

**Civil Rights Strategy Unit**

**Final Assessment**

Debatable Issue

**The Civil Rights movement ultimately proved that Martin Luther King’s strategy of non-violence was more effective than a radical militancy strategy would have been.**

Directions

Complete the fields below requiring you to supply or complete argument components on both sides of the debatable issue above.

Write in full sentences, or complete the templates to make full sentences (full ideas).

Note that you are being asked to make or complete arguments in response to the prompts below. These arguments may not necessarily be the same as the arguments you have made in your prior writing on this debatable issue.

Assessment Parts

**I. Argumentative Claims and Reasoning**

Complete the following arguments for the position that civil disobedience was more effective than radical militancy would have been by creating two distinct argumentative claims and reasoning for each piece of evidence, connecting it back to the argumentative claims and explaining how the evidence supports the claim. Reasoning, too, should be distinct; do not repeat yourself when providing reasoning, since the evidence provided for the claims is not the same. Finally, each argumentative claim is supported by two pieces of evidence.

**Argumentative Claim 1:**

One important reason that civil disobedience was more effective as a protest movement strategy

than radical militancy would have been is that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**First Piece of Evidence:**

According to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in his “Power of Non-Violence Speech” on April 4, 1957, “The end of violence or the aftermath of violence is bitterness. The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation and the creation of a beloved community. A boycott is never an end within itself. It is merely a means to awaken a sense of shame within the oppressor but the end is reconciliation, the end is redemption.”

**Reasoning:**

**Second Piece of Evidence:**

King also made this powerful statement in his “I Have a Dream” speech on the Capitol Mall on August 28, 1963. “The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.”

**Reasoning:**

**Argumentative Claim 2:**

In addition to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, another significant

reason that civil disobedience was more effective strategically is that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**First Piece of Evidence:**

In Martin Luther King’s famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” written while he was incarcerated for protesting segregation in Alabama in April, 1963, King emphasized that racism is impossible to explain or have make sense to children.

**Reasoning:**

**Second Piece of Evidence:**

Later that same year, King again in his “I Have a Dream” speech developed this very famous metaphor. “In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds.’ But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt.”

**Reasoning:**

**II. Counter-Argument and Refutation**

Compelling, effective academic argumentation includes consideration of the best reasons those who might disagree have for their position. These contrary reasons are called “counter-arguments.” Writers and speakers include counter-arguments in their own argumentation because they want the reader or listener to understand that other views have been considered, and that the arguments being advanced are subject to the testing and tempering that comes from engagement with the strongest points of skeptics or those who disagree. Counter-arguments also need to be responded to and answered – a process in argumentation called “refutation.”

For this part of the exam, assume that you are arguing for the position that says that radical militancy would have been a more effective Civil Rights strategy than civil disobedience.

First, complete the counter-argument claim below, which is based on the evidence that follows it.

**Counter-Argumentative Claim:**

Some people might argue that radical militancy would have failed since \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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These commentators can point to statements like this one from President Lyndon Baines Johnson, in an interview with the *Washington Post* in February, 1964: “White folks in America will not accept a form of Civil Rights activism that threatens violence. They simply will not. Reverend King is a black leader that has done much to build a wide coalition of support for Civil Rights.”

Next, draw on the evidence below (on the next page) from Malcolm X’s speeches in 1964 to refute (which means, respond to, answer, explain why it is wrong) the counter-argument above.

**Refutation:**

Malcolm X, Video “Debate” with Martin Luther King, 1964

Martin Luther King is supported by white people, and like other Uncle Toms before him, Martin Luther King has the effect of keeping black people powerless in the face of white oppression of black people.

**III. Evidence Selection**

It would be difficult to over-state the significance of evidence to the quality of argumentation. Selecting evidence that is closely aligned with a claim, while also being authoritative and sufficient to make the claim credible – these are the established criteria for evaluating the strength of evidence in an argument. And of course evidence must be explained by a writer or speaker’s reasoning: analysis that shows how the evidence proves or supports the claim.

For each of the following claims – on both sides of the debatable issue – select the best piece of evidence from the evidence set below, and provide your reasoning analyzing how the evidence supports the claim.

**A. Argumentative Claim:**

Civil disobedience’s spiritual aggressiveness matches radical militancy’s physical aggressiveness.

**Evidence:**

**Reasoning:**

**B. Argumentative Claim:**

Only radical militancy had leaders who were accepted as credible and authentic by average people in black neighborhoods.

**Evidence:**

**Reasoning:**

**C. Argumentative Claim:**

Instead of trying to work through the media, radical militancy rejected the media as a tool and a mechanism of white domination and the corrupting of a truly revolutionary movement for equality.

**Evidence:**

**Reasoning:**

**D. Argumentative Claim:**

Civil disobedience doesn’t complacently accept unjust conditions, it morally rejects them and refuses to adjust to them.

**Evidence:**

**Reasoning:**

**Evidence Set**

Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Non-Violence Speech,” April 4, 1957

King connects civil disobedience in the Civil Rights movement to a “maladjustment” to what a moral conscience cannot accept in society. He refers to the biblical figure Amos’s demand for justice and righteousness, Lincoln’s refusal to accept slavery, Jefferson’s bold decree that “all men are created equal,” and even Jesus Christ’s radical view that God loves every human being equally and that all mankind are brothers.

Malcolm X, “The Battle or the Bullet Speech,” Cleveland Ohio, April 3, 1964

“Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American. Being born here in America doesn't make you an American.”

Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Non-Violence Speech,” April 4, 1957

“Our self-respect is at stake; the prestige of our nation is at stake. Civil rights is an eternal moral issue which may well determine the destiny of our civilization in the ideological struggle with communism.”

Stokley Carmichael, Chairman, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, “What We Want,” *New York Review of Books*, 1966

“One of the tragedies of the struggle against racism is that up to now there has been no national organization which could speak to the growing militancy of young black people in the urban ghetto. There has been only a civil rights movement, whose tone of voice was adapted to an audience of liberal whites. It served as a sort of buffer zone between them and angry young blacks. None of its so-called leaders could go into a rioting community and be listened to.”

Gil-Scott Heron, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” Song Released April, 1971

“The revolution will not be right back  
after a message about a white tornado, white lightning, or white people.  
You will not have to worry about a dove in your  
bedroom, a tiger in your tank, or the giant in your toilet bowl.  
The revolution will not go better with Coke.  
The revolution will not fight the germs that may cause bad breath.  
The revolution will put you in the driver's seat.”

Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Non-Violence Speech,” April 4, 1957

“Nonviolent resistance is not a method of cowardice. It does resist. It is not a method of stagnant passivity and deadening complacency. The nonviolent resister is just as opposed to the evil that he is standing against as the violent resister but he resists without violence. This method is nonaggressive physically but strongly aggressive spiritually.”