



IN HISTORY

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# What Is National History Day<sup>®</sup>?

National History Day<sup>®</sup> (NHD) is a nonprofit organization that creates opportunities for teachers and students to engage in historical research. NHD is not a predetermined, by-the-book program but rather an innovative curriculum framework. Students learn history by selecting topics of interest and launching into year-long research projects. The mission of NHD is to improve the teaching and learning of history in middle and high school. The most visible vehicle is the NHD Contest.

When studying history through historical research, students and teachers practice critical inquiry, asking questions of significance, time, and place. History students become immersed in a detective story. Beginning in the fall, students choose a topic related to the annual theme and conduct extensive primary and secondary research. After analyzing and interpreting their sources and drawing conclusions about their topics' significance in history, students present their work in original papers, exhibits, performances, websites, or documentaries. These projects are entered into competitions in the spring at local, affiliate, and national levels, where professional historians and educators evaluate them. The program culminates at the national competition held each June at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Each year, National History Day uses a theme to provide a lens through which students can examine history. The annual theme frames the research for students and teachers alike. It is intentionally broad enough to allow students to select topics from any place (local, national, or world) and any period in history. Once students choose their topics, they investigate historical context, historical significance, and the topic's relationship to the theme. Research can be conducted at libraries, archives, and museums; through oral history interviews; and by visiting historic sites.

NHD benefits students and teachers. For students, NHD allows self-direction of their learning. Students select topics that match their interests. NHD provides program expectations and guidelines for students, but the research journey is unique to each project. Throughout the year, students develop essential skills and foster intellectual curiosity. Through this process, they gain critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to manage and use information now and in the future.

The classroom teacher is a student's greatest ally. NHD supports teachers by providing instructional materials and hosting workshops at local, affiliate, and national levels. Many teachers find that bringing the NHD model to their classroom encourages students to watch for examples of the theme and to identify connections in their study of history across time. To learn more, visit [nhd.org](http://nhd.org).





# 2025 Theme Narrative: *Rights & Responsibilities in History*

CATHY GORN, Ph.D., Executive Director, National History Day®

The theme for National History Day® (NHD) 2025 is *Rights & Responsibilities in History*. It is very broad, allowing students to choose family, local, national, or world history topics. At first glance, the theme seems clear and straightforward. Under greater consideration, however, it is far more complex. So before students choose their topics, we must break down the theme and analyze its parts.

It is important to remember that with rights come responsibilities. In the present day, we frequently read and hear discussions about “my rights” or “our rights.” While we all have the right to freedoms such as free speech, we also have a responsibility to use these freedoms in a manner that respects the rights and well-being of others, with an understanding of how that responsibility is necessary for the greater good of all. Thus, the NHD theme for 2025 is focused on **both** historical rights **and** responsibilities. **NHD projects in 2025 must focus on both as well.**

Rights and responsibilities determine the relationship between individuals and society. A society can be defined as a community, state, country, family, club, school, or religious organization, among other groups, where individuals gather and feel a sense of belonging. Together, rights and responsibilities play a crucial role in how individuals interact with each other, their communities, and their governments.

## Defining Rights & Responsibilities

**Rights are freedoms or privileges that individuals possess as human beings or as citizens of a society.**

They are often, though not always, protected by laws, charters, or constitutions that establish the boundaries of personal freedoms (rights) and protections and obligations (responsibilities).

- › **Civil rights:** nonpolitical rights of individuals that their governments (through law) are bound to protect. They can include:
  - › Freedom of speech: the right to speak freely (within reason).

- › Freedom of religion: the right to worship the religion of one’s own choice (or decline to worship).
- › Freedom of assembly: the right to assemble in a group of one’s choosing.
- › Freedom of petition: the right to ask the government to make a change.
- › Freedom of the press: the right to report on events and express opinions on the events of the day.
- › **Political rights:** the rights of citizens to participate in their government. They can include the right to vote, run for public office, and participate in the process. Political rights ensure that citizens have a say in how they are governed.
- › **Social rights:** the rights that establish a basic standard of living and well-being for all members of society. Social rights can include the right to an education, safe housing, or access to social services such as health care, access to food, and care for children or the elderly.
- › **Economic rights:** the rights that allow people to participate in their economy. These can include the right to own property, work, and earn fair wages. They can also include the right to pursue a career of one’s choosing, to start a business, or enjoy fair and safe working conditions.
- › **Human rights:** the rights that apply to all individuals, no matter who governs them. They are considered *universal* because they belong to everyone regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or other identities or affiliations. These rights are *inalienable* because they cannot be withdrawn, surrendered, or transferred except in specific situations. They are most famously defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in December 1948. This document affirms the right of every person to life, a fair justice system, and access to the resources of the community.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Access the full Universal Declaration of Human Rights at [un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](https://un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights).

**Responsibilities are expectations of individuals as members of society.** These include laws, social norms, or ethical principles designed to promote the well-being of society as a whole.

- › **Legal responsibilities:** the duty to maintain order and justice within a society. They include obeying the law, paying taxes, and respecting the rights of others. By following the laws, societies can function, and the rights of others are protected.
- › **Civic responsibilities:** the obligation to participate (directly or indirectly) in the functioning of a government. They can include voting, staying informed about political issues, and engaging in community activities.
- › **Social responsibilities:** the commitment to treat others respectfully and kindly and to help those in need. Examples include volunteering in the community or establishing organizations that support others.
- › **Ethical responsibilities:** the charge to make morally sound choices and decisions—even when driven by personal values and principles rather than being demanded by law—and making decisions between right and wrong.



During World War II, many nurses joined the U.S. military, causing a shortage in civilian hospitals. At Freedmen's Hospital (now Howard University Hospital) in Washington, D.C., Ethel Washington and Louise Beleno volunteered to pack surgical kits to aid the nursing staff. Library of Congress (2017696522).

## History of Rights & Responsibilities

The concepts of rights and responsibilities have a rich and complex history, evolving over the years and taking different forms depending on time, location, culture, and values. As with other concepts, they develop, ebb, and flow. The process of rights and responsibilities changing over time reflects societal values; advances in science, medicine, and technology; and our understanding of human dignity and well-being. The changes we observe also reflect philosophical, religious, and political developments, including the form of government that evolves or is in place. Importantly, the concepts of rights and responsibilities differ significantly when viewed through the lens of political organization. How do rights and responsibilities take shape within democracy, communism, fascism, socialism, or authoritarianism? What about monarchy, oligarchy, or anarchy?

To study rights and responsibilities in history, we must ask questions. Who decides who has rights? Does everyone have the same rights? Who decides on the limits individuals should or should not have? Why? What led to establishing certain rights, and to whom were they given? How have people, governments, or institutions decided what parameters should be set to enforce responsibilities? How are such decisions justified?

The relationship between rights and responsibilities is crucial to maintaining a just and functioning society. While citizens enjoy certain rights that protect their freedoms, they also bear responsibilities to one another.

Historically, it has not always played out that way.

In 2026, the United States will commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the beginning of our nation. In 1774, two years before the signing of that document, the First Continental Congress met at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia. To better understand the significance of that congress, we must ask questions about rights and responsibilities. What led to the convening of delegates from the colonies? What were their grievances? How did the delegates' ideas about rights and responsibilities as British citizens differ from those of Parliament? What resulted from that first convening?

Two years later, in 1776, the delegates to the Second Continental Congress issued the Declaration of Independence, a remarkable document declaring that individuals had certain fundamental rights guaranteed to them simply by being human. When they outlined their view of individual rights and wrote, “all men are created equal,” did they truly mean *all*? Who was left out? How did some individuals struggle to extend the idea of rights for all? What events made it possible to extend rights to more than just the propertied men of the eighteenth century? Who was instrumental in helping to secure rights for women, people of color, and Indigenous populations—and whose responsibility was it to do so? How and why? What compelled them to risk the very things the delegates of the Continental Congress pledged—their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor—to do so, and what were the consequences? In what ways did people who were excluded in the document use its language to make the case for rights for a broader group of Americans?



Artist Charles Édouard Armand-Dumaresq's 1873 painting depicting the signing of the Declaration of Independence. White House Historical Association.

And what about responsibility? How did that figure into the equation? Did the framers simply believe in and discuss rights? Who did they feel was responsible for guaranteeing those rights? Why? How have individuals considered responsibilities in their struggle for rights?

Americans were not the first nor will they be the last to fight for their rights. From ancient times until the twenty-first century, people around the globe have demanded and fought for, been guaranteed, or been denied certain rights and freedoms. Again, rights and responsibilities—as a concept—are shaped by culture, society, time, and place. No matter the example, we can consider: how have different contexts impacted entitlements (rights) and duties (responsibilities)?

Let's look at a few other historical topics.

One of the earliest known legal codes was the **Code of Hammurabi** created in Mesopotamia around 1754 BCE. In what way did it outline laws and punishments? Why was it created? How did it reflect the idea of taking responsibility for one's actions? Why did its creators feel that they were responsible for producing such laws and the consequences for breaking them?

In what ways did societies such as the **Incas or Aztecs** create and enforce ideas of rights and responsibilities in society? What was the *Codex Mendoza*? How did its painted images depict the history of the Aztecs and their conquest by the Spanish during the sixteenth century in Mexico? Why was it created? In what way did it define gender roles or issues of discipline?



The first page of the *Codex Mendoza*, showing the founding of the Aztec capital at Tenochtitlan, c.1541.

When and where did the **concept of citizenship** emerge? How did the ideas of rights and responsibilities play out in ancient Greek city-states such as Athens or Sparta? What responsibilities were required of citizens, and what rights were granted in exchange? Why?

In what ways have different **perspectives on childhood** played out in history? Historical notions about child rearing depended upon time, place, and culture. How were family roles defined in Late Imperial China? In what way did societal status play a role in defining issues such as child labor or gender roles? How did these change over time? Why? What were the consequences?

How did **Native American societies**, such as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (referred to at the time as the Iroquois Nation), establish codes of conduct related to rights and responsibilities? Why did these societies feel compelled to create such codes? In what context were they created? How did these codes impact Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities?

In what ways has **religion** played a role in outlining rights and responsibilities for some? What were some of the consequences? What influenced the Crusades of Medieval Europe? How were the Crusades an example of the relationship between religion and government? What other examples of such relationships influenced the course of human events?

The year 1994 marked the end of **apartheid** in South Africa. It had been in effect since 1948. What was apartheid, and how and why did it evolve? What were the consequences? What was the context in which it took place, locally and globally? Who and what helped bring about the change that resulted in its end? What had changed by 1994 that led to the end of apartheid?

**Foreign policy** has long influenced the notion of whose rights should be granted or denied and by whom. How has the effort to secure economic profit influenced rights and responsibilities? Consider the British East India Company in China or the Belgian monarchy's actions in the Congo. In what ways did the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 influence (impose) the formation of new countries, such as Yugoslavia? What were the immediate impacts and long-term consequences? In what way did it lead to the Bosnian conflict some 70 years later? How was the May Fourth Movement in China a reaction to the Treaty of Versailles? What role did it play in influencing individual rights and modernization in China?

These are just a few ideas from among the hundreds of topics students might choose to study for their NHD projects during the 2024–2025 program year. Students should brainstorm with their teachers and classmates, friends and family members, and skim through textbooks and other reference materials to find topics of interest. NHD topics can be drawn from family, local, national, or world history. Some of the best can be found in the students' own backyards. Nothing happens in isolation. Whatever their topic, students should remember to place it into historical context and view it through the lens of *Rights & Responsibilities in History*.

The next article in this book, "Celebrating America 250 and Inspiring National History Day® Topics," offers local history suggestions from 13 of our NHD affiliate programs. Students might be interested in researching the topics presented. They might also be inspired to look for parallel events in their own communities or explore local history in other places.

To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/theme](https://nhd.org/theme).



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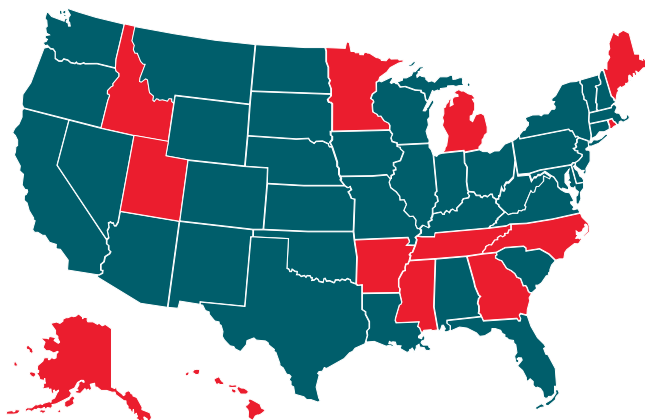


# Celebrating America 250 and Inspiring National History Day® Topics

As National History Day® (NHD) prepares to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, we are launching a series to appear across theme books through 2030. Each year, we will ask NHD affiliates to contribute topics to inspire NHD students to explore the theme through the lens of local history. One strength of the United States is its diverse stories of people, places, and events. There is no one American story—instead, there are millions of them. We hope NHD teachers and students will be inspired to explore what makes their communities unique and discover ways they can find examples of *Rights & Responsibilities in History* in their own backyard.

Local topics from 13 affiliates follow. Rather than starting with the original 13 colonies, NHD reached out to our affiliates across the nation. Each page includes an image (a painting, sketch, political cartoon, or photograph) that connects to local history and is accompanied by a description and questions to encourage students to consider the topic in light of the 2025 NHD theme. We hope these topics will provide inspiration to students across the nation and around the world as they work to identify their NHD topics.

## Contributing Affiliates



Explore NHD resources that address and celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. All are created by teachers and for teachers and are available for free download on the NHD website.

*Revolutionary Ideals*  
[nhd.org/RevIdeals](https://nhd.org/RevIdeals)

*Revolutionary Ideals* is a teacher resource created by teachers who participated in a 2022 NHD teacher institute in Providence, Rhode Island. The book, created in partnership with the Rhode Island Historical Society, includes two essays and 15 lesson plans created by NHD teachers. These lessons explore the ideals that drove the American Revolution and how these ideas were (or were not) applied. The book includes lessons that explore the *Gaspee* Raid, the Philadelphia Tea Party, the Regulator Rebellion, the role of a free press, the Rhode Island First Regiment, mercantilism and the triangle trade, the Indigenous roots of revolutionary ideas, and the impact of the American Revolution in France and Haiti. Teachers can download the lesson plan book or the individual lessons, which include the supporting materials (primary sources, graphic organizers, student instructions, and more.)

*Building a More Perfect Union*  
[nhd.org/250](https://nhd.org/250)

*Building a More Perfect Union* is a two-part resource series (published in 2021 and 2023) that explores how individuals and groups have worked to make the United States a better place for all its citizens. Developed in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the series includes four historical essays and 30 lesson plans. The topics span from the colonial period to modern American history and include inquiry-based lessons in which students explore primary source content using active learning strategies. The lessons are designed to be used in full, mined for primary source content, or modified or adapted to meet the needs of learners.

# Tennessee

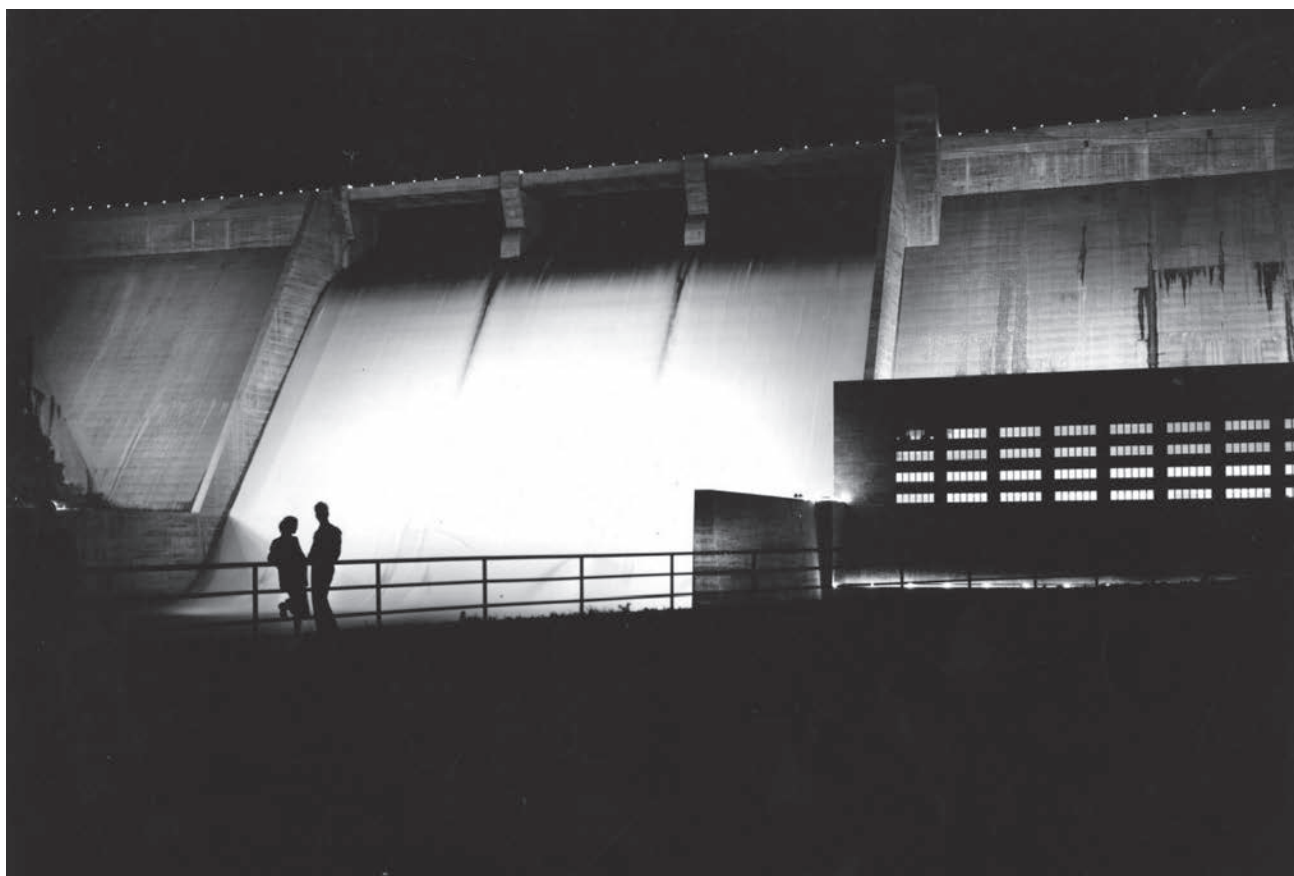
**NIKKI WARD, Director of Membership and Programs, State Coordinator for Tennessee History Day, Tennessee Historical Society**

Franklin D. Roosevelt became president of the United States on March 3, 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression. During his first 100 days, he created the New Deal, designed to uplift impoverished communities and strengthen infrastructure. One of his early actions was to sign the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act into law, allowing the federal government to build dams on the Tennessee River to control flooding and provide hydroelectric power. Started in October 1933 and finished in March 1936, Norris Dam in east Tennessee became the first hydroelectric project completed by the TVA.

Architect Roland Wank's design, evoking harmony with nature and encouraging people to visit the site, was sleek, intentional, and effective. The dam, however, was met with mixed responses from the community. Building the dam required 125,000 acres of land obtained through purchase or the use of eminent domain (when a government takes private land for public use). It resulted in the displacement of

over 15,000 people, many of whom were tenant farmers and sharecroppers who had lived in the area for decades. The speed of construction left little time for resistance. While many residents were grateful for the jobs, reliable water, and electricity that would be provided, others were angered by the loss of their land to a seemingly all-powerful federal government.

- › What rights did the federal government have when it came to the construction of Norris Dam?
- › What responsibilities did the federal government have to the people of Tennessee and surrounding regions?
- › What were the rights and responsibilities of the farmers and sharecroppers or the residents of the small town of Loyston, which is now at the bottom of Norris Lake?
- › How did the Norris Dam impact the economy and quality of life for the people who lived in the area?



The Norris Dam releases water to help control flooding. The dam was completed in 1936 by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Library Photograph Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives (28967).

# Alaska

DAVID RAMSEUR, President, Alaska Historical Society



Members of a Juneau and Sitka Native delegation discuss land selection under ANCSA with Senator Ted Stevens in his Washington, D.C., office on January 21, 1975. Left to right: Robert Loescher, Murlin Everson, Joseph Wilson, John Eldermar, Robert Carroll, James Peterson, and Herman Kitka. Ethel Staton shows Senator Stevens the land under consideration. U.S. Senate, Ted Stevens Foundation (1975\_01\_21).

In 1867, the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. This began decades of mistreatment by the federal government through assimilationist policies. Then, in 1971, the landmark Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA or Claims Act) was passed by the U.S. Congress. This federal law was a pivotal moment in Alaska's history. It set a course for Native self-determination and positive economic development across the state. The law resolved long-standing issues surrounding Aboriginal land claims in Alaska and stimulated long-lasting economic development through the federal government's allocation of 44 million acres of land and nearly \$1 billion to 12 newly formed Alaska Native regional corporations. ANCSA transformed the social, political, and economic landscape of Alaska. However, its passage also extinguished Aboriginal title to the land as well as Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights, restricting the extent to which Native people had control over subsistence management on the land ceded to them in the Act.

The lasting impacts of ANCSA mirror the historical trajectory of Alaska, extending from the millennia-old subsistence practices of Alaska Natives to the present-day dominance

of gleaming Native corporation office towers in the state's urban landscape. Today, ANCSA plays a vital role in Alaska's economy by supporting Native corporations established under the Act. Simultaneously, it encourages Alaska Native peoples to preserve their traditional cultural connections to the land. ANCSA did not address all of the Native concerns, and in the years since its passage, there have been numerous amendments to the Act. Many consider ANCSA a continuing work in progress.<sup>1</sup>

- › What rights and responsibilities emerged for Alaska Native peoples with the passage of ANCSA?
- › How did ANCSA's passage affect the economic rights of Alaska's citizens? Why is the timing of the Act's passage important to that economic story?
- › What is meant by "subsistence rights"? How is this fundamental right managed by the federal government and the State of Alaska?
- › What is the impact of ANCSA regional corporations, and how do they see their responsibility to Native shareholders?

<sup>1</sup> In 2021, the Alaska Historical Society documented this landmark act with a comprehensive guide to historical sources about ANCSA. The three-volume, nearly 1,200-page *Guide to the Sources for the Study of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act* identifies the vast majority of documents in existence across the world located in archives, libraries, personal collections, and online. It serves as the premier information gateway for researchers, historians, and those interested in this fascinating history of how the largest land claims settlement in U.S. history became law. The third volume is a teacher's guide to ANCSA. The guide is available at [tinyurl.com/ANCSAGuide](http://tinyurl.com/ANCSAGuide).



# Michigan

## CLAIRE HERHOLD, Michigan History Day Manager, Historical Society of Michigan

The Keweenaw Peninsula, located in the far northwest corner of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, is rich in copper deposits. By the late nineteenth century, it was the first major copper mining region in the United States and attracted thousands of settlers, many of whom were recently arrived immigrants. Copper mining was extremely lucrative for the three mining companies that dominated the region: the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, the Quincy Mine, and the Copper Range Company. However, mining proved less rewarding for the miners themselves, who endured hours in back-breaking conditions with little job security, low wages, and rampant exploitation of child labor. After their employers ignored their demands to meet and discuss these concerns, the miners' union called a strike on July 23, 1913.

The following months were tense as striking miners and their families organized to ensure better working conditions and to support each other through months without pay. Daily parades and marches helped to keep miners' spirits up. Those parades were often led by 25-year-old labor activist Anna Klobuchar "Big Annie" Clemenc. Earlier in 1913, she had organized the Women's Auxiliary group in Calumet and served time in jail for her labor activism. Standing six feet, two inches tall and carrying a large American flag on a ten-foot pole, Clemenc's presence at the head of these daily parades galvanized and inspired workers.

As the strike dragged on and mine managers refused to negotiate, relations between the two groups often turned violent. Following the murders of mine workers in Seeberville and the tragic stampede at Italian Hall that killed 73 people attending a Christmas party, the community turned to Big Annie to lead the funeral processions. Afterward, Clemenc embarked on a speaking tour to raise money for the victims and organize workers across the Midwest.

The Copper Country strike ended in April 1914 without achieving its major goals. However, the strike is widely regarded as a critical point in the region's history. It proved that collective action could halt even the largest mines, and managers were forced to lessen their control over workers' lives.

- › What rights did the striking copper miners claim for themselves in the workplace?
- › What responsibilities did mine managers have to their workers? To company shareholders?

- › Annie Clemenc was one of many people who devoted themselves to improving conditions in their mining community. Based on her actions, how might she have understood her rights and responsibilities as an individual and community member?
- › By the time the strike ended in 1914, union membership had dwindled and the workers' major demands were not met. Still, the strike is generally remembered as an important turning point. Why might historians' perspectives on an event's legacy change over time?



"Big Annie" Clemenc's leadership and community organizing galvanized workers during the Copper Country strike of 1913. Keweenaw National Historical Park, National Park Service.

# Arkansas

**PAIGE CREED, Regional Coordinator for Arkansas History Day, Park Interpreter/Museum Exhibits Specialist, Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources**

The discovery of oil in Union County, Arkansas, in January 1921 swept south Arkansas into an oil boom. Two communities, El Dorado and Smackover, were especially affected by the boom. Earlier, they struggled to survive by relying on agriculture and timber. Suddenly, they were faced with the opportunities and responsibilities of handling a natural resource gushing out of the ground. Union County residents began a new relationship with their environment—one that resulted in the devastation of every natural resource touched by oil and ultimately led to the downfall of oil production in south Arkansas.

Legally, oil and gas are fugacious (lasting just a short time) minerals. In the 1920s, ownership of oil and gas was governed by the Common Law Rule of Capture (whoever captured it owned it). The value of the oil, compounded by the rule of capture, sparked a drilling frenzy in the El Dorado and Smackover oil fields. At the height of the boom, Smackover Field produced more oil than any other field in the nation. While geologists cautioned producers to control the flow of oil, no regulations were enforced.

Wells were drilled every few yards, reducing the pressure in the oil pool. Too little pressure rendered the oil unretrievable. Drilling too deep disturbed the saltwater at the bottom of the pool, allowing the oil and saltwater to mix, thereby compromising the quality and value of the oil. Drilling too fast

led to mistakes, the most damaging of which was striking a natural gas deposit, releasing that pressure, and blowing out the oil. Oil and gas spewed as high as 200 feet into the air, coming down on the landscape—often in flames—demolishing the derrick, wrecking the drilling equipment, wasting vast amounts of oil and gas, and subjecting the trees, water, and wildlife to widescale contamination.

The boom mentality fueled a frenzy of competition among oil producers in south Arkansas, which led to unsustainable oil production and negative consequences to southern wildlife and vegetation. It took more than 50 years from the discovery of oil for drilling regulations to be fully enforced. The Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission was established in 1939. The commission enacted the Arkansas Oil and Gas Conservation Act: Act 105 to regulate drilling practices, conserve resources, and protect the environment. However, oil production was not fully regulated until the 1970s.

- › What rights allowed oil producers to drill for oil and produce oil in Arkansas in the 1920s?
- › What responsibilities did the oil producers have to conserve the resources and protect the environment?
- › What responsibilities did the federal or Arkansas government have to regulate the oil industry or to control oil production?



More than 75 derricks are shown drilling the field in Smackover, Arkansas, 1925. The large number of wells drilled too closely together caused damage to the natural resources above and below the surface. Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources (1985.016.001).

# Rhode Island

**MICHELLE WALKER**, Education Manager for the Rhode Island Historical Society, Assistant State Coordinator for Rhode Island History Day



*The Burning of the Gaspee*, by Charles DeWolf Brownell, 1892. Rhode Island Historical Society (1893.10.1).

In 1772 Rhode Island, tensions ran high between Rhode Island colonists and the British Navy, which was intent on preventing the smuggling of goods (particularly molasses) to collect taxes for the Crown. His Majesty's Schooner *Gaspee* was commanded by Lieutenant William Dudingston, who held a dual commission in both the British Navy and the customs service. This meant that Dudingston received a share of the proceeds from the sale of any American ship he seized for smuggling and its cargo. Dudingston's diligence in pursuit of British trade laws and his own interest made him loathed by Rhode Islanders, especially since the colonists felt that the laws were unjustly enforced—even illegal in some interpretations. A local warrant was issued for Dudingston's arrest, which he avoided by staying onboard the ship.

On June 9, 1772, the *Gaspee* gave chase to the *Hannah*, a sloop owned by John Brown of Providence, Rhode Island. Captain Benjamin Lindsey of the *Hannah* lured the *Gaspee* to Namquid Point, where a sandbar lurked just under the water's surface. While Lindsey avoided the sandbar, Dudingston (lacking a local pilot) unwittingly ran the *Gaspee* aground. News of the *Gaspee*'s predicament spread, and a few local leaders assembled a large group of Rhode Island colonists to seize the moment. The men, many armed, used longboats to row out to Namquid Point in the dead of night to meet the *Gaspee*. When they reached the ship, the

*Gaspee*'s sentinel roused Dudingston to the deck. One of the colonists demanded that Dudingston surrender, and when he refused, some of the colonists attempted to climb aboard. Sword strokes were exchanged, and a few men from the boats opened fire, wounding Dudingston. The colonists then took the crew captive, ransacked the schooner, and, after removing Dudingston and his crew, set the *Gaspee* on fire. Dudingston was given medical treatment, and the crew was released the next day. Despite a £100 reward from Rhode Island Governor Joseph Wanton and a £500 reward from King George III to anyone who could provide information, no one confessed or gave up their fellow colonists in the attack on the *Gaspee* and her crew. The lack of consequences for those involved in the attack infuriated King George III, likely explaining why he dealt so harshly with colonists 18 months later following the Boston Tea Party.

- › What rights did the British have to collect taxes from the 13 colonies in North America?
- › What responsibilities did the colonists have to follow British tax laws?
- › No one was ever arrested for the burning of the *Gaspee* or the assault on its crew. Did the colonists have a responsibility to tell the truth to the British authorities about what happened? Explain your reasoning.



# Idaho

**MAGGIE FULLERTON, National History Day in Idaho Coordinator, Idaho State Historical Society**

The story of women's suffrage in Idaho began in 1870 when a bill supporting voting rights for women was introduced to the state legislature and then failed in an 11-11 tie. In 1879, women in the then-territory of Idaho were granted the right to vote, but only in school elections. After statehood (1890), another women's suffrage bill was introduced to the Idaho legislature in 1893 and failed by just two votes.

Since only those who had the right to vote could extend that right to other groups, people in favor of the enfranchisement of women needed to work to raise public awareness and persuade those who were resistant. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) played an active part in women's suffrage. Rebecca Mitchell, one-time president of the Idaho WCTU, linked the fight for suffrage with the fight for temperance (a movement that sought to outlaw the consumption of alcohol). However, Abigail Scott Duniway, a writer and lecturer, thought that connection would lead to opposition to suffrage.

On July 4, 1896, in Lewiston, Idaho, a group of women marched in the town's parade to support a women's suffrage amendment to the Idaho Constitution, which was on the ballot that fall. While 30,000 Idahoans voted for president, fewer than 20,000 cast a vote either for or against Idaho's suffrage amendment. The *Green v. State Board of*

*Canvassers* case was sent to the Idaho Supreme Court for a decision about whether the 12,126 "yes" votes were enough to amend the state constitution. On December 24, 1896, the court ruled unanimously that the amendment had passed, and women born in the United States had the full right to vote in Idaho. In practical terms, women of color in Idaho fought into the twentieth century for their right to vote to be recognized.

Starting in 1898, women were elected to the Idaho House, as well as to statewide roles such as the superintendent of public instruction. More than two decades later, the U.S. Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment—granting women the right to vote—which then circulated the country for ratification. In February 1920, Emma Drake, a representative in the Idaho Legislature, wrote the bill that made Idaho the thirtieth state to ratify the amendment that—in words, anyway—ensured all women who were citizens of the United States had the right to vote.

- › Who grants and secures our natural rights, civil rights, and political rights?
- › What responsibilities do those with political rights have toward those who lack political rights?
- › What responsibilities do groups working for the same rights have to each other?



A suffrage parade in Lewiston, Idaho, July 4, 1896. Gift of the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Idaho State Archives (78-203-95).

# Georgia

JESS BURKE ALDEN, Program Coordinator, Georgia Humanities

HAYLEIGH SEBAUGH, Intern, Georgia Humanities

After the Civil War, with the abolition of slavery and an increased reliance on railroads in the South, Georgia underwent a significant economic shift and transitioned from cotton farming to an industrialized economy based on textile manufacturing. The growth of Georgia's textile industry relied on the labor of entire families. To ensure a steady and long-term workforce, mill owners provided housing for workers and their families, creating company towns called mill villages. As widespread poverty persisted in Georgia, the promise of a stable income and housing proved a compelling incentive for factory work.

Families often had to rely on their children to contribute financially. By 1890, 24 percent of textile mill workers were children.<sup>1</sup> The children working in textile mills were often expected to work 10- to 12-hour shifts, six days a week, for a lower wage than adult workers. The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) was formed in 1904 to advocate for the rights of child workers. Photographer Lewis Hine, employed by the NCLC, documented the working and living conditions

of children in the United States from 1908 to 1924. The efforts of the NCLC and advocates such as Hine contributed to change. Child labor in textile mills was officially abolished in 1933 with the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act, which prohibited the employment of children under the age of 16.

- › What rights did child workers have before passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933?
- › To what extent were mill owners responsible for the safety of child workers?
- › How did the creation of mill villages influence the rights and responsibilities of mill owners toward their workforce?
- › In what ways did the NCLC and advocates such as Lewis Hine address the rights of child workers? How did their efforts make them responsible to help abolish child labor in textile mills?



A young girl works as a spinner in a Georgia cotton mill, 1909. Library of Congress (2018675038).

<sup>1</sup> "Textile Industry," New Georgia Encyclopedia, updated October 28, 2021, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/textile-industry/>.



# Mississippi

**AL WHEAT, Director of Education and Mississippi History Day Affiliate Coordinator,  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History**

From the late 1800s through the early and mid-1900s, Mississippi held the highest rates of race-based violence of any state in the nation.<sup>1</sup> In 1868, Mississippi adopted a progressive constitution to combat the racial violence and disenfranchisement that Black citizens faced. That constitution was eventually replaced with the more restrictive and segregated 1890 constitution. The state and new constitution were so adept at disenfranchising and subjugating Black citizens that other Southern states emulated the “Mississippi Plan.” Over the following decades, race-based tensions in Mississippi continued to rise. Black World War II veterans returned from overseas determined to fight for their voting rights. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, mandating school desegregation, increased White hostility to equal rights. Then, in 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was brutally murdered in a racially motivated killing in the Mississippi Delta, sparking a new surge in the modern Civil Rights Movement.

In 1964, when volunteers from across the country came to Mississippi to fight for voting rights, educational opportunities, and political participation, the Freedom Summer Project began. Forging alliances transcending geography, class, and race, volunteers such as Bob Moses of New York and Joan Trumpauer Mulholland of Virginia stood hand-in-hand with Mississippians such as civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer to push for these changes. Despite arrests, violence, and even murder, project volunteers established Freedom Schools and registered Black citizens to vote. Building on the project’s momentum, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was formed to demonstrate Black interest in political participation. Freedom Summer is a monumental success not only in Mississippi’s civil rights history but also in America’s fight for equality.



Freedom Summer volunteers arrive at the Congress of Federated Organizations (COFO) Center in Jackson, Mississippi. Foner (Thomas) Freedom Summer Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Z/2312.000/S).

- › Mississippi was responsible for disenfranchising Black citizens and preventing them from receiving an education. How did Mississippi impede their rights? How did other states copy the “Mississippi Plan”?
- › What rights were civil rights activists fighting for? How were activists exercising their civic responsibilities?
- › Why did volunteers feel responsible for aiding Mississippians? What methods did volunteers use to overcome the roadblocks put in place to strip Black citizens of their rights? To what extent were they effective?

<sup>1</sup> For more information about lynching in the United States, see the Equal Justice Initiative’s interactive website, “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror,” [lynchinginamerica.eji.org/explore](http://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/explore).

# Minnesota

**SAMMI JO PAPAS, Head of History Day, State Co-Coordinator, Minnesota Historical Society**

In 1956, the United States government passed the Indian Relocation Act, promising jobs and housing for Native Americans who moved from reservations into cities. Despite these promises, Native Americans in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota) were unable to find high-paying jobs or suitable housing and faced discrimination. They were still feeling the effects of losing tribal sovereignty and tribal rights, notably including a ban on spiritual celebrations. These conditions created the need for additional Native American support within their communities. As a result, the American Indian Movement (AIM) began in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1968, over 100 years after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. It was a grassroots effort by Native Americans living in the Twin Cities. Their goal was to support the newly relocated Native Americans since the U.S. government had failed to uphold its responsibilities spelled out by the Indian Relocation Act.

Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, and Russell Means are generally known as the creators and leaders of AIM. In addition, many Native American women, such as Pat Bellanger, Sarah Bad Heart Bull, and Anna Mae Aquash, were heavily involved in AIM from its founding. AIM initially worked to establish legal services and schools locally before eventually expanding the organization into a national movement. In 1972, four caravans involving members of AIM and several other Native American groups from across the country, known as the Trail of Broken Treaties, walked to Washington, D.C. There, they occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building and demanded President Richard Nixon take responsibility for fulfilling the treaty commitments. What started as a group of 500 occupiers in the BIA grew to 1,000 as the founding members presented their 20-Point Position Paper that demanded their rights as Native Americans be honored according to government-passed treaties. Ultimately, nearly 200 tribes from across the United States banded together for this common cause.

Members of AIM participated in other occupations and memorials throughout their time as an organization. They consistently fought for the rights of all Native Americans and

brought hope to the Native population. In 1978, AIM took part in The Longest Walk, a significant event that involved walking from San Francisco, California, to Washington, D.C. This march played a crucial role in President Jimmy Carter's decision to lift the ban on Native American spiritual practices. As a result, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed that same year. In the present day, small branches of AIM continue to lobby to support and advocate for the rights of Native American people.

Questions to consider:

- › Why was AIM created? How did Native Americans use AIM to ensure their rights?
- › What responsibilities did AIM believe they had toward Native Americans in Minnesota? Were these impacts felt in other states?
- › When cooperating with AIM, what responsibilities did the government have in upholding legal agreements made with Native Americans?



The first board members of the American Indian Movement (AIM), 1968. Photograph by Roger Woo. American Indian Movement Interpretive Center.

## North Carolina

**KAREN IPOCK, State Coordinator for National History Day in North Carolina, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

The Coercive Acts of 1774, also known as the Intolerable Acts, were enforced by the British Parliament as retaliation for the Boston Tea Party that occurred on December 16, 1773. A series of harsh measures, including the Boston Port, Massachusetts Government, Justice, and Quartering Acts, were met with strong opposition throughout the colonies. A sense of solidarity grew among the colonists in the following months.

On October 25, 1774, a group of 51 women in Edenton, North Carolina, under the leadership of Penelope Barker, drafted a resolution to boycott British imports, including tea and cloth. They sent their final signed resolution off to England. Although less well-known than the Boston Tea Party, this act demonstrated extraordinary courage by the women, who did not hide their identities and signed their real names.

In London, *The Morning Chronicle* and *London Advertiser* reported the event on January 16, 1775. An accompanying satirical print portrayed the women negatively. Despite this newspaper coverage, the women's actions went unrecorded in North Carolina, resulting in future confusion and misunderstandings of what took place. Only in 1827, when a naval officer from North Carolina discovered a rendering of the cartoon abroad, did citizens begin to piece together the forgotten events, and it became known as the Edenton Tea Party.

One common misconception that has arisen over time is that the Edenton Tea Party was a social gathering at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth King, a prominent Edenton resident. However, the King residence was far too small for an assembly of this size. The text of the resolution also suggests it was merely an agreement rather than a physical gathering. Nevertheless, what is certain is that the Edenton ladies created this revolutionary document, marking one of the earliest instances of public political activism by women in America.

- › Why do you think the women in Edenton felt it was their right to boycott British imports and their responsibility to send the resolution to England?
- › How did Penelope Barker and the women of the Edenton Tea Party challenge the expectations of women in their time? What does that say about the rights for which they were advocating?



An English satirical print of women in Edenton, North Carolina, pledging to boycott English goods. Library of Congress (96511606).

- › What role did Penelope Barker play in the Edenton Tea Party, and how does her leadership connect to the broader theme of individuals taking responsibility for social and political change?
- › How did the Edenton women take responsibility for their actions? How did this differ from the participants of the Boston Tea Party?
- › How might the Edenton Tea Party be seen as a part of the broader movement for rights and liberties during the colonial period?

# Maine

**JOHN TAYLOR, Museum Assistant, Communications Manager, and State Coordinator for National History Day in Maine, Margaret Chase Smith Library, University of Maine**

Before the twentieth century, the United States lacked a national press. The circulation of information primarily relied on local newspapers that focused on local issues. Following World War II, advances in travel and communication technologies began to erode regional distinctions. Commenting on this technological shift in 1949, U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith noted “radio and television . . . share the power of shaping public opinion with the press.” During the 1930s, with the proliferation of radios, and in the 1950s, as television sets became common in American households, a national media landscape emerged. Media hubs in New York and Washington, D.C., played a pivotal role in determining which issues were deemed significant on a national scale. As time progressed, additional technological advancements—including satellites, cable television, fiber optics, and the Internet—continued transforming political discourse (and its distribution) in the United States.

Today, debates continue about the impact of mass media on American culture. Senator Smith stressed the importance of a free press and was known to criticize reporters on various occasions. As mass media became commonplace, she noted, “the only fear I have about the American Press is that it may be becoming ‘too sophisticated’ or elitist, and that the American people prefer their news with a biased or ‘sophisticated slant.’” She also accused news outlets of sensationalizing reports. The concerns Senator Smith voiced remain ongoing, especially for politicians and public figures whose decisions face constant scrutiny. Despite her critique, she maintained the belief that the divide between the press and government is essential, with each entity needing to keep a vigilant eye on the other.

- › How has technology impacted the way people communicate and gather information?
- › When reporting on a person, place, or event, what rights and responsibilities does the press have?
- › What are the rights and responsibilities of members of local, state, and national governments when interacting with the news media?
- › What rights and responsibilities does the general public have when depending on the media for information?



Telstar I was the first communications satellite capable of transmitting telephone, television, telephoto, and facsimile data. U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith’s work on the Senate Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee gave her a front-row seat to this new technology. She is pictured at the satellite’s American relay station in Andover, Maine, July 17, 1962. Margaret Chase Smith Library (P433).



# Utah

HEIDI CHUDY, NHD Utah Program Assistant, Utah Historical Society

On May 10, 1869, railroad officials, engineers, and workmen from the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroad companies came together in Utah's high desert to drive the final spike uniting the rails. The ceremonial driving of the "Golden Spike" celebrated the vision and determination that built nearly 2,000 miles of track in only six years. The first transcontinental railroad made it possible to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast entirely by rail. After 1869, instead of a six-month-long journey by horse and wagon, people and goods could travel from Nebraska to California in just four days.

President Abraham Lincoln supported the effort to unify the nation during the American Civil War (1861–1865). The transcontinental railroad began when the U.S. Congress passed the Pacific Railway Act of 1862. This act gave government bonds (money) and tracts of land to two railroad companies to connect the nation's existing rail network with the West Coast. In 1863, the Central Pacific Railroad Company started construction in Sacramento, California. Relying on the skilled work of thousands of Chinese immigrants, the Central Pacific crossed the rugged Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Nevada deserts. The Union Pacific Railroad began building from Omaha, Nebraska, in 1865. Irish immigrants and Civil War veterans worked to build the tracks across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. The two rail lines crawled toward each other across the continent until the final rails converged in Utah, just north of the Great Salt Lake.

The transcontinental railroad transformed travel, commerce, and industry by opening the American West to large-scale immigration and economic development. These changes benefited many people who found jobs and opportunities in western mines, railroads, and other industries. However, the railroad was not good for everyone. The Union Pacific line crossed through Native American lands, which led to the near-extinction of the bison and inflamed tensions between the newcomers and Indigenous peoples. Railroad companies exploited immigrant workers, paying them a fraction of what non-immigrants were paid while they performed dangerous and exhausting work. Many bustling boomtowns withered away when they were bypassed by the railroads. Ultimately, while the transcontinental railroad contributed to economic progress for some, it also left a legacy of exploitation, environmental damage, and social tensions.

- › What responsibilities did the federal government have to help improve the nation's transportation system during the 1860s?
- › What new economic opportunities did the transcontinental railroad provide? Who benefited from these opportunities? Did the government have a right or a responsibility to provide these opportunities, and why?
- › How did the growing influence of railroad companies impact the rights of farmers, ranchers, and Indigenous peoples?



This famous photograph shows the celebration after dignitaries gathered to drive the Golden Spike, completing the nation's first transcontinental railroad at Promontory, Utah, in 1869. David S. King Photograph Collection, J. Willard Marriott Digital Library, University of Utah (P0033n01\_08\_72).

# Hawai'i

**DORIAN LANGI, Retired Hawai'i Department of Education Teacher**

**DEVIN MAKIZURU, Hawai'i History Day State Coordinator**

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized military commanders to remove civilians from areas designated as military zones. Using the authority granted by Executive Order 9066, General John L. DeWitt issued a series of public proclamations that established military zones encompassing the West Coast of the United States. The proclamations also placed restrictions, such as curfews, on Japanese Americans living in the established military zones and eventually culminated in the forced evacuation and detention of Japanese Americans and the establishment of ten American concentration camps. Although Executive Order 9066 did not apply to any particular ethnic group in writing, in practice it was applied almost specifically to the Japanese American population living on the West Coast of the continental United States.

Since Hawai'i was not a U.S. state in 1941, Executive Order 9066 did not apply. However, the Organic Act (1900), intended to outline the governance of the Territory of Hawai'i, was used to enable the declaration of martial law (emergency military rule that suspends civilian governance) from December 1941 until October 1944. The Office of the Military Governor issued hundreds of general orders during this period, instituting a blackout and curfew and placing restrictions on the press, mail, and long-distance calls for all citizens, with even more restrictions on those of Japanese ancestry. Because citizens of Japanese ancestry constituted a large proportion of the territory's population, mass evacuation and internment were not feasible in Hawai'i. However, by the end of the war, approximately 2,000 of Hawai'i's civilians of Japanese ancestry had been interned at various locations in Hawai'i and the continental United States.

Honouliuli Internment Camp, located on the island of O'ahu, was the largest Prisoner of War (POW) and internee camp in Hawai'i. It held approximately 320 Japanese American civilian internees, along with 4,000 POWs from Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, Korea, and Italy, as well as non-combatant labor conscripts. One of 17 internment sites in Hawai'i, Honouliuli opened in March 1943 on 160 acres of land in a deep gulch of south-central O'ahu. Internees were separated by gender, nationality, and military or civilian status. Japanese American internees nicknamed Honouliuli "Jigoku Dani," which translates to "Hell Valley."



Honouliuli Internment Camp was the largest POW and internee camp in Hawai'i. A note on the back of the photo reads, "Prison Camp, Honouliuli Gulch." Photograph by Harry Lodge, 1945. Japanese American Relocation and Internment: The Hawai'i Experience Archival Collection, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (6673).

- › What responsibilities did the U.S. government have to the people in the territory of Hawai'i?
- › What rights did the U.S. government have when interning residents of the territory of Hawai'i?
- › How were the constitutional rights of interned Japanese American citizens and residents of Japanese ancestry impacted?
- › How do the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens change in times of war?

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# The Responsibility to Advocate for Children's Right to Health

LAURA J. SANTOYO, Archivist, Gartner Pediatric History Center, American Academy of Pediatrics

In the 1940s, when discussions surrounding the right to equitable, affordable health care were happening on the national stage, a young organization called the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) launched a nationwide study to identify and address shortcomings in child care. Access to modern health services was not equally available to all American children, and the AAP believed that doctors had a responsibility to provide better care. The right to health care and the responsibility to provide it—not just for children, but for all citizens—emerged as a common thread in American history from the early twentieth century, with conversations continuing into the present day.

The prelude to creating the AAP started on July 19, 1929, when a group of pediatricians attending an American Medical Association (AMA) meeting in Portland, Oregon, gathered for dinner at the home of James Rosenfeld, MD, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Oregon. The American Academy of Pediatrics was born around the dinner table that night, although it did not become a reality until the following year. For years prior, American pediatricians yearned for their own organization, feeling dismissed by the medical community. Former AAP historian Marshall Carleton Pease explained that “The medical profession . . . [classified pediatricians] rather condescendingly as a minor clique within the class named as the old fashioned family doctor.”<sup>1</sup> America's pediatricians wanted a platform where their voices, and the voices of children, would be heard.

It is no coincidence that the groundwork for an organization of pediatricians was laid during the Progressive Era (1890s–1920s), a period of social activism and political reform in the United States. National interest in child welfare increased during this time due to concerns over poor housing conditions, nutrition, and sanitation, as well as widespread disease brought on by rapid industrialization. Exploitative child labor was another concern, leading to the creation of reform groups such as the National Child Labor

Committee in 1904. White House Conferences on Children, held in the early twentieth century and designed to improve children's lives across the nation, were inspirational to the AAP founders as well. The first conference, held in 1909 by President Theodore Roosevelt, led to the creation of the Children's Bureau, which focused on improving the lives of families and children and was signed into law by President William Howard Taft in 1912.



Photograph of Manuel, a five-year-old shrimp-picker, standing barefoot in front of a mountain of oyster shells in Biloxi, Mississippi, February 1911. Library of Congress (2018676266).

This article will describe events leading up to the creation of the AAP, an organization that helped draw attention to child welfare in America. Its establishment paved the way for the AAP's 1945 national Study of Child Health Services, which addressed the right to better health for children and the responsibility to provide it.

<sup>1</sup> Notes for *A History of the American Academy of Pediatrics* (1947) by Marshall Carleton Pease, AAP History Collection, Gartner Pediatric History Center, American Academy of Pediatrics, Itasca, IL.



## President Woodrow Wilson's White House Conference on the Standards of Child Welfare (1919)

The White House Conference on the Standards of Child Welfare (the second White House Conference on Children) was held in 1919 at the conclusion of what President Woodrow Wilson declared the Children's Year (April 1918 to April 1919).<sup>2</sup> The Children's Year was a campaign intended to bring attention to the importance of "conserving childhood in times of national peril," such as wartime (at the start of the campaign, the United States was entering its second year of involvement in World War I).<sup>3</sup> The Children's Bureau supported the campaign because it faced challenges in maintaining child welfare standards, mostly due to the national focus on the war effort. This situation resulted in children bearing the brunt of the war's impact. In November 1917, Julia Clifford Lathrop, the first Director of the Children's Bureau, wrote, "We wish to see for the soldier above all the recognition that his children have the right to a home and the care of their mother while he is away."<sup>4</sup> President Wilson launched the campaign, believing that upholding basic child welfare standards was a "patriotic duty" and wanting to set "minimum standards for the health, education, and work of the American child."<sup>5</sup> The conference produced *Standards on Child Welfare*, a report that listed recommendations for the care of infants and their mothers.<sup>6</sup>

## The Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921

In 1921, in response to the alarming rates of infant and maternal mortality outlined in *Standards of Child Welfare*, Congress passed the Sheppard-Towner Act, another motivating factor in the founding of the AAP. This law provided federal funds to states for maternal and infant care programs, some of the first federally funded social welfare programs in the nation.<sup>7</sup> The programs under this act were successful in decreasing infant mortality rates. A

leading pediatrician, Martha May Eliot, MD, wrote that the Act established a shared responsibility between the American people and its government to provide "community services that children need for a good start in life."<sup>8</sup>

The AMA disapproved of the Sheppard-Towner Act, calling it a "socialist threat" and insisting that it would harm the public by intruding on states' rights and private practice.<sup>9</sup> However, a group of pediatricians attending a 1922 AMA meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, dissented and supported the law. They were scolded by AMA leaders for voting independently on policies involving the AMA. This legendary disagreement was a major catalyst in the founding of the AAP.<sup>10</sup> More than ever, the future founders wanted their own organization—one that would fight harder for the rights of children.



Dr. Martha May Eliot, Children's Bureau head, celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the bureau, 1952. National Archives and Records Administration.

2 The first White House Conference [on Care of Dependent Children] occurred in 1909 and helped establish the Children's Bureau (1912), the first government agency created to investigate and report on child welfare.

3 "The Story of the White House Conferences on Children and Youth," (Washington, D.C.: Children's Bureau, 1967), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED078896.pdf>.

4 Julia C. Lathrop, "The Children's Bureau in War Time," *The North American Review* 206, 744 (1917): 734–46. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25121688>.

5 "The Story of the White House Conferences on Children and Youth."

6 Cynthia A. Connolly and Janet Golden, "'Save 100,000 Babies': The 1918 Children's Year and Its Legacy," *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 7 (July 1, 2018): 902–907, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304354>.

7 Andrew L. Yarrow, "History of U.S. Children's Policy, 1900–Present," *First Focus on Children*, April 2009, <https://firstfocus.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Childrens-Policy-History.pdf>.

8 Martha May Eliot, "The Children's Bureau: Fifty Years of Public Responsibility for Action in Behalf of Children," *American Journal of Public Health* 52, 4 (1962): 576, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.52.4.576>.

9 Socialism is a political ideology that is based on the idea that common or public ownership of resources and means of production leads to a more equal society.

10 American Academy of Pediatrics, "50 Years of Child Advocacy: American Academy of Pediatrics, 1930–1980" (Evanston: American Academy of Pediatrics, 1980), 1.



American Academy of Pediatrics, First Annual Meeting, Ambassador Hotel, Atlantic City, June 13, 1931. Gartner Pediatric History Center, American Academy of Pediatrics. Copyright AAP. Used with permission.

## President Herbert Hoover's White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (1930)

In February 1930, Doctors Isaac A. Abt, C. Anderson Aldrich, and Clifford G. Grulee brought forth their proposal for the new American Academy of Pediatrics. The name American Academy of Pediatrics (rather than American Academy of Pediatricians) emphasized that their main mission was to advocate for the rights of children. The Academy was incorporated in June 1930, less than a year after that fateful dinner in July 1929.

Later that same year, President Herbert Hoover orchestrated the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (the third conference addressing the welfare of children). The President acknowledged the nation's responsibility to children, saying "the opportunity of the nation lies in the health and protection of its children."<sup>11</sup> Protecting children's health is a preventive measure; caring properly for a child's health increases the chances that a child will grow up to be a healthy and productive member of American society.

Before the conference, President Hoover organized a Planning Committee, chaired by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur, to study children's health and find ways the nation could improve it.<sup>12</sup> Experts from across the country, including Julia Lathrop, director of the United States Children's Bureau from 1912 until 1922 and the first woman to direct a federal bureau of the U.S. government, were initially invited to join the committee. Eventually, through the formation of sections and subcommittees, the number of experts involved rose to 1,200.<sup>13</sup>

In November 1930, 2,000 people attended the conference to hear the various committee reports, which totaled over 30 printed volumes. The reports outlined everything from suggestions on prenatal care to the promise of health care for the physically and mentally disabled. For example, one recommendation proposed that public schools be responsible for testing the hearing of every student.<sup>14</sup> From these reports, *The Children's Charter*, a document acknowledging the rights of children, was created. President Hoover recognized the responsibility of providing for the nation's children, writing, "Fathers and mothers, doctors and teachers, the churches and the lay organizations, the officers of government in the states and counties and towns, all have one common obligation—to advance these plans of better life for the children." The charter pledged, among other duties, to protect children's health "from birth through adolescence."<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the Great Depression (1929–1939), coupled with the involvement of the United States in World War II (1941–1945), made it difficult for the nation to follow through on the promises outlined in the *Charter*.<sup>16</sup> The AAP saw the charter as a "visionary framework" for their mission—and gladly stepped in to help.<sup>17</sup>



Graphic used on the cover of *The Children's Charter*. National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 187089).

11 J. Schuyler Long. "The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection." *American Annals of the Deaf* 76, no. 1 (1931): 1–7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44391018>.

12 Yarrow, "History of U.S. Children's Policy, 1900–Present."

13 Long, "The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection."

14 Long, "The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection."

15 "'The Children's Charter' Recognizing the Rights of Children", April 7, 1931, James P. Goodrich Papers (1877–1941), National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 187089), <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/187089?objectPage=3>.

16 "The Story of the White House Conferences on Children and Youth."

17 Alyson Sulaski Wyckoff, "Preface," *90 Years of Caring for Children* (Itasca: American Academy of Pediatrics. 2020): ii.

## American Academy of Pediatrics' Study of Child Health Services (1945)

"How to make good medical care available to all infants and children, no matter where they live or what their circumstances, is the number one health problem of this country."

—*The Road Ahead to Better Child Health* (1948), Committee for the Improvement of Child Health, American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>18</sup>

In late 1944, a group of pediatricians met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and decided that "real advancement in child care" hinged on the leadership of the physicians who administered the care. In other words, physicians were responsible for providing better care to children.<sup>19</sup> Then, in 1945, the AAP launched its own survey that built on the work of the Progressive Era and the White House Conferences and would guide much of the organization's future work: a Study of Child Health Services.<sup>20</sup> While a study to measure children's access to health care was of concern to the AAP from the year it was founded, there was a renewed interest in pursuing this topic after World War II because of the high number of young adults who had been declared "unfit" for military service due to their health. The AAP wondered whether the health conditions that disqualified so many from serving their country were preventable—and whether their being deemed unfit was evidence for the failure of the health care system in the United States.<sup>21</sup>

The Study of Child Health Services, which aimed to assess the amount, distribution, and quality of child health services across the nation, was officially initiated in 1945 and lasted three years. It was spearheaded by the AAP, with cooperation from the United States Public Health Service and the United States Children's Bureau. The study focused

on four major areas: pediatric education, distribution, qualification, and activities of professional medical personnel.<sup>22</sup> It required 160 field staff and cost \$1 million (about \$17 million today) to fund. Surveys were distributed to 3,500 pediatricians, 75,000 general practitioners, 66,000 dentists in private practice, 5,500 U.S. hospitals and county health agencies, and 70 medical schools.<sup>23</sup>

The findings highlighted one major shortcoming: limited access to specialized pediatric care. Specifically, the study found that:

- › Three-fourths of the private care given to children was provided by general practitioners, not pediatricians, who did not have the same training and had very little time for preventive measures such as routine health exams, immunization, feeding advice, etc.
- › Pediatricians were more accessible in metropolitan areas than in rural areas. Children who lived in or near cities received 50% more care than those in more isolated areas.
- › Three-fourths of pediatricians practiced in cities with populations of 50,000 people or more. Over half were in communities with medical schools. One-third of all pediatricians practiced in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania.<sup>24</sup>

The AAP recognized its responsibility to address the study's findings and began by assigning tasks to its existing committees. For example, to help address the finding that many general practitioners (not always pediatricians) treated children, the Committee on Immunization and Therapeutic Procedures and the Committee on Fetus and Newborn were tasked with revising manuals for distribution to all physicians who care for children.<sup>25</sup> This act emphasized the importance for all physicians treating children to follow the same guidelines regardless of specialty. Since smaller communities were found to have access to fewer pediatricians, the AAP asked the Committee on Geographical Distribution of Pediatricians to encourage more pediatricians to move to those smaller communities where the need was greater.<sup>26</sup> In these ways, the study helped improve health care for children.<sup>27</sup>

18 Committee for the Improvement of Child Health, American Academy of Pediatrics, *The Road Ahead for Better Child Health* (Philadelphia: Pickering Press, 1948), 3.

19 Committee for the Study of Child Health Services, *Child Health Services and Pediatric Education*, vii.

20 Also known as the *Survey of Child Health Services* in some publications.

21 Committee for the Study of Child Health Services, American Academy of Pediatrics, *Child Health Services and Pediatric Education* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1949), xiii.

22 Howard A. Pearson, "The Ever-Changing Content of *Pediatrics* Over Fifty Years," *Pediatrics* 102, 1 (1998): 169. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.102.S1.168>.

23 Alyson Sulaski Wyckoff, "Amid war in 1940s, AAP extended influence, undertook major child health study," *90 Years of Caring for Children* (Itasca: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2020), 7.

24 Sulaski Wyckoff, "Amid war in 1940s," 7.

25 Beaven, Paul W. "The Weapon of Truth: The Influence of the Study of Child Health Services Conducted in 1946-1948," *Pediatrics* 14, 1 (July 1954): 74. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.14.1.64>.

26 Beaven, "The Weapon of Truth," 74.

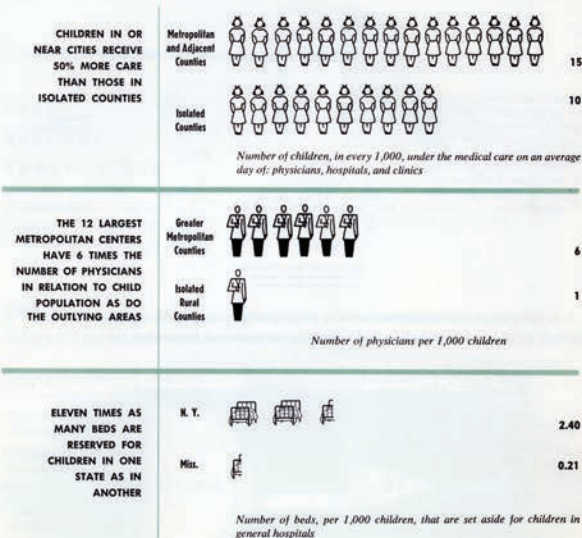
27 Pearson, "The Ever-Changing Content of *Pediatrics* Over Fifty Years," 169.



## THE NEEDS: 2. BETTER DISTRIBUTION

### Second: Complete medical care is not available to all children

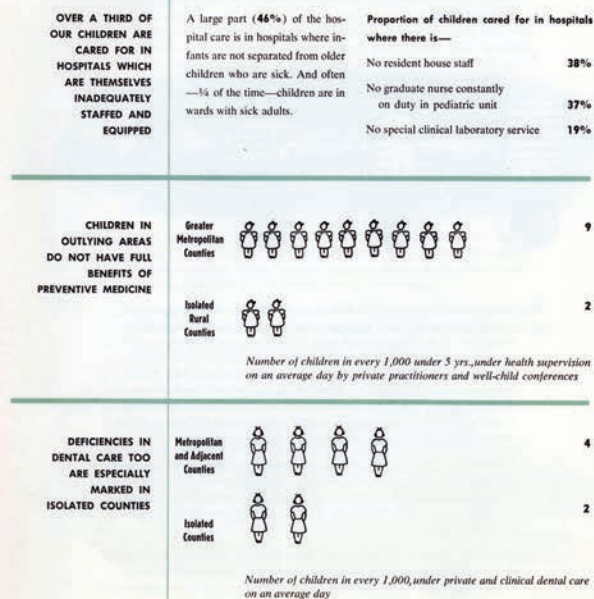
There are 36,000,000 children under 15 years of age in the United States. Thirteen million children, a third of the total, live in isolated counties.



## OF SERVICES FOR CHILD CARE

Children in some areas receive only a fraction of medical care rendered to children in other areas.

They are handicapped particularly in specialist care, clinic care and the highly skilled diagnostic and treatment services.



Spread from *The Road Ahead for Better Child Health*, a summary of the Study of Child Health Services conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics, pages 10-11, 1948. American Academy of Pediatrics. Copyright AAP. Used with permission.

## Conclusion

By the early twentieth century, people in the United States understood that children had a right to quality health care and recognized that the government shared the responsibility to provide it with the American people. The nation made many efforts to improve children's lives and made some progress, but such a monumental task required the help of a specialized organization dedicated to the cause: the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The Study of Child Health Services provided a solid foundation for the AAP. Since then, the AAP has remained firm in its belief that children have a right to quality health care. Over the last century, it has been a fierce advocate for children, responsible for improving children's health and well-being in many ways. For example, the AAP was instrumental in the passage of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act (1970); was vital in the development of the Consumer Product Safety Commission; has spoken up on topics such as standards for federally funded daycare

programs, adoption, environmental health, toy and product safety, firearm safety, car seat safety, corporal punishment, preventive care, immunization, mental health, safe sleep and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and so much more.<sup>28</sup>

For the next century—and perhaps, longer—the American Academy of Pediatrics will remain at the forefront of child advocacy and be, as their motto states, “dedicated to the health of all children.”

### Did You Know?

The American Academy of Pediatrics has an archive! Check out the Gartner Pediatric History Center at [aap.org/en/about-the-aap/gartner-pediatric-history-center/](http://aap.org/en/about-the-aap/gartner-pediatric-history-center/).

28 American Academy of Pediatrics, “50 Years of Child Advocacy: American Academy of Pediatrics, 1930-1980,” 5.

## Interested in learning more about the people and topics covered in this article?

Check out these resources:

*Children in Progressive-Era America*, Digital Public Library of America

[dp.la/exhibitions/children-progressive-era](https://dp.la/exhibitions/children-progressive-era)

Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[acf.hhs.gov/cb](https://acf.hhs.gov/cb)

"The Children's Charter," National Archives and Records Administration

[catalog.archives.gov/id/187089?objectPage=5](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/187089?objectPage=5)

Julia Clifford Lathrop (1858–1932), Virginia Commonwealth University

[socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/federal/lathrop-julia-clifford/](https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/federal/lathrop-julia-clifford/)

Martha May Eliot, MD (1891–1978), National Institutes of Health

[cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography\\_99.html](https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography_99.html)

National Child Labor Committee Collection, Library of Congress

[loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/](https://loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/)

The Sheppard-Towner Act (1921), American Public Health Association

[ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.57.6.1034](https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.57.6.1034)

*Standards of Child Welfare: A Report of the Children's Bureau of Conferences May and June 1919*, U.S. Department of Labor

[archive.org/details/standardsofchild00unit/page/n5/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/standardsofchild00unit/page/n5/mode/2up)

Video, *Justice, Not Pity: Julia Lathrop, First Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau*, Library of Congress

[loc.gov/item/2021687867/](https://loc.gov/item/2021687867/)

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# Jewish Americans: Securing Rights and Responsibility to Others

**JULIA HUSTON NGUYEN, Senior Program Officer, National Endowment for the Humanities**

Americans have fundamental rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, yet access to those rights by members of minoritized groups has been uneven. Jewish Americans have, at times, enjoyed religious, political, and civil rights. At other times, they have had to push for equal treatment. Either way, Jewish Americans have demonstrated that exercising rights also carries the responsibility to care for others in order to create a more perfect union.

## Jewish People in Early America

Although Americans often think of their early history in terms of the Pilgrims, Puritans, and other Christian settlers who came to North America in search of religious freedom, the religious history of the United States is considerably more complicated. Since the early decades of European settlement in what would become the United States, Jewish residents have been an integral part of the struggles to make the United States live up to its founding ideals and extend Constitutional rights to all.

Jews originally settled in Brazil to escape the Portuguese Inquisition, which began in 1536. Following their expulsion from Brazil, the initial influx of Jewish immigrants to what would become the United States was granted permission by the Dutch to settle in the New Netherland colony (an area that extends across present-day New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Connecticut, and Delaware) in 1655. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, congregations grew steadily in New York; Newport, Rhode Island; Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and other colonial cities. Jewish colonists, however, faced antisemitism (hostility or discrimination against Jewish people on religious, ethnic, or racial grounds) that limited their ability to vote, hold office, practice law, and gain citizenship. These restrictions varied by colony.<sup>1</sup>

Restrictions on political activity continued into the Revolutionary era. In Massachusetts, for example, the 1780 state constitution required officeholders to swear “that I believe the Christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its truth.”<sup>2</sup> Other states had similar requirements. With the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Jewish Americans took a significant step toward equal political rights. Article VI, Clause 3 of the Constitution stipulates that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” Thus, on paper, Jewish citizens could participate in the country’s administration on an equal footing with others. Similarly, the First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” guaranteeing that Jewish Americans (and others) would be neither forced to conform to a state religion nor constrained from practicing their own freely. This freedom of religion provided by the Constitution was in marked contrast to the situation Jewish people faced in many parts of Europe, where they were severely constrained, often confined to specific districts, limited to certain professions, and prohibited from serving in government.

Jewish Americans recognized that the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution were both revolutionary and precarious. In August 1790, newly inaugurated President George Washington visited Newport, Rhode Island. During the visit, Moses Seixas, warden of Congregation Jeshuat Israel and a first-generation Jewish American whose parents immigrated from Portugal, presented an address to the president in which he praised the new government as one that deemed “every one, of whatever Nation, tongue, or language, equal parts of the great governmental Machine.” He contrasted the United States with earlier governments that deprived Jewish residents “of the invaluable rights of free Citizens” and gave thanks “For all the Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal and

1 “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” Online Exhibition, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/>; “Jews in British America,” The American Revolution, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.ouramericanrevolution.org/index.cfm/page/view/p0157>.

2 “Religious Tests and Oaths in State Constitutions, 1776-1784,” Center for the Study of the American Constitution, University of Wisconsin-Madison, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://csac.history.wisc.edu/document-collections/religion-and-the-ratification/religious-test-clause/religious-tests-and-oaths-in-state-constitutions-1776-1784/>.



benign administration.”<sup>3</sup> By addressing Washington, Seixas invoked the protection of the nation’s most prominent leader for these new rights.

Washington assured Seixas that the United States “gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.” He supported religious equality for Jewish citizens as their right, noting that “It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.” Instead, Washington wrote that “all possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship.”<sup>4</sup> Washington’s words established a foundation upon which future generations would build.



The interior of Touro Synagogue, the home of Congregation Jeshuat Israel in Newport, Rhode Island. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (ri0083).

## Rights and Responsibilities in a Changing Nation

While working to secure their own rights, as granted by the U.S. Constitution, many Jewish Americans also recognized it as their responsibility to help others. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Jewish Americans founded numerous benevolent organizations to assist community members in need, providing monetary donations, material aid, education, and moral support.

In 1802, the Hebrew Orphan Society was founded in Charleston, South Carolina, to help widows, orphans, and children living in extreme poverty. Many other Jewish Americans followed suit and established their own charitable organizations. In 1819, Rebecca Gratz founded the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, the first independent organization established by Jewish people to serve Jewish people in Philadelphia. B’nai B’rith, a mutual aid society organized to perform traditional charitable functions such as helping widows and orphans, was founded in New York in 1843. The United Order of True Sisters, the first national Jewish women’s organization conceived as a female counterpart to B’nai B’rith, quickly followed suit in 1846. Collectively, these benevolent groups were part of an effort by Jewish American citizens (often women) to take responsibility for ensuring the well-being of their coreligionists and for helping to build a stronger nation in which care was provided for individuals in need.

Shortly before the American Civil War (1861–1865), a group of New York businessmen, philanthropists, and religious leaders established the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, a civil and political rights organization. Among its goals was to ensure that the civil and religious rights of Jewish people were respected both within the United States and abroad.<sup>5</sup> During the Civil War, political and military leaders initially saw no need to include Jewish chaplains in the Union Army. The first law authorizing chaplains, signed by President Abraham Lincoln on July 22, 1861, stipulated that they must be ordained members of a Christian denomination. The Board of Delegates of American Israelites sprang into action with a publicity campaign to lobby President Lincoln and Congress for a new, more inclusive law. They were successful, and a new law allowing rabbis to be commissioned as chaplains was signed by President Lincoln on July 17, 1862.<sup>6</sup>

During the Vicksburg Campaign in December 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant issued General Orders No. 11, expelling Jewish residents from Grant’s military district in parts of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky, ostensibly for violating the “regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, and also Department orders.”<sup>7</sup> The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, along with representatives of the affected Jewish communities, issued heated protests to federal representatives in Washington, including President Lincoln. Lincoln revoked the order, which had received considerable negative attention in the national press, and Grant later expressed regret for having issued it in the first place. Through these efforts, Jewish Americans stood up in protest when their rights were violated and reversed unjust orders.<sup>8</sup>

3 Seixas’ address can be found under Washington’s response at “From George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, 18 August 1790” Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>.

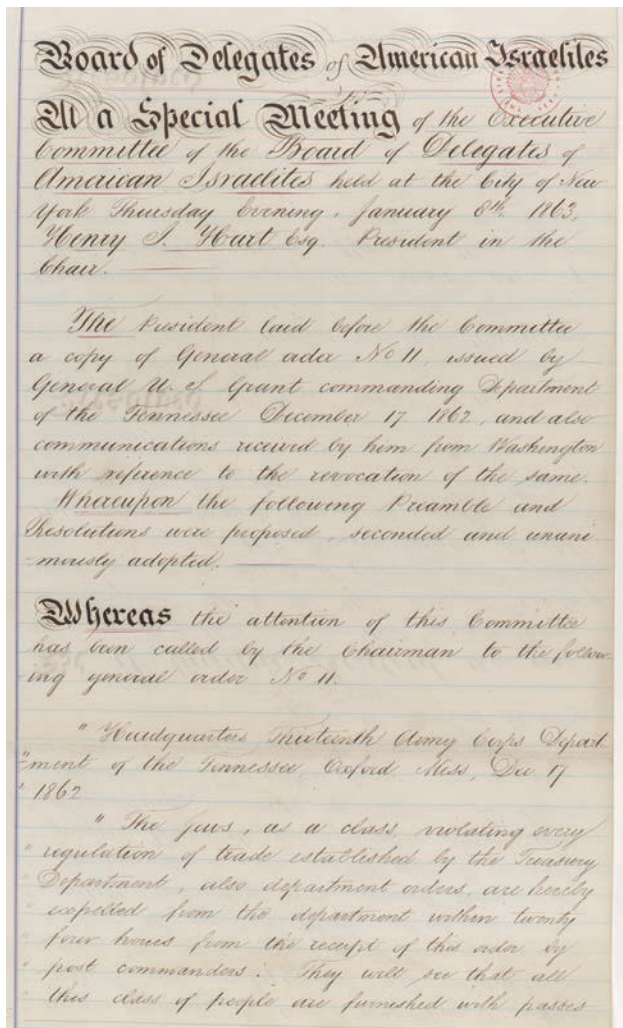
4 “From George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, 18 August 1790,” Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>.

5 “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” Library of Congress.

6 Karen Abbott, “Rabbi-Chaplains of the Civil War,” *The New York Times* [New York, New York], December 11, 2011. <https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/rabbi-chaplains-of-the-civil-war/>.

7 “Ulysses S. Grant and General Orders No. 11,” Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, National Park Service, last updated January 14, 2021, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/ulysses-s-grant-and-general-orders-no-11.htm>.

8 “General Grant’s Notorious Order No. 11,” Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-challenges.html#obj10>.



The Board of Delegates of American Israelites sent these resolutions to President Lincoln protesting General Grant's General Orders No. 11. Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

As Jewish Americans built their lives in the United States in the decades after the Civil War, religious leaders came together to formulate governing principles that would influence their religious lives and civic responsibilities. In 1885, religious leaders adopted the Pittsburgh Platform, which solidified the position of Reform Judaism and called for adherents to adopt a modern practice of their faith. Among its tenets was the belief that "we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society."<sup>9</sup> Although Reform Judaism's guiding principles were revised over the course of the twentieth century, the focus on social justice remained central, with the 1937 Columbus Platform declaring that Judaism "aims at the elimination of

man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife."<sup>10</sup> These tenets helped guide Jewish Americans as they advocated for their rights and the rights of others.

By the early twentieth century, Jewish benevolent organizations noted that both rising antisemitism and crowded conditions in the urban areas of the East Coast posed hardships for Jewish immigrants. To ease the burden on immigrants, these organizations developed an immigrant assistance plan that included guidance through the immigration process and help getting settled in a new location. An important part of the plan was identifying a new entry port to alleviate crowding in places such as New York City. The Jewish Immigrant Information Bureau sought a city where immigrants could be processed quickly, with the hope that they could then proceed to access economic opportunities in the Midwest and West.

In what became known as the Galveston Movement, the Bureau selected the Port of Galveston, Texas. It was an established port with good rail connections and a small but supportive local Jewish community. Between 1907 and 1914, more than 10,000 Jewish immigrants entered the United States through the Port of Galveston. As ships arrived, Rabbi Henry Cohen of Temple B'nai Israel welcomed nearly every immigrant and helped them reach their new homes.



Rabbi Henry Cohen (left, wearing a white hat) meeting the first group of Jewish immigrants in Galveston, July 1, 1907. Archives of Temple B'nai Israel, General Photographs Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio (073-0939).

Many settled in Texas and other parts of the American West—even as far afield as Fargo, North Dakota. Despite conflicts among organizing groups, economic challenges that hindered immigration, and the reluctance of many immigrants to settle in the rural West, the Galveston Movement exemplified one of the ways Jewish Americans

9 "Declaration of Principles: 'The Pittsburgh Platform'—1885," Central Conference of American Rabbis, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbinic-voice/platforms/article-declaration-principles/>.

10 "The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism: 'The Columbus Platform'—1937," Central Conference of American Rabbis, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbinic-voice/platforms/article-guiding-principles-reform-judaism/>.



endeavored to enact what they saw as their responsibility to help others. In this case, it helped Jewish immigrants to exercise their right to immigration and establish a new life in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

# Fighting for the Rights of All Americans

In the twentieth century, Jewish people in the United States continued and intensified their work to secure rights and combat antisemitism. The American Jewish Committee, which concerned itself with developments both in the United States and overseas, was founded in 1906 to “prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews and to alleviate the consequences of persecution.”<sup>12</sup> A few years later, in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith was created to counter rising antisemitism in the United States. This organization was founded in the wake of Leo Frank’s murder conviction in Atlanta, which many considered to be unjust and based primarily on antisemitism. The Anti-Defamation League protested unfair depictions of Jewish people in the media through boycotts, letters of protest, and other means. It also issued informational materials to help non-Jewish Americans learn about Judaism and the threats posed by antisemitism.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the entrenchment of fascism in Europe in the early 1930s, and to protest antisemitic laws and violence perpetrated under Adolf Hitler’s regime, American Jews orchestrated a boycott of German goods. During the 1930s and early 1940s, Jewish individuals and organizations, aware of how dire the situation was becoming for Jewish people in Europe, used petitions, newspaper articles, speeches, meetings with government officials, and rallies and marches to pressure the United States government and the international community to intervene. The American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and others also joined together to monitor the activities of pro-Nazi organizations in the United States. After World War II, Jewish aid organizations helped Jewish refugees resettle in the United States.<sup>14</sup>



This page from a 1940 edition of *The Southern Jewish Weekly* shows how Jewish media outlets tried to publicize the mounting atrocities that were taking place in Europe. The headline article highlights the imprisonment of 30,000 Jews in labor camps in Nazi-occupied Poland. An article in the middle of the left column also calls for a boycott of German-made toys during the holiday season to protest Germany’s treatment of Jews. Chronicling America, Library of Congress.

11 Jane Manaster, “Galveston Movement,” Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, updated May 18, 2016, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/galveston-movement>.

12 “Jewish Committee Meets: National Body to Protest Civil Rights—Officers Elected,” *The New York Times* [New York, New York], November 11, 1907, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1907/11/11/104712077.pdf>.

13 From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America, Timeline 1900s,” Library of Congress, accessed November 15, 2023, [https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/timeline/haven-timeline\\_3.html](https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/timeline/haven-timeline_3.html).

14 “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” Library of Congress; “The United States and the Nazi Threat: 1933–1937,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Museum, updated September 9, 2022, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-nazi-threat-1933-37>; “The United States and the Holocaust, 1942–45,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Museum, updated March 30, 2023, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-holocaust-1942-45>.



During the latter half of the twentieth century, while Jewish Americans persisted in advocating for their own rights, many also actively participated in the campaign to secure civil rights for African Americans. As early as the 1910s, Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald made significant donations to support Booker T. Washington's efforts to build schools for African American children across the South. White participants in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s were disproportionately Jewish, including about half of the students who took part in 1964's Mississippi Freedom Summer.<sup>15</sup> Rabbis Abraham Joshua Heschel, Maurice Davis, and several others marched with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Selma, Alabama, and Rabbi Heschel delivered a eulogy at King's funeral.<sup>16</sup>

Although the involvement of Jewish Americans in the Civil Rights Movement was not without tensions, it was a significant experience for those who took part. For many, the fundamental tenets of the Civil Rights Movement dovetailed with both the recognition of the inherent right to equality and the corresponding responsibility to ensure rights for self and others.

Throughout the history of the United States, Jewish Americans have worked to secure for themselves and their

families the full rights of citizenship in the face of persistent and pervasive antisemitism. At the same time, they recognized a responsibility to care for others and to work for social justice. Through their activism, they have claimed their place as citizens and have helped form our modern nation.

### **EDSITEment Resources for Studying Jewish American History**

Jewish American Keywords for Chronicling America  
[edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/jewish-american-keywords-chronicling-america](https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/jewish-american-keywords-chronicling-america)

Closer Readings Commentary: Jewish American Heritage Month  
[edsitement.neh.gov/closer-readings/jewish-american-heritage-month](https://edsitement.neh.gov/closer-readings/jewish-american-heritage-month)

Teacher's Guide: The History of Antisemitism and the Holocaust  
[edsitement.neh.gov/antisemitism](https://edsitement.neh.gov/antisemitism)

**To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/theme](https://nhd.org/theme).**

15 "The Rosenwald Schools: Progressive Era Philanthropy in the Segregated South (Teaching with Historic Places)," National Park Service, updated September 19, 2023, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-rosenwald-schools-progressive-era-philanthropy-in-the-segregated-south-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>; Judith Rosenbaum, "Freedom Summer: Introductory Essay," Living the Legacy: Civil Rights, Jewish Women's Archive, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/freedom-summer-introductory-essay>.

16 Frye Gaillard, "The Rabbi and Dr. King," Alabama Heritage from the Vault, July 24, 2023, <https://www.alabamaheritage.com/from-the-vault/the-rabbi-and-dr-king>; Jill Weiss Simins, "Walking with Dr. King: The Civil Rights Legacy of Rabbi Maurice Davis," Indiana History Blog, Indiana State Library, January 9, 2019, <https://blog.history.in.gov/walking-with-dr-king-the-civil-rights-legacy-of-rabbi-maurice-davis/>.



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# Exploring Rights and Responsibilities Through Art: A Journey at the National Gallery of Art

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Art has always been a powerful medium for expressing complex ideas, emotions, and societal issues that can work to support and enhance classroom instruction. Art acts as a witness, a bridge that can live across centuries, breaking through language barriers and stirring emotions. It has been used to depict and commemorate pivotal historical events; however, these images are more than mere illustrations. They are interpretations informed by an artist's unique perspective. Art also invites viewers to make their own meaning of what they see. In this way, art can become a generative space for dialogue, engaging different perspectives, uncovering complexity, and fostering curiosity.<sup>1</sup>

Examining works of art—including paintings, drawings, photographs, and three-dimensional objects—can help educators and students foster a deep understanding of environmental ethics, human rights, and the moral obligations we hold toward the world we inhabit. This article examines selected works by Helen West Heller, G. Peter Jemison, and Elizabeth Catlett, who portray an ongoing, deeply human, and complicated relationship between people and the land at key moments in history. These artists speak to broad themes of rights and responsibilities and urge viewers to consider: to whom does the land belong, who has the right to live on and work the land, and who is responsible for caring for the land? At the National Gallery of Art, one can find a treasure trove of works that delve into the complicated relationship between people and the land.<sup>2</sup>

As a tool, art can help us connect the past with the present and has the capacity to evoke powerful responses that can make historical events—or an individual's experience of them—more personal, relatable, and memorable. We hope this article will encourage educators and students to think about the role that works of art can play in supporting National History Day® (NHD) research and presentations, especially as it relates to the theme of *Rights & Responsibilities in History*.

## National Gallery of Art

Founded as a gift to the nation, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., serves as a center of visual art, education, and culture. The museum stewards a collection of more than 150,000 paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, photographs, prints, and drawings that span the history of Western Art and showcase some of the triumphs of human creativity. Open to the public 363 days a year, the National Gallery of Art offers a full spectrum of special exhibitions and public programs free of charge. For more information, visit [nga.gov](https://www.nga.gov).

- 1 For more information about integrating works of art into the curriculum while strengthening your students' critical thinking, check out *Teaching Critical Thinking Through Art* at the National Gallery of Art, a free online course. This five-part, self-paced course provides everything you need to begin creating a culture of critical thinking and collaboration for any classroom, subject, or level. You do not need an art background or museum access to successfully integrate the "Artful Thinking" course materials into your teaching. Learn more at [nga.gov/learn/teachers/online-courses.html](https://www.nga.gov/learn/teachers/online-courses.html).
- 2 For more ideas, visit the lesson unit on People and the Environment at [nga.gov/learn/teachers/lessons-activities/uncovering-america/people-environment.html](https://www.nga.gov/learn/teachers/lessons-activities/uncovering-america/people-environment.html). This lesson is part of *Uncovering America*, an online resource written for K–12 educators. Each module includes introductory essays, downloadable high-resolution image sets featuring background information, essential questions for students, and selected additional resources. Designed to encourage creative, critical, and historical thinking in your students as you examine works of art from the country's creation to the present day.



## Art and Agriculture

Artistic creations have long served as a mirror to society, reflecting the values, beliefs, and moral compass of the time in which they were created. This holds true for depictions of the environment and the people within it.

Helen West Heller's woodcut *Agriculture* (1939) is a striking depiction of people engaged in farming during the Great Depression.<sup>3</sup> Heller was an artist, poet, and activist. During the Great Depression, she was employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and later created a series of woodcuts often printed in *The New York Times*.<sup>4</sup> This allowed Heller to bring her work and her messages about people and their labor to the masses.



Helen West Heller, *Agriculture*, woodcut, 1939, Reba and Dave Williams Collection, Gift of Reba and Dave Williams. National Gallery of Art (2008.115.2454).

This woodcut depicts brickmakers transporting supplies and an individual sowing seeds. Heller's bold lines and patterns create a richly textured and dynamic scene of people at work. Heller wrote to the left of the sower: "Agriculture the most essential vocation." This statement not only emphasizes the importance of agriculture but also shares a powerful phrase speaking to the rights and responsibilities people have toward the environment.

In *Agriculture*, the central figure embodies the rights of farmers to cultivate the land. Agriculture is a vital human

endeavor, a right born out of the need for sustenance and survival. It is a practice that ensures food security for individuals and communities. This right comes with responsibilities. Farmers have the duty to care for the land, preserving its fertility for future generations. Heller's work emphasizes the idea that the right to cultivate the land is inseparable from the responsibility of stewarding it and protecting it from depletion and degradation.

The central figure is portrayed as a steward of the environment, responsible for nurturing the soil and maintaining its health. In addition, the design in the upper-left-hand corner shows a cycle connecting a feather, a cow's head, and the symbols for oxygen and carbon dioxide, showing how these elements are interconnected to the work of the main figure. Heller's work serves as a document of history, not only preserving the struggles and resilience of the American farmer during the Great Depression but also highlighting the impact of agriculture today, which remains an essential occupation in society. Agriculture is not solely an individual pursuit; it is a communal effort that ensures the well-being of society as a whole.

## Environmental Stewardship

Artist G. Peter Jemison examines relationships with the land through starkly different imagery and messages.<sup>5</sup> Jemison, a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, Heron Clan, refers to himself as a "cultural arts worker," a title that encompasses activism, writing, art-making, and curatorial work. As a former chairman of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) committee on burial rules and regulations, fighting for the return of sacred objects, Jemison has actively advocated for Native American rights.<sup>6</sup> He was also a founding member of the Museum of the American Indian in New York City. Jemison's artwork is rooted in Native American beliefs. He is known for his naturalistic paintings with political and social commentary. His work speaks to his relationship with the natural world and reflects Native Americans' continued stewardship of the land and enduring spirit in the face of historical and contemporary challenges.

Jemison uses bright colors and bold lines to create a sense of vibrancy and cultural vitality through images that deviate from real-world visual references and recognizable symbols. *Sentinels (Large Yellow)* features sets of parallel white lines that cover and intersect across a sunny landscape, producing a pattern that resembles those in Seneca beadwork and creating a link between people and the land. Jemison added real leaves that he collected to the bottom of the artwork and then painted over them. The balance of these elements reflects Jemison's embrace of Orenda, a traditional Haudenosaunee belief that every living thing contains a spiritual energy.<sup>7</sup> The painting also reflects the cycle of the seasons.

3 For more information on Heller and her art, visit [americanhistory.si.edu/blog/helen-west-heller](http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/helen-west-heller).

4 For information about the WPA, visit [history.com/topics/great-depression/works-progress-administration](http://history.com/topics/great-depression/works-progress-administration).

5 For more information about G. Peter Jemison, visit [americanindianmagazine.org/story/Peter-Jemison](http://americanindianmagazine.org/story/Peter-Jemison).

6 Learn more about the Haudenosaunee Confederacy at [haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/](http://haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/).

7 For more information on Orenda, visit [ganondagan.org/learn/good-mind](http://ganondagan.org/learn/good-mind).



G. Peter Jemison, *Sentinels (Large Yellow)*, 2006, acrylic, oil, and collage on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Funds from Sharon Percy Rockefeller and Senator John Davison Rockefeller IV. Reproduced with permission by the artist. National Gallery of Art (2022.22.1).

Sunflowers are a prominent symbol in the Seneca creation story; they are the first light. The dried sunflowers show the middle and end of a season. Meanwhile, the bright yellow, active white lines, and green trees in the background allude to a beginning.

Jemison challenges the viewer to reflect on the ongoing significance of Native American culture, identity, and impact on the land. Jemison says his works “fill in the blanks that have been missing.”<sup>8</sup> In doing this, he is combating the erasure of Native American culture and bringing the past into the present. The painting shows how Jemison is reclaiming and shining a light on Native stories, identity, and traditions. His work acts as a call to action to respect, celebrate, and support the preservation of these cultures and environments.

Both Helen West Heller and G. Peter Jemison created compelling artworks that communicate our profound rights and responsibilities to each other and to the environment shared by all. While Heller’s woodcut documents a historical period of hardship and resilience in American agriculture, Jemison’s painting is a call to action for the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities and the responsible stewardship of our land. These two works, although created in different ways and times, demonstrate the enduring power of art to capture history and inspire reflection and action to care for the land.

## Struggle, Land, and History

Elizabeth Catlett, an African American and Mexican American artist, printmaker, and sculptor, used her art to highlight the experiences and challenges faced by Black women in the United States.<sup>9</sup> One of her most well-known works is a series of 15 linocut prints paired with text that she titled *I am the Negro Woman* (1947). In this series, Catlett, the granddaughter of enslaved people, created deeply emotional woodcut images and simple texts, capturing pivotal moments in the history and experiences of African Americans—particularly women—from the era of slavery to the present day. The text reads as follows (each line is the title of a different linocut):

1. I am the Negro Woman
2. I have always worked hard in America
3. In the fields
4. In other folks’ homes
5. I have given the world my songs
6. In Sojourner Truth I fought for the rights of women as well as Negroes
7. In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom
8. In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery
9. My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized
10. I have studied in ever increasing numbers
11. My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land
12. I have special reservations
13. Special houses
14. And a special fear for my loved ones
15. My right is a future of equality with other Americans

8 Jody Graf, G. Peter Jemison, Nora Rodriguez, “Artists Make New York: G. Peter Jemison,” *MoMA Magazine*, March 30, 2022, <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/715#>.

9 For biographical information about Elizabeth Catlett, visit [nmaahc.si.edu/latinx/elizabeth-catlett](http://nmaahc.si.edu/latinx/elizabeth-catlett).



In this series, Catlett uses her own family history as a lens to critically examine slavery and its aftermath. Her work "In the Fields" (1947) highlights the practice and challenges of sharecropping.



Elizabeth Catlett, "In the Fields," 1947, from the series *I am the Negro Woman*, linocut, National Gallery of Art, Reba and Dave Williams Collection, Florian Carr Fund and Gift of the Print Research Foundation. © 2024 Mora-Catlett Family / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. National Gallery of Art (2008.115.35).

Sharecropping began following the end of the Civil War in April 1865, when nearly four million formerly enslaved people were freed with no land, jobs, money, or rights to citizenship. Formerly enslaved African American leaders from across the South asked for, and were loaned, land they could farm as long as they returned a portion of the crop to the land owners. As citizens whose voting rights were circumscribed by discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War, Black sharecroppers did not have a voice to advocate for their rights to equal treatment under

the law. Sharecropping remained in place in the American South until the 1940s as millions of African American people (as well as poor White people) were unable to retreat from the cycle of poverty sharecropping created.

Catlett drew her inspiration for "In the Fields" from original photographs of sharecroppers and their families taken by the photographer and photojournalist Dorothea Lange.<sup>10</sup> Lange had traveled to the American South in 1936 while employed by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) to document life in the area during the Great Depression.<sup>11</sup> The FSA published and exhibited some of Lange's works to inform the public and Congress of the impact of agricultural challenges facing the country.



Dorothea Lange, *Sharecropper's Cabin and Sharecropper's Wife*, 10 Miles South of Jackson, Mississippi, June 1937, gelatin silver print, Reba and Dave Williams Collection, National Gallery of Art, Florian Carr Fund and Gift of the Print Research Foundation. Image credit: © The Dorothea Lange Collection, the Oakland Museum of California, City of Oakland. Gift of Paul S. Taylor. National Gallery of Art (2016.191.6).



Alabama Negro working in field near Eutaw, Alabama, 1936 gelatin silver print, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser. © The Dorothea Lange Collection, the Oakland Museum of California, City of Oakland. Gift of Paul S. Taylor. National Gallery of Art (2016.191.67)

10 Dorothea Lange was a photographer and photojournalist employed by the Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression. She is famous for her work documenting the experiences of sharecroppers, migrant farmers, and later, Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. To learn more and see some of her most famous works, visit [nga.gov/exhibitions/2023/dorothea-lange-seeing-people.html](https://nga.gov/exhibitions/2023/dorothea-lange-seeing-people.html).

11 To see the full collection of Farm Security Administration photographs taken by Lange and other photographers recording American life between 1933 and 1944, go to [loc.gov/collections/fsa-owi-black-and-white-negatives/about-this-collection/](https://loc.gov/collections/fsa-owi-black-and-white-negatives/about-this-collection/).



Lang's photograph of a sharecropper in front of her home and another showing a female sharecropper farming the land give us a shocking view of the extreme poverty that sharecroppers endured. Lange included field notes to accompany her photographs, bringing in the first-hand experience of those she was photographing. These images helped create sympathy for the plight of those most affected by the Depression. By using Lange's well-known images as points of reference for her linocut series, Catlett translated the power of these photographs to create an artistic expression of the life of Black sharecroppers.

Catlett hoped that her art could bring attention to this deeply unjust system and work to bring about change and reform. The final image from the series, along with its accompanying text, yearns for "a future of equality with other Americans." Catlett died in 2012, and her art continues to implore viewers to take responsibility to ensure equal and fair rights for everyone.

## Conclusion: A Continuing Dialogue

The works of Helen West Heller, G. Peter Jamison, and Elizabeth Catlett allow us to draw connections to how history has impacted the complex relationship between people and the land. Each artist approached this theme in ways that

were deeply personal and reflective of their identity, lived experience, and artistic practice.

Through a careful selection of artworks, educators can encourage critical thinking and inspire the next generation to become responsible stewards of the environment. By acknowledging the rights of nature and embracing our responsibilities toward it, we can work toward a more sustainable and harmonious coexistence with the world around us.

There are many ways to continue to explore the connections between art, history, and other curricular topics. The National Gallery of Art offers multi-disciplinary resources for educators and students, online and in print, as well as onsite and online professional development programs for K-12 educators. Visit the National Gallery of Art, Educator Resources at [nga.gov/learn/teachers.html](https://nga.gov/learn/teachers.html). To schedule virtual or in-person tours, please visit [nga.gov/learn/teachers/school-programs.html](https://nga.gov/learn/teachers/school-programs.html).<sup>12</sup>

To access more theme resources, go to [nhd.org/theme](https://nhd.org/theme).

12 Essay © Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

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# Rights and Responsibilities in History

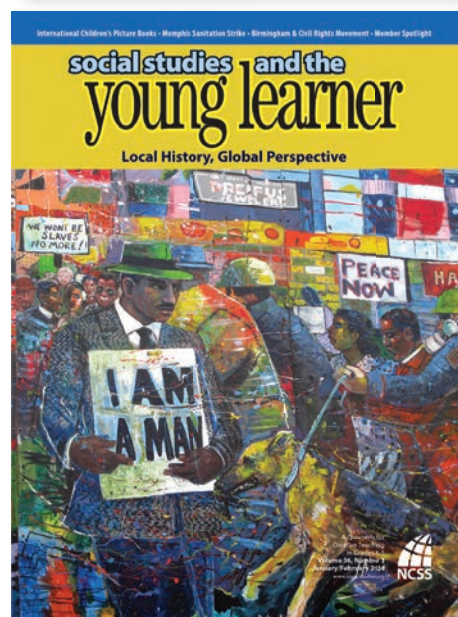
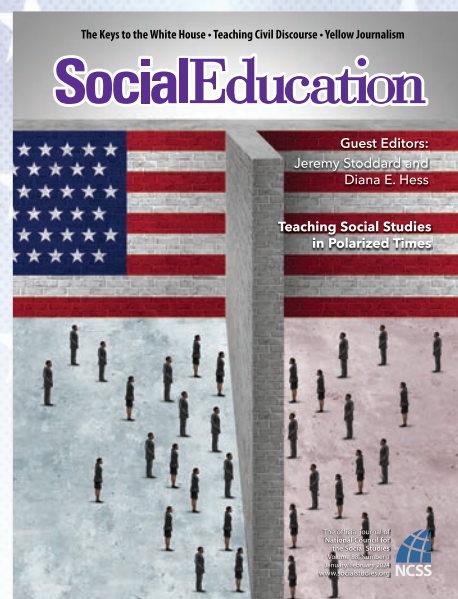
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# A Responsibility to Respond: Japanese Americans Spoke Out When Rights Were Violated

**KRISTEN HAYASHI, Ph.D., Director of Collections Management & Access and Curator, Japanese American National Museum**

**LYNN YAMASAKI, Director of Education, Japanese American National Museum**

During World War II, high school student Frances Sasano wrote an essay while she was incarcerated at Amache concentration camp in Colorado that poignantly described the loss of rights theoretically guaranteed to her by the Constitution of the United States. Sasano was one of over 125,000 Japanese Americans who were removed from the West Coast and unjustly detained. Remarkably, Frances ended her essay with a sense of hope, recognizing her responsibility and that of her American peers to create a more just and equal society, suggesting:

The war will end someday, and perhaps there won't be any more wars. We'll have a chance, all of us. The destiny of America is in our hands too. I wonder if there can be a world or even an American without inequality of races. It won't be now, and maybe not for a long time, but maybe someday; it'll come sooner if everybody puts his heart into it.<sup>1</sup>

This article is an example of the myriad of historical materials that comprise the permanent collection and inspire educational curriculum for virtual and in-person visits at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Los Angeles, California. JANM's collection and educational programming help to advance the museum's mission to promote an understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience. JANM is committed to applying lessons learned from the past to contemporary issues. Being informed about past injustices better prepares us to respond in ways that prevent injustice from happening again. How we respond to the violation of rights and support those who remain vulnerable can make a difference and alter outcomes.

Going beyond merely recounting the stories of one ethnic group, the museum puts the experiences of Japanese Americans in a much larger context, reinserting them into our shared national narrative. The history that JANM shares includes numerous instances when Japanese immigrants and their American-born descendants' rights were violated, as well as many examples of individuals who have taken the responsibility to stand up and assert agency against the violation of those rights. Arguably, one of the most prominent historical examples that underscores the fragility of U.S. democracy and the loss of rights is rooted in World War II when Japanese Americans were removed from the West Coast and incarcerated without due process.

The incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II is a topic that is often of interest to National History Day® (NHD) students. They might learn about this important chapter of U.S. history through the accounts of better-known historical figures, including activist Fred Korematsu, author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, or activist and actor George Takei. Yet, many inspiring changemakers in history are not prominently featured in history books. At JANM, students are encouraged to continue to learn about this time in our country's past and dig deeper to unearth some of the lesser-known human stories associated with this time in U.S. history—a time when many individuals responded to this injustice in their own ways.

JANM's collection also uncovers the stories of these lesser-known—yet equally significant—individuals. Students might find the experiences of individuals such as Frances Sasano, Stanley Hayami, Takashi Hoshizaki, and Miné Okubo relatable and understand that quieter actions are historically significant. Their stories did not always make headlines. Still, they made a lasting impact.

<sup>1</sup> Images of this essay and other items in the Sakamoto-Sasano Family Collection are available through JANM's collection page at: [janm.emuseum.com/groups/sakamoto-sasano-family-collection/results](https://janm.emuseum.com/groups/sakamoto-sasano-family-collection/results).



In JANM's collection, a sampling of some of the voices who felt a responsibility to speak out can be found in the personal diaries, essays, letters, and artwork of Japanese American incarcerated. Some of these voices were adults and others were the age of today's NHD students. Through exploring primary sources in JANM's collection, students can connect to the past in a more intimate way. We hope through this interactive examination of history, students will develop empathy and motivation to take responsibility to speak out when they see rights being violated. The following stories from four of these lesser-known figures shed light on how the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II affected them on a personal level.

## World War II

Along with their ancestors, Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans endured a long history of discrimination and prejudice intended to limit their social mobility. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i, on December 7, 1941, had a profound impact. Wartime hysteria, combined with deep-rooted racial prejudice, generated unfounded suspicion. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This laid the groundwork for the forced removal of over 125,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast by creating a zone from which the U.S. military could exclude anyone it deemed necessary. Once removed from their homes and communities on the West Coast, Japanese and Japanese Americans were

detained in the United States' concentration camps, located in desolate places throughout the interior of the country. For those detained, there was no due process nor legitimate reason, such as cases of espionage or sabotage, for their incarceration. Two-thirds of those incarcerated were U.S. citizens by birth, which should have granted them protection under the U.S. Constitution. Upon learning this history, students (and teachers) may ask: how is it that this massive injustice happened in the United States, a democracy with a constitution that is supposed to protect the rights of the people? What responsibility do we all have to ensure that such massive civil rights violations do not happen again?



Japanese and Japanese Americans from the West Coast arriving at the reception center in Santa Anita, California, in April 1942. Library of Congress (2017744920).

The Japanese American National Museum, as well as scholars of the World War II incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the United States, refer to the ten "War Relocation Centers"—administered by the War Relocation Authority and the locations of civilian incarceration—as America's concentration camps rather than internment camps. Government officials, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt, initially referred to Manzanar and Heart Mountain as "concentration camps." Once the camps were likened to the death camps in Europe, the federal government began to refer to these places euphemistically as "internment camps." Internment, however, is imprecise since it refers to the detention of "civilian enemy nationals." The majority of Japanese and Japanese American incarcerated who were detained among the ten "War Relocation Centers" were U.S. citizens by birth. Using the term "internment camp" for those ten War Relocation Centers, which infers the detention of enemy aliens, is misleading.

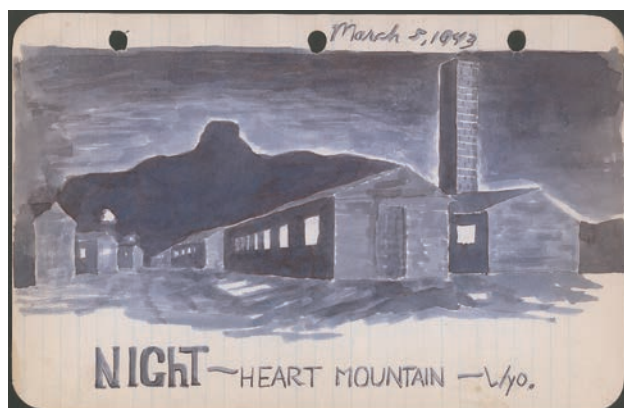
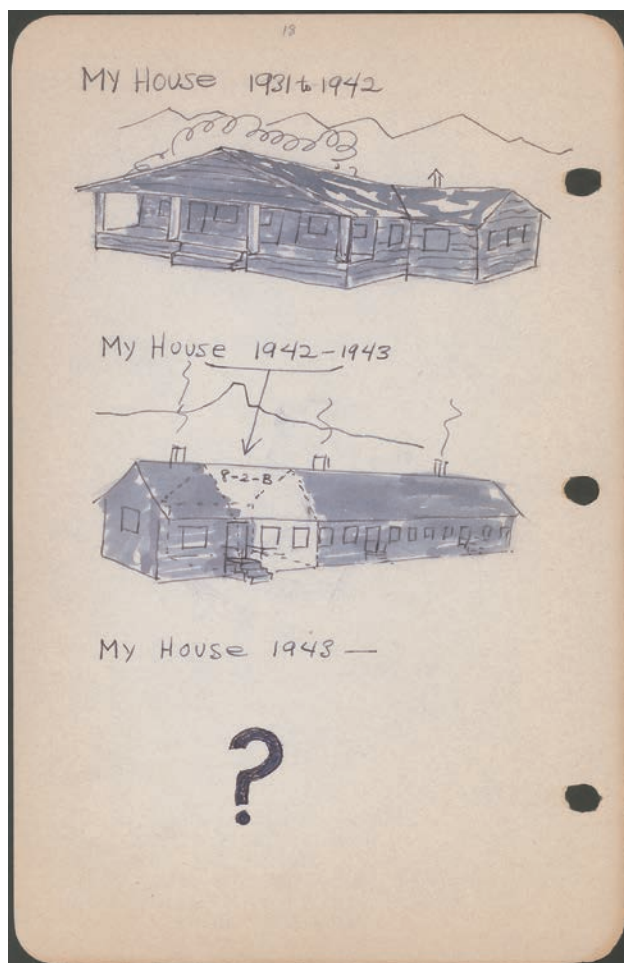
Additionally, the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Army operated camps that detained "enemy aliens," mostly Japanese immigrants, but also Italians and Germans. Japanese immigrants were considered "aliens ineligible for citizenship" because of discriminatory legislation that excluded non-White people from naturalization. "America's concentration camps" is a nuanced term used to describe the camps here in the United States and distinguish them from the concentration or death camps in Europe. For more on terminology, see [nps.gov/tule/learn/education/upload/Power\\_of\\_Words.pdf](https://nps.gov/tule/learn/education/upload/Power_of_Words.pdf).

## STANLEY HAYAMI

In November 1943, high school student Stanley Hayami started keeping a diary documenting daily life and his personal thoughts while he and his family were incarcerated at Heart Mountain concentration camp in Wyoming. As a typical teenager, Stanley's early entries noted his concern about maintaining his grades and included sketches of aspects of daily life. In a doodle, he captured the thrill of listening to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) beat the University of Southern California (USC) in football on the radio from his barracks. He artfully sketched landscapes of Heart Mountain, scenes of his home in Southern California—which he longed for—and fanciful inventions related to science and time travel. He thoughtfully wrestled with ideas of democracy, racial prejudice, and compliance with the impending military draft, all of which profoundly impacted him. His writings provide insights from a human and personal perspective for students researching these broader topics.



Stanley Hayami in his U.S. Army uniform, standing in front of barracks at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, on furlough to visit his family in December 1944. Japanese American National Museum (Gift of Grace S. Koide, 2010.4.15).



Two sketches from Stanley Hayami's diary. On the top a sketch from January 1943, and below that, a drawing of "Night-Heart Mountain-Wyo" from March 5, 1943. Japanese American National Museum (Gift from the Estate of Frank Naoichi and Asano Hayami, parents of Stanley Kunio Hayami, 95.226.1\_16v and 95.226.1\_34r).

In a diary entry from June 1943, in addition to writing about a friend's seventeenth birthday, Stanley shared thoughts about his incarceration. Through writings such as this, he demonstrated the clarity of his awareness of the unconstitutionality of what he was experiencing:

Many people have written of the evacuation—  
have debated about it in heated discussions—  
and have wondered how we feel.

Well, since I am one of those evacuated, although  
I may not be typical, but then who is? I will try to  
set down in writing—what I think about it?

First of all, do I think that it was constitutional?  
No I do not. We did not go through the due  
process of the law. They didn't have any  
evidence.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1944, the U.S. government installed the military draft for Japanese Americans, including those in concentration camps. Stanley complied with the draft despite the fact that his rights as a United States citizen had been unjustly violated. He was inducted into the U.S. Army's 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team in June 1944 and sent overseas to fight in the European Theater. While he left his diary behind with his family, he continued to document his experience through letters to his sister. Tragically, Stanley was killed in action on April 23, 1945, in northern Italy, just before the end of the war in Europe.

The Hayami family donated Stanley's diary, along with dozens of his drawings, letters, and photographs, to JANM's permanent collection in the 1990s. Since his diary is an extraordinary primary source that helps to convey the incarceration experience on such a personal level—one that students and adults can relate to—numerous interpretative materials have been created based on it, including a 360-degree interactive video, entitled: *A Life in Pieces*, which reveals some of Stanley's personal thoughts while he was incarcerated during World War II and makes his drawings come to life.<sup>3</sup>

Many other individuals, despite being incarcerated by the United States government, still felt the responsibility to uphold the democratic values and beliefs that the country was founded upon.

## TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI

In 1942, Takashi Hoshizaki was a high school student living in Los Angeles when he and his family were forced to leave their lives behind. The Hoshizaki family was also incarcerated at Heart Mountain concentration camp in Wyoming. Faced with the same dilemma over military service and the mandatory draft, Takashi began attending meetings of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee. This group agreed to serve their country in the U.S. Army if the federal government released their families. To qualify for membership in the Fair Play Committee, members were required to be loyal United States citizens who would be willing to serve in the military if their rights were restored. They believed in the rights guaranteed to them as U.S. citizens under the Constitution and felt it was important for the government to uphold the guarantees of the Constitution.

Their platform was highly debated among the incarcerated at Heart Mountain, yet they were no less patriotic or loyal than their peers who complied with the military draft. Despite their principled stance, the 63 young men of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee, including Takashi, were put on trial for evading the draft. It was the largest mass trial in Wyoming's history. Convicted of evading the draft, some were sent to Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in Kansas, and others (including Takashi) were sent to McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary in Washington to serve a three-year prison sentence.



63 members of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee at their trial in Wyoming, 1943. Takashi Hoshizaki is on the left side of the photograph in the back row. Japanese American National Museum (Gift of Frank S. Emi, 96.109.27).

<sup>2</sup> Images of Stanley Hayami's diary are available through JANM's collections page at [janm.org/collections/stanley-hayami-diary](http://janm.org/collections/stanley-hayami-diary).

<sup>3</sup> *A Life in Pieces: The Diary and Letters of Stanley Hayami* was created by Nonny de la Peña of Emblematic and Sharon Yamato in collaboration with the Japanese American National Museum. It is viewable at [youtube.com/watch?v=1AwOFx5nzuA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AwOFx5nzuA).



Although President Harry S. Truman officially pardoned the draft resisters after World War II, there has long been a stigma against them, even within the Japanese American community. Many disagreed with and were critical of their position to resist the call to serve their country. Although loyalty to the United States was a crucial part of the group's identity, many Japanese Americans did not view resistance as an act of loyalty. In the present day, this perception of disloyalty has changed, and now some view draft resisters such as Takashi Hoshizaki are recognized as standing up for their civil rights. Still, these stories remain lesser-known.

JANM's permanent collection is insufficient in detailing the story of the Heart Mountain draft resisters in comparison to the existing historical materials that represent the experiences of Japanese Americans who served in the U.S. military during World War II. In 2021, JANM began efforts to remedy this historical gap when the museum partnered with several organizations to conduct a substantive 24-hour interview with 96-year-old Takashi Hoshizaki to capture his experience. In 2024, Takashi Hoshizaki's "StoryFile" interview will be available through JANM's website for use in classrooms worldwide. Using artificial intelligence technology, which scans the hours of his interview, members of the public will be able to ask Takashi's avatar questions such as: "Why did you choose not to comply with the military draft? What was the platform of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee? What do you remember about high school?"<sup>4</sup>

## FRANCES SASANO

While she was a high school student, Frances Sasano was incarcerated with her family from 1942 to 1944. They were first held at a temporary detention center in Southern California and then at the Amache concentration camp in Colorado. During that time, Frances Sasano wrote the essay that is excerpted at the beginning of this article. She opened her piece by thoughtfully, yet critically, reflecting on the failure of democracy that resulted in her incarceration, noting:

Why did this have to happen anyway? Those crazy guard towers make me laugh. No, they don't, they make me hate. I'm no criminal who has to be watched so I won't escape, nor am I a traitor or the enemy who needs to be guarded. I thought I was a free-thinking American with the right of a trial before conviction. Only I can't be convicted because I haven't done anything unworthy of a citizen . . . The only crime was being born Japanese.<sup>5</sup>



Frances Sasano and fellow members of the Amache High School National Honor Society. Japanese American National Museum (gift of Scott and Jennifer Yoshida, 2018.10.55c).

Soon after Frances penned her essay, the National Honor Society student left camp to pursue a college education at Harford Junior College in Connecticut. She went on to become elected to the student council. Frances continued the legacy of the strong women in her family who influenced her. Among them was her aunt, Chiyoko Sakamoto Takahashi, who in 1938 became the first Asian American woman to pass the California Bar Examination. After the war, Chiyoko pursued a career as a civil rights attorney. Though not widely known, Frances' family story gives insight into some of the varied and complicated factors that affected Japanese Americans' response to the violation of their rights. Frances' nephew contributed a significant collection of archival materials to JANM. These items specifically chronicle the lives of the Sakamoto-Sasano family members, including Frances and Chiyoko.

More information about the Sakamoto-Sasano Family Collection at the Japanese American National Museum can be found at [janm.emuseum.com/groups/sakamoto-sasano-family-collection/results](http://janm.emuseum.com/groups/sakamoto-sasano-family-collection/results).

4 Currently, visitors to JANM can interact in our galleries with an avatar of Lawson Sakai, a Japanese American who served in the U.S. Army during World War II.  
5 Essay written by Frances Sasano wrote while at Amache High School. An image of Frances Sasano's essay can be found at [discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2019/11/14/sakamoto-sasano/](http://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2019/11/14/sakamoto-sasano/).

## Post-World War II

By the 1970s, the children of those who experienced forced removal and incarceration were becoming adults and attending colleges and universities. Inspired by numerous social movements of the 1960s, they began to take on the responsibility to address injustice by organizing and being the driving force behind the Redress Movement, efforts calling for the U.S. government to acknowledge and apologize for violations of civil rights.

The call for reparations began in the 1970s and eventually gained support in Congress. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), a bipartisan federal commission formed to review and study Executive Order 9066 and its impact. In 1981, the CWRIC heard the testimonies of Japanese Americans from across the country, many of whom spoke in public for the first time about incarceration during World War II. For many, speaking in public about such a traumatic experience took great courage and could be viewed as an example of former incarcerated feeling a responsibility to speak out and testify to bring attention to this historical wrong. Recognizing the historic nature of these hearings, two organizations: Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCRR, then known as the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations)<sup>6</sup> and Visual Communications (VC), collaborated to document the Los Angeles hearings to create a historical record.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the findings and recommendations of the Commission, in 1988, over four decades after World War II incarceration, the United States government officially apologized with the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.<sup>8</sup> An apology letter along with redress of \$20,000 was given to every surviving Japanese American impacted by the forced removal and incarceration. The CWRIC determined that the incarceration of Japanese Americans was caused by a failure of political leadership, wartime fear and hysteria, and racial prejudice.<sup>9</sup> Obtaining this historic apology was not a simple or easy path. It was a journey that took the voices of many to speak out and create a movement.

## MINÉ OKUBO

Artist Miné Okubo was one of the many former incarcerated who testified in one of the CWRIC hearings that took place in ten cities across the country. Born in 1912, she earned a Master of Fine Arts from the University of California at Berkeley in 1938. In the years before World War II, Okubo's artistic career showed great promise. She worked with master artists Fernand Léger in Europe and Diego Rivera in the United States. The focus of her artistic practice shifted abruptly and became more personal as she and other Japanese Americans faced removal from their communities. Since cameras were initially not allowed, some of JANM's most insightful documentation of life within America's concentration camps includes paintings and drawings that incarcerated created to capture everyday life and the surrounding landscape. Okubo felt a responsibility to document her experiences. With pencil, pen, and paper, she sketched scenes of daily activities related to detention centers in the Bay Area and in Topaz, Utah, where she and her brother were incarcerated. In one instance, she sketched a scene that poignantly captured a long line of Japanese Americans, standing next to their belongings, waiting to board a bus for their forced removal.

Okubo created hundreds of quick sketches, turning the seemingly mundane scenes of everyday life into works of art. Ultimately, these depictions of her fellow incarcerated stuffing mattresses with hay, bathing children in large washtubs, or standing in seemingly endless lines became inspiration for the 198 illustrations and accompanying captions that comprised *Citizen 13660*, a graphic memoir that was the first book-length personal account by a former incarcerated. The book's title alluded to the ironic fact that despite being a United States citizen, Okubo's civil liberties were taken away, and she was reduced to a number by her own government. Published in 1946, *Citizen 13660* provides insight into an injustice that remained a current event, as the last of the concentration camps had not yet closed at the time of publication. Although considered a significant social justice text today, it did not attract much attention until the Redress Movement. *Citizen 13660* gained prominence when Okubo referenced passages from her graphic memoir during her testimony at the New York CWRIC hearing.

Before her passing in 2001, Okubo expressed interest in having the artwork that she created during her incarceration, including the *Citizen 13660* illustrations, become part of JANM's permanent collection. Much of the collection—from her quick sketches to final drawings—is available through JANM's online collections. In 2021, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the original publishing, JANM debuted an exhibition titled *Miné Okubo's Masterpiece: The Art of Citizen 13660*.

6 The term *nikkei* refers to Japanese emigrants and their descendants. More information about this term can be found at [discovernikkei.org/en/about/what-is-nikkei/](https://discovernikkei.org/en/about/what-is-nikkei/).

7 Clips of testimony from the CWRIC hearings can be found at [youtube.com/watch?v=5zTG6om6l0w&t=244s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=5zTG6om6l0w&t=244s).

8 The text of the Civil Liberties Act can be accessed at [govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-102/pdf/STATUTE-102-Pg903.pdf](https://govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-102/pdf/STATUTE-102-Pg903.pdf) and President Ronald Reagan's remarks at the bill signing can be accessed at [reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-signing-bill-providing-restitution-wartime-internment-japanese-american](https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-signing-bill-providing-restitution-wartime-internment-japanese-american).

9 In 1982, the CWRIC's findings were issued in a report titled *Personal Justice Denied*. For more information on redress, see Glen Kitamaya, "Redress Movement," *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, rev. ed. edited by Brian Niiya, Japanese American National Museum (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 342-344.



Illustration from Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* of Japanese Americans being forcibly removed from their homes. Japanese American National Museum (Gift of Miné Okubo Estate, 2007.62.27).

While the exhibition *Miné Okubo's Masterpiece: The Art of Citizen 13660* is no longer on view at JANM, the artwork included in it remains a rich and accessible resource for classroom use. More information about the exhibition can be found on JANM's website at [janm.org/exhibits/mine-okubo-masterpiece/okubo](http://janm.org/exhibits/mine-okubo-masterpiece/okubo).

Digitized images of Okubo's work from JANM's collection are accessible online at [janm.emuseum.com/groups/mine-okubo-collection](http://janm.emuseum.com/groups/mine-okubo-collection).

An accompanying activity booklet created to help young visitors explore some of the main themes of the exhibition is available for download at [janm.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/janm-education-resources-mine-okubos-masterpiece-activity-booklet.pdf](http://janm.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/janm-education-resources-mine-okubos-masterpiece-activity-booklet.pdf).

descent who were incarcerated during World War II, meaning there are over 125,000 individual histories to explore when learning about this time in U.S. history. It is important to spotlight a variety of stories, not only to draw attention to lesser-known moments and figures in history but also to make students realize that they can shape history, too. The examples of high school students Stanley Hayami and Frances Sasano are reminders that young voices are often among the most forward-thinking. Through their respective writings, their belief in democracy and understanding of a collective responsibility to uphold these values is clear. Moreover, their thoughts on rights and responsibilities, albeit from nearly eighty years ago, continue to inspire and prompt questions about what the future holds. JANM believes that students today have the ability to make change and have a responsibility to do so when they see rights being violated—and hope that these stories from the past will provide inspiration.

## Conclusion

JANM's collection and educational programming focus on individuals who may seem ordinary yet have extraordinary stories to share. The four stories shared here are just a sampling. There are over 125,000 individuals of Japanese

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resources,  
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# Transforming Education



Images, L to R: Richard Walker, Matailong Du, Alex Jamison

Change your teaching by expanding perspectives on Native American history and cultures with the museum's education initiative, Native Knowledge 360°. Provide your students with classroom-ready lessons that incorporate Indigenous narratives, and more comprehensive histories.

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- Engage with contemporary and traditional Indigenous cultures
- Learn about Native individuals' contributions to the arts, sciences, and literature, their roles in history, and much more

Lead funding for the Native Knowledge 360° education initiative provided by the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, and Bonnie and Jere Broh-Kahn.

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# The Army Corps of Engineers: Their Responsibility to Protect the Rights of Others On and Off the Battlefield

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When most people think of the U.S. military, images of physical combat and slogans calling those eligible to defend their country emerge. However, the military's work extends far beyond the battlefield. George Washington appointed the first engineer officers of the Army on June 16, 1775, and engineers have been involved in combat since the Revolutionary War. They have played crucial roles in aiding domestic and international communities by preventing devastating epidemics, famines, and natural disasters and providing relief in their aftermath. Off the battlefield, engineers have worked in undertaking public works projects, regulating and directly overseeing environmental hazards, and facilitating international trade.<sup>1</sup> This history provides countless research possibilities for National History Day® (NHD) students, regardless of their historical interests.

The Pritzker Military Museum & Library (PMML) is an archival resource that can help students identify research sources to study the military's actions on and off the battlefield. The PMML's online digital collections ([cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/](https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/)) comprise over 13,000 primary source documents from the late 1700s to the early 2000s, concentrating in the twentieth century. These collections contain sources from or about every significant military conflict since the American Revolution as well as diplomatic, scientific, and other events. They include items such as reports, photographs, letters, maps, physical objects, and illustrations created by those holding a wide range of perspectives.

Students wanting to better understand the U.S. military's roles inside and outside direct combat should consider the history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps has provided a wide range of services since its establishment as a permanent component of the U.S. military in 1802. During times of peace, its work—ranging from land surveying and development to large-scale public construction projects to providing disaster relief aid—has been integral to safe and effective industrialization at home and abroad. In times of war, however, emergency infrastructure projects such as constructing railways, bridges, and military bases have been its primary focus.<sup>2</sup> Exploring the Corps offers a variety of possible NHD topics for students interested in the military, technology, or engineering.

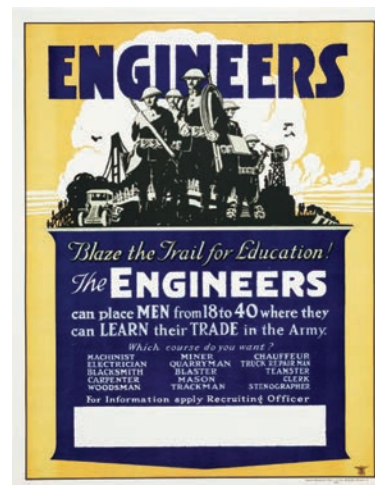
## World War I

During World War I, the Army Corps of Engineers' wartime involvement reached unprecedented levels. In this conflict, the engineers needed to innovate to transport, feed, and support over two million American servicemembers thousands of miles from home. Their tasks ranged from building railways, ports, barracks, and hospitals, to creating maps. The sheer size of the task required the recruitment of servicemembers with specialized skill sets.<sup>3</sup>

1 "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A Brief History," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Brief-History-of-the-Corps/>.

2 "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A Brief History."

3 "Army Engineers in the Great War," virtual exhibit, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Exhibits/World-War-One/WWI-Overview/>.



World War I recruitment posters for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, c.1914–1919. Pritzker Military Museum & Library (left: 321432, center: 321165, right: 320066).

## ADVERTISEMENTS

Looking at the resources contained in the PMML collections, we find a series of recruitment ads aimed specifically at convincing eligible members to enlist in the Corps during World War I. These ads offer a glimpse into the minds of military leaders as they anticipated wartime needs and considered what groups of individuals would be best qualified to shoulder which responsibilities within a military context.

One titled “U.S. Army Engineers for Engineering” takes great pains to show members engaged in highly skilled engineering tasks. Beyond their uniforms and a large steamship in the background, nothing in the image indicates any form of physical combat.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, another bears the slogan, “First in Emergencies,” and portrays an experience that appears to be almost entirely the opposite. Here, a soldier carrying a weapon is shown running alongside newly constructed railroad tracks in front of a large group of other soldiers.<sup>5</sup> Finally, a third calls on potential recruits to “Blaze the Trail for Education!” Accompanying this headline, the image at the top shows engineers in uniforms holding various tools while physical combat occurs in the background. In the lower half, men between the ages of 18 and 40 are explicitly invited to “learn their trade in the Army” by enlisting in the Corps and selecting one of the 15 engineering specialties advertised.<sup>6</sup>

These advertisements seem to target decidedly different groups. Teachers can use these recruitment posters to prompt discussions with students about history and media literacy. How do these posters reflect the historical context

in which they were created? Why would the military take this approach to recruitment? Which audiences might have been compelled by which advertisements and why? How do these slogans and their corresponding images differ from those used to recruit soldiers into other branches? How do they engage in a discussion of rights and responsibilities? Are citizens responsible for serving their nation in a time of war? What rights do citizens have to choose how they serve? What do they indicate about the factors that may have motivated recruits to join the Corps?

## ARTIFACTS AND OBJECTS

To consider the lived experience of wartime, incorporating physical objects can enrich student research. By integrating artifacts—such as tools used in combat or daily life—students can establish a tangible link to the era, deepening their understanding. These objects not only enhance historical analysis but also offer a distinctive perspective on how physical objects manifested rights and responsibilities during wartime. Objects such as the Creagh-Osborne Marching Compass highlight the resources available to members, reflect the kind of work they did, and emphasize the significance of these technologies to the war effort.

Examining one of the compasses that was part of the standard-issue uniform for Corps members during World War I provides a depiction of one fragment of Corps members’ wartime work.<sup>7</sup> Ask students: What was the compass used for? How did it aid Corps members in their duties? How does it reflect the skills and responsibilities expected of Corps members during World War I?

4 U.S. Army Engineers for Engineering: *Join the Engineers*, poster, c.1914–1918, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (321432), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll2/id/694/rec/83>.

5 Dannenberg, *First in Emergencies: Join U.S. Engineers*, poster, c.1919, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (321165), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll2/id/776/rec/1>.

6 *Engineers Blaze the Trail for Education! . . .*, poster, c.1914–1918, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (320066), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll2/id/734/rec/85>.

7 Creagh-Osborne Marching Compass, 1914–1918. WWI Hunter Collection, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (850821), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll4/id/820/rec/54>.





Creagh-Osborne Marching Compass, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (850821).

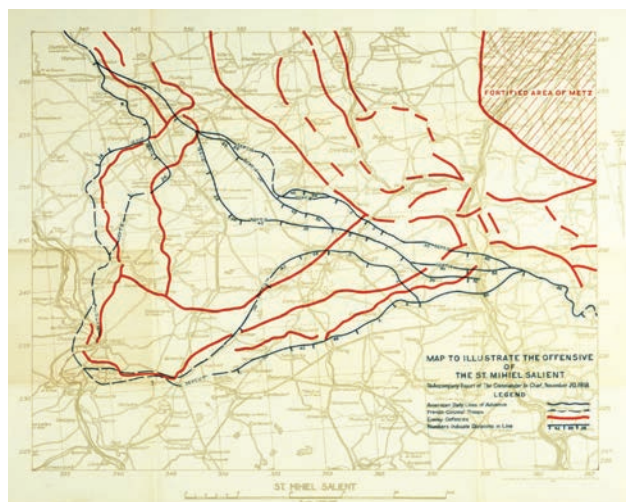
## MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

Adding to a depiction of Corps members' World War I experience is consideration of the critical role they played (and continue to play) in designing and planning military strategies in light of the terrain and the technologies and resources available, as well as in preparing reports on recent actions. In doing this work, they produced numerous surveys and diagrams. These took many forms and served a wide range of functions. Two of those accessible through PMML help to illustrate this.

The *Map of the St. Mihiel Offensive* from 1918 was created to accompany a report on that offensive in France.<sup>8</sup> It overlays a diagram of American and French troops' lines of advance

(for each day of the offensive) and "enemy" lines of defense on top of a detailed map of the region. A second, from 1919, diagrams the position of military units near Montabaur, Germany. It details, down to the yard, where each company will be positioned but depicts only the most vital topological features.<sup>9</sup>

Students can use these sources to pair with written accounts of the precise paths and strategies used on a given offensive. As one of the Corps' most central tasks, they afford a deeper understanding of how and for what audiences the surveys were created and interpreted. What responsibilities do Corps members accept when they use their skills in this manner?



*Map of the St. Mihiel Offensive*, 1918. Pritzker Military Museum & Library (800105009).

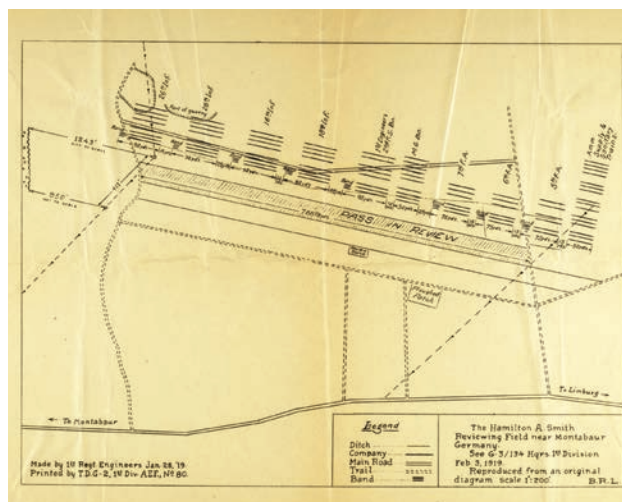


Diagram showing the position of military units near Montabaur, Germany, 1919. Pritzker Military Museum & Library (601006).

- 8 *Map to illustrate the offensive of the St. Mihiel salient*, 29th Engineers, 1918, John G. McDonald Collection, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (800105009), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll8/id/171/rec/30>.
- 9 *The Hamilton A. Smith Reviewing Field 1:200*, map, Hunter WWI Collection, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (601006), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll8/id/164/rec/280>.

## Non-Combat Roles for the Corps of Engineers

The Corps' peacetime roles in public works projects, technological development, and regulation offer additional avenues of inquiry. Since its earliest days, the Corps' duties included large-scale development projects and emergency relief work at home and abroad. Students can research the Corps' contributions to transportation technology and infrastructure, water management, environmental regulation and enforcement, new mapping techniques and technologies, and the design and construction of scientific laboratories and testing sites.

One of the Corps' most notable roles has been to survey public land. This could include the preparation for repairing or upgrading waterway safety features (locks, dams, levees, and bridges), planning construction projects (monuments and research facilities), and determining aid distribution in the aftermath of natural disasters.<sup>10</sup> These surveys provide highly specific illustrations and data concerning the landscape's natural features (e.g., location, size, nearby human-made structures, and other pertinent traits). Beyond providing vital information, this work encouraged breakthroughs in geographic surveying and environmental protection techniques and technologies.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to surveys created for use in combat, PMML's collections contain several peacetime surveys, which facilitate a deeper understanding of how such studies are conducted, how information is conveyed, and how different groups and individuals can use them. This compels consideration of many questions. By undertaking the mapping of an area unfamiliar to the intended audience, what responsibilities are accepted? To existing residents? To those relying on survey results? How did (and do) choices regarding what to include, exclude, or highlight in survey report materials relate to those responsibilities? How can something seemingly as mundane as a geographic survey infringe on or expand others' rights? Whose voices are eliminated or amplified?

Take, for example, an 1846 *Chart of Green Bay* and the surrounding parts of Michigan and Wisconsin created during the Corps' early decades and within the context of western expansion.<sup>12</sup> Given this historical setting, what information may have been left out? Why? To what effect? Were there Indigenous communities living there who were entirely excluded? What rights may have been abridged, enlarged, or modified in creating this map?



Map of Green Bay in Wisconsin Territory, 1846. Pritzker Military Museum & Library (321265).

10 Todd Shallat, "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in American History," Foreign Policy Research Institute (2010), <https://www.fpri.org/article/2010/08/the-u-s-army-corps-of-engineers-in-american-history/>.

11 "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A Brief History."

12 *Chart of Green Bay*, map, 1846, Pritzker Military Museum & Library (321265), <https://cdm16630.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16630coll8/id/18/rec/173>.

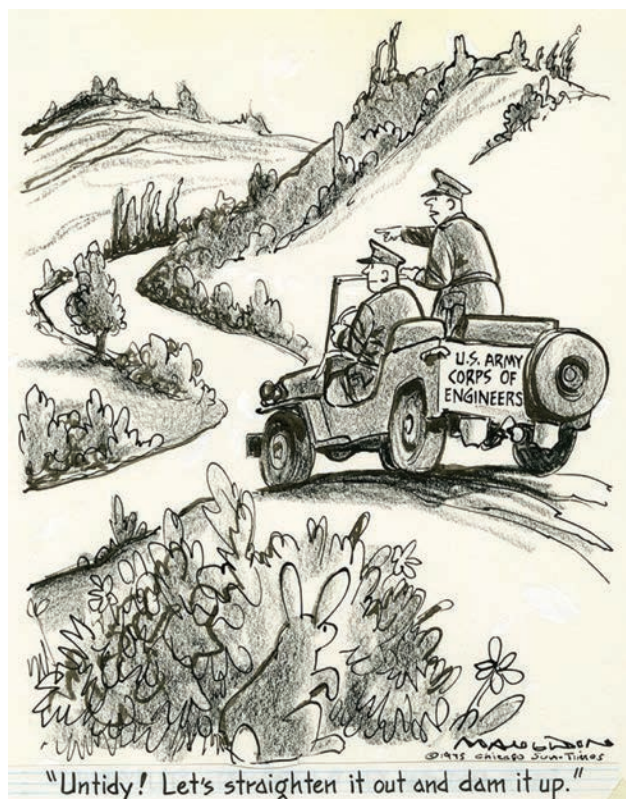


## Development

The impact of the Corps of Engineers' work can be seen across the United States and around the world. The Corps has helped to catapult the United States into its position at the top of the world's power structure, improved safety on waterways, and prevented potentially dire consequences of many disasters. However, this work has had both positive and negative consequences. For example, when waterways are altered by building dams, levees, or bridges to increase navigability and safety, how are surrounding communities affected? What responsibilities is the Corps accepting when

it opts to so drastically alter the natural landscape? Do these changes help or harm nearby residents?

PMML's collections can aid students in examining these actions—even from the perspective of Corps' critics. Consider the two cartoons below from famous cartoonist Bill Mauldin. Both pieces seem to touch on questions of control over land and possible ulterior motives behind this development work. Precisely what is being critiqued and why? Analysis of cartoons can encourage broad, general questions: What can sources such as cartoons contribute to historical research and analysis? What power dynamics are present? What ethical debates are implicated by development work?



Cartoons by Bill Mauldin, published in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, 1975. Pritzker Military Museum & Library (left: 331003, right: 331005).

### Who was Bill Mauldin?

Bill Mauldin (1921–2003) was an editorial cartoonist. He became famous during World War II where he served with the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Italy. He worked in the division's press corps and later for the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes*. There, his comics, featuring the characters of Willie and Joe, were hugely popular among soldiers, even though their criticism of the military often offended high-ranking officers. After the war, he worked as an editorial cartoonist and freelance writer for several major newspapers. The Pritzker Military Museum & Library is the largest repository of Mauldin's work. Consider these multimedia resources from PMML.

- › *Drawn to Combat: Bill Mauldin & the Art of War Exhibit* (virtual tour), [youtube.com/watch?v=h91UlyL6QSg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h91UlyL6QSg)
- › *Bill Mauldin: Shaping Views of American Presidents with Cartoons*, [youtube.com/watch?v=LdpH1muQjwg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdpH1muQjwg)
- › *Drawing Fire: The Editorial Cartoons of Bill Mauldin*, [youtube.com/watch?v=4JA9by5\\_Chg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JA9by5_Chg)



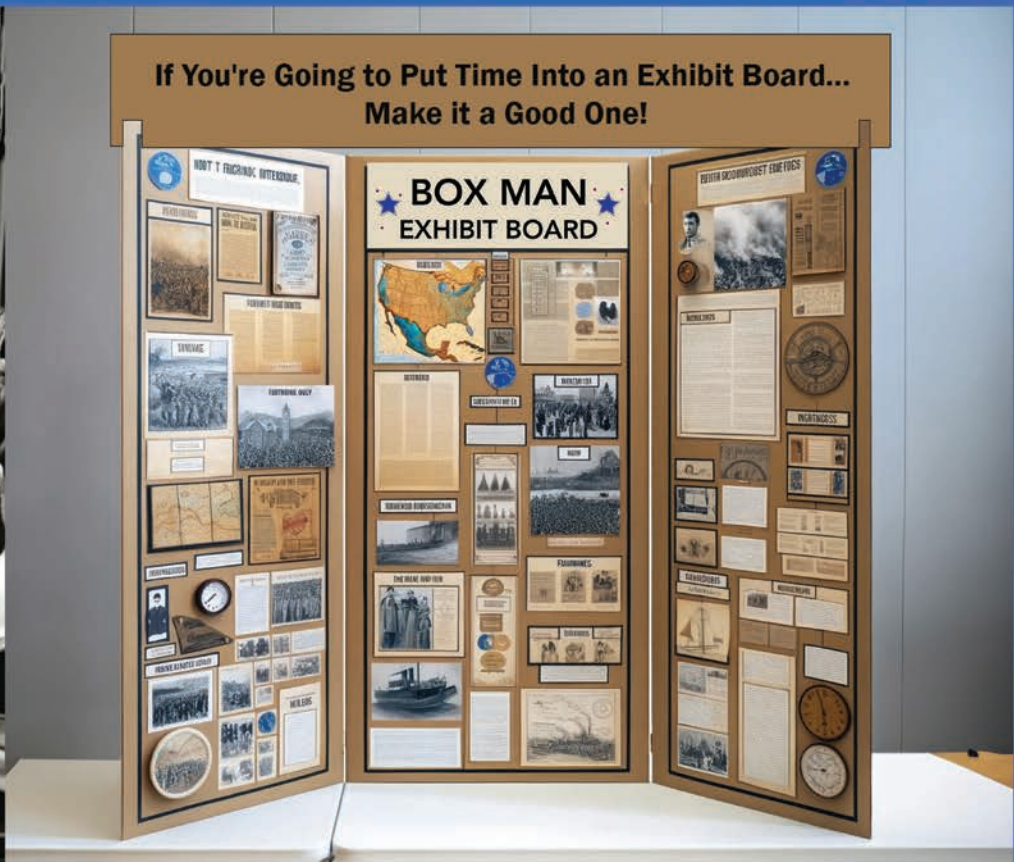
Incorporating resources such as cartoons can also guide more focused analysis. For example, students can refer to the cartoons to explore the Corps' role in environmental regulation. Beginning in the late 1800s, Congress gradually increased the Corps' power to regulate pollution and dumping in America's waterways and passed the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, which expanded its authority over hazardous waste dumping. How might the 1975 cartoons relate to the regulatory rights that the 1972 amendments conferred? How did these cartoons depict the responsibilities of the Corps in enforcing these regulations? What insights do the cartoons provide into public perception of the Corps' role in environmental stewardship?

## Conclusion

Since its formation over two centuries ago, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has fundamentally altered the American landscape and society. It has saved lives and spurred scientific and technological innovation at domestic, international, and global scales in times of both war and peace. In all these efforts, decisions regarding what kinds of rights and whose rights should be prioritized and what responsibilities to accept (and sometimes push for) have been a central element of the story.

*Natasha Holtman contributed to this article.*

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# The Colored Conventions Movement and Rights and Responsibilities in History

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By the time the Civil War began in 1861, approximately 500,000 African Americans had obtained their freedom, whereas four million remained in bondage.<sup>1</sup> However, race-based chattel slavery (when an enslaved person is held as the legal property of another) extended the social and political status of enslavement to free and unfree African Americans alike. While sizable communities of free African Americans were clustered in Northern industrial cities, including Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, members of those communities encountered comparable limitations and obstacles in exercising their civil rights as enslaved Black individuals did. Black Americans were denied access to rights while, at the same time, they were expected to meet the responsibilities of being citizens.

Encoded in law, race-based slavery was the dominant economic and social institution in the South and was legal in most states. Laws explicitly prohibited free and enslaved Black men from voting, denied Black children access to public schools, restricted Black families from residing in neighborhoods of their preference, deprived workers of fair wages for equivalent labor, and hindered their ability to serve as witnesses in court or receive protection from law enforcement officers. In practice, White Americans frequently exhibited hostility toward Black Americans in the

North and South and resisted equal social interactions with Black individuals in public and private settings including streetcars, retail stores, parks, churches, restaurants, and hospitals.

## Mob Violence in Cincinnati

Legal barriers created challenges for free Black citizens in the North. In 1802, Ohio, a free state that shared a border with Kentucky (a slave state), abolished slavery and then immediately passed several oppressive laws to discourage Black settlers. Despite the laws, many Black people moved to Cincinnati in the early nineteenth century. An 1829 census noted that ten percent of Cincinnati's population were "blacks and mulattoes."<sup>2</sup> These Black citizens could not exercise their right to vote, hold political office, or serve in the militia. Following a newspaper article stating that the Black Laws would be rigorously enforced, White mobs violently attacked Black residents, creating the "Riot of 1829."<sup>3</sup> Historian Carter G. Woodson described this event years later in the *Journal of Negro History*, stating, "bands of ruffians held sway in [Cincinnati] for three days, as the police were unable or unwilling to restore order. Negroes were insulted on the streets, attacked in their homes, and

1 E. Hergesheimer, *Map showing the distribution of the ... Compiled from the census of 1860*, map, 1861, Library of Congress (99447026), <https://loc.gov/item/99447026>.

2 Richard C. Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800–1830," *The Journal of Negro History*, 39, no 1, January 1954: 44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2715644>. Today, both of these terms are out-of-use. Both the Associated Press and the *Chicago Manual of Style* capitalize the word "Black" when it is used in the context of race or culture. The term "mulatto" is recognized as an offensive term. It is more appropriate to use the term biracial (if a person has ancestry from two racial groups), multi-racial, mixed-race, or multi-ethnic. To learn more, see "Racial Category Terms," University of Wisconsin-Madison, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://raceandpedagogy.ssc.wisc.edu/getting-started/terminology/>.

3 While the term "riot" or "race riot" was common at the time, the event can be more correctly described as an angry mob attacking Black residents.

even killed.”<sup>4</sup> Black Americans had no protection under the law. Black Ohioans were killed, their homes and businesses destroyed, and nothing was done to protect them or stop this mob violence.

Fearing that there would never be justice or civil rights protection, Black people explored the possibility of migration to a place where they could raise their families without fear. Canada was an option for several reasons. Canada, a British colony at the time, is the closest northern neighbor of the United States, and both countries share the same or similar language, culture, and religious practices. Moving to Canada, therefore, would be much easier than moving to Mexico or a Caribbean country such as Jamaica or Haiti.

To learn more about the 1829 violent attacks in Cincinnati, visit

- › “The Cincinnati Race Riot of 1841,” CLIO [theclio.com/entry/13933](https://theclio.com/entry/13933)
- › “Cincinnati Riots of 1829,” BlackPast [blackpast.org/african-american-history/cincinnati-riots-1829/](https://blackpast.org/african-american-history/cincinnati-riots-1829/)
- › “Emergency in Cincinnati,” Colored Conventions Project [coloredconventions.org/first-convention/origins-1830-convention/emergency-in-cincinnati/](https://coloredconventions.org/first-convention/origins-1830-convention/emergency-in-cincinnati/)

## The Long Civil Rights Movement and Civic Action

Other Black people responded to these legal and social inequities in Cincinnati by organizing and launching the Colored Conventions Movement (CCM). The CCM provided an effective mechanism for African Americans to assert their rights as citizens while reminding the United States of its responsibility to fulfill the promises of democracy for

all. The first CCM convention established the groundwork for nineteenth-century Black political organizing, laying the foundation for the long Civil Rights Movement that continues today.

Bishop Richard Allen convened that first meeting of the CCM at the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Allen and a group of Black men and women met to respond to the events in Cincinnati. The mob violence in Ohio was terrible. People were beaten and killed, and their private property and goods were seized by White civilians. However, White mob terror and attacks were common in many other states as well. Allen and his fellow activists knew that a solution for Ohio would also need to be an answer for African Americans across the United States. The 40 delegates at the first meeting, including 22 representing eight states other than Pennsylvania, exercised their right to assemble and petition for a redress of grievances.<sup>5</sup>

Brokering an agreement with the Crown Governor of Canada West, Allen’s emissaries secured the right of legal entry to Canada West for African Americans escaping slavery and, in addition, land for all African American migrants to settle and live in Chatham, Ontario.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, 2,200 African Americans left Ohio and moved to Canada over a period of several years. As a result, Chatham became one of the main ending points of the Underground Railroad.<sup>7</sup>

This initial CCM meeting set some important precedents that were followed at subsequent meetings. More than 200 state and national Colored Conventions were held between 1830 and the 1890s. The conventions followed democratic processes, adhered to parliamentary procedure, hosted public debates, voted on decisions, wrote reports, and met in Black autonomous spaces, including Black churches and Prince Hall lodges. Prince Hall lodges, founded in 1784, are fraternal organizations for African Americans. Because the meetings were held in Black churches and lodges, the delegates could speak freely. The CCM used Black and White newspapers to engage in discourse and share information broadly. African Americans demanded equality before the law and adopted the rhetoric and tools of republican citizenship to organize, petition, protest unfair laws, and create institutions that supported their citizenship goals.

4 Carter G. Woodson, “The Negroes of Cincinnati Prior to the Civil War,” *The Journal of Negro History*, 1 (1916), 6-7. For advice regarding when it is appropriate to use the word “negro,” see the guide provided by the Race and Pedagogy group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison at [raceandpedagogy.ssc.wisc.edu/getting-started/terminology/](https://raceandpedagogy.ssc.wisc.edu/getting-started/terminology/).

5 “The Convention Event,” Colored Conventions Project, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://coloredconventions.org/first-convention/the-convention-event/>.

6 “Black Settlement in Ontario,” Ontario Heritage Trust, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/pages/our-stories/slavery-to-freedom/history/black-settlement-in-ontario>.

7 Nikki Marie Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati’s Black Community, 1802-1868*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005). To learn more about the Underground Railroad and immigration to Canada, see “To Canada and Back Again . . .,” Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/immigration-from-united-states-on-underground-railroad>.





A sketch by artist Theodore Davis of the National Colored Convention, held in Washington, D.C., in 1869. The sketch was published in *Harper's Weekly* on February 6, 1869. Library of Congress (90715756).

Convention attendees and organizers constantly reminded the public that the ideas and principles embedded in the founding documents were the premises on which the American nation was begun and the Black freedom fight was grounded. Thousands of Black people engaged with courts, public education systems, government agencies, churches and other faith-based organizations, private and public sectors, and forums of public discourse to demand change. The conventions provided space for intellectual activism that has continued for many generations.

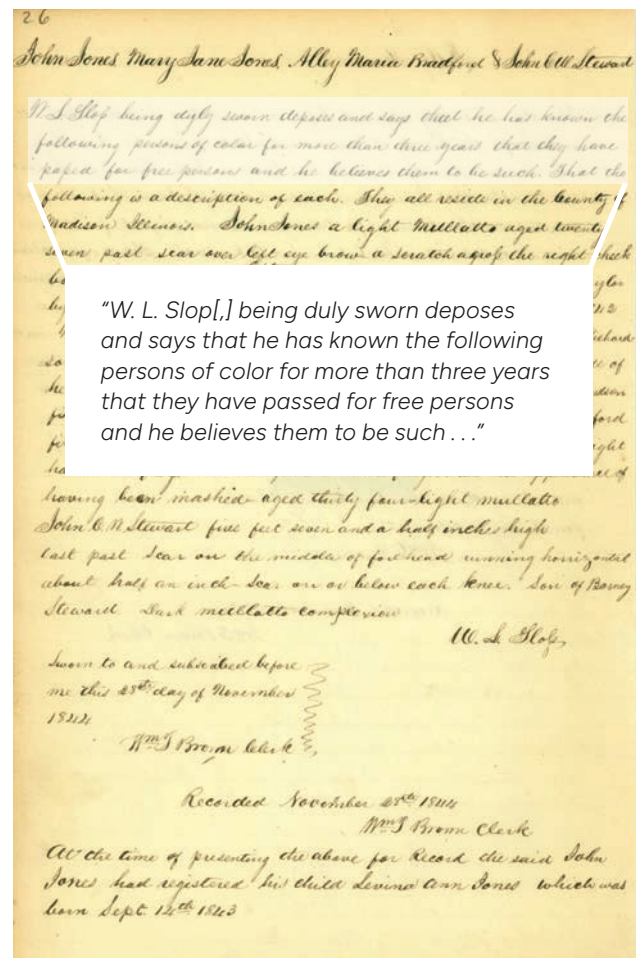
As with many other grassroots efforts, the CCM was decentralized. Organizers worked to abolish slavery and gain access to the ballot box, the jury box, and the witness stand. They fought for access to public education, fair pay for workers, and the right to unionize. As the movement spread, leaders chose the type of convention, the length of meeting time, the location, and the topics to be discussed. Colored Conventions provided the infrastructure, networks, and forums for Black political activism that began in Philadelphia and carried forward through Illinois, California, and across the United States.

## Taking Responsibility to Fight for Rights in Illinois

As the United States expanded westward after the American Revolution, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a legal basis for admitting organized territories into the union, banning slavery in the new territories. The shadow of slavery was present in Illinois, which gained statehood in 1818. Illinois passed several anti-Black laws and legalized "term slavery," which allowed enslavers to bring enslaved people into the state for contracted periods of time. Black people who

wanted to move to Illinois had to pay a fine, or they could be re-enslaved. Free Black people were denied the basic rights of citizenship including suffrage, access to the jury and witness boxes, and freedom of assembly. They did not earn fair wages, nor did they have access to public education for their children, yet they paid taxes to cover the education of White children.

Illinois Servitude and Emancipation records were maintained from 1722 until 1893. Illinois state law required that those wanting to register as free Black people must have a sworn deposition given by a White resident. One example can be found in Slave Emancipation Registry Book #3 of Madison County.



In 1844, John and Mary Jones, Alley Bradford, and John Stewart went before the Madison County Clerk to register as free Black people; a White resident had to give a sworn deposition on their behalf. Slave Emancipation Registry Book #3 1840–1860, Madison County Circuit Clerk Digital Collections.

African Americans in Illinois developed their own businesses, schools, and churches. Inspired by their attendance at an earlier convention and the passage of an 1853 law that barred Black migration into the state, Illinois activists held their first convention in October 1853. Delegates passed resolutions that asserted their citizenship and humanity while challenging oppressive political and social structures. These resolutions opposed emigration and colonization efforts that attempted to remove African Americans from their native soil, supported the establishment of Black-owned farms, backed the training of Black mechanics and business owners, and rejected race-based laws that discriminated against them. Convention delegates also called for organizing Black resources to provide education, economic empowerment, and advocacy.

The Illinois conventions demonstrate the national and local impact of the CCM. Building upon the practices of prior conventions in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York, activists in Illinois participated in and contributed to the “collective experiences where free Blacks reaffirmed for each other their commitment to anti-slavery living by embodying the gender-specific republican virtues and personal traits increasingly understood as essential for demonstrations of political capacity.”<sup>8</sup> Black men and women exercised their rights as citizens through fundraising, lobbying, and supporting national convention aims, even as they faced dissent among local members.

As the Civil War ended, the work of the Illinois conventions began to bear fruit. In 1864, John Jones, a delegate to the CCM in Illinois, declared in his essay, *The Black Laws of Illinois and a Few Reasons Why They Should Be Repealed*, “Fellow citizens, I declare unto you, view it as you may, we are American citizens.”<sup>9</sup> Jones stated Black citizenship as a fact. In February 1865, though Black men still had not been granted the right to vote, they successfully petitioned

the Illinois Republican legislature to end the state’s Black laws. Jones lobbied at the legislative session, presenting a petition signed by 11,000 community members to support the law’s repeal.<sup>10</sup> The Illinois convention is just one example of the coordinated local and national efforts of the Colored Conventions to achieve their rights and press the United States to fulfill its responsibility to all its citizens.

## Expanding the Fight Westward

The African American fight for civil rights in California exemplified the critical role of the CCM. Though the Compromise of 1850 added California to the Union as a free state, California legislators attempted to ban and or expel Black people.<sup>11</sup> After achieving statehood, California passed a series of laws that mirrored the Black Codes of other states. One example is the California Supreme Court decision of *People v. Hall* (1854), which excluded court testimony from Black, Native American, and Chinese people.<sup>12</sup>

Black residents responded by convening California’s first colored convention in Sacramento in November 1855. The convention was dedicated to overturning this law by “petition[ing] the Legislature of California, for a change in the law relating to the testimony of colored people, in the courts of Justice of this State.”<sup>13</sup> The major organizers of the convention (Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, William Newby, David Ruggles, Dennis Carter, J.B. Sanderson, and J. H. Townsend) organized a petition against race-based exclusion a year earlier.<sup>14</sup> These organizers leveraged a mass meeting, garnered wide media coverage and attention, and created a public record allowing organizers to refute racist discourse about their purported civility and political skills while pursuing their political goals.

8 Erica L. Ball, “Performing Politics, Creating Community: Antebellum Black Conventions as Political Rituals,” in *The Colored Conventions Movement Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 154.

9 John Jones, “The Black Laws of Illinois, and a Few Reasons Why They Should Be Repealed,” American Antiquarian Society, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://collections.americanantiquarian.org/blackpublishing/items/show/10875>.

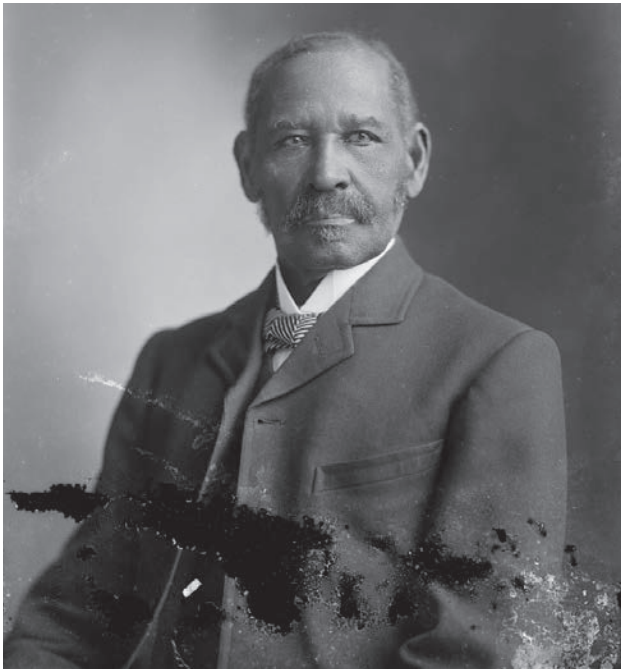
10 “Delegates and Their Families: John Jones,” Colored Conventions Project, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://coloredconventions.org/black-illinois-organizing/delegates/john-jones/>.

11 To learn more about these attempted bans, see Erin Blakemore, “California Once Tried to Ban Black People,” HISTORY®, updated May 8, 2023, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.history.com/news/california-once-tried-to-ban-black-people>; and Greg Nokes, “Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon,” Oregon Encyclopedia, updated April 6, 2023, accessed November 5, 2023, [https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/exclusion\\_laws/](https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/exclusion_laws/).

12 “*People v. Hall* (1854),” Immigration and Ethnic History Society at the University of Texas at Austin, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/people-v-hall/>.

13 “Proceedings of the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California. Held at Sacramento Nov. 20th 21st, and 22d, in the Colored Methodist Church [sic],” Colored Conventions Project Digital Records, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/265>.

14 “Exodus to British Columbia,” Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California, updated 2019, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.aclunc.org/sites/goldchains/explore/mifflin-wistar-gibbs.html>.



Portrait of Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, a Black nineteenth-century civil rights activist in California and organizer of the CCM in California, c.1901–1903. Library of Congress (2016700276).

The California conventions achieved tangible results for the Black community. One outcome of the first convention was the publication in San Francisco of the *Mirror of the Times*, a weekly African American newspaper, likely in 1856. The second California convention in 1856 focused on education, securing the right of testimony in court, and continuing support for the *Mirror of the Times*. Later conventions addressed access to public schools (1857)<sup>15</sup> and desegregation of schools (1865),<sup>16</sup> demands that were predicated on the organizers' intrinsic belief in their rights as citizens as opposed to the denial of their rights based on race. Black Americans embraced the promise embedded in the American Declaration of Independence.<sup>17</sup>

The 1865 convention focused on the right to vote; the preamble outlined the premises of the activists' arguments:

Gentlemen:—The undersigned, citizens of the United States and of the State of California, respectfully present to your honorable bodies, the Senate and House Assembly, this, their petition, and showing for your honorable notice that we are an industrious, moral and law abiding class of citizens, professing an average of education and general intelligence; born upon American soil, and paying taxes yearly upon several MILLION of dollars, and upholding all the institutions of our common country, as recently demonstrated by the employment of two hundred thousand of the negro population in the late great rebellion,—whose courage and loyalty have been testified to by many distinguished commanders, and whose whole record has never been disgraced by a single black traitor. We would most respectfully ask of your honorable bodies, in view of the above multiplied merits, an amendment to the Constitution of the state of California, in Section 1st, Article II, of said Constitution, so that the same may read as hereinafter set forth, to the end that American citizens of *African descent*, and such other persons of African descent as may have provided to become citizens, may be admitted to the rights of Suffrage and Citizenship of the State of California.<sup>18</sup>

The request is clear: amend the California constitution to give suffrage and citizenship to Black people. The convention reminded the legislature that African Americans were intelligent, educated, morally upright, and not traitors to the nation. It emphasized that Black people were taxpayers and deserved birthright citizenship.<sup>19</sup> Strategically dismissing the significance of the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) case and referring to the meritorious service of Black soldiers under “distinguished commanders,” the writers closed their request with irrefutable evidence of their worthiness as citizens.

15 “State Convention of the Colored People of California, San Francisco, October, 1857,” Colored Conventions Project (1857.CA-10.20.SANF), October 20, 1857, <https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/267>.

16 “Proceedings of the California State Convention of the Colored Citizens, Held in Sacramento on the 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th of October, 1865,” Colored Conventions Project (1857.CA-10.20.SANF), 1865, <https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/268>.

17 Paulette Brown-Hinds, “Mirror of the Times Founded 1857,” *Black Voices News*, July 31, 2008, <https://blackvoicenews.com/2008/07/31/mirror-of-the-times-founded-1857/>; editions of the newspaper from 1857 to 1867 can be accessed through *Chronicling America* at [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83027100/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83027100/).

18 “Proceedings of the California State Convention of the Colored Citizens, Held in Sacramento on the 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th of October, 1865,” Colored Conventions Project Digital Records, accessed December 13, 2023, [omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/268](https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/268).

19 Birthright citizenship was a concept available only to White Americans, based on the Naturalization Law of 1790, “A Bill to Establish an Uniform Rule of Naturalization, and Enable Aliens to Hold Lands under Certain Conditions,” National Archives and Records Administration (NAID: 7452136), accessed December 13, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7452136>.



Through the California conventions, Black people fought strategically for aspirational American citizenship. Though it took until 1865, convention organizers celebrated access to the witness box for Black people. Many of their other goals were secured after the conventions ended, including the Civil Rights Act in 1866, which ratified Black citizenship, and the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, which gave Black men the right to vote.<sup>20</sup>

## The Colored Conventions Project

The Colored Conventions Project has identified hundreds of conventions held across the United States and Canada in which thousands of attendees from as far away as Liberia and Jamaica participated. Lasting accomplishments include establishing Talladega College in Alabama and the charter for Howard University School of Law under the leadership of Colored Convention organizer John Mercer Langston. Though the movement subsided in 1900, it gave rise to a number of well-known organizations that focused on specific issues and areas, including the Equal Rights Leagues, the National Colored Teachers Association, which became the American Teachers Association and later merged with the National Education Association in 1963, and organizations such as the NAACP, among whose ranks we find several participants and organizers from colored conventions. The CCM was a rich proving ground for Black activists who used the skills, strategies, and networks they created and sustained over the years to continue their activism, often through single-issue organizations.

*Carol Rudisell and datejie green contributed to this article.*

### Students interested in exploring the Colored Conventions Movement for an NHD project can access the following resources:

- › *Colored Conventions Project*  
[coloredconventions.org/](http://coloredconventions.org/)
- › *The Making of African American Identity*  
National Humanities Center  
[nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm)
- › Online exhibition, *Black Organizing in Pre-Civil War Illinois: Creating Community, Demanding Justice*  
Colored Conventions Project  
[coloredconventions.org/black-illinois-organizing/](http://coloredconventions.org/black-illinois-organizing/)
- › Online exhibition, *The "Conventions" of the Conventions: The Practices of Black Political Citizenship*  
Colored Conventions Project  
[coloredconventions.org/black-political-practices/](http://coloredconventions.org/black-political-practices/)
- › Online exhibition, *Equality Before the Law: California Black Convention Activism, 1855–65*  
Colored Conventions Project  
[coloredconventions.org/california-equality/](http://coloredconventions.org/california-equality/)
- › Online exhibition, *The Meeting that Launched a Movement: The First National Convention*  
Colored Conventions Project  
[coloredconventions.org/first-convention/](http://coloredconventions.org/first-convention/)
- › Podcast, *Gold Chains*, ACLU of Northern California  
"Episode 2: Black Testimony Matters"  
[aclunc.org/sites/goldchains/podcast/transcripts/ep02-transcript.html](http://aclunc.org/sites/goldchains/podcast/transcripts/ep02-transcript.html)

To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/theme](http://nhd.org/theme).

<sup>20</sup> To learn more, about the Civil Rights Act of 1866, visit [constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/civil-rights-act-of-1866-april-9-1866-an-act-to-protect-all-persons-in-the-united-states-in-their-civil-rights-and-furnish-the-means-of-their-vindication](http://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/civil-rights-act-of-1866-april-9-1866-an-act-to-protect-all-persons-in-the-united-states-in-their-civil-rights-and-furnish-the-means-of-their-vindication).

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# Finding Rights and Responsibilities in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

**MICHAEL BIONDO**, Maine South High School, and Director of Teacher Support, *Rethinking the Gilded Age and Progressivisms*

**CRYSTAL JOHNSON**, Chicago History Museum, and Project Co-Director, *Rethinking the Gilded Age and Progressivisms*

The Gilded Age and Progressive Era (1877–1920) are two overlapping time periods in history that are especially rich when pursuing the 2025 National History Day® (NHD) theme *Rights & Responsibilities in History*. Students and teachers find that the era is full of action and intrigue. More significantly, it is also an example of a time when individual people became agents of change. The era reflects modern and relatable societal changes and challenges where people called out injustice and worked for reform.

The Gilded Age began in 1877 as the Reconstruction Period ended. Overwhelmingly, it was a time of industrialization and modernization in society. The period takes its name from Mark Twain, who called it the Gilded Age because while everything looked shiny on the outside, there were many problems under the surface.<sup>1</sup>

The Progressive Era, which is considered to have begun in the 1890s, overlapped the Gilded Age. During this period, reformers from different classes investigated problems and developed and implemented solutions. People, organizations, and governments solved problems, and society *progressed* forward.

Both of these historical eras were times of massive technological, social, and political change. We often see the Gilded Age as an era of problems, with the inevitable problem-solvers emerging in the Progressive Era. However, it took deliberate action by people in both eras to identify the problems and seek possible solutions. Across both, reformers and policymakers took steps to redefine rights and demand responsible action by individuals, corporations, and the government.

In this article, we will delve into the Gilded Age and Progressive Era to demonstrate how students can narrow down a research topic within a vast historical period. This

method is versatile and can be applied to any significant time frame or major event, making it a valuable skill for conducting historical research.

## Step One: Understand the Historical Context

Starting with the big picture—the historical time period of interest—gives students a chance to look broadly at the historical context and discover the many transformational events and people the era contains. In addition to surveying the variety of possible exciting and interesting topics, students can look for ways to understand how and why historians defined the time period as they have. What is it about the era that is distinct? What makes it worthwhile and interesting to research and study?

Naming time periods in history helps to organize topics and to understand the context of events. Periods give order to history and are generally accepted by historians. However, the start and end times for historical periods are not always as clear as we commonly assume. The trends, forces, and perspectives of people sometimes began earlier or ended later than the way we define them.

The Gilded Age and Progressive Era are often studied together because the issues, concerns, and processes at play in the eras overlap. The Gilded Age was a period of industrialization and modernization in society when the nature of work was redefined. New factories in growing cities demanded long hours with little pay. Immigration was at its peak as millions of people came to the United States through Ellis Island on the East Coast, Angel Island on the West Coast, or other immigration centers. Living conditions in major cities such as New York City and Chicago

<sup>1</sup> Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner. *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day*. Hartford: The American Publishing Company, 1902. Library of Congress (24022206). <https://www.loc.gov/item/24022206/>.



were crowded and unhealthy as populations exploded. Tens of thousands of tenements served as homes for the immigrant and working-class populations. At the same time, industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie, in the steel industry, and John D. Rockefeller, in the oil industry, built personal wealth at unprecedented levels. However, they also gave away huge portions of their fortunes to cultural and educational institutions through philanthropy.



Laundry strung across the yard of a tenement apartment building in New York City, c.1900–1910. Library of Congress (2016810247).

Looking at this era with a slightly different lens can help put the people and their decision-making at the center. Cities, though crowded, unsafe, and unsanitary, also became critical centers of trade, culture, and community. Immigrants worked to maintain their cultures and their identities. Individuals and groups fought for fair rules, just wages, and new opportunities through their unions. Marginalized communities organized for safety and security in the face of persistent racial and ethnic tensions.

The Progressive Era presented new ways of thinking about solving society's problems in reaction to many changes in life that emerged during the Gilded Age. However, it took deliberate action by civic groups, private groups, individuals, and the government at all levels to bring about regulation, oversight, and policy that benefited society. Theodore Roosevelt is known as the trust-busting president who also brought consumer reform, with much thanks to Upton Sinclair's muckraking exposé on Chicago's meatpacking district in *The Jungle*. The middle-class residents of

Hull-House, a settlement house in Chicago that served neighborhood migrants, were involved in various social issues of the day. They collected data about the local population for reports and speeches that helped to change social and political policies. One resident, Florence Kelley, worked tirelessly to limit child labor and regulate women's labor.

There were limitations to progress in this era. For example, George Pullman, the developer of the Pullman sleeping car, established a company town near Chicago, Illinois. His intention was to reform and improve the lives of his workers. However, when manufacturing declined, workers' financial needs were not adequately addressed, leading to the 1894 Pullman Strike. Or there is the fact that while women gained the right to vote, many Black women were excluded from the movement and remained disenfranchised. Many issues, such as rights for Indigenous peoples, remained unresolved, persisting throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This era can be investigated as a *Long Gilded Age*, tracing issues such as working conditions, unions, and child labor through 1920. The themes that emerged and became important during the Progressive Era arose earlier than we often consider. The Gilded Age and Progressive Era are sometimes treated separately and sometimes analyzed together in order to analyze cause-and-effect or continuity-and-change relationships. Applying a specific theme, such as *Rights & Responsibilities in History*, and asking questions about how the theme was present during the combined eras can not only help students identify a topic but also make the topic more interesting to study. Applying a theme can help focus students' investigations so that research has more depth. Doing so can also be a way for teachers to focus an instructional unit on the topic, helping to manage and organize important, related trends in the period with a greater general understanding of other issues during the combined era.

## Step Two: Explore Topics Using Rights and Responsibilities

By using the lens of human agency and thinking about how people in the past made decisions (and considering what forces shaped how they made those decisions), the theme of rights and responsibilities becomes essential to understanding the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Doing so calls students and teachers to consider: How did this period reshape the way Americans think about rights? How did ideas about government or individual responsibilities change?

Although the combined historical period is too extensive to be a single NHD topic, it offers a wealth of well-defined topics to engage students in historical inquiry—each of which can be explored by turning to plentiful primary sources. As students consider how to identify a topic within a broader historical period, employing the theme to pose questions can help them narrow their focus and zoom in on

specific topics. Suggestions for applying the theme of *Rights & Responsibilities in History* to identify specific, narrow, and researchable topics within the Gilded Age and Progressive Era follow.

## REDEFINING FREEDOM AND CITIZENSHIP

Who has the right to belong? This was a question people living in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era considered, prompting many groups to advocate for recognition and full citizenship, a status that would afford them both legal rights and social belonging. While reformers worked for expanded voting rights, social and economic justice, and municipal reforms, others argued against broadening the criteria for those who deserved political power and security. With protections in place and their status assured, some people had the freedom to pursue their hopes and dreams. For many groups, citizenship status, with its related protections, was tenuous at best. For others, the possibility of gaining citizenship was often nonexistent or never granted. This era marked a time of ongoing struggle for many.

Students interested in exploring freedom and citizenship topics might consider:

- › John Dewey, Democracy, and Education
- › Eugenics and Rights of People with Disabilities
- › Josephine Dodge and the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage
- › Simon Pokagon and *Red Man's Rebuke*
- › Puerto Rico and the Jones-Shafroth Act
- › Black Women and the Alpha Suffrage Club



Men looking in the storefront window at posted materials at the Headquarters of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1914. Library of Congress (97500067).

## STRIKES, PROTEST, AND DEMANDS FOR RIGHTS AND PROTECTION

How did people fight to get what they needed and to have their rights protected? Standing up for the rights of groups and individuals created unrest and upset the status quo. Organizing helped people with common interests advocate for their views and their needs. Sometimes, this led to public demonstrations and marches—and even violence. New methods of protest and struggle brought added attention to people, groups, and issues. People fought for their rights against established interests and took responsibility for themselves, demanding that the government and wealthy business people take responsibility for societal ills. Some people fought against racial injustice and lynching and called for the government to step in to protect lives and safety.

Students interested in learning more about strikes, protests, and the demands for rights and protection might consider:

- › Ida B. Wells and Anti-Lynching
- › The Pullman Strike and Labor Rights
- › The Immigrants' Protective League
- › Creation of the Juvenile Justice System
- › Japanese-Mexican Labor Association and the Oxnard Strike
- › Grace Abbott and the Right to Childhood
- › Free Speech and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)
- › Margaret Sanger and the Right to Birth Control



Strikers in the foreground looking at Illinois National Guard troops guarding the Arcade Building in Pullman, Chicago, during the 1894 Pullman Strike. Pullman State Historic Site.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY INTO THEIR OWN HANDS AND DEMANDING RESPONSIBLE ACTION

Who has the responsibility to act to protect rights and bring about change? In a period filled with new opportunities for democratic participation, federal, state, and local governments were called to action. Often prompted by ordinary people organizing to fight for their rights, regulations were passed, rules changed, and issues investigated and documented. In short, the people forced action. In some cases, those elected to serve in the government acted. They took responsibility for problems and created possibilities for more citizens. In others, private groups took action to try to correct concerns in society. While significant progress was made in some areas, not every societal need or concern was addressed, and not all reform was completed during this era.

Students interested in responsibility and responsible action might consider:

- › Civil Rights Organizing at the First Mexicanist Congress
- › Prohibition: Personal Liberty or Social Policy?
- › The Chinese Exclusion Act
- › Theodore Roosevelt, Trust-Busting, and Government Oversight
- › Hull-House: Empowering Vulnerable Communities
- › The Dawes Act and Federal Indian Policy
- › A Right to Nature? Establishing the National Parks

## Step Three: Narrowing the Topic and Crafting Researchable Historical Questions

Thinking about the period through the lens of *Rights & Responsibilities in History* will help students identify possible topics of interest that work well for NHD. The next step is to narrow the topic and craft a researchable historical question. This theme encourages students to consider big historical questions, including:

- › Who has rights? Who is excluded? How and why do some groups put limits on the rights of others?
- › How are rights granted or expanded? How are rights restricted?
- › What are the government's responsibilities to the people?

- › What actions do individuals or groups take to claim new or expanded rights?
- › What happens when people disagree about rights and responsibilities? What happens when definitions of rights and responsibilities are in conflict?
- › What forces change in how rights are interpreted in different time periods?

Questions such as these help students think about the theme no matter what era or historical topic they choose. Formulating a strong research question will pave the way toward a thesis that is researchable, arguable, and historically significant. Students must also carefully consider whether the topic will hold their interest over time, have sufficient sources, and be well-suited to the entry category (paper, exhibit, performance, documentary, or website) the student plans to pursue. Narrow topics work well for NHD projects because students can go into more detail demonstrating historical context, multiple perspectives, and change over time. Providing this kind of deeper analysis makes the historical argument more convincing and allows students to answer important questions such as, "So what? Why should we care about this topic?"

## Step Four: Putting It Into Action

What might this look like in a project related to Gilded Age and Progressive Era history? A student who is interested in the experiences of African Americans during this period will uncover stories of hardships, legal segregation, and restrictions on freedoms, but also innumerable examples of advocacy, organizing, and leadership. Theme-based questions can lead students to formulate more specific NHD research questions. For example, the theme question "What actions do individuals or groups take to claim new or expanded rights?" might lead to a research question such as "How did Ida B. Wells use her skills as a journalist to advocate for expanded rights and protections against lynching for African Americans?" This type of question is likely to lead to publications and events worth analyzing more deeply, such as Wells's pamphlet titled *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, in which she asks:

Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in this World's Exposition? Why are they not taking part in this glorious celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of their country? . . . It is to answer these questions and supply as far as possible our lack of representation at the Exposition that the Afro-American has published this volume.<sup>2</sup>

2 Ida B. Wells, "The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition," pamphlet, July 1893, Black Women's Suffrage Collection, Digital Public Library of America, <https://blackwomenssuffrage.dpl.org/collections/ida-b-wells/ibwells-0010-005>. Note that while the pamphlet uses the term "colored," the more appropriate term today would be African American or Black American. Remind students that when they encounter outdated or problematic language in primary sources, they should not repeat that language in their description or analysis of the source.



| Narrowed Topic                                                                                                 | Possible Research Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)</b>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› What rights did Asian immigrants have during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era?</li> <li>› How did the Chinese Exclusion Act narrow the rights of immigrants based on race and ethnicity?</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>Simon Pokagon and <i>The Red Man's Rebuke</i> (1893)</b>                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› How did <i>The Red Man's Rebuke</i> portray Indigenous peoples' struggle for rights and the responsibilities of the American government?</li> </ul>                                                                                        |
| <b><i>The Jungle</i> and the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906)</b>                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› How did Upton Sinclair raise public awareness and spark political action?</li> <li>› How did the Pure Food and Drug Act shape consumer rights and employer responsibilities?</li> </ul>                                                    |
| <b>Indiana and the first eugenic sterilization law (1907)</b>                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› How were people with disabilities treated during the Progressive Era?</li> <li>› What were the motivations of those who sought to sterilize people with disabilities, and what was the impact of the eugenics movement?</li> </ul>         |
| <b>National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment (1920)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› How did women's rights change in the early 1900s?</li> <li>› How did the public, political leaders, and Black women perceive the NAWSA's advocacy efforts?</li> <li>› Which strategies sparked changes in women's legal rights?</li> </ul> |

Narrowing the topic will help students transform their research and argument from a simplistic biographical approach to a substantive historical argument. In general, students should remember that strong National History Day research questions are the result of research. Historians, including NHD students, work by first crafting good research questions—and by acknowledging that the question (or questions!) should change over time as they uncover new information.

## Empowering Student Historians

The Gilded Age and Progressive Era collectively encompass both traditional subjects and new areas of study related to *Rights & Responsibilities in History*. Teachers and students will find abundant primary sources that encourage deep thinking about how Americans' ideas about rights and responsibilities have changed over time. As Jane Addams wrote in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, "[T]he good we secure

for ourselves is precarious and uncertain . . . until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."<sup>3</sup> Thinking about rights and responsibilities during periods such as the Gilded Age and Progressive Era helps students (and all of us!) understand how the American people have worked to secure and expand the common good.

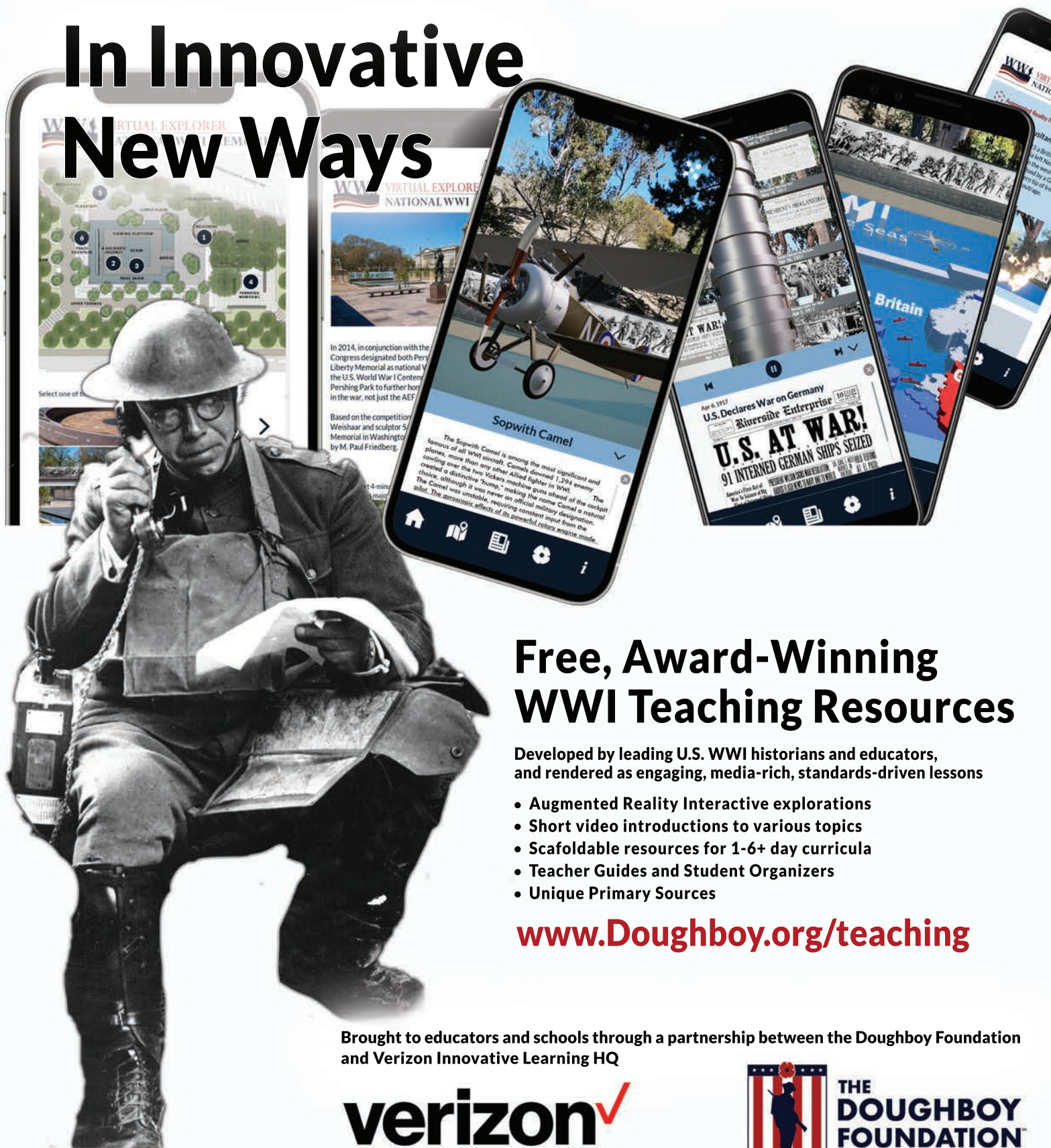
This article applies ideas from the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute *Rethinking the Gilded Age and Progressivism: Race, Capitalism, and Democracy, 1877 to 1920* to the National History Day theme, *Rights & Responsibilities in History*. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this piece do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, please visit [gildedandprogressive.org](https://gildedandprogressive.org).

**To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/theme](https://nhd.org/theme).**

3 Jane Addams, "Twenty Years at Hull-House, with Autobiographical Notes," Internet Archive, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/twentyyearsathul00inadda>.

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# Teaching Engaged Citizenship: Finding Historical Examples of U.S. Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities Through the National Park Service Educators Portal

**LINDA ROSENBLUM, Education Program Manager, Washington Office of Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers, National Park Service**

In 1636, Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island under a charter granted by King Charles II. This charter guaranteed the residents of Rhode Island the freedom of conscience in religious matters. Jewish immigrants began arriving there as early as 1658, seeking trade opportunities in the burgeoning seaport of Newport. The merchants and business owners who founded the Jewish community in Newport descended from families who fled Spain and Portugal because of persecution during the Inquisitions. In Rhode Island, they found freedom of conscience.

More than a century and a quarter later, the U.S. Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787. Ratification of the Constitution was completed on January 10, 1791, when Vermont (which, up until that time, was an independent sovereign state) voted to ratify the Constitution and applied for admission to the Union. In 1789, during the ratification process for the Constitution, Congress drafted the first amendments to the Constitution (the Bill of Rights) for ratification by the states.

On August 17, 1790, during this period of drafting and ratifying the U.S. Constitution, Moses Seixas, the warden of the Jewish congregation at Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, sent a letter to President George Washington. Much of his letter expressed social formalities and

referenced stories of Hebrew leaders such as the prophet Daniel and King David, biblical stories that would have been familiar to his letter's recipient. The primary purpose of his letter, however, was to offer gratitude to Washington for "all these Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal benign administration."<sup>1</sup> Washington responded to Seixas, pledging that the new nation would give "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."<sup>2</sup> Transcripts of this letter were circulated widely in newspapers across the United States. Washington's support for religious liberty pointed toward the passage of the First Amendment, which codified it in the Bill of Rights added to the Constitution on December 15, 1791.

In this article, the National Park Service (NPS) will highlight some lesson plans that feature historical examples of engaged citizenship regarding the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens. NPS preserves and protects the places and resources that tell America's stories. The agency has over 420 units, and nearly two-thirds of those units preserve and interpret historical or cultural resources and stories.

We begin with the Jewish citizens of Newport at the Touro Synagogue reminding President Washington of the importance of freedom of religion and conscience and continue with several more examples of engaged citizens

- <sup>1</sup> Seixas' message can be found under Washington's response at "From George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, 18 August 1790," Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November 19, 2023, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>.
- <sup>2</sup> "From George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, 18 August 1790," Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November 19, 2023, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>.



promoting women's rights, voting rights, and civil rights. The following lesson plans demonstrate the ways the rights of citizens of the United States are protected. The lessons can be found through the National Park Service Educators Portal at [nps.gov/teachers/index.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/index.htm).

## Touro Synagogue National Historic Site (Rhode Island)

[nps.gov/tosy/index.htm](https://nps.gov/tosy/index.htm)

Touro Synagogue, dedicated in 1763 in Newport, Rhode Island, is the oldest synagogue building in the United States. A structure of exquisite beauty and design, steeped in history and ideals, the synagogue is considered one of the ten most architecturally distinguished buildings of eighteenth-century America and the most historically significant Jewish building in the United States. The congregation housed by the synagogue was founded in 1658 by the descendants of Jewish families who first fled the Inquisitions in Spain and Portugal and then left the Caribbean, seeking the greater religious tolerance that Rhode Island offered. Touro Synagogue symbolizes religious freedom for all Americans and was designated a National Historic Site in 1946. The Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr. Visitors Center opened in 2009 and features exhibits that further explore the history of Newport's early Jewish community and the origins of First Amendment rights. Each year, over 30,000 visitors cross the synagogue threshold to pray, see its magnificent interior, and hear its remarkable story.



Touro Synagogue National Historic Site in Newport, Rhode Island, was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966. National Park Service (66000927).

## DISCOVER TOURO SYNAGOGUE: LIGHTNING LESSON FROM TEACHING WITH HISTORIC PLACES

[nps.gov/articles/000/discover-touro-synagogue-lightning-lesson-from-teaching-with-historic-places.htm](https://nps.gov/articles/000/discover-touro-synagogue-lightning-lesson-from-teaching-with-historic-places.htm)

In this lesson, students will learn about the founding of Rhode Island and the establishment of interfaith communities in the colony. Students will analyze maps, images, and historical writings to determine why the Jewish community thrived in Newport, Rhode Island, and why they reached out to President George Washington to protect their religious freedom. Activities also encourage students to compare historical events to contemporary issues regarding religious freedom.

## Women's Rights National Historical Park (New York)

[nps.gov/wori/index.htm](https://nps.gov/wori/index.htm)

On July 9, 1848, a group of five reform-minded women gathered at a social event in Waterloo, New York. During this meeting, they decided to organize a convention, a widely adopted method for advocating change at the time. They published a call in the local newspaper inviting people to "a Convention to discuss the social, civil and religious rights and condition of woman."<sup>3</sup> The convention was to be held July 19 and 20 in the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York, just three miles east of Waterloo. Relying heavily on pre-existing networks of reformers, relatives, and friends to advertise the two-day affair, the convention drew over 300 people. The result was the Declaration of Sentiments, where 100 men and women echoed, with their signatures, the thought "that all men and women are created equal."

This event was not the first time women's rights had been discussed in American society. Nor was it the only way women fought for their rights throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, it stood as a crucial and formal initiation of a movement in the United States that swiftly expanded in the years leading up to the American Civil War of the 1860s. This expansion was underscored by a sequence of women's rights conventions and local and regional grassroots endeavors that leveraged the demands expressed in the Declaration of Sentiments to propel the elevation of women's status in American society. Though the campaign for women's right to vote is the most famous of the demands of the Declaration of Sentiments, it was only one of many that included equal educational opportunities, the right to property and earnings, the right to the custody of children in the event of divorce or death of a spouse, and many other important social, political, and economic rights that continue to be contested in the United States and around to the world.

3 "Report of the Womans' Rights Convention," National Park Service, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/report-of-the-womans-rights-convention.htm>.

Women's Rights National Historical Park was established in 1980 to "preserve and interpret for the education, inspiration, and benefit of present and future generations the nationally significant historical and cultural sites and structures associated with the struggle for equal rights for women and to cooperate with State and local entities to preserve the character and historic setting of such sites and structures."<sup>4</sup>



The *First Wave* statue represents the first wave of the American women's rights movement, and features organizers and attendees of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, November 30, 2018. National Park Service.

## RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/rights-and-privileges-middle-school-level.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/rights-and-privileges-middle-school-level.htm)

Women's Rights National Historical Park tells the story of the first Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19 and 20, 1848. It is a story of struggles for civil rights, human rights, and equality—global struggles that continue today. The efforts of women's rights leaders, abolitionists, and other nineteenth-century reformers remind us that all people must be accepted as equals.

This lesson plan explores the story of the first formal women's rights convention. Students will explain women's roles and station in society and the content and context of the Declaration of Sentiments. They will describe and define the differences between rights and privileges and analyze readings from primary sources. They will also study the lives of the women and men who were leaders in the early women's rights movement. This lesson plan is available in three versions appropriate for upper elementary, middle school, and high school levels.

## The White House and President's Park, Lafayette Park (District of Columbia)

[nps.gov/whho/index.htm](https://nps.gov/whho/index.htm)

[nps.gov/whho/planyourvisit/explore-the-northern-trail.htm](https://nps.gov/whho/planyourvisit/explore-the-northern-trail.htm)

The seven-acre Lafayette Park sits directly north of the White House. The land that comprises Lafayette Park was previously used as a race track, a showplace for caged animals, a graveyard, a market for enslaved people, and an encampment for soldiers. It was also used for political protests and celebrations, a practice that continues today.

The park was planned by architect Charles Bulfinch in 1821, and in 1834 was named for the first foreign guest of state to stay at the White House: General Marquis de Lafayette. Originally named Lafayette Square, the park had many important occupants, including vice presidents, members of Congress, and foreign ambassadors. The houses of Naval hero Stephen Decatur, on the northeast corner of the square, and former First Lady Dolly Madison, on the opposite side of the square, still stand. The park has a rich history with St. John's Church, often called the "Church of the Presidents," which has welcomed every president, beginning with James Madison, to worship in its sanctuary. Freedman's Bank, of which Frederick Douglass was a director, had its headquarters at Lafayette Square. The original building was replaced by the Treasury Annex in 1899 and renamed the Freedman's Building in 2016.<sup>5</sup>

By the twentieth century, the park was known as Lafayette Park. John Carl Warneke created the present park design in the 1960s. The historic efforts of President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy, who were concerned with proposals to build large office buildings on the square, led to the preservation of the park and the buildings surrounding it. The area was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970.

## LAFAYETTE PARK: FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS ON THE PRESIDENT'S DOORSTEP

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/139lafayette.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/139lafayette.htm)

Beginning in January 1917, a dozen women with their banners marched across the park to take up positions in front of the White House. They came from the headquarters of the

<sup>4</sup> "History & Culture," National Park Service, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/index.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> To learn more, see Lina Mann, "The History of Lafayette Park," The White House Historical Association, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-history-of-lafayette-park>.

National Woman's Party (NWP) on Lafayette Square, and their banners demanded that President Woodrow Wilson help them in their campaign to get all American women the same right to vote that American men already enjoyed. They maintained their vigil through the rain and snow of January and February and on into the spring.



Protesters picketing in Lafayette Park to gain support for women's suffrage. Library of Congress (2016867961).

The NWP pickets began encountering violent reactions from onlookers after the United States entered World War I in April 1917. In June, police began to arrest and imprison the protesters under harsh conditions. Many people were shocked when they learned about the women's treatment. Some lawyers thought the sentences imposed were in violation of the First Amendment. The women continued to demand their rights despite the violence they endured. The Nineteenth Amendment, granting women in America the right to vote, finally became part of the Constitution in 1920, three years after the first pickets marched to the White House. Despite this amendment, many women of color were still blocked from voting, and it took more than 40 years before they, too, were able to vote.

Through maps, photos, political cartoons, and primary source reading, including a speech by President Woodrow Wilson, this lesson plan will introduce students to the story of the National Woman's Party and the struggle for women's voting rights.

## Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail (Alabama)

[nps.gov/semo/index.htm](https://nps.gov/semo/index.htm)

Established by Congress in 1996, the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail commemorates the people, events, and route of the 1965 Voting Rights March in Alabama. Led by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Black and White non-violent demonstrators protested for the right to vote. Today, people can connect with this history and trace the events of these marches along the 54-mile trail.

### THE SELMA TO MONTGOMERY VOTING RIGHTS MARCH: SHAKING THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/133selma.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/133selma.htm)

Millions of people across the United States were watching television on Sunday, March 7, 1965, when their programs were interrupted by shocking images of African American men and women in a cloud of tear gas being beaten with billy clubs. Attempting to march peacefully from the small town of Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, the state capital, to protest a brutal murder and the denial of their constitutional right to vote, 600 people were attacked by state troopers and mounted deputies dressed in full riot gear. Most viewers had never heard of Selma, but after March 7, 1965, they never forgot it.



Protesters cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, March 7, 1965. The protesters were violently attacked in an event known as "Bloody Sunday." Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site, National Park Service.

Eight days after "Bloody Sunday," President Lyndon Johnson made a powerful speech to a joint session of Congress introducing voting rights legislation. He called the events in Selma "a turning point in man's unending search for freedom."<sup>6</sup> On March 21, more than 1,000 people from all over the United States again left Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Selma and set out

6 Lyndon B. Johnson, *Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise*, speech, March 15, 1965, The American Presidency Project, University of California at Santa Barbara, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-the-american-promise>.



for Montgomery. This time, they were watched over by U.S. Army and Alabama National Guard units ordered by President Johnson to protect the marchers against further violence. At the successful completion of the march on March 25, Dr. King addressed a crowd estimated at 25,000 in front of the Alabama State Capitol, quoting the Battle Hymn of the Republic: "His truth is marching on."<sup>7</sup>

Five months later, on August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which is "generally considered the most successful piece of civil rights legislation ever adopted by the United States Congress."<sup>8</sup>

This lesson explores some of the methods the State of Alabama used to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote and the ways community leaders in Selma worked with Dr. King, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other national civil rights organizations to remove those restrictions. It discusses Brown Chapel in Selma, where the march began, and the State Capitol Building in Montgomery, where the march reached its triumphant conclusion.

## (H)our History Lesson Plans

[nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/-h-our-history-lessons.htm](https://nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/-h-our-history-lessons.htm)

(H)our History Lessons are one-hour resources featuring a reading, discussion questions, and one to three activities. Some are grouped in series by topic, and others are individual lessons.

### SERIES: TEACHING ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP

[nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=B7E731A8-B1AE-22FE-8EBAC94AEDB02C0B](https://nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=B7E731A8-B1AE-22FE-8EBAC94AEDB02C0B)

This series of five lesson plans covers five areas of citizenship through the use of primary documents and historical examples of citizens exercising their Constitutional rights. These lesson plans use young people's aptitude for creating and sharing information digitally. Students will compare and contrast historical examples of engaged citizens with contemporary issues. Topics include the process of amending the Constitution, the meaning of federalism, the workings of the judicial system to ensure our rights, and historical examples of exercising voting rights and First Amendment freedoms.

### SERIES: CLAIMING CIVIL RIGHTS

[nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=85B0D876-E119-C344-OA864BD2C826DCF5](https://nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=85B0D876-E119-C344-OA864BD2C826DCF5)

The six lesson plans in this series guide students and other interested learners through conversations about how people claimed civil rights for themselves and for others. Lessons include the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March, Free Frank McWorter and New Philadelphia, Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women, Dred and Harriet Scott's Case at the Old Courthouse, Frederick Douglass's Life-long Fight for Justice and Equality, and Colonel Charles Young's Protest Ride. Each lesson includes an inquiry question, reading, and a choice of activities.

### SERIES: CIVIL RIGHTS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

[nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=87B58CEC-FF43-3552-3B1856829F90C5C8](https://nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=87B58CEC-FF43-3552-3B1856829F90C5C8)

The lesson plans in this series guide students and other interested learners through conversations about school segregation and the Civil Rights struggles for desegregation. Topics include South Carolina's opposition to desegregation, Pierre Samuel DuPont's Delaware Experiment, Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald's modernized schools, and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Each lesson includes an inquiry question, reading, and a choice of activities.

Lesson plans and other education resources produced by the National Park Service and some of its partners are available through the NPS Educators Portal at [nps.gov/teachers/index.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/index.htm). A simple keyword or subject search can provide examples of lesson plans and activities that can serve as a starting place for finding great stories on which to base a student's National History Day® project.

To access more theme resources, go to [nhd.org/theme](https://nhd.org/theme).

7 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Our God is Marching On!*, speech, March 25, 1965, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/our-god-marching>.

8 "Introduction to Federal Voting Rights Laws," U.S. Department of Justice, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/introduction-federal-voting-rights-laws-1>.



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