

The Watergate Scandal

On November 7, 1972, President Richard Nixon, a Republican, won a landside re-election to a second term. Two years later, he resigned—the first president in history to do so. Nixon resigned because of “Watergate”—a scandal that began with a bungled burglary and ended with criminal charges against his closest aides and demands for his impeachment.

Early in 1972, Nixon’s aides were working hard to make sure he won the election in November. The Committee to Reelect the President (CRP)—headed by John Mitchell, who had just resigned from his post as attorney general—was raising huge amounts of money and working on plans to undermine the Democratic candidate. One of those plans, proposed by CRP’s special counsel, Gordon Liddy, was to break into the Democratic Party headquarters. John Mitchell agreed to give Liddy \$250,000 from CRP’s money, and Liddy, with his partner Howard Hunt, began planning the burglary.

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Y** Late at night on Friday, June 16, 1972, a group of five men hired by Hunt and Liddy broke into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). The DNC offices were located in the Watergate complex—five buildings holding offices, apartments, and a hotel in Washington, D.C. The plan was for the five men to plant eavesdropping devices and copy important DNC files, with Hunt and Liddy keeping watch from the Watergate Hotel. But thanks to a night watchman who alerted the police, the burglars were caught and taken to jail.

President Nixon insisted that neither he nor any of his aides had any involvement in the break-in. But soon evidence began to emerge linking the burglars to Liddy, Hunt, and the White House. One of the five men arrested, James McCord, was the security chief of CRP. And when the police searched the hotel rooms



During the Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon resisted releasing tapes of his recorded conversations to the special prosecutor. (Nixon White House Photographic Office)

where the burglars had stayed, they found \$2,300 in cash, which was eventually linked to CRP. Three months later, on September 15, a federal grand jury indicted the five burglars, along with Liddy and Hunt, and charged them with conspiracy, burglary, and violation of federal wiretapping laws. All of the men, except for Liddy and McCord, pleaded guilty.

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Reaction and Reform

This edition of *Bill of Rights in Action* looks at issues related to reaction and reform. The first article examines the Watergate scandal, which led to President Richard Nixon’s resignation. The second article looks at Italy’s Mussolini and his fascist government. The last article explores the Mexican Revolution, which tore Mexico apart at the beginning of the 20th century.

U.S. History: The Watergate Scandal

World History: Mussolini and the Rise of Fascism

Government: Land, Liberty, and the Mexican Revolution

Guest writer Lucy Eisenberg, Esq., contributed the article on the Watergate scandal. The other articles were written by our longtime contributor Carlton Martz.

The Cover-Up

The morning after the break-in, Liddy told his bosses at CRP that his men had been arrested. The bosses were horrified. Mitchell immediately issued a statement to the press denying that CRP had any connection with the break-in. He said that McCord

and the other men involved were not operating on either our behalf or with our consent. There is no place in our campaign . . . for this type of activity, and we will not permit or condone it.

Mitchell and his assistant Jeb Magruder embarked on a campaign to cover up CRP's involvement with the break-in. Another key person in the cover-up was John Dean, the White House counsel. Dean talked to Liddy on Monday about what had happened, and he went to John Ehrlichman, one of the two top aides on Nixon's staff. On Tuesday, Nixon met with Mitchell and his other top aide, H.R. Haldeman, and discussed Watergate. Ehrlichman and Dean were assigned to do two things. One was to stop the FBI from doing its job of investigating the burglary; and the second was to keep the burglars from talking.

The first assignment was not successful. Haldeman and Ehrlichman met with the head of the CIA on June 23 and asked him to tell the FBI to limit its investigation in the interest of national security. At first it looked as if the plan would work. But the acting FBI director, Patrick Gray, became uncomfortable. On July 6, he called President Nixon directly and told him that the president's staff was trying to use the CIA to disrupt his work. From then on, the FBI continued its investigation of the burglary.

Keeping the burglars from talking was more successful. Dean met with John Mitchell and two other CRP staff members on the morning of June 28 to discuss the problem. Later in the day, he met with Haldeman and Ehrlichman. They agreed to raise at least \$100,000 to give to the burglars, in return for their agreeing to plead guilty and not disclose anything about the break-in. They recruited Nixon's personal lawyer, Herb Kalmbach, to help raise money. The first bundle of \$50,000 was delivered in early December to Dorothy Hunt, the wife of Howard Hunt. That was not enough, she said, and by the end of August, CRP and Kalmbach had raised and delivered a total of \$154,000 to the burglars.

In November, it appeared that the cover-up had worked. Only the burglars—along with Hunt and Liddy—had been indicted. No one in the White House had been implicated. And Nixon won the election by a huge margin.

The Cover-Up Unravels

Two months after the election, Watergate came back into public view. Reporters at the *Washington Post* were uncovering links between the White House and the

Watergate break-in. The burglars who had not pleaded guilty—Liddy and McCord—went on trial on January 10, 1973, before Judge John Sirica. The jury found them both guilty. New doubts were raised when FBI Director Gray testified that Dean had sat in when Watergate witnesses were being interviewed and that he had turned over the FBI's Watergate files to Dean.

The cover-up continued behind the scenes with Nixon's knowledge and approval. In a meeting on March 22, 1973, in the Oval Office with Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, and Dean present, Ehrlichman told Dean to say that nobody in the White House was involved, and Nixon chimed in: "That's right." They discussed using executive privilege to limit questioning. And Nixon made it clear that he wanted the cover-up to continue:

I don't give a [expletive deleted] what happens. I want you all to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth Amendment, cover up or anything else, if it'll save it—save the plan.

Part of the plan was to continue to give money to Hunt to keep him quiet. Nixon and his staff agreed to pay Hunt's continuing demands, and they also agreed to promise Hunt and McCord clemency—i.e., early release. But even with money and the promise of clemency, McCord decided to talk. He wrote a letter to Judge Sirica stating that political pressure had been put on the defendants, witnesses had committed perjury, and people higher up than Liddy had been involved. When Judge Sirica read McCord's letter in court on March 23, 1973, the cover-up fell apart.

Dean also decided to talk to the prosecutors about what Nixon and his staff had done to cover up the Watergate burglary. In a 245-page statement, which Dean read on June 25 to the special Senate committee investigating Watergate, he implicated Mitchell, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman in acts of perjury and obstructing justice. President Nixon was implicated as well. Dean also told prosecutors about another break-in a year earlier in Los Angeles. It was planned by the White House "special investigations unit" (known as the "Plumbers," because its purpose was to stop leaks.) The Plumbers, who included Hunt and Liddy, had broken into a psychiatrist's office to get information about a man named Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg had leaked the Pentagon Papers, a classified Defense Department history of the Vietnam War. Ehrlichman had authorized the break-in.

Members of Nixon's staff testified under oath that Dean was lying. Without concrete evidence, the prosecutors could not prove what had really happened. But suddenly on



On August 9, 1974, President Gerald Ford (left) bids farewell to former President Nixon as he prepares to board a helicopter near the White House. (Wikimedia Commons)

July 23, 1973, an aide to the president revealed to the Senate Watergate Committee that Nixon had secretly taped all conversations in the Oval Office. Now, with the tapes, it would be possible to find out who was telling the truth.

Resign or Be Impeached

A battle for the tapes began immediately. In May, after pressure from Congress, Nixon had appointed Archibald Cox as a special prosecutor to investigate Watergate. As part of his investigation, the special prosecutor requested that the president turn over nine specific tapes, and the Senate Watergate Committee joined his request. Nixon refused their request, and Cox and the Senate Watergate Committee issued subpoenas and took the president to court. Judge Sirica ruled that the president must turn over the tapes, and on August 20, 1973, the Court of Appeals upheld the ruling. But Nixon still refused, claiming executive privilege.

On October 20, Nixon ordered the attorney general to fire Cox. The attorney general refused and resigned. His deputy also refused and resigned. Robert Bork, the solicitor general, was the next person in line. Bork followed Nixon's orders to fire Cox and abolish the special prosecutor's office. The events of that night, which became known as the "Saturday Night Massacre," resulted in a huge public outcry and demands to impeach the president. By Monday 150,000 telegrams had come to Congress and the White House. By Wednesday 450,000 telegrams had

arrived, most urging impeachment. And in the House, 22 bills were introduced calling for Nixon's impeachment.

A few days after the Saturday Night Massacre, Nixon appointed a new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, and made a surprise announcement that he would comply with the subpoena. But when the tapes were turned over to Judge Sirica, things got worse. Judge Sirica was told that two of the nine tapes subpoenaed were missing, and he discovered, on November 21, an 18½-minute gap in another tape. Nixon's secretary, Rosemary Woods, tried to explain that she had mistakenly caused the gap, but Sirica recommended a grand jury investigation of "the possibility of unlawful destruction of evidence"

The 18½-minute gap caused another public outcry. Two months later, in February 1974, the House began to investigate whether grounds existed for impeachment. On March 1, 1974, the grand jury indicted seven of Nixon's top aides, including Mitchell, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman, and named President Nixon as an "unindicted co-conspirator." Trial was set for September, and in preparation for the trial, Jaworski served a subpoena for 64 more tapes. Nixon again refused to comply with the subpoena, and the case went back to court.

The case of *U.S. v. Nixon* was argued before the Supreme Court on July 8, 1974. The president's counsel argued that the president, in his role of chief executive, had decided that tapes of confidential communications between himself and his aides were privileged and that the court should defer to the president's decisions. Jaworski argued that the tapes would provide necessary evidence in the pending criminal trials of Nixon's aides. Two weeks later the court issued a unanimous decision requiring Nixon to release the tapes. The court agreed with Jaworski that allowing the president to withhold the tapes would prevent the judicial branch from doing justice in a criminal case.

Three days after the Supreme Court decision, Nixon turned over the tapes. By then his fate was sealed. The House Judiciary Committee had already voted on three articles of impeachment. And the newly released tapes—including the "smoking gun" tape of June 20, 1972—showed clearly that Nixon had lied to the public and had obstructed justice. On the tape, Nixon and Haldeman discussed the hush money, and Nixon told Haldeman to ask the CIA to call the FBI and "say that we wish for the country, 'don't go any further into this case,' period."

Nixon's allies in Congress turned against him. It was clear that if the House impeached him, the Senate would convict him. On August 8, 1974, with no alternative left, Nixon announced he would resign. The vice president, Gerald Ford, assumed the presidency the next day.

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Aftermath

A month later, on Sunday, September 8, 1974, President Gerald Ford announced that he had granted former President Nixon a pardon for all offenses against the United States that he had committed “or may have committed or taken part in” during his presidency. On February 1, 1975, Mitchell, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman were found guilty of criminal conspiracy. Richard Nixon was not, and could not, be tried for conspiracy or other charges connected with Watergate because he had been pardoned.

The Nixon pardon, as one commentator noted, raised a number of unanswered questions: “To what extent was Nixon criminally guilty? Is a president above the law? How does one accept a pardon for acts he never committed?”

The special prosecutor and the Congress had also faced a number of difficult questions. Because this was the first time in history that a sitting president was being investigated for a criminal act, it was not clear whether a president should be indicted while still in office. Only one president had ever been impeached (a hundred years earlier) and there was little guidance on the meaning of Article II, Section 4, of the Constitution. It says that public officers shall be impeached for “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

But in the end, many people concluded that the system had worked. The president had abused his executive

power, and the press, Congress, and the criminal justice system and the judiciary had responded. Another strong force was what a report from the special prosecutor called an “aroused citizenry.” On the night that he was fired, Archibald Cox had stated “Whether ours shall continue to be a government of laws and not of men is now for Congress and ultimately for the American people.” The public’s outrage at the Watergate scandal was one more potent force that brought President Nixon down.

For Discussion

1. What was the Watergate scandal about?
2. After the burglary, what do you think President Nixon should have done? Why?
3. How important do you think the tapes were to the scandal? Why?
4. What was the “Saturday Night Massacre”? If you had been the attorney general on that night, what would you have done? Why?
5. Archibald Cox spoke of a “government of laws, not of men.” What does this mean? Do you agree? Explain.

For Further Reading

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A C T I V I T Y

Should President Ford Have Pardoned Nixon?

President Ford’s pardon of Nixon stirred great controversy. Ford argued that the best way to end the “years of bitter controversy and divisive national debate” around Watergate was to pardon Nixon. He said that many more years would pass before “Nixon could obtain a fair trial,” and Nixon “would be cruelly and excessively penalized either in preserving the presumption of his innocence or in obtaining a speedy determination of his guilt . . .” Ford said that during the delay, “ugly passions would again be aroused. And our people would again be polarized in their opinions. And the credibility of our free institutions of government would again be challenged at home and abroad.”

Critics claimed the pardon violated the principle that all people stand equal before the law. They argued that Nixon, like other people, should have his day in court. The pardon, they pointed out, cast aside months of investigations. The chairman of the Senate Watergate committee was disappointed that Nixon had not made a confession prior to the pardon: “The pardon power vested in the president exceeds that of the Almighty, who apparently cannot pardon a sinner unless the sinner first repents.”

Divide into small groups. Each group should do the following:

1. Think of reasons why President Ford should have pardoned Nixon.
2. Think of reasons why he should not have pardoned Nixon.
3. Discuss and decide this question: Should Ford have pardoned Nixon?
4. Prepare to report your decision and the reasons for it the rest of the class.

Mussolini and the Rise of Fascism

Fascism arose in Europe after World War I when many people yearned for national unity and strong leadership. In Italy, Benito Mussolini used his charisma to establish a powerful fascist state.

Benito Mussolini coined the term “fascism” in 1919 to describe his political movement. He adopted the ancient Roman *fasces* as his symbol. This was a bundle of rods tied around an ax, which represented the power of Rome.

Mussolini established the first fascist regime, followed soon after by others, including Nazi Germany. Fascism, however, differed somewhat from one nation to another. Thus, scholars often disagree on a precise definition of fascism. Even so, they tend to agree on its common characteristics such as:

- **Absolute Power of the State:** Fascist regimes have a strong centralized state, or national government. The fascist state seeks total control over all major parts of society. Individuals must give up their private needs and rights to serve the needs of the whole society as represented by the state.
- **Rule by a Dictator:** A single dictator runs the fascist state and makes all the important decisions. This leader often uses charisma, a magnetic personality, to gain the support of the people.
- **Corporatism:** Fascists believe in taming capitalism by controlling labor and factory owners. Unions, strikes, and other labor actions are illegal. Although private property remains, the state controls the economy.
- **Extreme Nationalism:** The fascist state uses national glory and the fear of outside threats to build a new society based on the “common



Fascist Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) led Italy from 1922 until 1943, when he was deposed. Germany then installed him as the leader of German-controlled northern Italy until it fell to the Allies in 1945. (Library of Congress)

will” of the people. Fascists believe in action and looking at national myths for guidance rather than relying on the “barren intellectualism” of science and reason.

- **Superiority of the Nation’s People:** Fascists hold up the nation’s people as superior to other nationalities. They typically strengthen and unify the dominant group in a nation while stifling dissent and persecuting minority groups.
- **Militarism and Imperialism:** Fascists believe that great nations show their greatness by conquering and ruling weak nations. Fascists believe the state can survive only if it successfully proves its military superiority in war.

Mussolini’s Rise to Power

After serving in the Italian army during World War I, Mussolini returned home, looking for a way to unify the Italian people. In 1918, he began to deliver emotional speeches, calling for a dictator to head the country. He argued that only a strong leader could unite the people to overcome Italy’s postwar mass unemployment, chaotic political party conflicts, and strikes by socialists and communists.

In 1919, Mussolini organized his fascist movement in the northern city of Milan. He formed squads of street fighters who wore black shirts. His “Blackshirts” beat up socialists and communists and threw them out of local governments.

The communist revolution in Russia had taken place only two years earlier. Mussolini’s fascist movement quickly gained the support of anti-communist business people, property owners, and middle-class professionals like teachers and doctors.

In 1921, Mussolini formed the National Fascist Party. But he still lacked a clear fascist program. He only knew one thing for sure: He wanted to rule Italy.

In a speech before thousands of his supporters in October 1922, Mussolini declared, “Either the government will be given to us, or we will seize it by marching on Rome.” A few days later, he unleashed his followers on a massive march to Italy’s capital city. As tens of

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thousands converged on Rome, government leaders became so unnerved that they resigned.

King Victor Emmanuel had the constitutional duty to appoint a new prime minister, who would form the next government. With his Blackshirts and other supporters swarming the streets of Rome, Mussolini demanded that the king appoint him prime minister. The king gave in, and at age 39, Mussolini became Italy's youngest prime minister on October 29, 1922.

The Fascist State

Mussolini chose Giovanni Gentile, a noted Italian philosopher, as his minister of education. Gentile reorganized Italy's school system. He also wrote many articles and books, clarifying the basic ideas of fascism.

Gentile argued that the private desires and interests of the individual came second to the "common will" of the people. The fascist state, he said, put this will of the people into action.

Gentile explained that self-sacrifice and obedience to the state enable the individual to achieve unity with the "common will." Gentile argued that rights do not belong to the individual but to the people as a whole.

Gentile taught that the "common will" of the people is the law of the state. Therefore, individuals must submit to the fascist state in order to be truly free. Later, Mussolini put it this way: "Far from crushing the individual, the fascist state multiplies his energies, just as in a regiment a soldier is . . . multiplied by the number of his fellow soldiers."

Building on the ideas of earlier European philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Gentile claimed that the peoples of the world are engaged in a survival of the fittest. He declared it is the natural right of the stronger to conquer and rule the weaker. Gentile stated that war has another function in the fascist state: It unites the people and proves their superiority as a nation.

Gentile, sometimes called the philosopher of Italian fascism, believed he could combine philosophy with raw power. He once praised Mussolini as being dedicated to Italy in "its honor, its glory, its security and prosperity, and, therefore, in its power and its value in the history of the world."

Il Duce and the Fascist State

Mussolini called new elections for the Italian parliament in 1924. Intimidation and fraud marred the election. Mussolini's Fascist Party together with a smaller allied party won 66 percent of the vote.



Mussolini (Il Duce) and Hitler (Der Fuehrer) ride in an open car through the streets of Munich, Germany, c. 1940. (National Archives)

After the election, Mussolini closed opposition newspapers and banned public protest meetings. He declared all political parties illegal except for his own Fascist Party. He outlawed labor unions and strikes. He also established a political police force, the Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Antifascism. A Fascist Grand Council rubber-stamped Mussolini's decrees and made parliament irrelevant.

By 1925, Mussolini had adopted the title, *Il Duce* (the Leader). He delivered emotional public speeches, swaying back and forth, puffing his chest, and holding his hands on his hips. The crowds chanted back fascist slogans such as "*Il Duce* is always right!" and "Believe, obey, fight!"

Opponents of Mussolini coined the term "totalitarianism" to describe his quest to control not only the political system but also the economy, schools, police, courts, military, and more. Ironically, Mussolini liked this term and began to use it himself to persuade Italians to come together under his leadership for a rebirth of society.

Mussolini compared the "new man" of Italy to the hardened soldiers of ancient Rome. As for women, *Il Duce* saw their role as giving birth and caring for a new generation of warriors. The Fascist Party organized youth organizations for all boys and girls aged 8–18. These groups promoted physical training, military drills (for boys), and the ideals of the fascist state.

Mussolini had little use for religion. Italy, however, was a strongly Catholic country. Gentile, as minister of education, continued the teaching of Catholic doctrine in

the elementary schools. But he replaced it with philosophy at the secondary level. The Catholic Church objected to this reform.

Hoping to keep the church from opposing his fascist regime, Mussolini adopted pro-Catholic policies against abortion and divorce. Then in 1929, he signed a treaty with the church that made Catholicism the state religion. This agreement also restored the teaching of Catholic doctrine in secondary schools. For its part, the church accepted Mussolini's fascist state and ended its involvement in Italy's political affairs.

Mussolini wanted to create an economic system that provided a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. Capitalism depends on private property, employer-owned competing enterprises, and the profit motive. Socialism envisions a society in which the workers jointly own the economic means of production (factories, farms, etc.) and control the government. Communism is a form of socialism that calls for a revolution to destroy capitalism, establish a dictatorship in the name of the workers, and distribute goods equally throughout society.

During the 1930s, Mussolini organized industry, agriculture, and economic services into state-controlled labor unions and employer associations called "corporations." Government officials appointed the heads of each union and employer corporation. They negotiated wages and working conditions with each other.

This "third way" corporatism attempted to unify workers and employers by requiring them to set aside their private interests in favor of the best interests of the fascist state. In practice, however, the employers usually benefited more than the workers did.

Compared to Hitler's Germany, police crackdowns were less harsh. But a special court tried anti-fascists, those working against Mussolini's regime.

The Jewish population of Italy was small, and neither Mussolini nor most other Italians were very anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish). Jews had fought for Italy in World War I and participated in Mussolini's march on Rome.

Even so, *Il Duce* came increasingly under the influence of Hitler in the late 1930s. Mussolini finally agreed to anti-Semitic decrees such as banning Jews from certain occupations. When the Germans occupied parts of Italy during World War II, they transported 20 percent of Italy's Jews to Nazi concentration camps. While Italians hid many Jews, Mussolini did nothing to stop the Nazi deportations.

Before World War II, popular support for Mussolini's fascist state was high. His charismatic style of leadership convinced many that Italy was on a path to greatness. When the Great Depression hit Italy after 1929, Mussolini acted quickly and boldly with a large program of public construction projects, which put many jobless Italians back to work.

Il Duce at War

Mussolini agreed with Gentile that the strong nations of the world had a natural right to subdue and rule the weak. Mussolini glorified military values like physical strength, discipline, obedience, and courage. "A minute of the battlefield is worth a lifetime of peace," he declared.

In 1935, Mussolini ordered the invasion of Ethiopia, a poor African country that had once humiliated Italy in battle. Seeking revenge, Mussolini used planes, artillery, and poison gas against tribesmen with old muskets. Mussolini announced to cheering crowds that the Roman Empire was back.

In 1939, Mussolini and Hitler signed the so-called "Pact of Steel," which committed each country to come to the aid of the other in war. A few months later, Hitler invaded Poland and set off World War II. Mussolini, however, delayed joining Hitler until Nazi troops were just about to defeat France in June 1940.

Mussolini then decided to invade Greece. But his army was beaten badly and had to be rescued by German troops. In 1941, he sent 200,000 of his soldiers to aid Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. The harsh winter and Soviet guerilla fighters killed huge numbers of German and Italian soldiers.

By 1943, British, American, and other Allies had defeated Mussolini's army in North Africa, taken Sicily, and bombed Rome. The Italian people had had enough and abandoned *Il Duce*.

King Victor Emmanuel ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Mussolini after his own Grand Council voted for him to resign. German commandos, however, helped him escape to Germany.

Mussolini returned to Italy and established a new fascist regime in the north near Milan, an area that the Germans had occupied. But he was merely a puppet of the Nazis.

When the Allies neared Milan, Mussolini tried to escape. But anti-fascist Italian fighters captured and shot him on April 28, 1945. The next day, crowds cheered as they hung Mussolini's body by its heels in Milan where he had started the fascist movement 25 years earlier.

More Fascist Regimes and Movements

Mussolini inspired others to develop their own versions of fascism. When Hitler gained power in Germany in 1933, he added the idea of an Aryan “master race” to his fascist state. In 1939, Francisco Franco established the Spanish state with some fascist elements. Other fascist or fascist-like regimes rose and fell in Japan, Argentina, South Africa, Greece, and Iraq among other countries.

Fascist movements took root even in democracies. The British Union of Fascists thrived for a while during the Great Depression. In the United States, the German-American Bund supported Hitler’s Nazi regime until the U.S. entered World War II.

Today, variations of fascism live on in a number of military dictatorships around the world. “Neofascist” groups still exist in Western democracies. These groups typically preach ultranationalism and spew hatred of racial or

ethnic minorities. While the idea of a unified nation under a fascist state probably died with Mussolini, the extreme racist forms of fascism, empowered by the Internet, are alive and well throughout the world.

For Discussion and Writing

1. Why do you think Mussolini was so popular as dictator of Italy?
2. Compare Mussolini’s fascist corporatism with capitalism and communism.
3. Why did Gentile and Mussolini believe that war was an essential part of the fascist state?

For Further Reading

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A C T I V I T Y

Is It Fascism?

Because of their connection to Hitler and the horrors of World War II, the terms “fascist” and “fascism” are often hurled as insults by political opponents. The terms have lost much meaning, other than as insults. Even scholars have difficulty in agreeing on a definition of fascism. But as the article notes, scholars do agree on several common characteristics of fascism. In this activity, you are going to use these characteristics to judge whether particular governments are fascist.

1. Form small groups and review the characteristics of fascism at the beginning of the article.
2. Each group should discuss and decide each of the hypothetical cases below whether each is an example of a totally, mostly, somewhat, or non fascist state.
3. Each group should report and give reasons for its conclusions.

Case #1: The government of **Surs** is ruled by one party, whose council of 100 selects the supreme leader. The people vote in other elections, but only one person is on the ballot for each office, as the party nominates all those running. The supreme leader has complete control of the society. The government owns all the major businesses and runs them in the name of the people. Religious worship is discouraged: No party member belongs to a religious organization. The prisons are filled with political prisoners. The party is trying to create a “new human,” free of race, ethnic, religious, and gender prejudice and free from the greed of capitalism.

Case #2: The supreme leader of **Railkine** makes most political decisions and heads the armed forces. The Assembly of Religious Leaders elects him from the clergy and may remove him. It also approves all candidates running for parliament. The assembly may also veto laws passed by parliament if they go against religious law. The supreme leader has outlawed political parties, closed newspapers, imprisoned dissenters, banned other religions, suppressed minorities, put requirements on how women should dress, and even outlawed dancing. The supreme leader is building up the military, and neighboring countries fear that Railkine will invade and impose its form of government.

Case #3: **New Sed** is a country with a parliament and a strong tradition of political and religious freedom. In the last 40 years, the Accolade Party has won election after election. This party has built good schools and a strong social safety net for all its people. The safety net includes a government-run health system, a high minimum wage, generous unemployment insurance, retirement pensions for all, and other benefits. It has enacted strict regulations on businesses. The government has a small military. Taxes are very high.

Land, Liberty, and the Mexican Revolution

For more than 100 years after winning independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico suffered a stream of political calamities. These included civil wars, dictatorships, assassinations, foreign invasions, and a long bloody revolution. Following the Mexican Revolution, President Lazaro Cardenas in 1934 ushered in a new era of stable government.

Between 1821 and 1857, Mexico had about 50 different national governments as conservatives and liberals fought for control of the country. The conservatives were mainly wealthy owners of large agricultural and livestock estates called *haciendas*, which controlled much of Mexico's land. Most of the liberals belonged to the business-oriented middle class.

Both conservatives and liberals focused on protecting their property and other economic interests. Neither had much concern for the suffering of rural peasants, factory workers, miners, and other common people who made up the vast majority of Mexico's population.

After a brutal civil war from 1858 to 1861, the liberals defeated the conservatives and elected Benito Juarez as president. The French, however, soon invaded and occupied Mexico to assure payment of the huge foreign debt it owed.

France set up a monarchy in Mexico under a Catholic archduke, Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria. He gained enthusiastic support from conservatives and Mexican Catholic Church leaders. When France withdrew its troops in 1866, however, liberal fighters under Juarez defeated Maximilian and his conservative allies and executed him by firing squad.

Juarez resumed his presidency, and Mexicans elected him two more times. He wanted to run for a fourth term but died suddenly. His secretary of foreign relations, Sebastian Lerdo, won election as president in 1872.

By this time, liberals had grown wary of presidents holding office for more than one term because they could become corrupt and too powerful. In addition, those in power usually rigged the elections in their favor.

When President Lerdo announced his intention to run for a second term, many liberals objected.



In the Mexican Revolution, Francisco "Pancho" Villa (1878–1923) commanded the most powerful army in Mexico, that of the revolutionaries in the north. (Wikimedia Commons)

Among them was General Porfirio Diaz, a national hero who had fought against the French.

In 1876, Diaz denounced Lerdo and seized the presidency by force. He ruled Mexico either directly or through a puppet president for the next 35 years.

The Diaz Dictatorship

Once in command of the government, Diaz concentrated power in his hands. He put his friends and relatives into key national, state, and local government offices. This angered the poor and middle-class liberals alike who valued local self-rule.

One of Diaz's main goals was to modernize Mexico's economy. He granted tax breaks and other economic privileges to foreign investors, which Mexican business owners resented. Diaz changed the law so that non-citizens who bought Mexican land could own the resources beneath the surface such as silver, copper, and oil. He also contracted with American companies to construct a railroad system. The railroad lines reached into most regions of the country, providing easier access to Mexico's ports. Suddenly, Mexico's minerals, beef cattle, cash crops like

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sugar and cotton, and other products for export became more profitable.

Some Mexican peasants farmed their own small plots of land. More commonly, they worked on village land that they traditionally owned as a group. Mexican peasants grew crops and grazed their livestock for food. But under the new Diaz economy, large *hacienda* owners, called *hacendados*, wanted more land to increase profits from their cash-crop and beef-cattle exports. Encouraged by Diaz, the *hacendados* took land from many nearby peasants and villages, often through bribery and violence.

The loss of their land forced many Mexican peasants to work as low-wage laborers for the *hacendados* or to migrate to cities in search of work. Landless peasants increased the labor pool, which caused lower wages, higher unemployment, and more poverty. Less land for growing crops like corn led to higher food prices. Hunger stalked the land.

“Debt peonage” trapped many landless peasants. They lived and worked on *haciendas* as laborers under brutal conditions for what amounted to pennies a week. Since they were always in debt to the *hacendado’s* store, they remained tied, virtually as slaves, to the *hacienda* for their entire lives.

Foreigners owned the railroads and most of Mexico’s emerging industries such as textiles (cloth-making) and mining. Workers labored long hours at low pay under frequently dangerous conditions. Mexican workers particularly resented the “dual-wage system,” which paid them less than foreign employees who did the same job.

Diaz tolerated abuse of workers and suppressed their attempts to form unions. In 1906, workers went on strike against a French-owned textile factory in Mexico’s chief port of Veracruz. Diaz sent army troops who killed dozens of strikers and executed union leaders.

That same year, miners in the northern state of Sonora went on strike against a copper mine owned by an American. He had refused to meet with the miners to negotiate pay and working conditions. He hired armed Americans from Arizona 40 miles away to cross into Mexico and come to his aid. Diaz authorized the governor in Sonora to deputize the Americans who joined Mexican troops in crushing the strike. The use of foreigners to fight the striking miners enraged many Mexicans.

The Revolution Against Diaz

By 1910, Diaz’s dictatorship had lasted three decades. Landless peasants, *hacienda* laborers, factory workers, railroad employees, miners, and middle-class liberals hated his rule. Francisco Madero, a liberal and successful businessman, attempted to campaign against Diaz for president in 1909. But Diaz threw him in jail “for insulting the president and fomenting rebellion.” After Diaz won the rigged election, Madero managed to flee to the United States.

On October 5, 1910, Madero declared that the election had been a fraud and he was now the provisional president. He called for Mexicans to revolt against Diaz.

Madero announced a liberal program of reforms that limited the president to a single four-year term, shifted political power to state and local governments, and promoted free market capitalism. He said little, however, about the land taken from the peasants by the *hacendados*.

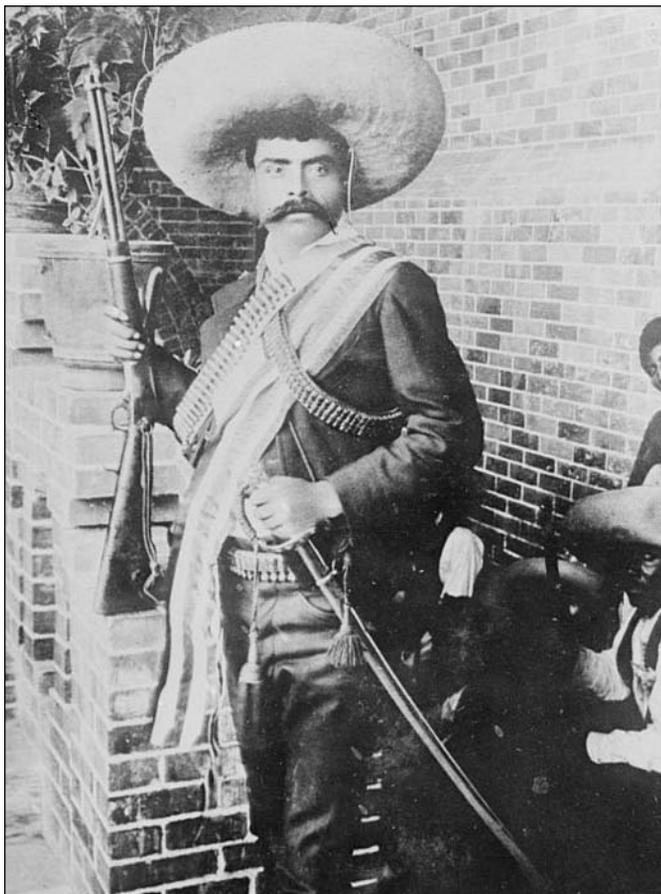
Many local revolutionary guerilla armies formed throughout Mexico and rallied under Madero’s banner. They included all sorts of Mexicans: landless peasants, factory workers, miners, cowboys, business owners, teachers, intellectuals, and even some bandits.

Two major groups seemed to form as the Mexican Revolution unfolded. First were the liberals like Madero. Most were middle class, educated, and interested in securing political liberties like free elections. Second were the much larger numbers of peasants and workers. They sought fundamental social and economic changes: the return of stolen peasant land, worker rights, schools, and an end to poverty and hunger.

The center of the Mexican Revolution in the north was the state of Chihuahua, a dry cattle-ranching country on Mexico’s wild frontier. Many who joined the revolution here were well-armed cowboys and small ranchers who had recently been fighting Apache Indians. They valued their freedom and hated rule from Mexico City.

Francisco “Pancho” Villa was 32 when he joined Madero’s revolutionary movement in 1910. Villa made his living rustling cattle from wealthy *hacendados* in Chihuahua. An excellent horseman and gunfighter, he had killed a number of men. He dressed plainly and neither smoked nor drank alcohol.

Villa’s motive for becoming a revolutionary was not clear except for erasing his record as a bandit and getting land for his men. Despite his unpromising background, Villa became the general of a huge revolutionary army. He won battles not by his command of



Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919) led the revolutionaries of the south of Mexico. He and Villa represented most workers and peasants in the Mexican Revolution. (Wikimedia Commons)

strategy and tactics but because of his charisma and his ability to gain the unquestioned loyalty of his followers, known as *villistas*.

The state of Morelos was the center of the revolution in the tropical south. Here huge sugar-growing *haciendas* had expanded by annexing as much peasant and village land as they could. Emiliano Zapata was a small landowner from a village that had lost its best farmland to the nearby *hacienda*.

Like Villa, Zapata was a superior horseman. Unlike him, he was something of a dandy who liked to sip brandy and wear flashy outfits with a huge sombrero.

In 1909, Zapata was elected village chief. He studied documents that proved his village had a right to its land based on a grant from Spain. In 1909, he confronted the local *haciendo* to demand the return of his village's cornfields. The *haciendo* replied that if the villagers wanted to sow their seed, "let them sow it in a flowerpot."

In 1910, when Madero declared his rebellion against Diaz, Zapata led a band of armed villagers to retake their stolen cornfields. Zapata was destined to become the leader of the Morelos peasants, called *zapatistas*.

They became fearsome guerilla fighters in reclaiming their land stolen by the *hacendados*. Zapata's cry of "Land and Liberty!" became the motto of the Mexican Revolution.

In May 1911, with Villa, Zapata, and other revolutionaries hitting Diaz from all sides, the dictator left Mexico and went into exile in France. A few months later, Madero won election as president.

The Revolution Continued

Zapata soon learned that Madero did not intend to force the *hacendados* to give up their millions of acres of land. In November 1911, Zapata announced plans to confiscate parts of each *hacienda's* land and redistribute it to individual peasants and villages.

Madero sent General Victoriano Huerta and the Mexican army to Morelos to suppress Zapata's land reform movement. Zapata took his fighters into the mountains to wage guerilla warfare against Huerta.

In the north, disillusioned revolutionaries rebelled against Madero for failing to improve the conditions of workers. Villa, however, remained loyal to him.

In February 1913, President Madero put General Huerta in charge of defending his government against a conspiracy of Diaz supporters who wanted to bring back the old dictator. But Huerta joined the conspiracy, took over the government, and had Madero executed.

With Huerta in charge, Mexico reverted to a dictatorship supported by Diaz's men, the *hacendados*, and top military generals. It was as if the Revolution of 1910 had never taken place.

Venustiano Carranza was a liberal supporter of Madero and governor of the northern state of Coahuila. Carranza declared himself "first chief" and launched a rebellion against Huerta.

Villa joined with Carranza and organized his own paid professional army of 20,000 men and even a few women. Villa formed many of his *villistas* into a superior cavalry. He confiscated trains to quickly transport his troops and horses to battle. He also had a hospital train of 40 cars with the latest medical equipment and both Mexican and American doctors. To finance his army, Villa raided *haciendas* for cattle that he sold in the U.S. where he purchased firearms. When rustled cattle were not enough to pay his bills, he printed his own money.

In Morelos, Zapata continued his guerrilla war against Huerta. But he refused to recognize Carranza as first chief. Zapata saw him as another liberal who would do little to return land to the peasants if he became president.

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To complicate things even more, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson ordered a fleet of warships to Veracruz in April 1914 and occupied the city with marines and sailors. Wilson viewed Huerta's government as illegal and supported Carranza's effort to overthrow him. By occupying Mexico's chief port, Wilson hoped to cut off customs revenue to Huerta's government.

Meanwhile, Villa's cavalry defeated a force of 12,000 Huerta troops, and Zapata tied down another part of his army in Morelos. Carranza's military chief, General Alvaro Obregon, fought his way toward Mexico City with his army. In July 1914, Huerta gave up and fled to Spain. A few months later, President Wilson ordered U.S. occupation forces to leave Veracruz.

'War of the Winners'

Four winners emerged from the fight against Huerta: Carranza, Obregon, Villa, and Zapata. "First Chief" Carranza and General Obregon represented the Mexican liberals. They opposed the rule of dictators but were not committed to basic social and economic reforms. Villa and Zapata represented most workers and peasants who demanded labor rights and land. But who would become president of Mexico?

In October 1914, the revolutionary winners sent delegates to a convention to decide on a temporary president, pending an election. Carranza, as self-proclaimed "first chief," assumed the convention would pick him. When the delegates chose someone else, Carranza angrily headed for Veracruz to plot taking power with his ally, General Obregon.

A few months later, Villa and Zapata met for the first and only time near Mexico City. They both expected Carranza to fight them to take control of the government. But they failed to agree on a joint plan to stop him. Many believe that by not joining forces at this moment, Villa, the heroic leader of a professional army, and Zapata, the champion of the peasants, lost the Mexican Revolution.

Zapata quickly returned to Morelos. Villa took his time, enjoying life in Mexico City, before heading to Chihuahua. Meanwhile, Carranza and Obregon trained their army in Veracruz.

Early in 1915, Obregon moved his army north to battle Villa, whom most Mexicans and even President Wilson believed would win. But Villa ignored his top military adviser, who wanted him to retreat deep into Chihuahua, which would have forced Obregon to lengthen his military supply line from Veracruz. If this had happened,

Zapata could easily have sent his peasant army from Morelos to cut off Obregon's supplies. But Villa refused to retreat, believing he was unbeatable.

Both Villa and Obregon commanded armies of about 15,000 soldiers. Obregon, however, had been studying European trench-warfare tactics, including the use of machine guns.

Villa chose to attack Obregon's trenches head-on with cavalry charges. Over two days in April 1915, Villa's brave cavalymen charged the trenches dozens of times, but Obregon's machine guns ripped them apart. After Villa's ammunition ran out, Obregon ordered his own cavalry charge and drove the *villistas* from the battlefield.

Villa regrouped with fresh reinforcements, increasing his army to 30,000 cavalry and infantry soldiers. He fought Obregon in a series of battles during the summer of 1915. But Villa stubbornly continued to order cavalry charges along with infantry frontal attacks. The results were always the same. Villa's defeated army finally retreated with their demoralized hero into the mountains of Chihuahua, where he assembled a small guerilla force.

The Revolution in Retreat

Villa's revolutionary army, the most powerful in Mexico, had been decisively defeated. Zapata continued to fight his own guerilla war, but mainly in Morelos. Carranza formed a government, and called for a new constitution and election.

Villa was not quite finished. He became angry when President Wilson recognized Carranza's government. Villa mistakenly believed Carranza had agreed with Wilson to make Mexico a U.S. colony. Villa began to strike out at Americans and their property in Mexico.

In May 1916, Villa led about 400 men across the border and raided Columbus, New Mexico, killing over a dozen Americans. Villa's purpose is not certain, but he may have wanted to provoke trouble between Carranza and Wilson.

President Wilson reacted to the raid by convincing Carranza to allow a U.S. "punitive expedition" to track down Villa in Mexico. General John Pershing with thousands of U.S. soldiers and several warplanes hunted Villa in northern Mexico for almost a year.

Pershing never found Villa, despite offering a \$50,000 reward for his capture. About the only thing Pershing did accomplish was to make Villa a patriotic hero again in the eyes of many Mexicans.

In the meantime, Carranza organized a convention to write a new constitution for Mexico. Although he barred supporters of Villa and Zapata, the delegates produced some radical constitutional provisions.

The Constitution of 1917 put controls over foreign investment, restored ownership of minerals to the nation, listed worker rights, and outlawed debt peonage. It also required the *hacendados* to give up land, with government compensation, to the peasants. Carranza won election as president following adoption of the new constitution, but he did little to carry out the reforms.

President Carranza decided to end Zapata's guerilla war and sent an army to Morelos to wipe him out. When the attempt failed, Carranza conspired to have him assassinated. On April 12, 1919, Carranza's commander lured Zapata into a trap and cut him down with a barrage of bullets.

As the next presidential election neared, General Obregon decided he wanted to be president. Carranza objected and fled to Veracruz with a trainload of gold from Mexico's treasury to plot another comeback. His enemies assassinated him on the way.

Obregon negotiated with Villa to end his guerilla war in the north. Villa got a *hacienda* for himself and land for his remaining *villistas*. Obregon won election as the new president in 1920. The Mexican armies that had fought one another for 10 years ceased operations. This ended what some call the military phase of the Mexican Revolution.

The continuous warfare between 1910 and 1920 claimed the lives of up to 2 million Mexican fighters and civilians. The country was a wasteland of ruined crops, burned buildings, ripped up railroad tracks, and other devastation. A quarter million Mexican war refugees had fled to the United States. Yet, President Obregon held views that seemed to be closer to the old dictator Diaz than to Villa or Zapata.

Political violence continued. Obregon helped plot Villa's assassination, which took place in 1923. Obregon stepped down as president in 1924 but ran for reelection four years later. A religious fanatic assassinated him before he took office.

Not until the election of President Lazaro Cardenas in 1934 did the government act seriously to distribute land to the peasants and fulfill the other revolutionary reforms of the 1917 Constitution. Cardenas distributed land to more peasants than all previous presidents before him had.

Cardenas instituted other reforms. He nationalized the railways, electric utility companies, and the oil industry. He did away with capital punishment. Most important, he began a tradition of transferring power by democratic election, which has continued to this day in Mexico.

For Discussion and Writing

1. How did Madero, Villa, and Zapata differ from each other when they rebelled against Diaz?
2. Who do you think was the chief hero of the Mexican Revolution? Who do you think was the chief villain? Why?
3. President Wilson ordered U.S. troops into Mexico two times during the revolution. Was he justified? Explain.

For Further Reading

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A C T I V I T Y

Villa and Zapata

When Villa and Zapata met in 1914, both rejected becoming president of Mexico. Villa told Zapata, "I am a fighter, not a statesman. I am not educated enough to be president, I only learned to read and write properly two years ago."

When the two revolutionaries visited the presidential palace, Zapata declined Villa's invitation to sit in the president's chair. Zapata told Villa, "I didn't fight for that. I fought to get the lands back. I don't care about politics. We should burn that chair to end all ambitions."

Write an essay, explaining why you think Villa, Zapata, or both should or should not have become president of Mexico. Use information from the article to support your reasons.



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STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Watergate

National High School U.S. History Standard 30: Understands developments in foreign policy and domestic politics between the Nixon and Clinton presidencies. (2) Understands the events and legacy of the Watergate break-in (e.g., the constitutional issues raised by the affair and the effects of Watergate on public opinion; the involvement of the Nixon administration in the cover-up . . .).

California History Social Science Standard 11.11: Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society. (4) Explain the constitutional crisis originating from the Watergate scandal.

Fascism

National High School World History Standard 41: Understands the causes and global consequences of World War II. (4) Understands the rise of Nazism and how it was received by society (e.g., . . . political debate and opposition to the Nazi and Fascist movements in Germany and Italy in the 1920s and 1930s)

California History Social Science Standard 10.7: Students analyze the rise of totalitarian governments after World War I. (3) Analyze the rise, aggression, and human costs of totalitarian regimes (Fascist and Communist) in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union, noting especially their common and dissimilar traits.

California History Social Science Standard 12.9: Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time . . . (1) Explain how the different philosophies and structures of feudalism, mercantilism, socialism, fascism, communism, monarchies, parliamentary systems, and constitutional liberal democracies influence economic policies, social welfare policies, and human rights practices.

Mexican Revolution

National High School Civics Standard 23: Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations. (2) Understands the effects that significant world political developments have on the United States . . .

National High School World History Standard 37: Understand major global trends from 1750 to 1914. (1) Understands the importance of ideas associated with republicanism, liberalism, socialism, and constitutionalism on 19th-century political life in such states as . . . Mexico . . . (e.g., how these movements were tied to new or old-class interests).

National High School World History Standard 38: Understands reform, revolution, and social change in the world economy of the early 20th century. (6) Understands the role of the peasantry in the Mexican Revolution (e.g., . . . the impact of the Mexican Revolution on the peasantry).

National High School World History Standard 42: Understands major global trends from 1900 to the end of World War II. (1) Understands how revolutionary movements in such countries as Mexico . . . either drew upon or rejected liberal, republican, and constitutional ideals of 18th and 19th century revolutions.

California History Social Science Standard 12.9: Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles. (6) Identify the ideologies, causes, stages, and outcomes of major Mexican, Central American, and South American revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Back issues of *Bill of the Rights in Action* are now available online.
Go to our web site www.crf-usa.org and click on Free Lessons and Bill of Rights in Action.

New from CRF

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Our new web site on immigration is a one-stop informational and interactive clearinghouse on topics of U.S. immigration. Suitable for teachers, students, and all Americans, it features balanced, non-partisan curriculum on immigration history, on public policy, and on holding discussions on current controversies.



CRF Blog

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Take a look at the new CRF Blog updated each week day. It features:

- Information, discussion, and links useful to K–12 educators in civics, law, history, economics, and other social studies.
- Announcements from CRF about its events, programs, and publications. (We post links to the new PDF version of *Bill of Rights in Action* a week before you receive it in the mail.)
- Other interesting and fun posts.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome.



New Intellectual Property Resources

www.educateIP.org

Street Law, Inc., and CRF are collaborating in the development of exciting new web resources on intellectual property. Supported by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the Department of Justice, the new web site will have high-interest materials for classroom and individual use, including interactive online case studies, classroom lessons, and links to current issues of intellectual property.



Coming soon are case studies on:

- *Coldplay v. Satriani*. Was Coldplay's wildly popular song "Viva La Vida" copied from guitarist Joe Satriani?
- *Shepard Fairey v. AP*. Fairey created the iconic Obama Hope posters by copying an AP photo. Was this fair use or did it violate AP's copyright?
- The Beatles created the White Album. Jay-Z created the Black Album. Did Danger Mouse's mashup of the two (creating the Grey Album) violate copyright law?

These case studies will be online soon, and many more will follow.

Plus, coming in May, we will conduct a webinar especially for classroom teachers, media specialists, and librarians on fair use and other intellectual property issues that you need to know about. Register for the free webinar on the web site: www.educateIP.org

Coming This Summer: CRF's Celebrate America

Look for CRF's new web site on celebrating U.S. holidays. Coming this summer, just in time for Fourth of July, the site will help teachers, students, and families give greater meaning to celebrating holidays.



Vivian Monroe

1924-2010



It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Vivian Monroe, founder of Constitutional Rights Foundation. In 1962, as a community volunteer, she became concerned that public schools should devote more attention to teaching about the Constitution and Bill of Rights. As the organization's first and only employee, she worked tirelessly to create and build the foundation to provide educational programming for schools in Los Angeles. In 1967, she selected Todd Clark to become Education Director and together they increased CRF's outreach, first throughout California and then nationally. Vivian was instrumental in establishing an affiliate organization in Chicago and was a leader in developing the national law-related education movement. She served as CRF's Executive Director from its inception until she stepped down in 1989. She then directed the two-year Southern California educational celebration of the Bill of Rights Bicentennial, one of the largest in the United States, before retiring in 1992. After retirement, she continued working as a consultant for youth-serving non-profits in the Los Angeles area. Her contributions to the establishment and growth of Constitutional Rights Foundation are immeasurable and her energy, enthusiasm, and persistence will be sorely missed.

About Constitutional Rights Foundation

Constitutional Rights Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan educational organization committed to helping our nation's young people to become active citizens and to understand the rule of law, the legal process, and their constitutional heritage.

Established in 1962, CRF is guided by a dedicated board of directors drawn from the worlds of law, business, government, education, and the media. CRF's program areas include the California State Mock Trial, History Day in California, youth internship programs, youth leadership and civic participation programs, youth conferences, teacher professional development, and publications and curriculum materials.

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