

Moments in the Lives of Engaged Citizens

Overview

Students will explore what it means to be an active, engaged citizen by sharing moments from their own lives. Students will then explore a tumultuous period of southern history, the Jim Crow Era, when it took numerous active, engaged citizens to fight against the inequality and injustice of southern laws. This lesson will culminate with students teaching classmates about an historical figure representative of an active, engaged citizen by creating a “living” museum exhibit. (Teacher Note: The “living” museum activity can be used with any historical time period or theme throughout your curriculum.)

Grade

8

Course

North Carolina, Creation and Development of the State

North Carolina Standard Course of Study

- Objective 7.02: Evaluate the importance of social changes to different groups in North Carolina.
- Objective 7.04: Compare and contrast the various political viewpoints surrounding issues of the post World War II era.
- Objective 7.05: Evaluate the major changes and events that have affected the roles of local, state, and national governments.
- Objective 8.03: Describe the impact of state and national issues on the political climate of North Carolina.
- Objective 8.04: Assess the importance of regional diversity on the development of economic, social, and political institutions in North Carolina.
- Objective 9.01: Describe contemporary political, economic, and social issues at the state and local levels and evaluate their impact on the community.
- Objective 9.02: Identify past and present state and local leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds and assess their influence in affecting change.
- Objective 9.03: Describe opportunities for and benefits of civic participation

Essential Questions

- What are the characteristics of an active, engaged citizen?
- What are examples of time periods when citizens have been restricted of their rights?
- What laws were in effect in North Carolina during the Jim Crow Era?
- How were individual North Carolinians affected by Jim Crow?
- What role did individual citizens play in demanding justice and equality when their rights were restricted?

Materials

- North Carolina Jim Crow Laws, handout and evaluation sheet attached
- Readings on civil rights activists and other engaged citizens, such as *Powerful Words*, by Wade Hudson
- Active, Engaged Citizens Discussion Questions, attached
- Moments in the Lives of Engaged Citizens Museum Response Sheet, attached
- Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow, by Bayard Rustin, reading attached

Duration

Two class periods

Procedure

When Were You an Active, Engaged Citizen?

1. As a warm-up, ask students to think of a time when they were an **active, engaged citizen**. Answers can be as simple as standing up for a friend or as complex as describing participating in a protest. Ensure students understand there is no right or wrong, as long as they explain a moment when they were engaged as a citizen. After students have had ample think time, the teacher should share his/or her own example, then call for a student to volunteer. Go around



the room allowing each student to share. (If you are limited on time, students can be instructed to share in small groups.)

2. Once students have shared, ask them to note the characteristics of an active, engaged citizen, based on what they heard in each other's stories and other characteristics they would like to note. Compile these on the board as students share.
3. Next, ask students to think of times throughout history when people have been restricted of their rights as citizens. Note these comments on the board as well. Hopefully, a student will mention the **Jim Crow era** or something similar such as segregation. Focus students on this particular period of history by asking them to share what they already know.

The Jim Crow South

4. Next, explain to students that they will be learning more about the period of southern history known as the Jim Crow Era, and the engaged citizens who fought against it, by first examining actual laws that existed in North Carolina during this time period.

Divide students into small groups and give each group a copy of the attached *North Carolina Jim Crow Laws* handout, as well as a copy of the *Evaluation Sheet*. Instruct groups to discuss and answer the questions together. Once students have finished, go over the questions as a class, allowing groups to report back their thoughts. Further discuss:

- What types of consequences do you imagine Blacks and other minorities received when breaking one of these laws?
- Why is it difficult to study such harsh periods of history as the Jim Crow Era? Why is it important to be educated on such history, and not avoid its difficult subject matter?
- As those of us today, who never directly experienced or participated in the Jim Crow Era, learn about it, why is it important to not let anger get the best of us or to place blame regarding the Jim Crow Era? (*Let your students know that feeling mixed emotions about such a harsh history is natural, but often we learn the most in moments when we are uncomfortable. Rather than clam up and avoid such moments, encourage students to be open-minded, to ask questions, and to learn.*)

Tell students that **between 1873 and 1957**, there were **23 Jim Crow laws passed in North Carolina** alone.

(*For additional law examples from various states, see the Consortium's lesson "Life in the Jim Crow South."*)

Resistance to Jim Crow

5. Next, lead students in discussing the resistance to Jim Crow, focusing on the active, engaged citizenship of individuals and communities.
 - Are the laws you just read still in the legal code of our cities today? Why?
 - What did it take to bring an end to the Jim Crow Era?
 - Who are some of the active, engaged citizens who helped protest the inequality of the Jim Crow laws?

Tell students that they will each be reading about one of the many active, engaged citizens who participated in the **Civil Rights Movement** and stood up for their rights during the Jim Crow Era and beyond. Partner students up and give each pair a different reading on people such as **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcom X, Rosa Parks, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, Thurgood Marshall, Paul Robeson, Mary McLeod Bethune, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, Stokeley Carmichael**, etc. A wonderful book to use is *Powerful Words, More than 200 Years of Extraordinary Writing by African Americans*, by Wade Hudson. Teachers can also print biographies and articles off of the Internet, or use alternate books.

After partners have read, ask them to discuss and answer the questions on the attached *Active, Engaged Citizens Discussion Questions*. Tell students it is important the read carefully and discuss their citizen in depth, as they will be teaching classmates about this citizen in their next activity.

Create a Living Museum

6. Once students have finished reading and discussing, tell students that they will be creating a "living" museum exhibit for an exhibition on the theme of **"Moments in the Lives of Engaged Citizens"**. Tell students there are two requirements of their museum exhibit:
 - *A statue/visual representation of the citizen assigned to you:*



Students should take turns playing “clay” and the role of “sculptor”, sharing ideas and using their bodies to create a statue or statuesque image that represents the citizen they read about. The final statue/image must include at least one student of the partnership, but can also include both partners, props, etc., and can be literal or abstract. The only requirement is that the final product is a visual representation of your citizen, and it must be a product that can be held in place for a short period of time.

- *A verbal presentation about your statue/visual representation:*
When visitors walk up to your exhibit, the museum docent (tour guide) should be able to tap the image, resulting in information about your citizen being shared. This information will be shared by one or both of you, and should be approximately 2 minutes long. (For example, a sculpture might come alive to tell his/her story in first person, or perhaps the sculpture remains frozen with one of the partners assuming the role of a narrator who delivers the information.) Once the information is shared, the exhibit returns to the position it was originally in.

**Teachers should use their discretion regarding how much time to devote to the museum activity. The process can be drawn out and turned into a project, in which students take several days (class or homework time) to research their assigned citizen, prepare their exhibit, come to class dressed as their parts, etc. Or, it can be done in class as a culmination to the lesson as described below.*

7. Allow students to prepare their museum exhibit (time will vary based on class composition and teacher’s pacing). Once all students are finished, ask half of the class partners to assume the position of their exhibits, and instruct the other half of the class to join you. The teacher should now assume the personality of a museum docent, taking half the class on an “art walk.” Lead students to each of their classmates “living” exhibits and ask them:
 - What do you see here?
 - Why do you think the artist has placed the clay in this position? What might this represent? What message is the artist trying to convey?

Once students have discussed the piece, the teacher should tap the exhibit to “bring it to life”, at which point the student(s) will share the information they have compiled about their citizen in whatever creative way they have chosen to present. Afterwards, the tour will continue on to the next piece of art. (Once a student’s exhibit has been visited, they can join the tour as well. Also, students can relax their statue positions while they are waiting for the tour to arrive to their exhibit.)

**Note: Teachers may want to have students take notes on each citizen exhibit they view. See the attached *Moments in the Lives of Engaged Citizens Museum Response Sheet*.*

8. Once all sculptures have been viewed, the class should swap places, with all students who presented their exhibits now becoming tourists, and the students who took the tour now assuming the positions for their exhibit. Repeat the same process.
9. After all students have presented, debrief the museum by discussing:
 - Which exhibit did you find most interesting and why? Which citizen were you most impressed with and why?
 - How would you characterize these citizens overall? In what ways did they engage themselves and others to bring about change in their societies?
 - Why is it important for us, as individuals today, to be active, engaged citizens as well?
 - We honor our ancestors by learning about and caring about the history they endured. What are other ways we can honor them? What are our responsibilities as citizens today to ensure laws such as those enforced during Jim Crow are not set or tolerated?
10. Assign the attached reading and questions for homework, *Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow*, by Bayard Rustin. It is important that teachers ensure time the following day of class to allow students time to debrief the reading and discuss the questions.

Culminating Activities

- Host an evening “Living Museum”, where students present their living art to outside visitors.

Multiple Intelligences

Linguistic; Body-kinesthetic; Visual-spatial; Interpersonal; Intrapersonal

North Carolina Jim Crow Laws - Evaluation Sheet

You have been provided a copy of actual North Carolina laws that were set during what is known as the Jim Crow era, 1870s-1960s. Carefully read through the laws and chart the following answers on notebook paper.

1. What types of things are made illegal under the Jim Crow laws in North Carolina?
2. Summarize one Jim Crow law ...How did it effect the lives of African Americans and other minorities?
3. Which law do you think is most unfair? Why?
4. How would you personally be affected by this law if it were legal today?

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North Carolina Jim Crow Laws

Passed 23 Jim Crow laws between 1873 and 1957. Seven of the statutes concerned school segregation, six were related to transportation and four outlawed miscegenation. No anti-segregation laws were passed until 1963. Suggesting the difficulty in determining a person's race, a school segregation law passed in 1903 declared that no child no matter how "remote the strain" of Negro blood could be considered a white child and attend a school for white children. The state continued to pass non-compulsory attendance requirements after the Brown decision in 1956 and 1957 as a means to avoid desegregation.

1873: Miscegenation [Statute]

Prohibited marriages between whites and Negroes or Indians or persons of Negro or Indian descent to third generation.

1875: Education [Constitution]

White and black children shall be taught in separate public schools, "but there shall be no discrimination made in favor of, or to the prejudice of, either race."

1875: Miscegenation [Constitution]

Prohibited forever all marriages between a white person and a Negro or between a white person and a person of Negro descent to third generation inclusive.

1899: Railroads [Statute]

Railroad and steamboat companies to provide separate but equal accommodations for white and black passengers. Did not apply to streetcars. Penalty: A company that failed to enforce this act fined \$100 per day, each day, to be recovered in action brought by any passenger on any train or steamboat who has been provided accommodations with a person of a different race.

1901: Education [Statute]

Clarified how children would be separated in public schools. The education policies followed the code regulating marriages from the 1875 Constitution, which stated that persons of Negro descent to the third generation inclusive were considered "colored."

1903: Education [Statute]

No child with "Negro blood in its veins, however remote the strain, shall attend a school for the white race, and no such child shall be considered a white child."

1907: Streetcars [Statute]

All streetcars shall set aside a portion of the front of each car as necessary for white passengers, and a rear portion of the car for black passengers. Noted that "no contiguous seats on the same bench shall be occupied by the white and colored passengers at the same time unless or until all other seats are occupied." Penalty: Misdemeanor for officer who violates this act, and may be fined or imprisoned. Passengers who violated the law could be fined up to \$50 or imprisoned up to 30 days. Companies were not liable for a mistake in the designation of any passenger to a seat set apart for the other race.

1908: Education [Statute]

Prohibited black and white children from attending the same schools. Descendants of the Croatan Indians to have separate schools also.

1919: Health Care [Statute]

Mandatory that public or private hospitals, sanatoriums, or institutions which admitted colored patients to employ colored nurses to care for inmates of their own race. Law repealed in 1925.

1921: Miscegenation [Statute]

Miscegenation declared a felony.

1925: Public Carriers [Statute]

Seats on all buses to be segregated by race.

1929: Health Care [Statute]

Mental hospitals to be segregated by race.

1931: Education [State Code]

Authorized separate education facilities for the "Cherokee Indians of Robeson County" and the "Indians of Person County," formerly known as "Croatans." Denied the privilege of such schools to all persons of Negro blood to the fourth generation inclusive.

1931: Public accommodations [State Code]

State library directed to maintain a separate place to accommodate colored patrons.

1933: Prisons [Statute]

Prisons to be segregated by race.

1947: Public accommodations [Statute]

Called for racial restrictions for the burial of the dead at cemeteries.

1950: Public carriers [Statute]

Public carriers to be segregated.

1952: National Guard [Statute]

No black troops to be permitted where white troops available; colored troops to be under control of white officers.

1953: Miscegenation [Statute]

Marriage between white and Negroes or Indians void. Penalty: Infamous crime, four months to ten years imprisonment, fine discretion of court.

1956: Education [Statute]

Local school boards given the option to suspend school operations.

1956: Public accommodations [Statute]

Required all plants and other businesses to maintain separate toilet facilities. Penalty: Misdemeanor.

1957: Education [Statute]

No child forced to attend school with children of a different race.

1957: Health Care [Statute]

Hospitals for the insane to be segregated.

1963: Barred public accommodations segregation [City Ordinance]

Raleigh, N.C. repealed a portion of the city code which required racial segregation in public cemeteries.

1963: Barred residential segregation [City Ordinance]

Repealed a 30-year ordinance in Asheville, N.C., which had barred persons of different races from residing in the same neighborhood.

Source: <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/insidesouth.cgi?state=North%20Carolina>

Active, Engaged Citizens Discussion Questions

Citizen's Name: _____

1. What is your initial reaction to the citizen you read about? Did anything surprise you about him/her or the time period in which he/she lived?
2. How would you characterize the citizen you read about?
3. What ideas did your citizen hold regarding society, citizenship, equality, etc.?
4. In what ways did this citizen exhibit active concern for and engagement in his/her community?
5. What do you most admire about this citizen?



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Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow

by Bayard Rustin, 1942

Recently I was planning to go from Louisville to Nashville by bus. I bought my ticket, boarded the bus, and, instead of going to the back, sat down in the second seat. The driver saw me, got up, and came toward me.

"Hey, you. You're supposed to sit in the back seat."

"Why? "

"Because that's the law. Niggers ride in back."

I said, "My friend, I believe that is an unjust law. If I were to sit in back I would be condoning injustice."

Angry, but not knowing what to do, he got out and went into the station. He soon came out again, got into his seat, and started off.

This routine was gone through at each stop, but each time nothing came of it. Finally the driver, in desperation, must have phoned ahead, for about thirteen miles north of Nashville I heard sirens approaching. The bus came to an abrupt stop, and a police car and two motorcycles drew up beside us with a flourish. Four policemen got into the bus, consulted shortly with the driver, and came to my seat.

"Get up, you ————nigger!"

"Why?" I asked.

"Get up, you black———!"

"I believe that I have a right to sit here," I said quietly. "If I sit in the back of the bus I am depriving that child—" I pointed to a little white child of five or six—"of the knowledge that there is injustice here, which I believe it is his right to know. It is my sincere conviction that the power of love in the world is the greatest power existing. If you have a greater power, my friend, you may move me."

How much they understood of what I was trying to tell them I do not know. By this time they were impatient and angry. As I would not move, they began to beat me about the head and shoulders, and I shortly found myself knocked to the floor. Then they dragged me out of the bus and continued to kick and beat me.

Knowing that if I tried to get up or protect myself in the first heat of their anger they would construe it as an attempt to resist and beat me down again, I forced myself to be still and wait for their kicks, one after another. Then I stood up, spreading out my arms parallel to the ground, and said, "There is no need to beat me. I am not resisting you."

At this three white men, obviously Southerners by their speech, got out of the bus and remonstrated with the police. Indeed, as one of the policemen raised his club to strike me, one of them, a little fellow, caught hold of it and said, "Don't you do that!" A second policeman raised his club to strike the little man, and I stepped between them, facing the man, and said, "Thank you, but there is no need to do that. I do not wish to fight. I am protected well."

An elderly gentleman, well dressed and also a Southerner, asked the police where they were taking me.

They said, "Nashville."

"Don't worry, son," he said to me. "I'll be there to see that you get justice."

I was put into the back seat of the police car, between two policemen. Two others sat in front. During the thirteen-mile ride to town they called me every conceivable name and said anything they could think of to incite me to violence. I found that I was shaking with nervous strain, and to give myself something to do, I took out a piece of paper and a pencil, and began to write from memory a chapter from one of Paul's letters.

When I had written a few sentences, the man on my right said, "What're you writing?" and snatched the paper from my hand. He read it, then crumpled it into a ball and pushed it in my face. The man on the other side gave me a kick. A moment later I happened to catch the eye of the young policeman in the front seat. He looked away quickly, and I took renewed courage from the realization that he could not meet my eyes because he was aware of the injustice being done. I began to write again, and after a moment I leaned forward and touched him on the shoulder. "My friend," I said, "how do you spell 'difference'?"

He spelled it for me—incorrectly—and I wrote it correctly and went on.

When we reached Nashville, a number of policemen were lined up on both sides of the hallway down which I had to pass on my way to the captain's office. They tossed me from one to another like a volleyball. By the time I reached the office, the lining of my best coat was torn, and I was considerably rumpled. I straightened myself as best I could and went in. They had my bag, and went through it and my papers, finding much of interest, especially in the Christian Century and Fellowship. Finally the captain said, "Come here, nigger."

I walked directly to him. "What can I do for you?" I asked.

"Nigger," he said menacingly, "you're supposed to be scared when you come in here!"

"I am fortified by truth, justice, and Christ," I said. "There's no need for me to fear."

He was flabbergasted and, for a time, completely at a loss for words. Finally he said to another officer, "I believe the nigger's crazy!"

They sent me into another room and went into consultation. The wait was long, but after an hour and a half they came for me and I was taken for another ride, across town. At the courthouse, I was taken down the hall to the office of the assistant district attorney, Mr. Ben West. As I got to the door I heard a voice, "Say, you colored fellow, hey!" I looked around and saw the elderly gentleman who had been on the bus.

"I'm here to see that you get justice," he said.

The assistant district attorney questioned me about my life, the Christian Century, pacifism, and the war for half an hour. Then he asked the police to tell their side of what had happened. They did, stretching the truth a good deal in spots and including several lies for seasoning. Mr. West then asked me to tell my side.

"Gladly," I said, "and I want you," turning to the young policeman who had sat in the front seat, "to follow what I say and stop me if I deviate from the truth in the least."

Holding his eyes with mine, I told the story exactly as it had happened, stopping often to say, "Is that right?" or "Isn't that what happened?" to the young policeman. During the whole time he never once interrupted me, and when I was through I said, "Did I tell the truth just as it happened?" and he said, "Well...."

Then Mr. West dismissed me, and I was sent to wait alone in a dark room. After an hour, Mr. West came in and said, very kindly, "You may go, Mister Rustin."

I left the courthouse, believing all the more strongly in the nonviolent approach. I am certain that I was addressed as "Mister" (as no Negro is ever addressed in the South), that I was assisted by those three men, and that the elderly

gentleman interested himself in my predicament because I had, without fear, faced the four policemen and said, "There is no need to beat me. I offer you no resistance."

Source:

Reprinted in Bayard Rustin, *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, edited by Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise (Cleis Press, 2003), 2-5.

http://www.explorepahistory.com/~expa/cms/pbfiles/Project1/Scheme40/ExplorePAHistory-a0k1d0-a_512.pdf

Answer the following questions:

1. How did you feel as you were reading Rustin's account? What part of the story most affected you (surprised you, angered you, frustrated you, etc.)?
2. Where did the bus driver expect Bayard Rustin to sit and why?
3. What motivated Rustin to defy the law?
4. How did Rustin respond to the driver and to the police?
5. What does this story reveal about Rustin's character? What does it illustrate about the philosophy of nonviolence?
6. Can you imagine responding to a beating as Rustin did, without fighting back? What do you think this would feel like? How might it affect your opponent?
7. In what ways did Rustin exhibit the characteristics of an active, engaged citizen?