighting fire with fire” was the only way many blacks and their supporters were able to survive the sixties.

**Bruce:**

"Well, our strategy was we always did carry our weapons out there. ...And so, when they came over that Wednesday night and started to shooting, and when they got down there about half a mile, our people opened fire on them. And so, they turned around, and come back that a-way. And when they come back that a-way, the people on that side started shooting over they heads. And [when they] got in town, they said, "We not going to go back out there no more." And said “Them niggers got all kinds of machine guns out there.”...and that word got out, and so from then on we never had no more problems when we'd go out there [with] nobody coming by shooting no more. So that broke that up."

From these examples it is clear that many blacks used the term and tactic of nonviolence quite loosely. Their public stance was undoubtedly necessary to attract supporters and to compel government action, while the more private reliance on armed self-defense was a reality that few activists shunned.

The larger Civil Rights Movement can attribute its success to the tactic of nonviolence contrasting with the exposure of violence-prone policemen, sheriffs, vigilante groups, and other defenders of the status quo. Yet, the tactic of armed self-defense was indispensable in order to protect lives and property since the courts and law enforcement officials often stood silent or protected the perpetrators of racist violence. Thus, blacks and their supporters were compelled to fight the evils of segregation with nonviolence as well as with force. While this may seem paradoxical, it worked to advance their struggle for freedom, equality, and justice.

**DOCUMENT 4:**

1. In Defense of Rioting - Ferguson http://time.com/3605606/ferguson-in-defense-of-rioting/
2. Our Demand is Simple, Stop Killing Us http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/magazine/our-demand-is-simple-stop-killing-us.html
3. Black Lives Matter Must Move Past Protests - <http://mic.com/articles/107382/black-lives-matter-must-move-beyond-protests-or-risk-losing-the-fight-for-racial-justice>

## Ferguson: In Defense of Rioting

## The violent protests in Ferguson, Mo., are part of the American experience. Peaceful protesting is a luxury only available to those safely in mainstream culture

When a police officer shoots a young, unarmed black man in the streets, then [does not face indictment](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/24/ferguson-grand-jury-deliberations/19474907/), anger in the community is inevitable. It’s what we do with that anger that counts. In such a case, [is rioting so wrong](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30190224)?

Riots are a necessary part of the [evolution of society](http://www.oddee.com/item_99060.aspx). Unfortunately, we do not live in a universal utopia where people have the basic human rights they deserve simply for existing, and until we get there, the legitimate frustration, sorrow and pain of the marginalized voices will boil over, spilling out into our streets. As “normal” citizens watch[the events of Ferguson](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/11052845/Michael-Brown-What-the-Ferguson-riots-tell-us-about-race-in-America-today.html) unfurl on their television screens and Twitter feeds, there is a lot of head shaking, finger pointing, and privileged explanation going on. We wish to seclude the incident and the people involved. To separate it from our history as a nation, to dehumanize the change agents because of their bad and sometimes violent decisions—because if we can separate the underlying racial tensions that clearly exist in our country from the looting and rioting of select individuals, we can continue to ignore the problem.

While the most famous rant against the riots thus far comes from Hercules actor [Kevin Sorbo](http://www.salon.com/2014/08/21/kevin_sorbo_writes_an_insane_rant_on_ferguson_calling_protestors_losers_and_animals/), where he calls the rioters “animals” and “losers,” there are thousands of people echoing these sentiments. Sorbo correctly ascertains that the rioting has little to do with the shooting of an unarmed black man in the street, but he blames it on the typical privileged American’s stereotype of a less fortunate sect of human being—that the looting is a result of frustration built up over years of “blaming everyone else, The Man, for their failures.”

Because when you have succeeded, it ceases to be a possibility, in our capitalist society, that anyone else helped you. And if no one helped you succeed, then no one is holding anyone else back from succeeding. Except they did help you, and they are holding people back. So that blaming someone else for your failures in the United States may very well be an astute observation of reality, particularly as it comes to white privilege versus black privilege. And, yes, they are different, and they are tied to race, and that doesn’t make me a racist, it makes me a realist. If anything, I am racist because I am white. Until I have had to walk in a person of color’s skin, I will never understand, I will always take things for granted, and I will be inherently privileged. But by ignoring the very real issues this country still faces in terms of race to promote an as-of-yet imaginary colorblind society, we contribute to the problem at hand, which is centuries of abuses lobbied against other humans on no basis but that of [their skin color](http://www.thenation.com/article/181337/anatomy-fergusons-police-riot).

The Boston Tea Party protest back in 1773 was meant to effect political and societal change, and while the destruction of property in that case may not have ended in loss of human life, [the revolution](http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution) that took place afterward certainly did. What separates a heralded victory in history from an attempt at societal change, a cry for help from the country’s trampled, today? The fact that we won.

In terms of riots being more common in black communities, that is true only when the riots are politically aimed.

The obvious example here is [the L.A. Riots of 1992](http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/18/5-ways-the-rodney-king-beating-and-la-riots-changed-america/), after the Rodney King beating and verdict. I would put forth that peaceful protesting is a luxury of those already in mainstream culture, those who can be assured their voices will be heard without violence, those who can afford to wait for the change they want.

“I risk sounding racist but if this was a white kid there would be no riot,” another person wrote on the [Tea Party page](http://www.teaparty.org/truth-ferguson-riots-martial-law-51593/). “History shows us that blacks in this country are more apt to riot than any other population. They are stirred up by racist black people and set out to cause problems. End of story.”

Blacks in this country are more apt to riot because they are one of the populations here who still need to. In the case of the 1992 riots, 30 years of black people trying to talk about their struggles of racial profiling and muted, but still vastly unfair, treatment, [came to a boil](http://www.southcentralhistory.com/la-riots.php). Sometimes, enough is simply too much. And after that catalyst event,[the landscape of southern California changed, and nationally, police forces took note](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/25/us/in-south-los-angeles-a-changed-complexion-since-the-riots.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

And the racism they are fighting, the racism we are all fighting, is still alive and well throughout our nation. The modern racism may not culminate in separate water fountains and separate seating in the backs of buses, but its insidious nature is perhaps even more dangerous to the individuals who have to live under the shroud of stereotypical lies society foists upon them.

Instead of tearing down other human beings who are acting upon decades of pent-up anger at a system decidedly against them, a system that has told them they are less than human for years, we ought to be reaching out to help them regain the humanity they lost, not when a few set fire to the buildings in Ferguson, but when they were born the wrong color in the post-racial America.

**DOCUMENT 5:**

# **‘Our Demand Is Simple: Stop Killing Us’**

How a group of black social media activists built the nation’s first 21st-century civil rights movement.

Earlier in the afternoon, well over a thousand people marched from the Western District police station to City Hall to protest the death of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old black man whose spinal cord was severely injured while he was in the custody of the Baltimore Police Department.

But this protest looked much like the ones that have characterized the growing movement against police violence.

One protester was DeRay Mckesson, a 29-year-old former school administrator who has spent much of the past nine months attending and Mckesson, who is from Baltimore, had returned to his hometown not long after Gray's death to join the protests.

As the police marched their way up the street, Mckesson posted a Vine, a photo and a 30-second video to his 85,000 Twitter followers.

When Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department shot and killed Michael Brown, Mckesson and a core group of other activists have built the most formidable American protest movement of the 21st century to date.

Their innovation has been to marry the strengths of social media the swift, morally blunt consensus that can be created by hashtags; the personal connection that a charismatic online persona can make with followers; the broad networks that allow for the easy distribution of documentary photos and videos with an effort to quickly mobilize protests in each new city where a police shooting occurs.

But the movement that Mckesson is helping to lead has been able to sustain the country's focus and reach millions of people.

Nevertheless, police killings have become front-page news and a political flash point, entirely because of the sense of emergency that the movement has sustained.

Protests began on West Florissant Avenue nearby, as well as outside the Ferguson Police Department; the crowds demanded justice for Brown and that the name of the officer who shot him be released, prompting the police to come out in force. Images from the Ferguson protests plumes of tear gas, armored vehicles in the streets, packs of heavily armed police officers wearing military fatigues were leading the news.

Mckesson decided to go see the protests for himself. Inspired, in part, by the Twitter accounts he had been following at the time, Mckesson had fewer than 900 followers and tweeted inconsistently he decided to live- tweet the trip. Mckesson eventually returned to Minneapolis, but by then he had committed himself to the protests.

On one of those trips, Mckesson met Johnetta Elzie, a fellow protester who goes by Netta. Over the next few weeks, Elzie, who studied journalism in college, emerged as one of the most reliable real-time observers of the confrontations between the protesters and the police.

Mckesson, too, was live-tweeting when he was back in Ferguson, integrating video and referring to protesters and police officers alike by name. Mckesson's tweets were usually sober and detailed, whereas Elzie's were cheerfully sarcastic, mock-heroic and forthright: a running account of events that felt intimate.

Mckesson and Elzie focused much of their attention on criticizing the mainstream media, who devoted too much airtime, they felt, to violence and discord among the protest community. Mckesson had begun wearing red shoes and a red shirt to protests.

Mckesson and Elzie have always insisted that the movement is leaderless, that it is a communal expression of pent-up anguish spilling onto the streets, but over the fall, they were frequently called upon to serve as its spokespeople.

Mckesson, who was dutifully putting out the newsletter during this time while still working at his job in Minneapolis, began using Twitter to announce actions throughout St. Together, Mckesson and Elzie were developing a model of the modern protester: part organizer, part citizen journalist who marches through American cities while texting, as charging cords and battery packs fall out of his pockets.

Three days before, a grand jury in Staten Island decided not to indict Officer Daniel Pantaleo, of the New York Police Department, on charges of killing Eric Garner, an unarmed black man, by choking him. Demonstrations broke out across the city, with major bridges and tunnels shut down every night by protesters, and Mckesson traveled to New York to join them.

“After the protest, Mckesson and I retired to a nearby cafe in a Japanese bookstore.” Earlier that day, he asked if any of his followers knew the address of William Bratton, New York's police commissioner, thinking that he might organize a protest.

The Twitter users, especially the more vicious ones, seemed to actually know Mckesson and some of his fellow protesters. Mckesson had come to New York to attend workshops and to spread the word about actions in the city.

Two weeks later, after a series of actions involving tens of thousands of people, the murder of two New York police officers had a chilling effect on the street protests. In the rare quiet moments between police shootings and actions, Mckesson tweets and retweets stats, trivia, inspirational messages and the names of the dead.

After graduating in 2007, Mckesson joined Teach for America and taught middle school for two years in East New York, Brooklyn, before moving back home to Baltimore to work in H.R.

After a night of photographing and documenting everyone else at the protest, Mckesson, the education executive with a six-figure salary, finally turned the camera around on himself, revealing the awkward resolve of a student-body president who had lost confidence in all those systems and was trying something new.

In March, Mckesson and Elzie traveled to Selma, Ala., for the 50th- anniversary commemoration of Bloody Sunday, the pivotal moment in the civil rights era when protesters marching on the Edmund Pettus Bridge were brutally attacked on national television by Alabama state troopers.

Mckesson and Elzie have each expressed ambivalence over whether the youth movement should try to draw from the popular image of the civil rights movement.

If you ask Mckesson and Elzie why there is no central figure in today's movement, they will again insist on the advantages of leaderlessness. Their resistance to confining the civil rights movement to a museum made Mckesson and Elzie an awkward fit for Selma, which was filled with people doing just that.

At dinner that night in Montgomery, Mckesson and Elzie received the news that a 19-year-old unarmed black man, Tony Robinson, had been shot and killed in Madison, Wis.

Mckesson and Elzie seemed almost star-struck, peppering Nash with questions about the civil rights movement and then posting her answers on Twitter.

Mckesson, Elzie and Packnett, who arrived the night before, tried to find a contact who would take them to the foot of the bridge, where Mckesson would speak.

Soon after I met them, Mckesson and Elzie took me on a tour of some of the sites around St. Louis. As we drove from the Six Stars Market, where Kajieme Powell, 25, was shot in August, to the gas station where Antonio Martin, 18, was killed in December, Elzie talked about the emotion behind the movement and how, for many people in St. Louis, the Ferguson protests represented the first time they were able to collectively voice their frustrations with the police.

The swiftness with which the movement now acts, and the volume of people it can bring out to every protest, have turned every police killing into a national referendum on the value of black lives in America.

In April, after cellphone video footage showed a North Charleston police officer firing eight times at the back of a 50-year-old black man named Walter Scott as he was running away, the officer was arrested and booked on murder charges the same day, and nearly every prospective candidate in the coming presidential election subsequently released a statement, expressing horror at Scott's death and promising to address criminal-justice-system reform.

Her proposals were hardly specific or new: widespread adoption of body cameras by police officers, "a renewed focus on working with communities to prevent crime" and a call for a "true national debate" on how to end the "era of mass incarceration," but the fact that Clinton chose to address these issues at such length suggests that police reform will be an unavoidable subject during the campaign season.

Shortly after Tony Robinson was shot and killed in Madison, Mike Koval, the city's police chief, released the name of the officer involved and visited Robinson's mother. Nobody can predict where and when these killings may happen, only that they will happen, and that the movement will continue to draw attention to them, and that the sense of grief within black America and of constant siege at the hands of the police will not abate.

**DOCUMENT 6:**

# **#BlackLivesMatter Must Move Beyond Protests — Or Risk Losing the Fight for Racial Justice**

Witness the rupture.

Once the worry of minorities and leftists, the ease with which a white man with a badge can end the life of a black person is finally on America's mind. The realization that police practices can be brutish and unfair to black men has become a matter of serious concern for many whites, bourgeois liberals and some conservatives — [apparently even George W. Bush](http://mic.com/articles/105922/even-george-w-bush-says-the-eric-garner-decision-is-hard-to-understand). Law enforcement is undergoing a crisis of legitimacy.

The window of opportunity for the racially equalized institutional changes is wider than it's been [in decades](http://mic.com/articles/106934/americans-haven-t-been-this-concerned-about-racism-in-more-than-20-years). The recent non-indictments for police killings in Ferguson, Missouri, and Staten Island, New York, have reignited awareness of the systemic nature of racial discrimination. Riot, protest and media pressure has made the White House anxious and piqued the interest of a generally useless Congress. Some [modest](http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/12/12/congressman-proposesalteringgrandjuryprocess.html) [reform](http://mic.com/articles/105450/obama-wants-75-million-to-outfit-50-000-police-officers-with-body-cameras) is in the works.

But all of this is fragile. When there is a long enough pause in the rate at which black men are killed by the police, the cameras will point elsewhere. If there is any hope of reaping lasting change from this moment, it must take shape in the form of something more durable than rage.

"Black Lives Matter" is the closest thing to a unifying banner for the demonstrations in response to the absence of justice in Ferguson and Staten Island. It's a slogan, [a website](http://blacklivesmatter.com/) and a [Twitter hashtag](http://mic.com/articles/105002/15-black-lives-matter-tweets-everyone-needs-to-see), which [first surfaced in 2012](http://grist.org/politics/stopping-a-bart-train-in-michael-browns-name/) in response to vigilante George Zimmerman's acquittal after he killed unarmed black teen Trayvon Martin. At this point, the phrase has become shorthand for the various streams of resistance to police brutality across the country.

The Black Lives Matter movement resembles Occupy Wall Street in 2011, which is cause for both celebration and concern: Both establish a polarizing antagonist — police, bankers — who serves as an entry point for structural critique (systemic racism and politico-economic inequality, respectively). Both have given birth to and mobilized highly decentralized, politically diverse and fairly spontaneous protest movements. Both operate in the register of[contentious politics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contentious_politics) and feed off friction — or the threat of it — with the state. And just as Occupy mostly dissolved during its first winter, so too could Black Lives Matter.

So now the movement must evolve. Here are three ideas for those interested in carrying on with campaigns under the umbrella of Black Lives Matter:

**Public protest is a tactic, not a strategy:** Protesting is vital, but it's not a substitute for the organization, discipline and grit needed for long-term change. Groups small and large need to organize locally and coordinate nationally on specific programs with short- and long-term goals. Resources for political, economic, legal and cultural advocacy need to be pooled and employed strategically. Campaigns for reform — whether assigning special prosecutors for police homicide trials, disarming the police or closing the white-black wealth gap — must be focused. Local community efforts should be paired with efforts engaging the federal political process.

Past efforts with similar agendas provide useful case studies. One example worth considering is the rise of the Black Panther Party in response to police brutality in the late 1960s through the early '70s. Typically depicted as armed separatists, the Black Panthers were antiracist and committed to building interracial coalitions. Their most divisive position, advocacy of armed self-defense, was only one relatively short-lived element of their complex political program. Soon after they developed a nationwide following, they focused on community programs providing free services to neighborhoods; their most popular nationwide initiative was the [Free Breakfast for Children Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Breakfast_for_Children). The Panthers' other communitarian programs — which included free clothing, medical care, transportation, housing cooperatives and much more — highlighted the shortcomings of the state and economy, while empowering ordinary citizens to conceptualize and participate in an alternative political economy.

The Black Panthers began as a response to the police, but quickly evolved into a broader vision of how people of color can find dignity and autonomy in a [congenitally racist](http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/11/barack-obama-ferguson-and-the-evidence-of-things-unsaid/383212/) country; they knew that oppression by the police was inextricable from oppression in economic and political life. While their practice of armed resistance was ineffective in the long-term, and is certainly not something that should be embraced today, their holistic view of change merits study. Their [10-point program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten-Point_Program) connected their concern with self-defense to a broader agenda of wholesale social change, and it intended to capture political and economic gains that the Civil Rights movement had failed to target or secure.

While it's tragic that today's grievances bear such a strong resemblance to those of the '60s, it bodes well that today's conversation has been similarly panoramic in its discussion of racial injustice and the actions that will be needed to address it.

**Use civil disobedience to generate attention:** During the Civil Rights era, activists gained legitimacy not just by expressing discontent publicly, but also by actively defying unjust laws. Protests and die-ins are valuable, but they do not have the same ability to captivate as the sacrificial spectacle of nonviolent refusal. A willingness to endure arrest is a powerful asset, and it's something that white allies can bring to the table in a big way. Recall Occupy's explosive growth in popularity and media attention when police overreacted to occupations with mass arrests and pepper spray. Today, [peaceful resistance](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/14/us/st-louis-protests.html?_r=0) to the institutions that are behind today's crisis can take many forms, but it will need to go beyond permitted marches.

**Words matter:** Lastly, it's worth contemplating the limitations of the slogan "Black Lives Matter." It's a defensive plea that affirms its own unreality in the criminal justice system. While its vagueness allows it to cast a wide net as a brand, it's also unambitious; "Black Lives Matter" sounds like a cry for general validation rather than a non-negotiable demand for freedom from discrimination. "Hands up, don't shoot" is another popular slogan at protests these days, and it also suffers from defensive posturing.

Framing matters. As political scientist Corey Robin [has explained](http://www.thenation.com/article/159748/reclaiming-politics-freedom), today's liberals' defensive language on everything from taxes to foreign policy often reinforces the conservative paradigm they take issue with, while successful political movements have always focused on liberation:

*From Emerson and Douglass to Reagan and Goldwater, freedom has been the keyword of American politics. Every successful movement — abolition, feminism, civil rights, the New Deal — has claimed it. A freewheeling mix of elements — the willful assertion and reinvention of the self, the breaking of traditional bonds and constraints, the toppling of old orders and creation of new forms — freedom in the American vein combines what political theorists call negative liberty (the absence of external interference) and positive liberty (the ability to act). Where theorists dwell on these distinctions as incommensurable values, statesmen and activists unite them in a vision of emancipation that identifies freedom with the act of knocking down or hurtling past barriers.*

There is no simple answer to this problem — one that afflicts the left as a whole — but the [language of Black Power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Power) could provide a useful toolkit for Black Lives Matter.

As we enter 2015, let us resolve to stay the course in working toward more inclusive notions of freedom. The fire must keep burning, but it's also going to have to burn slowly.



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Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ History/Writing

***History/Writing Final Essay Topic Brainstorm***

Before you begin conducting research for your essay, we will first take some time to brainstorm what you already know about your topic. This will help guide your learning as you research by showing you what you already know and what questions you still need to learn more about.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. What is your topic? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Next, jot the question for your topic in the column on the left.
3. Then with your group, write down information you already know in the second column.
4. Lastly, write down information you need to find in your research in the last column.

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| **Question** | **I already know...** | **I need to find...** |
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Extra Space for Brainstorming:

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| **Question** | **I already know...** | **I need to find...** |
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Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ History/Writing

***History/Writing Final Essay Outline***

*Use this organizer to collect evidence for your essay.* ***Just jot your ideas****, do not write whole sentences here. Make sure you write down what document you pulled the evidence from so you can refer back to it.*

**Once this is complete, you may begin typing your essay on Google Docs.**

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| ***Introduction (Hook your reader & give brief summary of what your essay is about)*** |
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| ***Body Paragraph 1 (First Question -- Just jots*** |
| **Answer/Claim/Topic Sentence:** **Evidence 1:** **Source: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_****Evidence 2:****Source: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |

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| ***Body Paragraph 2 (Second Question -- Just jots!)*** |
| **Answer/Claim/Topic Sentence:** **Evidence 1:** **Source: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_****Evidence 2:****Source: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |

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| ***Body Paragraph 3 (Third Question -- Just jots!)*** |
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| ***Conclusion (Summarize your essay, give the reader your key take-aways/opinions, drop the mic!)*** |
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