

HIST B242 – American Politics and Society Since 1945

August 31, 2026

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For each of the three texts below, consider the following questions:

- (1) how would you define the key problem(s) that each author identifies?
- (2) What are their key proposals to address those problems?
- (3) Who do they see leading or contributing to those efforts to address existing problems and stir potential change?

In other words: What's the problem? What's the solution? And who is going to fix it?

1) Lyndon Johnson, State of the Union address, January 4, 1965

A NATIONAL AGENDA

I propose that we begin a program in education to ensure every American child the fullest development of his mind and skills.

I propose that we begin a massive attack on crippling and killing diseases.

I propose that we launch a national effort to make the American city a better and a more stimulating place to live.

I propose that we increase the beauty of America and end the poisoning of our rivers and the air that we breathe.

I propose that we carry out a new program to develop regions of our country that are now suffering from distress and depression.

I propose that we make new efforts to control and prevent crime and delinquency.

I propose that we eliminate every remaining obstacle to the right and the opportunity to vote.

I propose that we honor and support the achievements of thought and the creations of art.

I propose that we make an all-out campaign against waste and inefficiency.

THE TASK

Our basic task is threefold:

First, to keep our economy growing;

--to open for all Americans the opportunity that is now enjoyed by most Americans;

--and to improve the quality of life for all.

2) Black Panthers Ten-Point Program, “What We Want, What We Believe” (excerpt), 1966

1. **We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.**
We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
2. **We want full employment for our people.**
We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the White American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.
3. **We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community.**
We believe that this racist government has robbed us, and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities...
4. **We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.**
We believe that if the White Landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
5. **We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society....**
6. **We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.**
We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us.
7. **We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people....**
8. **We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails....**
9. **We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States....**
10. **We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.**

3) The Diggers, “The Post-Competitive, Comparative Game of a Free City,” 1968

Our state of awareness demands that we uplift our efforts from competitive game playing in the underground to the comparative roles of free families in free cities. We must pool our resources and interact our energies to provide the freedom for our individual activities. In each city of the world there is a loose competitive underground composed of groups whose aims overlap, conflict, and generally enervate the desired goal of autonomy.... [I]t's about time we carried ourselves a little heavier and got down to the business of creating free cities within the urban environments of the western world....

Free City:

An outline . . . a beginning...

Free City Switchboard/Information Center

should coordinate all services, activities, and aid and direct assistance where it is most needed...

Free Food Storage and Distribution Center

should hit every available source of free food--produce markets, farmers' markets, meat-packing plants, farms, dairies, sheep and cattle ranches, agricultural colleges, and giant institutions (for the uneaten vats of food)...

Free City Garage and Mechanics

to repair and maintain all vehicles used in the various services...

Free City Bank and Treasury

this group should be responsible for raising money, making free money, paying rents, for gasoline, and any other necessary expenses of the Free City Families...

Free City Housing and Work Space

rent or work deals with the urban gov't to take over spaces that have been abandoned for use as carpentry shops, garages, theaters, etc., rent whole houses...

Free Medical Thing

should be established in all poverty areas and run by private physicians and free from any bureaucratic support. The Free City Bank should try to cover the expenses, and pharmaceutical houses should be hit for medical supplies, etc.

Free City Environmental and Design Gang

gangs of artists from universities and art institutes should be turned on and helped in attacking the dank squalor of the slums and most of the Free City Family dwellings . . . paint landscapes on the sides of tenements . . . fiberglass stairwells . . . make crazy.

Free City Schools

schools designed and run by different groups according to the consciousness of their Free Families (e.g., Black Man's Free School, Anarchist's Creative Arts School, etc.). The schools should utilize the space liberated for them by the Free City Space Gang.