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# Objectives

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As educators, it is imperative to prepare students for the challenges they will face tomorrow. The purpose of this exercise is for students to think critically about how advances in technology can impact the future, specifically in the realm of civil rights and human rights. Our current educational objectives place a strong emphasis on STEAM careers and demand for these courses is high. Consequently, students are less exposed to subjects in the humanities that require them to think thoughtfully about social issues. It is particularly important at this stage that we cultivate a generation of ethical engineers of the future. This exercise educates students about civil rights issues in tech and asks them to reflect on how it affects them as an individual and our society.

## What are rights?

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The word term **rights** is used in different contexts, but the basic notion of a *right* is something that we are entitled to or guaranteed.

*The term civil rights refers to specific rights that are meant to ensure equality and are protected by laws on a national or local level.*

The United States adopted a notion of Civil Rights after the Civil War. At first, in United States, white, land-owning men were the only people who enjoyed guaranteed rights under the constitution. These were known as *civil liberties* or personal freedoms of citizens, which were covered by the first ten amendments, known as The Bill of Rights. After the Civil War the constitution was amended by the Reconstruction Amendments. These amendments are fundamental to what we understand civil rights. According to Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute:

“The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution constituted the largest expansion of civil rights in the history of the United States. The Thirteenth Amendment outlawed involuntary servitude. The Fourteenth Amendment made it illegal for a state to pass laws "which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States... [or] deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, [or] deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The Fifteenth Amendment prohibits the U.S. or any state to deny a citizen the right to vote based on that person's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”(1)

The new laws made slavery illegal, and granted other important rights of citizenship, like voting. However, many of the existing legal, economic, and social structures still put African Americans at a disadvantage. In many places the civil rights and human rights of African Americans were being violated. In the 1960s, many statutes and additional amendments would need to be added in order address the problems that the Reconstruction Era amendments left out. While legislation continues to be improved, discrimination and racism are still pervasive. One of the reasons that