



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1992 Volume I: The Constitution, Courts and Public Schools

Eyes on the Prize: The Civil Rights Struggle, 1954 to 1965

Curriculum Unit 92.01.03
by Peter Neal Herndon

I've come this far to freedom
And I won't turn back.
I'm changing to the highway
From my old dirt track.
I'm coming and I'm going
And I'm stretching and I'm growing
And I'll reap what I've been sowing
Or my skin's not black;
I've prayed and slaved and waited
And I've sung my song.
You've slashed me and you've treed me
And you've everything but freed me,
But in time you'll know you need me
And it won't be long.

—written by a student in the Mississippi Freedom Schools, 1964 (quoted in Holt, page 149)

Introduction

This curriculum unit is intended for use in the New Haven high schools in conjunction with the Public Broadcasting film documentary, "Eyes on the Prize," a six-hour photojournalistic history of the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's. This video film series recorded the spirit of Americans, black and white, who participated in the struggle for racial equality from the time of the Brown v Board of Education decision in 1954 to the Selma March a decade later. These videos are readily available through most public libraries, such as New Haven and Hamden. The course material in the following unit should prepare history or social studies students to view and review five of the eight films. Teachers may desire to utilize the unit as a ten- to fourteen-day mini-course, or as a supplement, featuring one or more of the films contained in the unit. I have designed the guide to be flexible. Hopefully, New Haven's high school teachers will find this guide useful and one which they can focus on key issues that impact on students even today in the 1990's.

I was ten years old and lived in a small Southern town when Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi for flirting with a white woman. How could anyone be that hateful, I wondered? I remember the news reports which showed the Army troops present as nine black children entered Little Rock's Central High School. Could this be America? Then, college students a little older than I sat in at a Greensboro lunch counter, and I remember being outraged by such an unfair system. Why were people treating people so unfairly just because of the color of their skin? I hope to share some of my own feelings of pain and anger to my students through this teaching experience. The title is taken from a traditional civil rights song:

"I know one thing we did right
Was the day we started to fight.
Keep your eyes on the prize
Hold on, hold on."

Nonviolence was the key to tactical victories won in this era. And the Constitution of the United States was the anchor that provided guarantees that non-violent tactics were legally defensible to provide the gains necessary. People were willing to violate local laws because they believed they answered to a "higher law," the Constitution. Students should become aware of the hardships faced by people who were willing to risk job and home and even life to win the "prize" of justice, self-respect and fair treatment. What gains were made during this decade of marches, meetings, jailings, sit-ins and freedom rides?

My unit presents five themes, in the context of "barriers" to overcome:

A. SOCIAL BARRIERS. Racial prejudices and fears that led to the formation of the Ku Klux Klan; fears of black-white "race-mixing," culminating in the murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955. Why did the Till case become a national scandal? Till's mother said, "The murder of my son has shown me that what happens to any of us, anywhere in the world, had better be the business of all of us." (Williams, page 57)

B. EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS. Implementation of the Brown decision in Little Rock produced heroes and villains

like Orval Faubus, Daisy Bates and Thurgood Marshall. What was it like for Mrs. Bates after she was struck by a rock thrown through her living room window with a note, “Stone this time. Dynamite next”?

The confrontation achieved historic proportions when President Eisenhower reluctantly brought in federal troops to protect the “Little Rock Nine” after rioting had occurred outside the school. Watching those students being escorted by rifle-toting soldiers through the front door of the high school is a scene few can forget.

C. POLITICAL AND LEGAL BARRIERS. The tactics developed by civil rights activists—sit-ins and freedom rides—proved effective in breaking these barriers down. What was the price? Beginning at a Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro in February 1958, sit-ins soon spread to fifteen cities in four other states. In Nashville things got violent and courts there upheld the segregation statutes. National attention focused on the movement. In 1960, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed, with a resulting shift in power from the older, more conservative legal approach to a more direct challenge to confront the enemy where he was. Victory in Nashville in 1960 promoted sit-ins in over one hundred Southern cities.

Freedom Rides began a year later, following a Supreme Court decision to integrate interstate bus terminals. Freedom Riders were mauled in Birmingham and Montgomery in May, 1961, which resulted in President Kennedy sending federal marshals to Alabama. Arrests followed. So did black voter registration drives throughout the South. The political education process continued.

D. HATE BARRIERS. Martin Luther King went to Birmingham in 1963, calling it the “most thoroughly segregated city in the United States.” Improving conditions notwithstanding, King engineered a campaign which resulted in massive demonstrations and arrests. King courageously decided to ignore a court order and went to jail himself. Almost one thousand children were arrested. “Bull” Connor’s fire hoses and snarling police dogs produced unforgettable pictures to the nation and the world.

Later, in June, George Wallace capitulated at the University of Alabama and the same month, President Kennedy introduced a civil rights bill in Congress. To help ensure political victory, a March on Washington followed two months later, a glorious day in the long continuing fight for equality.

E. MISSISSIPPI. Students will study the events that led to the murders of NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers and three civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner in 1964, the same year the Civil Rights bill was signed into law by President Johnson. That same year saw the birth of the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), a challenge to Mississippi’s regular Democratic Party, which had excluded blacks from membership. After “Freedom Summer” in Mississippi, Ross Barnett, and “Ole Miss” would never be the same again!

I. Unit Objectives

This unit of study contains certain basic concepts associated with the topic which students will be expected to understand and use. The following list contains organizations, events and terms with which students will be exposed in the unit:

Albany (Georgia) Movement, 1961
Birmingham, desegregation of, 1963

Black Power
Brown v Board of Education, 1954
bus boycotts
Central High School (Little Rock), 1957
Citizens Councils
civil rights
Civil Rights Act of 1957
Civil Rights Act of 1960
Civil Rights Act of 1964
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
Council of Federated Organizations (COFO)
Democratic National Convention, 1964
Fourteenth Amendment
Freedom Riders/Riders
Freedom Schools (Mississippi), 1964
Freedom Summer (Mississippi), 1964
integration
Jim Crow
Ku Klux Klan
literacy tests
Little Rock Nine
lynchings
March on Washington, 1963
Mississippi, University of ("Ole Miss")
Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
Montgomery bus boycott, 1955
NAACP
National Guard
non-violent resistance
police brutality
Project "C" (Birmingham), 1963
segregation
Selma to Montgomery March, 1965
separate but equal doctrine
sit-ins
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

This unit will challenge students to use critical skills, and in particular, observation and listening skills. Students will be encouraged to role play, utilize interviewing techniques and thereby sharpen verbal techniques and skills. Debating and small group activities should lead to further communication and group process skills. To summarize, my students who complete this unit of study will have been exposed to a variety of methods which are intended to improve their abilities to decipher, interpret, organize and communicate more effectively. In addition, independent research will be encouraged, many of the topics listed above in the Student Vocabulary List of Concepts.

II. Unit Summary and Strategies

I have divided each of the five films into two parts. This allows ample time for the teacher to prepare the class to watch the film and to hand out any materials, including questions sheets, that accompany the film. Also, the shortened length allows the student discussion and reaction, as well as classroom activities (see Lesson Plan section below) which will help reinforce what students have seen. My experience with film-watching has taught me that the students respond best when they can follow along with a guide, usually in the form of written questions and comments. Therefore, what follows is a series of Film Guides which are intended to be duplicated and used along with each film or film segment. Another tip: pause the film at appropriate places when you feel it is necessary to reinforce or stress a point brought out in the film, so that students know that you consider it important, and therefore, they should also.

FILM ONE: THE LITTLE ROCK STORY, PART ONE, 1954-1960

I. BACKGROUND TO THE FILM. The Jim Crow system in the South officially in place since 1896 when the famous Plessy v Ferguson Supreme Court decision declared that “separate but equal” facilities were the law of the land. This precedent was declared null and void by the 1954 Brown v Board of Education court decisions. But old ideas die a slow death.

A. Several arguments are offered by pro-segregationists at the beginning of the film. One man is a preacher, one a U.S. Senator, James Eastland, and one a Sheriff. Which arguments have you heard before? Which arguments were generally believed to be true by white Southerners in 1954? How would you argue against the logic presented by any one of these men?

B. The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees “equal protection of the laws” to all U.S. citizens. Explain why this concept was important in arguing against segregated schools in the South.

C. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Brown v Board of Education that racially segregated schools were “inherently unequal” and placed a badge of inferiority upon black children who were forced, de facto, to attend schools that were separate from the white majority. Explain how a segregationist might argue against this decision by the Supreme Court based on the doctrine of “states rights” or any other principle of law.

D. Compliance with the law of the land. How quickly did states in the South act to remedy the unlawfully segregated schools in their districts? What should happen to a school district that completely refused to obey the law? What could/should the federal government do?

II. THE FILM, PART ONE. LITTLE ROCK. For Preparation and Review.

A. Identify the people in the film:

Governor Orval Faubus Autherine Lucy

L. C. Bates Daisy Bates

The "Little Rock Nine" Elizabeth Eckford

Ernest Green Minnijean Brown

Melba Petillo

B. Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events that led to Autherine Lucy's suspension from the University of Alabama in 1956. Was the "threat of violence" just cause for not integrating the university? Explain your answer. What disturbing "precedent" occurred here?
2. What was Governor Orval Faubus' purpose in using National Guard troops at the Central High School? What were the reactions to the decision?
3. What happened to the nine black students who tried to enter Central High? Elizabeth Eckford, who was separated from the others, had nowhere to go. How did she finally get away from the mob?
4. Describe President Eisenhower's role during the crisis. Did he act decisively? Explain why you agree or disagree with his actions in Little Rock.
5. Once the black students finally entered the building through a side entrance, what happened outside the building? Who did the mob attack? Why?
6. Describe the student reactions as they were escorted into Central High School by federal troops for their "first day of school" in October, 1957.
7. How was the school year "different" for the nine students than for normal high school students?
8. What evidence in changes in attitudes among white students were there in the film?
9. "Looking back on the school year, how would you say it affected you?" Answer this questions from the point of view of Minnijean Brown (the suspended student), Ernest Green (graduating senior), and Melba Petillo (who burned her books).
10. In 1958, Governor Faubus decided not to re-open the schools. Explain how this decision was received. What would you expect to happen to a Governor today who made such a decision?

NOTE: To allow adequate discussion of the events described in the film, I recommend stopping the film right after Governor Faubus' speech. This is a natural break in the film, as the focus now shifts to events in Alabama and Mississippi. The second part of the film takes about 20 minutes to

show.

THE FILM,
PART TWO.

III. JAMES
MEREDITH
AND OLE
MISS, 1960.

- A. Identify the
People in
the Film:
- James Meredith Medgar Evers
Myrlie Evers Governor Ross Barnett

- B. Questions
to Consider:

1. Describe President Kennedy's response to the integration crisis in New Orleans in 1960.
2. In 1961, James Meredith asked Medgar Evers, who had himself been rejected from "Ole Miss" in 1954, and who was now an organizer for the NAACP in Mississippi, for advice as to how to enroll there. Thurgood Marshall, later an associate Supreme Court justice, agreed to help Meredith. Governor Barnett vowed to stop Meredith from entering the University, at the risk of violating a federal court order. Explain the reaction to Barnett's decision.
3. Governor Barnett met with President Kennedy. What did Kennedy do to guarantee Meredith's entry to the University of Mississippi? Describe the events in your own words.
4. The following is a timetable of events on Sunday, September 30, 1962, after Barnett and President Kennedy spoke on the telephone:
4 PM—over 500 deputized federal marshals were in place on campus
6 PM—James Meredith arrived on campus, flown in by helicopter
7 PM—rioting started; state highway patrolmen left the scene
8 PM—Gov. Barnett made a speech declaring to the federal officials, "You are trampling on the sovereignty of this great state . . . You are destroying the Constitution of this great nation . . . May God have mercy on your souls."
9 PM—Pres. Kennedy appeared on TV and said, "Americans are free . . . to disagree with the law, but not to disobey it . . . No man, however prominent and powerful . . . is entitled to defy a court of law."
10 PM—Casualties reported: 2 men shot and killed; cars overturned and burned; rocks and bottles thrown at troops, etc.
11 PM—Barnett declared, "We will never surrender!"
12 AM—Kennedy called Barnett and ordered the state police to return to the scene, but Barnett never ordered them back
4 AM—Kennedy ordered several hundred army troops to move onto the Old Miss campus to stop the rioting. 166 marshals had been injured and 28 had been shot. 200 people had been arrested, only a quarter of them UMiss students.

8 AM—James Meredith walked across the now-quiet campus to register as a student and met with no resistance. One hour later, he began his first class, as a senior transfer student.

Summer, 1963. James Meredith graduated from the University of Mississippi with a “NEVER” button pinned upside-down on his graduation gown.

5. How were the Meredith case and the Little Rock situation similar? How were they different? How were both a lesson in courage?

React to the following quotation: “The desegregation issue would become a political football

6. for the many Southern politicians who were more interested in grandstanding than in fair play.”

FILM TWO: NO EASY WALK, PART ONE, 1961-1962 “THE LESSONS OF ALBANY, GEORGIA”

BACKGROUND TO
THE FILM. Emmett
Till’s murder in
1955. The
Montgomery bus
boycott ends
successfully in
December, 1956.
King organizes the
Southern Christian
Leadership
Conference in

- i. January of 1957.
The Greensboro sit-
in takes place in
February, 1960,
the same year that
the Student
Nonviolent
Coordinating
Committee (SNCC)
was founded and
the 1960 Civil
Rights Act is
passed.

In the 1950's the SCLC began a non-violent training program to involve young black people in the civil rights movement. The workshops on non-violence taught college students the tactics of "passive resistance."

- A. Students learned that non-violence required compassion, commitment, courage, and the self-discipline not to strike back when struck or spit on or insulted. By 1960, students at many black college campuses had heard of the workshops.

On February 1, 1960, four black freshmen from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, members of the NAACP Youth Council, staged a sit-in. The movement spread to fifteen cities in six states by the end of the month. Despite arrests and fines, the sit-in movement continued to spread. In Nashville, violence erupted, but pressure from merchants who were being boycotted by blacks, brought pressure to change segregation policies.

- B. Students wanted to participate in direct action. They formed the SNCC to organize the sit-in movement. After a bombing in Nashville, in April, 1960, a silent march on city hall forced the mayor to concede that segregated businesses were morally wrong. Shortly thereafter, Nashville's lunch counters, movie theaters, hotels and restaurants began serving blacks and whites on an equal basis. A victory for the students!
- C.

The “Freedom Riders” began their movement in May, 1961, with a bus trip from Washington, D.C. to Georgia and Alabama. At Anniston, Alabama, a mob attacked the bus which was destroyed by a firebomb. At Birmingham, the passengers on the second bus were attacked. A week later, after negotiations between President Kennedy’s office and the Alabama governor, a new group of student riders left Birmingham for Montgomery and were attacked viciously outside of Montgomery. Further violence in Montgomery prompted federal marshals and National Guardsmen to be brought in. The Riders continued into Mississippi, where they were arrested and sent to jail. Throughout the summer, over 300 Freedom Riders traveled throughout the South trying to integrate bus terminals. Their courage and tenacity proved to be an inspiration to black people throughout the South.

D.

II. THE FILM, “NO EASY WALK,” PART ONE, ALBANY GEORGIA.

For Preparation and Review of the Film’s Events

A.

Identify the people in the film:

Governor George Wallace

Fred Shuttlesworth

Martin Luther King

Ralph Abernathy

Police Chief Laurie Pritchett

B.

Questions to Consider:

1.

At the beginning of the film, Governor George Wallace made a statement about segregation. Why did so many Southern officials use segregation as a political weapon. What is your response to this tactic by Governor Wallace?

2.

What happened to Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth because of his courageous stand against segregation?

3. Following the Freedom Rider beatings in Birmingham, the sheriff, Eugene Connor, was fired. Why? What does this show about the political situation in Birmingham?
In Albany, Georgia, SNCC had begun to organize the people in 1961, but had little success in getting the rural black citizens to register to vote. Arrests of protesters from the NAACP and SNCC helped to focus the community's attention on the need to integrate. Explain what differences existed between the two black organizations and why there was jealousy. What role did the "Albany Movement" play in unifying the community's black population?
4. What preparations did Albany's Sheriff Pritchett take prior to arresting black demonstrations? Comment on the Sheriff's handling of protesters. Was it successful or not? Explain.
5. Why was King invited to Albany? Why was he arrested? How was his arrest handled by authorities?
6. Why was there building resentment toward King and the officials of the SCLC?
7. Comment on what Pritchett meant by his statement, "I don't mind, and you don't matter."
8. Why was King allowed out of jail early? Why did King call this a "cunning (wily) tactic"?
9. What role did the courts play in the Albany situation?
10. When King left Albany he told reporters that the Albany Movement's goals had been "so vague that we got nothing and the people were left depressed and in despair." The Mayor said he would never negotiate with "outside agitators" such as King. In light of all this, what lessons should have been learned about organizing a successful protest in the future?
- 11.

NOTE: King's departure from Albany provides a logical breaking point in this film. Stop the film

here to encourage discussion, using the questions above or other questions brought out by the film. How does viewing the film make the viewer feel about these events and about the people who participated?

THE FILM, PART
TWO.
BIRMINGHAM
II. AND THE
MARCH ON
WASHINGTON,
1962-1963

- A. Identify the people in the film (refer to the names in Part One)
- B. Questions to Consider:

1. Birmingham (“Bombingham”) was called by many black leaders the “worst big city in the U.S.A.” There were eighteen unsolved bombings in black neighborhoods from 1957 to 1962. The Rev. Shuttlesworth, head of the black activists in the city, had himself been beaten and had his home bombed. He called on Martin Luther King to bring his SCLC to the city. Why do you think King accepted the challenge, especially after his embarrassing lack of success in Albany?
2. After the Freedom Rider incident brought national attention to Birmingham, many voters in Birmingham wanted change. Explain what happened in the elections of November, 1962, to further disrupt the city.
3. While the city was in confusion over its new government, the SCLC launched out with Project “C.” Explain what this was and what King hoped to accomplish.
4. What decision did King make that had a positive effect on the movement, after the courts had forbidden King to participate in any further demonstrations. Someone said this was the beginning of King’s true leadership. Evaluate his decision.
5. King wrote from jail, “Justice too long delayed is justice denied.” Comment on this statement as it relates to the desegregation movement.
6. King’s decision to involve schoolchildren in the marches was a controversial one. Was it a wise move? Explain.
7. Comment on the use of police dogs and fire hoses on the demonstrators by Police Chief “Bull” Connor.
8. President Kennedy was concerned, but instead of sending troops, he sent a federal negotiator to try to reach a peaceful settlement. Comment on this move by Kennedy.
9. How did things finally quiet down in Birmingham? Explain the role taken by the President.

10. What happened when Governor George Wallace defied the attempt by two black students to enter the University of Alabama?
11. What piece of legislation drove civil rights organizations to plan a March on Washington D.C. for August 28, 1963? How successful was the March? Give your own reactions to this historical event.
12. Why was the March considered a personal triumph for Dr. King?
13. How did people respond to the deaths of four little girls in Birmingham in September? What did these violent events prove to the nation and to the civil rights leaders?

NOTE: Suggested class activity: A role play bringing together the various groups in the Birmingham dispute as they tried to work out a satisfactory agreement. Outline the various pros and cons Dr. King may have considered before deciding to go to jail in Birmingham. A critical analysis of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech and why it appealed to people of all races and religions.

FILM THREE: MISSISSIPPI, IS THIS AMERICA? 1962-1964

BACKGROUND TO THE FILM.

During the ten years between 1950 and 1960, more than 30,000 blacks migrated out from Mississippi, the poorest state in the country. In 1959, the NAACP counted only one black dentist, five black lawyers and sixty black doctors in the entire state. Medgar Evers, denied admission to the "Ole Miss" law school, became an

- I. organizer for the NAACP in the rural parts of the state. He helped track down witnesses in the Emmett Till kidnapping-murder, and the murder of Rev. George Lee, who had dared to register to vote. Medgar was the object of hate mail and daily telephone threats. Yet Medgar kept on the job, knowing what he was doing was right, fully aware of the risks to himself and his family.

A.

After a month of tension and violence, James Meredith became the first black man ever to attend the University of Mississippi. That was in 1962. In that same year, the NAACP began planning civil rights activities in Jackson, the capital.

B.

In the summer of 1963, Evers and the NAACP led sit-ins in Jackson. The SNCC arrived to instruct volunteers, and the police responded with beatings and arrests of high school students in Jackson. This set the stage for tragedy and a national focus on the events in Mississippi.

II. THE FILM, PART ONE. MISSISSIPPI, 1962-1964.

A.

Identify the people in the film:

Governor Ross Barnett

Bob Moses

James Chaney

Andrew Goodman

Unita Blackwell

Medgar Evers

Mickey Schwerner

B.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does the land represent to black people and white people in Mississippi?
2. What was the purpose in forming Citizens' Councils? How did they become powerful?
3. Why was registering black voters so important in Mississippi? What kept blacks from registering to vote?
4. In Jackson, why did Medgar Evers urge blacks to boycott stores? What happened to student demonstrators in Jackson?

5. What happened in Jackson the night after President Kennedy's speech to the nation about the need for civil rights for all citizens? How did Mrs. Evers describe her feelings that night?
6. Why did so many volunteers come to Mississippi during the summer of 1964? ("Freedom Summer")
7. Was training necessary for the volunteers? Explain why you think as you do. Describe what happened during the training.
8. What happened to Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner?
9. According to the volunteer interviewed in the film, what effect did the threat of violence have on recruiting people to come to Mississippi? Explain.

NOTE: After viewing this part of the film, ask the students to think about how they might have reacted if asked to face the risk of violence for a cause they believe in. Think about this quotation by French writer Victor Hugo, "Stronger than all the armies is an idea whose time has come." The SNCC philosophy at the time was: "When beaten down, get right up again; when intimidated, carry on in the face of fear." How easy was it for those who lived in Mississippi to seek their rights? Did they have good reason to fear? How long is "enough?"

THE FILM,
PART TWO.
THE
III. MISSISSIPPI
FREEDOM
DEMOCRATIC
PARTY, 1964

- A. Identify the people in the film:

Charles Evers	James Forman
Bob Moses	Fannie Lou Hamer
Dave Dennis	Rita Schwerner
- B. Questions to Consider:

1. Prior to "Freedom Summer" some important events had taken place, including not only the assassination of Medgar Evers, for which no one was ever convicted, but also, five months later, President John Kennedy was killed. A civil rights bill was signed the next July, ending public segregation, but not addressing the important voting rights issue. Meanwhile, the three civil rights workers, missing since June 20, were still being searched for. Still, about a thousand volunteers were working throughout the state, canvassing and setting up "freedom schools."
2. One speaker in the film compared what was happening to a "Second Reconstruction." What did he mean by this and what comparisons could be made?
3. Why did White Citizens' Councils feel so strongly about the black vote?
4. What positive things went on during "Freedom Summer" besides voter registration?
5. What did many white Mississippians resent about the most upper-middle-class white volunteers? Can you sympathize with their views at all? Explain.
6. Rita Schwerner, the wife of the missing Mickey Schwerner, said that if "only Mr. Chaney who is a [black] native Mississippian, had been alone at the time of the disappearance, that this case, like so many others . . . would have gone completely unnoticed." She implied that because the other missing workers were white, the American people became outraged. What do you think? Are there parallels today? Explain.
7. Workers like Bob Moses of SNCC worked to get a slate of delegates from the MFDP to challenge the segregationist delegates to the Democratic National Convention in the summer of 1964. In August, less than three weeks before the Convention was to open, the bodies of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner were discovered in an earthen dam. What were the reactions among segregationists? What happened during the investigation? How did the publicity help the MFDP gain support among Democrats elsewhere in the country?
8. If you were Fannie Lou Hamer, what arguments might you use to convince other Democrats that your group of delegates, not the "regular" Democrats from Mississippi, were the real "people's choice," and should be seated at the Convention?
9. What did actually happen at the Convention? Why was Bob Moses so angry? What happened to Fannie Lou Hamer and the others who took seats on the Convention floor?
10. Evaluate Hamer's statement: "What would I look like fighting for equality with the white man? I don't want to go down that low. I want the true democracy that raise me up and the white man up . . . raise America up."
11. Explain the compromise offered to the MFDP at the Convention. Why do you think they rejected it? Wouldn't it have been better to have had "part of the pie" rather than no pie at all?
12. What were some of the gains of Freedom Summer even after the summer was over?

NOTE: For discussion with students after the film: “Even though the MFDP delegates did not obtain their goal of ousting the regular Mississippi delegates, there were some valuable lessons learned and a spirit that would not die.” How do experiences like this, even though disappointing, help shape leaders for the future and inspire the fight to continue? What other examples come to mind, of apparent failures that have turned successful in other ways?

FILM FOUR: BRIDGE TO FREEDOM, 1965

BACKGROUND TO
THE FILM. The
Fifteenth

- Amendment, passed in 1870, prohibited racial discrimination in voting. However, almost one hundred years later, very few black Southerners had been allowed to vote. In 1962 in Alabama, only 13.4 percent of voting age blacks were registered to vote.

- A. In Dallas County, where Selma (population 30,000) was located, blacks made up one-half of the voting-age population, but only one percent were on the voting rolls. Just 156 of Selma’s 15,000 eligible voters were registered.

- B. In February, 1963, two SNCC workers started registration clinics, but found that it was difficult to persuade Selma’s blacks to register. Intimidation and fear of retaliation, as well as doubts about passing the literacy tests (then legal) all contributed to lack of response. But the work continued, nevertheless.

THE FILM, PART ONE.
II. THE SELMA VOTING
DRIVE, 1965.

A.

Identify the people in the film:

Gov. George Wallace

Sheriff Jim Clark

Amelia Boynton

Jimmy Lee Jackson

James Forman

Rev. C. T. Vivian

B.

Questions to Consider:

1. After hearing the remarks of Malcolm X at the beginning of the film, why do you think it was becoming difficult to keep the movement for black equality non-violent?
2. Why was Martin Luther King awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December, 1964?
3. Why did it take courage to register to vote in Selma?
4. Why were whites so hostile toward groups like SNCC?
5. Was the black leadership in Selma united or divided? Explain.
6. Describe Sheriff Jim Clark and his tactics.
7. What was unfair about the so-called "literacy test" given to new voters before they were considered qualified to vote?
8. What did King tell the people he was there to do? What methods did he use in Selma?
9. What happened to Amelia Boynton? What happened to the teachers who gathered in front of city hall? How did some of the students respond to seeing their teachers demonstrating?
10. After Rev. C. T. Vivian's remarks to Sheriff Clark, what happened? Do you think Vivian was hoping Clark would overreact? Explain.
11. What happened to Jimmy Lee Jackson? How did people in Selma respond to his death?
12. Why did King and the SCLC propose fifty-mile march from Selma to Montgomery shortly after Jackson's death? How did this cause a split in black leadership?

NOTE: I recommend that the teacher stop the film after the scene where Gov. Wallace's announcement that his state would not permit the march since it would tie up traffic on the highway. Discuss the mood of Selma and the problem of maintaining an orderly atmosphere. How were reporters being treated in Selma; were reporters merely recording history or were they "making history?" What were the risks?

THE FILM, PART
TWO. FROM
III. SELMA TO
MONTGOMERY,
1965

- A. Identify the people in the film:
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Lyndon B. Johnson | Hosea Williams |
| Ralph Abernathy | John Lewis |
| Andrew Young | Rev. Orloff Miller |
- B. Questions to Consider:
1. Describe what happened when the marchers reached Edmund Pettus Bridge. How did the nation react?
 2. How does Andrew Young describe the futility of arming yourself to fight back against the police? Give your own response to his arguments.
 3. What was Governor Wallace's opinion of what happened to the demonstrators?
 4. Judge Johnson ruled that the march might have to be canceled. King said that "We are moving and we cannot afford to stop, because Alabama and our nation have a date with destiny." What happened when the marchers met with the state troopers at the bridge this time? What did King do next? What was the reaction to his decision?
 5. Rev. Orloff Miller described what happened to his friend Rev. James Reeb. What was the reaction by whites? by blacks?
 6. What happened at the meeting between Governor Wallace and President Johnson? What happened over the issue of who would protect the marchers in Alabama?
 7. What was significant about President Johnson using the phrase "we shall overcome" in his speech proposing the Voting Rights Act of 1965?
 8. What did James Forman mean when he spoke about "knocking the — legs off the table?"
 9. Explain King's angry remarks, "I'm not satisfied as long as the Negro sees life as a long and empty corridor with a 'No Exit' sign at the end. The cup of endurance has run over." What important announcement did King make to the crowd?
 10. Why did the 4,000 marchers need protection along their 50-mile journey? Who protected them? Was the march peaceful?
 11. Why was this march a significant one in the history of the civil rights movement for equal rights?
 12. What memories did Coretta King have of the march? What did Martin speak about at the end?
 13. Why were these two events important:

- August 6, 1965 — The Voting Rights Act passed by Congress
August 11, 1965 — The Watts riots began in Los Angeles
What impressed you about these events in history? How did they result in victory, not only for voting rights but also for dignity, equality and justice? How was this a time of hope for America? How did this movement affect blacks and whites in America for the better?
- 14.

CONCLUSION

One historian summarized the decade from 1954 to 1965 this way:

“This decade . . . saw more social change, more court decisions, and more legislation in the name of civil rights than any decade in our nation’s history. Those changes were forced by millions of Americans who, with a sense of service and justice, kept their eyes on the prize of freedom.” (Williams, page 287)

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

LESSON ONE: Little Rock: Who Should Represent the Black Community? (Role Play)

Objectives:

1. To familiarize students with the sensitive issues of race in Southern communities in the 1950’s;
2. To become more aware of strategies used by civil rights groups such as the NAACP and to get students to evaluate such strategies;
3. To become familiar with interviewing techniques;
4. To empathize with the students who were selected and to become aware of some of the sacrifices they were expected to make.

Procedures:

- This class period activity can take place either before or after students have seen the Little Rock film, Part One. Students selected should be given ROLE CARDS which instruct them how to act and what their responses will be to the questions asked in the interview (see SAMPLE
1. ROLE CARDS, below). Some Candidates should be clearly inappropriate to the students in the classroom who are the SELECTION COMMITTEE, whose job it is to agree on five students to represent the black community (Explain that in Little Rock they actually picked nine, but to make it simpler, we will pick five)

- The NAACP “INTERVIEWERS” will have a list of Sample Questions to ask the different applicants. (see below). The INTERVIEWERS may also encourage members of the class, (The
2. SELECTION COMMITTEE) to ask appropriate questions at their discretion. SELECTION COMMITTEE members should have a list of candidates and check whether they are acceptable or not, with a brief reason given.

- Following interviews of the CANDIDATES, discussion of each candidate follows between the INTERVIEWERS and the SELECTION COMMITTEE, with each person getting one vote. The
3. CANDIDATES selected may want to make a comment about their commitment to a peaceful, successful year at Central High School.

SAMPLE ROLE CARDS FOR STUDENT CANDIDATES

STUDENT ONE: You are very athletic, a junior, and have been a member of the varsity football, basketball and track teams. You are an average student. You like to date, have three or four girlfriends, and are popular with the rest of the students. You might have a hard time giving up sports. Your girlfriends are not in favor of your leaving the school to go to Central. You want to “show those whites” that black kids are just as good if not better than they are. They’d better not get on your nerves or they might be sorry!

STUDENT TWO: You are considered a quiet student. You get good grades and mind your own business. You work after school to help support your Mom and your younger sister. You admire Martin Luther King and what he stands for. You get better than average grades. You are a senior. People consider you responsible, you don’t like to fight, and are looking to going to Central to prove to whites that black kids can learn just as good, if not better than white kids.

STUDENT THREE: You have the gift of being able to make people laugh, whatever the situation. Your ability to tell jokes and funny stories attracts friends. You are friendly and “never met a guy I didn’t like.” You are a total optimist (look on the bright side of things) who believes strongly that people are basically good inside, they just need a chance to show it. You are a sophomore, but considered mature for your age, and are active in your church youth group. You are a “B” student.

STUDENT FOUR: You are someone who loves to gossip, tell stories and be “where the action is.” Your mouth sometimes gets you in trouble, because you have a tendency to exaggerate what you hear and have lost several friends because of this. You have been suspended from school three times for fighting. You don’t like to fight, but sometimes you just have to say what you think to people and don’t really care what they think back! You are a sophomore and a below average student.

STUDENT FIVE: You are outgoing and popular. You like to attend sports activities and are sports-minded, but do not play on a varsity team. You are a junior, active in clubs, especially the newspaper and literary magazine. Your grades are good. You hope to go to a good college, with whites and blacks. You believe that integration is important, and you have strong support from your parents. You are active in your church and sing in the choir.

STUDENT SIX: You are very clothes conscious. You have a part-time job at a clothing store which brings you in contact with many white people. You have learned how to wait on “certain” customers who are rude and impatient and be pleasant, in spite of the anger you may feel inside. You are a Junior; you have lots of friends, but leaving your friends wouldn’t bother you that much. Your grades are better than average. You have white friends in New York, where you spend your summers.

STUDENT SEVEN: You are a musician. You are into blues and jazz. You play the saxophone in the school band, and were elected Band President last year. You feel that a lot of whites imitate black music styles because they secretly want to be black. You would miss the band if you went to Central, plus you would find it difficult to make new friends. You were beaten up last year by a gang of whites and vowed to “get even” if it took you the rest of your life. You are a senior and want to go to an all-black college.

STUDENT EIGHT: You are a “straight A” student, class president in your junior year, and captain of the varsity basketball team. You feel that whites are inferior musically, athletically and intellectually. The reason blacks haven’t gotten ahead is because of discrimination and prejudice, not natural ability. You would work hard to convince whites that blacks are intelligent, normal, talented people. You wouldn’t mind making friends with a white kid. You believe you could “take it” if you had to, up to a certain point.

STUDENT NINE: You are an average student who enjoys the attention of members of the opposite sex. You like parties and dancing, are up on all the latest fads and fashions. Some consider you “boy crazy.” You like to stay out late on the weekends, and your parents are starting to worry about some of the kids you are hanging out with. You stopped going to church two years ago. You want to be a hairdresser, so you can keep up with “what’s happening.” You stayed back last year (ninth grade) due to poor grades.

STUDENT TEN: You are a good student with not much time to spare. You have an after-school job to help out your family and to save for college expenses. Your mother can’t work due to illness. Your father is a minister. You believe that in order for blacks to achieve they must work hard and earn respect from the whites. Nothing comes free. You do not like violence, and have walked away from fights, although you beat up a bully for picking on your little sister. You are a junior and well-liked by most kids.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

To be asked by Interviewers from the NAACP: (Not a complete list)

1. What year in school are you? What kinds of grades do you get?
2. Tell us a little about yourself and what kind of family you come from (answers will vary).
What would you miss most about not being able to go to the all-black school you are currently
3. enrolled in? Would you be able to adjust successfully without your friends and mostly whites in the school?
4. What is your general attitude toward whites? How do you think you would respond if a white student insulted you, made fun of you or tried to push you around?
Why do you want to be one of the students to go to Central High School next fall, knowing full
5. well that you probably will not be eligible for any extra-curricular activities, such as band, chorus and athletics?

NOTE: In preparation for this activity, students could write their own questions of the candidates, and make a list of possible “qualifications” that student candidates should display in order to be chosen.

LESSON TWO: Little Rock: Press Interviews with Eyewitnesses on Monday, September 23, 1957

Objectives

1. To recreate an historical situation, e.g., the first day of “school” for the Little Rock Nine;
2. To explore attitudes of different individuals who played a role in this situation;
3. To understand the courage necessary to stand up to injustice and racism.

Procedures

1. This role-play activity is similar to Lesson One. The activity can take place either before or after students watch the film, although it is intended to be carried out after the film, as a reinforcement activity, and as a way for students to express some of their emotions in an acceptable way.
Student volunteers will be given a ROLE CARD with a prepared statement to read. Participants will be asked to read what’s on the card, one at a time. A MODERATOR (the teacher or
2. another student) will then direct the conversation so that each one gets an opportunity to “confront” others on the panel. The Activity is over when everyone has had a chance to bring out their feelings about what happened.
3. If there is time and interest, students from the class should be encouraged to ask questions and comment on what the Panel Members say.

PANEL MEMBERS’ ROLE CARDS

DAISY BATES, NAACP DIRECTOR. I remember driving several of the children to the school, one of two drivers that day. They had all arrived at my home at 8 o’clock. We listened to the radio in my living room, as they broadcasted sidewalk interviews of people stationed outside Central High School. One man said, “Just let those niggers show up! Just let ‘em try!” The two parents who stayed with the children were nervous, and I could see them praying silently with bowed heads. Then the police called and told us to meet them near the school and they would escort the children in through a side entrance. The newsmen left for the school. When we got to the school, I got out of the car and told the children to move quickly. The mob was in front of the school, away from us. The police escorted them through the side door of the school. They were in! They were in! They made it! Thank God, they made it.

MISTER ECKFORD, FATHER OF ONE OF THE LITTLE ROCK NINE. I was very nervous driving my daughter, Elizabeth to Mrs. Bates house. You remember that Elizabeth was attacked on September 3 when she got separated from the other eight children. There was a mob around her, yelling “lynch her, lynch her!” A reporter got her to sit down on a bus stop bench, then a white woman came and got on the bus with Elizabeth. If it hadn’t been for her, they might have killed my daughter! No wonder I was a little nervous three weeks later. And the national guard, they never even tried to help her. No sir! She was fortunate to escape with her life. And now, here we are again. Still no real guarantee of protection. How can a few police and guards protect these children from a mob of five or six hundred? I just don’t know where it will all end.

MAYOR WOODROW MANN, MAYOR OF LITTLE ROCK. I personally resent the way that the Governor of our state, Orval Faubus, is using our city as a pawn in his little chess game to make an appeal to all the racist voters of the state. His move to call in troops to actually prevent the black students from entering Central High School is a direct violation of federal law under the Brown v. Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court. These helpless children are at the mercy of the mob. And the Governor is acting completely irresponsibly by refusing to order the National Guard to protect the black students. What is he waiting for—someone to get

killed? No decent person is safe under these conditions. I believe the only safe way is for President Eisenhower to send in Federal troops. The state troops, under our Governor will only make matters worse. This situation has gotten totally out of hand.

JUDGE RONALD N. DAVIES, U.S. DISTRICT COURT JUDGE. I presided over the hearing to decide whether the Governor of Arkansas, has the right to use the State National Guard to prevent the Negro students from entering Central High School. What amazed me was in the middle of the hearing, the Governor's attorneys took their legal documents and left the court. I thought I had seen everything in a courtroom, but this was a shocker! After hearing the evidence, I decided to grant an injunction which stopped the Governor from using National Guard troops to interfere with integration at Central High School. That very night, the Governor came on tv and said he was obeying the court order, but he also appealed to the Negro community to stay away from Central High until school integration could be accomplished without violence. This man has no respect for the law that I can see.

JIMMY HICKS, REPORTER FOR THE AMSTERDAM NEWS. The morning of September 23 was full of memories for me. After leaving Mrs. Bates house, I rushed to the school, to the side entrance where Mrs. Bates told us the kids would be entering. We got there about five minutes before the nine students did, and it's a good thing for them. The mob saw the four of us, all Negroes, approaching the school and started yelling at us. "Get the niggers. Get 'em!" About a thousand folk blocked the streets. One big burly guy swung at my head. I ducked. The blow landed on my shoulder, spinning me around. I ran between two parked cars where they couldn't see me. Two men jumped on top of Earl Davy. Others were kicking and beating him while the two held him. They smashed his press camera on the sidewalk. Several men jumped on Alex Wilson, knocking him to the ground and kicking him in the stomach. They were really starting to get out of hand, when someone yelled, "Come on, the nigger kids are in the school!" The mob then stopped beating us and ran toward the school like a pack of wild animals. That was our chance. We got the heck out of there as fast as we could. But you know, during all that beating, Alex never let go of his hat!

SOURCE: Bates, pages 69-71, 77-78, 93, 82-84, 90-92.

NOTE: If desired, the teacher can add others to the panel, such as police officers who escorted the black students into Central; some of the students themselves, black and white; onlookers, etc.

LESSON THREE: Central High School Student Council Meeting, 1958

Objectives:

1. To bring out some of the grievances by students, black and white, who attended Central High during the 1957-1958 school year;
2. To empathize with students, black and white, who face unfairness, and look for alternatives to change such situations.

Procedures

This role-play is somewhat freewheeling, as compared to either Lessons One and Two.

- Student Participants are given a situation or incident to describe and others, in character, are supposed to respond, these incidents are written on a SITUATION CARD. A MODERATOR, or
1. Student Council President, calls on individuals to explain their situation to the others, who are expected to discuss the incident and offer suggestions. Remember that time is limited, so the MODERATOR needs to move things along.
 2. The entire class is the Student Council, with perhaps one student chosen as Secretary, who should record Situations and any Recommendations to the Principal.

SAMPLE SITUATION CARDS

SITUATION ONE: Student was originally assigned to a homeroom with a friend in order to make it easier for her. After the second marking period, her homeroom teacher insisted she be placed in a different homeroom, which was all-white. The student objected, saying she was too scared. It was hard enough having just one friend; with no one else there to befriend her, she knew she would be picked on and teased. She wants to stay where she is.

SITUATION TWO: Student received harassing phone calls at night. One night, she was told that boys were coming to school with squirt guns loaded with acid. She was warned to stay home. The next day, the student was chased down the hall, after having her new dress squirted with ink, ruining the dress. At the end of the hallway, a boy faced her with a water pistol aimed at her face. Terrified, she closed her eyes tight. The liquid hit her face and she heard the boy running down the hall. It took several moments for her to convince herself that the liquid was only water. She knows who the boys are and thinks they should pay for the dress and be suspended.

SITUATION THREE: Student reports of being tripped and hit by students when teachers and Guardsmen aren't looking. Once he even got spit at in the face. When things are witnessed by teachers, usually something is done; but often there is no teacher or Guardsman around, like outside after lunch or in gym class, or in the bathroom. Can more protection be given?

SITUATION FOUR: Student wants to join after-school activities and clubs that are strictly white-only. When the music teacher recommended this student for after-school Chorus that sings at other schools, the white parents complained bitterly to the Principal. It's unfair for us not to have extra-curricular activities like we used to have at our other all-black high school. This is part of school, too, isn't it?

NOTE: Other discriminatory situations, such as not being able to attend school dances, play on athletic teams, etc., can be brought out. Also, complaints that some teachers aren't being fair in grading or ignoring the way white students treat them in class, etc. Obviously, even though each student was assigned his/her own Guardsman, there were times when violence, certainly the threat of violence occurred. It should be noted from the film that Minijean Brown, one of the Little Rock Nine, a junior, was suspended from Central after she dumped her lunch tray on the heads of two boys who had been harassing her. After a second suspension and repeated incidents, she was finally expelled for another lunchroom incident. She completed her high school education at New Lincoln High School in New York City. (Bates, pages 116-122)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc. 1962. 234 pages.

Readable first-person of the personal struggles, courage and commitment by Mrs. Bates, her husband and the students at Central High School during the 1957-1958 school year. Excellent for students to read.

Fairclough, Adam. *To Redeem the Soul of America*. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press. 1987. 503 pages.

Takes the Civil Rights Movement from the origins of the SCLC to the "Abernathy years" in the 1980's. Well-documented and scholarly, with almost seventy pages of notes and footnotes and over ten pages of chronology at the end of the book.

Friedman, Leon, ed. *The Civil Rights Reader*. Basic Documents of the Civil Rights Movement. New York: Walker and Company. 1967. 348 pages.

Begins with the 1947 Civil Rights Committee's Report to the President and ends with the 1966 Civil Rights Bill, with excerpts from Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Stokely Carmichael and others. An essential part of a serious treatment of this era.

Goldman, Peter. *Civil Rights: The Challenge of the Fourteenth Amendment*. New York: Conrad-McCann, Inc. 1965. 120 pages.

Written for the junior-high school student, full of pictures and chapter titles such as "The Schools: Separate Isn't Equal," and "The Students: Sit-ins and Freedom Rides." Includes the music and all eight verses of "We Shall Overcome." Portrays events up to and including the Selma to Montgomery March in 1964.

Harkey, Ira. *The Smell of Burning Crosses*. Jacksonville, Illinois: Harris-Wolfe and Company. 1967. 208 pages.

Personal autobiography of Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Ira Harkey. A story of personal courage in racist Mississippi against the racist society and the Klan.

Holt, Len. *The Summer That Didn't End*. New York: William Morrow and Company. 1965. 351 pages.

An in-depth description of "Freedom Summer" in 1964 and the Democratic National Convention. Over forty pages of Appendices and Documents at the end of the book, including a list of incidents of violence in Mississippi in 1964, and student work from the Freedom Schools.

Huie, William B. *Three Lives For Mississippi*, New York: WCC Books. 1965. 254 pages.

Written in 1965 by a native Mississippian, it documents the events surrounding the missing civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner. Sixteen pages of photos. High-interest reading level for students.

Lewis, Anthony and the New York Times. *Portrait of a Decade*. The Second American Revolution. New York: Random House. 1964. 322 pages.

Authoritatively written and well-researched. A good overview of the decade, 1955 to 1965. Has an excellent

chapter entitled, "The North," and another, "The Law."

Schulke, Flip, ed. Martin Luther King, Jr. A Documentary: Montgomery to Memphis. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1975. 224 pages.

Dozens of excellent, large black and white photographs, convey the message as only visual images can. A wonderful resource to use in the classroom. Includes all of King's major speeches and letters.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Staff Reports. Civil Rights U.S.A., Public Schools, Southern States, 1962. New York: Greenwood Press Publishers. 1962. 217 pages.

How Southern school districts in four states responded to the desegregation decrees, each with a Summary, and community progress charts.

von Hoffman, Nicholas. Mississippi Notebook. New York: David White Company. 1964. 117 pages.

A personal account, with over thirty pages of photographs, of the people's struggles during Freedom Summer, 1964. High-interest reading for students.

Whitfield, Stephen J. A Death in the Delta. The Story of Emmett Till. New York: Macmillan, Inc. 1988. 193 pages.

Fascinating detailed account of the Till case, and the conditions that promoted such a crime. Focuses on the theme of race and sex in the Southern culture. Literary as well as historical.

Williams, Juan. Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. 1987. 300 pages.

A companion to the film series. Filled with helpful anecdotes, stories, personal biographies and illustrations that proved invaluable to my unit.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>