

## 8.3 - THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

### DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS FROM SELECTED READINGS.

#### **PLESSY V. FERGUSON**

**What was the Court to decide and what was the decision? How does this court case solidify the role of being black in America?**

The court was to decide whether the Louisiana law separating the races on rail cars was constitutional or if it violated the 14th Amendment. The court concluded the state law was within rights of the constitution and helped maintain order rather than discriminate. This court case secures the ability to treat the two races differently.

#### **RICHARD WRIGHT, 12 MILLION BLACK VOICES**

**1. Do you think World War I had an influence on African Americans and their migration to the North? How? Why do you think the migration slowed dramatically after 1928?**

*WWI had an influence on the Great Migration. As millions of men were drafted or volunteered to fight overseas, jobs opened up in factories. Additionally, the increased production to meet war demands created more jobs, creating an impetus for poor blacks to move North to fill these positions. The Stock Market crashed ("went boom") and spurred the Great Depression, eliminating the opportunities that caused migration.*

**2. What does Richard Wright's description tell you about the experience of moving from the South to the North? How do you think the African American migrants felt? What were some of the challenges in attempting to create a better life? What were some of the differences between southern and northern life?**

*Things weren't as obvious. Migrants were unsure of their surroundings. Migrants may have left scared, confused, shocked, anxious, excited but hesitant, exposed, awkward, auspicious yet reluctant. Finding a job, yet lacking a thorough education, housing poor and underpaid work.*

**3. What were working and living conditions like in the North? Did it appear to be a better life? How? How was the treatment of blacks in the North and South similar? How was it different?**

The apartments were crowded and they were not given proper housing. In the South they made blacks work hard, but they gave them okay housing and food. In the North, blacks had fight for their food and work hard for it.

#### **LANGSTON HUGHES, "MONTAGE OF A DREAM DEFERRED"**

**1. In the sixth line, whose feet do you think the author is talking about? What are they doing?**

*The feet referenced in "Dream Boogie" are those of African Americans, tapping to the beat of a questionable tune. The built-up emotions of a dream long deferred may challenge the stereotype that existed after WWII describing blacks as happy despite segregation and widespread racism.*

**2. What do the narrator's inner feelings appear to be? What is his outward persona? What does the poem tell you about the life of the narrator?**

*The narrator's (Hughes) inner feelings are reflected through the "Daddy" in "Dream Boogie" by challenging the stereotype. However, his outward persona may be closer to the child's voice by remaining outwardly passive and happy, hiding feelings of resentment and possible frustration.*

**3. In "Harlem," what are the essential two outcomes of a dream deferred? Which do you think unfolded? Do you think Langston Hughes had a feeling about the nature of the future?**

*Hughes suggests that a dream deferred either "sags like a heavy load" (burdening those that carry it), or it explodes, likely violently or in a way that releases some pent-up aggression and frustration.*

**ANNE MOODY, COMING OF AGE IN MISSISSIPPI**

**1. How does this document exemplify the planning involved in the civil-rights movement?**

*The planning of the civil rights movement was extraordinary because without planning the movement out it could have been a large problem.*

**2. What did non-violent demonstrators have to endure? What qualities do you think the demonstrators had? Do you think they had any special skills or training? Who were the different people who sat at the counter? What do these facts tell you about the movement?**

*They were physically and mentally abused. They were beaten and had salt thrown in their wounds. The demonstrators were very courageous and brave for doing this because a mob was forming that could possibly lead to their deaths. I don't think they had any special skills or training, they were just normal people. At the beginning there were only three of them. At the end, there were around eight or nine of them. This shows that people really came together when they believed in the same things.*

**3. Why do you think the police did not intervene? Do you think they had an obligation to do so? What does this tell you about the role of much of the local law enforcement during this time? Was this fair?**

*They could've gotten stuck in the middle of it all or they didn't want to be thought of differently among their friends because most people on the force were white. I don't think they had an obligation to go in and help them because it was their choice although they should have because the demonstrators were being hurt. Down south they had different views on everything and I don't know how they would have acted. This shows that most law enforcement was racially "illiterate" during that time.*

**JOHN LEWIS, ORIGINAL TEXT OF SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL**

**1. What part of the speech do you think the other civil rights leaders wanted John Lewis to change? Why? Do you think it was a wise idea?**

*I think that they probably would have wanted to change the parts where John Lewis was giving examples of what police have done to black people in the past and the parts where he talks about burning Jim Crow to the ground because they showed bad examples of white behavior and were violent words.*

**2. Why do you think John Lewis did not support the civil-rights bill? What issues did it not address? What examples does he use to make his point?**

*Because it was too little, too late. It would not make up for the things that blacks have already taken. It did not address the right to vote for blacks and their education. He gives examples of the blacks of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia who were qualified to vote but did not have proper educations.*

**3. John Lewis asked, "I want to know, which side is the Federal Government on?" Which side do you think the government was on? Did it this change? Cite evidence to support your opinion.**

I think that the Federal Government was on its own side because all the political leaders wanted to do was make their own lives better, which meant going with the status quo. It changed after the Civil Rights movement but not during.

### **MALCOLM X, "MESSAGE TO THE GRASS ROOTS"**

#### **1. What is the overall message delivered by Malcolm X?**

You do not get treated differently because you are white, or weak, but because you are black.

#### **2. Do you think Malcolm X makes a strong argument against the justification of violence against blacks? What examples does he cite?**

Yes because he tells of how blacks are treated badly instead of whites. He tells of how a couple of them were beaten.

#### **3. How did Malcolm X attempt to unite African Americans in his speech?**

By showing all around what happens to black people.

### **MARTHA HONEY, LETTER FROM MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER**

#### **1. How does Martha Honey describe her experience as an activist? What is different about her experience compared to that of black activists?**

She tells of how the whites abuse black people and that she is ashamed to share the same skin color of people who do things like that. She also says that she can't really help them or do anything for them except for cry. She is upset that she can go home whenever she can and black people can't.

#### **2. What does Honey's letter tell you about the state of Mississippi?**

Mississippi was racist and had some white people that abused black people.

#### **3. Is Honey proud of her contributions? Why, or why not?**

She isn't proud of her contributions because she feels that there should be more that she could do.

### **TESTIMONY OF FANNIE LOU HAMER**

#### **1. What makes someone a first-class citizen? Why? What is so important about being able to vote?**

A first-class citizen is someone who exercises their civic duties such as voting.

#### **2. What risks did African Americans face when attempting to register or after they registered?**

They risked getting beaten and segregated or arrested.

#### **3. Was Fannie Lou Hamer's arrest justifiable? What was the treatment of her like?**

No the arrest was not justifiable because all she was doing was trying to help people get their rights to vote.

### **TESTIMONY OF RITA L. SCHWERNER**

#### **1. How were Rita Schwerner and her husband treated because they were white activists? Would you say they faced discrimination? Give examples.**

They were treated badly. Every time they tried to get a place to stay, usually with blacks, the owners would get harassing phone calls telling them not to let them stay there. I think that they did face discrimination because they were trying to help the black people.

**2. According to Schwerner, how did police use fear and intimidation? What would you do if you were an activist facing these tactics?**

They took her husband to the police station and questioned him about what they were doing. If this happened to me, I would just go in and answer the questions because it is not smart to run from the police.

**3. Why did Schwerner go to see the governor? What was his response? Why do you think he responded the way he did?**

She went there to get his help to find the three missing men. When the governor heard who she was, he bolted to the door and a bunch of police men surrounded them. I think he responded this way because he knew about the three missing men and what happened to them.

**ALICE WALKER, "ONCE"**

**1. Which section of the poem most struck a chord with you and why?**

The eight year old girl getting hit by a truck and the cops understanding that she was "in the way".

**2. What did the poem tell you about African Americans' view of themselves?**

They think that they are the very bottom, that they are worth nothing.

**SANDRA A. WEST, "RIOT! - A NEGRO RESIDENT'S STORY"**

**1. Why would African Americans riot and burn their own neighborhood? What was being expressed? Do you think rioters had a goal?**

Hatred, anger, insanity. They had nothing to lose. I think that they were expressing how they felt about the ways they were being treated.

**2. Why did families who were fearful not leave their neighborhood?**

They didn't have any where to go and they were scared.

**3. Do you think rioting was an effective form of protest? Why, or why not?**

No because it just brought the civil rights movement backwards.