

# GREAT DEBATES

TOUGH QUESTIONS / SMART HISTORY

## THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

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### SERIES OBJECTIVES

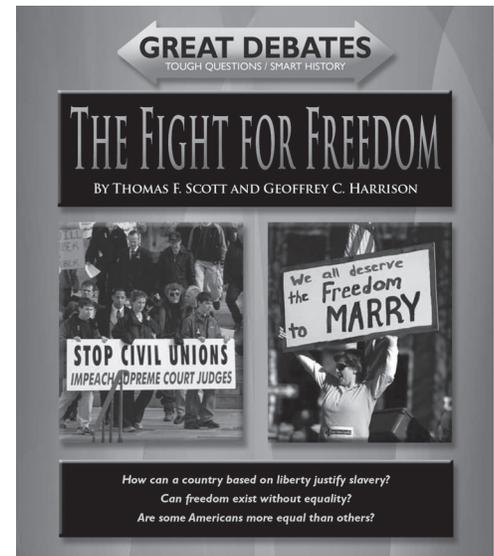
The **GREAT DEBATES** series was conceived, written and designed to offer educators a versatile, thought-provoking classroom tool. Each book focuses on a theme in contemporary American culture and follows it from the country's earliest days to the present.

This provides history and context to the issues they hear and read about today—at home, at school, and in the media. The authors have stopped at crucial moments along the cultural timeline to examine the discussions surrounding this topic. Many have a ring of familiarity to them—they echo the debates on these issues today!

Each title in the **GREAT DEBATES** series is structured along similar lines. The introductory chapter (**WE HAVE ISSUES**) supplies young readers with a jumping-off point for the issue addressed by the book. It also clarifies the meaning and ground rules of “debate” within an academic environment, and explains the purpose of the Make Your Case sidebars in **CHAPTERS 1** through **5**.

As much as possible, **CHAPTERS 1** through **5** are organized along chronological lines. Each chapter title is actually a “big question” that was being debated at that point in history. At the bottom of the opening spread for each chapter are the “big answers” to those questions—one assuming the **AFFIRMATIVE SIDE** and the other the **NEGATIVE SIDE**, as would be the case in an academic debate. These answers not only serve as examples of how a classroom debate (or discussion) might proceed. They send a critical message to students—that the heated arguments they hear on this issue today have actually been going on for centuries.

Each of the first five chapters features two **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars. Each of these sidebars presents a quote on the subject matter by an opinion-maker of the day. The quote is followed by a brief analysis, which concludes with a question. This question is meant to stimulate class discussion or—if your class engages in some type of debate or forensics activity—serve as a possible topic. In most cases, students will be able to formulate good answers to these questions. If, as an educator, you feel they require additional context or



need guidance to stay on point, this Teacher's Guide provides you with short responses that you can tailor to your own style or classroom environment.

Likewise, this Guide provides you with responses to the other questions posed in the book. At the end of **CHAPTERS 1** through **5**, a **NOW CONSIDER THIS** paragraph acts as a brief summation. It also presents a new aspect to the issue, and poses a question similar to those in the **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars. In **CHAPTER 7 (POINT – COUNTERPOINT)**, readers examine historic quotes on both sides of a theme covered earlier in the book. These quotes are accompanied by a brief analysis and historical context, and then followed by a question. As with the **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars, you will find helpful answers in this Guide for the **NOW CONSIDER THIS** and **POINT – COUNTERPOINT** features.

**CHAPTER 6 (FIND YOUR VOICE)** provides students with questions and answers. The questions address 3 current-day debates, while the answers provide information and viewpoints designed to help readers form their own opinions. This Guide does not provide any further information or suggestions on these subjects; the authors feel that this is where you can encourage students to cut loose and take control of the conversation. As a moderator, however, you may want to read the conclusion of **CHAPTER 6**. If your students need a spark of encouragement, you will find it here!



## CHAPTER 1

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### MAKE YOUR CASE

*In what ways did the practice of slavery weaken America?*

- Entire books have been written on this subject. Two of the primary ways that slavery weakened the country were morally and technologically. For all of their high ideals about freedom and self-determination, Americans had to reconcile themselves with the moral hypocrisy of slavery. How could the country hold itself up to the rest of the world as a beacon of liberty when it enslaved other human beings? From a technological standpoint, portions of the U.S. that depended on slave labor were often slow to invest in industries and technology that did not depend on forced labor. In the early 1800s, as the Industrial Revolution began in America, this put the Southern states at a disadvantage, which ultimately became one of the indirect causes of the Civil War.

### MAKE YOUR CASE

*Is there ever a circumstance where slavery could be considered a good idea, or ending slavery could be considered a bad one?*

- No. Hoi’s argument presumed that some humans were less human than others, and that this made slavery okay. Not only is it never okay, but some would argue that America has never fully recovered from this aspect of its history, and never will.

### **NOW CONSIDER THIS ...**

*If you had lived at this time, would you have challenged the legality of slavery, or would you have supported violent rebellion?*

- Those who worked within the system to end slavery endured years of disappointment and frustration. After the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision in 1857, many abolitionists felt they had been pushed back to square one. That case affirmed the fact that slaves were considered property even when they were taken to states and territories where slavery was illegal. Ironically, the peaceful efforts of abolitionists did not make their full impact until after John Brown was hanged for his assault on the federal armory at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia. Brown hoped to equip a slave army and force the government’s hand.

## **CHAPTER 2**

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### **MAKE YOUR CASE**

*Why would some people have opposed the idea of women holding office in the 1800s?*

- Many believed that women were unprepared for the world of politics. In this age, before the media investigated and reported on the activities of politicians, much of governing was done in smoke-filled rooms and involved under-the-table deals. It was thought that even the most hardened and well-educated women would be unable to work effectively in this environment.

### **MAKE YOUR CASE**

*Is our country stronger when all groups, including women, take part in governing?*

- In many respects, that is the ultimate goal of democracy. Through their votes, each person in America has a say in how the country is run—from local government all the way to national leadership. The more diversity there is among elected leaders, the better chance that the views and goals of all groups will be represented.

### **NOW CONSIDER THIS ...**

*As African Americans and women, did NACW members have an advantage or disadvantage in the fight for freedom?*

- At this time in history, this proved to be a productive combination. Within the African American community, women were far more involved in social and religious organization than men. With a familiar infrastructure already in place, they were able to organize and coordinate their efforts with

great effectiveness under the leadership of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Mary Church Terrell. By the 1920s, the NACW had more than a quarter-million members campaigning for better education and women's suffrage, and against lynchings and Jim Crow laws.

## CHAPTER 3

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### MAKE YOUR CASE

*Should the U.S. Supreme Court base any decision it makes on the belief that one group of people is inferior to another?*

- No, it should not. It is one thing to take economic and cultural differences into consideration when rendering an opinion on constitutionality. It is another to say those differences make the facts of a case “social” as opposed to legal, as Justice Brown did.

### MAKE YOUR CASE

*In what ways did segregation affect the personal liberty of all U.S. citizens?*

- Segregation created a caste system in America. It discouraged and, in some cases, criminalized, the mingling of the races. In many public places, people of color were not allowed to have contact with whites. Likewise, whites were not allowed to share certain public spaces set aside for people of color. In accepting this situation as the status quo, Americans were conditioned to relinquish other rights and freedoms in the years that followed. Without the later efforts of the Civil Rights movement, it is possible that society might have been further divided, perhaps by religion or income or education or profession—as was the case in other parts of the world.

### NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

*Could the women's movement have benefitted from taking a similar legal approach to the NAACP's?*

- It very well could have. However, there were distinct differences in their situations. Women were not legally prevented from pursuing their goals and ambitions in the same way African Americans were. Therefore it might have been difficult to make the same progress as the NAACP through a chain of legal decisions. Many of the obstacles women faced in 19th and 20th century America were not so much legal as cultural; in many respects, their fight was a complex “two-front” war.

## CHAPTER 4

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### MAKE YOUR CASE

*In what ways might a strategy of non-violent protest and civil disobedience bring tensions to the surface?*

- King believed in direct action such as marches, protests, and sit-ins instead of violent action. His theory was that civil disobedience and boycotts would force communities to confront their racism, and that this would create a willingness to negotiate. He stated that “there is a type of constructive, non-violent tension which is necessary for growth” and quoted the Greek philosopher Socrates, who maintained that tension in the mind could free a person to rise above myths and half-truths to objective appraisal and understanding.

## MAKE YOUR CASE

*In the fight for freedom, should people use all methods at their disposal or should some be off-limits?*

- Malcom X later backed away from his aggressive approach to the Civil Rights movement. However, this strategy has been followed by many freedom movements around the world. For example, the largely peaceful demonstrations in Egypt during 2012 prompted free elections in that country. However, in 2013, when Egyptians felt they had not received the freedoms they had been promised, they took to the streets again in armed conflict against the government.

## NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

*Should the rights of gay Americans be protected under the same laws that protect the rights of women and African Americans?*

- Until quite recently, this question was considered a “moral” one that was largely influenced by religious doctrine. For many Americans, it still is. However, the legal issues surrounding gay rights are very real, and significant progress has been made in matters of workplace discrimination, bullying, and same-sex marriage. For example, in 2013, the Supreme Court invalidated the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which is discussed on pages 36 and 37.

# CHAPTER 5

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## MAKE YOUR CASE

*Should the government recognize same-sex marriage the same way it does marriage between men and women?*

- The 2013 Supreme Court decision on DOMA cleared the way for states to determine how they would approach to same-sex marriage. The decision did not state that the federal government accepts same-sex marriages, but prevented it from defining what marriage is. If state governments recognize same-sex marriages, the federal government can no longer deny marriage partners federal benefits. This raises some interesting questions. For instance, if a same-sex couple is legally married in one state but moves to a state where their union is not recognized (or even illegal), does that couple still qualify for federal benefits? Hopefully, questions such as these will be ironed out in the coming years.

## MAKE YOUR CASE

*Was Bond smart to apply the idea of constitutional separation of church and state to same-sex marriage?*

- Indeed he was. The more the issue of same-sex marriage is distanced from religious belief, the more clearly it can be debated. And by linking same-sex marriage with the strides that have been made in the Civil Rights movement, the more inclusive both causes become.

## NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

*After more than 50 years, has Affirmative Action evened the odds, or will ending this policy bring a return to discrimination in education and the workplace?*

- In June 2013, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that addressed this very question. In *Fisher v. University of Texas*, a student sued the school over its race-conscious admissions policy, claiming that undue consideration was given to non-white applicants at the expense of white applicants. A similar case had been decided in favor of Affirmative Action a decade earlier. However, in 2013, the justices agreed with Fisher in a blow to Affirmative Action policies.

## CHAPTER 7

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*How might the growing number of well-educated or working women have made it more likely that they would win the vote?*

- One of the major arguments against women's suffrage was that, in the early 20th century, women lacked the education and sophistication to weigh in on the issues of the day. Stereotypes are difficult to break, but with more women earning high school diplomas and college degrees—and greater acceptance of women in the workplace—it was difficult to argue that they were ill-equipped to participate fully in democratic elections.

*What kind of long-term damage did segregated schools do to society as a whole?*

- In segregated school systems, children of color typically received inferior instruction. Their career possibilities and ambitions were blunted at an early age, often regardless of their creativity and intellect. Based on the amount of innovation and genius that managed to emerge from segregated schools, one can only guess at the profound contributions to American society that were never realized.

*Is the issue of same-sex marriage something that should be decided by the courts?*

- Because so many issues surrounding same-sex marriage are legal ones, it is inevitable that the courts will be involved in this debate at virtually every step. In places where laws prohibit same-sex unions, those laws will ultimately have to be upheld or struck down—by definition, these decisions involve the courts.