

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Kennedy asserted that America would “pay any price” to defend liberty. What kind of foreign policy commitments might this have entailed?
2. What did Kennedy identify as the “common enemies of man”? To defeat these enemies, would government power have to be expanded? Why?
3. Explain how the Soviet Union might have responded to this speech.

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

FROM *The Other America* (1962)

*Throughout the 1950s public attention was focused on the amazing affluence generated by the American economy. Yet as social analyst Michael Harrington revealed in *The Other America* (1962), 40 to 50 million Americans, 20 percent of the total population, were in fact mired in poverty. This “underclass” was largely hidden from view. They included the elderly and the “unseen” residents of urban slums and rural hovels. President Kennedy read several reviews of Harrington’s book and was so stunned by its revelations that he created a task force to design federal programs to address the issue. Kennedy was assassinated before the programs could be implemented, but under Lyndon B. Johnson the government initiated a “war on poverty.”*

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There is a familiar America. It is celebrated in speeches and advertised on television and in the magazines. It has the highest mass standard of living the world has ever known.

In the 1950’s this America worried about itself, yet even its anxieties were products of abundance. The title of a brilliant book was widely misinterpreted, and the familiar America began to call itself “the affluent society.” There was introspection about Madison Avenue and tail fins; there was discussion of the emotional suffering taking place in the suburbs. In all this, there was an implicit assumption that the basic grinding economic problems had been solved in the United States. In this theory the nation’s problems were no longer a matter of basic human needs, of food, shelter, and

clothing. Now they were seen as qualitative, a question of learning to live decently amid luxury.

While this discussion was carried on, there existed another America. In it dwelt somewhere between 40,000,000 and 50,000,000 citizens of this land. They were poor. They still are.

To be sure, the other America is not impoverished in the same sense as those poor nations where millions cling to hunger as a defense against starvation. This country has escaped such extremes. That does not change the fact that tens of millions of Americans are, at this very moment, maimed in body and spirit, existing at levels beneath those necessary for human decency. If these people are not starving, they are hungry, and sometimes fat with hunger, for that is what cheap

foods do. They are without adequate housing and education and medical care.

The Government has documented what this means to the bodies of the poor, and the figures will be cited throughout this book. But even more basic, this poverty twists and deforms the spirit. The American poor are pessimistic and defeated, and they are victimized by mental suffering to a degree unknown in Suburbia.

This book is a description of the world in which these people live; it is about the other America. Here are the unskilled workers, the migrant farm workers, the aged, the minorities, and all the others who live in the economic underworld of American life. . . . I would ask the reader to respond critically to every assertion, but not to allow statistical quibbling to obscure the huge, enormous, and intolerable fact of poverty in America. For, when all is said and done, that fact is unmistakable, whatever its exact dimensions, and the truly human reaction can only be outrage. . . .

The millions who are poor in the United States tend to become increasingly invisible. Here is a great mass of people, yet it takes an effort of the intellect and will even to see them. . . .

The other America, the America of poverty, is hidden today in a way that it never was before. Its millions are socially invisible to the rest of us. No wonder that so many misinterpreted Galbraith's¹ title and assumed that "the affluent society" meant that everyone had a decent standard of life. The misinterpretation was true as far as the actual day-to-day lives of two-thirds of the nation were concerned. Thus, one must begin a description of the other America by understanding why we do not see it.

There are perennial reasons that make the other America an invisible land. Poverty is often off the beaten track. It always has been. The ordinary tourist never left the main highway, and today he rides interstate turnpikes. He does not go into the valleys of Pennsylvania where the towns look like movie sets of Wales in the thirties. He does not see the company houses in rows, the rutted roads (the

poor always have bad roads whether they live in the city, in towns, or on farms), and everything is black and dirty. And even if he were to pass through such a place by accident, the tourist would not meet the unemployed men in the bar or the women coming home from a runaway sweatshop. . . .

If the middle class never did like ugliness and poverty, it was at least aware of them. "Across the tracks" was not a very long way to go. There were forays into the slums at Christmas time; there were charitable organizations that brought contact with the poor. Occasionally, almost everyone passed through the Negro ghetto or the blocks of tenements, if only to get downtown to work or to entertainment.

Now the American city has been transformed. The poor still inhabit the miserable housing in the central area, but they are increasingly isolated from contact with, or sight of, anybody else. Middle-class women coming in from Suburbia on a rare trip may catch the merest glimpse of the other America on the way to an evening at the theater, but their children are segregated in suburban schools. The business or professional man may drive along the fringes of slums in a car or bus, but it is not an important experience to him. The failures, the unskilled, the disabled, the aged, and the minorities are right there, across the tracks, where they have always been. But hardly anyone else is.

In short, the very development of the American city has removed poverty from the living, emotional experience of millions upon millions of middle-class Americans. Living out in the suburbs, it is easy to assume that ours is, indeed, an affluent society.

This new segregation of poverty is compounded by a well-meaning ignorance. A good many concerned and sympathetic Americans are aware that there is much discussion of urban renewal. Suddenly, driving through the city, they notice that a familiar slum has been torn down and that there are towering, modern buildings where once there had been tenements or hovels. There is a warm feeling of satisfaction, of pride in the way things are working out: the poor, it is obvious, are being taken care of.

¹ Economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1908–).

The irony in this . . . is that the truth is nearly the exact opposite to the impression. The total impact of the various housing programs in postwar America has been to squeeze more and more people into existing slums. More often than not, the modern apartment in a towering building rents at \$40 a room or more. For, during the past decade and a half, there has been more subsidization of middle- and upper-income housing than there has been for the poor. . . .

And finally, the poor are politically invisible. It is one of the cruelest ironies of social life in advanced countries that the dispossessed at the bottom of society are unable to speak for themselves. The people of the other America do not, by far and large, belong to unions, to fraternal organizations, or to political parties. They are without lobbies of their own; they put forward no legislative program. As a group, they are atomized. They have no face; they have no voice.

Thus, there is not even a cynical political motive for caring about the poor, as in the old days. Because the slums are no longer centers of power-

ful political organizations, the politicians need not really care about their inhabitants. The slums are no longer visible to the middle class, so much of the idealistic urge to fight for those who need help is gone. Only the social agencies have a really direct involvement with the other America, and they are without any great political power. . . .

That the poor are invisible is one of the most important things about them. They are not simply neglected and forgotten as in the old rhetoric of reform; what is much worse, they are not seen.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. According to Harrington, America was commonly described as an "affluent society." What was implied by this phrase, and why did Harrington deny its validity?
2. Why were the poor so "invisible" to middle-class Americans?
3. Did the poor have political power? Why or why not?

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

FROM *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963)

During the 1960 presidential campaign John F. Kennedy had promised to provide "moral leadership" to improve race relations in the United States. Once in office, however, he moved cautiously, fearful of alienating the powerful coalition of southern Democrats in Congress. The mantle of "moral leadership" was instead taken up by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the inspirational black Baptist minister from Atlanta who helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957. In early 1963 King and the SCLC resolved to assault segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. They organized an economic boycott of white businesses and staged a series of protest marches. Birmingham police used dogs and fire hoses to break up the rallies, and they arrested King and many of his lieutenants. While in jail he used smuggled

paper and pen to write a powerful response to criticism he had received from local white ministers.

From Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963," in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper Collins, 1964), pp. 77-78, 82, 84-87, 89-92, 96, 99-100. Reprinted by the arrangement with The Heirs to the Estate of Martin Luther King, Jr., c/o Writers House, Inc. as agent for the proprietor. Copyright 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr., copyright renewed 1991 by Coretta Scott King.

While confined here in the Birmingham City Jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities "unwise and untimely."

. . . I am here, along with several members of my staff, because we were invited here. I am here because I have basic organizational ties here. Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the 8th-century prophets left their little villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home town, and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Greco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular home town. . . . Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. . . .

You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being. I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial social analyst who looks merely at effects, and does not grapple with underlying causes. I would not hesitate to say that it is unfortunate that so-called demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham at this time, but I would say in more emphatic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: 1) collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive; 2) negotiation; 3) self-purification; and 4) direct action. We have gone

through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal, and unbelievable facts. . . .

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly I have never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was "well timed," according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost always meant "never." It has been a tranquilizing Thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. . . .

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954

outlawing segregation in the public schools, it is rather strange and paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: There are *just* laws and there are *unjust* laws. 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. I would agree with Saint Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."

Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.

All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. . . . So segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, but it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Isn't segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? So I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court because it is morally right, and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong. . . .

Let me give another explanation. An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because it did not have the unhampered right to vote. Who can say the legislature of Alabama which set up the segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout the state of Alabama all types of conniving methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters and there are some counties without a single Negro registered to

vote despite the fact that the Negro constitute a majority of the population. Can any law set up in such a state be considered democratically structured? . . .

We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and . . . it was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that, if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal. If I lived in Communist country today where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I believe I would openly advocate disobeying these anti-religious laws. . . .

We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of good people. We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. . . .

You spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of the extremist. I started thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation, and of a few Negroes in the middle class who because of a degree of academic and economic security, and because at points they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost

faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces saying that we need not follow the "donothingism" of the complacent or the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. There is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I'm grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with floods of blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss us as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators"—those of us who are working through the channels of nonviolent direct action—and refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes, out of frustration and despair, will seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies, a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; something without has reminded that he can gain it. . . .

So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice—or will we be extremists for the cause of justice? . . .

The contemporary Church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch-supporter of the *status quo*. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the Church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the Church's silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the Church as never before. If the Church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early Church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the 20th century. . . . I

am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom . . . they have gone with the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. These men have been the leaven in the lump of the race. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the Gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment. . . . But even if the Church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are presently misunderstood. 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 the destiny of America. . . .

One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, courageously and with a majestic sense of purpose, facing jeering and hostile mobs and the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman of Montgomery, Alabama,¹ who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride the segregated buses, and responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity: "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." They will be young high school and college students, young ministers of the Gospel and a host of the elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience's sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, and thus carrying our whole nation back to great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the

¹ Rosa Parks (1913–).

formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. . . .

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader, but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away, that the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and that in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty. . . .

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. King described two kinds of laws. What were they, and what criteria did King use in deciding when to obey them?
2. What were the two “opposing forces” in the “Negro community” according to King? What did each side advocate?
3. Do you think whites would have felt threatened by King’s strategy of non-violent civil disobedience? Explain.

GEORGE C. WALLACE

The Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham, and Hoax (1964)

George Wallace served as governor of Alabama during the early 1960s. In 1958 he had lost the gubernatorial election to a rabid segregationist, and Wallace vowed that he would “never be out-niggered again.” He won the governorship in 1962 and pledged: “Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!” In June 1963 Wallace stood defiantly in a doorway at the University of Alabama to prevent the first black student from registering, only to step aside when federal marshals threatened his arrest. Wallace’s theatrical defense of segregation and his opposition to civil rights legislation and related Supreme Court rulings, Communism and “left-wing” liberalism, made him a hero among white conservatives. In 1964 he challenged Lyndon Johnson for the Democratic presidential nomination. Although unsuccessful, he displayed an ability to exploit the “white backlash” against political and social liberalism. This signaled an emerging conservative revolt that would flower in the 1970s and 1980s.

From “Speech Prepared for Delivery by George C. Wallace,” Southeastern Fairgrounds, Atlanta, Georgia, 4 July 1964, pp. 1–3, 7, 10–11, 13–16, George Wallace Papers, McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi. By permission of the Alabama Dept. of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

We come here today in deference to the memory of those stalwart patriots who on July 4, 1776, pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to establish and defend the proposition that governments are created by the people, empowered by the people, derive their just powers from the consent of the people, and must forever remain subservient to the will of the people.

Today, 188 years later, we celebrate that occasion and find inspiration and determination and courage to preserve and protect the great principles of freedom enunciated in the Declaration of Independence.

It is therefore a cruel irony that the President of the United States has only yesterday signed into law the most monstrous piece of legislation¹ ever enacted by the United States Congress.

It is a fraud, a sham, and a hoax.

This bill will live in infamy. To sign it into law at any time is tragic. To do so upon the eve of the celebration of our independence insults the intelligence of the American people.

It dishonors the memory of countless thousands of our dead who offered up their very lives in defense of principles which this bill destroys.

Never before in the history of this nation have so many human and property rights been destroyed by a single enactment of the Congress. It is an act of tyranny. It is the assassin's knife stuck in the back of liberty.

With this assassin's knife and a blackjack in the hand of the Federal force-cult, the left-wing liberals will try to force us back into bondage. Bondage to a tyranny more brutal than that imposed by the British monarchy which claimed power to rule over the lives of our forefathers under sanction of the Divine Right of kings.

Today, this tyranny is imposed by the central government which claims the right to rule over our lives under sanction of the omnipotent black-robed despots who sit on the bench of the United States Supreme Court.

This bill is fraudulent in intent, in design, and

in execution. It is misnamed. Each and every provision is mistitled. It was rammed through the Congress on the wave of ballyhoo, promotions, and publicity stunts reminiscent of P. T. Barnum.

It was enacted in an atmosphere of pressure, intimidation, and even cowardice, as demonstrated by the refusal of the United States Senate to adopt an amendment to submit the bill to a vote of the people. . . .

It threatens our freedom of speech, of assembly, or association, and makes the exercise of these Freedoms a federal crime under certain conditions.

It affects our political rights, our right to trial by jury, our right to the full use and enjoyment of our private property, the freedom from search and seizure of our private property and possessions, the freedom from harassment by Federal police and, in short, all the rights of individuals inherent in a society of free men.

Ministers, lawyers, teachers, newspapers, and every private citizen must guard his speech and watch his actions to avoid the deliberately imposed booby traps put into this bill. It is designed to make Federal crimes of our customs, beliefs, and traditions.

Therefore, under the fantastic powers of the Federal judiciary to punish for contempt of court and under their fantastic powers to regulate our most intimate aspects of our lives by injunction, every American citizen is in jeopardy and must stand guard against these despots. . . .

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that will destroy our free enterprise system. I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that will destroy neighborhood schools. I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that will destroy the rights of private property.

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that destroys your right—and my right—to choose my neighbors—or to sell my house to whomever I choose. I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that destroys the labor seniority system.

I am having nothing to do with this so-called civil rights bill.

¹ Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The liberal left-wingers have passed it. Now let them employ some pinknik social engineers in Washington, D.C., to figure out what to do with it. . . .

It has been said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. There was never greater evidence as to the proof of this statement than in the example of the present Federal Judiciary. . . .

I feel it important that you should know and understand what it is that these people are trying to do. The written opinions of the court are filled with double talk, semantics, jargon, and meaningless phrases. The words they use are not important. The ideas that they represent are the things which count.

It is perfectly obvious from the left-wing liberal press and from the left-wing law journals that what the court is saying behind all the jargon is that they don't like our form of government.

They think they can establish a better one. In order to do so it is necessary that they overthrow our existing form, destroy the democratic institutions created by the people, change the outlook, religion, and philosophy, and bring the whole area of human thought, aspiration, action and organization, under the absolute control of the court. Their decisions reveal this to be the goal of the liberal element on the court which is in a majority at present.

It has reached the point where one may no longer look to judicial decisions to determine what the court may do. However, it is possible to predict with accuracy the nature of the opinions to be rendered.

One may find the answer in the Communist Manifesto. The Communists are dedicated to the overthrow of our form of government. They are dedicated to the destruction of the concept of private property. They are dedicated to the object of destroying religion as the basis of moral and ethical values. . . .

I do not call the members of the United States Supreme Court Communists. But I do say, and I submit for your judgment the fact that every single decision of the court in the past ten years which

related in any way to each of these objectives has been decided against freedom and in favor of tyranny. . . .

The Federal court rules that your children shall not be permitted to read the bible in our public school systems. Let me tell you this, though. We still read the bible in Alabama schools and as long as I am governor we will continue to read the bible no matter what the Supreme Court says. . . .

But yet there is hope.

There is yet a spirit of resistance in this country which will not be oppressed. And it is awakening. And I am sure there is an abundance of good sense in this country which cannot be deceived. . . .

Being a southerner is no longer geographic. It's a philosophy and an attitude. One destined to be a national philosophy—embraced by millions of Americans—which shall assume the mantle of leadership and steady a governmental structure in these days of crises.

Certainly I am a candidate for President of the United States. If the left-wingers do not think I am serious—let them consider this.

I am going to take our fight to the people—the court of public opinion—where truth and common sense will eventually prevail. . . . Conservatives of this nation constitute the balance of power in presidential elections.

I am a conservative.

I intend to give the American people a clear choice. I welcome a fight between our philosophy and the liberal left-wing dogma which now threatens to engulf every man, woman, and child in the United States.

I am in this race because I believe the American people have been pushed around long enough and that they, like you and I, are fed up with the continuing trend toward a socialist state which now subjects the individual to the dictates of an all-powerful central government.

I am running for President because I was born free. I want to remain free. I want your children and mine and our prosperity to be unencumbered by the manipulations of a soulless state.

I intend to fight for a positive, affirmative program to restore constitutional government and to stop the senseless bloodletting now being performed on the body of liberty by those who lead us willingly and dangerously close to a totalitarian central government.

In our nation, man has always been sovereign and the state has been his servant. This philosophy has made the United States the greatest free nation in history.

This freedom was not a gift. It was won by work, by sweat, by tears, by war, by whatever it took to be—and to remain free. Are we today less resolute, less determined and courageous than our fathers and our grandfathers?

Are we to abandon this priceless heritage that has carried us to our present position of achievement and leadership? I say if we are to abandon our heritage, let it be done in the open and full knowledge of what we do.

We are not unmindful and careless of our future. We will not stand aside while our conscientious convictions tell us that a dictatorial Supreme Court has taken away our rights and our liberties.

We will not stand idly by while the Supreme Court continues to invade the prerogatives left rightfully to the states by the constitution.

We must not be misled by left-wing incompetent news media that day after day feed us a diet of fantasy telling us we are bigots, racists and hate-mongers to oppose the destruction of the constitution and our nation.

A left-wing monster has risen up in this nation. It has invaded the government. It has invaded the news media. It has invaded the leadership of many of our churches. It has invaded every phase and aspect of the life of freedom-loving people.

It consists of many and various and powerful interests, but it has combined into one massive drive and is held together by the cohesive power of the emotion, setting forth civil rights as supreme to all.

But, in reality, it is a drive to destroy the rights of private property, to destroy the freedom and liberty of you and me. And, my friends, where there are no property rights, there are no human

rights. Red China and Soviet Russia are prime examples.

Politically evil men have combined and arranged themselves against us. The good people of this nation must now associate themselves together, else we will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a struggle which threatens to engulf the entire nation.

We can win. We can control the election of the president in November. Our object must be our country, our whole country and nothing but our country.

If we will stand together—the people of this state—the people of my state—the people throughout this great region—yes, throughout the United States—then we can be the balance of power. We can determine who will be the next president. . . .

Let it be known that we will no longer tolerate the boot of tyranny. We will no longer hide our heads in the sand. We will reschool our thoughts in the lessons our forefathers knew so well.

We must destroy the power to dictate, to forbid, to require, to demand, to distribute, to edict, and to judge what is best and enforce that will of judgment upon free citizens. We must revitalize a government founded in this nation on faith in God.

I ask that you join with me and that together, we give an active and courageous leadership to the millions of people throughout this nation who look with hope and faith to our fight to preserve our constitutional system of government with its guarantees of liberty and justice for all within the framework of our priceless freedoms.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. According to Wallace, what were some of the freedoms endangered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964?
2. Why was Wallace especially critical of the Supreme Court?
3. Did Wallace direct his speech to appeal to the emotions or the intellect of his audience? Explain.

MALCOLM X

FROM "The Black Revolution" Speeches (1964)

Born Malcolm Little in 1925, Malcolm X was the son of a Baptist preacher who promoted black separatism and was murdered by unknown assailants in Michigan. At age six, the fatherless Malcolm was taken to a foster home. He dropped out of school in the eighth grade and embarked upon a crime spree that landed him in a federal prison at age twenty-one. There he discovered the writings of Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims. Muhammad portrayed whites as servants of the Devil; blacks therefore had to separate themselves from the white community. Malcolm became a loyal disciple of Elijah Muhammad. Upon his release from prison, he became minister of a Black Muslim temple in Harlem, a black neighborhood in New York City. Clashes with the Black Muslim leadership over which tactics to use in fighting racism led to his suspension from the organization in late 1963. He then traveled to Mecca where he adopted the beliefs of orthodox Muslims and founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity. In 1964 he delivered the following address.

From Malcolm X, "The Black Revolution," in *Two Speeches by Malcolm X* (New York: Merit, 1965), pp. 5, 14. Copyright © 1965, 1990 by Betty Shabazz and Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Friends and enemies, tonight I hope that we can have a little fireside chat with as few sparks as possible being tossed around. . . . I hope that this little conversation tonight about the black revolution won't cause many of you to accuse us of igniting it when you find it at your doorstep. . . .

I'm still a Muslim but I'm also a nationalist, meaning that my political philosophy is black nationalism, my economic philosophy is black nationalism, my social philosophy is black nationalism. And when I say that this philosophy is black nationalism, to me this means that the political philosophy of black nationalism is that which is designed to encourage our people, the black people, to gain complete control over the politics and the politicians of our own community.

Our economic philosophy is that we should gain economic control over the economy of our own community, the businesses and the other things which create employment so that we can provide jobs for our own people instead of having

to picket and boycott and beg someone else for job.

And, in short, our social philosophy means that we feel that it is time to get together among our own kind and eliminate the evils that are destroying the moral fiber of our society, like drug addiction, drunkenness, adultery that leads to an abundance of bastard children, welfare problems. We believe that we should lift the level or the standard of our own society to a higher level wherein we will be satisfied and then not inclined toward pushing ourselves into other societies where we are not wanted.

* * *

Why is America in a position to bring about a bloodless revolution? Because the Negro in this country holds the balance of power and if the Negro in this country were given what the Constitution says he is supposed to have, the added power of the Negro in this country would sweep all of the

racists and the segregationists out of office. It would change the entire political structure of the country. It would wipe out the Southern segregationism that now controls America's foreign policy, as well as America's domestic policy.

And the only way without bloodshed that this can be brought about is that the black man has to be given full use of the ballot in every one of the 50 states. But if the black man doesn't get the ballot, then you are going to be faced with another man who forgets the ballot and starts using the bullet.

Revolutions are fought to get control of land, to remove the absentee landlord and gain control of the land and the institutions that flow from that land. The black man has been in a very low condition because he has had no control whatsoever over any land. He has been a beggar economically, a beggar politically, a beggar socially, a beggar even when it comes to trying to get some education. So that in the past the type of mentality that was developed in this colonial system among our people, today is being overcome. And as the young ones

come up they know what they want. And as they listen to your beautiful preaching about democracy and all those other flowery words, they know what they're supposed to have.

So you have a people today who not only know what they want, but also know what they are supposed to have. And they themselves are clearing another generation that is coming up that not only will know what it wants and know what it should have, but also will be ready and willing to do whatever is necessary to see that what they should have materializes immediately. Thank you.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the economic and social philosophies of the Black Muslims?
2. According to Malcolm X, what would help prevent racial bloodshed from occurring? Was he optimistic about this? Explain.
3. Compare Malcolm X's remarks to Dr. King's views. What were the essential differences?

STOKELY CARMICHAEL

FROM Black Power (1966)

Born in 1942 in the West Indies and raised in New York City, Stokely Carmichael joined the Student NonViolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) while enrolled at Howard University. In the mid-1960s, he emerged as the chairman of the organization and shifted its emphasis from voter registration to self-reliance and violent social change. His successor, H. Rap Brown, was even more militant, once asserting that "Violence is as American as cherry pie." Carmichael eventually changed his name to Kwame Ture and moved to the African nation of Guinea.

One of the tragedies of the struggle against racism is that up to now there has been no national organization which could speak to the growing militancy of young black people in the urban ghetto. There has been only a civil rights movement, whose tone of voice was adapted to an audience of liberal whites. It served as a sort of buffer zone between them and angry young blacks. None of its so-called leaders could go into a rioting community and be listened to. In a sense, I blame ourselves—together with the mass media—for what has happened in Watts, Harlem, Chicago, Cleveland, Omaha. Each time the people in those cities saw Martin Luther King get slapped, they became angry; when they saw four little black girls bombed to death, they were angrier; and when nothing happened, they were steaming. We had nothing to offer that they could see, except to go out and be beaten again. We helped to build their frustration.

For too many years, black Americans marched and had their heads broken and got shot. They were saying to the country, "Look, you guys are supposed to be nice guys and we are only going to do what we are supposed to do—why do you beat us up, why don't you give us what we ask, why don't you straighten yourselves out?" After years of this, we are at almost the same point—because we demonstrated from a position of weakness. We cannot be expected any longer to march and have our heads broken in order to say to whites: come on, you're nice guys. For you are not nice guys. We have found you out.

An organization which claims to speak for the needs of a community—as does the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee—must speak in the tone of that community, not as somebody else's buffer zone. This is the significance of black power as a slogan. For once, black people are going to use the words they want to use—not just the words whites want to hear. And they will do this no matter how often the press tries to stop the use of the slogan by equating it with racism or separatism.

An organization which claims to be working for the needs of a community—as SNCC does—must work to provide that community with a po-

sition of strength from which to make its voice heard. This is the significance of black power beyond the slogan.

Black power can be clearly defined for those who do not attach the fears of white America to their questions about it. We should begin with the basic fact that black Americans have two problems: they are poor and they are black. All other problems arise from this two-sided reality: lack of education, the so-called apathy of black men. An program to end racism must address itself to the double reality.

Almost from its beginning, SNCC sought to address itself to both conditions with a program aimed at winning political power for impoverished Southern blacks. We had to begin with politics because black Americans are a propertyless people in a country where property is valued above all. We had to work for power, because this country does not function by morality, love, and nonviolence but by power. Thus we determined to win political power, with the idea of moving on from there into activity that would have economic effects. With power, the masses could *make or participate in making* the decisions which govern their destinies and thus create basic change in their day-to-day lives. . . .

SNCC today is working in both North and South on programs of voter registration and independent political organizing. In some places, such as Alabama, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey, independent organizing under the black panther symbol is in progress. The creation of a national "black panther party" must come about; it will take time to build, and it is much too early to predict its success. We have no infallible master plan and we make no claim to exclusive knowledge of how to end racism; different groups will work in their own different ways. SNCC cannot spell out the full logistics of self-determination but it can address itself to the problem by helping black communities define their needs, realize their strength, and go into action along a variety of lines which they must choose for themselves. . . .

Ultimately, the economic foundations of this country must be shaken if black people are

to control their lives. The colonies of the United States—and this includes the black ghettos within its borders, north and south must be liberated. For a century, this nation has been like an octopus of exploitation, its tentacles stretching from Mississippi and Harlem to South America, the Middle East, southern Africa, and Vietnam; the form of exploitation varies from area to area but the essential result has been the same—a powerful few have been maintained and enriched at the expense of the poor and voiceless colored masses. This pattern must be broken. As its grip loosens here and there around the world, the hopes of black Americans become more realistic. For racism to die, a totally different America must be born.

This is what the white society does not wish to face; this is why that society prefers to talk about integration. But integration speaks not at all to the problem of poverty, only to the problem of blackness. Integration today means the man who “makes it,” leaving his black brothers behind in the ghetto as fast as his new sports car will take him. It has no relevance to the Harlem wino or to the cotton-picker making three dollars a day. . . .

Integration, moreover, speaks to the problem of blackness in a despicable way. As a goal, it has been based on complete acceptance of the fact that *in order to have* a decent house or education, blacks must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that “white” is automatically better and “black” is by definition inferior. This is why integration is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy. It allows the nation to focus on a handful of Southern children who get into white schools, at great price, and to ignore the 94 percent who are left behind in unimproved all-black schools. Such situations will not change until black people have power—to control their own school boards, in this case. Then Negroes become equal in a way that means something, and integration ceases to be a one-way street. Then integration doesn’t mean draining skills and energies from the ghetto into white neighborhoods; then it can mean white people moving from Beverly

Hills into Watts. . . . Then integration becomes relevant. . . .

Whites will not see that I, for example, as a person oppressed because of my blackness, have common cause with other blacks who are oppressed because of blackness. This is not to say that there are no white people who see things as I do, but that it is black people I must speak to first. It must be the oppressed to whom SNCC addresses itself primarily, not to friends from the oppressing group.

From birth, black people are told a set of lies about themselves. We are told that we are lazy—yet I drive through the Delta area of Mississippi and watch black people picking cotton in the hot sun for fourteen hours. We are told, “If you work hard, you’ll succeed”—but if that were true, black people would own this country. We are oppressed because we are black—not because we are ignorant, not because we are lazy, not because we’re stupid (and got good rhythm), but because we’re black.

* * *

The need for psychological equality is the reason why SNCC today believes that blacks must organize in the black community. Only black people can convey the revolutionary idea that black people are able to do things themselves. Only they can help create in the community an aroused and continuing black consciousness that will provide the basis for political strength. In the past, white allies have furthered white supremacy without the whites involved realizing it—or wanting it, I think. Black people must do things for themselves; they must get poverty money they will control and spend themselves, they must conduct tutorial programs themselves so that black children can identify with black people. This is one reason Africa has such importance: The reality of black men ruling their own nations gives blacks elsewhere a sense of possibility, of power, which they do not now have.

This does not mean we don’t welcome help, or friends. But we want the right to decide whether anyone is, in fact, our friend. In the past, black Americans have been almost the only people whom everybody and his mamma could jump up

and call their friends. We have been tokens, symbols, objects—as I was in high school to many young whites, who liked having “a Negro friend.” We want to decide who is our friend, and we will not accept someone who comes to us and says: “If you do X, Y, and Z, then I’ll help you.” We will not be told whom we should choose as allies. We will not be isolated from any group or nation except by our own choice. We cannot have the oppressors telling the oppressed how to rid themselves of the oppressor. . . .

Black people do not want to “take over” this country. They don’t want to “get whitey”; they just want to get him off their backs, as the saying goes. . . . The white man is irrelevant to blacks, except as an oppressive force. Blacks want to be in his place, yes, but not in order to terrorize and lynch and starve him. They want to be in his place because that is where a decent life can be had.

But our vision is not merely of a society in which all black men have enough to buy the good things of life. When we urge that black money go into black pockets, we mean the communal pocket. We want to see money go back into the community and used to benefit it. We want to see the cooperative concept applied in business and banking. We want to see black ghetto residents demand that an exploiting landlord or storekeeper sell them, at minimal cost, a building or a shop that they will own and improve cooperatively; they can back their demand with a rent strike, or a boycott, and a community so unified behind them that no one else will move into the building or buy at the store. The society we seek to build among black people, then, is not a capitalist one. It is a society in which

the spirit of community and humanistic love prevail. The word love is suspect; black expectations of what it might produce have been betrayed too often. But those were expectations of a response from the white community, which failed us. The love we seek to encourage is within the black community, the only American community where men call each other “brother” when they meet. We can build a community of love only where we have the ability and power to do so: among blacks.

As for white America, perhaps it can stop crying out against “black supremacy,” “black nationalism,” “racism in reverse,” and begin facing reality. The reality is that this nation, from top to bottom, is racist; that racism is not primarily a problem of “human relations” but of an exploitation maintained—either actively or through silence—by the society as a whole. . . .

We have found that they usually cannot condemn themselves, and so we have done it. But the rebuilding of this society, if at all possible, is basically the responsibility of whites—not blacks. We won’t fight to save the present society, in Vietnam or anywhere else. We are just going to work, in the way we see fit, and on our goals we define, not for civil rights but for all our human rights.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did Carmichael mean by “black power”?
2. Why did Carmichael reject the principle of racial integration?
3. What did he mean when he said that blacks should create a society that was not capitalist?

Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968)

Beginning in the mid-1960s the seething racial tensions in America's inner cities began to explode. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided new legal protections but did not resolve the culture of poverty that stripped people of hope for a better future. Each summer saw a rising number of race riots. The violence and destruction prompted President Johnson in 1967 to establish a multiracial national commission to investigate the causes of the unrest and to recommend ways to ease the tensions. Chaired by Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois, a year later the commission issued a report, which became known as the Kerner Report.

From *Report of the National Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C., 1968), pp. 1-2, 5, 225-36.

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

Reaction to last summer's disorders 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.

This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values.

The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society.

This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will.

The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted.

Violence cannot build a better society. Disruption and disorder nourish repression, not justice. They strike at the freedom of every citizen. The community cannot—it will not—tolerate coercion and mob rule.

Violence and destruction must be ended—in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.

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 it, and white society condones it.

It is time now to turn with all the purpose at our command to the major unfinished business of this nation. It is time to adopt strategies for action that will produce quick and visible progress. It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens—urban and rural, white and black, Spanish-surname, American Indian, and every minority group.

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.

* * *

White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II. Among the ingredients of that mixture are:

Pervasive discrimination and segregation in employment, education and housing, which have resulted in the continuing exclusion of great numbers of Negroes from the benefits of economic progress.

Black in-migration and white exodus, which have produced the massive and growing concentrations of impoverished Negroes in our major cities, creating a growing crisis of deteriorating facilities and services and unmet human needs.

The black ghettos where segregation and poverty converge on the young to destroy opportunity and enforce failure. Crime, drug addiction, dependency on welfare, and bitterness and resentment against society in general and white society in particular are the result.

At the same time, most whites and some Negroes outside the ghetto have prospered to a degree unparalleled in the history of civilization. Through

television and other media, this affluence has been flaunted before the eyes of the Negro poor and the jobless ghetto youth.

Yet these facts alone cannot be said to have caused the disorders. Recently, other powerful ingredients have begun to catalyze the mixture:

Frustrated hopes are the result of unfulfilled expectations aroused by the great judicial and legislative victories of the Civil Rights Movement and the dramatic struggle for equal rights in the South.

A climate that tends toward approval and encouragement of violence as a form of protest has been created by white terrorism against nonviolent protest; by the open defiance of law and federal authority by state and local officials resisting desegregation; and by some protest groups engaging in civil disobedience who turn their backs on nonviolence, go beyond the constitutionally protected right of petition and free assembly, and resort to violence to attempt to compel alteration of laws and policies with which they disagree.

The frustrations of powerlessness have led some Negroes to the conviction that there is no effective alternative to violence as a means of achieving redress of grievances, and of "moving the system." These frustrations are reflected in alienation and hostility toward the institutions of law and government and the white society which controls them, and in the reach toward racial consciousness and solidarity reflected in the slogan "Black Power."

A new mood has sprung up among Negroes, particularly among the young, in which self-esteem and enhanced racial pride are replacing apathy and submission to "the system."

The police are not merely a "spark" factor. To some Negroes police have come to symbolize white power, white racism and white repression. And the fact is that many police do reflect and express these white attitudes. The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread belief among Ne-

SHELBY STEELE

The New Segregation (1992)

A senior fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University and a professor of literature at San Jose State University, Shelby Steele has emerged as one of the most persuasive African-American critics of affirmative action.

From Shelby Steele, "The New Segregation," *Imprimus* 21 (August 1992):1-4.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s–1960s culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act—two monumental pieces of legislation that have dramatically altered the fabric of American life. During the struggle for their passage, a new source of power came into full force. Black Americans and their supporters tapped into the moral power inspired by a 300-year history of victimization and oppression and used it, to help transform society, to humanize it, to make it more tolerant and open. They realized, moreover, that the victimization and oppression that blacks had endured came from one “marriage”—a marriage of race and power. They had to stop those who said, “merely because we are white, we have the power to dominate, enslave, segregate and discriminate.”

Race should not be a source of power or advantage or disadvantage for anyone in a free society. This was one of the most important lessons of the original civil rights movement. The legislation it championed during the 1960s constituted a new “emancipation proclamation.” For the first time segregation and discrimination were made illegal. Blacks began to enjoy a degree of freedom they had never experienced before.

Delayed Anger

This did not mean that things changed overnight for blacks. Nor did it ensure that their

memory of the past injustice was obliterated. I hesitate to borrow analogies from the psychological community, but I think this one does apply: Abused children do not usually feel anger until many years after the abuse has ended, that is, after they have experienced a degree of freedom and normalcy. Only after the civil rights legislation had been enacted did blacks at long last begin to feel the rage they had suppressed. I can remember that period myself. I had a tremendous sense of delayed anger at having been forced to attend segregated schools. (My grade school was the first school to be involved in a desegregation suit in the north.) My rage, like that of other blacks, threatened for a time to become all consuming.

Anger was both inevitable and necessary. When suppressed, it eats you alive; it has got to come out, and it certainly did during the 1960s. One form was the black power movement in all of its many manifestations, some of which were violent. There is no question that we should condemn violence, but we should also understand why it occurs. You cannot oppress people for over three centuries and then say it is all over and expect them to put on suits and ties and become decent attaché-carrying citizens and go to work on Wall Street.

Once my own anger was released, my reaction was that I no longer had to apologize for being black. That was a tremendous benefit and it helped me come to terms with my personal development. The problem is that many blacks never progressed beyond their anger.

The Politics of Difference

The black power movement encouraged a permanent state of rage and victimhood. An even greater failing is that it rejoined race and power—the very “marriage” that civil rights had been designed to break up. The leaders of the original movement said, “Anytime you make race a source of power, you are going to guarantee suffering, misery and inequity.” Black power leaders declared: “We’re going to have power because we’re black.”

Well, is there any conceivable difference between black power and white power? When you demand power based on the color of your skin, aren’t you saying that equality and justice are impossible? Somebody’s going to be in, somebody’s going to be out. Somebody’s going to win, somebody’s going to lose, and race is once again a source of advantage for some and disadvantage for others. Ultimately, black power was not about equality or justice; it was, as its name suggests, about power.

And when blacks began to demand entitlements based on their race, feminists responded with enthusiasm, “We’ve been oppressed too!” Hispanics said, “We’re not going to let this bus pass us by,” and Asians said, “We’re not going to let this pass us by either.” Eskimos and American Indians quickly hopped on the bandwagon, as did gays, lesbians, the disabled and other self-defined minorities. By the 1970’s, the marriage of race and power was once again firmly established. Equality was out: the “politics of difference” was in. From then on, everyone would rally around the single quality that make them different from the white males and pursue power based on that quality. It is a very simple formula. All you have to do is identify that quality, whatever it may be, with victimization. And victimization is itself, after all, a tremendous source of moral power.

The politics of difference demanded shifting the entire basis of entitlement in America. Historically, entitlement was based on the rights of citizenship elaborated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. This was the kind of entitlement that the original civil rights move-

ment leaders claimed for blacks: recognition of their rights as American citizens to equal treatment under the law. They did not claim, “We deserve rights and entitlements because we are black,” but, “We deserve them because we are citizens of the United States and like all other citizens are due these rights.” The politics of difference changed all that. Blacks and other minorities began demanding entitlement solely based on their history of oppression, their race, their gender, their ethnicity, or whatever quality that allegedly made them victims.

Grievance Identities

By the 1980’s, the politics of difference had, in turn, led to the establishment of “grievance identities.” These identities are not about such things as the great contributions of women throughout history or the rich culture of black Americans. To have a strong identity as a woman, for example, means that you are against the “oppressive male patriarchy”—period. To have a strong identity as a black means that you are against racist white America—period. You have no choice but to fulfill a carefully defined politically correct role: (1) you must document the grievance of your group; (2) you must testify to its abiding and ongoing alienation; and (3) you must support its sovereignty. As a black who fails any of these three requirements you are not only politically incorrect, you are a traitor, an “Uncle Tom.” You are blaming the victim, you are letting whites off the hook, and you are betraying your people.

In establishing your grievance identity, you must turn your back on the enormous and varied fabric of life. There is no legacy of universal ideas or common human experience. There is only one dimension to your identity: anger against oppression. Grievance identities are thus “sovereignties” that compete with the sovereignties of the nation itself. Blacks, women, Hispanics and other minorities are not even American citizens anymore. They are citizens of sovereignties with their own right to autonomy.

The New Segregation on Campus

The marriage of race and power, the politics of difference, and grievance identities—these are nurtured by the American educational establishment. They have acted on the establishment and affected it in significant ways. After a talk I gave recently at a well-known university, a woman introduced herself as the chairperson of the women's studies department. She was very proud of the fact that the university had a separate degree granting program in women's studies and stressed that I had always been very much in favor of teaching students about the contributions of women. But I asked her what it was that students gained from segregated women's studies that could not be gained from studying within the traditional liberal arts disciplines. Her background was in English, as was mine, so I added, "What is a female English professor in the English department doing that is different from what a female professor in the women's studies department is doing? Is she going to bring a different methodology to bear? What is it that academically justifies a segregated program for women or for blacks, or any group? Why not incorporate such studies into the English department, the history department, the biology department or into any of the other regular departments?"

As soon as I began to ask such questions, I noticed a shift in her eyes and a tension in her attitude. She began to see me as an enemy and quickly made an excuse to end the conversation. This wasn't about a rational academic discussion of women's studies. It was about *the sovereignty of the feminist identity* and unless I tipped my hat to that identity by saying, "Yes, you have the right to a separate department," no further discussion or debate was possible. Meanwhile, the politics of difference is overtaking education. Those with grievance identities demand separate buildings, classrooms, offices, clerical staff—even separate XEROX machines. They all want to be segregated universities within the universities. They want their own

space—their sovereign territory. Metaphorically, and sometimes literally, they insist that not only the university but society at large must pay tribute to their sovereignty.

Today, there are some 500 women's studies departments. There are black studies departments, Hispanic studies departments, Jewish studies departments, Asian studies departments. They all have to have space, staff, and budgets. What are they studying that can't be studied in other departments? They don't have to answer this question, of course, but when political entitlement shifted away from citizenship to race, class and gender, a shift in cultural entitlement was made inevitable.

Those with grievance identities also demand *extra* entitlements far beyond what should come to us as citizens. As a black, I am said to "deserve" this or that special entitlement. No longer is it enough just to have the right to attend a college or university on an equal basis with others or to be treated like anyone else. Schools must set aside special money and special academic departments just for me, based on my grievance. Some campuses now have segregated dorms for blacks students who demand to live together with people of their "own kind." Students have lobbied for separate black student unions, black yearbooks, black Homecomings dances, black graduation ceremonies—again, all so that they can be comfortable with their "own kind." One representative study at the University of Michigan indicates that 70 percent of the school's black undergraduates have never had a white acquaintance. Yet, across the country, colleges and universities like Michigan readily and even eagerly continue to encourage more segregation by granting the demands of every vocal grievance identity.

White Guilt

A great contributing factor is, of course, white-guilt—specifically a knowledge of ill-gotten advantage. Ignorance is innocence, knowledge is guilt. Whites in America generally know that there is at least a slight advantage in being white. If a white person walks into a department store, chances are

he or she is not going to be followed by the security guard as I am. This kind of knowledge makes whites vulnerable. (Incidentally, I do not mean to deride all forms of guilt. Guilt can be a wonderful thing, a truly civilized emotion. Prisons are full of people incapable of feeling guilt.) A member of a grievance identity points a finger and says, "Hey whitey, you've oppressed my people! You have had generations to build up wealth and opportunity while I've had nothing." Almost automatically, the white person's first reaction is, "Am I guilty? Am I a racist?"

The second reaction is escapism. "All right, what do you want? What is it going to take to prove to you that I am not racist?" White college and university administrators say, "You want a black student lounge? You got it. We have a little extra money, so we can pay for a black yearbook. We can hold a separate graduation just for you. What else do you want?"

The third reaction is blindness. Obviously, when you are preoccupied with escaping your own feeling of guilt, you are utterly blind to the people causing it. So college and university administrators blindly grant black students extra entitlements, from dorms to yearbooks, and build an entire machinery of segregation on campus while ignoring the fact that 72 percent of black American college students are dropping out. Black students have the lowest grade point average of any student group. If whites were not so preoccupied with escaping their own guilt, they would see that the real problem is not racism; it is that black students are failing in tragic numbers. They don't need separate dorms and yearbooks. They need basic academic skills. But instead they are taught that extra entitlements are their due and that the greatest power of all is that power that comes to them as victims. If they want to get anywhere in American Life, they had better wear their victimization on their sleeve, they had better tap into white guilt, making whites want to escape by offering money, status, racial-preferences—something, anything—in return. Is this the way for a race that has been oppressed to come into its own? Is this the way to achieve independence?

A Return to a Common Culture

Colleges and universities are not only segregating their campuses, they are segregating learning. If only for the sake of historical accuracy, we should teach all students—black, white, female, male—about many broad and diverse cultures. But those with grievance identities use the multicultural approach as an all-out assault on the liberal arts curriculum, on the American heritage, and on Western culture. They have made our differences, rather than our common bonds, sacred. Often they do so in the name of building the "self-esteem" of minorities. But they are not going to build anyone's self-esteem by condemning our culture as the product of "dead white males."

We *do* share a common history and a common culture, and that must be the central premise of education. If we are to the end the new segregation on campus, and everywhere else it exists, we need to recall the spirit of the original civil rights movement, which was dedicated to the "self evident truth" that all men are created equal.

Even the most humble experiences unite us. We have all grown up on the same sitcoms, eaten the same fast food, and laughed at the same jokes. We have practiced the same religions, lived under the same political system, read the same books, and worked in the same marketplace. We have the same dreams and aspirations as well as fears and doubts for ourselves and for our children. How, then, can our differences be so overwhelming?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In Steele's opinion, what resulted when the politics of difference replaced the politics of equality?
2. How did "grievance identities" affect the demands made by certain groups?
3. Why did Steele criticize the "new segregation" that emerged on college campuses?