

Civil Rights - What is Fair?

Background:

Harry Truman grew up in a segregated environment where different parts of our nation had signs “colored” or “white”. Based on the color of skin determined where you could sit, sleep or eat in restaurants, motels, trains and buses. Some neighborhoods and schools along with the armed forces were segregated. Most often African Americans were offered little or no opportunity when education along with voting and job opportunities were denied. In the beginning of WWII, only a few African Americans were able to join the U.S. Armed Forces. They were assigned jobs to cook, clean and take care of other soldiers but not as fighting soldiers.

President Truman was concerned about stories of violence and abuse of returning WWII veterans of color such as Isaac Woodard. He was blinded by police for creating a disturbance with the bus driver for asking to get off to use the restroom. There were other reports of veterans being shot when going out to dinner with their family. President Truman chose a group to study these civil rights issues to see what he could do to protect African Americans and stop them from being treated unfairly.

People had different points of view about segregation and civil rights. Specifically in the southern states. When President Truman was nominated to run for president two southern states walked out of the convention and most of the remaining southern delegates refused to support Truman’s nomination. Later these southerners formed their own political party called the States’ Rights Democratic Party and nominated Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina to run for president against him.

President Truman delivered his civil rights message to Congress on Feb. 2, 1948. When they failed to act on his proposals he focused on the U.S. Armed Forces. This was within his powers as Commander In Chief so he issued an Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948. This abolished discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin in the United State Armed Forces.

Standard:

3.TS.7.C.b Identify point of view in social studies’ topics.

5.H.3.C.a Identify and describe the contributions of historically significant individuals from 1800 – 2000.

Vocabulary

Segregation - setting someone apart from other people; separated

Desegregation - process of ending the separation of different races

Integration - the action or process of joining or mixing with a different group of people (ask students to hold arms up and apart to define segregation then move to the middle for desegregation and together for integration)

Military - the armed forces of a country

Civil Rights - the rights of all citizens to freedom and equality

Veteran - a person who served in the military

Materials Needed

(2) signs: Strongly Agree - Strongly Disagree

Copy of image of political cartoon

Procedure:

1. Discuss background information with the class
2. Discuss vocabulary
3. Activity 1 - Display points of view on spectrum line
4. Activity 2 - Analyze political cartoon
5. Students draw their own cartoon

Assessment:

Students will be able to analyze the political poster "I STAND PAT" and understand President Truman's point of view to protect civil rights for African Americans. Students can choose a topic from Activity 1 and use their position to draw their own cartoon with captions.

I. Activity - Spectrum Line:

Find a space where students can line up by putting a sign on opposite ends of the continuum that says Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree. Then explain the varying degrees in between. Tell students you are going to read a statement and you want them to decide how they feel about it and physically move to where they stand on that line.

When students have found their place then ask for volunteers at alternating ends to share why they stood where they did. Explain that people have different points of view and while students share their arguments tell students they can move to another place in the line if they heard anything that made them change their mind.

**Strongly
Agree**



**Strongly
Disagree**

Choose two statements for activity:

(Larger class size can be divided in half to perform this activity)

Schools should be in session all year.

You should treat others the way they treat you

Everyone in school should wear the same uniform.

Since all people are different you must treat them differently.

Conclusion:

Discuss with students that even though President Truman grew up in a segregated environment he wanted to change it so all people were treated fairly. There were different points of view towards integration and many people told him they wouldn't vote for him to be president. But when he made his decision he felt it was the right thing to do and would not let others change his mind. President Truman said that many people advised him not to raise the whole question of civil rights. They said it would make things worse. But he felt "you can't cure a moral problem by ignoring it. It is no service to the country to turn away from the hard problems—to ignore injustice and human suffering. It is simply not the American way of doing things."

2. Activity 2: Analyze Political Cartoon:

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon>

Use visual thinking strategies:

What do you notice?

Who are the people in this cartoon?

What captions do they use?

What do you think it means when Truman says "I Stand pat"?



This is a political cartoon regarding civil rights and the 1948 election by Clifford Berryman. The cartoon depicts "Miss Democracy" saying "You Mean You'd Rather be Right Than President?" President Harry S. Truman is standing on a rug labeled "Civil Rights" and is saying "I Stand Pat!" The original of the cartoon is inscribed: "To the President with Cordial and Hearty Good Wishes. C.K. Berryman Washington Star March 14, 1948."