



EPISODE 14:
BACK TO THE MOVEMENT (1979 - 1985)

Episode 14 explores new and old challenges that black communities faced twenty-five years after the civil rights struggle began. The program follows the black communities of Miami and Chicago and chronicles their dramatically different responses to these challenges.

1960s	
	The construction of interstate highway I-95 breaks apart the once-vibrant black neighborhoods in Miami, causing rapid decline during the 1970s
1979	
Dec.	Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance executive and former US Marine, dies from injuries inflicted by police in Miami, Florida
1980	
May 17	All police officers charged with involvement in McDuffie's murder are acquitted. A protest outside of the local justice department escalates into a three-day riot
Nov. 4	Republican candidate Ronald Reagan defeats President Jimmy Carter in his bid for the presidency
1982	
Oct. 5	One hundred thousand blacks are newly registered to vote in Chicago following a black-led voter registration campaign
1983	
Feb. 22	In Chicago, Harold Washington is elected the city's first black mayor

In the 1980s, after years of social and economic progress, many urban centers were on the decline again: lack of investment in local businesses, cuts in social programs, discriminatory housing practices, and chronically neglected schools led to widespread disillusionment and rising unemployment and crime. While many people fled to the suburbs, waves of Asian and Latino immigrants moved to the cities and introduced new political and economic challenges for black Americans.

In Miami, Florida, decades of racial tension, exacerbated by poor housing and limited opportunities, set the stage for yet another scene of police brutality and riots. Overtown, a neighborhood in central Miami, had long been a nexus of black economic, social, and cultural life. In the early 1960s the construction of interstate highway I-95 through the middle of the town displaced hundreds of black families and tore the commercial and cultural fabric that had held the thriving community together. Many of the displaced Overtown inhabitants moved into nearby Liberty City. By the late 1970s, many white residents of Liberty City (along with some black professionals) were moving out, leaving behind a struggling community (despite overall economic growth in Miami, the unemployment rate for blacks was 17 percent, double that for whites). In the spring of 1980, new challenges emerged as new

waves of refugees from Cuba altered the political, cultural, and economic dynamics of the city.

Tensions between Miami's police force and the city's black residents came to a head on December 17, 1979, when Arthur McDuffie, a former Marine and insurance agent, was killed during a high-speed chase. The police reported that McDuffie had had a motorcycle accident and then violently resisted arrest. However, the medical examiner's report showed conclusively that McDuffie had died from multiple severe blows to the head by a blunt object. The police officers involved in the case were charged with manslaughter, tampering with evidence, and, in one case, second-degree murder. Despite compelling medical evidence and testimony by other officers that McDuffie had been beaten brutally while in custody, an all-white jury acquitted the defendants of all charges. The tensions between Miami's police force and the city's black population came to a boil, as furious black residents poured into the streets to protest the unjust ruling. In the three-day riot that ensued, seventeen people died and the city sustained one hundred million dollars in damage. The death of McDuffie and the treatment of his killers was a reminder of the routine humiliation of racial profiling but also echoed the painful his-

tory of lynching in the United States. The trial and its aftermath threatened to unravel many of the earlier achievements of the civil rights movement in Miami.

But the 1980s saw signs of progress elsewhere in the country. The second segment of the episode depicts developments in Chicago, where the black community struggled with poverty, a lack of economic power and political representation, and the legacy of the political machinery of Mayor Richard Daley (see Episode 8). The black community's initial support for Jane Byrne, Chicago's first female mayor, eroded when she failed to appoint black representatives in her administration. In 1982, in a political climate hostile to the progressive policies advanced by the civil rights movement, the Byrne administration prepared measures to cut back public aid and funding for social programs. Determined to assume a greater role in the city's leadership, black political activists started a voter registration drive with the goal of electing a new generation of black officials. They persuaded a reluctant Harold Washington, a black congressman, to run for mayor. After a massive mobilization effort and a racially charged campaign, Washington beat Bernard O. Epton and became the first black mayor of Chicago.

The program concludes with America at a racial crossroads. The civil rights movement had achieved remarkable gains. Signs of progress included Washington's historic election, which revitalized black political activism and the return of Unita Blackwell, one of the original members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, to the democratic national convention which had been denied seats just twenty years before. Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition energized a new generation of voters, tying the civil rights struggle to the plights of other marginalized communities across the nation. But the path to progress was not clearly marked, and challenges of both leadership and strategy lay ahead. As the Miami riots of 1980 revealed, undercurrents of frustration and isolation roiled very close to the surface. And, twelve years later, the same frustrations exploded in Los Angeles, California, where public outrage and violent protest followed the acquittal of police officers involved in the beating of Rodney King.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why is this episode called "Back to the Movement"?
2. Compare the choices made by groups and individuals in Miami and Chicago in response to racial injustice. What lessons can we learn?
3. How did the changing demographics of the United States in the 1980s create new challenges and new opportunities for those who hoped to improve the lives of black Americans?
4. In what ways was the civil rights struggle in the 1980s similar and dissimilar to the struggles during the 1960s and 1970s?
5. How did the election of Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago reflect the changes America had undergone between 1950 and 1980?
6. How did the black-led freedom movement create new opportunity for other groups in America? What challenges lie ahead?

Document 1: GROWING UP IN THE GHETTO

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and Run-DMC, founded in the late 1970s and early 1980s, respectively, were two of the earliest hip-hop groups in the United States with a popular following. Like many early hip-hop groups, their lyrics were filled with social and political commentary. *The Message*, from an album released in 1982 of the same name, was one of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's breakout hits. Released in 1984, *Hard Times* was the first track on Run-DMC's debut album. In

an oppressive atmosphere of poverty and blighted opportunity, many young people in inner city neighborhoods turned to graffiti art, hip-hop music, and dance for self-expression. Songs like *The Message* and *Hard Times* spoke to the frustrations and desperation that characterized their lives in the early 1980s.

The Message

A child was born, with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind [...]
You grow in the ghetto, living second rate
And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate [...]
You'll admire all the number book takers
Thugs, pimps, pushers and the big money makers [...]
You say: "I'm cool, I'm no fool!"
But then you wind up dropping out of high school [...]
Being used and abused, and served like hell
Till one day you was find hung dead in a cell
It was plain to see that your life was lost
You was cold and your body swung back and forth
But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song
Of how you lived so fast and died so young.¹

Like Grandmaster Flash, Run DMC rapped about the challenges facing young people growing up in America's ghettos, yet their songs often reinforced the importance of education and hope for the future.

Hard Times

Hard times spreading just like the flu
Watch out homeboy, don't let it catch you
P-p-prices go up, don't let your pocket go down
When you got short money you're stuck on the ground
Turn around, get ready, keep your eye on the prize [...]

Hard times is nothing new on me
I'm gonna use my strong mentality [...]
Hard times in life, hard times in death
I'm gonna keep on fighting to my very last breath.²

CONNECTIONS

1. How did these songs depict life in the ghetto during the 1980s? What words and images resonate with you? What issues (social, economic, institutional) did their lyrics call attention to?
2. Why do you think Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five named their song "The Message"? What message was it trying to convey? What audience do you think these two songs were appealing to?

Why you think they resonated with the American public?

- Both “The Message” and “Hard Times” describe the struggle faced by young people growing up in the ghetto. What support would help kids growing up in the ghetto keep their “eyes on the prize”? What is the prize? What skills would they need? How do you account for the different tones of the two songs?
- When do depictions of social problems help to make a difference? When do they reinforce stereotypes?

Document 2: THE ARTHUR MCDUFFIE TRIAL

In December 17, 1979, Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance salesman and former US Marine, was spotted by the Miami police doing stunts on his motorcycle. Following a high-speed chase, McDuffie was injured. He died a few days later in a hospital. The officers involved reported that McDuffie had crashed his motorcycle and then resisted arrest. The medical examiner’s report, however, concluded that McDuffie had been beaten to death. In the spring of 1980, four policemen were charged in connection with McDuffie’s death. Despite the coroner’s report and the testimonies of the witnessing officers that McDuffie had been brutally beaten by other policemen, the defendants were acquitted by an all-white jury. When the news became public, Liberty City, Overtown, and other black neighborhoods erupted in a riot. The Miami riot was larger in scope and damages than the worst riots of the mid-1960s. In an *Eyes on the Prize* interview, Maurice Ferre, who was mayor of Miami at the time of the riot, recounted the shock waves the jury’s verdict sent throughout the city:

The McDuffie trial was one of the critical points in the history of Miami. And the reason, of course, is that for weeks on end the newspapers and especially the television stations in the evening would report what was going on in the trial, so that the people of Miami and especially the black community were patently aware of every gruesome detail of how that poor man had died—that they had held his head, what kind of a flashlight, with how many batteries, they had beaten him with, where the blood was splattering. It was just horrible. There was no question but that this was a terrible thing that had occurred, it was tragic. I don’t think anybody had any question but that there was guilt. These police officers had no right to kill that man the way he was killed. He was not resisting at that point, and yet they battered his head in. And they’re all of a sudden [found] not guilty. It was a shock.

All the things that had built up to that, all of the many problems that Miami had in the black community—poverty, the underclass, racism—all these things were coming together. The Mariel [Cuban] refugees coming in, the advent of economic competition between the Cubans and the blacks—or the perception of it, because a lot of times it wasn’t real but just a perception of it. The lack of opportunity, the lack of jobs, the lack of upward mobility, unemployment, underemployment, single-parent homes, pregnant teenagers, drugs. All the Pandora’s boxes of problems that were coming together. All of a sudden, this is the tinderbox that somebody strikes a light and all of a sudden there’s an explosion. And that’s exactly what occurred. There’s no question but that McDuffie was a major turning point in our history. And as it occurred, those of us that had positions of responsibility were painfully aware of the potential, but frankly I’ve got to tell you, it never occurred

to me that those four officers on trial in Tampa would be found not guilty, totally not guilty. I thought somehow they'd end up doing some time in jail or there would be some consequences of this, but nothing. So that was a shock to me as well as to the rest of the community.³

CONNECTIONS

1. Mayor Ferre described the McDuffie trial as a “major turning point” in the history of Miami. How did he describe the climate that led to the riots? Based on his description of the environment, which factors do you think contributed to the riot?
2. What is the message to the community when there is no accountability for police brutality? In the aftermath of the verdict, what do you think Mayor Ferre could have done to promote peace, dignity, and respect?
3. Why do you think people in the community responded to the officers' acquittal with violence? What other means did the community have to show its disapproval?
4. In 1992, riots broke out in Los Angeles after police were acquitted of beating Rodney King. Research the trial and the riots that followed. What similarities are there between the events in Los Angeles and in Miami? What are the differences?

Document 3: CONFRONTING RACIAL ISOLATION IN MIAMI

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May 1980. The National Guard in Liberty City, Miami. When the policemen involved in the murder of Arthur McDuffie were acquitted, the black community in Miami erupted in a riot. The riot was one of the worst America had ever witnessed.

In Miami, the riot that erupted over the acquittal of the policemen in the McDuffie murder trial ruined black neighborhoods and destroyed white-owned businesses. After three days of rioting, seventeen people—ten white and seven black—were dead, more than a thousand had been arrested, and the city incurred over one hundred million dollars in property damage.

The US Commission on Civil Rights launched an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the riot. They released a report, *Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami*, which, among other things, described the plight of the city's black communities. The riot and the Commission's report exposed the overwhelming challenges faced by Miami's

black citizens: poverty, high levels of unemployment, lack of political representation and educational opportunities, police brutality, and racial discrimination:

The black community in Miami is characterized chiefly by its isolation from the city as a whole. Blacks are in the city, but in a crucial sense, they are not part of Miami. They are not politically and economically powerful sectors that control community resources and make community policies. Their concerns have not been a priority for the city, the county, or for the private sector. Their frustration fed the violence that recently erupted in the

wake of what was viewed as yet another in a long line of abuses suffered at the hands of an unresponsive and uncaring officialdom.

The isolation of Miami's black community results from a series of events that have contributed to the deterioration of what was once a vibrant and viable community. [...] One of the events that precipitated the isolation was the physical destruction of a large portion of the black community by the municipal government. Under the urban renewal program, the city tore down a massive amount of low-cost housing, forcing large numbers of blacks to leave their traditional neighborhoods and move into other areas that could not accommodate them. New units of low-cost housing were never built to replace all that had been demolished. In a city with a vacancy rate of less than one percent, the remaining low-cost housing has become severely deteriorated and overcrowded. The consequences are isolated and disparate ghettos.

Neither the children who are transported to schools outside of these communities nor those who remain in neighborhood schools receive, in many respects, an education that addresses their needs. The city has not allocated enough resources and effort to provide adequate vocational-technical programs and well-trained guidance counselors or to address the myriad other needs of students from low-income families. [...]

Blacks are isolated in Miami's economy, as well. Although the local economy continues to grow at a rate higher than that for the Nation as a whole, there are few black entrepreneurs, and the black unemployment rate remains high. Stymied by their own lack of capital and their inability to obtain capital from commercial lenders, would-be black businesspeople fall through the cracks of unimaginative and nonaccommodating programs of the State, local and Federal government. Blacks with the education and talent to succeed in business often leave Miami for other parts of the country that appear to offer more opportunities for blacks. [...]

Compounding this situation is the fact that justice in Miami is administered in a way that excludes blacks and appears incapable of condemning official violence against them. Black complaints of police violence are common in the city. The incident that took the life of Mr. McDuffie was one of many confrontations between black residents and the system that is supposed to protect all of Miami's inhabitants. The underlying causes range from employment practices to inadequate police training and evaluation. The department screens applicants for the police force with an allegedly biased test. [...] The proportion of the youth in the Miami juvenile justice system who are black is more than three times as great as [that of blacks] in the Dade County population. Counseling for such youth is inadequate, in part, because the system employs counselors who meet minimal educational and experience requirements. Services for rehabilitating juveniles are grossly inadequate.

Many of Miami's problems have answers—more and better-qualified teachers and counselors, better selection and training of police officers, rehabilitation of housing, and so on. But remedial steps cost money. The housing situation is a good example of the cost-benefit approach that appears to have taken hold in Miami. Because it is a seller's market, landlords can rent or sell any housing they choose to make available, no matter how deteriorated. As a result, they do not appear to view rehabilitating housing as being to their advantage. In the rare instances when they are brought before municipal authorities for violation of housing ordinances, landlords generally find it cheaper to pay the fine than to make the repairs. The question is whether one approach is indeed “cheaper” than another when the trade-off involves human suffering and frustration. [...]

As indicated throughout the report, Miami suffers the range of urban problems that seem endemic to all major American cities today. The vast majority of the black community, regardless of economic status, feels powerless and frustrated. It is possible to identify and perhaps to ameliorate some of the sources of tension, but any long-term solution requires a coordinated attack on the underlying causes of racial isolation and exclusion. [...]

The same groups, individuals, and units of government that worked together to rebuild downtown Miami can—if they want to—work together with the black community to bring about that community's participation in all aspects of growth and progress in Dade County. The knowledge and skills are available; the question is one of commitment. This report unmistakably demonstrates that without such a commitment, conditions will worsen, isolation will increase and violence will recur.¹⁴

CONNECTIONS

1. The authors of the report *Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami* wrote that “blacks are in the city, but in a crucial sense, they are not part of Miami.” What did they mean?
2. What key words did the Commission use to describe the problems facing Miami's black citizens? Why did the commissioners think that isolation was the main problem? What did they mean by “isolation”?
3. What factors do the authors of the report believe contributed to the isolation of the black community?
4. What solutions to the isolation and marginalization of blacks in Miami did the Commission offer? What do you think about the Commission's recommendations? Can you think of other ideas that would have helped to make a difference?
5. How is a community harmed when all groups are not provided equal protection?

Document 4: **HAROLD WASHINGTON FOR MAYOR!**

In 1982, Chicago's black minority experienced the same neglect, discrimination, and political marginalization that the black community in Miami faced. Frustrated with poor living conditions and the lack of black representatives in the city's offices, black activists decided to take action. They organized a massive voter registration drive that enlisted over one hundred thousand new black vot-

ers, and recruited Harold Washington, a Democratic Congressman, to run for mayor. Although initially reluctant, Washington declared his candidacy on November 10. At a rally, he explained his decision to run for mayor:

Chicago is a divided city. Chicago is a city where [some] citizens are treated unequally and unfairly. Chicago is a city in decline. Each year for the last decade, we have lost 11,500 jobs, 3,500 housing units and nearly 36,000 people.

Since 1955 [the year Mayor Daley took office], women, Latinos, Blacks, youth and progressive whites have been left out of the Chicago government. Since 1979 [the year Mayor Byrne took office], the business, labor and intellectual communities have been allowed but token involvement in Chicago government. Sadly, we have learned what happens when there is no governmental stability—and when the few rule over us. The results are that more people don't have jobs, more are out of food, out of their homes and out of hope.

Our businesses are failing at the highest rate since the Depression, in part from high interest rates, and the only answer the city government provides is fat consultant contracts for a few politically connected firms and jobs for a few patronage workers.

We have a school system which does not educate, in which students continue to lag far behind the rest of the country in tests of reading and math ability.

We have a continuing crime problem in the city. Despite a drop in crime statistics, it's still not safe to walk the streets or run a business. Even at home, Chicagoans are robbed, mugged and beaten.

We no longer have dependable housing in this city. There has been an epidemic of abandoned buildings and rents have skyrocketed. Subsidized housing is no longer being built. And, with interest rates as they are, no one can afford to buy their own home anymore.

Finally, "the city that works" doesn't work anymore. City services cost more than in any other city in America, and yet they just aren't there—sewers are in disrepair, streets are marred with giant potholes. We have one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country, and traffic appears to be permanently snarled.

We have these terrible problems in Chicago, partly because leadership has not striven for unity and pointed boldly to the new directions. Instead, it has perpetuated outdated politics and pie-in-the-sky financing. [...]

I would prefer not to run. But, there is a sense of urgency which moves me. Chicago can only be rebuilt if all the people of Chicago and her leaders work together. I was born, raised and educated in this city, and I have served it on three levels of government. I love

representing Chicago in Washington, where we need courageous voices to speak out [...] but I can't watch the city of Chicago be destroyed by petty politics and bad government.

I have heard the earnest pleas of thousands of people to enter the race. Therefore, I declare that I am a candidate for the mayor of Chicago. Not to do so would be a mockery of my longstanding dedication to public service. I see a Chicago that runs well, in which services are provided as a right, not as a political favor.

I see a Chicago of educational excellence and equality of treatment in which all children can learn to function in this ever more complex society, in which jobs and contracts are dispensed fairly to those that want and qualify for them, and in which justice rains down like water.

I see a Chicago in which the neighborhoods are once again the center of our city, in which businesses boom and provide neighborhood jobs, in which neighbors join together to help govern their neighborhood and their city.

Some may say this is visionary—I say *they* lack vision. [...]

Thousands of Chicagoans have beseeched me to undertake this task. Their faith is not misplaced.⁵

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February 1983. Harold Washington gives a victory sign during his campaign to become Chicago's first black mayor. His victory that year symbolized a dramatic increase in blacks' political power.

Overcoming both prejudices and personal and racist attacks, Washington waged a strong grassroots campaign and won the election. In April 1983, he became Chicago's first black mayor. In his inaugural speech, he called on the people from every walk of life to get involved in rebuilding Chicago:

[...] My election was the result of the greatest grassroots effort in the history of the city of Chicago. It may have been equaled somewhere in this country, but I know not where. My election was made possible by thousands and thousands of people who demanded that the burdens of mismanagement, unfairness and inequity be lifted so that the city might be saved.

One of the ideas that held us all together said that neighborhood involvement has to replace the ancient, decrepit and creaking machine. City government, for once in our lifetime, must be made equitable and fair. The people of Chicago asked for more responsibility and more representation at every city level.

It's a good thing that philosophy prevailed, because otherwise I'm not sure the city could solve the financial crisis at hand. Reluctantly, I must tell you that because of circumstances thrust upon us, each and every one of us, we must immediately cut back on how much money the city can spend. [...] But these measures are not enough to make up the enormous deficits we have inherited. Like other cities across the state, we simply cannot provide adequate public service without additional sources of revenue. During the election I said that there was no alternative to higher state income taxes. [...]

But when it finally comes down to basic issues, I'm only going to be successful if you are involved. The neighborhoods and the people who reside in them are going to have to play an active, creative role in this administration. I am asking you now to join that team. [...] Business as usual will not be accepted by the people of this city. Business as usual will not be accepted by any part of this city. Business as usual will not be accepted by this chief executive of this great city. [...] The city's books will be open to the public because we don't have a chance to institute fiscal reform unless we all know the hard facts. I believe in the process of collective bargaining when all the numbers are on the table and the city and its unions sit down and hammer out an agreement together. The only contracts that ever work are the ones that are essentially fair. [...]

We are a multiethnic, multiracial, multilanguage city and that is not a source to negate but really a source of pride, because it adds stability and strength to a metropolitan city as large as ours. Our minorities are ambitious, and that is a sign of a prosperous city on the move. Racial fears and divisiveness have hurt us in the past. But I believe that is a situation that will and must be overcome. [...] In our ethnic and racial diversity, we are all brothers and sisters in a quest for greatness. Our creativity and energy are unequalled by any city anywhere in the world. We will not rest until the renewal of our city is done.

Today, I want to tell you how proud I am to be your mayor. [...] It makes me humble, but it also makes me glad. I hope some day to be remembered by history as the mayor who cared about people and who was above all fair, a mayor who helped to heal our wounds, who stood the watch while the city and its people answered the greatest challenge in more than a century—and who saw that city renewed. [...]

Let's go to work!⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Washington, what were the causes of the decline of Chicago? What groups were especially affected? What were the similarities between the problems minorities faced in Chicago and in Miami?
2. Washington discussed the “grassroots” efforts that contributed to his election. What does that term mean? How can grassroots efforts lead to political success?

3. What vision did Washington articulate for Chicago? What were the key policies to which he was committed?
4. Washington described Chicago's identity as a "multiethnic, multiracial, multilanguage city" and believed that diversity adds "stability and strength" to a city. How does diversity strengthen a city? How can diversity be harnessed for the public good?

Document 5: FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO THE RAINBOW COALITION

In 1984, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a former staff member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and founder of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), became the second black American to run for President. Jackson's campaign, coupled with a massive voter registration project, used the image of a rainbow to represent the diversity of the United States. While the campaign was marred by accusations of antisemitism, he used his address at the 1984 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco to reaffirm the historical alliance between black and Jewish Americans and tie the civil rights movement to the new coalition he hoped to build. In the following excerpts from his speech, Jackson described his new multicultural "rainbow coalition":

Our flag is red, white and blue, but our nation is a rainbow—red, yellow, brown, black and white—and we're all precious in God's sight.

America is not like a blanket—one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt—many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread. The white, the Hispanic, the black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay and the disabled make up the American quilt.

[...]From Fannie Lou Hamer in Atlantic City in 1964 (see Episode 5) to the Rainbow Coalition in San Francisco today; from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we have experienced pain but progress as we ended American apartheid laws, we got public accommodation, we secured voting rights, we obtained open housing, as young people got the right to vote. We lost Malcolm [X], Martin [Luther King], Medgar [Evars], Bobby [Kennedy], John [Kennedy] and Viola [Liuzzo]. The team that got us here must be expanded, not abandoned.

Twenty years ago, tears welled up in our eyes as the bodies of Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney were dredged from the depths of a river in Mississippi (see Episode 5). Twenty years later, our communities, black and Jewish, are in anguish, anger and pain. Feelings have been hurt on both sides.

There is a crisis in communications. Confusion is in the air. But we cannot afford to lose our way. We may agree to agree; or agree to disagree on issues; we must bring back civility to these tensions.

We are co-partners in a long and rich religious history—the Judeo-Christian traditions.

Many blacks and Jews have a shared passion for social justice at home and peace abroad. We must seek a revival of the spirit, inspired by a new vision and new possibilities. We must return to higher ground.

We are bound by Moses and Jesus, but also connected with Islam and Mohammed. These three great religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were all born in the revered and holy city of Jerusalem.

We are bound by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Heschel, crying out from their graves for us to reach common ground. We are bound by shared blood and shared sacrifices. We are much too intelligent; much too bound by our Judeo-Christian heritage; much too victimized by racism, sexism, militarism and anti-Semitism; much too threatened as historical scapegoats to go on divided one from another. We must turn from finger pointing to clasped hands. We must share our burdens and our joys with each other once again. We must turn to each other and not on each other and choose higher ground.

Twenty years later, we cannot be satisfied by just restoring the old coalition. Old wine skins must make room for new wine. We must heal and expand. The Rainbow Coalition is making room for Arab Americans. They, too, know the pain and hurt of racial and religious rejection. They must not continue to be made pariahs. The Rainbow Coalition is making room for Hispanic Americans [...].

The Rainbow is making room for the Native American, the most exploited people of all, a people with the greatest moral claim amongst us. We support them as they seek the restoration of their ancient land and claim amongst us. We support them as they seek the restoration of land and water rights, as they seek to preserve their ancestral homelands and the beauty of a land that was once all theirs. They can never receive a fair share for all they have given us. They must finally have a fair chance to develop their great resources and to preserve their people and their culture.

The Rainbow Coalition includes Asian Americans, now being killed in our streets, scapegoats for the failures of corporate, industrial and economic policies.

The Rainbow is making room for the young Americans. Twenty years ago, our young people were dying in a war for which they could not even vote. Twenty years later, young America has the power to stop a war in Central America and the responsibility to vote in great numbers. Young America must be politically active in 1984. The choice is war or peace. We must make room for young America.

The Rainbow includes disabled veterans. The color scheme fits in the Rainbow. The disabled have their handicap revealed and their genius concealed; while the able-bodied have their genius revealed and their disability concealed. But ultimately, we must judge people

by their values and their contribution. Don't leave anybody out [....].

The Rainbow includes small farmers. They have suffered tremendously under the Reagan regime. They will either receive 90 percent parity or 100 percent charity. We must address their concerns and make room for them.

The Rainbow includes lesbians and gays. No American citizen ought to be denied equal protection from the law.

We must be unusually committed and caring as we expand our family to include new members. All of us must be tolerant and understanding as the fears and anxieties of the rejected and of the party leadership express themselves in so many different ways. Too often what we call hate—as if it were some deeply-rooted philosophy or strategy—is simply ignorance, anxiety, paranoia, fear and insecurity.

To be strong leaders, we must be long-suffering as we seek to right the wrongs of our Party and our Nation. We must expand our Party, heal our Party and unify our Party. That is our mission in 1984.

We are often reminded that we live in a great nation—and we do. But it can be greater still. The Rainbow is mandating a new definition of greatness. We must not measure greatness from the mansion down, but from the manger up.

[...] When we think, on this journey from slave ship to championship, that we have gone from the planks of the Boardwalk in Atlantic City in 1964 to fighting to help write the planks in the platform in San Francisco in 1984, there is a deep and abiding sense of joy in our souls in spite of the tears in our eyes. Though there are missing planks, there is a solid foundation upon which to build. Our party can win, but we must provide hope, which will inspire people to struggle and achieve; provide a plan that shows a way out of our dilemma and then lead the way.⁷

CONNECTIONS

1. What did Jackson's rainbow flag symbolize? What other images in his speech stand out? How was Jackson's vision of a rainbow coalition similar to or different from the message and symbolism of the civil rights movement? Whom did his organization seek to embrace?
2. How did Jackson's idea of a rainbow coalition address the changing demographics of the United States in the 1980s?
3. After reading Jackson's address, what questions would you like to ask him? What would you like to tell him?
4. Based on what you have learned from *Eyes on the Prize*, what are the challenges of holding a broad coalition together? What can be done to strengthen the bonds between the various groups that make up a coalition?

Document 6: NONVIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY

Taylor Branch, Pulitzer Prize winner and civil rights historian, concluded his civil rights history trilogy with a book entitled *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68*. In the introduction to this final volume, Branch evaluated the unique contributions of the civil rights movement, nonviolent direct action, and the Reverend. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, leadership to American democracy:

Nonviolence is an orphan among democratic ideas. It has nearly vanished from public discourse even though the most basic element of free government—the vote—has no other meaning. Every ballot is a piece of nonviolence, signifying hard-won consent to raise politics above firepower and bloody conquest. Such compacts work more or less securely in different lands. Nations gain strength from vote-based institutions in commerce and civil society, but the whole architecture of representative democracy springs from the handiwork of nonviolence.

America's Founders centered political responsibility in the citizens themselves, but, nearly two centuries later, no one expected a largely invisible and dependent racial minority to ignite protests of steadfast courage—boycotts, sit-ins, Freedom Rides, jail marches—dramatized by stunning forbearance and equilibrium into the jaws of hatred. During the short career of Martin Luther King, Jr., between 1954 and 1968, the nonviolent civil rights movement lifted the patriotic spirit of the United States toward our defining national purpose.

James Madison, arguing in 1788 to ratify the novel Constitution of the United States, called upon “every votary of freedom to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government.” This revolutionary premise challenged the once universal hierarchy of rulers and subjects along with its stubborn assumption that a populace needs discipline by superior force or authority. [...] There remains debate about the relative sturdiness of self-governance and public trust as bedrock features of constitutional design. [...] However, nonviolent pioneers from the civil rights era stand tall in the commitment to govern oneself and develop political bonds with strangers, rather than vice versa. Teenagers and small children sang freedom songs in the Birmingham jail. Workshops trained nonviolent pilgrims to uphold democratic beliefs against the psychology of enemies. Demonstrators faced segregationist oppressors in the utmost spirit of disciplined outreach, willing to suffer and even die without breaking witness for civil contact. [...]

Martin Luther King famously exhorted the nation to “rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed,” but he paid tribute to vanguard students for teaching him that oratory alone was not enough. He reinforced a cry for democracy with political sacrifice, and dreams of brotherhood collided in his anguished voice with the cruelties of race. To combat distortions in historical perception, King balanced an imperative for equal votes with the original prophetic vision of equal souls before God. He grounded one foot in

patriotism, the other in ministry, and both in nonviolence. The movement he led climbed from obscurity to command the center stage of American politics in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy declared racial segregation a moral issue “as old as the Scriptures and ... as clear as the American Constitution.” A year later, after President Lyndon Johnson signed a landmark law to abolish segregation by sex as well as race, King accepted the Nobel Peace Prize. “I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality,” he said, echoing the Founders’ lyrical hopes for freedom. “But what,” wrote Madison, “is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary.”⁸

The nonviolent movement was inspired by ideas from outside the United States. In turn, the movement strengthened democracy activists in China and Eastern Europe, in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and elsewhere around the world. Shen Tong, born in Beijing in 1968, was a leading student activist in the movement for democracy in China. He escaped the Chinese government’s deadly response to the nonviolent demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and came to study in the United States. Later, in 1990, as chairman of the Democracy for China Fund, he gave a speech at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta (where King had been minister). In it, he discussed the influence of the philosophy of nonviolence in the global struggle for democratic change:

My first encounter with the concept of nonviolence was in high school when I read about Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. At the time this method of nonviolence seemed, to my superficial understanding, extremely logical and beautiful. Here was a method which would clearly win in the end, no matter how long the struggle may last. Although the process may take longer, you get the true result—a real and lasting change—not a fake result.

At the time, Dr. King’s ideas seemed very idealistic to me from my simple understanding of his principles. Just like the sense of nonviolence which Albert Einstein gave to me, which Gandhi gave to me.

But that was the first step in my life, and that was the first step in the lives of many young Chinese seeking some beautiful way for China. We were exposed to the principles of nonviolence and it gave us inspiration. It was something very pure, very idealistic in our minds.⁹

CONNECTIONS

1. Branch wrote that “nonviolence is an orphan among democratic ideas.” What did he mean?
2. How did Branch connect the nonviolent struggle to the principles of American democracy? For Branch, what values are at the heart of the nonviolent movement? How do violence and lawlessness diminish these values?
3. Why did Branch argue that “the most basic element of free government—the vote—has no other meaning” than the principle of nonviolence?
4. What did Branch suggest are the lasting legacies of King’s leadership?

5. What did Shen Tong mean when he said that nonviolent change “may take longer” but in the end will get the “true result?” To what other approaches might he have been comparing nonviolence in this case?

¹ Grand Master Flash & The Furious Five, “The Message,” *The Message*, compact disc, Sugar Hill Records, 1982 as quoted from Metrolyrics, http://www.metrolyrics.com/lyrics/161869/Grandmaster_Flash/The_Message (accessed July 19, 2006).

² Run D.M.C., “Hard Times,” *Run D.M.C.*, compact disc, Profile Records, 1984 as quoted from Song Teksten, http://www.song-teksten.com/song_lyrics/run_d_m_c/run_d_m_c/hard_times (accessed July 19, 2006).

³ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 653–54.

⁴ “Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, June 1982), as quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 682–87.

⁵ Travis Dempsey, *Harold: The People’s Mayor* (Chicago: Urban Research Press, 1989), 157–58.

⁶ Harold Washington, “Inaugural Address,” April 29, 1983, *Chicago Public Library*, <http://www.chicagopubliclibrary.org/004chicago/mayors/speeches/hw83.html> (accessed on August 18, 2006).

⁷ Rev. Jesse Jackson, “Address before the Democratic National Convention,” July 18, 1984, *The Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson, Frontline*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/jesse/speeches/jesse84speech.html> (accessed on June 20, 2006).

⁸ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68* (New York: Simon Schuster, 2006), xi–xiii.

⁹ Shen Tong, “Address to the National College and University Student Conference,” as quoted in Clayborne Carson, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader*, 712–13.