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### Civil Rights Act

As a senator from Texas, Lyndon B. Johnson was known for his dedication and commitment to his career. He did not support civil rights while he was a senator. At the time, he didn't believe blacks should have a right to vote and shouldn't be a part of any laws. However, that view changed as he signed the Civil Rights Act on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964. When President John F. Kennedy was killed in November 1963, Johnson vowed that he would carry out his proposals for civil rights reform. Lyndon B. Johnson was a big opponent to federal civil rights while a senator from Texas, however that view later changed when he became President.

Lyndon B. Johnson served as a Texas senator from 1949-1961. During that time, he was a major opponent to federal civil rights. At the time, he didn't believe blacks should have a right to vote and shouldn't be a part of any laws. Barack Obama once said in a speech given at the LBJ Presidential Library, "During his first 20 years in Congress, he opposed every civil rights bill that came up for a vote, once calling the push for federal legislation a farce and a shame," (Gardner).

Let's fast forward to 1964, and somehow now President Johnson is signing a bill to end segregation. When President John F. Kennedy was killed in November 1963, Johnson vowed that he would carry out his proposals for civil rights reform. He felt passionately that he could

use his presidency and his great legislative skill to finally put racial discrimination, at least under the eyes of the law, to an end, (East). Delivered in a message to a joint session of Congress, President Johnson stated, "I want to be the President who helped to end hatred among his fellow men and who promoted love among the people of all races and all regions and all parties." On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964, using more than 75 pens, signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, (Bowen)

When you take a look at these two viewpoints, you see a big difference. In one you can see Johnson is against federal civil rights, and in the other you see him signing a federal act to end racial discrimination. You may think, what caused him to change his mind on this? There is no 100% clear answer to this, but instead assumptions can be made. The main reason most likely is because of his duty as president. The duty as President of the United States is to do what is best for the country, and this decision of signing the act was best for the country.

Lyndon B. Johnson has been significantly involved within the history of civil rights within the United States. He also has had many different views on the topic. As a senator, he was fully against federal civil rights legislation. At the time, he didn't believe blacks should have a right to vote and shouldn't be a part of any laws. However once he became president, this view seemed to change. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964, he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which put an end to racial segregation. When it comes to answering the question as to why he changed his view on federal civil rights, it mostly is because of his duty as President of the United States.

Works Cited

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