

Political Philosophy

Week 8.

Pacifism, Civil Rights
and Resistance





‘Nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honor, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for the empire's fall or its regeneration.’
– Mahatma Gandhi, “The Doctrine of the Sword”, 1920

‘True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice.’ – Jane Addams



- ‘Only the hammer blow of revolution, that is to say, the conquest of political power by the proletariat can break down this wall [between capitalist society and socialist society].’ – Rosa Luxemburg
- ‘Pacifism, the preaching of peace in the abstract, is the one means of duping the working class’. – Lenin
- ‘If you are nonviolent, if you suffer, then your opponent will see your suffering and will be moved to change his heart. ... In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none.’ – Stokely Carmichael

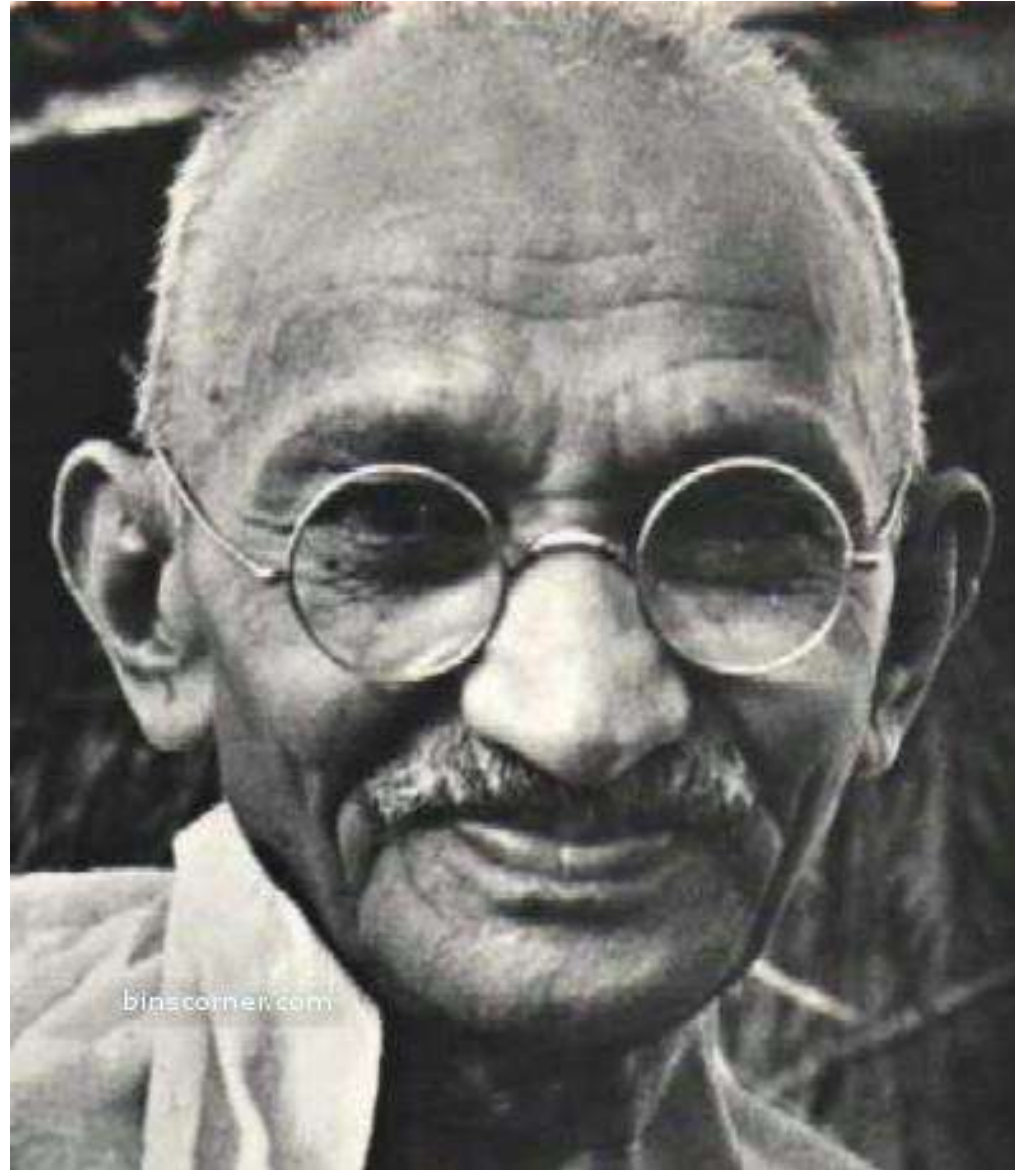


Introducing Non-violence

- Pacifism: opposition to war and violence as a means of settling disputes
- ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.’ – Sermon on the Mount
- Non-violent action: fighting for social, political or economic goals without the threat or use of violence
- Can take the form of protests and marches, non-cooperation (strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience) or disruption (sit-ins, sabotage)
- *Why has it been so appealing?*

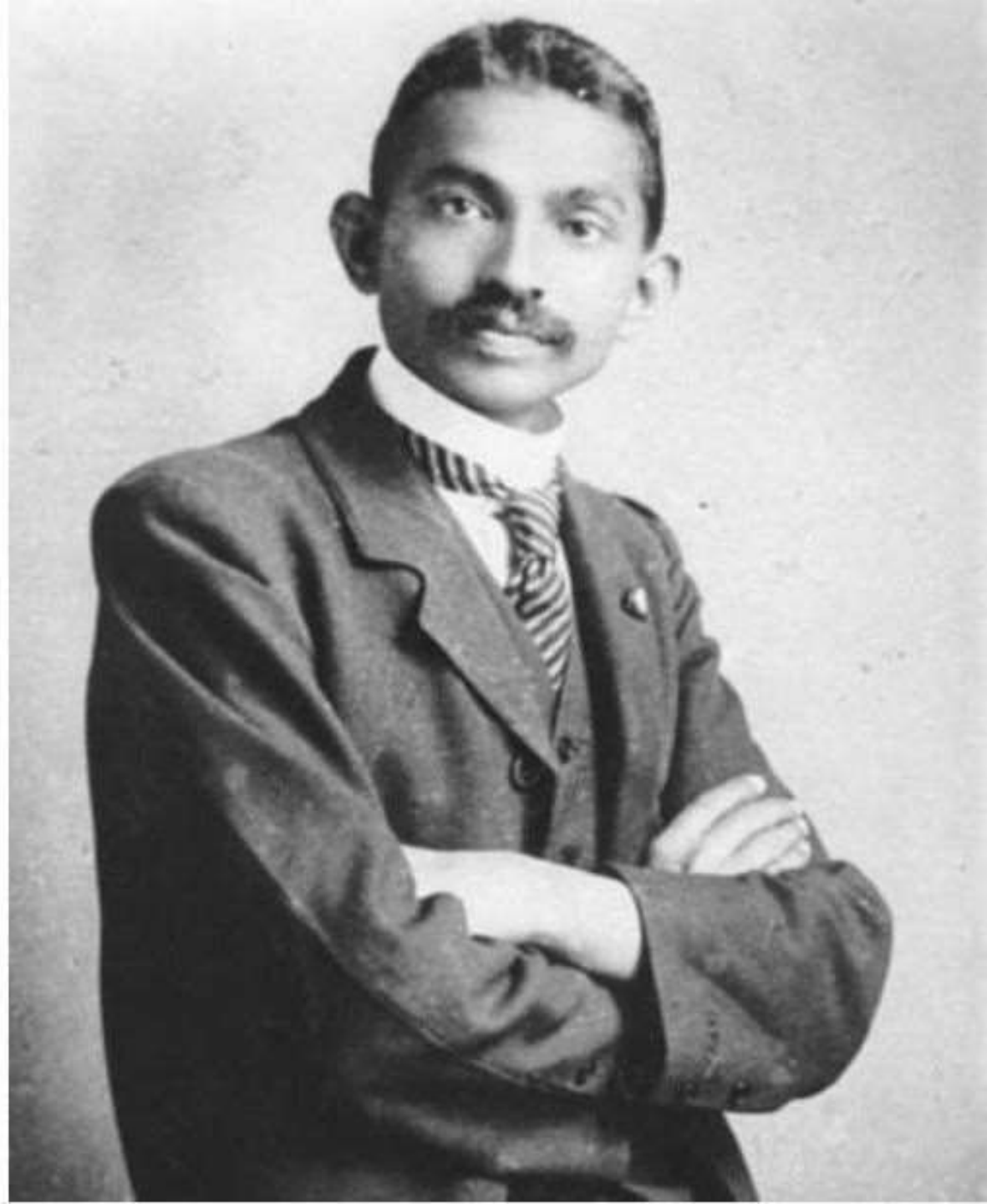
Principled and pragmatic

- *Principled non-violence*: grounded in moral injunctions against violence, often from religious belief. Peace and pacifism as a way of life. Aims to convert the opponent through making visible 'conscious suffering', in order to appal and bring about change
e.g. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr.
- *Pragmatic non-violence*: uses non-violent protest because it's considered the most effective means to organise a movement, secure popularity among a wide range of groups, and bring about change.
e.g. Occupy, Stop the War, strikes, most modern protest...
- Some stray into both, e.g. Nelson Mandela, CND



Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948)

- Born in Porbandar, Gujarat, British India, to a high caste Hindu family
- Trained in law at the Inner Temple, London. Sees himself a 'Briton first, and an Indian second'
- Unable to establish a law practice in Mumbai, moves to Natal, South Africa (1888-1914), encountering racism directly, and develops his political views as a civil rights activist
- Receives the Queen's South Africa medal as the leader of an Indian Ambulance Corps during the Boer War, in an effort to challenge British racist stereotypes about Indians
- Returns to India in 1915, leads the Indian National Congress becomes 1920, and soon becomes a globally-known leader of non-violent resistance against British Rule



Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948)

- A philosophy of *satyagraha* (devotion to the truth), 'based on the immutable maxim, that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed.'
- Rowlatt Act (1919) extended 'emergency' British powers over India. Gandhi leads a popular movement of civil disobedience and boycotts. Warned not to march into Delhi, he does so anyway. The Amritsar Massacre of some enraged and appalled many
- Gandhi emphasised self-rule (*Hind swaraj*) over better treatment. Encouraged campaigns including tax resistance (Kheda 1918), and wearing *khadi* (homespun cloth) over British imports and a reclamation of Indian culture and philosophy
- Salt March 1930 against British tax and salt monopoly: 240 miles with 78 volunteers, leading to mass unrest, British massacres and violence, and 60k arrested
- While causing international outcry, with Gandhi becoming Time's man of the year 1930, it does not advance self-dominion, and the INC drop satyagraha in 1934...



- ‘a curse’ that ‘has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration... It has reduced us politically to serfdom’
– Gandhi, 1929.
- ‘It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace....to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor’
– Winston Churchill, 1931



‘converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason. Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I, and I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man.’



Over to you

In groups, discuss this question:

What does Gandhi mean by ‘soul force’ (*satyagraha*)? How is it presented as a non-historical truth of the world? Are you convinced?

‘Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which they were subsequently found to have been wrong. ... It is therefore meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence of whatever it may be. This is the key to use of soul-force.’
- Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1909), 122



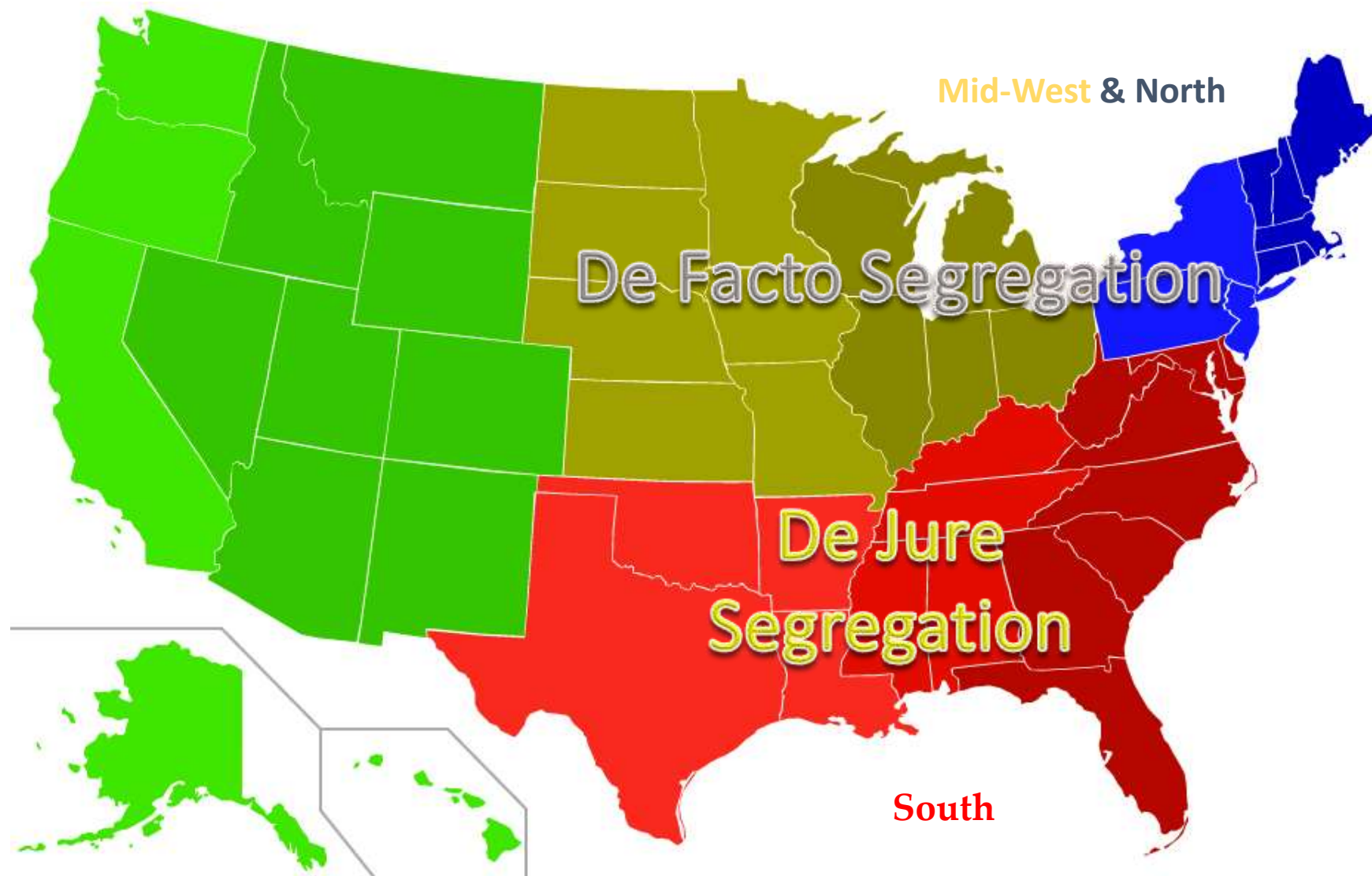
‘Like most people, I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by his Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts.

The whole concept of *Satyagraha* (*Satya* is truth which equals love, and *agraha* is force; *Satyagraha*, therefore, means truth force or love force) was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform’



Civil Rights in the US (1954-68)

- Despite Lincoln's victory in the Civil War, Jim Crow laws lead to segregation and disenfranchisement of African-Americans
- Lynchings common (<5k 1882-1968)
- 'Great Migration' between 1910-70 sees 7 million African-Americans move North, most after WW2
- In 1955, a year-long bus boycott begins in Montgomery, Alabama following Rosa Parks' arrest
- Its leader was a young, charismatic Baptist Minister...



The Two Different Black Americas



Martin Luther King Jr (1929-68)

- As President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (1957), led the civil rights movement on a platform of Christian belief and non-violence
- Struggles against segregation in Albany (1962) and Birmingham (1963)
- 1963 March on Washington, with 'I have a dream' speech
- Wins Nobel Peace Prize in 1964; Civil Rights Act same year
- 1965 Selma to Montgomery Marches with students
- Often arrested, subject to violence and numerous assassination attempts
- Final years turn to Vietnam War opposition and 'the Poor People's Campaign' against economic injustice, but assassinated in 1968



‘I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.’

‘The third way open to oppressed people in their quest for freedom is the way of nonviolent resistance. Like the synthesis in Hegelian philosophy, the principle of nonviolent resistance seeks to reconcile the truths of two opposites, acquiescence and violence, while avoiding the extremes and immoralities of both. The nonviolent resister agrees with the person who acquiesces that one should not be physically aggressive toward his opponent; but he balances the equation by agreeing with the person of violence that evil must be resisted. He avoids the nonresistance of the former and the violent resistance of the latter. With nonviolent resistance, no individual or group need submit to any wrong, nor need anyone resort to violence in order to right a wrong. Nonviolent resistance is not aimed against oppressors, but against oppression.’





Is non-violence enough?

- By 1966, 69% of Black Americans were living in metropolitan areas, and 45% were living outside of the South
- More than 50% of non-whites lived in poverty. Black unemployment was 2x that of whites.
- From the mid-1950s, non-violence was increasingly criticised by Malcolm X (1925-65) and the Nation of Islam. They advocated non-voting, violent resistance and racial separation
- Malcolm is ejected from the NOI in 1964. After a pilgrimage to Mecca, he begins to support non-violence and rejects segregation
- Assassinated a year later by the NOI...





Over to you

In groups, discuss one of the two questions, either on MLK or Malcolm X.

1. How does King attempt to persuade his reader to non-violent direct action? What images and ideas does he use? In what way is he a 'moderate'?
2. What kind of choice does Malcolm X present with the ballot or the bullet? How does he criticise non-violence and putting faith in elected representatives?

‘You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. ... I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.’

– Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, 1963, p. 625



'I'm one of the 22 million black people who are victims of Americanism. ... who are victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. ... So it's time in 1964 to wake up. And when you see them coming up with that kind of conspiracy, let them know your eyes are open.

... There's new thinking coming in. There's new strategy coming in. It'll be Molotov cocktails this month, hand grenades next month, and something else next month. It'll be ballots, or it'll be bullets. It'll be liberty, or it will be death.

... I don't mean go out and get violent; but at the same time you should never be nonviolent unless you run into some nonviolence.'

- Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964)

RACING
RESULTS-ENTRIES

Los Angeles Times

FINAL

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 1965

1,000 RIOT IN L.A.

Police and Motorists Attacked

Routine Arrest of 3 Sparks Watts Meloe; 8 Blocks Sealed Off

Los Angeles Times



Where do you stand?

- Broadly, what reasons are there to prefer non-violent action?
 - Most agree that violence is itself an evil, and a little less, that a non-violent world is a desirable end goal
 - Violent protest often harshly punished and brings further police crackdowns
 - More likely to secure cooperation/support from a wide range of people
 - Enhances domestic and international legitimacy
- What reasons are there to challenge it?
 - Requires authorities/wider public to be open to persuasion and change, otherwise it leads to disillusionment and violence against protestors e.g. Northern Ireland in late 1960s, or Sri Lanka's Tamil satyagraha campaigns
 - Has it truly led to much political change?

Next week... *Ayn Rand*

- From the Left to the Right, we turn to Donald Trump's and Sajid Javid's favourite writer, and an inspiration to many on the Right...
- Ayn Rand, author of *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), and contributor of a new philosophy she called Objectivism, of egoism, capitalism and opposition to religion and socialism
- We'll read from *Atlas Shrugged*, a sprawling philosophical novel, focusing on excerpts from John Galt's Speech – a distillation of her philosophy
- Email any questions to dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk