

Section
5

The Movement Takes a New Turn

READING FOCUS

- What was Malcom X's approach to gaining civil rights?
- What were the major goals of the black power movement?
- Why did violent riots erupt in many urban streets?
- How did the tragic events of 1968 affect the nation?

MAIN IDEA

Gains in civil rights came so slowly that some African Americans rejected nonviolence and called for more radical action. Increases in social unrest culminated in 1968 with the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy.

KEY TERMS

Nation of Islam
black nationalism
black power
de jure segregation
de facto segregation

TAKING NOTES

As you read, prepare an outline of this section. Use Roman numerals to indicate the major headings of this section, capital letters for subheadings, and numbers for the supporting details.

- I. Malcolm X and Black Nationalism
 - A. Black Nationalism
 - B. Opposition to Integration
 1. Malcolm X rejects ideas of integration and nonviolent protest.
 2. _____
- II. The Black Power Movement
 - A. _____



VIEWING HISTORY Author James Baldwin wrote movingly of the black experience. **Identifying Central Issues** What did Baldwin foresee happening to African Americans in the 1960s?

Setting the Scene James Baldwin's essays and novels included powerful descriptions of the African American experience that touched both black and white Americans deeply. As a strong voice for the civil rights movement, Baldwin wrote about the damaging effects of segregation in the United States. He recounted "the Negro's past, of . . . death and humiliation; fear by day and night; fear as deep as the marrow of the bone; doubt that he was worthy of life, since everyone around him denied it. . . ."

In 1963, in the bestseller *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin told how generations of oppression and suffering had set African Americans apart but had also made them stronger. Now, he said, African Americans were tired of promises. Their anger was ready to erupt. As Baldwin put it, "The Negro himself no longer believes in the good faith of white Americans—if, indeed, he ever could have."

Over time, the passage of two civil rights acts would help African Americans to win court battles that would tear down segregation. But in the meantime, African Americans still faced economic and social discrimination. Many were angry at the slow pace of change. Growing anger led to a deep divide within the civil rights movement.

Malcolm X and Black Nationalism

Outside the mainstream civil rights movement, more radical and militant political leaders emerged. The most well known of these was Malcolm X, born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. His father, a Baptist minister who spread the "back-to-Africa" message of Marcus Garvey, died when Little was a child. Growing up in ghettos in Detroit, Boston, and New York, Little turned to crime. At age 20, he was arrested for burglary and served seven years in prison. While in jail he joined the **Nation of Islam**, a group often called the Black Muslims. Viewing white society as oppressive, it preached black separation and self-help.

Black Nationalism Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, taught that Allah (the Muslim name for God) would bring about a “Black Nation,” a union among all nonwhite peoples. According to Elijah Muhammad, one of the keys to self-knowledge was knowing one’s enemy. For him, the enemy of the Nation of Islam was white society.

Members of the Nation of Islam did not seek change through political means but waited for Allah to create the Black Nation. In the meantime, they tried to lead righteous lives and worked hard to become economically self-sufficient.

Released from prison in 1952, Malcolm Little changed his name to Malcolm X. (The name Little, he said, had come from slaveowners.) He spent the next 12 years as a minister of the Nation of Islam, winning followers with his fiery speeches. He spread the ideas of **black nationalism**, a belief in the separate identity and racial unity of the African American community.

Opposition to Integration Malcolm X disagreed with both the tactics and the goals of the early civil rights movement. He called the March on Washington the “Farce on Washington,” and voiced his irritation at “all of this non-violent, begging-the-white-man kind of dying . . . all of this sitting-in, sliding-in, wading-in, eating-in, diving-in, and all the rest.” Instead of preaching brotherly love, he rejected ideas of integration. Asking why anyone would want to join white society, he noted:

“No sane black man really wants integration! No sane white man really wants integration! No sane black man really believes that the white man ever will give the black man anything more than token integration. No! The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches that for the black man in America the only solution is complete separation from the white man. . . . The American black man should be focusing his effort toward building his own businesses, and decent homes for himself. As other ethnic groups have done, let the black people, wherever possible, however possible, patronize their own kind, hire their own kind, and start in those ways to build up the black race’s ability to do for itself. That’s the only way the American black man is ever going to get respect.”

—Malcolm X

Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad came to disagree about many things, including political action. In 1964, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam and formed his own religious organization, called Muslim Mosque, Inc. He then made a pilgrimage, or religious journey, to Mecca, the holy city of Islam, in Saudi Arabia.

Seeing millions of Muslims of all races worshipping together peacefully had a profound effect on Malcolm X. It changed his views about separatism and hatred of white people. When he returned, he was ready to work with other civil rights leaders and even with white Americans on some issues. It seemed as if Malcolm X might become one of the leaders in a unified civil rights movement. His change of heart, however, had earned him some enemies.

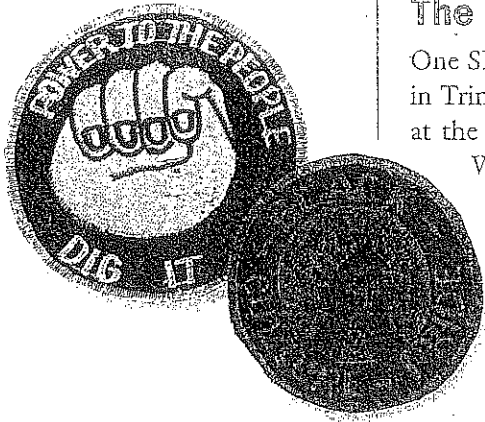
Malcolm X had only nine months to spread his new beliefs. In February 1965, he was shot to death at a rally in New York. Three members of the Nation of Islam were charged with the murder. Malcolm X’s message of black nationalism lived on, however. He particularly influenced younger members of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.



VIEWING HISTORY Malcolm X was a leading minister of the Nation of Islam until 1964. **Making Comparisons** How did black nationalism differ from other kinds of civil rights activism?

READING CHECK

How did Malcolm X’s views change after his pilgrimage in 1964?



The symbols of the black power movement reflected its call for a strong African American community.

VIEWING HISTORY Members of the Black Panthers marched in New York City in 1968 to protest the trial of Huey P. Newton. Newton had been convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the death of a police officer. His conviction was later overturned. **Identifying Central Issues** What efforts did the Black Panthers make to improve the quality of life in black communities?

The Black Power Movement

One SNCC leader who heard Malcolm's message was Stokely Carmichael. Born in Trinidad, in the West Indies, in 1941, Carmichael came to the United States at the age of 11 and was soon involved in protests. At Howard University in Washington, D.C., he and other students became actively involved in the Washington chapter of SNCC.

SNCC Shifts Gears As Carmichael rose to SNCC leadership, the group became more radical. After being beaten and jailed for his participation in demonstrations, he was tired of nonviolent protest. He called on SNCC workers to carry guns for self-defense. He wanted to make the group exclusively black, rejecting white activists.

The split in the civil rights movement became obvious in June 1966. At a protest march in Greenwood, Mississippi, while King's followers were singing "We Shall Overcome," Carmichael's supporters drowned them out with "We Shall Overturn." Then Carmichael, just out of jail, jumped into the back of an open truck to challenge the moderate leaders:

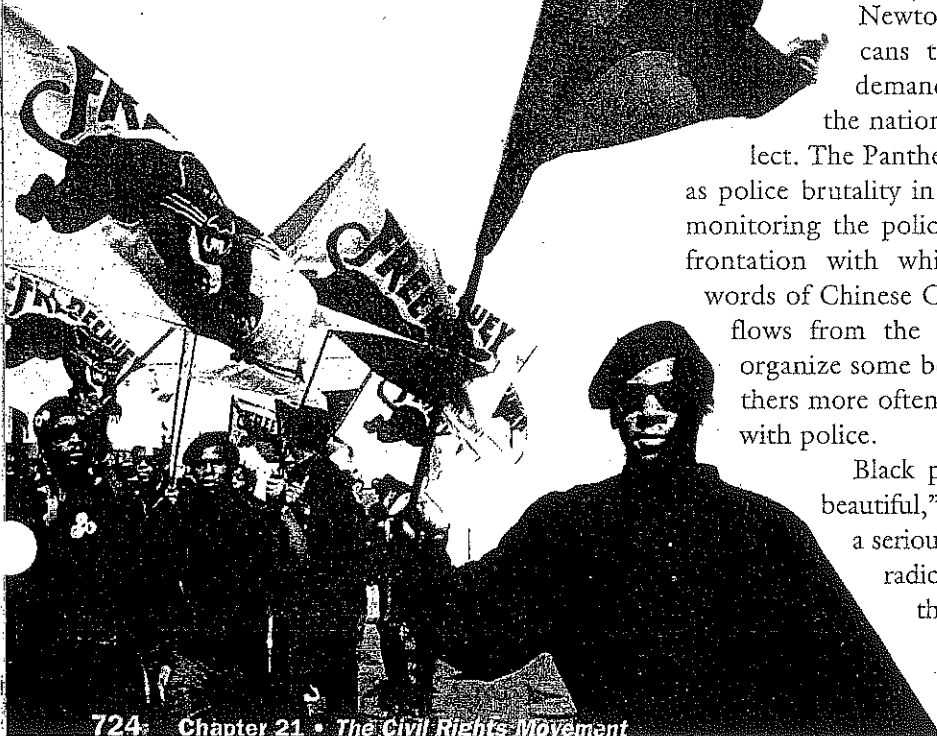
"This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested, and I ain't going to jail no more! . . . The only way we gonna stop them white men from whip-pin' us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years—and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start saying now is 'black power!'"

—Stokely Carmichael, public address, June 1966

As he repeated "We . . . want . . . black . . . power!" the audience excitedly echoed the new slogan. Carmichael's idea of **black power** resonated with many African Americans. It was a call "to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community . . . to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and support those organizations."

The Black Panthers In the fall of 1966, a new militant political party, the Black Panthers, was formed by activists Bobby Seale and Huey Newton. The Panthers wanted African Americans to lead their own communities. They demanded that the federal government rebuild the nation's ghettos to make up for years of neglect. The Panthers also wanted to combat what they saw as police brutality in the ghettos. Often, as a result of their monitoring the police, they became engaged in direct confrontation with white authorities. Newton repeated the words of Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong: "Power flows from the barrel of a gun." Although they did organize some beneficial community programs, the Panthers more often found themselves in violent encounters with police.

Black power gave rise to the slogan "Black is beautiful," which fostered racial pride. It also led to a serious split in the civil rights movement. More radical groups like SNCC and the Black Panthers moved away from the NAACP and other more moderate organizations.



Riots in the Streets

The early civil rights movement focused on battling *de jure* segregation, racial separation created by law. Changes in the law, however, did not address the more difficult issue of *de facto* segregation, the separation caused by social conditions such as poverty. *De facto* segregation was a fact of life in most American cities, not just in the South.

There were no "whites only" signs above water fountains in northern cities, yet discrimination continued in education, housing, and employment. African Americans were kept out of well-paying jobs, job-training programs, and suburban housing. Inner-city schools were run-down and poorly equipped.

Residents of ghetto neighborhoods viewed police officers as dangerous oppressors, not upholders of justice. James Baldwin remarked that a white police officer in one of these neighborhoods was "like an occupying soldier in a bitterly hostile country." Eventually, frustration and anger boiled over into riots and looting. In 1964, riots ravaged Rochester, New York; New York City; and several cities in New Jersey.

One of the most violent riots occurred in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts. On August 11, 1965, police in Watts pulled over a 21-year-old black man for drunk driving. At first the interaction was friendly among the police, the suspect, and a crowd of Watts residents that had gathered. When the suspect resisted arrest, however, one police officer panicked and began swinging his riot baton. The crowd was outraged, and the scene touched off six days of rioting.

Thousands of people filled the streets, burning cars and stores, stealing merchandise, and sniping at firefighters. When the national guard and local police finally gained control, 34 people were dead and more than a thousand had been injured. Violence spread to other cities in 1966 and 1967. Cries of "Burn, baby, burn" replaced the gentler slogans of the earlier civil rights movement.

A concerned federal government set up a special National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, headed by former Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, to investigate. In 1968, the Kerner Commission report declared flatly that the riots were an explosion of the anger that had been smoldering in the inner-city ghettos. It declared that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."

Tragedy Strikes in 1968

In the troubled decade of the 1960s, the most shattering year was 1968. A series of tragic events hit with such force that, month by month, the nation seemed to be coming apart. Against a backdrop of domestic violence, chaos, and confrontation, many Americans began to believe that the chance of achieving peaceful social change through political activism was hopeless.

For many Americans, the memory of President Kennedy's assassination in 1963 was still vivid and haunting five years later. They looked to other leaders to carry on the spirit and idealism of the Kennedy years. But in 1968, people's hopes were again shattered by the burst of bullets from assassins' guns.

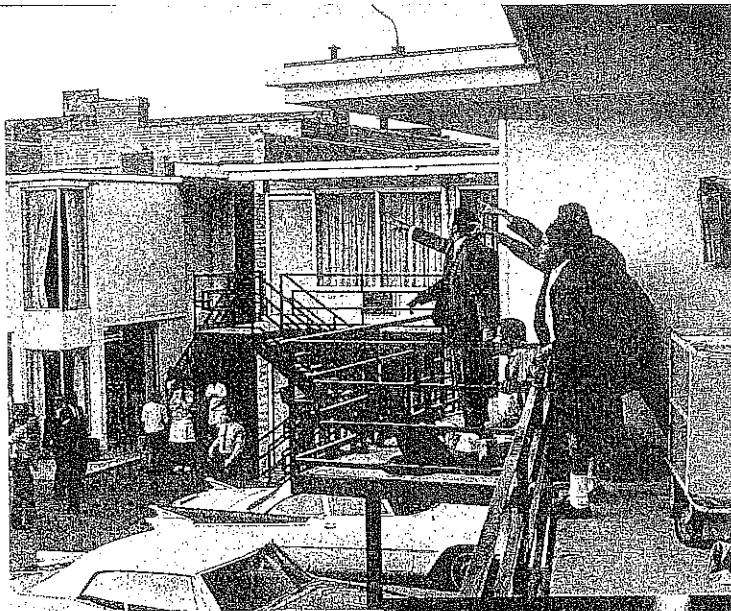
Martin Luther King, Jr., Is Assassinated In 1968, Dr. King turned his attention to economic issues. Convinced that poverty bred violence, he broadened his approach to attack economic injustice. Calling his new crusade the

Focus on ECONOMICS

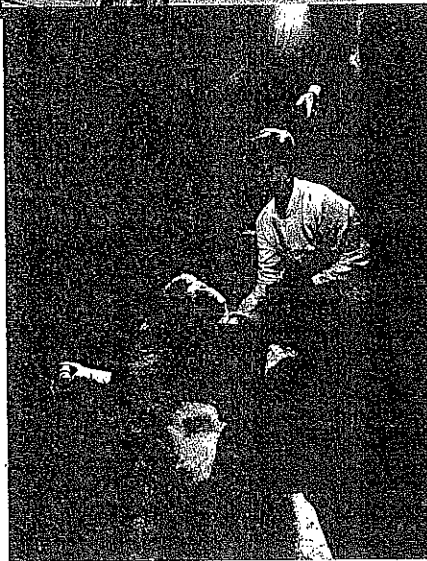
De facto Challenges The fight against *de facto* segregation faced different challenges than the fight against *de jure* segregation. One problem was that the civil rights movement lost much of its political support as the Nixon administration assumed power in 1969. Another had to do with changes taking place within the African American community. Not all civil rights organizations joined in this fight. Some activists believed that the real struggle was against legal barriers and not against residential patterns. Because there was less solidarity among civil rights groups, protests lost much of their strength.

African American solidarity was also weakened as a result of the increasing number of black Americans who had "made it" by the early 1970s. Many began moving to suburbs, attending college, and obtaining better jobs. As a result, some African Americans became disconnected from the intense struggle with poverty in the city ghettos.

Overall, the statistics looked promising. The number of black Americans living in poverty decreased from more than 40 percent in 1959 to about 20 percent in 1968. Between 1960 and 1977, the number of African Americans enrolled in college increased by 500 percent. Yet, for those African Americans living in inner cities, conditions had not improved. For example, in 1970, 60 percent of African Americans living in cities had low-level service jobs, compared to 33 percent of white Americans also living in cities.



VIEWING HISTORY Assassinations in 1968 shocked the nation. Above, Martin Luther King, Jr., lies mortally wounded, while companions point frantically to the direction from which shots were fired. At right, busboy Jay Romero is the first to reach Robert Kennedy after he was shot in a hotel kitchen just after winning the California primary. **Identifying Central Issues** What effect did these murders have?



Poor People's Campaign, King began planning a Poor People's March on Washington. Traveling around the United States to mobilize support, he went to Memphis, Tennessee, in early April. There he offered his assistance to striking garbage workers who were seeking better working conditions.

King spoke eloquently, referring to threats made against his life:

"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountain top. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. . . . But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land."

—Martin Luther King, Jr., April 3, 1968

The next day, as King stood on the balcony of his motel, a bullet fired from a high-powered rifle tore into him. An hour later, King was dead.

King's assassination sparked violent reactions across the nation. In an outburst of rage and frustration, some African Americans rioted, setting fires and looting stores in more than 120 cities. The riots,

and the police response to them, left close to 50 people dead. President Johnson ordered flags on federal buildings to be flown at half mast to honor King, but it took more than 50,000 troops to quell the violence. For many Americans of all races, King's death eroded faith in the idea of nonviolent change.

Robert F. Kennedy Is Assassinated Senator Robert F. Kennedy, who had served his brother John as Attorney General, was another major crusader for civil rights. In 1968, he decided to enter the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. President Johnson had lost support from many Democrats because of America's involvement in the Vietnam War. After Senator Eugene McCarthy lost to Johnson in the New Hampshire primary by only six percentage points, Kennedy realized that Johnson was vulnerable. On March 16, Kennedy entered the campaign. His candidacy received a critical boost on March 31, when Johnson stunned the nation by announcing that he would not run for a second term as President.

In the years since his brother's death, Robert Kennedy had reached out to many Americans, including Chicanos in the California farm fields, Native Americans in the Southwest, African Americans in the Mississippi delta, and poor white families in New York tenements. Opposed to the Vietnam War, he condemned the killing of both Americans and Vietnamese. He criticized the Johnson administration for financing a war instead of funding the programs needed to help the poor and disadvantaged at home.

Kennedy spent the spring of 1968 battling McCarthy in the Democratic primary elections. On June 4, he won a key victory in California's primary. But just

READING CHECK

Why had Robert Kennedy represented a source of hope for many Americans?

after midnight, after giving his victory speech in a Los Angeles hotel, Robert Kennedy was shot by an assassin. He died the next day.

When the shooting was reported, several campaign workers who had watched the speech on TV were waiting for Kennedy in his hotel room. One of them, civil rights leader John Lewis, later said, "We all just fell to the floor and started crying. To me that was like the darkest, saddest moment." Kennedy's death ended many people's hopes for an inspirational leader who could heal the nation's wounds.

Legacy of the Movement

At times, both black and white Americans wondered whether real progress in civil rights was possible. Many young activists felt frustrated and discouraged when the movement failed to bring changes quickly. Lyndon Johnson was devastated by the violence that exploded near the end of his presidency. "How is it possible," he asked, "after all we've accomplished?" Still, the measures passed by his administration had brought tremendous change. Segregation was now illegal. Because of voter registration drives, thousands of African Americans could now vote. The power they wielded changed the nature of American political life.

Between 1970 and 1975, the number of African American elected officials rose by 88 percent. Black mayors were elected in Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Newark, New Jersey. Others served in Congress and state legislatures. In 1966, Barbara Jordan became the first African American elected to the Texas state senate since Reconstruction. Six years later she was elected to the United States Congress. Jordan noted what made the movement necessary:

"The civil rights movement called America to look at itself in a giant mirror. . . . Do the black people who were born on this soil, who are American citizens, do they really feel that this is the land of opportunity, the land of the free? . . . America had to say no."

—Texas Representative Barbara Jordan

BIOGRAPHY



In 1968, Shirley Chisholm became the first black woman elected to Congress. Running from New York's twelfth district as a Democrat, Chisholm overcame social obstacles facing both women and African Americans.

Chisholm, born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1924, had long held a deep interest in social welfare, particularly the social welfare of children. In her early 30s, Chisholm was the director for a child-care center in New York. Her career in politics began in 1964 when she was elected to the New York state assembly. Four years later she gained national attention when she won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. She would win the next six elections, serving in the House until 1983.

Her early career in politics was marked by her outspoken criticism of the seniority system in Congress and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Her major work involved sponsoring legislation that would help the urban poor and increase funding for child welfare programs.

Section

5

Assessment

READING COMPREHENSION

1. How did **black nationalism** reflect a change from the early days of the civil rights movement?
2. How did the Black Panthers reflect Stokely Carmichael's idea of **black power**?
3. What did the Kerner Commission conclude about the race riots occurring in American cities?
4. What impact did the 1968 assassinations have on the legacy of the civil rights movement?

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

5. **Distinguishing Fact From Opinion** Malcolm X once said that for African Americans "the only solution is complete separation from the white man." Do you believe this statement to be a fact or an opinion? Explain your answer.
6. **Writing to Persuade** Black nationalists believed that African Americans should establish separate communities. Write a brief paper defending or opposing this position.



Take It to the NET

Activity: Creating a Time Line
Do further research on the civil rights movement from 1965–1970. Create a poster-sized time line for these years, incorporating images and quotations you find in your research. Be sure to include events covered in this section. Use the links provided in the *America: Pathways to the Present* area of the following Web site for help in completing this activity.

www.phschool.com