

**PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY****Biography**

Born in Marshall, Texas, James Farmer helped found the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942 and served as the group's leader for twenty years. The organization's purpose was to directly challenge American racism through Gandhian tactics of nonviolence, making it the first civil rights organization to adopt these strategies. Farmer became the National Director of CORE in 1953, leading the organization of sit-ins and Freedom Rides. He left the organization in the late 1960s as it drifted away from tactics of nonviolence. Farmer served as the Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Nixon.

What is Mr. Farmer's profession? (circle your answer or answers)

- A. Politician
- B. Business professional
- C. Activist
- D. Professor

Answers:  
C – Mr. Farmer has worked as an activist.

**Vocabulary**

**Activist:** A person who practices direct action to effect changes in social conditions and governments.

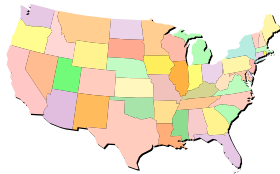
Name two people (aside from Mr. Farmer) who are **Activists**:

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1.



2.



3.



4.

Can you identify the images above?

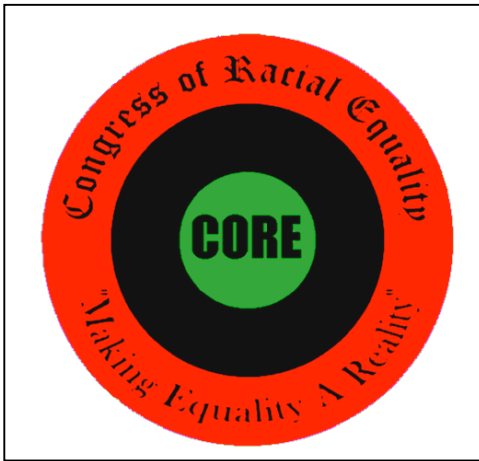
1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Answers:  
1. World Map 2. Unites States of America 3. Texas 4. Texas State flag

**POST-VISIT ACTIVITY**

The Congress of Racial Equality was founded by a group of Chicago students in 1942. Many of the founders were members of the Chicago branch of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a pacifist organization seeking to change racist attitudes. Influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, CORE pioneered the strategy of nonviolent direct action, in particular the tactics of sit-ins, jail-ins (serving out discriminatory jail sentences rather than paying bail), and freedom rides. Mahatma Gandhi was an Indian nationalist whose nonviolent techniques moved India toward independence from British rule and won Gandhi international acclaim. Gandhi also widely influenced Martin Luther King, Jr.



White middle-class college students made up the bulk of early CORE membership, but as time passed the organization was increasingly made up of poorer African Americans. CORE remained committed to maintaining an interracial membership, but black leaders were sought out for high profile positions. In the mid-1960s CORE shifted its attention to the north and west of the nation, regions in which the majority of its membership lived and worked. Much as

CORE's role in the black community was being questioned, so too were the effectiveness of its tactics. Many began to favor militant activism as civil rights efforts encountered increasing white resistance. Ultimately, Farmer stepped down as the national director and was replaced by the more militant Floyd McKissick who endorsed Black Power and had greater support in the black community.

**New Vocabulary**

**Pacifist:** Opposing war or violence as a means of settling disputes

**Militant:** Engaged in warfare or fighting

What other student-led or initiated organizations played important roles in the Civil Rights Movement?

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How did the shift to Black Power within CORE change the organization?

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