

Name _____

Date _____

John Lewis - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. In the city of Selma, Alabama, voting rights for African Americans were routinely obstructed and denied by local legislation and police intimidation at the polls, sparking an organized movement that was part of the wider civil rights struggle. In March 1965, local and national activists organized a march from Selma to Montgomery, the state's capital about 50 miles north. However, while crossing the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, the march met with a police blockade. Police on horseback confronted and began beating the peaceful protestors, citing an unjust local law that prohibited gatherings larger than three people. Dozens of marchers had to go to the hospital for their injuries. The event, soon termed "Bloody Sunday," was broadcast live on national news, leading to public outrage. President Lyndon B. Johnson introduced the Voting Rights Act to Congress shortly thereafter.

What was the most significant outcome of the televised beating of peaceful protestors in Selma?

- A. It convinced many that the civil rights movement was not worth the risk to people's safety.
- B. It led to stricter laws against the voting rights of Black people in Alabama.
- ☒ C. It brought national attention to the struggle for voting rights and increased public support for the civil rights movement.
- D. It caused a series of violent riots and protests throughout the southern United States.

According to the passage, Bloody Sunday "was broadcast live on national news, leading to public outrage. President Lyndon B. Johnson introduced the Voting Rights Act to Congress shortly thereafter."

2. Segregation was a fact of life in the Jim Crow South throughout the early 20th century, including strict separation of Black and White riders on buses. Despite a 1956 Supreme Court ruling that stated such separation was unconstitutional, the practice continued. To challenge the government to actually enforce desegregation, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized a series of nonviolent protests in which Black and White activists rode buses together. The Freedom Riders, as these activists were called, were often met with violent resistance from police and White supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Many attacks led to demonstrators being hospitalized. The largest of these protests occurred in Jackson, Mississippi, where hundreds of Freedom Riders were arrested and refused to take bail, putting a strain on the local jail system. This created political pressure at the national level, leading US Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to demand stronger enforcement of the court ruling against segregation on busses and trains. This marked a major victory for the civil rights movement.

Why did Freedom Riders in Jackson, Mississippi, refuse to be released from jail?



A.

To obstruct the system and put pressure on politicians to act

According to the passage, protestors refusing to leave jail put “strain on the local jail system” and “created political pressure at the national level.”

B. To save money on bail fees

C. To draw attention to the jail’s harsh living conditions

D. To demonstrate the difficulties Black Americans faced in the legal system

3. On August 28, 1963, a massive demonstration of over 250,000 people arrived on the National Mall in Washington D.C. The event, known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, was organized by several major figures in the civil rights movement and featured speeches from many of them, including Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Among the speakers was a 23-year-old John Lewis, then chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). A passionate activist, Lewis wanted his speech to represent the people of the Deep South. He delivered an unflinching speech that demanded direct action from politicians, including equal criticism of both major political parties. Famously, the speech included the line, “We want our freedom and we want it now,” a demand for the legal protections African Americans deserved. Lewis and his fellow SNCC organizers had crafted a deliberately militant speech emphasizing that decorum and civility did not matter more than basic human liberties.

Which of these best describes John Lewis’s speech at the March on Washington?

- A. It called for violent demonstrations against police and politicians.
- B. It focused on celebrating civil rights leaders who couldn’t be there, like Rosa Parks.
- C. It was sympathetic to the movement’s opponents.



D.

It demanded immediate action and criticized politicians in both parties.

According to the passage, Lewis delivered a speech that was “deliberately militant” and “demanded direct action from politicians, including equal criticism of both major political parties.”