



BLACK LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

A re-creation of the leadership dilemma blacks faced following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

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PURPOSE

Why were blacks at a crossroads after Martin Luther King's assassination?

This debate re-creates the plight of black Americans after Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in April 1968. Following a decade of civil rights progress, black Americans were both angry and confused: their national hero had died at the hands of a white assassin. They asked themselves: *Should we work to integrate ourselves into white America, or should we separate ourselves, maybe even embracing violence as we do so?* Concerned blacks turned to their leadership, but instead of hearing one clear voice, they heard many. This imaginary debate captures this wide spectrum of recommendations black leadership was presenting to black America in that tragic year. During this re-creation your students should experience the following:

Knowledge

1. Important dates, persons, and events in black Americans' struggles for equal rights since the Civil War
2. Key issues dividing black leadership since the Civil War—with particular emphasis upon 1968

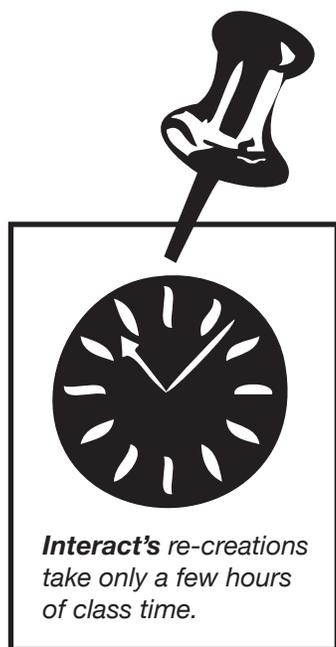
Attitudes

1. An appreciation for the confusion and fury engulfing black America following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968
2. An appreciation of the black American's dilemma: assimilation into or separation from the majority white culture—and by what means, non-violent or violent

Skills

1. Assuming an identity, standing up, and delivering a speech, asking a question, giving an answer
2. Listening carefully enough to be able to take notes sufficiently detailed that they record not only the speaker's ideas but also the speaker's feelings about those ideas

OVERVIEW



Four class periods—or days—are needed for this re-creation.

Day 1

After an interest catcher makes students aware that they have convictions about whether black Americans should separate themselves from white culture or should assimilate into it, students read the Student Guide's Background Essay on the history of black Americans' struggles since our Civil War. Then 18 persons are given special handouts and assigned roles (six speakers and 12 questioners); the unassigned remaining students are told they will be allowed to ask questions if time is available. Everyone prepares note sheets for note-taking during the upcoming re-creation.

Days 2–3

The classroom is arranged with a chairperson (most likely you, the teacher) sitting among six speakers at the front of the room facing an audience in an assembly hall at Howard University. The date is July 1968. Excepting the six speakers, who role-play black adults, and you, who are a black college professor from Howard University, all other students role-play black college students who have gathered in this tragic summer following the deaths of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy. A debate is being held on whether blacks should assimilate or integrate—and by which means, violence or non-violence. First, three speakers speak and are questioned; then, the final three speakers speak and are questioned.

Day 4

Students are divided into five activity groups for a contemporary debriefing activity focusing upon issues similar to the 1968 debate. Each activity group has an area to discuss: school integration, housing integration, minority preference in hiring and/or college entrance, government loans to minority businesses, and government subsidies to the poor. The groups' chairpersons report their groups' conclusions to the whole class. Optional essay examination questions are available if you wish to use them.

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 1

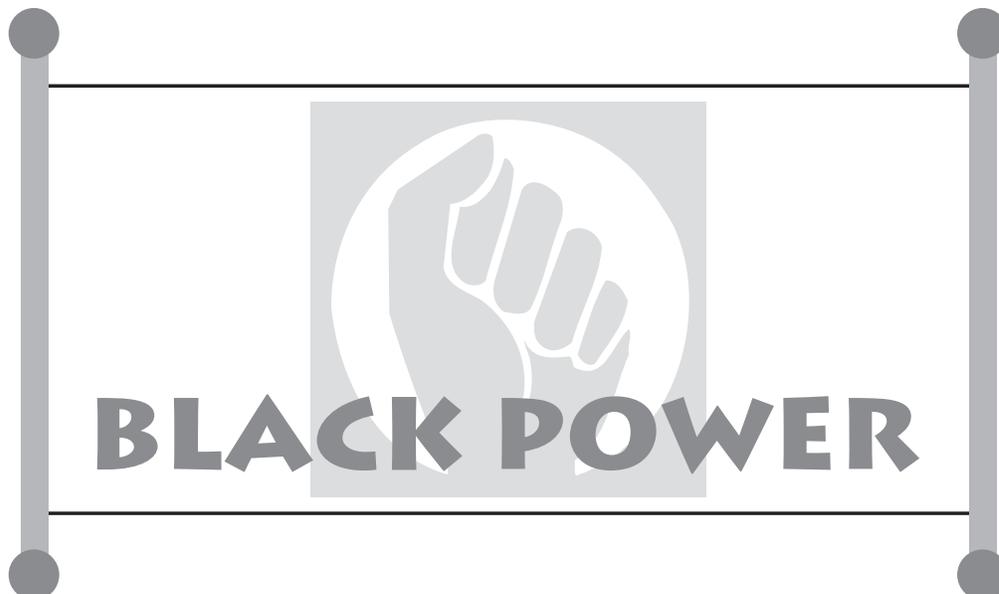


Certain roles are so important that only you should determine who plays them.

1. **Assigning roles** Decide in advance how you wish to assign the six speakers roles and the 12 questioners roles. If you plan to expand the minimal two hours of the actual debate, you may want to select only the six speakers. Then you could have all remaining students pull slips of paper: 12 could be marked CQ1, SQ1, CQ2, SQ2, CQ3, SQ3, CQ4, SQ4, CQ5, SQ5, CQ6, SQ6; the remaining could be blank. Students who pull blank slips would be told they can question any speaker **Note well:** After duplicating a ROLE ASSIGNMENTS: BLACK LEADERSHIP DEBATE sheet, fill in its spaces with the 18 students' names who have assigned roles. (You may also want to give each student a copy.)
2. **Handouts** Duplicate the number in parentheses, using the masters in this Teacher Guide.
 - SPEAKER (six, one per speaker—speakers 1–5 have two pages; speaker 6, three pages)
 - SPEAKER QUESTIONERS (six: cut pages in half vertically, one per questioner)

Optional:

 - * ROLE ASSIGNMENTS: BLACK LEADERSHIP DEBATE (one copy for your use)
3. **Poster materials** If you wish to encourage your students to make posters with 1968 slogans on them to hang on your classroom walls prior to the debate's beginning, obtain some plain cardboard, butcher paper, appropriate paint, felt pens.



An example of a poster Speaker 5 might wish to refer to during his speech ...

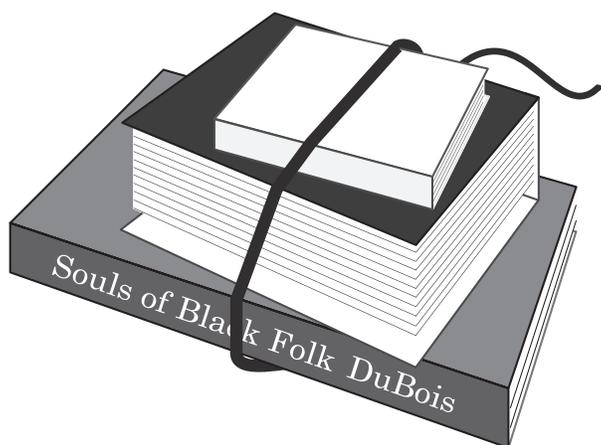
SETUP DIRECTIONS - 2



4. **Video recording** If your school has a recording system, by all means arrange in advance for a capable student to be a cameraperson who will record the debate. Students learn a great amount about themselves by watching their images and hearing their voices. Of course, if you plan to record the debate, you may want to assign a student to the role of a commentator who introduces the debate with some posters (e.g., *The Howard University Debate on Black Leadership*) and commentary prior to turning the meeting over to you, the chairperson. Portions of videos such as this are excellent ways to communicate to administrators and to your students' parents what your class is like.

5. **Follow-up reading** Since some of your students, either before or after the debate, will want to do further reading on this subject, consider asking your friendly librarian to set up a **Black Leadership: The 1960s** shelf in your school library. On this shelf he/she might place books such as the following:

- _____, *The Annals of America*, Volume. XVIII: 1961–1968, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1968.
- Adler, Mortimer, editor, *The Negro in American History: Black Americans 1928–1968*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1969.
- DuBois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk*, Premier Americana, Greenwich, Conn., 1961.
 - Ducas, George, editor, *Great Documents in Black American History*, Praeger, New York, 1972.
 - Fox, Elton C., *Contemporary Black Leaders*, Dodd, Mead, New York, 1970.
 - Franklin, John Hope, *From Slavery to Freedom*, Vintage Giant, Random House, New York, 1969.
 - Franklin, John Hope, *The Negro in 20th Century America*, Vintage Original, Random House, New York, 1967.
 - Haley, Alex, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Grove Press, New York, 1965.
 - Katz, William L., *Eyewitness: The Negro in American History*, Pitman, New York, 1967.
 - Mead, Margaret and Baldwin, James, *A Rap on Race*, Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1971.



DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 1



Also assign your students to read the chapter(s) in their textbook covering the black struggle for civil rights during the 20th century.

Before Day 1

(Could be one or more days in advance of Day 1)

1. Consider showing any film or filmstrip that will introduce black history from around 1945–1970.
2. Give an appropriate lecture on the above history or invite into your classroom some adults who were young and involved in the black leadership debate of the 1960s.
3. Encourage your students to read in the books you or your librarian have gathered on the reserve shelf labeled Black Leadership: The 1960s.

Day 1

(These teaching directions are brief since the instructional sequence is written out in considerable detail under Procedure in the Student Guide.)

1. Follow items 1–7 under Day 1, Procedure, on page 7 in the Student Guide.
2. The optional recommendation (#8 under Procedure) for students to make posters representing the six speakers' positions is a good one. The authors of this re-creation has found in their own classrooms that the act of making posters stimulates student thinking and engenders a loyalty that aids confrontation once the re-creation begins.

Days 2–3–4

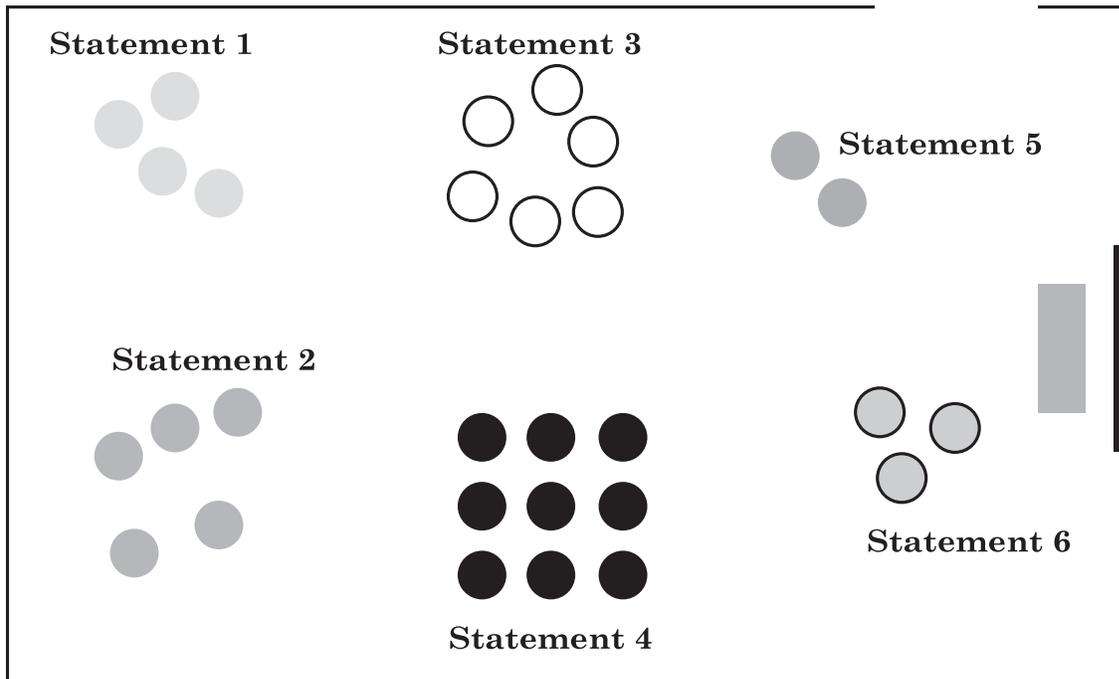
Re-creation

1. The key decision to make here relates to time. If you have an energetic and/or capable class, very likely one hour will be insufficient time for all the students to question the speakers. In such a case, increase the time you're allotting to each set of three speakers. Obviously the debate will be less stilted and more vital if everyone who wants to question the speakers gets to do so. **Note well:** *Make sure that students rising to speak who have no assigned 1968 college student identity make up such an identity before they rise to question anyone. It is important that students play a role during the re-creation. Stress that they can be themselves and can express their own viewpoints during the final debriefing.*
2. The authors recommend that you definitely not have six speakers speak sequentially before allowing questions. Let three speakers speak; then let the questioners question.

DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 2

Debriefing

3. Follow the numbered items under Procedure, Days 2–3–4, Debriefing procedure on page 8 in the Student Guide.
4. Here is the moment in the teaching unit when students can be themselves. Encourage them to speak their inner convictions.
5. You might like to end the debriefing by having students re-examine the six statements found under Procedure, Day 1, in their Student Guides. Consider asking them to go to the six classroom areas a second time—in order to see if the re-creation experience has confirmed or altered their first response to the statements.



ROLE ASSIGNMENTS: BLACK LEADERSHIP DEBATE

Speakers	Critical Questioners	Supporting Questioners
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6