Sources of Tension

“Separate, but equal” vs. integration of schools (huge disagreements over this issue)

Brown vs. Board of Education establishes legal precedent for integration of schools

Tension

States’ rights vs. federal power
State & local officials (e.g., governors, law enforcement) refuse to implement fed. laws to integrate schools

Goal

Force state government officials to comply with federal law

CONS
Disadvantages of taking a risk

Highly charged issue
- strong fed. stand could escalate into a race war with increased violence - divide the country further
Taking a strong position could cost JFK next election

PROS
Advantages of taking a risk

Forcing state government compliance could ensure that Af. Americans have equal opportunities for success
Could be significant progress toward ending gov.-sanctioned discrimination

Risk-taking Action

JFK orders an “army” of federal marshals to the South to ensure that...
...Federal laws are obeyed and enforced by state and local officials
...Af. Americans are protected when integration laws are enforced

Results

Unexpected

George Wallace “stands in school house door” to prevent Af. American from registering at Univ. of Alabama (his way of protesting JFK’s actions)

Wallace’s “racist” actions on national TV result in increased national support for JFK

Expected

JFK loses political support from South

Governors forced to order schools to be integrated & order state troopers to protect Af. Americans from violent attacks (or else governors would be arrested by fed. marshals)

Spin-off

Tensions or Issues

Forced busing becomes necessary to ensure schools are integrated

Whites concerned about safety of their children & fear Af. American teachers are poor educators -- result is “white flight” to private schools

Success at integration issue encourages Af. Americans to pursue other civil rights issues (housing & job discrimination)

Poor whites with kids attending private schools must pay tuition -- don’t have money for other basic needs

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