

BLIZZARD BAG

US HISTORY TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT

Civil Rights: an Oral History

Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. Oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies. For the purposes of this assignment, you will be conducting a simple interview and reporting on it.

Your essential question will be this: **How much have American race relations changed over the past few decades?**

Step 1: Choose the Interviewee(s)

- Because much of the civil rights movement occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, you would ideally select someone who was old enough to remember events at that time – i.e. someone at least in their mid-60s or older. This could include a grandparent, older aunt or uncle, pastor, family friend, etc. – someone you would feel comfortable talking to. You may also interview more than one person, if you wish.
- If you do not know anyone that fits the age range above, you could also consider interviewing someone younger, but who is still old enough to be able to describe how American race relations have changed in the course of their lifetime. They may even be able to share stories that their parents and other relatives shared with them. A parent would likely fit this role well.

Step 2: Conduct the Interview

- Below are some suggested questions to ask your interviewee. You have been given space with which to take notes by hand, though you may also audio-record your conversation for later reference if you wish.
1. *What is your earliest memory related to civil rights and/or race relations?*
 2. *Where did you live during this time? (Also, did you move, and if so, how did things change from place to place?)*
 3. *Are there any particular people, groups, or events that you remember especially?*
 4. *What did your parents and/or other adults think about what was going on at the time?*
 5. *What did your peers (people closer to your own age) think about what was going on?*

6. *What were your own thoughts/feelings about what was going on?*
7. *Did you or any one you knew get personally engaged in any way with the push for civil rights?*
8. *Have you personally witnessed any instances of racial discrimination in your lifetime that you remember well?*
9. *In your opinion, have race relations in America improved during your life, and if so, how much?*
10. *In what ways have race relations in America changed over the past few decades?*
11. *What, in your opinion, could still be done to improve race relations in America?*

Step 3: Report on Your Findings

- Now it is your turn to share what you found out. Your task is to answer the essential question: **“How much have American race relations changed over the past few decades?”** using evidence gathered from your interview. You may include direct quotations, or simply paraphrase in your own words what you learned.
- **Your report should be a minimum of one page, typed, double-spaced, with a size 12 font (Calibri or Times New Roman) and 1-inch margins all-around.**
- In your report, make sure to identify *who it was you interviewed*. You do not need to use their full name, but you should at least include some details about them (their age, male or female, and their relation to you – i.e. grandparent, aunt, uncle, parent, pastor, family friend, etc.).
- Make sure to end with a conclusion in which you *directly answer the essential question*. (“In conclusion, after interviewing my source and drawing on my own observations, I believe that race relations have...”)

Step 4: Turn it in!

- Make sure that your name is on both your report and on this handout sheet with your interview notes.
- Staple the pages together and give them directly to Mr. Peyton.
- ***Failure to complete this assignment will not only result in a zero, but also in two unexcused absences, since its purpose is to help make up for missed days of school.***