

Introduction to the Civil Rights Project

Central Question: The year is 1968. Dr. Martin Luther King has just been assassinated. The country is in great turmoil, and the movement is deeply divided on the best strategy for achieving its goals. A Committee on Civil Rights Progress (CCRP) has been formed to try to decide on a unified policy. Many differing groups want the CCRP to adopt its viewpoint. You have been hired by one of these groups as a member of an investigative team. They want your help in making recommendations to the CCRP on the answer to this question:

What should be done now to continue the struggle for a more just, equal society?

During the 1960s, a wide range of tactics and solutions were advocated by those struggling for a more equal, democratic society. These strategies ranged from legal challenges to nonviolent protest advocated by leaders such as Martin Luther King to more forceful actions urged by leaders such as Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael. By the time of Dr. King's death in 1968, the Civil Rights community was greatly divided on the best strategy for achieving a more equal society.

Your team will investigate one strategy used by some groups to achieve equality from 1954-1968. You will look at the evidence, evaluate what has been tried, and recommend a strategy for the future. As a team member, you have three major responsibilities:

1. **EXPERT INVESTIGATOR:** You will be the expert for one event in which this strategy was used. To be sure that your group's report to the CCRP is accurate and thorough, you will also be the fact checker for another team member's report on his or her event. You will explain to your investigative team what you have found about your event. Then, help your team member fill in any missing information for the event you fact-checked
2. **HISTORICAL ANALYST:** You will work with the other members of your team to analyze a set of historical documents that reveal more about the issues that your group wants the CCRP to consider.
3. **POLICY EVALUATOR:** You will be given a specific role to help your team prepare to present and defend its views in an open hearing before the CCRP. Your presentation will focus on a key concern for your group.

When investigating your event, be sure to answer these questions:

- Who was involved?
- What goals did they pursue?
- What tactics did they use to accomplish their goals?
- What were the positive consequences of those actions? What do this strategy's strongest supporters argue? Be sure to fairly explain arguments for this strategy.
- What were the negative consequences of those actions? What do this strategy's strongest critics argue? Be sure to fairly explain arguments against this strategy.
- Overall, what is your judgment on how effective these strategies were?
- Should they be continued in the future? What changes should be made?

In your final recommendation to the committee, you may decide:

- a. That these strategies should be continued as they have been**
- b. That they should be totally abandoned as failures**
- c. That they should be modified based upon past experiences to be more effective in the future.**

Whatever you recommend, be sure to explain why that is the best choice of action. Be sure you have fairly explained both arguments for and against your position.