

Civil Rights Leadership Part II – Civil Rights and Social Activism

Find out about Americans' civil rights and the importance of protecting them through social action.

Section A: What are Civil Rights?

In the United States, civil rights are our personal rights that are given and guaranteed by the Constitution and Amendments, as well as subsequent legislative statutes and acts. These include:

- The 1st Amendment rights such as freedom of speech, press, peaceful assembly, and religious practice
- The 14th and 19th Amendments and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 guaranteeing the right to vote to all citizens regardless of race, color, or gender
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, or religion in the areas of employment, access to public facilities (including schools), and fair housing
- The Age Discrimination Employment Act of 1967 preventing unequal treatment at work due to age
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 securing equal employment rights for the disabled and ensuring handicap access in public facilities

These rights protect us from unfair treatment by the government, in public facilities, or at work. However, at times these rights need to be expanded (for example, for sexual preference) or a court case needs to be pursued if a right is violated. Many of the Black leaders in this oral history project work to secure civil rights for themselves and other Americans. They do this by pursuing jobs in the government, by being lawyers, by raising awareness, or by donating money to or working for non-government agencies such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, the Legal Defense Fund, and the United Negro College Fund.

Section B: Who are some Modern Civil Rights Leaders?

Task #1:

Elaine Jones is the former director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and worked to protect citizens' civil rights. In [Social Consciousness: Race and Society](#), Jones talks about helping an elderly white woman in an age discrimination case during her time at the Legal Defense Fund. Watch the clip and explain the reasons why Elaine Jones makes this decision.

Enter Response here:

Task #2:

Elaine Jones also discusses two other cases of weight and height discrimination that she pursued. Do you agree that this organization, founded to help Black people overcome discrimination, should be helping other races?

Enter Response here:

Task #3:

Bill Gray was a Congressman, Director of the United Negro College Fund guaranteeing access to higher education to black students, and a minister. In this clip, [Influence of Racial Discrimination](#), he looks at the issue of fair housing, a right secured by the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Bill Gray pursued a case of housing discrimination when he was denied an apartment because he was Black. Write about what happened and what Gray did about the incident. Why do you think he did that?

Enter Response here:

Task #4:

Julian Bond was elected to the Georgia Legislature, but when he arrived the state body refused to recognize him as a Congressman because of his stated opposition to the Vietnam War. Many believed that the real reason was his race. Bond knew his rights and pursued the case all the way to the Supreme Court.

In the clips [Leadership Challenges](#) and [Georgia Legislature](#), Bond talks about the years in the House as being a very difficult time. Why do you think he decided to run for Congress? Why do you think he stayed in the Georgia Legislature for 21 years despite it being very difficult?

Enter Response here:

Section C: What is Social Activism? Who are some Social Activist Leaders?

Social Activism occurs when individuals act as the conscience and voice of many people within a society. They take a stand on particular issues often in the areas of human and animal rights and environmental protection. Activists draw attention to a particular issue within a society and attempt to make the problem better through awareness, funding, or governmental legislation.

Task #5:

Charles Ogletree is a law professor at Harvard University and an authority on the legal protection of civil rights. In the clip provided, he talks about the type of social activism he encourages his law students to participate in.

Watch the clip [Career: Education](#) and list at least four ways Charles Ogletree recommends that people can be social activists within their community.

Enter Response here:

Task #6:

Julius Chambers was a social activist throughout his career as a lawyer. In the second half of the clip [Race and Society](#), he talks about poverty as a hindrance to an individual's future success. He feels that anti-poverty discrimination should be added to the civil rights featured above.

Watch the clip and think about whether you agree that there should be anti-poverty discrimination laws. Write down your response and justify your answer with at least one reason.

Enter Response here:

Task #7:

Dorothy Height worked on racial and gender equality issues beginning in the 1930's. When she was interviewed, she believed that issues of race continued to be as important as they had been in the 1960's.

Watch the clip [Race and Gender](#) and decide whether you agree with Dorothy Height or not. Is race still a major factor affecting life in America today? Support your answer with at least two reasons.

Enter Response here:

Task #8:

Roger Wilkins believes in Racial Uplift, arguing that Blacks who have achieved a high level of success in America must help other Blacks work their way out of poverty. Other Black leaders disagree and feel that if some one wants to work their way out of poverty he or she can do it by hard work and that no one is required to provide assistance.

What do you think? Do you believe that successful Blacks should help the Black underclass work their way out of poverty? Or do you believe that a successful Black is doing enough just by breaking racial barriers as he or she achieves? Support your answer with at least two reasons.

Enter Response here:

Discussion Question:



Identify what you feel is the largest societal problem worth fighting for. Why do you think this is such an important issue? Provide at least three reasons to support your point of view. Be prepared to discuss your answer in the group discussion.

Enter Response here:
