**United States History**

**Nonviolence: The Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963**

**KING**: I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham.

**CHORUS**: Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

**KING**: We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

**CHORUS**: Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

**KING**: Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation.

**CHORUS**: Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

**KING**: Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.

**CHORUS**: Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

**KING**: For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

**CHORUS**: Justice too long delayed is justice denied.

**KING**: One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.

**CHORUS**: An unjust law is no law at all.

**KING**: An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself.

**CHORUS**: This is difference made legal.

**KING**: We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal." Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers.

**CHORUS**: An unjust law is no law at all.

**KING**: Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. **CHORUS**: Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever.

**KING**: We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny.

**CHORUS**: America is freedom.

**United States History**

**Black Power**

**SOURCE A: “The Ballot or the Bullet,” by Malcolm X, 1964 (Cleveland, Ohio)**If we don't do something real soon, I think you'll have to agree that we're going to be forced either to use the ballot or the bullet. It's one or the other in 1964. It isn't that time is running out -- time has run out!

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver -- no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.

And now you're facing a situation where the young Negro's coming up. They don't want to hear that "turn the-other-cheek" stuff, no.

## SOURCE B: Commencement Address at Howard University, June 4, 1965

But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.

**SOURCE C: Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, from *Black Power* (1967)**

While color blindness may be a sound goal ultimately, we must realize that race is an overwhelming fact of life in this historical period. There is no black man in the country who can live "simply as a man." His blackness is an ever-present fact of this racist society, whether he recognizes it or not. It is unlikely that this or the next generation will witness the time when race will no longer be relevant in the conduct of public affairs and in public policy decision-making. . . .

**SOURCE D: Malcom X, “To Mississippi Youth,” 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,

**SOURCE E: James Forman's Black Manifesto, 1969**

We are therefore demanding of the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country. We are demanding $500,000,000 from the Christian white churches and the Jewish synagogues. . . . Our objective in issuing this Manifesto is to force the racist white Christian church to begin the payment of reparations which are due to all black people, not only by the church but also by private business and the U.S. government.

**SOURCE F: The Chicago Freedom Movement, 1966**

...Chicago today is a divided city -- segregated in all areas of social and economic activity, in employment, in education, in housing and in community organization. The Negro community is sectioned off from the larger metropolis into areas of the city that have been set aside for black ghettoes.

Under the system of northern racism the Negro receives inferior and second-class status in every area of urban living. The Negro is concentrated in the low-paying and second-rate jobs. In housing, proportionately more Negroes live in substandard or deteriorating dwellings. In education, Negro schools have more inexperienced teachers, fewer classrooms, and less expenditures per pupil. In the maintenance of law and order Negroes are frequently the victims of police brutality and of stop and search methods of crime detection.