



www.trackedinamerica.org

Is this a Party Issue?

Introduction

There are often more similarities than differences between the two major political parties in the U.S. Unfortunately, when it comes to tracking members of American society both parties—the Democrats and the Republicans—are guilty of violating human rights.

This is not the only issue that has been handled poorly by both parties. Another clear example of a violation by both parties is the issue of genocide. Both Republican and Democratic party leadership has failed when it has come to genocidal issues. It took forty years for the U.S. government to ratify the *UN Convention on the Prevention of Genocide*. Even after the convention was ratified, the Rwandan genocide occurred during President Clinton's first term in office and now genocide in Darfur is occurring during President George W. Bush's watch. In both cases, the US Government has not followed the protocol set forth in the UN convention despite its ratification by Congress in 1988.

The exercise below is designed to illustrate to students that “tracking” is a nonpartisan issue. Finally, students will study the steps they can take as citizens to stop injustice when it occurs.

After completing the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Conduct basic research online with selected Web sites.
2. Understand the civil rights violations committed by employing surveillance techniques in the United States.
3. Examine the role of political parties in the United States in regards to human rights abuses.
4. Record information in a chart and analyze that material using a determined set of questions.

Grade Level

9-12

Time Requirement

One class period (55 minutes)

Materials:

1. The Web site (Tracked in America ... www.trackedinamerica.org)
2. Chart: Is this a Party Issue?
3. Worksheet: Is this a Party Issue?

Procedure:

Ask students to complete the chart below in small groups. The information for the chart can be found under ‘Background Reading’ for each time period represented on the Web site. Information about the presidents can be found at The Internet Public Library at <http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/>.

After the groups have completed the charts and answered the corresponding questions ask a spokesperson from each group to present the results (answers to the questions). Continue the discussion with the questions below.

Is the improper use of surveillance a party issue?

If it is not a party issue, then how does that affect American citizens and residents?

If you are a citizen of the U.S. what can you do to ensure your rights are being protected?

Assessment:

For homework ask students to research and write a brief summary about another controversial issue that crosses party lines. You can provide them a list of topics according to the grade level you are teaching.

Standards:

**From McRel Online Standards (<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks>)*

Historical Understanding

Level IV [Grade 9-12]

Standard 1. Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=3&standardID=1>

Benchmark 1. Knows how to identify the temporal structure and connections disclosed in historical narratives.

Benchmark 2. Understands historical continuity and change related to a particular development or theme (e.g., the Industrial Revolution, the evolution of democracy in the U.S.).

Benchmark 3. Understands the organizing principles of alternative models of historical periodization.

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective.

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=3&standardID=2>

Benchmark 1. Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history

Benchmark 7. Knows how to avoid seizing upon particular lessons of history as cures for present ills.

Chart: Is this a Party Issue?

| Time Period | Human Rights Violation (Brief Description) | Targeted Groups | President In Office | Political Party |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| World War I | | | | |
| Pearl Harbor | | | | |
| McCarthy Era | | | | |
| Civil rights movement | | | | |
| Sanctuary movement | | | | |
| After 9/11 | | | | |

Worksheet: Is this a Party Issue?

Group Members:

After your group has completed the chart answer the questions below together. Assign someone in the group to record the answers.

1. How many presidents in your chart were Democrats?
2. How many presidents in your chart were Republicans?
3. According to the material you recorded on the chart, when are human rights violations that involve surveillance most likely to occur? Are they apt to occur during peacetime or wartime? Under both political parties? Or one in particular?
4. Which groups in the United States were targeted in the examples you chose?
5. What conclusions can you draw based on the information collected and recorded in the chart?