

African Americans and the Vietnam War

“We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight...” ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Overview

Although African Americans have participated in all American wars, they have sometimes faced bitter hostility from their fellow Americans, even while risking their lives to protect American democracy. In this lesson, students will explore the complicated period of the conflict in Vietnam, focusing on the role of African Americans in the war as well as on the discrimination they simultaneously faced at home. Through class discussion, examination of an anti-war comic book, exploration of political cartoons, and review of a less commonly studied view of Martin Luther King, Jr. regarding war, students will study the various African Americans who protested the Vietnam War as well as their reasons for doing so.

Grades

High School

Materials

- “African Americans and the Vietnam War,” reading attached
- Comic book excerpt, image attached
- *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book*, by Julian Bond and TG Lewis; available at http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Exhibits/Bond/Bond.html
 - Teachers should either print a class set of this 19-page comic book to reuse with each class (a printer friendly version is available [here](#)) or provide Internet access and have students review the comic book electronically
- As an accompaniment to the comic book, teachers may also want to provide copies of the Vietnam timeline (or access to the website), located at: <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/vietnam-war-timeline>
- Political Cartoons (7 attached), additional cartoons available at http://www.aavw.org/special_features/homepage_cartoons.html
- Analyzing Political Cartoons, questions attached
- “MLK Speech On Vietnam Gripped Washington,” installment of NPR’s “Tell Me More About Black History”
 - Transcript and recording of 5-minute broadcast available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101240393>
- Excerpts from MLK’s speech “Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break Silence,” 6 excerpts attached
 - The full text and a recording of the speech is available at: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>
- “Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break Silence” Response Questions & Culminating Activity, attached
- Optional: You Tube Recording of Interview with MLK on the Mike Douglass Show:
 - Part I: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SfH2uMayks&feature=related>
 - Part II: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQIIE-WIM8&feature=related>
- Poster paper and art supplies

Essential Questions

- While African Americans were risking their lives overseas in the Vietnam conflict, what types of discrimination were they facing at home?

- Who were some of the prominent civil rights leaders during the period of the Vietnam conflict and why did many of them disagree with the war?
- What were Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideas regarding the Vietnam War and why are these ideas less widely known?
- What role should dissent play in a democracy?

Preparation

- Students should have a basic understanding of the events and history of the Vietnam War; while the comic book will provide some summarization of the events, students should already be familiar with the content.
- Prior to teaching this lesson, assign the attached reading, "African Americans and the Vietnam War," for homework.
- While this lesson deals with topics such as racism, injustice and war, it is important for students to explore such controversial history in order to have a comprehensive understanding of our nation's past and to be empowered to create a better future. In order to lead this lesson effectively and safely, teachers must have established a safe classroom culture with clear expectations of respect, open-mindedness, and civil conversation. See Carolina K-12's Database of K-12 Resources under the "[Activities](#)" section and our [Tips for Tackling Sensitive History & Controversial Current Events in the Classroom](#). Also, teachers should be clear that this lesson is not about telling them how to personally react to the concept of war; rather it is exploring how Dr. King viewed the Vietnam War as well as the concept of dissent in a time of war.

Duration

60-90 minutes (Teachers can alter which activities they include/exclude based on their time available.)

Procedure

Examining *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book*

1. As a warm-up, project the attached image of an excerpt from Julian Bond's *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book* and instruct students to silently examine the image and jot down their thoughts to the following questions:
 - What do you think you are looking at? Who created this and why? What message is this image trying to convey and what evidence makes you think this?
2. After a few minutes of silent contemplation and writing, ask students to discuss:
 - What did you notice first regarding this image? What struck you?
 - What do the signs say? What do they mean?
 - Whose voice is the caption representing? Why might this group of people feel this way?
 - Who has an idea regarding what message is being conveyed?
 - While African Americans were risking their lives overseas in the Vietnam conflict, what types of discrimination were they facing at home? (Remind previous periods of history the class has studied when this was also the case, such as the Double V Campaign of World War II.)
 - How does this image relate to the reading you did for homework? (Use this as a transition to review the homework reading and discussion questions.)
 - Students may need a summary of what the **Great Society programs** were, which are briefly mentioned in the homework article. Let students know that the Great Society was a set of domestic programs proposed/enacted in the United States on the initiative of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Two main goals of the Great Society social reforms were the elimination of poverty and racial injustice. New major spending programs that addressed education, medical care, urban problems, and transportation were launched during this period. The Great Society in scope and sweep resembled the New Deal domestic agenda of Franklin D. Roosevelt, but differed sharply in types of programs enacted.
 - Does anyone have an idea of what this is we are looking at? When might this have been created and where might this have been found?

3. Let students know the image is actually one frame from a comic book called *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book*, which was written by Julian Bond in 1967. Julian Bond was one of eight African Americans elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1965, following the passage of civil rights legislation, such as the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**. On January 10, 1966, however, the Georgia state representatives voted 184-12 not to seat him because he publicly opposed the U.S.'s policy in Vietnam, as well as publically endorsed the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC)** opposition to the Vietnam War. The Georgia representatives also disliked Bond's stated sympathy for persons who were "unwilling to respond to a military **draft**." A U.S. District Court panel ruled 2-1 that the Georgia House had not violated any federal rights. However, in 1966, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled 9-0, in the case of *Bond v. Floyd* (385 U.S. 116), that the Georgia House of Representatives had denied Bond his right of freedom of speech and were required to seat him. Further discuss:
 - Given what you read and what we've discussed thus far, why might Bond have opposed the Vietnam War? Why might he have supported people who dodged the draft?
 - What do you already know about SNCC?
 - Remind students that SNCC was one of the principal organizations of the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. The organization emerged from a series of student meetings led by **Ella Baker** held at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina in April 1960. SNCC grew into a large organization with many supporters. In the late 1960s, led by leaders such as **Stokely Carmichael**, SNCC focused on "**black power**", and protesting against the Vietnam War. In 1969, SNCC officially changed its name to the Student National Coordinating Committee; it passed out of existence in the 1970s.
 - Why do you think SNCC was simultaneously focused on the rights of African Americans as well as protesting the war in Vietnam?
 - As a member of the GA House of Representatives, do you think Bond had a right to voice his anti-war and anti-draft sentiments, as well as to support the stance of the SNCC? Why or why not?
 - What role should dissent play in a democracy?
 - Why do you think 184 Representatives voted to throw him out based on his vocal anti-war stance? Do you believe something like this could occur today? Why or why not?
4. Tell students that they are going to spend approximately 20 minutes reading and discussing Julian Bond's *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book* in small groups (3-4). (Teachers can either print a class set of this 19-page comic book to reuse among students, or alternatively can provide Internet access and have students review the comic book electronically.) Optionally, teachers may also want to provide access (via a print out or direct Internet access) to ANCHOR's timeline of Vietnam events, located at: <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/vietnam-war-timeline>. This timeline can serve as a good reference of historical events as students read.
5. Pass out the attached "Discussion Questions for *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book*." While teachers can instruct all groups to discuss/answer all 26 questions, teachers can alternatively assign groups certain numbers to answer; each group can then report its collective answers back during the class discussion of the comic book. (Another option is for teachers to instruct group members to divvy up all 26 questions among their group, with each student assuming responsibility for answering certain numbers then sharing the answers with the remainder of their group mates.)
6. Teachers should also give students some preparation for the material the comic book will address. Let students know that they will encounter the term "Negro," and that while this was the common way to refer to African Americans during the 60s, the term is not used today. Also, remind students that the text they are reading represents the opinion of Julian Bond – students may find themselves agreeing and/or disagreeing with the message of the comic book, either of which are acceptable and encouraged. Let students know they will have the opportunity to discuss their opinions of the comic book during the class discussion later.

7. Once students have read and discussed the comic book in their small groups, come back together as a class and have groups report their thoughts on the questions they addressed. Further discuss:
 - Is this comic book propaganda? If so, what kind and why?
 - What do you think Bond hoped this comic book would do? What was his purpose? What makes you think this?
 - Bond focuses on the people who did not support the war, and the various reasons he did not support the war. On the other hand, who may have supported the Vietnam War and why? What arguments can you note for why the Vietnam conflict was necessary?
 - Did any particular frames of the comic book connect to the reading you did for homework? Which frames and how so?
 - Bond notes many African Americans who did not support the Vietnam conflict. According to the comic and your homework reading, why might an African American in particular have had more reason to disapprove of the war?
 - What is your opinion of dissent during times of war? Does dissent mean that you do not support those fighting the war? Why or why not?
 - Do you have any particular questions about any frame of the comic, or the Vietnam conflict in general?

Fighting for a Denied Democracy: Examining Political Cartoons

8. Next, to further explore the civil rights injustices to African Americans during the Vietnam time period, give each group one of the attached political cartoons for evaluation. Also provide students with a copy of the attached “Analyzing Political Cartoons” questions. Once students have discussed their cartoon, have them share the message of the cartoon and summarize their discussion with the class. Further discuss:
 - According to these cartoons, were African Americans able to enjoy all of the rights of democracy everywhere in the US? Explain.
 - Why do you think many black soldiers enlisted to fight in Vietnam for democracy, even while they were being denied democracy at home?
 - What did it take to correct such injustices during this time period?
 - Share the following quote with students and ask that they share their interpretation to further the discussion: “These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. We in the West must support these revolutions.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Who in particular do you think MLK was referring to and why?
 - In what ways could his comment also be applied to what was taking place in the US during the Vietnam period?
 - What are some ways to realize democracy and ensure it lives up to its potential today?

Beyond “I Have a Dream” – King’s Views on Vietnam

9. Next, ask students to remember who the first civil rights activist was that Bond mentioned in his comic book as being against the Vietnam War. Ask students to share what they already know about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Also ask how often they have learned about King’s views regarding Vietnam, as compared to how often they have learned about him in the context of civil rights, or his famous speech, “I Have a Dream.” Typically, our understanding of Dr. King is limited to a media-generated image of a peaceful and eloquent civil rights leader. While he can certainly be characterized in this way, his breadth as a scholar, leader, and activist was also much more than what many people are aware of. Many of Dr. King’s philosophical and (what some would consider) radical views are rarely cited in textbooks or in the clips played on television throughout various holidays. Tell students that one issue Dr. King spoke out about but is lesser known is his anti-war stance in regards to Vietnam, as well as his criticism of America’s international policies.

10. Tell students that while Dr. King gave many memorable speeches throughout his life, including “I Have a Dream,” they are going to spend some time focusing on a lesser-known speech that was considered quite revolutionary for its time. The speech was called “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence.”
11. As an introduction to the speech, tell students you are going to play a short 5-minute excerpt from NPR, in which this speech is discussed and several actual excerpts from the original speech are played: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101240393>. (If possible, teachers should also project the transcript of the excerpt, available at the same site and attached.) After playing the clip for students, discuss:
- Why do you think Dr. King’s views regarding Vietnam, and his anti-war stance, are less well-known? Why is this speech in particular not as popular as other speeches, such as “I Have a Dream?”
 - Why do you think this speech was considered “revolutionary?” If someone gave a similar speech today, perhaps pertaining to America’s conflicts in the Middle East, would it also be considered revolutionary? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think Dr. King’s “radical presence” has largely been forgotten today? Why are his more controversial views less discussed in textbooks?
 - Kai notes that Dr. King “said that we don’t have to wait for the oppressors to set the timetable for liberation; that’s something that we decide.” Why was this a radical idea in the 60s? (Discuss with students how, as Kai Wright mentions, people constantly said, “you’re asking for too much, too fast.” There was a “be patient” mentality when it came to civil rights and issues of social justice, but in King’s mind, and rightfully so, one more second of such injustices was far too long to wait.)
 - What does it say about Dr. King’s character for speaking his views regarding the war, even though it was an unpopular view that angered many? In general, why do you think speaking out against war is viewed so controversially?
 - What do you think Dr. King meant by “silence is betrayal?”
 - What is Dr. King referring to when he calls for a “radical revolution of values?”
 - What connections can you make between this history and today? Dr. King called for moving from a “thing-oriented society” to a “person-oriented society.” What did he mean by this? Do you think this transition has taken place today? Are we currently a “thing oriented” or “people oriented” society? What makes you think this?
12. Next, have students return to their groups and provide each group with one of the attached excerpts from MLK’s “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence.” (Six excerpts are attached.) Also give each student the attached handout of questions and instruct students to read their excerpt together then discuss the questions provided.
13. After students have completed their discussion, either individually or with their group members, students should complete the culminating activity, in which they highlight what they have learned regarding African Americans, civil rights, and the Vietnam war by creating a flyer/poster for MLK’s speech regarding Vietnam. The final flyer can be completed on regular drawing paper, or teachers may want to provide chart paper and instruct students to create poster-sized flyers. Encourage students to be creative, but accurate to the time period. (This can be completed for homework if not finished in class.)
- **Optional:** Teachers may also want to show excerpts from the November 2, 1967 interview with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Mike Douglass Show, during which he discusses his views on the Vietnam War. (Both segments are around 7 minutes each.) This is also a good opportunity for students to experience Dr. King beyond his famous “I Have a Dream Speech,” since the interview is a more intimate look at his views on Vietnam. (Since many school districts block the use of YouTube, teachers should test the access availability or download the interview prior to class.)
- Part I: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SfH2uMayks&feature=related>
 - Part II: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQIE-WIM8&feature=related>

Possible questions to discuss after viewing:

- How does Dr. King believe loyalty should be measured?
- Do you agree with Dr. King that the United States abused its power in the conflict with Vietnam? Explain.
- Should governments admit it when they make mistakes? Why or why not? Does Dr. King believe governments should admit mistakes? Explain.
- Do you think Dr. King would characterize himself as patriotic? Why or why not? Is he expressing support for the troops in your opinion? Explain. Can one express disagreement for a war, but still express admiration for the troops? (Discuss with students that while some may feel dissent in a time of war is dangerous and unpatriotic, others believe that dissent is the backbone of a true democracy, and the most patriotic thing you can do.)
- Why did some people during this time feel that Dr. King was endangering the Civil Rights Movement? Was he?
- Dr. King comments, "The measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and moments of convenience, but where he stands in moments of challenge and moments of controversy." What message is he trying to convey? How does this message relate to his stance on Vietnam?
- What does Dr. King mean when he says a transformation is needed in terms of our thinking, particularly in terms of peace?
- Why does Dr. King believe all bombings should be halted? Do you agree? Explain.

- 14.** Once students have completed their flyers/posters, teachers may want to have them hang their work around the room. In order of the numbered excerpts, have each group report back to the class regarding the excerpt assigned to them and allow students to do a "gallery walk," viewing each other's posters/flyers.

African Americans and the Vietnam War

African Americans have served in every war waged by the United States. Throughout the nation's history, African American soldiers, sailors, and marines have vastly contributed to America's military efforts.

From the Civil War through the Korean War, **segregated** African American units, usually officered by whites, performed in both combat and support capacities. In 1948, President Harry Truman ordered the military establishment to **desegregate**. Although the Navy and Air Force accomplished integration by 1950, the Army, with the vast majority of African American servicemen, did not achieve desegregation until after the Korean conflict. Vietnam, then, marked the first major combat deployment of an integrated military and the first time since the turn of the century that African American participation was actually encouraged.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy reactivated the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces. Chaired by attorney Gerhard Gesell, and known as the **Gesell Committee**, the panel explored ways to draw qualified African Americans into military service. In 1964 African Americans represented approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population but less than 9 percent of the nation's men in arms. The committee found uneven promotion, token integration, restricted opportunities in the National Guard and Reserves, and **discrimination** on military bases and their surrounding communities as causes for low African American enlistment. Before the government could react to the committee's report, the explosion of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia changed the problem. An expanded military, a **discriminatory draft**, and other government programs brought not only increased African American participation but also accusations of new forms of discrimination.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam unfolded against the domestic backdrop of the **civil rights movement**. From the outset, the use, or alleged misuse, of African American troops brought charges of **racism**. Civil rights leaders and other critics, including the formidable **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, described the Vietnam conflict as racist—"a white man's war, a black man's fight." King maintained that black youths represented a disproportionate share of early draftees and that African Americans faced a much greater chance of seeing combat.

The draft did pose a major concern. Selective Service regulations offered **deferments** for college attendance and a variety of essential civilian occupations that favored middle- and upper- class whites. The vast majority of draftees were poor, undereducated, and urban—blue-collar workers or unemployed. This reality struck hard in the African American community. Furthermore, African Americans were woefully underrepresented on local **draft boards**; in 1966 blacks accounted for slightly more than 1 percent of all draft board members, and seven state boards had no black representation at all.

"**Project 100,000**," a **Great Society** program launched in 1966, attempted to enhance the opportunities of underprivileged youths from poverty-stricken urban areas by offering more lenient military entrance requirements. It largely failed. Although more than 350,000 men enlisted under Project 100,000 during the remainder of the war, 41 percent were African American and 40 percent drew combat assignments. Casualty rates among these soldiers were twice those of other entry categories. Few Project 100,000 inductees received training that would aid their military advancement or create better opportunities for civilian life.

African Americans comprised a disproportionate number of combat troops, many of whom had **voluntarily enlisted** to risk their life for the country:

- Although they made up less than 10 percent of American men in arms and about 13 percent of the U.S. population between 1961 and 1966, they accounted for almost 20 percent of all combat-related deaths in Vietnam during that period.
- In 1965 alone, African Americans represented almost one-fourth of those killed in action in the Army.

- In 1968, African Americans, who made up roughly 12 percent of Army and Marine total strengths, frequently contributed half the men in front-line combat units, especially in rifle squads and fire teams.

Under heavy criticism, Army and Marine commanders worked to lessen black casualties after 1966, and by the end of the conflict, African American combat deaths amounted to approximately 12 percent—more in line with national population figures. Final casualty estimates do not support the assertion that African Americans suffered disproportionate losses in Vietnam, but this in no way diminishes the fact that they bore a heavy share of the fighting burden, especially early in the conflict.

Destructive **riots** in the Watts district of Los Angeles and in Harlem had negative effects on the military, but the widespread violent reaction to the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King brought the greatest racial turmoil to the armed forces. Racial strife became most evident in rear areas and on domestic installations. At the Navy base at Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of Vietnam (RVN), white sailors donned Ku Klux Klan-like outfits, burned crosses, and raised the Confederate flag. African American prisoners rioted at the U.S. Army stockade at Long Binh, RVN; one white soldier was killed and several others were wounded during the upheaval, which spread over weeks. The Marine base at Camp Lejeune and the Army's Fort Benning were among the important domestic posts to witness serious racial problems.

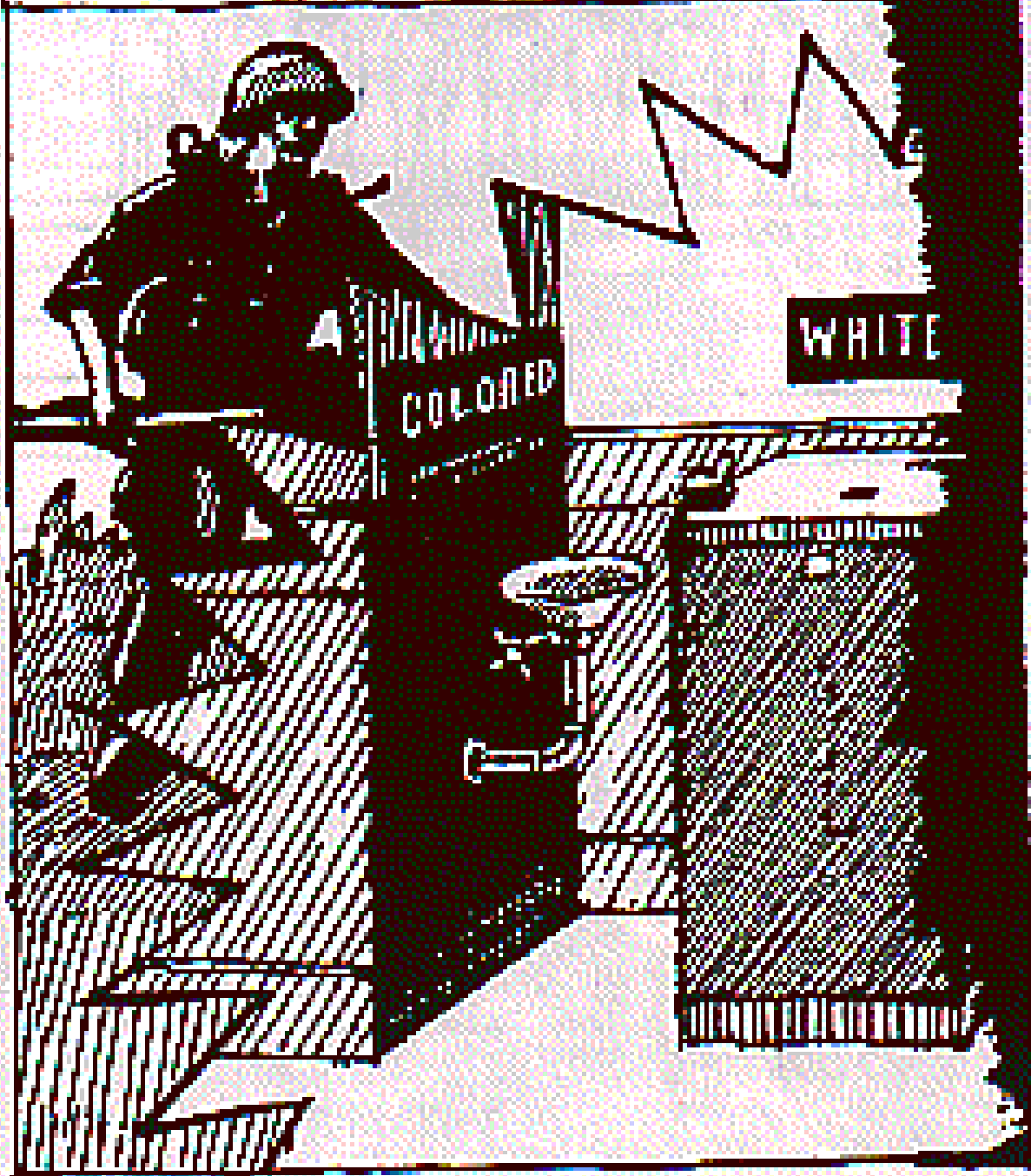
African Americans played a major role in Vietnam and, in the process, changed the complexion of the U.S. Armed Forces. African American servicemen were well-trained, highly motivated professionals; some 20 received the Medal of Honor, and several became general officers. Despite the likelihood of seeing hazardous duty, they reenlisted at substantially higher rates than whites. In 1964 blacks represented less than 9 percent of all U.S. Armed Forces; by 1976 they made up more than 15 percent of all men in arms. Although the percentage of African American officers doubled between 1964 and 1976, they still accounted for less than 4 percent of the total.

Source: *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*

Answer on notebook paper:

1. The article notes that Vietnam was the first major military engagement where troops were integrated and African American participation was encouraged. How do you imagine that this impacted the troops and the army as a whole?
2. According to the Gesell Committee, why were African Americans initially not enlisting in the war effort?
3. What evidence supports the argument that the draft was discriminatory?
4. Why do you think Dr. King characterized the Vietnam War as a “a white man's war, a black man's fight?” The slogan “a rich man’s war, a poor man’s fight” has also been used to describe Vietnam. What message do such slogans convey?
5. What was the goal of Project 100,000? Out of the 41% of African Americans who enlisted, what percentage was put into combat?
6. What statistics serve as evidence that African Americans made up an unfair majority of combat troops?

**ONE SAID "WHY ARE WE ALWAYS FIRST
CITIZENS ON THE BATTLEFIELD, AND SECOND
CLASS CITIZENS AT HOME?"**



Discussion Questions
Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book
by Julian Bond

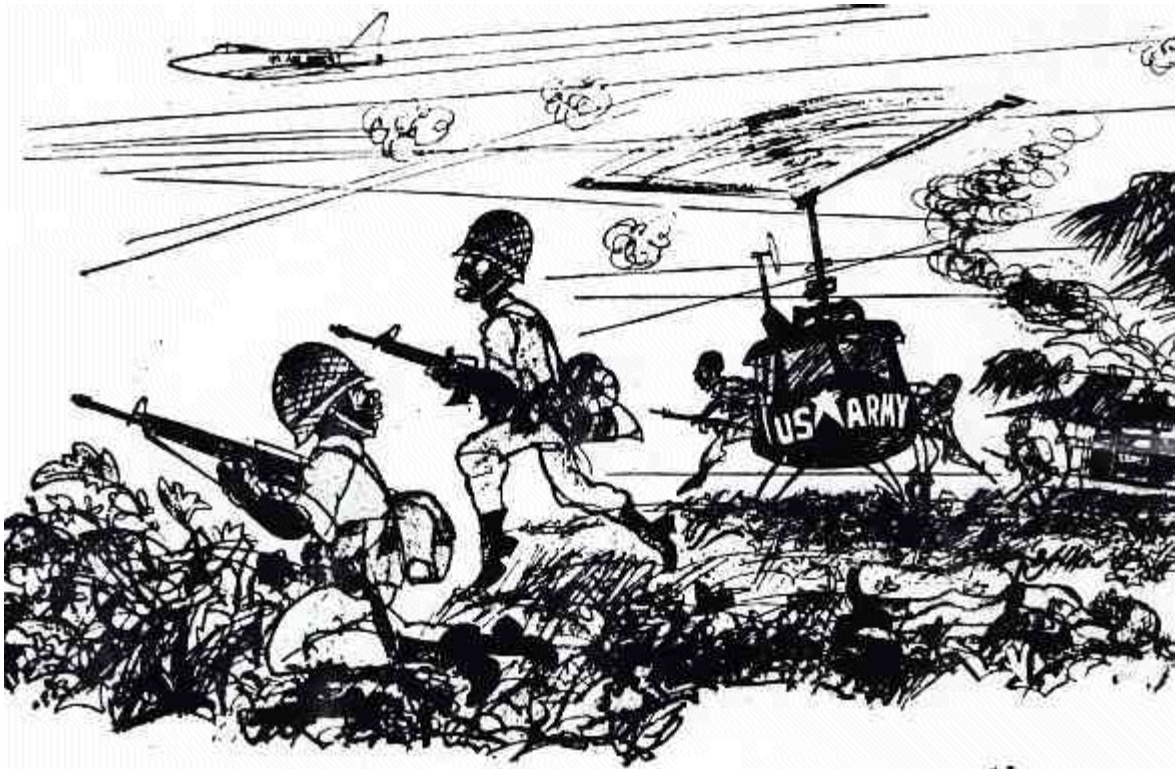
1. Who are the various people and groups that Bond notes are against the war in Vietnam on pages 1-3 of the comic? Note anything you already know about the groups or people mentioned:
2. Why do you think groups such as this opposed the war?
3. On page four, a question regarding African Americans is posed: "Why should we fight for a country that has never fought for us?" Why might African Americans during the Vietnam War era have felt that American didn't fight for them? What particular circumstances (from laws to societal "norms" of the time) were at play that likely contributed to this feeling?
4. Page 4 mentions the necessity of fighting for free elections in the states of Mississippi and Alabama, rather than doing so overseas in Vietnam. What historical reality is this caption referring to? How did this reality lead many African Americans to believe that the U.S. policies were hypocritical?
5. What statistic does Bond note on page 5? Based on this statistic, write a statement regarding African Americans and the Vietnam War:
6. Why does Bond say that people in Vietnam "want to be left alone by everyone?"
7. What was taking place in Vietnam while civil war took place between America's North and South?
8. What change took place in Vietnam during the Second World War?
9. Who was Ho Chi Minh?
10. Bond refers to the beginning of the Indochina War in 1946. What role did the US play in this conflict?
11. Why do you think the French, even with US aid, were unsuccessful in their take over?
12. What was President Lyndon Johnson's response to America taking over the war? Do you think the author, Julian Bond, agreed with President Johnson's stance? Why or why not?
13. Why did the US not support the idea of an election in Vietnam?
14. Why do you think Eisenhower and America feared the election of Ho Chi Minh?
15. What did the US do to influence the situation in South Vietnam? Evaluate this decision.
16. What type of government was established under Ngo Dinh Diem?
17. What was the National Liberation Front?

- 18.** As the National Liberation Front began to fight against South Vietnam, how did the United States respond?
- 19.** Page 12 of the comic notes two opposing views of the communist movement in Vietnam. Summarize these two views.
- 20.** Why was the American government so afraid of Communism?
- 21.** What inconsistencies and alternating viewpoints does Bond point out on pages 13-18?
- 22.** The third frame on page 18 asks, “What do you think? Should we be fighting in Vietnam, or should we let the Vietnamese people – Catholics, Buddhists, Communists and Democrats – settle their own problems their own way?” Given that we have the benefit of historical perspective, how would you respond?
- 23.** What type of civic responsibility and participation is Bond encouraging? What frames of the comic support this?
- 24.** In the very last frame the author again asks “What do you think?” How would you respond to him?
- 25.** Overall, what message do you believe that Julian Bond is trying to convey?
- 26.** Why do you think Bond chose to write this comic book? Why do you think he picked this medium in particular?

Political Cartoons

Additional cartoons available at http://www.aavv.org/special_features/homepage_cartoons.html

Cartoon 1:



"This is proving to be excellent training for civilian life."

Cartoon 2:



"Of course I'll fight for my country -Soon as I'm the citizen of one."

Cartoon 3:



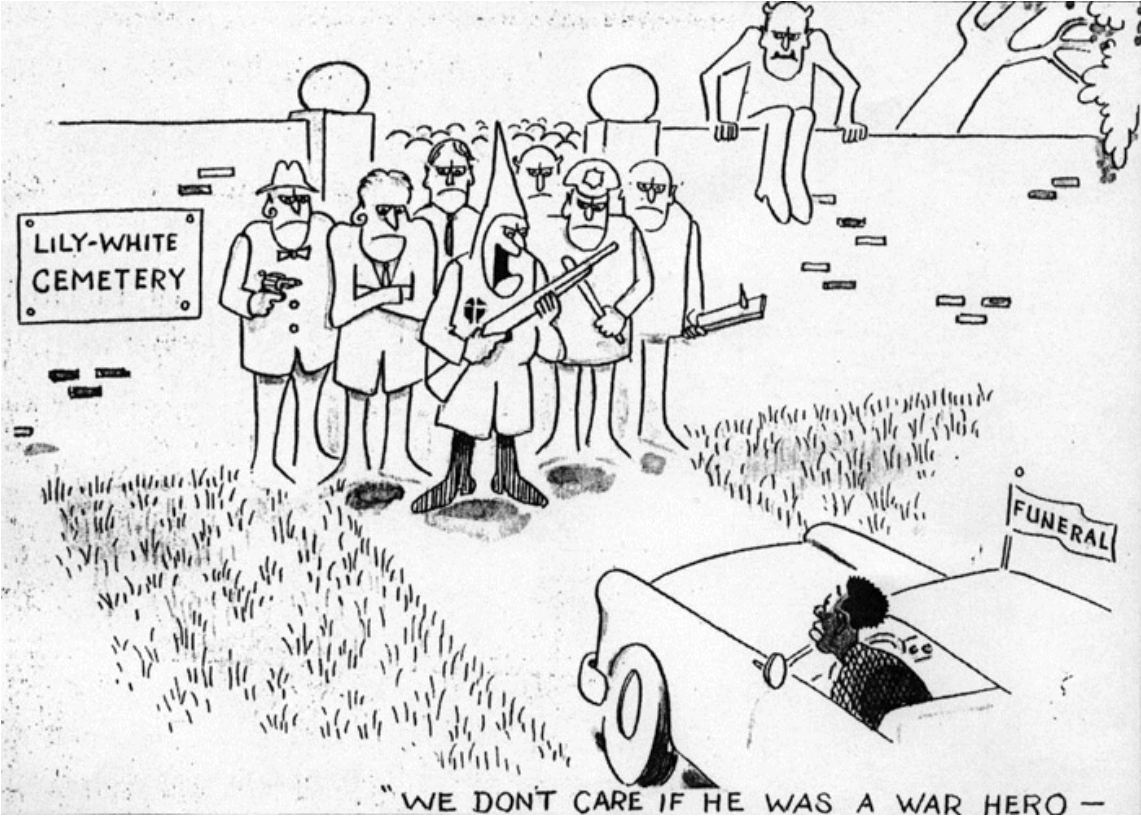
Me?...I'm only on my way to save democracy in Vietnam!

(c) 1965 by The New York Times Company.
Reprinted by permission. March 3, 1965.

Cartoon 4:



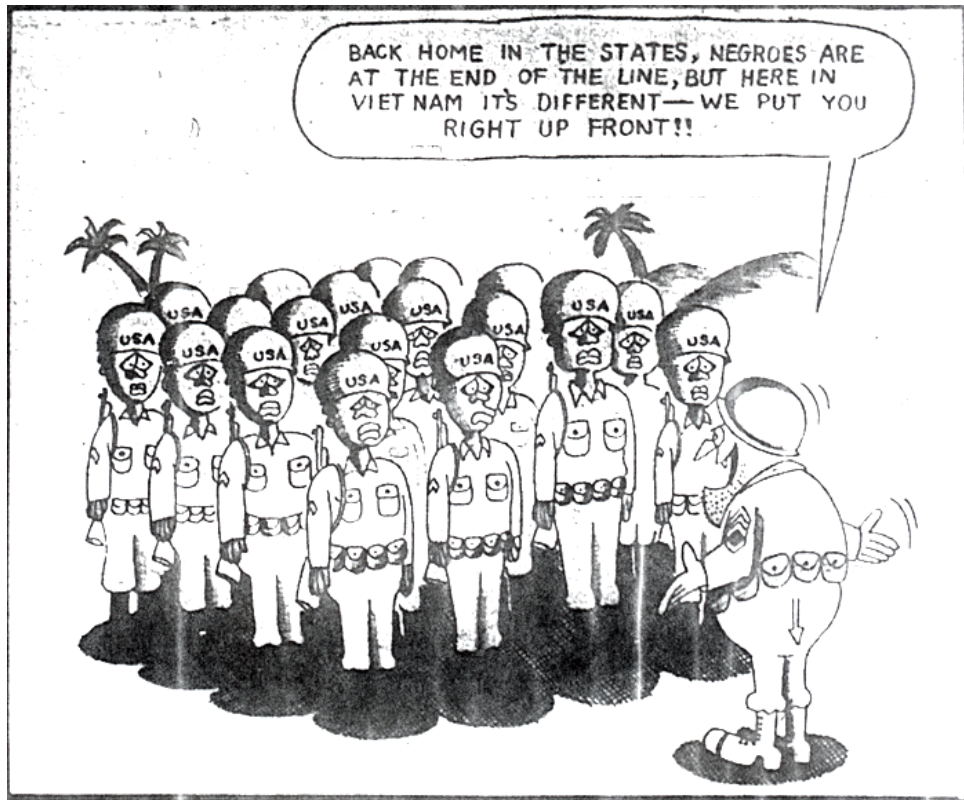
Cartoon 5:



Cartoon 6:



Cartoon 7:



Analyzing Political Cartoons

1. List the objects, people, and symbols you see in the cartoon.
 2. Identify the cartoon caption.
 3. Record any additional words or phrases used by the cartoonist.
 4. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.
 5. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
 6. What historical realities and/or injustices are being highlighted in this cartoon?
 7. What message is the artist conveying?
 8. Who would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?
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Transcript: MLK Speech on Vietnam Grippped Washington

From NPR: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101240393>

KORVA COLEMAN, host:

It's Black History Month. We've been celebrating people and events that have played key roles in this country's history with our series, Tell Me More about Black History. Editor and writer Kai Wright has been telling us some timely stories, and today, we offer our final installment. Martin Luther King Jr. gave memorable speeches throughout his life. On April 4, 1967, he delivered a speech called "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence." Although the speech is one of King's lesser-known nowadays, it was considered revolutionary for its time. Tell me more about black history, Kai.

(Soundbite of music)

KAI WRIGHT: It's really been wonderful talking to your audience about the black history and bringing some of the first-person voices into the conversation. Today, we jump ahead to the man who often headlines Black History Month: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We often hear about King's dream. Sometimes if we want to hear something edgy, we turned to his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." But one of the tragedies, I think, of our understanding of Martin Luther King today is how much we've forgotten just how much of a radical presence he was on the American scene during his time. One of his biggest challenges was that he said that we don't have to wait for the oppressors to set the timetable for liberation; that's something that we decide. And that was the way he pushed back against people that constantly said, you're asking for too much, too fast. And that was a terribly radical idea.

Similarly, I want to introduce our listeners to a speech that often gets lost in our understanding of King, and that's when he came around to speak out on the Vietnam War. He was ahead of many civil-rights leaders at the time, and indeed, he caught great deals of flack for it. President Lyndon Johnson was angry at him for it; his white allies were angry at him for it; civil-rights leaders were angry at him for it. But he said that after months and months of back and forth with his advisers that he can longer, quote, "divide my conscience." And as he says in the speech, a time comes when silence is betrayal. The section that I'd like your listeners to hear is one where he says, my opposition to the war is about something more than just Vietnam.

(Soundbite of speech, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence," April 4, 1967)

Reverend MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (Civil Rights Leader): But I wish to go on now and to say something even more disturbing. The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality...

(Soundbite of applause)

Rev. KING: And if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing clergy and laymen concern committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru; they will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia; they will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end, unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy.

(Soundbite of applause)

WRIGHT: He gives a long and detailed speech, as many of his speeches were, where he goes in to great deals of foreign impressions, about foreign policy. But he comes around and says there's something bigger here; there's something about America's need for what he calls a radical revolution of values, and he offers this passage.

(Soundbite of speech, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence," April 4, 1967)

Rev. KING: I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin...

(Soundbite of applause)

Rev. KING: We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society, when machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

WRIGHT: That's the kind of message that is deeply resonant today, still, when we're talking about not just America's presence on the world stage militarily, but our presence on the world stage culturally and the way we order our society today. It's so prophetic and offers so many lessons for listeners and for politicians as we move in to 2009 in this current era. It's a shame that that kind of thing gets lost in our history of King, and so, I thank you for letting me bring that to your audience.

(Soundbite of music)

COLEMAN: Kai Wright is editor of "The African-American Experience: Black History and Culture through Speeches, Letters, Editorials, Poems, Song and Stories." He joined us from studios in New York. To hear earlier stories in our Tell Me More about Black History series, please go to our Web site, the Tell Me More page of npr.org.

(Soundbite of music)

COLEMAN: Coming up, Louisiana's Governor Bobby Jindal gave the Republican response to President Obama's first joint-session address to Congress this week, but did his speech hit the mark? Or did it miss the point?

ARSALAN IFTIKHAR: If President Obama's speech was a homerun, touchdown or a three-pointer, Jindal's was a squeeze bunt, incomplete pass and three seconds in the lane.

COLEMAN: The Barbershop Guys are next on Tell Me More from NPR News. I'm Korva Coleman.

Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break the Silence

Excerpt from speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered on April 4, 1967, at a meeting of "Clergy and Laity Concerned" at Riverside Church in New York City

Excerpt 1-

I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join you in this meeting because I am in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization which has brought us together: Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. The recent statements of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart, and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." And that time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexed as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on.

And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movements and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: "Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King?" "Why are you joining the voices of dissent?" "Peace and civil rights don't mix," they say. "Aren't you hurting the cause of your people," they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live...

Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break the Silence

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Excerpt 2-

There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor -- both black and white -- through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated, as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. And so we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. And so we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason [for speaking out about the war] moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years -- especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they ask -- and rightly so -- what about Vietnam? They ask if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today -- my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent...

Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break the Silence

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Excerpt 3-

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read: Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that America will be led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land...

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion, my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the ideologies of the Liberation Front, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in...1945...after a combined French and Japanese occupation and before the communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony. Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not ready for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination and a government that had been established not by China - for whom the Vietnamese have no great love - but by clearly indigenous forces that included some communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam. Before the end of the war we were meeting eighty percent of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of their reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at recolonization.

After the French were defeated, it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva Agreement. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators, our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly rooted out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords, and refused even to discuss reunification with the North. The peasants watched as all this was presided over by United States' influence and then by increasing numbers of United States troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America, as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received the regular promises of peace and democracy and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs...

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Excerpt 4 -

...they [the Vietnamese] languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs.

So they go, primarily women and children and the aged. They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of -- in the crushing of the nation's only noncommunist revolutionary political force, the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.

Now there is little left to build on, save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call "fortified hamlets." The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these. Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These, too, are our brothers.

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Excerpt 5 –

Perhaps a more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation Front, that strangely anonymous group we call "VC" or "communists"? What must they think of the United States of America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem, which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the South? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the North" as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings, even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than twenty-five percent communist, and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam, and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will not have a part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them, the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation planning to build on political myth again, and then shore it up upon the power of new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition....

So, too, with Hanoi. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western words, and especially their distrust of American intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French Commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which could have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again. When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered.

Also, it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreement concerning foreign troops. They remind us that they did not begin to send troops in large numbers and even supplies into the South until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the president claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the North. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor, weak nation more than eight...thousand miles away from its shores.

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Excerpt 6 –

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called "enemy," I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words, and I quote:

Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism (unquote).

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war...

We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in the affairs of men does not remain at flood -- it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, "Too late." ...

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight...

Name: _____

**Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break the Silence
Response Questions & Culminating Activity**

Discuss the following with your group-mates and write your final answers on notebook paper:

1. Summarize the main points of this excerpt:
2. What overall message is Dr. King trying to convey in this excerpt?
3. Choose one quote that you find particularly striking, interesting, relevant, or controversial and write it here. Interpret the quote – what message is Dr. King sending?
4. Who might have agreed with Dr. King’s message in this excerpt and why?
5. Who might have disagreed with Dr. King’s message in this excerpt and why?
6. How does this excerpt connect with the information you learned in the homework reading, in Bond’s comic book, in the political cartoons viewed, etc.?
7. If you were going to give this particular excerpt a title, what would you call it and why?
8. We’ve discussed how many of King’s views, such as his anti-war sentiments, disagreement with the Vietnam War, and disapproval of many of America’s foreign policies, are often less discussed in today’s society. Why do you think this is?

Culminating Assignment:

Imagine the year is 1967 and that you are one of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s advisors. It is one week before he is to give his “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence” speech. In order to spread the word regarding the situation in Vietnam and how it relates to civil rights, as well as to solicit audience members for Dr. King’s speech, create an informational flyer or poster for the April 4, 1967 event. Flyers/posters must contain:

- Information regarding the situation in Vietnam (as learned/discussed in class)
- Information regarding civil rights during the period of Vietnam (as learned/discussed in class)
- “Teaser” information regarding King’s speech that will convince people to show up and listen (as his advisor, you would know what the speech says beforehand)
- A quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or another civil rights leader during the Vietnam era
- A visual image (this might be in comic book style, political cartoon style, a standard drawing (literal or abstract), etc.
- Accurate information regarding the date and place the speech was held
- Flyers should be creative but historically accurate