



2003 Freedom Award  
National Recipient  
Maxine Smith



**PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY**

**Biography**

Maxine Smith was the head of the Memphis branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for over forty years. The NAACP is a widely influential civil rights organization that led many protests and demonstrations. Her work was key to the desegregation of Memphis schools and public services in the 1950s and 1960s. Smith organized “Black Mondays,” school boycotts begun in 1969 to force full integration of the public education system. She also organized sit-ins, boycotts of downtown stores, and court cases to challenge the southern Jim Crow system.

What is Maxine Smith’s profession? (circle your answer or answers)

- A. Receptionist
- B. Philanthropist
- C. Attorney
- D. Activist

Answers:  
D - Mrs. Smith has worked as an civil rights activist.

**Vocabulary**


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

**Boycott:** To engage in a concerted refusal to have dealings with in order to express disapproval or force acceptance of certain conditions

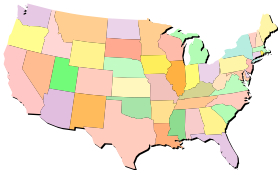
Name two people (aside from Maxine Smith) who you think are **Activists**:

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1.



2.



3.



4.

**Can you identify the images above?**

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

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

Answers:  
1. World Map 2. United States 3. Tennessee 4. Tennessee Flag



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**POST-VISIT ACTIVITY**

Founded in 1909 by W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida Wells-Barnett, and others, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and most influential civil rights organization. Early on the NAACP concentrated on using the courts to overturn the Jim Crow laws that established racial segregation and discrimination. In the decades following World



War I, the NAACP's legal department, headed by Thurgood Marshall, defended the interests of blacks convicted by all-white juries, denied the vote in Southern states, and excluded from employment and union membership on the railroads. The NAACP undertook a campaign spanning several decades to bring about the reversal of the separate but equal doctrine announced by the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

Beginning by challenging segregation in state professional schools, then attacking Jim Crow at the college level, the campaign culminated in a unanimous Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that held that state-sponsored segregation of elementary schools was unconstitutional. Bolstered by that victory, the NAACP pushed for full desegregation throughout the South.

What was Jim Crow segregation? How was the court system used to fight it?

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Can you name some events organized by the NAACP during the civil rights era struggles?

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**New Vocabulary:**

**Unconstitutional:** Illegal due to being a direct violation of the nation's constitution

Use this word in a sentence about the civil rights movement.

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