

"GOOD TROUBLE": THEN AND NOW

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

This activity aims to give students a chance to consider and grapple with both the risks and the hopefulness of nonviolence as a response to violence and oppression. The quotations from Bayard Rustin and John Lewis should provide them with a couple of different ways to think about what nonviolence entails.

After giving students time to read and make any notes about the three quotations, give them the opportunity to discuss the quotations with their classmates. Divide them into small groups to work through the Discussion Questions, as well as any questions they may have about the quotations. Finally, assign them to answer the Reflection Questions in writing. The directions provided simply encourage them to focus on specificity in their writing, but of course you can add more focused instructions or criteria based on your own curriculum focus and standards.

To further ground this activity in the text of the comic book, you might refer back to the Summary Question in the "Questions to Guide Reading and Discussion" that asked them to dig into the narrator's insistence that Mrs. Parks was a "good woman and not a trouble maker."

"GOOD TROUBLE": THEN AND NOW

DIRECTIONS

Read the following quotations, and jot down your reactions or questions you have about them. Then, once you're in a small group with some of your classmates, talk about the Discussion Questions as well as any you came up with. Finally, address the Reflection Questions in writing, being as specific as possible.

In an impassioned 1963 speech in New York -- about a month after the March on Washington and just ten days after a Ku Klux Klan bombing killed four Black girls at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama -- Bayard Rustin called on fellow activists to recommit to challenging oppression and injustice.

"We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers. Our power is in our ability to make things unworkable. The only weapon we have is our bodies. And we need to tuck them in places so wheels don't turn."

In 2005, on the 50th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rep. John Lewis reflected on what it meant for him as a person and for the U.S. as a country.

"When I was growing up, my mother, my father, my grandparents, my great-grandparents told us when we asked about segregation, racial discrimination, 'Don't get in trouble. Don't get in the way.' But Dr. King, Rosa Parks and so many others gave us examples [of] getting in the way . . . And I don't know where our nation, where we would be as a people, if it hadn't been for those nonviolent actions in Montgomery fifty years ago."

A little later in his life, on the 55th anniversary of the march from Selma to Montgomery and just a few months before he died in 2020, Lewis urged young people to carry on the work of nonviolent resistance.

"To each and every one of you, especially you young people ... Go out there, speak up, speak out. Get in the way. Get in good trouble. Necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Rustin meant by "angelic troublemakers"? How does this quote help you understand what nonviolent action looks like?
2. How do you think John Lewis's advice to young people came to be so different from the advice he had gotten when he was a young man?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it would mean to be an "angelic troublemaker" today?
2. Do you see places in your own life and your community where you think you can "get in good trouble"?
3. What do you think you need to feel prepared or able to speak up and speak out?