

Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary

MLK, RFK, and Nonviolence as Civic Discipline

Content Focus

- This topic should focus less on inspiration and more on democratic tension.
- The stronger question is: How do leaders argue for nonviolence when many people feel anger, fear, grief, or even justification for violence?

Historical Connection

- Both MLK and RFK framed nonviolence not simply as morality, but as necessary for democratic society and civic repair.
- This connects to:
 - Protest
 - Justice
 - Law/order debates
 - Democratic participation
 - Citizenship

Question

- Is nonviolence only a moral position, or is it also a democratic strategy?

Student Objectives

Teaching: Students compare MLK and RFK documents.

Students identify:

- **Diagnosis of injustice**
- **Explanation of suffering**
- **Views on law/order**
- **Expectations for citizens**
- **Emotional tone**
- **Proposed civic action**

Possible Extension: Students debate whether nonviolence is practical, moral, strategic, or all three.

Primary Sources for Lesson

LOC Sources:

Civil Rights Era exhibition <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-era.html>

MLK "I Have a Dream" photograph <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013645765/>

MLK with leaders at March on Washington <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013649720/>

MLK press conference <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003688129/>

Letter from Birmingham Jail materials <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-era.html#obj2>



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