

## **The Least Among Us: Civil Rights Struggles in America**

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If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.  
—John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address

### **BACKGROUND**

My father, the youngest son of a poor teacher/preacher’s family, coming of age during the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s, spent his life working for a variety of organizations devoted to the betterment of oppressed or disenfranchised peoples (C.C.C., N.Y.A., Red Cross, I.R.O., U.N.R.R.A., and U.N.I.C.E.F.), literally, around the globe – from Europe and Asia, to Africa and back to America. His favorite quotation, and one which truly formed the basis for his life’s work, ran something to the effect that, “A civilization should be measured not on the basis of how well the powerful members of that society live, but rather, on the well-being of the least powerful members of that society.”

This has always seemed eminently reasonable to me, even as a child. Do not the wealthy, in every country, live lives of luxury? Examine the lives of the poor, the few, or the disempowered citizens of any country, and there you will see the measure of justice, or injustice, in that society. My father’s philosophy and lifetime example have profoundly influenced my own personal values as well as my choice of careers. As a teacher, I hope to pass on to my students a passion for compassion and fairness, and introduce them to the American heroes who stand as models of determination, strength of character, and incorruptible ethics, against what, at times, must have seemed insurmountable odds, and without whom, our nation could not have progressed along the lines so idealistically set forth by the founding fathers of the American Revolution.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Compassion, Fairness, and Fighting for What You Believe In: Living Up to the Ideals Set Out in the Founding Documents by the Creators of the American Democracy**

As a teacher of 5<sup>th</sup> grade vanguard (gifted/talented) students, responsible for a curriculum including Reading, Language Arts and U.S. History, I have the opportunity of integrating my teaching (across the curriculum), through the study of history, the examination of literature, and the expression of both creative and analytical writing. This, I believe, is the perfect combination of subjects from which to embark on a compassionate, coherent, humanist approach to teaching; offering the opportunity to communicate a clear

reflection of what is, in my opinion, the finest part of American political thought and values, as expressed by the authors of the founding documents of this democracy, its writers, poets, historical figures, and historians.

In proposing this unit on 'Civil' rights, or citizen's rights, I am attempting to remedy two distinct problems. The first is to bridge a large gap in my American History curriculum, and the second is to help students connect and apply what they know of early American History to their own lives, which they live day to day, and to the future they will help to create for our country, and by extension, the global human society.

My experience has been that it is relatively simpler to teach history, that is, to encapsulate the essential elements, themes, and lessons of history, when one is distant from the time period. The closer one gets to one's own lifetime, the more detailed and complex the task becomes. Thus, with elementary students, at my grade level, it has been my custom to teach units on explorers, colonial settlement patterns, revolution and emergence of the American Democracy, immigration and industrialization, the pioneer experience, and the Civil War. The events that follow that period (including World War I, the Depression Era, World War II, the Cold War, and contemporary U.S. issues), in both my mind and the Social Studies text book, are reduced to what seem like a series of disconnected, sweeping generalizations and arbitrary omissions, which create a sense of randomness and chaos, unrelated to the earlier events the students have studied. It all seems just too much to cram into 10-11 year old brains!

It has occurred to me that one way to solve both of these problems, and honor my own values as well, may be to create a unit which examines the significant social movements which characterized this great span of years, and which represented the realization, refinement and extension of those ideals set out by the original proponents of our democratic society in documents (The U.S. Constitution), with which my students are already familiar. In doing so, I can make these same documents increasingly meaningful to the students, so that they come to understand the many ways in which the ideals and issues treated in the American Constitution, over 200 years ago, relate directly and continuously to the lives of the people of this country, themselves included.

Focusing specifically on those lessons taught through the examination of the many Civil Rights issues which are part and parcel of American History will, I hope, help them to understand and develop the intrinsic and essential values necessary to guide them on their journey toward becoming the thoughtful, compassionate, and ethical adults that I hope my students will one day be.

The students in my classes represent a wide cross section of U.S. demographics. They are male, female, rich, poor, recently arrived, and long established residents of this country, children of skilled and unskilled laborers, and also of professionals. They include African, Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, and European Americans.

By illuminating the stories of poor, lower class, or disenfranchised minorities, during this broad span of historical time, and their struggles to achieve the full rights of citizens in a democratic society, I hope to bring alive the sense of continuity of purpose which binds the old history with the new, to promote an understanding of the scope and sequence of the events of that period of history, and to develop a sense of awareness and connection between my students, who by virtue of ethnicity, gender, or class, do truly share a direct interest in battles won or ongoing, with the groups who fought to gain these basic civil rights.

## CONTENT

### **Civil Liberties Movements in America: Dragging the American Dream into Reality, Kicking and Screaming!**

The history of the past is but one long struggle upward to equality.

—Susan B. Anthony

When the American Constitution was originally written, it represented the noblest and most liberal political thought of the finest minds of that time. It stood (and still stands!), as a vision of philosophical idealism, an instrument of justice, and a model of political stability. Yet, as one era passes and another takes its place, we have encountered the need to alter the original document, reinterpret its intent, and expand its definitions to meet the needs and visions of our own times. The democracy of 1776, in truth, only included a small, privileged segment of the population: white, male, property owners! What then, of the myriad others, who comprise the America of today? This unit will attempt to tell *their* story: the struggle to perfect and extend the full range of citizens rights to all people, all classes, all religions, all races, all ages, and genders.

#### *African Americans*

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, and thusly, carrying our whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

I anticipate that this part of the unit will be introduced, conceptually, soon after the Civil War as a natural extension of the issues involved in that conflict, and will detail the decades long struggle of African Americans for fair protection under the law, and equal

standing as citizens of the U.S. Students will explore the major figures, events, and legal decisions which have guided and influenced the African American Civil Rights movement, and affected this particular minority group, including: emancipation, the eradication of Jim Crow laws, voting rights, school desegregation, and non-discrimination or affirmative action legislation.

### *Mexican Americans*

It's ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables, and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves.

—Cesar Chavez

Because we have suffered, and we are not afraid to suffer in order to survive, we are ready to give up everything – even our lives – in our struggle for justice.

—Cesar Chavez

The studies of the battle for equal rights by Mexican Americans will begin with the era following the Mexican-American war, at the time of the acquisition of those territories of the southwest previously belonging to Mexico: California, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, and including, of course, Texas. Issues to be explored and discussed will include land ownership, and the transfer of citizenship (both treaty issues, which were systematically ignored or violated, subsequent to the annexation of these territories by the U.S.). The issues of voting rights, laborers rights, bilingual education, and school desegregation will also be examined. Comparisons will be drawn and relationships established between this movement and those of other minority groups.

### *Asian Americans*

In the detention centers, families lived in substandard housing, had inadequate nutrition and health care, and had their livelihoods destroyed: many continued to suffer psychologically long after their release

—*Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*

Most of the 110,000 persons removed for reasons of ‘national security’ were school-age children, infants and young adults not yet of voting age.

—Michi Weglyn, “Years of Infamy”

Beginning with the early immigration of Asians to the Alaska and California gold rushes, and continuing through the massive importation of Chinese laborers required to complete the transcontinental railroad, the attitudes and behaviors of the dominant citizenry toward this community, as reflected in the popular press of the time, the emerging legislation regarding Asians (restricting a variety of activities including land ownership, residency, immigration quotas and limitations, and intermarriage with other races), and the

repressive violence of race riots will be examined. In more recent history, events occurring during the WWII era, specifically the controversial internment of Japanese-American citizens in camps during this period, and the subsequent legal proceedings in the effort to gain reparations will be studied.

### *Native Americans*

All men were made brothers. The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it. You might as well expect the rivers to run backward, as that any man who was born free, should be content when penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases.

—Chief Joseph

The way, the only way to stop this evil is for the red man to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was first, and should be now, for it was never divided. We gave them forest clad mountains and valleys full of game, and in return, what did they give our warriors and our women? Trinkets, rum, and a grave.

—Chief Tecumseh

Earlier portions of American history have introduced the initial idea of conquest by Europeans of what once were Native American territories within the U.S., from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Canadian boundaries to Mexico. Within the purview of this unit are the issues of treaty violations, illegal encroachment by miners, settlers, and ranchers on Indian lands, corruption and mismanagement within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We will study the eventual rise of the American Indian Movement and other empowering tribal activist movements, around the issues of tribal economies, land rights, environmental degradation, and education, which used the legal sovereignty of Native Americans, within tribal law and on tribal lands, to assert the rights of indigenous peoples to control their own lives and to force compliance of the U.S. Government to live up to promises made in existing treaties.

### *Immigration law*

Remember that when you say, “I will have none of this exile and this stranger for his face is not like my face and his speech is strange,” you have denied America with that word.

—Stephen Vincent Benet

Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, *In a speech before the Daughters of the American Revolution*

Beginning with the early industrialization of the U.S. and the rapid expansion of the American Pioneer movement west across the continent of North America, there began to

arrive, in wave after wave, thousands upon thousands of immigrants from a wide variety of countries around the globe. Most were, indeed, “tired, poor, and huddled masses,” as the famous poem on the Statue of Liberty indicates. They fled home countries due to famine, war, persecution, and a host of other difficulties that made life in the old country intolerable or untenable. Notwithstanding that America was a country entirely made up of immigrants, each new wave had to pass through a trial by fire to gain a foothold in the new world. Each were accused of representing every vile vice and disability, and were predicted to bring about the decline of civilization. Nevertheless, given sufficient time, each group gradually wove its way into the fabric of American society, at least, that is, if race or color were not an issue. Race, of course, mattered immensely, and remained as a visible barrier to assimilation in a racist society. Even mixing and diluting of bloodlines of race or color did not work to diminish racism, as so much as a drop of ‘colored’ blood, if ascertainable, whether apparent or not, marked an individual as a ‘full member’ of the despised race, thus assimilation for Asians, Hispanics, Africans, Native Americans and other Non-Caucasians, was not really possible.

Immigration policies during the growing of America have reflected the changing views and needs of social, political, and economic conditions in this country, and continue to provoke controversy, both throughout the course of our history, and in current times. Students will examine the changes occurring in immigration law as a result of economic, social, and political currents, and analyze their relationship to policies governing entry to the U.S.

### ***Labor Movements***

Those who produce should have, but we know that those who produce the most - that is, those who work hardest, and at the most difficult and most menial tasks, have the least.

—Eugene Debs

Birthered, from its first breath, into capitalism, and taken over, developed and dominated, through ‘right of might’ by entrepreneurial individuals who saw themselves as heroes of destiny, or the representatives of superior cultures, the U.S. historically has had little tolerance for the average worker involved in ‘labor movements’ or ‘workers rights.’ From the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, with its mills full of immigrant females and children, to the workers in the many extractive industries, from the roving migrant farm workers to the meat packer workers of Chicago, and the blue collar and lower professional class workers (nurses, teachers) of today’s work force, attempts at unionization have been demonized, decried as Un-American, and sabotaged, ruthlessly by a combination of the powerful owner-elite, their political allies, hired thugs and law enforcement agencies. Organizers and strikers in one exploited group of workers after another, gradually and with much bloodshed and sacrifice, have, over time, achieved some recognition of the rights of workers to decent working hours, minimum wages, health care provisions, safety measures on the job, and pension benefits. We can see this struggle continuing today, as our legislators debate the levels of responsibility incurred

by corporations for their workers health-care plans, social security benefits, and pension guidelines.

### ***Rights of Children***

. . . each of the 2 billion children in the world enjoys the rights to survival, health and education; to a caring family environment, play and culture; to protection from exploitation and abuse of all kinds; and to have his or her voice heard and opinions taken into account on significant issues.

—*The Convention on the Rights of the Child*

Childhood, today in America, is thought of as an almost sacred time of life; a time for joy and loving, nurturing relationships, for stimulation of intelligence, for exploration and the expansion of aspirations, for the growth and development of identity. As a nation we struggle with child rearing and educational strategies to maximize the potential of each child (at least rhetorically).

Not so in the early days of our country's existence. In the past, a child was a worker. Whether it was on a homestead or in a factory, the children of the working class in America worked, as soon as they were able, and as long as they were able. Children of immigrant families, struggling to survive in the poverty stricken conditions of the eastern industrialized cities lived in filthy, dark, crowded, disease-ridden tenements, and did whatever they could to earn a few cents more to keep the family afloat financially.

Socially conscious individuals, horrified by the conditions which came to light during the social reform era of the 1890s, began to demand laws which would protect young children. Oddly, the invention of flash photography, used to expose conditions heretofore hidden from sight, wielded by a young photographer named Jacob A Riis, and published in an expose, titled "How the Other Half Lives," contributed significantly to the success of this movement. Combined with a growing body of statistics compiled by reformers on both child mortality, and the vast, derelict, and often criminal, orphan population of the cities, this scandalous, graphic evidence of degradation, in the midst of the conspicuous consumption of wealth displayed by the upper classes was sufficient to goad legislators into passing laws, limiting both the minimum age and the hours that a child could be allowed to work. Additionally, public education for all children was soon advocated, and laws making it mandatory for a child to attend school were also then implemented.

### ***Voter's rights***

The people of this country, not special interest big money, should be the source of all political power.

—Paul Wellstone

Our history has demonstrated that the well-being of society springs from the growth of daily, active citizenship that provides an enabling environment for good leaders to come forth. Every significant social movement this century has sprung from active citizens fighting for their cause – women’s suffrage, workers’ rights, civil rights, environmental and consumer protection, peace. Put in today’s terms, citizens in our country need to spend more time being citizens.

—Ralph Nader

The issue of voter’s rights is one which brings into play virtually all of the minority groups within the spectrum of American demographics. Whether you are young, female, or a member of any of the racial minorities in this country, the ability to cast your vote has, at some time, been questioned, denied or interfered with through intimidation or manipulation. As stated earlier, the original right to vote was only granted to white, male, property owners, then to all white males, eventually to all males regardless of color, eventually to women as well, and finally, to those as young as 18, once it was decided that if you were old enough to die for your country (by virtue of the fact that you were required to serve in the military), you were old enough to vote.

Gaining the right to vote, however, is only half the battle. Becoming a responsible, informed voter is the real, difficult, and daily responsibility of American citizens, and one which recent elections seem to indicate that the people of America are shirking. Apathy, born of confusion and mistrust, is sapping the will of voters to participate, and their belief in their ability to have an effect on the decisions of their elected officials.

### ***Women’s Movement***

The new religion will teach the dignity of human nature and its infinite possibilities for development. It will teach the solidarity of the race, that all must rise and fall as one. Its creed will be justice, liberty, equality for all the children of earth.

—Susan B. Anthony

The problem that has no name – which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities – is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease.

—Betty Friedan

The women’s movement in the U.S. got a later start than in some European countries. Beginning in earnest, with the eloquent voices of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the call for equal rights for women has continued in some form ever since. The early movement leaders (upon whom much scorn and ridicule was heaped), called themselves ‘suffragettes,’ and worked to achieve the right to vote (proposed at the Seneca Falls Convention 1848, and finally granted in the 1920s). Over time the movement grew to include such issues as family planning (reproductive rights), legislation surrounding the issues of divorce and child support, equal work for equal pay (still an issue at



present), equal opportunity in the work place, protection against sexual harassment, and the Equal Rights Amendment, which still has not been ratified.

While much has been accomplished in these areas in legal terms, as with all of the other minority group issues, there is a distance between the enactment of legislation and the realization, or attainment, of true equality. Differences in pay scales in those fields predominantly staffed by females, not to mention differences in pay for men and women performing equal jobs, rates of career advancement, and incidences of sexual harassment on the job, all point to the work yet to be done in this area.

### ***First Amendment Freedoms (speech, assembly)***

A government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

—Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

These two, basic freedoms, granted to all citizens by the original Constitution, are among the most precious and essential of all, and deserve a special place of honor in the teaching of civil rights, for without them the citizen's most critical ability to access and share knowledge is curtailed. Without free access to information and the ability to share it with others, you cannot have an informed public, and without that, there can be no meaningful democratic process.

The process of extending civil rights to all of the groups mentioned above has always been dependent upon the freedom (or determination, despite the attempt to deny the freedom), to initiate a dialogue, both within the interested group itself (to establish its methods and purposes), and with the rest of society (by means of speeches, written statements, and interviews), to communicate their purposes to the larger community.

The right to assemble, to call attention to grievances and injustices, to protest and attest to a commonly held belief is the second critical component of a democratic process. In isolation, how can we make our voices heard? If we cannot gather, how do we arrive at consensus? Democracy is a living, breathing, vital, interactive social process, and like the human beings who created it, it cannot survive in silence or isolation.

## **TEACHING OBJECTIVES**

### **Reading**

My intention is to develop and enhance the reading comprehension skills of my students, specifically their ability to connect, analyze, apply, and synthesize concepts from both fiction and non-fiction sources.

## **Language Arts**

Students will gain proficiency (that is the use of well reasoned, coherently structured, grammatically correct, and effectively worded arguments), in both written and oral presentation of research-based information, essays and possibly creative products such as short plays, poems, or songs.

## **Social Studies (American History)**

The National Council of Social Studies states that the main objective of social studies is:

. . . to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions . . . as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

Awareness, appreciation and understanding of the issues typified by the civil rights movements in our country will enable students to better gauge the course of U.S. history over time, from its inception to the present day, and allow them to participate more intelligently and perhaps actively in the decisions that face the American people today and in the near future, decisions which will play a critical role in the future of both America, and the rest of the world's countries and peoples, with whom we are so inextricably linked.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Whole Class Assignment**

Since it is critical to the very purpose of this unit that the students understand the related nature of *all of these struggles* (the core elements of the unit), relevant chapters of the social sciences text *America's Story* will be read and discussed by all students. In addition, excerpts of PBS video documentaries covering the various civil rights movements cited above will be shown to and discussed by the class as a whole.

A journal notebook will also be kept in which, during the video presentations, students will take notes on important concepts, dates, figures, issues and any questions which arise. These can be used as reference material in the follow-up discussions as well as a reference resource for the final essay described below.

A "final overview essay," in which each student could choose three of the civil rights movements studied, and discuss their relationship to one another, and to the corresponding, pertinent portions of the constitution (a copy of which is available in the appendix portion of each student's history text), would provide an individualized evaluative tool with which to measure the student's ultimate ability to analyze the various

civil rights issues and identify their specific relationship to the rights spelled out in the American Constitution and its amendments.

### **Collaborative Group Assignment/Individual Responsibility:**

#### ***Research Assignment***

Each group of students (4 per table, as they are normally grouped in class) will then be assigned at random (by lottery) to study one of the aforementioned civil rights struggles in depth. Each member of the group will be responsible for a particular segment of the report, (e.g. historical context, important figures, goals of the movement as they relate to the individual rights granted in the U.S. Constitution and the current status of the movement), and will prepare a written and researched paper\* on his/her portion of the topic, which will be presented as an oral report to the class. The group, as a whole, will also produce a poster board collage designed to represent the overall goals and history of the group's topic, including important figures, historical events, and quotations.

\*The written report (to be turned in to the teacher) will consist of two to three pages, typed, single spaced, and will contain appropriate citations for quoted materials and a bibliography. The paper will be graded according to Standard English composition guidelines – for content, coherence, structure, grammatical correctness, and neatness or presentation.

#### ***Literature Circle***

Each group of students sharing a (CRM) topic will choose to read a work of fiction that relates directly to their topic. The group will share and discuss with one another their experience of the book during weekly group meetings using the 'Literature Circle' model (a brief description of this technique follows) to guide their discussions of the literature.

In the literature circles, the student group (all of whom are reading the same text) determines a reading time frame, divides the text into four more or less equal parts, and rotates the four principle jobs amongst themselves during the course of reading the book. Each student is responsible for a different job each time the group meets. Typically, these jobs are:

- *The Summarizer* who sums up the main events and ideas covered in the section of the story under discussion.
- *The Director* who formulates questions for discussion,
- *The Connector* who finds connections between what happens in the story and related experiences in his/her own life
- *The Luminary* who reads three favorite passages, and explains why she/he enjoyed them. This person also searches out new or interesting words that the

author used in this section of the book, and makes sure that other group members can define and explain the new vocabulary as well.

## **Extra Credit Assignments for a Group**

### ***Power Point Presentation***

Many of my students are much more computer literate than I and might well enjoy producing a power point presentation highlighting the main points of the movement they have studied. Ideally, this would include a well-structured presentation with introductory titles, clearly stated problems and goals, and photos or photo-collages of important figures and events which have marked the progress of the movement.

### ***Theatre Piece***

Student groups with a talent for theatre might put together a three to five minute scenario developed around the central theme or problem of their assigned civil rights topic. Their task would involve the development of characters, and a dramatic exchange within a context that would illustrate the central problem faced by the group they are portraying, and indicating, by the end of the act, a plan to resolve, or to seek a solution, along the lines of civil rights activism.

### ***Dance Piece***

A student group may design a dance piece (with the assistance of our creative movement teacher), which portrays the emergence, the struggles and/or the victories of any of the civil rights movements.

## **Individual Assignments**

### ***Book Report***

Each student would be required to read a work of fiction which would reflect the civil rights movement (CRM), that he/she had chosen to study in depth. A book report, will be required, consisting of one to two typed, single-spaced pages, outlining the main characters and their traits, the setting (both in time and place), a brief summary of the story events, the essential message that the author was trying to convey, and why the student did, or did not, enjoy the book.

### ***Poetry***

A poetry assignment comes as a very natural expression out of the drama and passion of the civil rights movement studies. I plan to assign two types of poetry for students to

write – one a haiku, and the other a free verse sixteen-line poem (student’s choice of eight (8) couplets, or three (3) quatrains).

I teach my students that haiku poems typically have three lines, with five syllables in the first and third lines and 7 syllables in the second line. Also, a haiku poem often has references to nature, and changes, and the third and final line often holds a surprise ending, creating an unexpected link between the elements in the first two lines and the last line. Often, in order to emphasize the importance of structure in poetry, I assign four haikus, to be written about four different aspects of one main topic. For example, if slavery were the topic, the four sub-topics might be: birth, childhood, adulthood, and death. Alternatively, the four times of the day: dawn, noon, evening, and night might serve the purpose, describing a day in the life of a captive or a runaway.

Because younger children often have a relatively smaller vocabulary than adults, I try not to emphasize the need for rhyming in their poems. Too many times, I have seen a potentially strong poetic effort reduced to trivial nonsense for lack of a meaningful rhyming word. Rather, I ask them to seek strong emotional language, vivid imagery, clear structure, coherence of subject matter, and a clear, creative format. In their sixteen line poem, they may choose to form couplets, four stanzas of three lines, three stanzas of four lines, or two stanzas of eight lines. They must use a dictionary and a thesaurus to stretch and enliven their word choices. Final products are carefully edited, printed out on the computer, with the writer’s choice of fonts, illustrated, and bound into a classroom edition for all to share.

### *Speech*

A written speech (two to three minutes long) will be assigned to be presented to the class. The speech must be persuasive in nature, intended to move and convince the audience of the essential justice of the rights being demanded by the speaker. The student will make a case for the cause which she/he has studied and make clear reference to the section of the Constitution which supports her/his claim.

### *Artwork*

Students will also produce two pieces of artwork to accompany their reports. One will be a life size portrait of an important figure in their (CRM) study. The second piece of artwork must portray a scene from the context of their movement (e.g., a strike, a march, a child working in a factory or in a crowded, family tenement apartment). Research on the artwork must be done through the Internet or using classroom resources (I have lots of U.S. History photographic resources), in order that the details of the work are historically true to the time and place. The artwork may be done in pencil, crayon, acrylic paint, or oil pastel.

### ***Getting in Touch With Our Government***

Ideally, I would love to culminate the unit with a forward-looking, student-generated, list of goals ‘yet to be accomplished.’ Currently, a number of websites exist for political action groups. Native American Tribal Rights Issues, Affirmative Action issues, Environmental or quality of life issues are all ongoing, and students can research current issues within each movement. Through the Internet too, students can actually contact appropriate organizations working on issues of interest, which facilitates communications between citizens and those involved in formulating or passing legislation.

Perhaps as a class, or in small groups according to interest, we can formulate some correspondence on behalf of a particular piece of legislation, backed by appropriate citations from the U.S. Constitution, which could then be submitted to the President, the U.S. Congress, or a State Representative, calling for action on behalf of the rights of citizens groups whose needs are still not being met.

### **CONCLUSION**

Completion of this unit will take the better part of six to eight weeks, depending on the demands of the school year testing schedule, and will take up almost an entire grading cycle, but it will be designed to serve the needs of the students academically, in a variety of ways: sharpening their research skills, enhancing their analytical powers, exercising their expressive skills both written and oral, and allowing them to examine and develop their own personal value systems in relation to the stated ideals and the contemporary issues of the society in which they live.

Entering into the world of middle school, with its peer pressure, polarization and gender identity issues, a firm grip on one’s sense of self and one’s constitutional rights is a great idea, at just the right time!

### **APPENDIX**

As a cross-curricular unit, encompassing Reading, Language Arts, and Social Sciences, this course of studies is designed to teach the following objectives, cited in the TEKS (as listed in the 2003 edition of Project Clear), and established by the Texas Education Agency.

#### **Social Studies Objectives Covered in this Unit (TEKS)**

- SS5.4.E- Explain the reasons for and rights provided by the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
- SS5.5.B- Identify the accomplishments of notable individuals who have made contributions to society in the areas of civil rights.

- SS5.14.F- Explain the impact of American ideas about progress and equality of opportunity on the economic development and growth of the U.S.
- SS5.16.B- The student understands important ideas in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
- SS5.19.- The student understands the importance of individual participation in the democratic process.
- SS5.20- The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society
- SS5.21- The student understands the fundamental rights of American citizens guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and other amendments to the U.S. Constitution
- SS5.25- The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.
- SS5.26- The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.
- SS5.27- The student uses problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

### **English Language Arts Objectives Covered in this Unit**

- ELAL5.1.a-d- Listen for a variety of purposes, actively, attentively, and purposefully, analyze and evaluate messages, initiate and sustain conversations and discussions.
- ELAL5.2.f - Use higher order thinking skills to participate in academic discourse.
- ELAL5.3.b- Prepare, organize, and deliver a variety of oral presentations
- ELAL5.5.a- Connect own experiences and ideas with those of others.
- ELAR5.1.a- Use a variety of word recognition strategies.
- ELAR5.1.b- Read with fluency and understanding in texts at appropriate difficulty levels.
- ELAR5.2.b- Identify the purposes for which text is written.
- ELAR5.2.c- Read widely for different purposes in varied sources.
- ELAR5.3.a- Develop vocabulary using a variety of strategies.
- ELAR5.3.c- Use a variety of strategies so support word identification and confirm word meaning.
- ELAR5.5.c- Determine a text's main or major ideas and the salient supporting details.
- ELAR5.5.d- Summarize texts for a variety of purposes.
- ELAR5.5.f - Draw inferences from a text.
- ELAR5.7.b- Determine distinctive and common characteristics of cultures through wide reading.
- ELAR5.7.c- Articulate and discuss themes and connections that cross cultures.
- ELAR5.8.a- Develop relevant questions pertaining to a specific topic to investigate through reading.
- ELAR5.8.b- Use multiple print and non-print sources to research a specific topic.
- ELAR5.8.c- Summarize and organize information in systematic ways.

- ELAW5.2.c- Identify select and use persuasion and/or argument, as appropriate to audience and purpose.
- ELAW5.2.d- Write for personal expression and reflection.
- ELAW5.2.e- Write for academic expression and reflection.
- ELAW5.2.f- Write creative texts.
- ELAW5.2.h- Write with a variety of literary devices.
- ELAW5.3.a-f- Write using correct Standard English skills regarding capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- ELAW5.4 a-g- Write using correct Standard English skills regarding grammar and sentence structure.
- ELAW5.5.a-g- Write using a variety of pre-writing strategies, rewriting or revision strategies, and editing techniques for final publishing.
- ELAW5.7.a- Collaborate with other writers to produce text
- ELAW5.8.a- Take notes from relevant and authoritative sources.
- ELAV5.1.b- Interpret important events and ideas gleaned from video segments, graphic, or technology presentations.
- ELAV5.1.c- Use media to explore ideas, cultures, and points of view.
- ELAV5.3.a- Select, organize, or produce appropriate media to extend and complement meanings.

## **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Teacher Resources**

#### ***PBS Teacher Source Websites***

The PBS Teacher Source website at <<http://www.pbs.org/teachersource>> is an incredible resource for teachers and students, with interactive sites and links on virtually every topic you need to teach. Several of the specifically civil rights oriented sites listed below were located through this easy to use resource.

*America 1900 – Teacher’s Guide.* PBS: The American Experience. June 2003.

<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/1900/tguide/index.html>>.

America 1900 presents a comprehensive picture of what life was like in the United States at the turn of the century. Students will investigate technology, immigration, foreign policy, and suffrage movements during this exciting period in history.

*Conquistadors – Teaching Guide.* 2000. PBS Online. June 2003.

<<http://www.pbs.org/opb/conquistadors/teachers/teachers.htm>>.

Explore the meaning of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, using art to show how each of the articles relates to their own lives and writing an editorial discussing the value of the Declaration.



Davis, Chris. *Immigration Debate*. PBS: The New Americans – Teacher Guide. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/kcet/newamericans/6.0/html/immdebate.html>>. Examine common misconceptions about immigrants in a research and debate setting.

*For Educator's – Tolerance in Times of Trial*. PBS: America Responds. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/americaresponds/tolerance.html>>. Uses the treatment of citizens of Japanese and German ancestry during World War II as examples of ethnic conflict during times of trial. Investigate contemporary examples of ethnic conflict, discrimination, and stereotyping at home and abroad.

*Half the People: 1917-1996*. PBS: The People's Century. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/peoplescentury/teachers/tghalf.html>>. Identify 20<sup>th</sup> century leaders in feminist/women's rights movements, explore the goals of feminist and counter-feminist organizations, and identify issues important to women in the U.S. today.

*Japanese American Internment Lesson Plan*. 2001. KQED. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/classroom/internment.html>>. Explore the internment of Japanese Americans from San Francisco's Fillmore neighborhood during World War II to understand both the constitutional issues at stake and the human impact of this government policy.

Krouse, Judith. *Women's Rights and Reform in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. PBS: Not For Ourselves Alone. <<http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/resources/03activity.html>>. Study primary sources and learn about other issues besides suffrage that concerned women's rights activists, and the landmark court cases that affected 19<sup>th</sup> century American women.

*Miss America – Teacher's Guide*. 1999. PBS: The American Experience. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/missamerica/tguide/index.html>>. Miss America looks at American history from a female perspective starting in the Jazz Age, through the women's liberation movement and into today's issues of beauty ideals, individualism, self-image, and consumerism.

Morris, James McGrath. *Alcatraz is not an Island: Sovereignty is the Goal*. 2002. ITVS. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotanisland/educators2.html>>. The takeover of Alcatraz brought Indian rights issues to the attention of the government and the American public, changing forever the way Native people viewed themselves, their culture and their need for self-determination.

Morris, James McGrath. *Alcatraz is not an Island: Victory from Loss*. 2002. ITVS. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/alcatrazisnotanisland/educators1.html>>. Students will explore how it became a catalyst for a wave of Indian protest and compare and contrast the experiences of the Native American rights movement with the African American civil rights movements.

Morris, James McGrath. *Foreign War and Domestic Freedom: A Delicate Balancing Act*. Public Affairs Television. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/now/classroom/civilliberties.html>>. Students will describe the tension between external threats and internal liberty in democratic societies. They will contrast previous historic moments when liberty was restricted with conditions in the United States today.

Sitzer, Lewis. *American Immigration Past and Present*. 2003. PBS: The New Americans – Teacher Guide. June 2003. <[http://www.pbs.org/kcet/newamericans/6.0/html/amimm\\_pp403.html](http://www.pbs.org/kcet/newamericans/6.0/html/amimm_pp403.html)>. Debate historical and current U.S. immigration policies.

*Teen Immigrants: Five American Stories Discussion Guide*. 1999. In the Mix. June 2003. <[http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/educators/pro\\_disc\\_guides.html](http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/educators/pro_disc_guides.html)>. Get the facts about recent immigration to the U.S., and explore cultural stereotypes and perceptions of immigrants.

Thurston, Thomas. *Lesson Plan 6: The Law and Politics of Jim Crow*. 2002. PBS: The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow. June 2003. <[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/education\\_lesson6.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/education_lesson6.html)>. Students examine the changing legal status of African Americans, the political violence that accompanied it, and the legal challenge to Jim Crow undertaken by the NAACP and the individuals covered in the documentary series.

*Zoot Suit Riots – Teacher’s Guide*. PBS: The American Experience. June 2003. <[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng\\_tguide/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng_tguide/index.html)>. *Zoot Suit Riots* looks at teenage rebellion, World War II, immigration and assimilation, race relations, conflicts between law enforcement and minority groups, and the history of Mexicans in America.

### ***Additional Teacher Resources***

In addition to the incredibly helpful sites within the PBS Teacher Source website, additional information can be found on CNN, NPR, and Big Chalk, as well as simple topic searches through search engines such as Yahoo or Google, all of which have web sites which are very user friendly and updated frequently. The sites below were located through such a search, and many of them have student as well as teacher activities.

AFT Human Rights and Community Relations Dept. American Federation of Teachers. June 2003. <<http://www.aft.org/human/sites/misc.html>>.

This site provides useful links to Human Rights related community groups (statements, activities, data), specific to the unit.

*Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.* 2000. The Journal for Multimedia History. 14 May 2003.

<<http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol3/chicano/chicano.html>>.

A concise review and synopsis of the video, and the information therein contained. This site is a possible resource for the group focusing on Mexican American Movement.

*Convention on the Rights of the Child.* UNICEF. 2003. <<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>>.

An excellent site for research on the rights of the child contains links, statistics, and analysis of the issue; everything you need to know, beautifully organized.

*Curriculum of United States Labor History for Teachers.* The Illinois Labor History Society. June 2003. <<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/curricul.htm#contents>>.

A curriculum of United States Labor History for Teachers

*Fields of Hope: Child Labor in Agriculture.* US Department of Labor. 16 Mar. 2003.

<<http://www.fieldsofhope.org/>>.

What would you rather do, go to school or work in the fields? This site funded by the US Department of Labor is about child labor specific to agriculture. Select a country from Around the World to learn where children work, the status of national and international child labor laws, and demographic data related to education. Resources include a teacher's guide, quiz, glossary, poster and brochure. Spend a day in the life of a child laborer and maybe you won't complain when asked to load the dishwasher.

*Timeline of the American Civil Rights Movement.* 1996. Western Michigan University. June 2003. <<http://www.wmich.edu/politics/mlk/>>.

Provides clear, concise data, plus visuals on the African American movement.

## **Video Resources**

This listing represents a selection of programs which address the topics in this unit. In addition to a description of the program available on video, these sites, with few exceptions, provide multiple activities, links, and related resources for both teachers and students.

### ***PBS Historical and Political Videos***

The following films are all produced by PBS and there are listings and descriptions available online at <<http://www.pbs.org>>.

*African American World*. May 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld>>. General historical information, references, timeline, kids, community, resources.

*Africans in America*. Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia>>. A collection of images, stories, documents, biographies, and commentaries.

*Ancestors in the Americas*. May 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/ancestorsintheamericas>>. A history of the immigration of Asians to the U.S., including Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese populations. Excellent resources, timeline, interviews, historical data.

*The Black Press*. 12 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/blackpress>>. *Soldiers Without Swords*: An exploration of the role of Print Media in forming and altering public opinion. Specifically, this relates to the African-American civil rights movement.

*The Border*. 31 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder>>. Examines contemporary life along the U.S./Mexico border, including immigration, citizen's legal rights, and problems with working and health conditions.

*Children of the Camps*. 19 June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp>>. An examination of the life of six Japanese children whose lives were drastically affected by interment in the camps by the U.S. government during the paranoia of World War II.

*Fight in the Fields*. 3 May 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/fightfields>>. The story of Cesar Chavez and the migrant farm workers struggle for fairer conditions. The roots of Chicano civil rights activism in the 1960s.

*Goin' to Chicago*. 2 May 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/gointochicago>>. A history of the great African American migration from the Deep South to the Northern City, the life, the art, the civil rights movement, its hopes and dreams, broken and achieved there.

*The Good War*. 9 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/thegoodwar>>. Examination of the issues of conscientious objectors and their civil rights during World War II.

*A Midwife's Tale*. 1 May 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/midwife>>. Eighteenth century America through a woman's eyes.

*Miss America*. 5 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/amex/missamerica>>. The evolution of ideals of beauty and issues of self-esteem, body image, consumerism, women in the work place, women's liberation movement

*New York*. 3 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/newyork>>. A seven part series on the growth of that great metropolis (from the original Dutch colony to Post World War II), documenting the American experiences of immigration, development of economic power, evolution of American politics, the explosive growth of population, and all of the issues attendant to these phenomena.

*Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony>>. Provides excellent resources on the women's movement both past and present.

*Of Civil Rights and Wrongs*. Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2001/ofcivilwrongsandrights>>. The story of one Japanese-American citizen's long term battle and final victory, in his efforts to redress the injustices of internment of U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry, during WW II.

*The Orphan Trains*. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/orphan>>. Live interviews with, and historical case histories of children who lived the experience of destitution and adoption through this system.

*The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. 16 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jiimcrow>>. Illuminates a century of segregation laws against black Americans in the Deep South, its inception, its implementation, and its eventual demise during the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

*Roots in the Sand*. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/rootsinthesand>>. Examines the immigration and assimilation process of Southeast Asians (Indian/Pakistani), into the society and economy of California's Imperial Valley agricultural development. Issues include barriers to mixed race couples and racially motivated obstacles to economic success, overcome in the long run, by tenacity and litigation.

*Trail of Hope*. June 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/trailofhopes>>. Documents the arduous flight of the Mormon Community, escaping religious persecution, to the land around Salt Lake City, where they are finally able to establish a base.

*The Zoot Suit Riots*. 14 May 2003. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng>>.

Explore early Mexican American experiences in Los Angeles, highlighting the issues of assimilation, immigration, and race relations.

### **Student Resources: Related Youth Fiction**

Carter, Forrest. *The Education of Little Tree*. University of New Mexico Press, 2001.

The story of an orphan boy of mixed white and Indian heritage, raised by his grandparents, in the lush natural habitat of his Cherokee ancestors. A variety of incidents expose the ignorance and racism of whites toward Native Americans. Humorously, delightfully and sensitively written. An excellent film version of this book also can be obtained.

Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*. Yearling Books, 2001.

A story of an exceptionally observant pre-teen girl whose ambition to become a writer leads her to write extensive and painfully honest entries about the people and situations she experiences. When her journal is found and read by her friends, she is torn by the dilemma of honesty versus tact.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuke and James D. *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of a Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment*. Bantam Books, 1983.

A poignant memoir of the relocation and internment of the Wakatsuke family in the bleak internment camp of Manzanar. The uprooting of the family, the loss of livelihood, the shame, and the injustice of these ill-conceived actions by the U.S. Government wreak long-term havoc with the families economic and psychological well-being.

Jimenez, Francisco. *Breaking Through*. Houghton Mifflin Co, 2002.

The memoirs of a Mexican immigrant boy and his family's experiences struggling to come to terms with life in the United States, and their status as illegal aliens. One of a series of novels on the life and times of this boy and his family, which ends with their successful entry and assimilation.

Miles, Betty. *The Real Me: Equal Rights for Girls, is That Too Much to Ask?* Bull's Eye Publishing, 1989.

The heroine of this novel discovers that almost everything interesting that she wants to do is considered a part of the masculine realm. This book is out of print, but available through Amazon.com in used editions.

Nixon, Joan Lowery. *A Family Apart*. Laureleaf, 1995.

The touching story of a group of siblings, struggling unsuccessfully, to survive the poverty and corruption of New York City during the early industrial age. They are

relinquished by their mother and sent on the ‘Orphan Train’ out to the rural west of the United States, for adoption by farm families. A bittersweet novel, detailing the sorrow and/or salvation which awaited such children.

Patterson, Katherine. *Lyddie*. Puffin, 1994.

The story of a young girl’s coming of age during the 1840s, through her experiences of economic survival on a marginal family farm, and as a factory worker. Issues of labor rights, equal pay for women, and literacy are powerfully woven into this piece of historical fiction.

Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Puffin, 1991.

A classic piece of fiction, detailing the brutal conditions of poverty, violence, and racism, which beset black families in the Deep South during the 1930s. This is one of a series of three, powerful novels about the Logan family and their struggles to defend their property and civil rights. We see the young female heroine move from protected innocence, to shocked awareness and finally courageous determination.

Woodruff, Elvira. *Orphan of Ellis Island*. Cartwheel Books, 2000.

A fifth grade orphan boy, defensive about his lack of knowledge about his parentage, eludes his class on a field trip to Ellis Island, falls asleep while hiding, and awakes to find himself locked inside the Museum. During the night, he inexplicably makes contact with some children in Italy, is transported in both time and place, and becomes a boy going through the immigration process of early immigrants through Ellis Island. He comes to understand that he has experienced this, with what turn out to be his ancestors on their journey to America.

### **Additional Print Resources**

There are many more potential print resources available. One good way of finding quality material is to go to Amazon.com and type in some of the topics included in this unit. A plethora of printed material will be found.