

In My Shoes: Role Playing American Government and Politics

Oprah said it succinctly, “Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.” This is not new. Women’s Rights advocate, suffragette and poet Mary T. Lathrap wrote in 1895:

*Just walk a mile in his moccasins
Before you abuse, criticize and accuse.
If just for one hour, you could find a way
To see through his eyes, instead of your own muse.*

In each of our five (5) units of study in American Government and Politics you will be invited to connect with relevant players. To better understand government and politics, walk in the shoes of those who have and continue to shape our government and politics. The end result will not only improve our understanding; provide practice of essential skills; but also inspire and empower our own civic engagement. Welcome. Get ready to “take the time to walk a mile in [their] moccasins.”

Unit 1: Yesterday’s Framers Meets Today’s Political Scientist

Unit 2: Meet an Iron Triangle

Unit 3: Join the Fight for Civil Rights

Unit 4: Analyze Public Opinion Data

Unit 5: Join a Linkage Institution

Unit 3: FOUNDATIONS

Join the Fight for Civil Rights

In this role-playing exercise, you will be joining the civil rights movement. Complete presentation slides that include the following findings:

- Check out each of the following civil rights organizations. Identify their origin, common activity and membership: NAACP Legal Defense Fund; ACLU; National Urban League; Southern Poverty Law Center; Anti-Defamation League; Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and Congress of Racial Equality.
- Assess the strategies used by the above organizations. List their successes and failures as an organization. Which organization would you like to join? Explain.
- Pick an issue. Along with your organization, make an action plan that addresses solutions to your issue. What tactics and strategies do you think will be most effective? Keep an eye on national, state and local lines of attack. Do you expect legislative, executive or judicial help? Explain.
- Create a hypothetical interview between you and a national member of the media. Pretend you are being interviewed on a national news program. Introduce your group, your issue and the strategies you are using to make positive changes to our civil rights. Solicit others to join in your effort.
- When all of the presentation slides have been completed and posted, you will be invited to eavesdrop 3-4 conversations and report back as to what you have learned.