

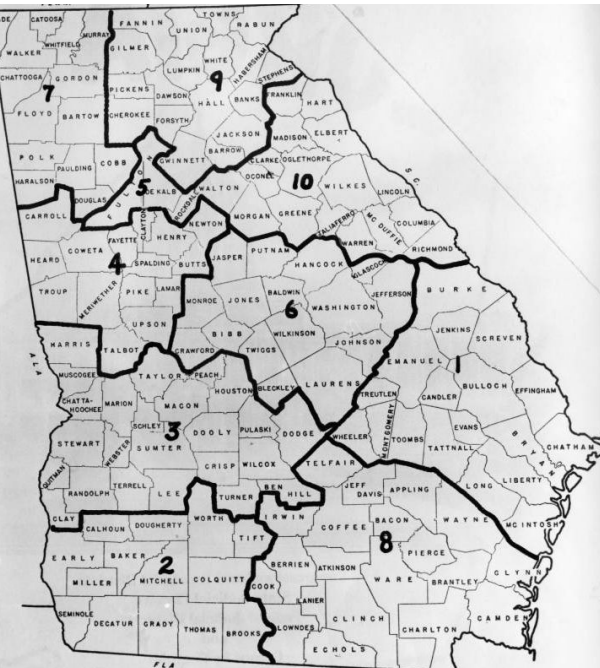
# ACTIVITY : SIBLEY COMMISSION JIGSAW

## INSTRUCTIONS

Students should be placed into four "expert" groups. Each of these groups represents either a specific person or group of people interested in the subject of school integration in Georgia. All four groups will receive a copy of the "Digest of the Sibley Report." Each group will also receive one individualized primary source that directly addresses their person's point of view on integration.

Relying on these two sources each group should determine their person's or group of people's attitude toward school integration.

When completed the expert groups should disband and form "roundtable" groups that include one person from each of the four groups. The roundtable group will share what they learned in their expert groups with the other roundtable members. The roundtable should then rank the four different perspectives from most resistant to integration to least resistant to integration on a visual graphic or chart they construct.



Map outlining school districts where the Sibley Commission will hold public hearings, 1960.

Source: AJCP298-020a, Atlanta Journal Constitution Photographic Archives, Special Collections and Archive, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

## Key People

**John A. Sibley** - A lawyer, successful businessman, and trustee of Berry College, who was appointed by the Georgia General Assembly to chair hearings throughout the state to determine whether or not Georgians favored shutting down all public schools in order to prevent integration.

**J. Battle Hall** - Floyd County's Representative to the State General Assembly, and a member of the Sibley Commission.

**Jule Levin** - President of the Rome Chamber of Commerce and member of the Rome Council on Human Relations, a civil rights group intent on ending racial discrimination.

**Floyd County Residents** - The population of Floyd County in 1960 was 69,130. Its largest city was Rome with 32,226. 36% of the population was 18-years-old or younger and 14% of the population non-white. The median family income in the county was \$4,669 and the median income of non-white families was \$2,582.

## DOCUMENT FOR EVERY GROUP

**"Digest of the Sibley Report and Summary of Georgia Laws Relating to School Segregation," 1960**

### WHAT THE SIBLEY REPORT SAYS –

The 1960 Georgia General Assembly set up a Committee on Schools, ordered it to hold hearings throughout Georgia, find out how the people felt about the future of their schools, and report by May 1.

The chairman was John Sibley; the Committee and the Report came to be popularly known by his name.

The Committee held hearings in each Congressional district and heard 1,800 witnesses (1,600 white and 200 Negroes) who said they represented 115,000 people. Two out of three of the people who testified favored closing Georgia's public schools rather than complying with orders of the Federal Court to integrate any of them.

The Committee members made their report on April 28. They agreed on two things: (1) they all deplored the Supreme Court decision, believed that it was wrong, and that both races could be better educated in separate schools; (2) they all, however, recognized that the decision is a fact and that Georgia must cope with it in some way.

### THE REPORT HAS TWO PARTS: A Majority Report and a Minority Report

The Majority Report, signed by 11 members including the chairman, wants the schools kept open and laws passed to control integration which the courts may decree. The controls they recommend are these:

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(1) by pupil placement

(2) by local option that would allow the community to decide when or whether to close or re-open its own schools, and

(3) by providing that any dissatisfied parent could take the tuition grant and send his child to another school.

This freedom of choice, the Majority felt, would insure the parent the greatest freedom in protecting the welfare of his child, and would guarantee that no child would be compelled to go to school with a child of another race.

The Minority Report, signed by 8 members including the vice-chairman, favors keeping the present laws, closing all schools rather than allowing any Georgia school to be integrated, and going to a system of tuition grants and private schools if the courts order any integration anywhere.

### THE MAJORITY REPORT SAYS

There are two choices:

Choice Number 1: The people of Georgia can keep the existing laws.

These provide that the Governor is to close any Georgia school or school system that is ordered integrated by the Court. Local citizens do not now have any choice in this matter.

This, under the Georgia law, would result in the closing, one by one, of the schools as the Court orders them integrated. However, the Federal Courts in the Norfolk Case held that the state cannot close public schools in one system and continue to operate public schools in other systems; the State must provide public education for all or none.

This continued state policy could result in the closing of all public schools in Georgia and the establishment of private schools with tuition grants for pupils. In such event, the Courts have held no publicly-owned school buildings, buses, books, or any other property, can be used by private schools. A private school must be private in fact as well as in name.

Choice Number 2: The people of Georgia can operate a system of public school education within the limits of the Supreme Court decision.

This will keep the maximum segregation possible, allow the local communities to determine the issue for themselves, and insure each parent the greatest possible freedom in protecting the welfare of his own child. This also would avoid the closing of all schools, in case of integration is ordered in one school. It would not interfere with the continued operation, on a segregated basis, of those schools not affected by the Court decree. (The alternative is coercive integration—the worst possible sort—by court order, with no safeguards whatever available to the local people and no freedom of action on the part of the parents of the children.)

To set up such a system of education, these two changes in the Georgia Constitution would be necessary:

(1) A fundamental right should be written into the Constitution guaranteeing that no child be required to attend school with a child of another race.

(2) Local determination to close schools or to reopen them should also be provided.

(Other necessary statutes to set up this system of education should be enacted.)

The Majority Report, therefore, recommends that these issues be submitted to the people so that they may choose the one which they consider best for their children.

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### DOCUMENT FOR JOHN A. SIBLEY EXPERT GROUP

#### "Report of the Georgia Assembly Committee on Schools," 28 April 1960

Those who insist upon total segregation must face the fact that it cannot be maintained in public schools by state law. If they insist upon total segregation everywhere in the State, they must be prepared to accept eventual abandonment of public education.

Those who insist upon total segregation, but who back away from closing the schools, are not only deceiving themselves and the people, but are creating a very difficult and harmful situation: if the State stands upon the present laws, yet declines to accept the ultimate closing of the schools, the result will be integration in its worst form: coercive integration by court order, with no safeguards available to the local people and no freedom of action on the part of the parents of children affected.

The alternative is to establish a system of education within the limitations of the Supreme Court decision, yet one which will secure the maximum segregation possible within the law, which will vest the control of its schools in the people of the community, and which will ensure the parent the greatest freedom in protecting the welfare of his child.

To put this alternative into effect, the Committee believes that some changes are necessary in the Georgia Constitution. The guaranty that no child should be required to attend school with a child of another race ought to be one of the fundamental rights protected by the Constitution.

#### Notes about Sibley's view of desegregation:

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### DOCUMENT FOR J. BATTLE HALL EXPERT GROUP

Letter from J. Battle Hall to Rose Levin, 29 January 1960

Dear Mrs. Levin:

Of course I was already aware of yours and Jule's position on the School Integration problem, and I am sure that you are cognizant of mine. In my opinion the best way to destroy the Georgia Public School System is to integrate.

Please rest assured that I will do everything possible toward seeing that our children have an adequate opportunity for a good education and according to the wishes of the people of Georgia.

Very truly yours,  
J. Battle Hall

**Notes about Hall's view of desegregation:**

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### DOCUMENT FOR JULE LEVIN EXPERT GROUP

**Jule Levin Testimony before Meeting of the General Assembly on Schools - Seventh Congressional District, 10 March 1960**

Q: (Chairman John Sibley) You are from Floyd County?

A: (Jule Levin) Yes, sir.

Q: Will you identify yourself?

A: Rome, Georgia. I am Jule Levin. I represent myself, my wife, my sister, my brother-in-law, and a host of friends with whom I have spoken.

Q: What is your business?

A: I am a merchant half the time, and a civic worker the other half. But I am here primarily because I am a parent.

Q: Now you heard the choices given this morning, did you not?

A: Yes, sir. I would say first, and unequivocally, I am for local option, but uninterrupted schools, at any cost. I say this, and I say this in the deepest sincerity: As a child I was the son of immigrant parents, who might be compared to the lot of the Negroes today. The public schools gave me a wonderful opportunity to grow into what I would like myself to be. Inside I like myself for the way I think, for the way I work for the community, for the way I work for society. I think this is the greatest function of public schools, is to prepare well-adjusted people. To close public schools to me is an act of suicide on the part of society.

**Notes about Levin's view of desegregation:**

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### DOCUMENT FOR FLOYD COUNTY RESIDENTS EXPERT GROUP

**Coleman Prophett, "Floyd Witnesses for Open Schools, Cartersville Hearing Testimony Strongly Favors Local Option," *Rome News Tribune*, 11 March 1960**

Romans testifying before the State School Study Commission in Cartersville Thursday favored by 3-1 some form of local decision on the school segregation issue.

Nearly 100 witnesses who testified before the commission's first North Georgia hearing voiced the same general sentiment although there was strong support for "Segregation at all costs."

Witnesses appearing before the commission, which was formed by the General Assembly to determine public sentiment on the school issue, came from 11 of the 14 counties in the Seventh Congressional District. Many presented petitions or the results of polls conducted by civic, business, labor and professional groups, so the opinions given the commission yesterday actually reflected the thinking of thousands of persons over the district.

#### Strong for Open-Schools

It was the strongest open-school sentiment the commission, headed by Atlanta banker John A. Sibley, has encountered so far. Previous hearings have been held at Americus where there was a strong segregation trend, and at Washington where opinion was more evenly divided.

The commission opened its fourth session in LaGrange today.

Here is the way Floyd Countains appearing before the commission Thursday expressed themselves, in order of their appearance:

E. Russell Moulton, superintendent of Lindale schools, said he represented the Floyd County Education Assn. and that 192 of the 260 members of the association had been polled on the alternatives of closing schools to avoid integration or establishing some form of local option-pupil placement plan. The result, he said, was 189-3 in favor of local option.

The people of Floyd County are fully capable of deciding how they want their schools operated," Moulton said.

#### Notes about Floyd County residents' views of desegregation:

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### Roundtable Group

1. What was John Sibley's view of desegregation and why did he hold this view?
2. What was J. Battle Hall's view of desegregation and why did he hold this view?
3. What was Jule Levin's view of desegregation and why did he hold this view?
4. What was the view of desegregation held by Floyd County residents and why did they hold this view?

In this box, produce a visual graphic or chart that represents the four different perspectives on school desegregation from most resistant to least resistant to integration.

# ANSWER KEY

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## Activity : Sibley Commission Jigsaw

Possible Responses Include:

- John Sibley - Keep public schools open, but preserve maximum segregation possible
- J. Battle Hall - Integration will destroy public education
- Jule Levin - Keep schools open, public education should provide opportunities for all Americans
- Floyd County - Keep schools open, let local communities decide integration issue

In order of most to least supportive of integration: Levin, Floyd County, Sibley, Hall

Further Information on the Civil Rights Movement in Rome, Georgia is available at:  
<https://sites.berry.edu/civilrights/>

