

Document 1

Source: From a speech delivered by President Johnson to Congress titled "The American Promise," March 15, 1965.

My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Tex., in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English, and I couldn't speak much Spanish. My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast, hungry. They knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them. But they knew it was so, because I saw it in their eyes.

Source: Photo courtesy of Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, 1929.



Lyndon Johnson (center) and his students at Welhausen Elementary School, Cotulla, Texas, May 7, 1929.

Document 2

Source: Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*, 1998.

Yet all Johnson's rhetoric could not entirely disarm the suspicions of civil rights advocates. (Roy Wilkins* asked him) if he had felt so strongly about the issue, why had it taken him so long to act on it? Johnson wrinkled his brow and said: "You will recognize the words I'm about to repeat. Free at last, free at last. Thank God almighty, I'm free at last."... Johnson was describing himself as liberated from his Southern political bonds or as a man who could now fully put the national interest and moral concerns above the political constraints imposed on a Texas senator.

*Roy Wilkins was an important African-American civil-rights leader who worked closely with John Kennedy in developing the civil-rights bill that Johnson would later support. In 1964, he became executive director of the N.A.A.C.P.

Why did Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

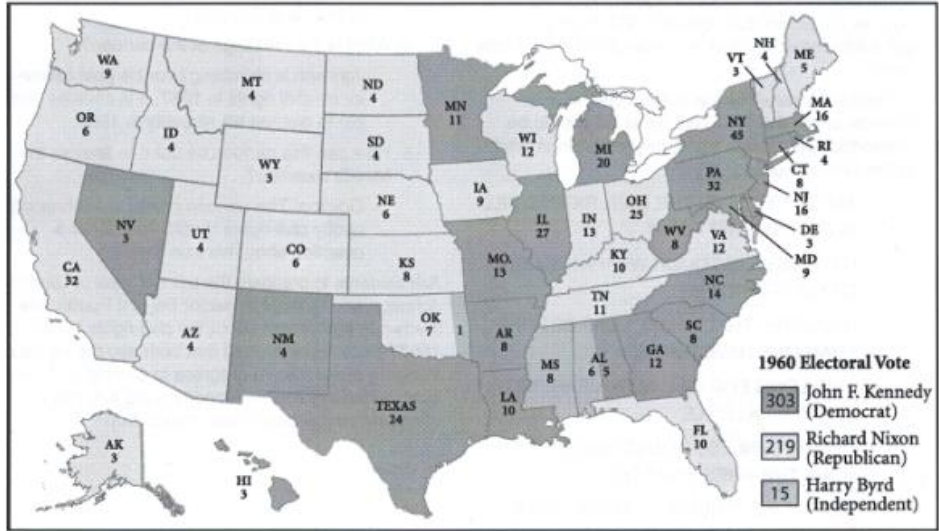
Document 3

Source: Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*, 1998.

Note: A few days after he became President in November 1963, Johnson invited Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, an unyielding segregationist, to the White House to talk about the civil-rights bill. The longtime friends and colleagues sat knee-to-knee as they had this conversation.

Johnson: Dick, you've got to get out of my way. I'm going to run over you.
Russell: You may do that, but, by God, it's going to cost you the South and cost you the election.
Johnson: If that's the price I've got to pay, I'll pay it gladly.

Source: Map created from various sources.

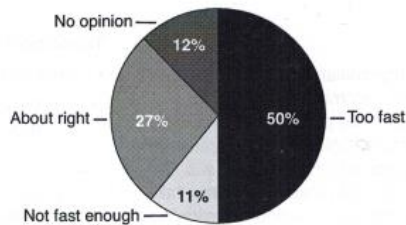


Document 4

Source: George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971*, 1972.

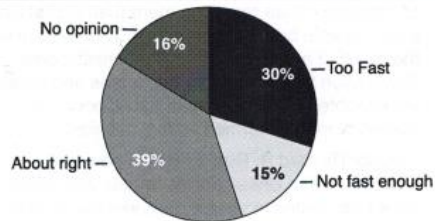
August 1963:

“Do you think the Kennedy Administration is pushing integration too fast or not fast enough?”



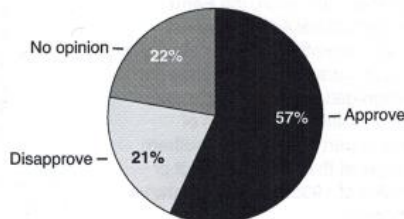
February 1964:

“Do you think the Johnson Administration is pushing integration too fast or not fast enough?”



April 1964:

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way Lyndon Johnson is handling the civil rights problem?”



Why did Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964?