

KNOWLEDGE MAP: INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE OF HISTORY

SUMMARY

This unit looks at the ways that religious beliefs have influenced major historical figures of the 20th Century which led to dramatic changes in society, the effects of which are still with us today. The primary focus is how religious beliefs can increase social justice but there is also an element that evaluates non-violent protest methods used to pursue the objective of social justice.

KEY INDIVIDUALS

Martin Luther King Jnr (1929-1968)

Civil Rights campaigner in the US during segregation. **Christian**. Assassinated 1968.

Malcolm X (1925-1965)

Civil Rights campaigner in the US during segregation. **Muslim**. Assassinated 1965.

Muhammad Ali (1942-2016)

Heavy weight boxer. **Muslim**, Refused to be drafted to Vietnam war for religious and political reasons.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Campaigned for India's independence from British Empire. **Hindu**. Assassinated 1948.

Oscar Romero (1917-1980)

Christian Archbishop. El Salvador. Campaigned against government death squads. Assassinated 1980.



KEY TERMS

Segregation = Separating people by the colour of their skin. Eg Schools for white children, schools for black children.

Civil rights = The rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality.

Boycott: withdraw from commercial or social relations with (a country, organization, or person) as a punishment or protest.

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST NON-VIOLENT PROTEST

FOR: It is a 'weapon' available to all (it costs no money, so poor people can do it)

It breaks the cycle of violence and counter-violence.

It ensures that the media focus on the issue at hand rather than acts of violence.

It is an effective way of achieving public sympathy

AGAINST: It can take a long time to achieve results.

It can be seen as weak in the face of violence

It is waiting for the aggressor to surrender rather than forcing the aggressor to surrender

KEY TEACHINGS ON EQUALITY

Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Malachi 2:10

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

Humanity is but a single brotherhood. Qur'an 49:10

KEY TEACHINGS ON THE USE OF VIOLENCE

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Exodus 21:24

An eye for an eye. Qur'an 5:45

Lesser Jihad - In defence of Islam

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Matthew 5:38-42

Ahimsa – Hindu belief in non-violence and love

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This unit looks at the ways that religious beliefs have influenced major historical figures of the 20th Century which led to dramatic changes in society, the effects of which are still with us today. The primary focus is how religious beliefs can increase or reduce social justice but there is also an element that debates the relative merits of non-violent protest methods used to pursue the objective of social justice.

MARTIN LUTHER KING

During the time of Segregation in the USA, white people are treated as superior to black people and this is enshrined in law by the government at the time. This means that black and white people are segregated in areas such as education and public transport. As a Christian, Martin Luther King is influenced by various Bible teachings that emphasise equality between all humans. This is one of the factors that drives him to organise non-violent protests against segregation such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956). After many years of non-violent protests, Luther King and civil rights leaders are successful in ending the system of segregation. Despite this success, racism still remains a powerful force in the modern United States.

MALCOLM X

Campaigning at the same time as ML King. Different approach as he argued against the non-violent tactics of ML King. Initially a black supremacist member of the Nation of Islam, he converted to Sunni Islam and became a believer in racial equality after his experiences on the Hajj pilgrimage.

KEY TERMS

Social justice: equality in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

Montgomery Bus Boycott: a political and social protest campaign against the policy of racial segregation on the public transit system of Montgomery

Hajj Pilgrimage: The 5th Pillar of Sunni Islam. Once in lifetime, to make a holy journey to the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

The Salt March: Major nonviolent protest action in India led by Gandhi. The march was the first act in an even larger campaign of civil disobedience (satyagraha) Gandhi waged against British rule in India.

MUHAMMAD ALI

1966: Drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, Ali refused on religious grounds. (Lesser Jihad) The US government stripped him of his world boxing championship title, banned him from boxing, fined him and sentenced him to five years in prison. Ali went on to win the case on appeal three years later, did not have to fight in Vietnam and went on to further world boxing championship titles.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Campaigning for India to become independent from the control of the British Empire, Gandhi employed non-violent protests such as the Salt March (1930) to eventually gain freedom for India. Influenced by Hindu teachings such as Ahimsa, he could not resort to violence in his protests, despite facing violence from his opponents.

OSCAR ROMERO

With the brutal and corrupt government of his country (El Salvador) employing terror tactics such as death squads and disappearances to continue oppressing the majority of the population, Romero, influenced by his Christian beliefs in equality and non-violence, protested against the government in defence of the people. He was assassinated by a government death squad in 1980.