

Teaching American History Grant: Learning Experience 2006-2007
(Matthew Grande, Rhinebeck Central School District)

Topic Title: Revolutionaries in the Civil Rights Movement **DATE: 7/18/06**
Grade Level: 8

Overview of the Learning Experience:

- The New York State Social Studies curriculum for the 8th grade students places emphasis on Martin Luther King, “activists and leaders,” and strategies developed in fighting for Civil Rights during the 1950’s and 60’s (p. 87)
- This lesson directly fits into standards 1 and 5 of the New York State Learning Standards.
- Students will write an essay on who they believe is more revolutionary in the US Civil Rights Movement: Malcolm X or Martin Luther King, Jr.

Goals and Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Compare and contrast the differences between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X in regards to mobilizing their Civil Rights groups.
- Identify the different methods of protest in US Civil Rights movements.
- Understand the impact that both men had in their respective communities.

Essential Question(s):

An essential question reaches beyond the learning experience itself and may

- What makes someone “revolutionary”?
- How do Martin’s and Malcolm’s goals differ?
- How do are their goals similar?
- What views do Martin and Malcolm disagree with?
- Who is more revolutionary in US society?
- Who do you think is more of a threat to white society?
- How do Martin and Malcolm relate to the revolutionaries in the US in the 1770’s??

Time Allotment (classroom time): Two class periods

Vocabulary (key terms):

1. Revolution/Revolutionary
2. Motive
3. “Uncle Toms”
4. Self-purification
5. Direct Action
6. Foster
7. Unfettered
8. Appraisal
9. Monologue

Materials/Resources: (Please include all documents containing directions for students)

Copies of excerpts from Martin Luther King, JR. "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" April 16, 1963 and Malcolm X "Message to the Grassroots"-November 10, 1963 in Detroit, Michigan.

Scaffolding activities for challenged learners include the textbook descriptions of Martin and Malcolm's ideas and views as well as audio copies of the readings the night before so students can better prepare for the lesson.

Challenging activities for the most able learners include complicating the topic by asking them to decide between Martin, Malcolm, and the Black Panthers (a copy of the "Ten Point Program by the Black Panther Party would be given to them).

Materials/resources needed by teacher?

- Technology components: I put the reading on a Smartboard or LCD projector (an overhead could be used) to answer any questions about the text.

Procedure:

- The day before this lesson, a brief introduction to some similarities and differences between Martin and Malcolm would take place, including their upbringing, family history, geographic locations, etc. Photographs of both men would be displayed, as well as a clip of the "I Have a Dream" speech and "Malcolm X" movie by Spike Lee. Students will be familiar with Malcolm and Martin after this and better prepared for tomorrow's lesson.
- "What makes a person a 'revolutionary?'" is written on the board and students discuss this in pairs for a few minutes and then answer as a group. (4 minutes)
- Reading packets are passed out (with Black Panther readings passed out to the top students and the instructions are on read aloud: "On your desk is a short reading packet containing a speech and letter from two influential African-American Civil Rights leaders. Take 15 minutes to read the packet and take notes on the following questions:
 1. How do Martin's and Malcolm's goals differ?
 2. How do are their goals similar?
 3. What views do Martin and Malcolm disagree with?
 4. Who is more revolutionary in US society?

When you have finished, turn to a partner and discuss your answers for 5 minutes. We will then share as a group. Are there any questions?"

- Students will share their findings and then answer, "Who do you think is more of a threat to white society?" and "How do Martin and Malcolm relate to the revolutionaries in the US in the 1770's?" and debate these questions using the documents as well as, "Who do you think is more revolutionary?" They will take

notes on their classmate's answers by adding to their own notes and interpretations.

Assessment:

- Students will write a brief essay answering, "Who do you think is more revolutionary?" They are required to cite from the documents evidence of why they chose their particular opinion. They will add if their opinion changed or stayed the same after our class discussion and hand in the essay with the day's notes.

Student Work:

- Following the field testing of your learning experience in the classroom, send 3 samples [*digital if possible*] of student work to the BOCES grant office. Please include and identify a range of achievement levels.

Malcolm X "Message to the Grassroots"-November 10, 1963 in Detroit, Michigan

I would like to make a few comments concerning the difference between the black revolution and the Negro revolution. There's a difference. Are they both the same? And if they're not, what is the difference? What is the difference between a black revolution and a Negro revolution? First, what is a revolution? Sometimes I'm inclined to believe that many of our people are using this word "revolution" loosely, without taking careful consideration [of] what this word actually means, and what its historic characteristics are. When you study the historic nature of revolutions, the motive of a revolution, the objective of a revolution, and the result of a revolution, and the methods used in a revolution, you may change words. You may devise another program. You may change your goal and you may change your mind.

Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. Number one, it was based on land, the basis of independence. And the only way they could get it was bloodshed. The French Revolution -- what was it based on? The land-less against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. Was no love lost; was no compromise; was no negotiation. I'm telling you, you don't know what a revolution is. 'Cause when you find out what it is, you'll get back in the alley; you'll get out of the way. The Russian Revolution -- what was it based on? Land. The land-less against the landlord. How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed. And you're afraid to bleed. I said, you're afraid to bleed.

[As] long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people. But when it comes time to seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls be murdered, you haven't got no blood. You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite; and you bark when the white man says bark. I hate to say this about us, but it's true. How are you going to be nonviolent in Mississippi, as violent as you were in Korea? How can you justify being nonviolent in Mississippi and Alabama, when your *churches* are being bombed, and *your* little girls are being murdered, and at the same time you're going to violent with Hitler, and Tojo, and somebody else that you don't even know?

If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it's wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it's wrong for America to draft us and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us, and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country.

The Chinese Revolution -- they wanted land. They threw the British out, along with the Uncle Tom Chinese. Yeah, they did. They set a good example. When I was in prison, I read an article -- don't be shocked when I say I was in prison. You're still in prison. That's what America means: prison. When I was in prison, I read an article in Life magazine

showing a little Chinese girl, nine years old; her father was on his hands and knees and she was pulling the trigger 'cause he was an Uncle Tom Chinaman, When they had the revolution over there, they took a whole generation of Uncle Toms -- just wiped them out. And within ten years that little girl become [sic] a full-grown woman. No more Toms in China. And today it's one of the toughest, roughest, most feared countries on this earth -- by the white man. 'Cause there are no Uncle Toms over there.

Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" April 16, 1963

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through an these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants --- for example, to remove the stores humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves : "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoralty election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run-oat we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run-

off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct-action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling, for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

The Black Panthers Ten Point Plan

1. **WE WANT FREEDOM. WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.**
We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions which exist in our communities.
2. **WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE.**
We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.
3. **WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALISTS OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.**
We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of our fifty million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.
4. **WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS.**
We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.
5. **WE WANT DECENT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY.**
We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.
6. **WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE.**
We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but which will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide our selves with proper medical attention and care.

7. **WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.**

We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against black people, other people of color and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

8. **WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION.**

We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desire of the United States ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the United States government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. **WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY.**

We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in United States prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the United States military are the victims of oppressive conditions which are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons are brought to trial they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trial.

10. **WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY.**

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.