

1. Mark your confusion
 2. Show evidence of close reading
 3. Write a 1+ page reflection.
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Point-Counterpoint: Should Super Bowl performances be used as a political platform?

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This year's Super Bowl halftime show spurred more controversy, and possibly more interest than the football game itself, with its performances by Beyonce, Bruno Mars and Coldplay. Beyonce's tribute to the "black power" movement wowed some viewers and offended others. Should the Super Bowl stage be used as a platform for political activism? Reporter Jessica Gibbs and Managing Editor Katie Rohman debate.

Gibbs: Political activism is not about being tactful

Have you seen the internet lately? If you've been online for even a few minutes following this year's Super Bowl, you couldn't have escaped the swirling commentary of the halftime performance.

News coverage, opinion columns, bloggers and social media users were all buzzing about Beyonce's segment in particular. Many of her fans were quick to praise the show but others took offense to the strong political undercurrents during her set.

It appeared to be a call to arms for the #BlackLivesMatter movement as she referenced the Black Panther Party through her dancers' costumes and Michael Jackson's Superbowl performance with her own ensemble. She sang her newest single, "Formation," for which the music video is an undeniable political statement on race in America, and choreographed her dancers to create a large "X" on the field mid-performance. It was a move some speculate heralded the legacy of Malcolm X, the civil rights leader assassinated in 1965.

The performance was in a word, unapologetic, and I believe that was the point.

So, we ask ourselves: Should Beyonce have used the Super bowl as a platform for her political beliefs?

Well, of course. In fact, we first watched Coldplay do the same by using their performance to promote LGBT rights.

Activists have taken drastic measures of all types throughout history. We probably shouldn't be surprised that a celebrity of Beyonce's stature and political prowess, if you will, would use an event like the Super Bowl to send a message.

That's political activism. That's freedom of speech. It's not always polite. It's not always comfortable and tactful. In fact, it's rarely any of those things. More often than not, political activism brings to light conversations we wish we didn't need to have, and it forces us to talk.

We don't have to agree with the message. We don't have to agree with the tactics. But, we'll probably end up listening, even if we just want to watch a great concert during the Super bowl.

Regardless of your opinion, should she or shouldn't she, Beyonce has likely accomplished her goal. We're talking about it. We're talking once again about race relations in America. Who's to know where this will lead, but it's certainly kept the conversation rolling, and it's added another chapter in the history of American political activism.

Rohman: Why can't the Super Bowl be about football?

The NFL celebrated 50 years of the Super Bowl on Sunday. It was also probably the last game played by Peyton Manning, who will go down in history as one of the NFL's greatest quarterbacks.

Unfortunately, the drama about the halftime show, as usual, overshadowed everything else. There's been controversy every year about this concert — the choice of musicians, what they wear, how they dance, if they are even singing or not. All of this over a 15-minute lip-synced show.

The controversy started when news spread before the Super Bowl that Beyonce was planning an "anti-police" performance. As rumors go, you don't know if that was going to be the case, or if it was just gossip.

If you watched the performance by Beyonce and her dancers Sunday, and hadn't heard before or after the show that it was about the Black Panther Party, would you have even realized it? Do leather hot-pants and fishnet tights really "say" anything? Donning a black beret does not make you a Black Panther. And, for some reason, everyone seems to glaze over the fact the Black Panther Party was a violent militant group — hardly a respectable model for the civil rights movement.

To me, it wasn't any different than Coldplay's performance, where rainbow-colored flowers and a "Believe In Love" sign could be interpreted as a nod to LBGT rights and San Francisco's gay culture.

Is this the platform celebrities want to use to enact change? Debuting your newest single, on the stage of the biggest sporting event of the year, is hardly the place to make a statement about black power. It's tacky, and honestly, kind of a selfish way of creating buzz about your upcoming tour.

Possible Response Questions:

1. What was new or surprising to you in this article?
2. Summarize the key arguments that Gibbs and Rohman made. Whose point-of-view—Gibbs or Rohman—do you agree with? Which point-of-view was argued most effectively? Why?
3. What other arguments—for either point-of-view—would you add or could be made?
4. How did your opinion change before and after reading this article?
5. Choose any paragraph(s) and write a response.