

SITUATION PAPER:

(The following is for a "role-play" session that will take place in the Freedom School class of July 16. Mike Miller will lead the class. He will play the role of President of Mary McLeod College. You have between now and the class to prepare for the role play. In addition, there will be a brief preparation period shortly after the class begins.)

The undergraduate students at Mary McLeod College liked reading Howard Zinn's PEOPLES HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. It was a good balance to the more traditional textbook that was required reading for their US History class, a class that was required of all undergraduates at the four-year liberal arts college.

When students showed up for their class at the beginning of the Fall, 2005 semester, they discovered that Zinn's book was no longer a supplemental text for the class, and it wasn't even on the reading list. When they asked their teacher why, he said that he had been told that it could no longer be assigned as a supplemental text. When the students asked why it wasn't on the reading list as an "optional reading," he told them that the Department Chair had told him not to put it there. When the students asked the Department Chairman why, she said the book had become too controversial. Pressed for more details, she said that some parents had contacted members of the Board of Trustees of the College, and that some conservative members put pressure on the College President who, in turn, told the Department Chair that "the book is too hot to handle" because of its "subversive" ideas. The President had suggested to the Trustees that the Zinn book remain an optional reading along with other optional readings, but three of the nine Trustees were adamant in their position.

The students asked the College President if they could talk with him about what had happened. He scheduled a meeting with them, but said to them that all he could do was explain why the book was no longer on the reading list.

You are the Mary McLeod students who are going to meet with the President. The meeting is set for 10:15 a.m., July 16.

You have 20 minutes to prepare for the meeting.

Mike Miller is the class leader for July 16. He will further explain the role-play at the beginning of the class.