

TEACHERS' STUDY GUIDE FOR "OPEN SECRET"

The 1901 Constitutional Convention was primarily called for what reasons? *To stop the Negroes from voting.*

Who made up the delegation of the 1901 Convention? *155 white men*

Alabama's constitution is the longest in the U.S. True *true* False

Alabama's constitution is the longest in the world. True *true* False

Who was Booker T. Washington? *Founder of the Tuskegee Institute and one of the most respected and influential Black leaders in 1901.*

How did Booker T. Washington try to influence the delegates of the 1901 Convention? *He gave Pres. John Knox a letter asking the delegates to refrain from disenfranchising the Negro from voting.*

What is the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution? *The Amendment that made it illegal to deny a man to vote on the basis of his race.*

Could Blacks legally vote in Alabama prior to the 1901 Convention? *Yes, if they were men.*

What percentage of Black voters in Alabama were disenfranchised by the 1901 Constitution? *From 180,000 down to 3,000....about 98% were disenfranchised.*

Name two ways the 1901 Convention used to restrict voting rights: *By a poll tax and a literacy test.*

Why couldn't the delegates simply eliminate the black votes? Why did they have to use poll taxes and literacy tests? *Because of the 15th Amendment.*

There were two former Governors elected as delegates to the 1901 convention. Can you name them? *Governor Oaks and Governor Jones*

Who is Miss Frances Griffin? *She was a suffragist.*

What is a "suffragist"? *A woman who worked to allow women to have the right to vote.*

Did Alabama vote in favor of giving women the ballot in 1901? *No*

Why do you think some delegates argued against the convention being recorded as public record? *Because they thought their opinions might show that they were prejudiced,*

Historians suggest that the ratification of the 1901 Constitution was secured by the voters in what region? *The Alabama Black Belt.*

Why is that theory questioned? *Because more voters voted than were registered and the majority of votes would have to have come from Black men who would have voted against their own right to have the vote.*

How many times has the Alabama Constitution been amended?

1. 50-75
2. 75-100
3. 200
4. *more than 800*

Do you think that the 1901 Constitution, with its discriminatory purpose, represents the thinking of Alabama's people in 2010? *No*

Essay/Discussion questions:

When the legislators vote against a bill that would allow Alabamians to decide whether or not to have a convention, is that disenfranchisement of all voters in the state? Why or why not? *It disenfranchises all voters because a law that would allow a convention to write a new constitution would ask the people to vote on holding that convention. By not allowing the law to pass, the legislators are preventing the people from deciding if they want a convention or not.*

If we know the fraud that made possible the adoption of this convention, why can't it be thrown out? *Because the voters who voted are no longer alive and so they can't testify of the fraud. In addition, the ballots are no longer available to use in court.*

Thanks to Federal intervention over the last 109 years, blacks and women can indeed vote in Alabama, schools are no longer separated and people of differing races can marry. *The segregationist language in the Constitution is no longer legally enforceable, however, it is still a part of our current Constitution. Do you think it is OK to have the language in the document?*

The film mentions "Home Rule"...Do you know what that is? *It means that county governments do not have the right to create laws to carry on business of the county, but must ask the Legislature to pass laws that the county needs, and then those laws must go to the people for a vote. In some cases, the whole state will vote on an issue that just applies to one county.*

The film mentions unfair taxes...Do you know why Alabama's taxes are considered unfair? *Because the poorest folks pay the largest percentage of their money on taxes. People begin paying income taxes if they earn only \$12,600.00 a year. And everyone pays up to 10% sales tax on everything they buy. Poor people pay a larger percentage of their income on food than do wealthier folks, so they end up paying more of their income on the taxes on that food.*