Paths to Justice

Three leaders respond to racial injustice

USH.C.2.2.E "Compare the viewpoints of early civil right leaders, such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Ida B. Wells, in response to rising racial tensions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline one action each leader urged in response to racial injustice. Circle words or phrases that help you compare their priorities.

Different Responses to Injustice

1. In 1895, a crowd at an Atlanta exposition heard Booker T. Washington propose a path through a dangerous era. Across the South, segregation laws and threats of violence restricted Black Americans' choices. Washington, who led the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, urged Black people to build economic strength through skilled work, education, and business ownership. He suggested that openly demanding social equality right away might provoke white resistance and slow economic progress. He asked white employers to support Black workers rather than exclude them. His public message put economic opportunity first, although he quietly helped fund some legal challenges to discrimination.

2. W. E. B. Du Bois objected to Washington's public willingness to postpone demands for equal rights. In 1905, he helped form the Niagara Movement, which called for full voting rights and an end to segregation. He argued that education should include college study as well as job training, preparing Black leaders to challenge unjust laws. Du Bois did not dismiss economic success, but he insisted that prosperity could not replace political power or equal treatment. While Washington urged patience in public, Du Bois called for organized, immediate protest against discrimination.

3. Ida B. Wells confronted racial terror by investigating lynchings, killings often carried out by mobs without a trial. After three of her friends were lynched in Memphis in 1892, Wells examined reports and showed how accusations used to excuse these murders often hid economic rivalry or other motives. She published her findings, urged boycotts of white-owned businesses, and pressed for laws against lynching. Like Du Bois, Wells publicly challenged injustice instead of waiting for economic gains to secure safety. Unlike Washington's focus on job training, she treated exposing violence as an urgent step toward protecting Black lives and rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Washington's and Du Bois's public positions differ on when to demand equal rights?

2. Both Washington and Wells proposed using economic power. How did each want to use it?

3. How were Wells and Du Bois more alike in their public responses to injustice than either was to Washington?

4. What harm did Wells emphasize that Du Bois did not emphasize in the passage, and how did that shape her response?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you edit a Black newspaper in 1905 as your town faces voter suppression and threats of violence. Write a short editorial that combines one strategy from each of two leaders in the passage, explains how the strategies work together or clash, and urges readers to take a specific action.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline one action each leader urged in response to racial injustice. Circle words or phrases that help you compare their priorities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Washington's and Du Bois's public positions differ on when to demand equal rights?	**Washington publicly put economic progress first and suggested delaying demands for social equality. Du Bois called for immediate, organized demands for voting rights and an end to segregation.**
2	Both Washington and Wells proposed using economic power. How did each want to use it?	**Washington urged skilled work, education, and business ownership to build economic strength. Wells urged boycotts of white-owned businesses as a response to racial violence.**
3	How were Wells and Du Bois more alike in their public responses to injustice than either was to Washington?	**Both urged public action against injustice rather than waiting for economic gains to bring change. Du Bois called for organized protest, while Wells published evidence of lynchings and urged boycotts.**
4	What harm did Wells emphasize that Du Bois did not emphasize in the passage, and how did that shape her response?	**Wells emphasized lynching. She investigated and published evidence about the killings and pressed for laws against them, while Du Bois emphasized voting rights and segregation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our town cannot wait for fair treatment to arrive on its own. I would follow Du Bois by organizing neighbors to demand voting rights now. I would also follow Wells by collecting and publishing evidence of threats so officials cannot deny what is happening. Their strategies work together: the evidence strengthens our public demand for protection. I urge readers to document intimidation carefully and bring their reports to a community meeting.

Accept comparisons that accurately distinguish each leader's public priorities. For the editorial, look for two historically grounded strategies, an explanation of their relationship, and a specific call to action.