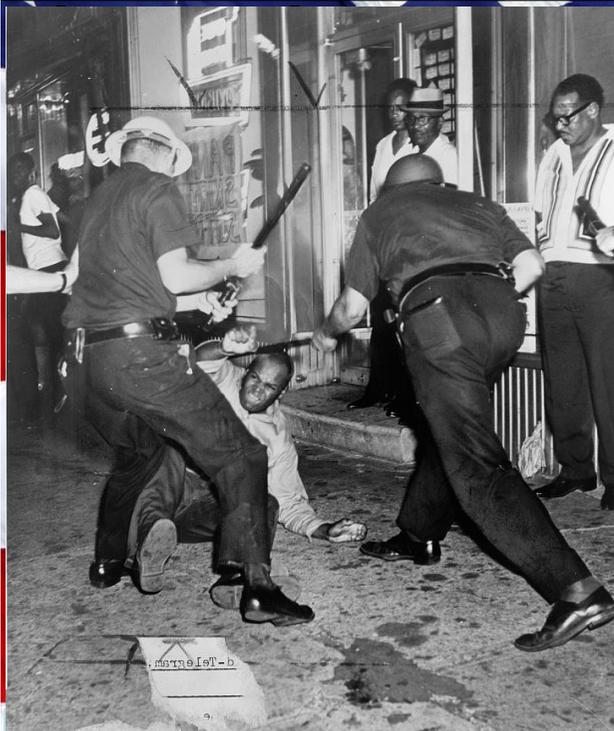


# Free at Last? Civil Rights in the USA,

## The problem of the ghettos

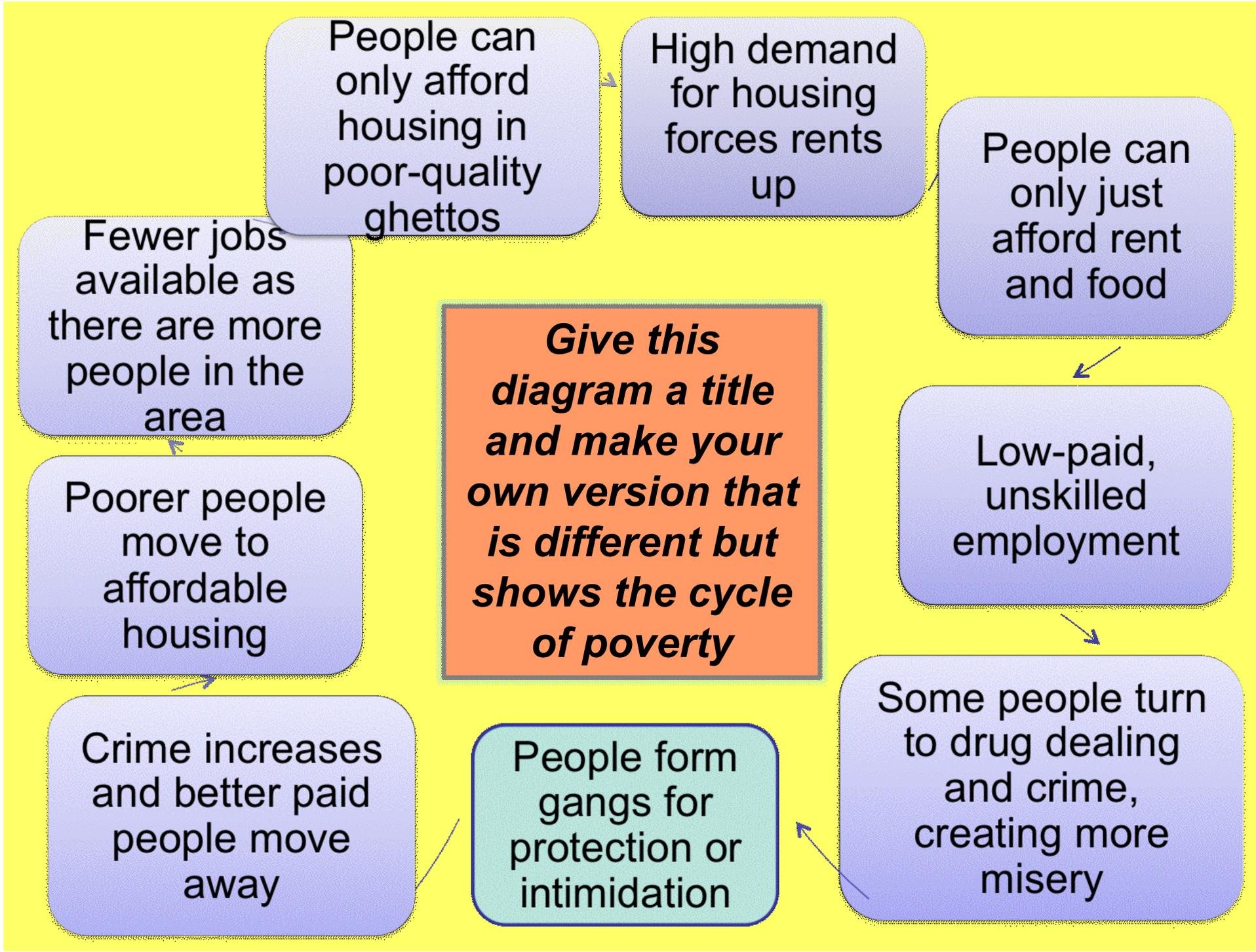
- Describe the problems facing black Americans in the major cities of the North.
- Explain why the Kerner Commission report shocked the USA
- Decide if black Americans could really claim to be 'free at last' in 1968.

**Between 1950 and 1960, four million black Americans had migrated from the South looking for homes and jobs in the northern cities. By 1965, half of all black Americans lived in run-**

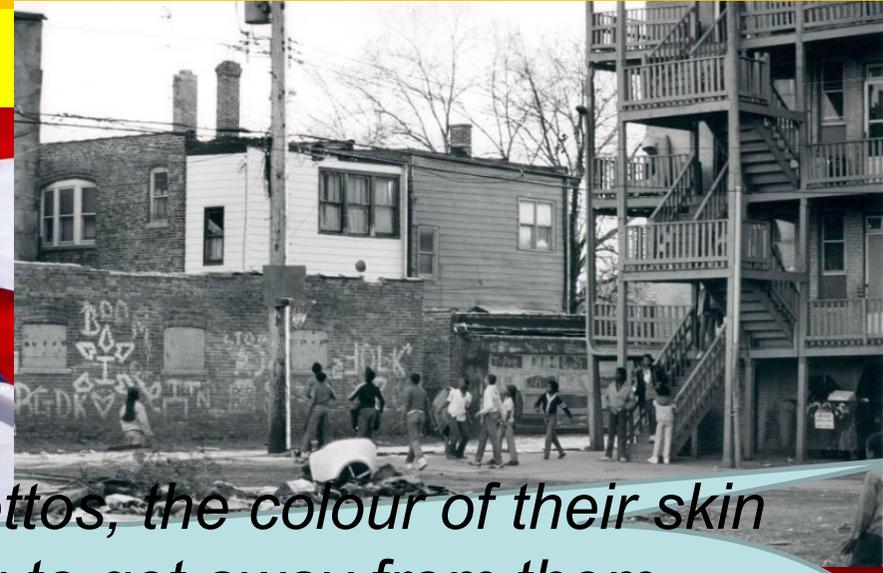


**Martin Luther King Jr. was aware of the growing black, radical protests and the discontent in the urban ghettos. He and his followers moved north to try and tackle the problems of**

**But how relevant was the civil rights campaign to black Americans in the North?**



The problem of racial discrimination and prejudice was added to the difficulties of breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty in the ghettos.



*As blacks moved into the ghettos, the colour of their skin was another difficulty in trying to get away from them.*

*For many young black Americans, the civil rights movement that had been so successful in the south was irrelevant.*

*If they did not have jobs and money, what was the point of the civil rights movement?*

**1965 Watts riot, Los Angeles** - a turning point in the campaign for civil rights.

Watts district:  
98% population = Black  
Nearly 100% police = White

The first of many riots in US cities from 1964 to 1967 – Detroit and Chicago are other examples.  
*“The long, hot summers”.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Au9oohl1MuM>



**The importance of Watts and other riots:** showed that poverty, hunger, poor housing and unemployment were far more important to black people in cities than the 'older' civil rights issues in the South.

- Showed that Martin Luther King was no longer the leader of a UNITED movement for civil rights
- Black Americans in US cities were no longer attracted to the message of non-violence

*King lost his focus; city problems were just too big for him*

*King's message of non-violence was no longer popular; the more violent message of Black Power promised quicker results.*

## Why did MLK want to go to Chicago?

- He believed he could make a difference there
- He hoped to have an influence
- He tried to tackle segregated housing as the main focus for his protest



## Why was Chicago different to southern cities?

- The mayor knew how to handle the media
- The mayor – Richard Daley - made vague promises but did not keep them
- This weakened King's credibility
- Many people thought that Black Power might be more effective



## Why did President Johnson create the Kerner Commission?

- There were 43 'race riots' in 1966, despite government money for schools, housing, jobs and health
- A riot in Detroit in 1967 was particularly bad – several people were killed and millions of dollars worth of property was destroyed
- Civil rights leaders condemned the violence but young black Americans ignored them
- The Commission was to investigate the real causes of the riots



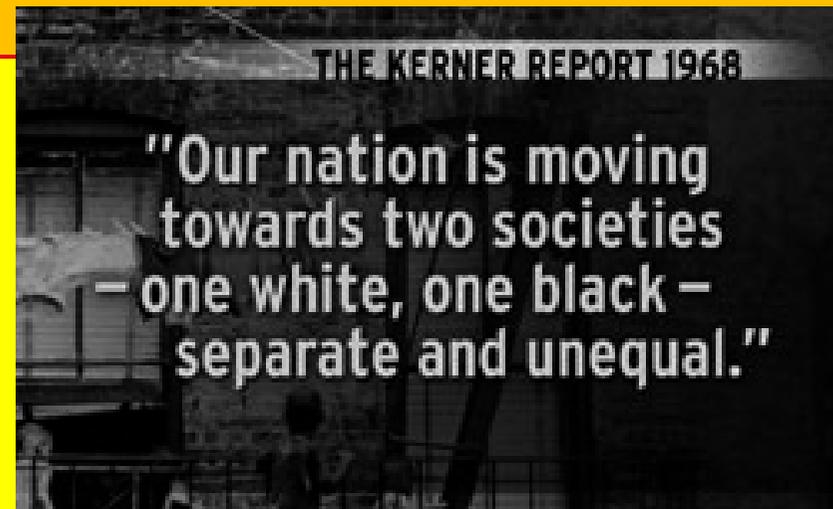
# Why was the Kerner Commission's report so important?

Kerner claimed that:

- The problems of ghettos were caused by poverty
- This was the result of lack of opportunities for Blacks to improve their lives

- *40% of all black Americans lived in poverty*
- *Riots and other crimes caused by poverty*
- *Black men twice as likely to be unemployed than white men.*
- *Black men three times as likely to be in unskilled jobs*

**The Commission reminded the USA that it was still far from being free and equal**



*Kerner also said that white society created ghettos, white society kept them going and white society did nothing to improve them*

# Did the assassination of MLK mark the end of the civil rights campaigns?

## What did he achieve?

- Riots broke out in 168 cities on his death – it looked like the end of the non-violent movement BUT
- He helped make changes
- Life in the USA – particularly the south – was very different in 1965 to 1955
- Today he is an icon for dignified protest against injustice

## DR. KING FATALLY SHOT BY ASSASSIN IN MEMPHIS

### U.S. Shocked, Saddened by Slaying, Johnson Says

Message Is Given Nation After Assassination

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Johnson spoke Thursday night of an "America shocked and saddened" by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King as he condemned violence, lawlessness and divisiveness.

In a brief message to the nation via television and radio, Johnson disclosed that he is postponing a trip to Hawaii for a Vietnam strategy conference. He had been scheduled to leave around midnight. He said he will leave sometime Friday.

The President appeared in the doorway of the White House offices, stern-faced and spoke on all television and radio networks.

"I ask every American citizen," he said, "to reject the blind violence that has struck down Dr. King, who lived by nonviolence."

The President urged prayers for peace and understanding in the land and said:

"We can achieve nothing by lawlessness and divisiveness among the American people."

He said he hopes all Americans will search their hearts.

At that point he said he was cancelling all plans for the evening and postponing until Friday his planned take-off for Hawaii and conferences there on problems of war and peace in Vietnam.

#### DINNER PLANNED

He was to have attended a

### ANGUISH VOICED BY U.S. LEADERS

Shock, Grief, Is Reaction; Violence Feared

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's civil rights and political leaders reacted with anguish, shock and grief Thursday night at the slaying of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

There also was fear that the slaying could lead to more violence.

"We have been saddened," President Johnson told the nation on radio and television. "I ask every citizen to reject the blind violence that has struck Dr. King who lived in nonviolence."

#### TRIP PUT OFF

The President said he was postponing his trip to Hawaii, for a Vietnam strategy conference, until Friday. He had been scheduled to leave about midnight Thursday.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey said the slaying "brings shame to our country. An apostle of nonviolence has been the victim of violence."

The vice-president said, however, that his death will bring new strength to the cause he fought for.

A spokesman for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People said, "I am shocked and grieved by this



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING Rifle Bullet-Fells Rights Crusader

### King: Been to Mountaintop No Matter What Happens

### NEGROES SMASH AUTO WINDOWS

Jackson Scene of Disorder at News of Death

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) —

### Non-Violence Advocate Dead Day Later

By JAY BOWLES MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—"It really doesn't matter what happens now. I've been to the mountaintop."

The speaker was Martin Luther King Jr. His audience was

### Dies Hour After Injury; Troops Recalled

By DOUG STONE MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King Jr., father of non-violence in the American civil rights movement, was killed by an assassin's bullet Thursday night.

King, 39, was hit in the neck by a bullet as he stood on the balcony of a motel here. He died less than an hour later in St. Joseph Hospital.

Gov. Buford Ellington immediately ordered 4,000 National Guard troops back into the city. A curfew, which was clamped on Memphis after a King-led march turned into a riot a week ago, was reimposed.

Police said incidents of violence, including several fire bombings were reported following King's death.

The 1964 Nobel Peace Prize winner was standing on the balcony of his motel here, where he had come to lead protests in behalf of the city's 1,300 striking garbage workers, most of them Negroes, when he was shot.

#### PAIR ARRESTED

Two unidentified men who were arrested were released several hours later.

As word of King's death spread through the stunned city,



**1968 Olympic Games:**  
two American medal  
winners give a Black  
Power salute

*What impression do you  
think people around the  
world would have thought  
about race relations in the  
USA when they saw this on  
television?*



Photograph taken 1937

**How successful had the civil rights campaigns been by 1968?**

# ACTIVITIES

- National 4: Do activity 3 on page 99 of textbook
- National 5: Design a revision mobile
- See textbook page 100 – do the activity using the success criteria