Barriers to Change

How opponents tried to stop civil rights campaigns in Alabama

SS24.AS.16b "Identify ways in which opponents of the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama sought to limit its success."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each action used to limit a civil rights campaign, and circle who took that action. Use your marks to compare the methods opponents used.

Three Campaigns, Many Obstacles

1 On a winter morning in Montgomery, Black residents waited for rides instead of boarding segregated city buses. Their boycott, begun in December 1955 after Rosa Parks's arrest, aimed to end bus segregation. Opponents tried to make participation costly. Some white employers fired Black workers who supported the boycott or threatened their jobs. In February 1956, a Montgomery County grand jury indicted boycott leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr., under an Alabama law against boycotts. Criminal charges put leaders at risk of punishment and could frighten other residents away from the protest. The boycott continued until a federal court ruling ended segregation on Montgomery buses.

2 In Birmingham in 1963, civil rights organizers marched to challenge segregation in stores and public life. City officials wanted to stop the demonstrations before they could change local rules. Police arrested many marchers, filling jails and taking protesters off the streets. Under public safety commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor, police dogs were used against demonstrators, and firefighters aimed high-pressure water hoses at crowds, including young people. These tactics made marching dangerous and could discourage families from joining. Instead, news coverage of the violence brought national attention to the campaign. Birmingham's opponents had tried to silence a public protest through arrests and force.

3 Selma's struggle in 1965 centered on voting. In Dallas County, where Selma is located, registrars used literacy tests and limited office hours to keep many Black residents from registering. When marchers set out from Selma toward Montgomery on March 7 to demand voting rights, Alabama state troopers and a local sheriff's posse attacked them at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Officers used clubs and tear gas to drive people back. The attack, later called Bloody Sunday, aimed to halt the march and warn others not to join. National outrage helped build support for the Voting Rights Act, which Congress passed that August.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did some white employers try to make the Montgomery bus boycott harder to sustain?

2. How could the Montgomery County grand jury's indictments limit the boycott?

3. What two kinds of force did Birmingham officials use against demonstrators, and how could they limit the campaign?

4. How did registrars and state troopers use different methods to limit the Selma campaign?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence exhibit label explaining how opponents in at least two Alabama cities used three different methods to limit civil rights campaigns. Explain what each method targeted, then identify one important difference between the methods.

ANSWER KEY

Barriers to Change

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.AS.16b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each action used to limit a civil rights campaign, and circle who took that action. Use your marks to compare the methods opponents used. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did some white employers try to make the Montgomery bus boycott harder to sustain?	**They fired Black workers who supported the boycott or threatened their jobs, making participation costly.**
2	How could the Montgomery County grand jury's indictments limit the boycott?	**The charges put boycott leaders at risk of punishment and could frighten others away from protesting.**
3	What two kinds of force did Birmingham officials use against demonstrators, and how could they limit the campaign?	**Police dogs and high-pressure water hoses made demonstrations dangerous and could discourage people from joining.**
4	How did registrars and state troopers use different methods to limit the Selma campaign?	**Registrars used literacy tests and limited office hours to restrict voter registration. State troopers used clubs and tear gas to stop a voting rights march.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Opponents in Alabama tried to stop civil rights campaigns in several ways. In Montgomery, some employers threatened boycott supporters' jobs, targeting their ability to earn a living. A county grand jury indicted boycott leaders, putting them at risk of punishment. In Selma, registrars used literacy tests to block Black residents from registering to vote. Unlike the job threats and criminal charges in Montgomery, the tests directly restricted access to the ballot.

Accept accurate paraphrases that identify the opponent, the method, and its effect on the campaign. For Part 3, accept other supported combinations of three methods from at least two cities.