**The actualization of the concept “STRUGGLE/FIGHT” in American political discourse within 150 years after the Civil War in the USA**

The analysis of definitions of a word “struggle” in a set of English dictionaries (on the basis of definitions from Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Collins American English Dictionary) enables one to summarize its semantic peculiarities in the following statements:

* Struggle is an effort in order to achieve something
* Struggle is a fight
* Struggle is moving with difficulty

As it is seen, in the some definitions “struggle” is explained with the help of the word “fight”, which presupposes the use of physical force or even arms.

The interpretation of struggle in African American discourse differs between authors depending on their political views and historic background.

The first period under analysis is the time of the Civil War in the USA (1861-1865), when the concept “struggle/fight” played a crucial role in verbalizing the political situation of that time. As it has been believed, concepts are formed in human mind on the basis of man’s experience and world perception. So it is they that function as the means of expressing AA’s worldview.

One of the examples that seem to be relevant in this case is Jefferson Davis’ Inaugural Address. In it he uses neither “struggle”, nor “fight” but instead introduces a verb “to combat”: “*Looking forward to the speedy establishment of a permanent government to take the place of this, and which by its greater moral and physical power will be better able to combat with the many difficulties which arise from the conflicting interests of separate nations*.” [Jefferson Davis' Inaugural Address as Provisional President of the Confederate States of America, February 18, 1861, http://www.wildwestweb.net/cwdocs/davisinaugural.html]

Clearly enough, the verb in question is supposed to have a meaning close to “struggle/fight”. Indeed, American English dictionaries present them as synonyms [Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Collins American English Dictionary]. However, neither dictionaries, nor the Corpus of Contemporary American English supply one with examples of such a collocation (“to combat with”). The preposition “with” is much more common when appearing next to a noun, but not a verb (“to be in combat with smb”). So, the pattern has changed.

Here it may also be rather interesting to note that in British English the verb “to combat” does not have a meaning synonymous to that of the verb “to fight” (“[to](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=to) [do](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=do) [something](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=something) [in](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=in) [order](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=order) [to](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=to) [try](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=try) [to](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=to) [stop](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=stop) [something](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=something) [bad](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=bad) [from](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=from) [happening](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=happening) [or](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=or) [a](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=a) [bad](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=bad) [situation](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=situation) [from](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/british/direct/?q=from) becoming worse” [Macmillan Dictionary]). It follows that it is only in American English where the verb “to combat” is one of the means of verbalizing the concept “struggle/fight”.

The next speech that is worth being mentioned is Colonel Chamberlain’s address to a large group of deserters who he wanted to inspire to take part in the upcoming battle of the Civil War. It is not characterized by considerable length but it is definitely expressive, powerful and persuasive.

In this address Colonel Chamberlain turns to the concept “struggle/fight” rather often. Having been defined by the historic background, the realizations of the concept in question are closer to its second component – “fight”. Clearly enough, here “fight” activates the idea of an armed resistance during a war. What makes this use peculiar is the number of collocations this word appears to have: “*If you look back through history you will see men fighting for pay, for women, for some other kind of loot. They fight for land, power…*”. [Colonel Chamberlain, US civil war, http://www.theleadershiphub.com/blogs/speech-changed-course-us-civil-war]. In this quotation the word “fight” is likely to gain rather negative connotations due to the idea of fighting in order to get something, to conquer something.

In contrast to this, what the speaker is urging his audience to fight for is “each other”: “*We are an army out to set other men free. What we are fighting for, in the end, we’re fighting for each other*”. So, here the concept acquires positive interpretation as its goal is freedom and safety. Not surprisingly, the result of the address was incredible: the majority of deserters joined Colonel Chamberlain immediately.

Last but not least, comes Abraham Lincoln’s speech known as the Gettysburg Address. In it the concept of “struggle/fight” is verbalized just once but is definitely present throughout the speech. A.Lincoln appeals to his contemporaries with a plea to remember, feel grateful to and respect all those “*brave men, living and dead, who struggled here*”. [Abraham Lincoln, November 19, 1863, Gettysburg Address, Bliss copy, http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm]. It is thanks to these people that the country “*shall have a new birth of freedom, and <…> government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth*.”

Almost a century had passed after the Civil War in the USA when the АА Civil Rights Movement began, again bringing the idea of struggling and fighting to the fore. This time the struggle concerned African Americans. There were two ways for them of sorting out the problems of discrimination and segregation: integrationism and nationalism. Every tendency had its advantages and disadvantages but no one knew which variant is the only one to be realised. Depending on speaker’s affiliation with either of the groups the concept “struggle/fight” got different interpretation in discourse of that time.

One of the most prominent figures of the Civil Rights Movement is its leader Martin Luther King, Jr. It is quite common for him to call for non-physical resistance. «*We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force*».

Being a representative of integrationist movement, members of which found it possible to feel both African and American by establishing close relations with the white Americans on the basis of the Declaration of Independence, MLK constantly draws attention to the fact that it is not possible to reach the desired result by falling for violence and physical force. “*And I’ve said, in so many instances, that as the Negro, in particular, and colored peoples all over the world struggle for freedom, if they succumb to the temptation of using violence in their struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and our chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos. Violence isn’t the way*.” [Loving our enemies, Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, 17 November 1957http://www.ipoet.com/ARCHIVE/BEYOND/King-Jr/Loving-Your-Enemies.html.]

In some cases “struggle” is synonymous to “nonviolence”. They are interconnected so tightly that in MLK’s opinion the former does not exist without the latter. “*And so as we go away this afternoon, let us go away more than ever before committed to this struggle and committed to nonviolence.*” [Our God is Marching On! 25 March 1965  
Montgomery, Ala. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/our\_god\_is\_marching\_on/]

Moreover, in MLK’s discourse “struggle” is seen as a means of unifying people. (“*The battle is in our hands. And we can answer with creative nonviolence the call to higher ground to which the new directions of our struggle summons us*.” (Our God is Marching On! 25 March 1965 Montgomery, Ala. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/our\_god\_is\_marching\_on/)). Indeed, when facing difficulties people tend to unity their abilities and might.

So, it follows that in his discourse the concept “struggle” is much closer in its meaning to the first definition adduced earlier and is not synonymous to “fight” (“struggle is an effort”). In contrast to “fight”, in this case “struggle” appears surrounded by the words which denote common spiritual values: “*dignity*”, “*discipline*” and “*soul*”.

The next speaker of the civil rights movement I would like to draw your attention to is MX. As it is well-known, he was a representative of a so-called nationalist approach to African Americans’ self-identification. Nationalist thinkers believed that only the African side of their identity was important. That is why they could not be both American and African at the same time. They had experienced slavery for decades, then followed segregation, exploitation and other political and social restrictions. The only way for the blacks to stop it, according to nationalism, was to leave America and return to Africa or some other place. Only in this case they would have an opportunity to develop their culture being guided by their own history.

This explains the fact that, in contrast to MLK’s discourse, in MX’s speeches the concept “struggle” has high frequency usage. What is more, the author assigns new semantic meaning to it: «*So, we're giving a new interpretation to the civil-rights struggle, an interpretation that will enable us to come into it, take part in it*» [MXб 1964]. This new understanding of “struggle” is mainly connected with a call for drastic action, i.e. fighting, which will be performed until they get what they strive for: «*We've got to fight until we overcome*» [MX].

Next, fighting is perceived as a characteristic typical of every man, every human being. “*We are human beings, and our fight is to see that every Black man, woman, and child in this country is respected and recognized as a human being. <…> A man will die and fight for what is his right. And if he doesn’t, if he’s not ready to fight and die for what is his right, he’s not a man*”. (Speech to Civil Rights Workers from Mississippi (Jan. 1, 1965), http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.ca/2013/07/speech-to-civil-rights-workers-from.html). So all those who are not going to take part in this fight (here one can see a reference to integrationists) are rigorously excluded from humanity.

One more peculiarity of MX’s style is clarity and sincerity. He does not use complicated metaphors but those which can easily be understood by everyone. His intention was to reveal the truth – the objective truth available to everybody. That is why it is possible to find such examples in his speeches: “*In your struggle it's like standing on a revolving wheel: you're running, but you're not going anywhere*.” [**After the Bombing / Speech at Ford Auditorium** Malcolm X, transcribed and edited by [the Malcolm X Museum](http://www.themalcolmxmuseum.org/) and [Noaman Ali](http://nomes.malcolm-x.org/)  
February 14, 1965, <http://www.malcolm-x.org/speeches/spc_021465.htm>]. In other words, in MX’s opinion, the struggle for equal rights lasted for a long period of time but people have not achieved anything yet. They have just wasted their force for nothing.

Despite the differences in style, manner of addressing the audience and the means of achieving their aims, both MLK and MX struggled for the same things. It can be proved by examining the most frequent collocations with the words “struggle” and “fight”: most frequently they stand next to such words as “liberty”, “human rights”, “freedom”, “equality”.

As you all know, as a result of the civil rights movement in the USA in the middle of the 19th century, AAs got social and political benefits: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination based on "race, color, religion, or national origin" in employment practices and public accommodations; the Voting Rights Act of 1965 restored and protected voting rights and so on. So people’s struggle brought fruitful results.

Almost 50 years have passed since that time. Let us now briefly examine the current situation on the basis of BO’s discourse. Interestingly enough, in it the concept “struggle” has not received an equal amount of expression. Due to Obama’s victory in the US election in 2008, which can be perceived as all African Americans’ victory in the struggle for equal rights, there was no need in the concept of “struggle”: the goals was achieved, so there was nothing to struggle/fight for anymore. Nevertheless, 4 years later BO reminded everyone of “struggle” once again.

In his victory speech of 2012 BO activates several meanings of the concept in question, for example, that of military actions abroad and that of overcoming the difficulties: “*You'll hear the deep patriotism in the voice of a military spouse who's working the phones late at night to make sure that no one who fights for this country ever has to fight for a job or a roof over their head when they come home*” [BO, 2012].

When talking about the future of America BO relies on the Americans’ strong desire to contribute to the improvement of social conditions in their country. That is why he urges everyone “*to fight for new jobs and new opportunities*”.

As can be seen from the examples adduced above, in BO’s victory speech of 2012 the concept “struggle/fight” is expressed only with the help of a lexical unit “fight”, which presupposes an active action to achieve the established goals. In some cases the meaning of “fight” is close to that of “struggle”. Still the highest most frequent definitions adduced in dictionaries connect “fight” with war and physical action [Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Collins American English Dictionary].

Thus, it can be concluded that BO does not exclude using physical force/weapons from a set of possible ways of reaching his aims.

So, let me now sum everything up: as it can be seen from the examples, during the last 150 years of American history people’s desires have evolved greatly. However, there has been no uniformity in the means of achieving the goals. Therefore, it is possible to speak about the evolution of the concept “struggle/fight” (During the first period “STRUGGLE/FIGHT” was understood as an armed resistance of one warring side against the other. Then – struggle vs fight. Finally, in B.Obama’s modern discourse (his victory speeches) “STRUGGLE/FIGHT” is defined as resistance which does not presuppose the use of physical force (except fighting for the country)) and the shift in the means and ways of struggling for the realization of dreams.