Paths to Equality

Compare how three leaders sought civil rights change

USH.C.7.1.E "Compare the viewpoints and influence of civil rights leadership (e.g., Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reflected in his I Have a Dream speech, the perspectives of Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy's advocacy of civil rights legislation)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one goal for each leader, and circle one method each leader supported. Write 1 beside a sentence about King's influence, 2 beside one about Malcolm X's influence, and 3 beside one about Kennedy's influence.

Three Routes Toward Civil Rights

1. In August 1963, more than 200,000 people gathered at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Speaking near the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. described a nation that had promised equal rights but had not delivered them to Black Americans. In his "I Have a Dream" speech, he called for an end to segregation and imagined children judged by their character, not their skin color. King urged nonviolent action and appealed to the nation's founding ideals. His words reached a huge audience and helped make civil rights a pressing national issue, although a speech alone could not change the law.

2. Malcolm X challenged the idea that Black Americans should have to wait for white leaders to grant them justice. As a leader in the Nation of Islam during the early 1960s, he argued for Black pride, community control, and self-defense when people faced violence. Unlike King, he was skeptical of appeals for integration and of nonviolence as a rule in every situation. After leaving the Nation of Islam in 1964, he became more open to working with people across racial lines. His speeches gave national attention to Black self-determination and pressed Americans to confront racism beyond the repeal of segregation laws.

3. Robert F. Kennedy worked from inside the federal government while activists pressed from outside it. As attorney general under President John F. Kennedy, he backed the administration's 1963 civil rights bill, which sought to end segregation in public places. He urged Congress to act, arguing that equal rights needed the force of federal law. The bill became the Civil Rights Act of 1964 after President Kennedy's death. Kennedy used his position to move demands for equality into a bill lawmakers could debate. Unlike King's public call for nonviolent action or Malcolm X's emphasis on community control, his chief tool was federal legislation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did King's approach to confronting injustice differ from Malcolm X's approach in the early 1960s?

2. Both King and Malcolm X gave speeches. How did their speeches influence the civil rights debate in different ways?

3. King and Kennedy both sought to end segregation. How did their routes to change differ?

4. Why might Malcolm X's emphasis on community control and Kennedy's support for federal law lead people to take different actions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town in 1963 that bars Black residents from its public swimming pool. In five or six sentences, propose a response using ideas from two leaders in the passage, compare their views, and explain how each could influence the town's response.

ANSWER KEY

Paths to Equality

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.7.1.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one goal for each leader, and circle one method each leader supported. Write 1 beside a sentence about King's influence, 2 beside one about Malcolm X's influence, and 3 beside one about Kennedy's influence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did King's approach to confronting injustice differ from Malcolm X's approach in the early 1960s?	**King urged nonviolent action and appealed to national ideals. Malcolm X emphasized Black pride, community control, and self-defense, and questioned nonviolence as a rule in every situation.**
2	Both King and Malcolm X gave speeches. How did their speeches influence the civil rights debate in different ways?	**King's speech reached a huge audience and made civil rights a pressing national issue. Malcolm X's speeches drew attention to Black self-determination and racism beyond segregation laws.**
3	King and Kennedy both sought to end segregation. How did their routes to change differ?	**King called for nonviolent action and appealed to the public. Kennedy used his position as attorney general to support a civil rights bill and urge Congress to act.**
4	Why might Malcolm X's emphasis on community control and Kennedy's support for federal law lead people to take different actions?	**Malcolm X's emphasis could lead Black communities to organize and direct their own efforts. Kennedy's approach could lead people to press Congress for laws protecting equal rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would organize a peaceful gathering outside the pool, drawing on King's support for nonviolent action. Speakers would ask the town to end segregation. Malcolm X's emphasis on community control suggests that Black residents should lead the effort rather than wait for officials to invite them. His acceptance of self-defense differs from King's commitment to nonviolence, so the group would choose King's method for this gathering. Local Black families would set the demands and select the speakers. These approaches could build public pressure while keeping the affected community in charge.

Accept comparisons that accurately distinguish each leader's viewpoint, method, and influence as described in the passage. The open response should apply ideas from two leaders to a proposed action, not simply restate a question answer.