Paths to Equality

Compare Civil Rights Movement strategies and their tradeoffs

USH.6.6 "Evaluate various methods and philosophies (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr., the Black Panthers, Malcolm X) to bring about equal rights during the Civil Rights Movement."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one method used by King, Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers. Circle a benefit of each method, then number three risks or limits you find.

Different Ways to Demand Change

1. In 1963, Birmingham, Alabama, became a test of how to challenge segregation. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other organizers used nonviolent marches, boycotts, and arrests to expose unjust laws. King argued that refusing to fight back could reveal the brutality of segregation and win public support for federal action. Television images of police attacking protesters helped bring national attention to the campaign. Nonviolence did not mean safety: demonstrators, including young people, faced dogs, fire hoses, and jail. The approach depended on disciplined participants and on audiences willing to respond to the injustice they saw.

2. Malcolm X challenged the idea that Black Americans should always seek acceptance through integration or remain defenseless when attacked. For much of his public life, he urged Black pride, economic independence, and separation from white institutions. He defended the right to self-defense, in contrast to King's commitment to nonviolent protest. After leaving the Nation of Islam in 1964 and traveling abroad, Malcolm became more open to working with people of different backgrounds, although he still insisted on human rights and self-determination. His message could strengthen community confidence, but calls for separation could make broad interracial coalitions harder to build.

3. Founded in Oakland in 1966, the Black Panther Party combined demands for political power with armed patrols that monitored police behavior. Panthers argued that communities needed protection when authorities failed to provide it. In 1969, they began free breakfast programs for children, meeting an immediate need while showing that community action could support families. Breakfasts could help children right away, but meals alone could not end discrimination in housing, jobs, or policing. Armed patrols drew attention to police conduct, yet they also risked confrontations and brought intense government scrutiny. These methods differed from both King's nonviolent campaigns and Malcolm X's speeches about self-determination.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could King's nonviolent campaign help win federal action, and what did that strategy depend on?

2. How did Malcolm X's position on self-defense differ from King's? Explain one possible strength and one limit of Malcolm X's broader message.

3. Compare what the Panthers' breakfast programs and armed patrols aimed to do. Give one limit or risk of either method.

4. A community wants national attention to unfair policing but fears confrontations. Which method in the passage might fit best? What tradeoff would remain?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a neighborhood council in 1970 facing unfair policing and children arriving at school hungry. Write a 5- to 6-sentence recommendation that adapts two different approaches from the passage, explains which problem each addresses, weighs one risk or limit of each, and says where you would begin.

ANSWER KEY

Paths to Equality

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.6.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one method used by King, Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers. Circle a benefit of each method, then number three risks or limits you find. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could King's nonviolent campaign help win federal action, and what did that strategy depend on?	**It could expose the brutality of segregation and gain public support for federal action. It depended on disciplined protesters and audiences willing to respond.**
2	How did Malcolm X's position on self-defense differ from King's? Explain one possible strength and one limit of Malcolm X's broader message.	**Malcolm X defended the right to self-defense, while King committed to nonviolent protest. Malcolm's message could build community confidence, but calls for separation could hinder interracial coalitions.**
3	Compare what the Panthers' breakfast programs and armed patrols aimed to do. Give one limit or risk of either method.	**Breakfast programs fed children, while armed patrols monitored police behavior. Meals alone could not end discrimination, and patrols risked confrontations and government scrutiny.**
4	A community wants national attention to unfair policing but fears confrontations. Which method in the passage might fit best? What tradeoff would remain?	**King's nonviolent campaign might fit because it drew national attention without armed patrols. Protesters could still face arrest or violence, and success depended partly on the public's response.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would begin with a free breakfast program modeled on the Panthers' work because hungry children need food immediately. Neighbors could ask local groups to donate food and help serve it. This effort would not change how police respond to residents. To challenge unfair policing, I would also organize disciplined, nonviolent marches like those King led. Marchers might face arrest, and the campaign would need outsiders to pay attention before it could influence officials. I would start with breakfast while planning the marches, so children get help now and residents can press for lasting change.

Accept other supported judgments about which method fits best. For Part 3, look for two distinct approaches, a connection to each problem, a risk or limit for each approach, and a justified starting choice.