

**A Position Statement:**  
**Comparing Efforts to Bring About Social Change--**  
**The American Revolution and the African-American Civil Rights Movement**

In 1776, the American colonists revolted from their mother country, Great Britain. Tensions had been growing for some time as the colonists accused Britain of violating their rights. In 1763, colonists were banned from living beyond the Appalachian mountains. Settlers already living there lost their property. The British Parliament imposed a series of taxes on sugar, tea, paper and other necessities. Colonists were not allowed to vote on these taxes. The colonists reacted by writing petitions to the government, by boycotting taxed goods and by threatening and assaulting tax collectors. In 1770, five colonists were killed in Boston when British troops were called out to quiet a mob. When a group of colonists destroyed cargoes of tea on British ships in Boston Harbor in 1773, large numbers of British troops were sent to Boston to enforce the law and keep order. Since there was not enough barracks space for all of the troops, some colonists were required to house troops in their homes. When troops traveled into the countryside in 1775 to seize a supply of weapons and ammunition, shots were fired, people were killed on both sides and the American Revolution had begun.

You have studied efforts in the 1960s by African-Americans to gain their full rights as U.S. citizens. Based upon your understanding of the events in that struggle, **who do you think had greater justification for revolution: American colonists in the 1770s or African-Americans in the 1960s?**

To answer this question, you should write four paragraphs:

Paragraph 1: Summarize the relevant events of the Civil Rights movement in much the same way that the American Revolution is done above. Be careful to avoid in this paragraph revealing your position and reasons for your position. That is what paragraph 4 is for.

Paragraph 2: Make the strongest argument you can that the colonists were more justified in revolting than African-Americans would have been. State this position and support it with two or three different, good reasons.

Paragraph 3: Make the strongest argument you can that African-Americans would have been more justified in revolting than the colonists. State this position and support it by responding to the reasons you gave in your Paragraph 2 argument.

**BOTH PARAGRAPHS 2 & 3 SHOULD READ AS THOUGH THEY ARE THE SIDE YOU ARE TRULY TAKING.**

Paragraph 4: Choose which group you believe had the stronger justification for revolution.

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- (1) Be sure your conclusion shows that you have considered the arguments against your position as well as arguments for position.
- (2) State what conditions must be present before people are justified in using force to bring about change.
- (3) Do you believe those conditions were present for both groups, for neither group or for only one group?