

TEACHER GUIDE

1972 DOC. #1: “Together with McGovern” Poster

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

After the disastrous 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago when police beat protestors in the streets, the process for selecting delegates to the Democratic National Convention underwent a great change. South Dakota Senator George McGovern had been appointed to head a committee that would recommend changes to ensure “adequate representation” of women and minorities. In 1972 these rule changes resulted in a far more diverse representation of race, ethnicity, gender, and age than had ever before been seen in a major party convention.

The 1972 election represented the first time that 18-21 year olds were eligible to vote for President. At the Democratic convention women made up 40% of the delegates, young people 25%, and the number of African American delegates was double the number present in 1968 (Fischer 146). This meant that there was less space at the convention for the so-called “party regulars” – city bosses, union leaders, and professional politicians. George McGovern emerged from this convention as the nominee.

> **Project** the document.

This is a McGovern campaign poster from 1968 designed by Paul Davis.

QUESTION **What messages about the McGovern campaign are communicated by this poster? Explain your answer.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The Democrats are the party of the people. McGovern is at their center.

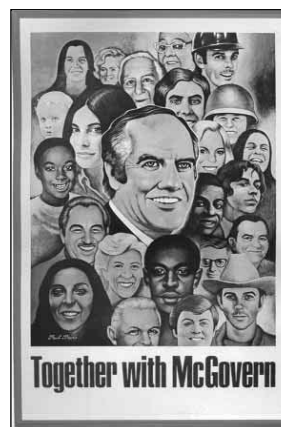
EVIDENCE poster shows representatives of many different social groups in roughly equal numbers; McGovern’s face is in front, in the center, and slightly larger than the others; text: “Together with McGovern”

QUESTION **What emotions are meant to be evoked by this poster? Why?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER This poster evokes joy and happiness.

EVIDENCE everyone is smiling; the layout suggests togetherness and unity

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“Together with McGovern” Poster

PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION

How did this poster reflect the rule changes that Democrats made for their 1972 convention regarding delegate representation?

SUGGESTED ANSWER

The rules allowed far more women, young people, and people of color to be represented, and this diversity is reflected in the faces on the poster.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Would a poster of the same design have worked for Nixon as well? Why or why not?

Who was the target audience for this poster? Who might have felt alienated by this poster?

Should there be quotas requiring representation for traditionally under-represented groups at political conventions? Why or why not?

ADDITIONAL INFO

In addition to the convention rule changes, more states in 1972 held direct primaries where delegates were selected by popular vote rather than by state party conventions. McGovern, who had been involved in these rule changes himself, hoped to do well in the primaries and then persuade the party regulars to support him in the general election. Unfortunately for McGovern, his candidacy was not supported by many among the traditional Democratic constituency, especially organized labor. Their lack of support contributed to his huge loss in November. One labor leader remarked, "There's too much hair and not enough cigars at this convention" (Fischer 146).

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

"Commoner"

Race

Target Audience (supporters of diversity)