

Activity #1: Understanding the Primary Sources: What Do They Tell You?

Student Name _____

Date _____

Letter to Martin Luther King from a Group of Clergymen, April 12, 1963:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=533>

We clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "an Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama.

We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there has been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experiences of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

Signed by:

C.C.J. CARPENTER, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Alabama.

JOSEPH A. DURICK, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham

Rabbi MILTON L. GRAFMAN, Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama

Bishop PAUL HARDIN, Bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of
the Methodist Church

Bishop NOLAN B. HARMON, Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the
Methodist Church

GEORGE M. MURRAY, D.D., LL.D., Bishop Coadjutor, Episcopal Diocese of
Alabama

EDWARD V. RAMAGE, Moderator, Synod of the Alabama Presbyterian Church
in the United States

EARL STALLINGS, Pastors, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

Activity #1: Understanding the Primary Sources: What Do They Tell You?

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: As you work your way through the "Letter to Martin Luther King from a Group of Clergymen," answer the following questions in the space provided.

Questions	Answers
<p>In 1963, what two recommendations did a group of Alabama clergymen propose to resolve the racial conflict in Birmingham, Alabama?</p>	
<p>Identify two or three criticisms they gave of the political demonstrations and protests which were taking place in Birmingham.</p>	
<p>What praise did they give to "local news media and law enforcement officials" for their conduct during the demonstrations?</p>	

Name: _____ Period: _____

Questions: "Letter to Martin Luther King, Jr."

1. Who wrote the letter to Martin Luther King, Jr. while he was in jail?

2. What do they say to MLK regarding his methods of non-violent resistance?

3. How do they feel the citizens of Birmingham and its police should act?

4. What do they want the "Negro community" to do in response?

5. The author's of this document feel that when one's "rights are consistently denied" there are two methods to challenge the status quo. Name them:
 - a.

 - b.

6. How do you think MLK felt upon reading this letter in his jail cell?