VOICES
IN THE CLASSROOM
Teaching the work of Howard Zinn
Featuring supporting material from Lupe Fiasco, Kevin Coval, Matt Damon, and more.
A TEACHING RESOURCE GUIDE
Credits

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Curriculum written by Mariah Neuroth and Hannah Graham
Edited by Dao Tran
Designed by Brett Neiman
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VOICES in the Classroom: 
An Introduction

Over the course of two years in Chicago, the Voices of a People’s History (VOICES) team partnered with Young Chicago Authors and TEAM Englewood High School in Chicago in pursuit of a goal: to bring the great work of historical movers and shakers, especially those overlooked in the annals of history and “traditional” curriculum, to life. This goal was born directly from the work of Howard Zinn, famed author of *A People’s History of the United States* and coeditor, along with Anthony Arnove, of *Voices of a People’s History of the United States* (namesake of the VOICES organization). Throughout the course of his life, Howard Zinn worked to make the stories of all people known, especially those missing from “orthodox histories.” The VOICES Teaching Resource Guide is an inspired result of the powerful learning that transpired in classrooms stirred by Zinn’s goal “to awaken a greater consciousness of class conflict, racial injustice, sexual inequality, and national arrogance.”

In pursuit of further vitalizing historical texts, the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide is dedicated to providing teaching tools for educators interested in helping students make connections between historical texts, contemporary works, and themselves. This goal is furthered through the inclusion of excerpts from *The People Speak*, a 2009 documentary showcasing famous performers reading historical works from *Voices of a People’s History of the United States* and *A People’s History of the United States*.

Toward the goal of fostering connections between history and the present, the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide is composed of five discrete units. Each unit brings together primary texts, auditory and visual portrayals of texts being performed (many by famous actors), and student-centered writing prompts. Taught together or separately, these texts and lessons present an array of powerful orators and writers who have “spoken their truth” when faced with powerful, oppressive forces. It is our hope that this teaching resource guide acts exactly as its name suggests: as a resource for you, your students, and your organization in connecting the voices of historical and contemporary revolutionaries with the everyday, contemporary experiences people engage in.

Given the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide was conceptualized and homegrown in the city of Chicago, there is a noticeable focus on texts and events from the Chicagoland area and surrounding Midwest. While this attention is evident, we are confident that the themes and messages embedded in these lessons will translate to many other contexts. We encourage you—whether you are from the Chicagoland area or beyond—to find authors, texts, and local historical content that you might use in addition to the texts presented here.

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Overview

The VOICES Teaching Resource Guide

You should ask students if anything in a particular historical event reminds them of something they read in the newspapers or see on television about the world today. When you press students to make connections, to abstract from the uniqueness of a particular historical event and find something it has in common with another event—then history becomes alive, not just past but present.¹

—Howard Zinn, 1994

Zinn’s words set the precedent and tone for the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide’s primary goal:

To provide a resource for educators interested in empowering students to make connections between historical texts, contemporary works and circumstances, and themselves.

In the spirit of exploring commonalities between historical and contemporary texts, each of the five units in this guide brings together the work of a historical figure and a contemporary artist or event, asking students to compare, contrast, and make connections between their form and messages.

The five units in this guide are not in any prescribed order, though they can be followed in the sequence they appear. We encourage you to look closely at the guiding questions, objectives, and texts that organize each of the units themselves, drawing from the material in parts or as a whole to complement your curriculum.

VOICES Teaching Resource Guide
Organization

The VOICES Teaching Resource Guide consists of the following:

• An introduction to the work of Howard Zinn
• “A Teacher Speaks” essay, focusing on the experiences of a TEAM Englewood high school teacher who works with VOICES material
• A suggested activity to prime your students for personal, intense discussions that may emerge through the course of teaching with this guide
• Five units, each consisting of four to six lessons

Unit-Level Organization

The units in this guide are not placed in a prescribed order. Rather, we invite you to wholly or partially integrate the material into your own curriculum or programming. Each unit consists of:

• Four to six lessons, each 45–65 minutes in length
• Guiding questions and unit-level objectives (in which the Common Core State Standards [English Language Arts Anchor Standards] are addressed)
• Copy-ready handouts of historical texts
• A link to a performance from The People Speak
• Suggested vocabulary pre-teaching activities (for more complex texts) and/or historical teaching resources (to engage your students in further period study)
Organizing Principles

The VOICES Teaching Resource Guide units and lessons are organized according to three core principles:

1. **Preparing for Discussion and Engaging with (Historical) Texts**

   - Some of the topics the authors in this guide write about can be hard for students to digest or may trigger sensitive personal reactions. In order to prepare for the often-difficult topics the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide delves into, we have included an introductory pre-teaching activity focused on creating group agreements for safe discussion. These initial agreements are referred to throughout the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide units.

   - Just as students should be prepared emotionally to engage in new, unfamiliar topics, they should also be prepared to engage in the complexity of new material. To build interest and heighten awareness of specific themes, lessons prime students to enter texts with anticipatory activities that build vocabulary knowledge and ask students to relate their opinions and life experiences prior to engaging with primary documents.

   - Howard Zinn wrote that “a historian (or journalist, or anyone telling a story) [is] forced to choose, out of an infinite number of facts, what to present, what to omit. And that decision inevitably [reflects], whether consciously or not, the interests of the historian.” Similarly, this guide inevitably presents what its authors have deemed to be relevant contextual information surrounding texts, and consciously does not provide brief explanations of complex historical periods. It is possible to focus on the texts in this guide without studying, at length, the time periods in which they took place. However, we encourage you to think deeply about what else you want your students to glean from the historical context pieces in the guide are drawn from, using the additional resources recommended to amend and add to the material provided.

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1 Zinn, A People’s History, 25.
2 **Reading, Hearing, and Viewing Texts**

By seeing, hearing, and viewing the primary texts discussed in this guide, students will find various ways of understanding, critiquing, and connecting to the work being explored through:

- **Use of multimedia.** Educators have relied on various media for decades to engage students in their education. Video and audio resources, frequently called upon for use in lessons, can heighten student interest, spark creativity, and utilize new material to enhance learning.

- **Accessing the material through multiple avenues.** Every unit in the VOICES Resource Guide focuses on reading, viewing, and hearing primary texts being spoken. Lessons draw attention to the complexities of content through comparisons of texts as read, heard, and seen. It should be noted that some of the historical texts explored in this guide are abridged versions. These abridged versions were chosen to align with the spoken performances. Where abridged versions were performed in *The People Speak*, there too will you find abridged versions in the guide. While we believe the abridged versions of these texts capture the essence of each author’s writing and ultimate aims, links to the texts in full are provided in every unit.

3 **Focus on Student Opinion, Belief, and Response**

VOICES was founded on the belief that there is a hunger for a history in which ordinary people can participate and recognize themselves, their forbearers, their neighbors, and their fellow workers. Throughout our partnership in Chicago, we have found that young people resonate with source material in ways that challenge their thinking, inspire their work, and connect them to the struggle for human dignity that continues today. One of the founding aims of our partnerships is to help young people analyze
their relationship with the larger society outside of the existing configuration of power. Toward this goal, the VOICES Teaching Resource Guide:

- Incorporates student opinion, writing, and dialogue into every lesson.

- Includes a reflective, whole-class discussion section at the end of each lesson. The discussion poses questions aimed at getting students to think critically about new material, connect to larger themes in the unit, and evaluate what they are learning about themselves and their classmates.

- Contains a writing exercise focused on students’ experiences in relation to the material and guiding questions under consideration at the end of each unit.
Who is this Resource Guide for?

Through his work, Howard Zinn sought to expose others (students and non-students alike) to the historical struggles of a diverse group of people. Thus, while the teaching content of this guide has been written with a high school educator and student audience in mind, we encourage teachers (and people) of all ages to find ways to bring these texts into your schools, programming, and homes. With this objective in mind, we have included the Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards in English Language Arts addressed by the activities. These anchor standards are not grade specific. It is our hope that the inclusion of these Common Core State Standards may assist elementary school educators interested in scaffolding material for younger grades.

Young Chicago Authors (YCA) transforms the lives of young people by cultivating their voices through writing, publication, and performance education. YCA does this work through a variety of arts education programs in and out of schools. These programs expose young people to hip-hop realist portraiture and show them how to create their own authentic narratives. http://www.youngchicagoauthors.org

VOICES is a nonprofit arts, education, and social justice organization active throughout the United States. It was founded in 2007 by a group of activists, artists, and educators, led by historians Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, editors of the book Voices of a People’s History of the United States. VOICES came together as a result of enthusiastic audience response to occasional readings from this book (held across the country starting in 2003) and to ongoing requests from readers and audiences for educational material and further performances. This desire for a history in which ordinary people can participate and recognize themselves, their forbearers, their neighbors, and their fellow workers, motivated the founding of VOICES. By giving public expression to rebels, dissenters, and visionaries from the past—and present—VOICES seeks to educate and inspire a new generation working for social justice. http://www.peopleshistory.us

TEAM Englewood Community Academy’s mission statement is simple: Opportunity. The school’s vision statement further declares:

- TEAM is a learning environment where students are accepted, nurtured, and loved.
- TEAM challenges students to develop resilience, talent, and intellectual ability.
- TEAM students become independent learners through rigorous and responsive instruction.
- TEAM prepares graduates to become productive members and leaders of society.¹

Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove’s *Voices of a People’s History of the United States* set the tone and inspiration for this guide. The historical texts presented herein are directly from *Voices of a People’s History*, as are the pieces in *The People Speak* video. Prior to delving into the material presented in this guide, we encourage you to read Howard Zinn’s brief biography and introduction to the *Voices* book, presented here in full. It is our hope that reading Zinn’s introduction will clarify his choices for those using this guide, preserving the spirit and intention of his work.

**Biography**

Howard Zinn (August 24, 1922–January 27, 2010) was a historian, playwright, and activist. He wrote the classic *A People’s History of the United States*, “a brilliant and moving history of the American people from the point of view of those whose plight has been largely omitted from most histories.” The book, which has sold more than two million copies, has been featured on *The Sopranos* and *The Simpsons*, and in the film *Good Will Hunting*. In 2009, the History Channel aired *The People Speak*, an acclaimed documentary codirected by Zinn, based on *A People’s History* and a companion volume, *Voices of a People’s History of the United States*. Zinn was a co–executive producer, codirector, and coauthor of *The People Speak*.

Zinn grew up in Brooklyn in a working-class, immigrant household. At eighteen he became a shipyard worker and then flew bomber missions during World War II. These experiences helped shape his opposition to war and passion for history. After attending college under the GI Bill and earning a PhD in history from Columbia, he taught at Spelman, where he became active in the civil rights movement. After being fired by Spelman for his support for student protesters, Zinn became a professor of political science at Boston University, where he taught until his retirement in 1988. Zinn was the author of many books, including an autobiography, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, the play *Marx in Soho*, and *Passionate Declarations*. He received the Lannan Foundation Literary Award for Nonfiction and the Eugene V. Debs Award for his writing and political activism.
Introduction to *Voices of a People’s History of the United States*

by Howard Zinn

Readers of my book *A People’s History of the United States* almost always point to the wealth of quoted material in it—the words of fugitive slaves, Native Americans, farmers and factory workers, dissenters and dissidents of all kinds. These readers are struck, I must reluctantly admit, more by the words of the people I quote than by my own running commentary on the history of the nation.

I can’t say I blame them. Any historian would have difficulty matching the eloquence of the Native American leader Powhatan, pleading with the white settler in the year 1607: “Why will you take by force what you may have quietly by love?”

Or the black scientist Benjamin Banneker, writing to Thomas Jefferson: “I apprehend you will readily embrace every opportunity, to eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions which so generally prevails with respect to us, and that your Sentiments are concurrent with mine, which are that one universal Father hath given being to us all, and that he hath not only made us all of one flesh, but that he hath also without partiality afforded us all the Same Sensations and [endowed] us all with the same faculties.”

Or Sarah Grimké, a white Southern woman and abolitionist, writing: “I ask no favors for my sex. ...All I ask of our brethren, is that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy.”

Or Henry David Thoreau, protesting the Mexican War, writing on civil disobedience: “A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart.”

Or Jermain Wesley Loguen, escaped slave, speaking in Syracuse on the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850: “I received my freedom from Heaven and with it came the command to defend my title to it. ...I don’t respect this law—I don’t fear it—I won’t obey it! It outlaws me, and I outlaw it.”

Or the populist orator Mary Elizabeth Lease of Kansas: “Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street.”

Or Emma Goldman, speaking to the jury at her trial for opposing World War I: “Verily poor as we are in democracy, how can we give of it to the world?... [A] democracy conceived in the military servitude of the masses, in their economic enslavement, and nurtured in their tears and blood, is not democracy at all.”
Or Mississippi sharecropper Fannie Lou Hamer, testifying in 1964 about the dangers to blacks who tried to register to vote: “The plantation owner came, and said, ‘Fannie Lou. ... If you don’t go down and withdraw your registration, you will have to leave... because we are not ready for that in Mississippi.’ And I addressed him and told him and said, ‘I didn’t try to register for you. I tried to register for myself.’”

Or the young black people in McComb, Mississippi, who, learning of a classmate killed in Vietnam, distributed a leaflet: “No Mississippi Negroes should be fighting in Vietnam for the White Man’s freedom, until all the Negro People are free in Mississippi.”

Or the poet Adrienne Rich, writing in the 1970s: “I know of no woman—virgin, mother, lesbian, married, celibate—whether she earns her keep as a housewife, a cocktail waitress, or a scanner of brain waves—for whom the body is not a fundamental problem: its clouded meanings, its fertility, its desire, its so-called frigidity, its bloody speech, its silences, its changes and mutilations, its rapes and ripenings.”

Or Alex Molnar, whose twenty-one-year-old son was a marine in the Persian Gulf, writing an angry letter to the first President Bush: “Where were you, Mr. President, when Iraq was killing its own people with poison gas? ... I intend to support my son and his fellow soldiers by doing everything I can to oppose any offensive American military action in the Persian Gulf.”

What is common to all these voices is that they have mostly been shut out of the orthodox histories, the major media, the standard textbooks, the controlled culture. The result of having our history dominated by presidents and generals and other “important” people is to create a passive citizenry, not knowing its own powers, always waiting for some savior on high—God or the next president—to bring peace and justice.

History, looked at under the surface, in the streets and on the farms, in GI barracks and trailer camps, in factories and offices, tells a different story. Whenever injustices have been remedied, wars halted, women and blacks and Native Americans given their due, it has been because “unimportant” people spoke up, organized, protested, and brought democracy alive.

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When I decided, in the late 1970s, to write *A People’s History of the United States*, I had been teaching history for twenty years. Half of that time I was involved in the civil rights movement in the South, when I was teaching at Spelman College, a black women’s college in Atlanta, Georgia. And then there were ten years of activity against the war in Vietnam. Those experiences were not a recipe for neutrality in the teaching and writing of history.

But my partisanship was undoubtedly shaped even earlier, by my upbringing in a family of working-class
immigrants in New York, by my three years as a shipyard worker, starting at the age of eighteen, and then by my experience as an air force bombardier in World War II, flying out of England and bombing targets in various parts of Europe, including the Atlantic coast of France.

After the war I went to college under the GI Bill of Rights. That was a piece of wartime legislation that enabled millions of veterans to go to college without paying any tuition, and so allowed the sons of working-class families who ordinarily would never be able to afford it to get a college education. I received my doctorate in history at Columbia University, but my own experience made me aware that the history I learned in the university omitted crucial elements in the history of the country.

From the start of my teaching and writing, I had no illusions about “objectivity,” if that meant avoiding a point of view. I knew that a historian (or a journalist, or anyone telling a story) was forced to choose, from an infinite number of facts, what to present, what to omit. And that decision inevitably would reflect, whether consciously or not, the interests of the historian.

There is an insistence, among certain educators and politicians in the United States, that students must learn facts. I am reminded of the character in Charles Dickens’s book *Hard Times*, Gradgrind, who admonishes a younger teacher: “Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life.”

But there is no such thing as a pure fact, innocent of interpretation. Behind every fact presented to the world—by a teacher, a writer, anyone—is a judgment. The judgment that has been made is that this fact is important, and that other facts are not important and so they are omitted from the presentation.

There were themes of profound importance to me that I found missing in the orthodox histories that dominated American culture. The consequence of these omissions has been not simply to give a distorted view of the past but, more importantly, to mislead us all about the present.

For instance, there is the issue of class. The dominant culture in the United States—in education, among politicians, in the media—pretends that we live in a classless society, with one common interest. The Preamble to the United States Constitution, which declares that “we the people” wrote this document, is a great deception. The Constitution was written in 1787 by fifty-five rich white men—slave owners, bondholders, merchants—who established a strong central government that would serve their class interests.

That use of government for class purposes, to serve the needs of the wealthy and powerful, has continued throughout American history, down to the present day. It is disguised by language that suggests all of us, rich and poor and middle class, have a common interest.
Thus, the state of the nation is described in universal terms. When the president declares happily that "our economy is sound," he will not acknowledge that it is not sound for forty or fifty million people who are struggling to survive, although it may be moderately sound for many in the middle class, and extremely sound for the richest 1 percent of the nation who own 40 percent of the nation's wealth.

Class interest has always been obscured behind an all-encompassing veil called "the national interest."

My own war experience, and the history of all those military interventions in which the United States was engaged, made me skeptical when I heard people in high political office invoke "the national interest" or "national security" to justify their policies. It was with such justifications that Harry Truman initiated a "police action" in Korea that killed several million people, that Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon carried out a war in Southeast Asia in which perhaps three million people died, that Ronald Reagan invaded Grenada, that the elder Bush attacked Panama and then Iraq, and that Bill Clinton bombed Iraq again and again.

The claim made in spring of 2003 by the new Bush that invading and bombing Iraq was in the national interest was particularly absurd, and could only be accepted by people in the United States because of a blanket of lies spread across the country by the government and the major organs of public information—lies about "weapons of mass destruction," lies about Iraq's connections with Al Qaeda.

When I decided to write A People's History of the United States, I decided I wanted to tell the story of the nation's wars not through the eyes of the generals and the political leaders but from the viewpoints of the working-class youngsters who became GIs, or the parents or wives who received the black-bordered telegrams.

I wanted to tell the story of the nation's wars from the viewpoint of the enemy: the viewpoint of the Mexicans who were invaded in the Mexican War, the Cubans whose country was taken over by the United States in 1898, the Filipinos who suffered a devastating aggressive war at the beginning of the twentieth century, with perhaps 600,000 people dead as a result of the determination of the US government to conquer the Philippines.

What struck me as I began to study history, and what I wanted to convey in my own writing of history, was how nationalist fervor—inculcated from childhood by pledges of allegiance, national anthems, waving flags, and militaristic rhetoric—permeated the educational systems of all countries, including our own.

I wondered how the foreign policies of the United States would look if we wiped out the national boundaries of the world, at least in our minds, and thought of children everywhere as our own. Then
we could never drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, or napalm on Vietnam, or cluster bombs on Afghanistan or Iraq, because wars, especially in our time, are always wars against children.

When I began to write “people’s history,” I was influenced by my own experience, living in a black community in the South with my family, teaching at a black women’s college, and becoming involved in the movement against racial segregation. I became aware of how badly twisted was the teaching and writing of history by its submersion of nonwhite people. Yes, Native Americans were there in the history, but quickly gone. Black people were visible as slaves, then supposedly free, but invisible. It was a white man’s history.

From elementary school to graduate school, I was given no suggestion that the landing of Christopher Columbus in the New World initiated a genocide, in which the indigenous population of Hispaniola was annihilated. Or that this was the first stage of what was presented as a benign expansion of the new nation, but which involved the violent expulsion of Native Americans, accompanied by unspeakable atrocities, from every square mile of the continent, until there was nothing to do but herd them into reservations.

Every American schoolchild learns about the Boston Massacre, which preceded the Revolutionary War against England. Five colonists were killed by British troops in 1770. But how many schoolchildren learned about the massacre of six hundred men, women, and children of the Pequot tribe in New England in 1637? Or the massacre, in the midst of the Civil War, of hundreds of Native American families at Sand Creek, Colorado, by US soldiers?

Nowhere in my history education did I learn about the massacres of black people that took place again and again, amid the silence of a national government pledged by the Constitution to protect equal rights for all.

For instance, in 1917 there occurred in East St. Louis one of the many “race riots” that took place in what our white-oriented history books called the “Progressive Era.” White workers, angered by an influx of black workers, killed perhaps two hundred people, provoking an angry article by the African American writer W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Massacre of East St. Louis,” and causing the performing artist Josephine Baker to say: “The very idea of America makes me shake and tremble and gives me nightmares.”

I wanted, in writing people’s history, to awaken a great consciousness of class conflict, racial injustice, sexual inequality, and national arrogance. But I also wanted to bring into the light the hidden resistance of the people against the power of the establishment: the refusal of Native Americans to simply die and disappear; the rebellion of black people in the antislavery movement and in the more recent movement against racial segregation; the strikes carried out by working people to improve their lives.
When I began work, five years ago, on what would become the present volume, *Voices of a People’s History of the United States*, I wanted the voices of struggle, mostly absent in our history books, to be given the place they deserve. I wanted labor history, which has been the battleground, decade after decade, century after century, of an ongoing fight for human dignity, to come to the fore. And I wanted my readers to experience how at key moments in our history some of the bravest and most effective political acts were the sounds of the human voice itself. When John Brown proclaimed at his trial that his insurrection was “not wrong, but right,” when Fannie Lou Hamer testified in 1964 about the dangers to blacks who tried to register to vote, when during the first Gulf War, in 1991, Alex Molnar defied the president on behalf of his son and of all of us, their words influenced and inspired so many people. They were not just words but actions.

To omit or to minimize these voices of resistance is to create the idea that power only rests with those who have the guns, who possess the wealth, who own the newspapers and the television stations. I want to point out that people who seem to have no power, whether working people, people of color, or women—once they organize and protest and create movements—have a voice no government can suppress.
I didn’t know who Howard Zinn was until I was a junior in college. Reading Zinn’s work became formative in the teacher I would become when I found that the stories and history of many of my students was absent in history textbooks. So when the opportunity to use The People Speak (a 2009 American documentary feature film inspired by the work of Howard Zinn) in my English classroom arose, I jumped at the chance. Because of my involvement with Louder Than a Bomb, an annual youth poetry slam in Chicago, I knew immediately I wanted my students to read, analyze, and respond to the writing of famous historical figures. In January 2012, my students and I began using materials from The People Speak in my sophomore American Literature class; materials that would later inspire the work of this resource guide. With each piece, we engaged in background work on author, time period, vocabulary, and allusion prior to reading, analyzing, and discussing each piece. After exploring the historical work, we connected to a contemporary piece of text and students responded to emerging themes. In my thirteen years of teaching, this was some of the most powerful, challenging, and renewing educational work for my students and me.

While reading and discussing texts and contexts, my students made connections to other classes and their own background knowledge. At times they felt frustrated that, in their words, “everything changes and stays the same.” They began to explore and deepen their ideas of feminism, government, privilege, and social justice. Most importantly, they began to realize how to act positively for change on those frustrations; that their own voices matter much more than they realized. They began to learn how to speak their truth to power.

In May of that year, we put on our own show, Englewood Speaks, in which students sang songs and performed their responses to the pieces we studied after poets and activists read the original text. I would strongly encourage you to consider doing this as well in a way that honors and fits your school’s community. For many of my students, it was the first time they had been on a stage. Our auditorium was packed with students, families, community members, and Chicagoans who had never been to the neighborhood of Englewood (primarily because of the segregation in our city and its notorious reputation for violence) before that night. My students moved from being terrified to ecstatic with pride.
as they performed and were celebrated. As Elijah, one of my students in the show, said, “It felt so good. I think we showed people what Englewood really is.” Now as juniors, many of my students have said that we “need to do it again!” They want to end their high school careers celebrating the voices of those who struggled for justice, as well as their own voices in that struggle.

I think what is most important in teaching with the material in this guide is to go into it unafraid and honest, similarly to how the authors presented here approached their work and causes. By sharing your own opinions, struggles, and experiences relating to the material, you will create a space where your students feel emboldened to do the same. They will feel more empowered to take academic and personal risks while engaging in the material.

Engaging with the works in this guide may seem daunting at first, but the risk is worth the reward. The tools we have provided for you here will help ease your concerns. These texts, units, and lessons lend themselves in an easy, beautiful way to cross-curricular learning. And most importantly, they are a vehicle to engage in critical thinking and action around voice and power. As Dimple, another one of my students said, “I learned how important my education is. I will go to college, be a role model, and share my knowledge with people in my community. I will make change.”

These are texts and activities that should be taught to all students, regardless of race or socio-economic status. It reminds us of our connection to the past and to each other. It challenges us to envision and then take action toward forming the world in ways we think it should be.
“Hearing One Another’s Voices: Exploring Student Identities and Who Gets to Tell the Stories of Our Past” by Jesse Hagopian

Traditional curriculum—the type found in humdrum corporate history textbooks—reproduces oppression, in part by obscuring collective struggles that have challenged those in power, and in part because it is simply mind-numbingly boring. As Malcolm X once said, “When we send our children to school in this country they learn nothing about us other than that we used to be cotton pickers... Why, your grandfather was Nat Turner; your grandfather was Toussaint L’Ouverture; your grandfather was Hannibal.”

If the education system has been controlled by institutions that seek to erase lessons of the power of collective struggle, and also to make history dreary and dull, then the duty of a social justice educator must be to make history both exciting and empowering. The VOICES Teaching Resource Guide can help a great deal with that endeavor. Yet in order to bring the lessons in these pages alive, the educator will need to promote a type of inquiry in the classroom that is rooted in the lives and experiences of students.

As the social activist and educator bell hooks writes in her book Teaching to Transgress, “As a classroom community our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.”

With that in mind, before I ever begin teaching about any historical time period, I start every year off with a unit called “Who am I? What is history? What does history have to do with me?” This unit asks students to examine identity and debate questions on the nature of history while analyzing who gets to tell that history and how historical forces shape the world today.

Foregrounding historical inquiry in the students’ own identities communicates to them from the beginning that their experiences and views will be a vital part of the class, while helping to achieve the “interest in one another” that bell hooks asserts is a necessary component to an exciting classroom. In this section students can look at everything from Socrates’s idea of the “examined life” and W. E. B. Du Bois’s concept of “double consciousness” to black feminist writers on intersectionality and the ways identities are shaped by overlapping factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and more. Asking students the question, “What is history?” allows the teacher to help reveal the vigorous debates about the nature of the discipline of history—and allows the students to pick a framework for understanding history that they believe will be of the most use to make

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2 bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York: Routledge, 1994), 8.
sense of the world. An important resource to promote this discussion is an interview with Howard Zinn titled “Who Controls the Past Controls the Future.” In the interview Zinn says, [Objectivity] is not possible because all history is a selection out of an infinite number of facts. As soon as you begin to select, you select according to what you think is important. Therefore it is already not objective... So it’s not possible to be objective, and it’s not desirable... We should have history that enhances human values, humane values, values of brotherhood, sisterhood, peace, justice, and equality.¹

The discussion and debate generated by the examination of this passage has allowed my students to critically analyze the interests that inform the texts we study for the rest of the year, to talk back to the textbooks, and helps them understand why their own viewpoint and voice matter in the quest to apply the lessons of history to create a socially just future.

Building a classroom where students are allowed to get to know each other, care for one another, and question systems and policies that have been disruptive to the collective good is a thrilling undertaking and can change the world.

Suggested teaching activities:

- Have students write their definition of history, or a quote that represents their views, on a sheet of construction paper. Hang these pieces of paper around the room. Through the course of the year/units in this guide, ask students to reflect on how their definition has evolved, shifted, or stayed the same. Encourage students to amend or change their definition and talk about their evolving thoughts.

- Read Howard Zinn’s “Who Controls the Past Controls the Future” (from his book Failure to Quit: Reflections of an Optimistic Historian) with students. Begin a class discussion on historical “objectivity” and the possibilities associated with (re)examining history.

- Bring in readings that examine history and the human experience in complex ways. Hagopian suggests using the work of Socrates and W. E. B. Du Bois. Authors such as Audre Lorde, Richard Delgado, James Baldwin, Gloria Steinem, Derrick Bell, Michel Foucault, and many others can further contribute to discussions connecting critical theory, society, and history.

- Hagopian suggests engaging in dialogue around “the nature of history” early in the school year, using these initial discussions as a critical touchstone for continuing conversations about voice, justice, and history. Throughout the course of the school year or units discussed in this guide, keep the question “What is history?” posted visibly. After every unit, refer to and discuss students’ changing response to this question. At the end of the year/units in this guide, reflect on how students’ responses to this question (both communally and individually) have been altered.

Pre-Teaching Activity

Setting Group Agreements

Lesson Objectives
Students will:
- Evaluate a preset list of guidelines for discussion
- Identify additional “safe space” guidelines for discussion

Materials Needed
- Poster paper
- Markers/pens

Time Needed
20 minutes

- Explain to students that over the course of [this unit, lesson, or year], they will engage in exercises in which they will be stating their personal opinions and discussing sensitive, controversial topics. Before engaging in these discussions, setting up a safe space where everyone’s opinion is respected is important.

- Suggest the following group safe space guidelines for discussion, and ask students what else they would like to add/amend:
  - Disagree without being disagreeable
  - Speak your truth—we listen to everyone’s truth and our response is our own truth
  - Respect the mic—whoever is talking has the floor
  - Watch the clock (when you speak)—make sure others have a chance to speak

- Be sure to write the guidelines on a piece of poster paper. Hang the poster somewhere it can be easily referenced prior to future discussions.
UNIT 1

LESSON 1
Stand & Declare Activity

LESSON 2
Prepare to Read
Howard Zinn, and Watch
Matt Damon Read Howard Zinn
in Chicago

LESSON 3, 4, AND 5
Breaking the Rules
**Overview**

**Summary**

In this unit, students will examine the concept of civil disobedience through reading the work of Howard Zinn and investigating a contemporary example. Students will complete the unit by stating their opinion on an act of civil disobedience.

**Length**

Five 45-Minute Lessons

**Guiding Questions**

- Why do people engage in civil disobedience?
- What forms does civil disobedience take?
- What can engaging in civil disobedience accomplish?

**Primary Learning Goals**

Students will:

- Articulate personal opinions on controversial statements
- Identify the primary message of “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn
- Evaluate a contemporary form of civil disobedience

**Texts**

- “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn
- “Detroit High School at Southwestern High, Western High Looks to Stop School Closures” by David Sands (optional)

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Addressed: ELA Anchor Standards**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
Lesson Objectives

Students will:
• Articulate personal opinions on controversial statements
• Evaluate the composition of their classmates’ responses

Materials Needed

• Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
• Pens/pencils
• Tape or tacks (for posting signs)

Time Needed

45 minutes

Preparation

Post the “Stand & Declare” signs (written on poster paper or loose-leaf) in four areas of the room: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree

Remind students of the guidelines for discussion:
• Disagree without being disagreeable
• Speak your truth—we listen to everyone’s truth and our response is our own truth
• Respect the mic— whoever is talking has the floor
• Watch the clock— make sure others have a chance to speak
• Other guidelines that students have suggested/added

Lesson 1

Review the activity that will be taking place today with your students:
• Several statements will be read out loud to the class.
• Students should move to stand by the sign that best describes their reaction to each statement.
• Students should talk to the other students who share their point of view. Each group will need a spokesperson to present their views to the larger group.
LESSON 1: Stand & Declare

Read these statements out loud (alternatively, read statements directly from the source text in this unit—“Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn—or other statements you have gathered):

- If someone goes to jail, it is because they have done something wrong.
- If someone doesn’t go to jail, they have done things right.
- I believe that people in power make decisions that are best for the people they serve.
- I believe that people in power care about me and my community.
- If I want the world to be different, I have to work to change it.
- I have the power to change the community/society I live in.

Discuss (be sure to revisit the safe space guidelines as needed)

- Within small groups (once individuals have gathered underneath the “Stand and Declare” sign they have chosen):
  - What is your opinion of this statement?
  - Why do you feel this way?

- Ask small groups to record their thoughts and opinions before sharing with the larger group. Once students are in the large group, ask each small group to share, with the rest of the class responding:
  - Do you agree with what this small group said?
  - Why or why not?
  - If there are only a few people (or no one) standing under a particular sign, why do you think this is the case?
  - Look around the room at where everybody is standing. What does that tell you about the people in this class?

Reflection

- Did you change your mind about anything we discussed today? What made you change your mind?
- Did you realize you had an opinion about something today that you had not thought about much before? If so, what?
- Based on what we discussed today, what do you think the reading we are going to engage in later today, tomorrow/the next session will be about? Why?
Lesson Objectives

Students will:
• Identify the primary message of “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn.
• Compare their predictions of a spoken performance and the actual staged reading of “Civil Disobedience.”
• Evaluate if reading “Civil Disobedience” altered or strengthened their beliefs on disobedience.

Materials Needed

• Poster paper
• Pens/pencils
• Tape or tacks (for posting signs)
• Paper (or student notebooks)
• Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)

• Handout: “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn

Please Note: The version of “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn presented here is an abridged version, and aligns with the performance given in The People Speak video. The unabridged version may be found in APPENDIX A (pg. 117).

Materials Needed for the Vocabulary Activity (optional)

• Notecards or Post-Its (if engaging in the vocabulary activity prior to reading)
• Word definitions, in plain English (not dictionary-speak) if engaging in the vocabulary activity
• Documents with chosen vocabulary words

Time Needed

45 minutes (65 minutes with Vocabulary Activity)

Please Note:

This lesson focuses on the concept of civil disobedience in the context of the historical era surrounding the US war in Vietnam. This guide does not give specific contextual information on the Vietnam War itself, but rather the events surrounding the creation of this specific text. The era of the Vietnam War is a complex sociopolitical time period. We encourage you to make use of the following Zinn Education Foundation resources in fleshing out this conflict for students as it makes sense in the context of your curriculum/programming:

Teaching Resources and Tools from the Zinn Education Project
zinnedproject.org
LESSON 2

Read “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn

Vocabulary Activity (Optional) 20 minutes

Suggested Word List: supposition, reallocation, dictates, abolish, interdependence, metaphysical, illegitimate (and any other words you feel your students would benefit from knowing)

■ Prior to reading the text, divide students into groups of two to four. Give each group a list of the vocabulary words (see the suggested list of words below—you are encouraged to add to and detract from this list)
  • Do you recognize any of the words here? Where have you heard them? What do you think they might mean?
  • Are there any parts of the words that you recognize (“root” words or prefixes/suffixes like un-, pre-, or -less)? What do/might these tell us about the word’s meaning?

■ Assign each small group one word to look up in the dictionary, or give them the definition of the word. Ask each group to:
  • Think about how they might go about remembering their words (what images come to mind? What other words come to mind that have to do with this word?).
  • Encourage students to write synonyms, other colloquial words, or even (tiny) drawings (stick figures help!) that would assist them in remembering.

■ Ask groups to share their responses with the class. As groups share definitions, create a “brainstorming” poster for each word with pictures and related words, adding to the definition of each.

■ Pass out Post-Its or notecards. Have students write each of the vocabulary words on a different card, as well as accompanying words, phrases, drawings, or parts of the word that will assist them in remembering the words’ meanings.

■ Pose the following questions to the class (optional):
  • Do these words have to do with what we discussed yesterday in class? If so, what? Are there connections?
  • Based on seeing these words together, what do you think the article we will be reading is about? What time period do you think it takes place in?
When reading “Civil Disobedience,” be sure to incorporate the vocabulary words into instruction in the following ways:

- **Read the beginning of the article aloud with students. Discuss with students how the definition of the first word fits in the context of the sentence. Then ask students to complete reading the rest of the document themselves.**

- **Encourage students to place their Post-It next to the words they come across and need help remembering. Alternatively, have students pull their notecards as they need them and come across the words.**

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**Lesson 2**

- Ask students (either as a “quick write,” where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes, or share in pairs and then as a whole group) to respond to the following statements:
  - What does it mean to obey? To disobey?
  - Who are you required to obey?
  - Do you think it ever acceptable to disobey? Why or why not?

- Make sure students have a chance to share, either in small groups/pairs and with the class or with the class as a whole.

- Explain that today, students will be reading a speech in which many of the issues discussed yesterday will be addressed, and where one man focuses on disobeying those whom he does not believe serve the people of America’s best interest.

- Read and introduce the context of the piece, noting that this is written from Howard Zinn’s point of view years after his speech (the text students will be studying) had been given:

  “In November 1970, after my arrest along with others who had engaged in a Boston protest at an army base to block soldiers from being sent to Vietnam, I flew to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore to take part in a debate with the philosopher Charles Frankel on civil disobedience. I was supposed to appear in court that day in connection with the charges resulting from the army base protest. I had
Read “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn

a choice: show up in court and miss this opportunity to explain—and practice—my commitment to civil disobedience, or face the consequences of defying the court order by going to Baltimore. I chose to go. The next day, when I returned to Boston, I went to teach my morning class at Boston University. Two detectives were waiting outside the classroom and hauled me off to court, where I was sentenced to a few days in jail. Here is the text of my speech that night at Johns Hopkins.”

—Howard Zinn, introduction, Voices of a People’s History of the United States (2004)

- Assign each small group one word to look up in the dictionary, or give them the definition of the word. Ask each group to explain or discuss:
  - How did Howard Zinn disobey?

- Explain that civil disobedience, the title of Zinn’s speech, is when a person refuses to obey laws or commands of a government. As you pass out the speech (attached to this lesson), encourage students to continue to think about if, when, and where it is “right” to practice civil disobedience. Encourage students to take notes on questions, connections, and thoughts they have as they read.

- After students have finished reading, ask the entire class for general feedback on the piece itself:
  - What does Zinn seem to be saying in this piece?
  - How do you think Howard Zinn might have delivered this when he said it? What would it sound like? Look like? Why?

- Watch Matt Damon read “Civil Disobedience” during a performance of The People Speak in Chicago (http://vimeo.com/48834336). Encourage students to read along with the text and take notes if they have further thoughts during this reading. After watching this performance, ask students:
  - What was it like watching this performance? Was it what you expected after reading the text? What became clearer for you when listening to/watching this?
  - What is Zinn arguing for in this piece?

- Ask students to turn to a partner and discuss the following questions, taking note of their conversation to share with the class:
  - Yesterday we discussed your responses to the statement “If someone goes to jail, it is because they have done something wrong.” Would Howard Zinn agree or disagree with this statement, based on your reading of his speech? Why?
Read “Civil Disobedience” by Howard Zinn

- Who does Zinn believe we should disobey?
- Do you agree or disagree with Zinn? Which parts do you agree/disagree with? Why?
- After reading why Howard Zinn wrote this speech, and then reading the speech itself, what were the causes and effects of civil disobedience surrounding this piece? What was/were the actual “acts” of civil disobedience that took place?

Bring students back together as a group. Ask several pairs to share what they discussed, and invite other pairs/students to respond in a large group discussion. As students share what they think the causes, acts, and effects of civil disobedience were in the case of this speech, write these on each poster. Leave these hanging for the remainder of the unit.

Reflections

- Review your answer from the beginning of the lesson. Does Howard Zinn’s idea of civil disobedience match your opinions on obedience/disobedience?
- What are some modern-day examples, here in our community or in the world, of civil disobedience?
Civil Disobedience (1970)
by Howard Zinn

I start from the supposition that the world is topsy-turvy, that things are all wrong, that the wrong people are in jail and the wrong people are out of jail, that the wrong people are in power and the wrong people are out of power, that the wealth is distributed in this country and the world in such a way as not simply to require small reform but to require a drastic reallocation of wealth.

I start from the supposition that we don’t have to say too much about this because all we have to do is think about the state of the world today and realize that things are all upside down. If you don’t think, if you just listen to TV and read scholarly things, you actually begin to think that things are not so bad, or that just little things are wrong. But you have to get a little detached, and then come back and look at the world, and you are horrified.

So we have to start from that supposition—that things are really topsy-turvy. And our topic is topsy-turvy: civil disobedience. As soon as you say the topic is civil disobedience, you are saying our problem is civil disobedience.

That is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience.

Our problem is the numbers of people all over the world who have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience.

We recognize this for Nazi Germany. We know that the problem there was obedience, that the people obeyed Hitler! People obeyed; that was wrong. They should have challenged, and they should have resisted; and if we were only there, we would have showed them. Even in Stalin’s Russia we can understand that; people are obedient, all these herdlike people. Remember those bad old days when people were exploited by feudalism? Everything was terrible in the Middle Ages—but now we have Western civilization, the rule of law.

The rule of law has regularized and maximized the injustice that existed before the rule of law, that is what the rule of law has done. When in all the nations of the world the rule of law is the darling of the leaders and the plague of the people, we ought to begin to recognize this. We have to transcend these national boundaries in our thinking.

Nixon and Brezhnev have much more in common with one another than we have with Nixon. J. Edgar Hoover has far more in common with the head of the Soviet secret police than he has with us. It’s the international dedication to law and order that binds the leaders of all countries in a comradely bond. That’s why we are always surprised when they get together—they smile, they shake hands, they smoke cigars, they really like one another no matter what they say.

What we are trying to do, I assume, is really to get back to the principles and aims and spirit of the Declaration
of Independence. This spirit is resistance to illegitimate authority and to forces that deprive people of their life and liberty and right to pursue happiness, and therefore under these conditions, it urges the right to alter or abolish their current form of government—and the stress had been on “abolish.”

But to establish the principles of the Declaration of Independence, we are going to need to go outside the law, to stop obeying the laws that demand killing or that allocate wealth the way it has been done, or that put people in jail for petty technical offenses and keep other people out of jail for enormous crimes.

My hope is that this kind of spirit will take place not just in this country but in other countries because they all need it. People in all countries need the spirit of disobedience to the state, which is not a metaphysical thing but a thing of force and wealth. And we need a kind of declaration of interdependence among people in all countries of the world who are striving for the same thing.
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

• Compare the methods of civil disobedience related to Howard Zinn's “Civil Disobedience” speech and the Detroit student walkouts.

• Evaluate and write about a contemporary form of civil disobedience.

Materials Needed

• Loose-leaf paper or poster paper

• Pens/pencils

• Paper (or student notebooks)


Optional: There is a one-minute video of students explaining their decision to walk out embedded in the article or, a contemporary, local example in your community in which people have exhibited civil disobedience, ideally using one of the examples students offered in the previous class.

• Access to computers with the Internet, envelopes, and stamps (if engaging students in the first writing option, below)

Time Needed

Three Class Periods (45 Minutes Each) dedicated to (1) creating a first draft of writing, (2) peer editing/revising, and (3) presenting/reflecting on work.

Please Note:

There are two options below for student-centered writing projects related to the concept of civil disobedience. We encourage you to offer both options to students, or choose one for the entire group.
Lessons 3, 4, and 5

- Divide students into groups of three to four.

- Pass out the “Detroit High School at Southwestern High, Western High Looks to Stop School Closures” by David Sands to groups (or an article that you have chosen). Ask students to read the article independently or aloud to each other and discuss the following questions in their small groups:
  - What was the cause, act, and effect of this example of civil disobedience? (*Note: Encourage students to refer to the poster created during the prior lesson, even creating a mini version of this sheet on their own paper to assist them in thinking about their responses.*)
  - Do you think Howard Zinn would agree or disagree with these students’ actions? Why or why not?

- Bring students back together as a class and ask small groups to share responses. Add their responses to the poster as they do so. Ask students as a class:
  - How is the act of civil disobedience these students chose different than the act of civil disobedience Howard Zinn used? Why do you think they chose a different act?
  - Do you support the actions of these students? Why or why not?

Writing Project: Option One

- Ask students as a class:
  - This is one example of civil disobedience in action. What are examples of civil disobedience that you have read or heard about, seen, or encountered? Did these examples take place in your school? In your community? In your city? What about around the country, or in the world? (*Note: Have examples ready to share with students if they have a difficult time coming up with them.*)

- Gather feedback and responses, writing students’ responses on the board or poster paper.
LESSONS 345 Breaking the Rules

- Explain that students are going to be writing letters to one of the parties involved in the article they read or the examples they have come up with. *(For example, using the case from the Detroit Public Schools, students could write letters to students who engaged in the walkout stating why they support or do not support their decision, or letters of protest to Detroit’s Department of Public Instruction, protesting the school closings.)* *(Note: Students should refer to the causes, acts, and effects of the civil disobedience as evidence for their opinion.)*

- Be sure to allow students time to find the best person to send their letters to by searching online or making inquiring calls. Students may also need time to research the latest news related to their area of interest to cite in their letters.

- After writing the first draft of their letters, ask students to review each other’s work and give suggestions related to content and editing.

- Before sending their letters, ensure students have copies ready for presentation.

**Writing Project: Option Two**

- Explain that students are going to write an essay, poem, play, speech, or any other type of writing to demonstrate a time when they engaged in civil disobedience or a time they would like to do so. Ask students to brainstorm a response to one of the following questions, either in pairs or on paper:
  
  - When have you broken a rule or norm within your group because you thought it was the right thing to do? What were the negative and positive consequences?
  
  - What is a rule or norm you would like to protest through civil disobedience? How would you go about doing this, and why? What do you think would happen? Why?
  
  - In either one of these writing options, be sure to reference the cause, act, and the effect/predicted effect of the act of disobedience.

- Ask several students to share ideas/examples they are thinking of with the class (this can be helpful in sparking other students’ imaginations and memories).

- After writing the first draft of their piece, ask students to review each other’s work and give suggestions related to content and editing.
Presentation (Options One and Two)

- Be sure to allow students time to perform or present their pieces.

- Presentation Options/Ideas:
  - Hold a performance, where students can get up on a “stage” and share their pieces. *(Prior to this activity, remind students of Matt Damon’s reading of Howard Zinn’s work. Discuss what made the performance compelling as a way to think about giving powerful performances.)*
  - Create a “gallery walk,” where students place their pieces around a room or hang them up along the corridors of a hallway. Place an additional piece of paper next to each piece. As students “walk by” each piece, they can write positive feedback and probing questions on the paper (this can also be done with Post-Its).
  - Place students in small groups to present to each other and engage in reflective dialogue on each piece.

Reflections

- Has your opinion on disobedience changed over the course of this unit? How?
- What have the examples you’ve seen in this unit shown you about the causes of civil disobedience? About the different acts of civil disobedience? About the effects of civil disobedience? *(Note: Encourage students to reference the poster created over the last two class periods, as well as the work they witnessed their classmates produce.)*
- How could you use what you wrote here to inspire others? Who do you think it could inspire? How?
- Looking back at the statements we thought about during the first lesson of this unit, are there any you would answer differently now?
Unit 2: Neighborhood Worlds

LESSON 1
Survey and Discuss

LESSON 2
Read Gwendolyn Brooks and Watch Jamila Woods Read “Beverly Hills, Chicago”

LESSON 3
Read and Listen to TEAM Englewood

LESSONS 4, 5, AND 6
History and Your Neighborhood
Summary
In this unit, students will consider what constitutes a neighborhood and whose history makes up neighborhood spaces. Students will complete the unit by interviewing and presenting histories of people in their local neighborhood.

Length
Six 45-Minute Lessons

Guiding Questions
• What constitutes a neighborhood?
• How does one viewpoint (of a neighborhood) coincide or disagree with others’ interpretations?
• Whose experiences compose the history of a neighborhood?

Primary Learning Goals
Students will:
• How is the act of civil disobedience these students chose different than the act of civil disobedience Howard Zinn used? Why do you think they chose a different act?
• Compare Gwendolyn Brooks’s and Team Englewood’s perception of neighborhoods.
• Analyze the Chicago Historical Society’s entry on the Englewood neighborhood, and compare its content to “Dear Englewood.”
• Interview, write up, and reflect on the histories of at least two people in their neighborhood.
• Evaluate how their knowledge, feelings, and ideas about their neighborhoods were altered or concretized through interviewing.

Texts
• “Beverly Hills, Chicago” by Gwendolyn Brooks
• “Dear Englewood” by TEAM Englewood students Tyranesha Clark, Craig Jackson, Angela Jordan, Ariel Miller, and Shantavia Rutcker
Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Addressed: ELA Anchor Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Lesson 1: Survey and Discuss

Lesson Objectives

Students will:
- Create visual representations of a neighborhood they are familiar with.
- Compare and contrast their classmates’ representations.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Markers and crayons
- A diverse array of magazines
- Glue and scissors

Time Needed

45 minutes

Prepare the Space

Remind students of the guidelines for discussion:
- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Speak your truth—we listen to everyone’s truth and our response is our own truth
- Respect the mic—whoever is talking has the floor
- Watch the clock—make sure others have a chance to speak
- Other guidelines that students have suggested/added
Lesson 1

- Write the following word on the board: *Neighborhood*

- Ask students to create a picture, collage, or map of a neighborhood they know well in response to this word. Encourage students to write associative adjectives or nouns (*verdant, gray, grocery stores, houses, park*) that they feel are affiliated with or explain their drawing/collage/map.

- Put students in groups of three or four. Have students share what they’ve created, encouraging other students to ask questions related to each student’s piece, including choices related to pictures, words, and labels. Once small groups have shared, ask them to discuss the following questions:
  - What did your pieces have in common?
  - How were your pieces different?
  - What do you think are the reasons your pieces are similar and/or different?
  - Based on looking at your pieces, how would you as a group define what a “neighborhood” is? (Have students write these on pieces of paper/poster paper)

- Have small groups share how their pieces were similar and different, as well as their group definition of “neighborhood.” Hang up students’ definitions around the room.

Reflections

- What did you learn about your own understanding of your neighborhood by engaging in this exercise?
- What did this activity cause you to reflect on?
- What did you learn about other people’s perceptions of neighborhoods from engaging in this activity?
Lesson Objectives

Students will:
• Identify and relate the primary messages of Gwendolyn Brooks’s poem, “Beverly Hills, Chicago.”
• Compare and contrast their classmates’ representations.

Materials Needed

• Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
• Pens/pencils
• Tape or tacks (for posting signs)
• Paper (or student notebooks)
• Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)
• Handout: “Beverly Hills, Chicago” by Gwendolyn Brooks

Time Needed

45 minutes

Prepare the Space

Write the following vocabulary words on the board, as well as their definitions. Prior to reading the Gwendolyn Brooks poem in the lesson, be sure to point out the words as a reference tool for students as they read. (Note: These are recommended words to review with students. We encourage you to review the poem and choose additional words you feel your students would benefit from knowing in advance.)

Refuse: something (such as paper or food waste) that has been thrown away; trash or garbage

Cease: to stop doing (something)

Gruff: rough or very serious in manner or speech

1 Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary, online at www.merriam-webster.com
Ask students (either as a “quick write,” in which students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes, or share in pairs and then as a whole group) to respond to the following statements:

- In the previous class, we created an interpretative drawing/collage/map of our neighborhoods, and explored our perceptions of what neighborhoods are. If you could live anywhere in Chicago or your city, would it be your neighborhood? If so, why? If not, where would you live? Where would you not want to live? Explain your answers.

Make sure students have a chance to share, either in small groups, pairs, or with the class as a whole.

Explain that today, students will be reading a poem about one author’s perception of a neighborhood, and how it causes her to reflect on the lives of the people she sees.

Introduce Gwendolyn Brooks through reading the following (also included in the attached handout):

Gwendolyn Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, on June 7, 1917, but was raised in Chicago, Illinois. She started writing poetry when she was young, creating more than seventy-five poems by the age of sixteen. She was the first black author to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and inspired many of the black poets of today. Gwendolyn Brooks died of cancer on December 3, 2000 (at eighty-three). She is buried at Lincoln Cemetery in Blue Island, Illinois.

Pass out copies of “Beverly Hills, Chicago” to students. Ask them to read the poem silently to themselves. Once students have read the poem, briefly pose the following questions to the class for discussion:

- What is the author commenting on in this poem?
- What is the tone of this poem (what is the feeling or mood)?
- We are about to watch a performance of this poem being read. How do you predict it will sound when delivered based on the tone?

Watch Jamila Woods read “Beverly Hills, Chicago.” (Available online at www.vimeo.com/141181699) Encourage students to read along with the text and take notes if they have further thoughts during this second reading. Ask students after watching:

- What was it like watching this poem be performed?
- Did your prediction of what the poem would “sound” like match with the performance?
- Did watching this performance help you understand the text we just read in a different way, or in more depth? If so, how?
Ask students to turn to a partner and discuss the following questions. After posing each question, ask different pairs to share their thoughts with the class and allow others to respond:

- Who is the “we” Gwendolyn Brooks refers to throughout the poem?
- What is the “Beverly Hills” neighborhood in Chicago (or your city) that Gwendolyn Brooks is (or could be) referring to?
- What does Gwendolyn Brooks believe about the lives of people in Beverly Hills, Chicago? Do you agree with her assessment?
- What do you believe about the lives of people in the neighborhood you would/would not want to live in? Do you think these beliefs would prove to be true if you moved there?
- Did watching this performance help you understand the text we just read in a different way, or in more depth? If so, how?

**Reflections**

- Did your answer to the question posed at the beginning of this class change after you read Beverly Hills, Chicago? If so, how?
- What did reading this poem cause you to reflect on?
- How do you think Gwendolyn Brooks would define a neighborhood? How does this overlap or differ from the definitions we created yesterday?
Gwendolyn Brooks

Gwendolyn Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, on June 7, 1917, but was raised in Chicago, Illinois. She started writing poetry when she was young, creating more than seventy-five poems by the age of sixteen. She was the first black author to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and inspired many of the black poets of today. Gwendolyn Brooks died of cancer on December 3, 2000 (at eighty-three). She is buried at Lincoln Cemetery in Blue Island, Illinois.

Beverly Hills, Chicago

“and the people live till they have white hair"
—E. M. Price

The dry brown coughing beneath their feet,
(Only a while, for the handyman is on his way)
These people walk their golden gardens.
We say ourselves fortunate to be driving by today.

That we may look at them, in their gardens where
The summer ripeness rots. But not raggedly.
Even the leaves fall down in lovelier patterns here.
And the refuse, the refuse is a neat brilliancy.

When they flow sweetly into their houses
With softness and slowness touched by that everlasting gold,
We know what they go to. To tea. But that does not mean
They will throw some little black dots into some water and add sugar and the juice of the cheapest lemons that are sold,

While downstairs that woman’s vague phonograph bleats, “Knock me a kiss.”
And the living all to be made again in the sweatingest physical manner
Tomorrow. . . . Not that anybody is saying that these people have no trouble.
Merely that it is trouble with a gold-flecked beautiful banner.

Nobody is saying that these people do not ultimately cease to be. And
Sometimes their passings are even more painful than ours.
It is just that so often they live till their hair is white.
They make excellent corpses, among the expensive flowers. . . .
Nobody is furious. Nobody hates these people.
At least, nobody driving by in this car.
It is only natural, however, that it should occur to us
How much more fortunate they are than we are.

It is only natural that we should look and look
At their wood and brick and stone
And think, while a breath of pine blows,
How different these are from our own.

We do not want them to have less.
But it is only natural that we should think we have not enough.
We drive on, we drive on.
When we speak to each other our voices are a little gruff
Lesson Objectives

Students will...

- Identify and relate the primary message of TEAM Englewood Community Academy’s poem “Dear Englewood.”
- Compare Gwendolyn Brooks’s and Team Englewood’s perception of neighborhoods.
- Analyze the Chicago Historical Society’s entry on the Englewood neighborhood and compare its content to “Dear Englewood.”

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Paper (or student notebooks)
- Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)
- Handout: “Dear Englewood” by TEAM Englewood students Tyranesha Clark, Craig Jackson, Angela Jordan, Ariel Miller, and Shantavia Rutcker

Time Needed

45 minutes

Lesson 3

- Ask students (either as a “quick write,” in which students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes, or share in pairs and then as a whole group) to respond to the following statements:
  - Earlier in this unit, you created pieces that represented your neighborhoods, as well as defined what a “neighborhood” is. Take a moment to reflect on these pieces and your neighborhood as a whole. What do you like about your neighborhood? What would you like to change?
LESSON 3

Read TEAM Englewood Community Academy’s “Dear Englewood”

- Make sure students have a chance to share, either in small groups, pairs, and/or with the class as a whole.

- Explain that today, students will be reading a poem focused on several Chicago students’ view of their neighborhood, and comparing it to their own views as well as the Gwendolyn Brooks poem.

- Pass out copies of “Dear Englewood.” Explain to students that Englewood is a historic area on the South Side of Chicago. Ask students to read the poem, then turn to a partner and respond to the following question:
  - Earlier you wrote down things you like about your neighborhood, and things you would like to change. How are the sentiments expressed by the students in this poem different and similar to how you feel about your neighborhood?

- Hand out the Chicago Historical Society’s (CHS) entry on Englewood. Divide students into small groups and assign each group a paragraph from the reading. Ask the students in each group to briefly read, discuss, take notes, and report back to the class on what their paragraph stated. Ask students the following questions:
  - How does the CHS account compare with this poem? Where do you see there are connections? Where do you see evidence of the “history” CHS explains in the poem students are writing about?
  - What does the CHS account leave out that this poem explains further?
  - Which account of “history” is correct? Why do you think some information and perspective about neighborhoods are recorded as “history” and others are not?

Reflections

- Does reading this poem and the CHS account change our definitions of “neighborhood”? What should be added, changed, or taken out of our definitions?
DEAR ENGLEWOOD

by TEAM Englewood Community Academy
Tyranesha Clark, Craig Jackson,
Angela Jordan, Ariel Miller,
and Shantavia Rutcker

Dear Englewood, why are you so careless? Deaths occur constantly and you just sit back and watch. Shouldn’t you speak up? Why sit back silently in the cut? Why so shy? Be the bold and beautiful you that we know you as. You’ve never been this way before. Holding back doesn’t help but hinders the problem. {WE NEED A CHANGE}

All I see is drug dealers and crack heads, all kinds of niggas the ones with dreads. Making a profit aint nothing stopping they got a whole operation everybody’s involved in.

Keeping supply in abandoned buildings just sitting there like a corpse in the morgue. Police come and they scatter like the roaches underneath their fridge on the kitchen floor. We need to stand together as one to make a change for the better and stick together.

Dear Englewood, when will you get rid of the negative stuff? When will you start respecting yourself? Ohhh Chicago why are you letting your shield of motivation and determination to be penetrated by violence and cruelty?!?!?!

I am addressing you as the windy city, which I hate, but somehow you’ve made me want to start over in life accomplishing everything. I have abolished the thought of being a follower— I am a leader.

To sum it all up Englewood is not really a bad place,
Kind of better than the hood around the way
Actually many people work together
Through the good, through the bad, in each and every weather.
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

• Interview, record, and reflect on the histories of at least two people in their neighborhood.
• Evaluate how their knowledge, feelings, and ideas about their neighborhoods are altered or verified through interviewing.

Materials Needed

• Pens/pencils
• Paper (or student notebooks)
• Handout: “General Interview Tips”

Time Needed

Three 45-minute class periods dedicated to (1) gathering research and/or creating interview questions (2) working on writing pieces (3) presenting

Note: This lesson encourages students to go into their neighborhood to explore the histories of ordinary people and their experiences. Partnering with a local community center, retirement facility, or even bringing in guest speakers to talk to the class could alter this assignment into a class project whereby students all record the histories of several people in one neighborhood (particularly relevant if all students are from the same neighborhood).

The end of this unit naturally entreats students to perform or present their work to the broader community or within their neighborhood. Consider finding a space for your students to hang their work, either within your organization/school, a local/city center, a neighborhood institution or storefront, or your local historical society.

This evident hunger for a history in which ordinary people can participate and recognize themselves, their forbearers, their neighbors, and their fellow workers, motivated the founding of VOICES.

—Voices of a People’s History website
www.peopleshistory.us/about/background
Voices in the Classroom

Unit 2: Neighborhood Worlds

Tell students that in order to record a “new” history about their neighborhood/neighbors, they will be interviewing two people from their neighborhood. Interview questions should focus on the interviewee’s experience of the neighborhood, as well as physical or historical areas of the neighborhood that the interviewer (student) does not know much about. Encourage students to find interviewees of different ages, perhaps even living in different places in the neighborhood itself. Some example questions might be:

- What was this area like when you were growing up? (Or when you moved here?)
- Has this neighborhood changed over time (or since you moved here)?
- I don’t know much about ______________________ in our neighborhood. What is your experience with that place? What do you know about it?

Pass out the handout “General Interview Tips” and read through it with students.

Give students time to plan their interview questions and whom they intend to interview.

Allow students time outside of class to complete their interviews. Once students have completed their interviews:

- Write about their newfound understandings of their neighborhood through their interviews in the form of an essay, poem, or article.
- Include in their writing how the interviews they engaged in changed, added to, or confirmed their own thoughts, opinions, and knowledge of their neighborhood.
- Encourage students to add to their original pieces from the beginning of the class, based on what they have heard/learned.
Allow students time outside of class to complete their interviews. Once students have completed their interviews:

- Hold a performance, where students can get up on a “stage” and share their pieces. (*Prior to this activity, remind students of Jamila Wood’s reading of Gwendolyn Brooks’s work and discuss what made the performance compelling. Use this as a way to assist students in thinking about giving powerful performances.*)

- Create a “gallery walk” where students place their pieces around a room or hang them up along the corridors of a hallway. Place an additional piece of paper next to each piece. As students “walk by” each piece, they can write positive feedback and probing questions on the additional paper (this can also be done with Post-Its).

- Place students in small groups to present to each other and engage in positive reflection on each piece.

**Reflections**

- How have your own thoughts or ideas about your neighborhood been altered through engaging in this project?

- Write the dictionary definition of “neighborhood” on the board. Ask students how this definition coincides with the class definitions that have been created. What is left out in the dictionary definition? In the class definitions?
General Interview Tips

- **Research.** Read and obtain background information about the subject, source or topic at hand before interviewing so that you can ask informed questions.

- **Ask simple questions.** Keep your questions short, to the point and focused. Otherwise you risk distracting or confusing your subject, or allowing him or her to answer only part of a complex question. Break down complicated questions into shorter, simpler questions.

- **Limit closed-ended questions; use mostly open-ended questions.** Closed-ended questions are yes-or-no questions or those that invite very basic, one-word answers. Open-ended questions often begin with “Why?” and “How?” or phrases such as “Tell me about …” or “How does that make you feel?” They invite longer, more insightful responses.

- **Ask follow-up questions.** An inexperienced interviewer asks a question, notes the response then moves on to the next question. Don’t stick to the script—listen to the answers and probe further before moving on to your prepared questions. Often it is during a follow-up question that the right quote falls into your lap. “Following up” can also involve a non-question, like a sympathetic response or a gesture of surprise or admiration.

- **Take notes.** While having an audio recorder is helpful, always keep a notebook handy and use it to jot down quotes, statistics or facts that strike you. You might also want to write down physical details about your environment and your subject’s appearance, facial expressions and voice. But be sure to look up from your notebook and maintain eye contact.

- **Be conversational without having a conversation.** Keep the interview informal and casual, not overly scripted, and go with the flow, allowing your subject to switch directions—as long as you remain in control of the interview and are prepared to steer it back to your topic as needed.

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Unit 3: Words I’ve Never Said

LESSON 1
Gallery Walk

LESSON 2
Read Frederick Douglass and Watch Morgan Freeman
Read “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro”

LESSON 3
Read Lupe Fiasco
“Words I’ve Never Said”

LESSONS 4, 5, AND 6
Speaking Truth
UNIT 3

Overview

Summary

In this unit, students will explore how and why people write and speak about controversial subjects, especially those that critique systems and society. Students will complete the unit by relating a personal belief or word choice that may be considered controversial in certain spaces.

Guiding Questions

• How do different mediums work to convey the message of a speaker?
• How do critiques of society persist and alter over time?
• What determines when and where people express their opinion?

Length

Five 45-Minute Lessons

Learning Goals

Students will ...

• Identify and relate the primary messages of Frederick Douglass’s “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” and Lupe Fiasco’s “Words I Never Said.”
• Compare Frederick Douglass’s and Lupe Fiasco’s societal critiques.
• Create a piece of writing focused on words/concepts students have not said in particular spaces, explaining their use of medium and language as it relates to their intended audience.

Texts

• “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” by Frederick Douglass
• “Words I Never Said” by Lupe Fiasco

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Addressed: ELA Anchor Standards

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify words and topics that are not permitted in various spaces in their lives.
- Compare and contrast their classmates’ responses.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Tape or tacks (for posting signs)

Time Needed

45 minutes

Prepare the Space

Place large poster paper around the room with the titles *Words or Topics I Can’t Say Around My Guardians/Family*, *Words or Topics I Can’t Say at School*, and *Words or Topics I Can’t Say Around My Friends*

*Remind students of the guidelines of discussion:*

- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Speak your truth—we listen to everyone’s truth and our response is our own truth
- Respect the mic—whoever is talking has the floor
- Watch the clock—make sure others have a chance to speak
- Other guidelines that students have suggested/added
Lesson 1

Review the instruction with your students:

- Each student should be given a marker and asked to spend three to four minutes brainstorming at each poster.
- Divide students into small groups (of three to four each). Assign each group to a poster.
- Once the posters are filled in, have students read the posters out loud to the group.

Reflections

- What did you learn about other people in this class from engaging in this activity?
- What did you find surprising about the different responses in our class? What did not surprise you?
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and relate the primary messages of Frederick Douglass’s “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro”
- Compare and contrast their classmates’ responses.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper
- Pens/pencils
- Poster paper (if students are participating in the optional vocabulary activity)
- Handout: Writing for Who? (optional)
- Handout: Frederick Douglass’s famous speech, “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro.”

Time Needed

45 minutes
(60 minutes with Vocabulary Activity)

Please Note: The version of “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” by Frederick Douglass presented here is an abridged version, and aligns with the performance given in The People Speak video. The unabridged version may be found in APPENDIX B (pg. 123).

Please Note:
The text used in this lesson focuses on the work of Frederick Douglass, who was formerly enslaved, in his address to the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society. This guide does not give specific detailed historical information on slavery in the United States or abolitionist movements, though it does reference events surrounding the creation of this specific text. We encourage you to make use of the following Zinn Education Foundation resources (in addition to many other resources online and in print) in exploring the deeply troubling history and aftermath of slavery in the United States as it makes sense in the context of your curriculum/programming:

Slavery and the United States: Teaching Resources and Tools from the Zinn Education Project
www.zinnedproject.org/teaching-materials/?themes=slavery
Vocabulary Activity (Optional) 15 minutes

Suggested Word List: devout, pale, disparity, reproach, rebuke, bequeath, rouse, propriety, impudence, barbarity, sham, denounce

Prior to reading the text, divide students into groups of two to four each. Give each group one or more of the vocabulary words and the definitions (see the suggested word list above—we encourage you to add to and detract from this list), and ask groups to discuss the following questions, writing their responses on the board or on a piece of poster paper to share with the class:

- Do you recognize what this word means? Where have you heard it? What do you think it might mean?
- What is a synonym of this word? An antonym?
- What is a possible way to remember this word? (Encourage students to be creative in coming up with a method for remembering based on related words, images, or even physical movements)
- What is a picture that your group feels represents this word?

Ask groups to share their responses on the poster paper or responses on the board with the class. Be sure to hang up the posters in places where students can see/reference them while reading.

When reading (optional):

- Read the beginning of the article aloud with students. Discuss with students how the definition of the first word fits in the context of the sentence. Then ask students to complete reading the rest of the document themselves, referencing the definitions as necessary.

Lesson 2

Ask students (either as a “quick write,” where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes, or share in pairs and then as a whole group) to respond to the following statements:

- What comes to mind when you think of the Fourth of July?
- What do you feel the Fourth of July represents? For whom?

Make sure students have a chance to share, either with the class as a whole or in small groups/pairs.
LESSON 2

Read Frederick Douglass

- Explain that today, students will be reading a speech by Frederick Douglass challenging whom and what the Fourth of July holiday honors.

- Introduce the context of the piece (also on the handout):

  The Fourth of July is nationally recognized as a day to celebrate the struggle for freedom and independence. But the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass, himself a former slave and the editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*, dared to challenge whom "Independence" Day celebrated. Here is part of his remarkable address to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in 1852.

- Hand out Frederick Douglass’s famous speech, “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro.” Ask students to read the poem silently to themselves. Once students have read the poem, briefly pose the following questions to the class for discussion:
  
  - What is Frederick Douglass’s message in this speech? (Encourage students to cite specific examples from the text)
  - What is the tone of this speech (what is the feeling or mood)?
  - We are about to watch a performance of this speech being read. How do you predict it will sound when delivered by an actor and based on the tone?

- Watch Morgan Freeman read “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro.” (Available online at www.history.com/topics/black-history/frederick-douglass/videos/the-meaning-of-july-4th-for-the-negro) Encourage students to read along with the text and take notes if they have further thoughts during this second reading. Ask students after watching:
  
  - What was it like watching this speech be performed?
  - Did your prediction of what the speech would “sound” like based on the tone match with the performance?
  - Did watching this performance help you understand the text we just read in a different way, or in more depth? If so, how?

- Ask students to get into small groups (of three to four each) and discuss the following questions (alternatively, assign each group one question to discuss and share about). After discussing, be sure groups share responses with the class, encouraging other groups to ask questions and respond:
  
  - Do you find this speech powerful?
  - Do you think the message of this speech is still relevant today?
Optional

Instead of addressing the questions below, pass out the “Writing for Who?” handout and ask students to complete it for Frederick Douglass’s piece.

• Why do you think Douglass chose to write a speech (an address)?
• Who do you think his audience was composed of (in terms of race, gender, and class) after reading this? Why?
• How do you think Douglass’s audience affected how he wrote this speech? What he included?

Reflections

• Yesterday you wrote about topics/words you can or can’t say around people. Where do you think Frederick Douglass could or could not give this speech? How are those reasons similar/different from those you wrote about on the posters?
“Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God—both for your sakes and ours—that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions. Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful.

But such is not the state of the case.

I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary.

Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me.

This Fourth July is yours, not mine.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O, had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

For it is not light that is needed, but fire. It is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened. The conscience of the nation must be roused. The propriety of the nation must be startled. The hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed. And its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.
What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.

To him, your celebration is a sham. Your boasted liberty, an unholy license. Your national greatness, swelling vanity. Your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless. Your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence. Your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery. Your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages.

There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour. Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival."

Frederick Douglass
1818–1895
**Lesson Objectives**

Students will:

- Identify and relate the primary message of Lupe Fiasco’s “Words I've Never Said.”
- Compare Frederick Douglass’s and Lupe Fiasco’s societal critiques.

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**Materials Needed**

- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)
- **Handout:** Lupe Fiasco’s “Words I Never Said”
- **Handout:** Writing for Who? (optional)

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**Time Needed**

45 minutes

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**Please Note:** There are expletives used in Lupe Fiasco’s lyrics. You may wish to check with your school or program on language policies prior to printing, copying, and listening to this piece with students.

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**Lesson 3**

- Ask students to respond to the following statement either as a “quick write” (where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes) or orally in pairs and then as a whole group:
  - Earlier in this unit, you wrote down words you can’t say in different spaces/places in your life. Choose one of the words you wrote down. Which of those words have you never said in those spaces? Why? What would happen if you did?

- Make sure students have a chance to share, either in pairs and/or with the class as a whole.

- Explain that today, students will be reading a poem focused on one artist’s words he “never said.”
LESSON 3

Read Lupe Fiasco

- Make sure students have a chance to share, either in pairs and/or with the class as a whole.
- Explain that today, students will be reading a poem focused on one artist’s words he “never said.”
- Divide the class into three groups, assigning each group to be responsible for a verse from the song. Explain that those groups should pay particular attention to the content of their verse while listening to the song as a whole.
- Pass out copies of lyrics to “Words I Never Said.” Listen to Lupe Fiasco’s song while students read along: www.soundcloud.com/atlanticrecords/words-i-never-said-ft-skylar
- After listening to the song, ask students in each group to discuss the content of each verse they were “assigned” in more depth. Explain that many of the verses make allusions to people or events. Encourage students to use a computer or their smartphones to look up these references if they are not familiar with them.
- Have each small group share their findings with the class, encouraging other groups to ask questions of each other and add interpretations. After students have shared, discuss the following as a class:
  - Why do you think the title of this piece is “Words I Never Said”?  
  (Optional: instead of addressing the questions below, pass out the Writing for Who? handout and ask students to complete it for Lupe Fiasco’s piece)
  - Who do you think Lupe Fiasco’s intended audience is? Why?
  - Why do you think the author chose to write a song rather than another format (such as an essay or an article) to get his point across? Do you find the use of a song to get his point across powerful? Why or why not?
  - How does the message in this piece compare to the message in Frederick Douglass’s piece?

Reflections

- On our posters you wrote about topics/words you can or can’t say around people. Where do you think Lupe Fiasco could and could not perform this piece? How are those reasons similar and different from those you wrote about at the beginning of class?
“Words I Never Said”

By Lupe Fiasco
( featuring Skylar Grey)

[Skyler Grey]
It’s so loud inside my head
With words that I should have said!
As I drown in my regrets
I can’t take back the words I never said
I can’t take back the words I never said

[Lupe Fiasco]
I really think the war on terror is a bunch of bullshit
Just a poor excuse for you to use up all your bullets
How much money does it take to really make a full clip
9/11 building 7 did they really pull it
Uhh, and a bunch of other cover ups
Your child’s future was the first to go with budget cuts
If you think that hurts then, wait here comes the uppercut
The school was garbage in the first place, that’s on the up and up
Keep you at the bottom but tease you with the upercrust
You get it then they move it so you never keeping up enough
If you turn on TV all you see’s a bunch of “what the fucks”
Dude is dating so and so blabbering bout such and such
And that ain’t Jersey Shore, homie that’s the news
And these the same people that supposed to be telling us the truth
Limbaugh is a racist, Glenn Beck is a racist
Gaza Strip was getting bombed, Obama didn’t say shit
That’s why I ain’t vote for him, next one either
I’m a part of the problem, my problem is I’m peaceful
And I believe in the people.

[Skyler Grey]
It’s so loud inside my head
With words that I should have said!
As I drown in my regrets
I can’t take back the words I never said
I can’t take back the words I never said

Stream “Words I Never Said” at:
www.soundcloud.com/atlanticrecords/words-i-never-said-ft-skylar
[Lupe Fiasco - Verse 2]
Now you can say it ain't our fault if we never heard it
But if we know better than we probably deserve it
Jihad is not a holy war, where’s that in the worship?
Murdering is not Islam!
And you are not observant
And you are not a Muslim
Israel don't take my side cause look how far you’ve pushed them
Walk with me into the ghetto, this where all the Kush went
Complain about the liquor store but what you drinking liquor for?
Complain about the gloom but when’d you pick a broom up?
Just listening to Pac ain't gone make it stop
A rebel in your thoughts, ain’t gon make it halt
If you don’t become an actor you’ll never be a factor
Pills with million side effects
Take em when the pain’s felt
Wash them down with diet soda!
Killin off your brain cells
Crooked banks around the world
Would gladly give a loan today
So if you ever miss a payment
They can take your home away!

[Skyler Grey]
It's so loud inside my head
With words that I should have said!
As I drown in my regrets
I can’t take back the words I never said
I can’t take back the words I never said

[Lupe Fiasco - Verse 3]
I think that all the silence is worse than all the violence
Fear is such a weak emotion that’s why I despise it
We scared of almost everything, afraid to even tell the truth
So scared of what you think of me, I’m scared of even telling you
Sometimes I’m like the only person I feel safe to tell it to
I’m locked inside a cell in me, I know that there’s a jail in you
Consider this your bailing out, so take a breath, inhale a few
My screams is finally getting free, my thoughts is finally yelling through
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Create a piece of writing focused on words/concepts students have not said in particular spaces, explaining their choice of medium and language as it relates to their intended audience.

Materials Needed

- Pens/pencils
- Paper
- Access to technology (optional)

Time Needed

Three 45-minute lessons dedicated to (1) formulating writing objectives and creating a first draft (2) peer review and revision, and (3) performing.

Lesson(s)

- Ask students to respond to the following statements either as a “quick write” (where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes) or share in pairs and then as a whole group:
  - In our previous lesson, you wrote down what might happen if you said one of the words or brought up one of the topics you “can’t say” in certain spaces. What would put you in a position to bring up that topic or say those words in the spaces we discussed?

- Explain that throughout this unit, students have been focusing on the work of two authors who made the decision to speak their minds and their “truths,” even when it might be deemed controversial. Students have also been exploring why these authors may have written in the mediums and language they did, and thought about those authors’ potential audiences in the process. Now, students will be thinking about topics and/or words that others might find controversial and how they want to present those ideas to a specific audience.

- Ask students to respond to the following statements either as a “quick write” (where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes) or share in pairs and then as a whole group:
  - In our previous lesson, you wrote down what might happen if you said one of the words or brought up one of the topics you “can’t say” in certain spaces. What would put you in a position to bring up that topic or say those words in the spaces we discussed?
LESSON 4

Speaking Truth

- **Thinking about who their target audience is** (is it the institution or person who has—through policy or social pressure—not allowed the topic or words to be spoken? Is it the general public? Is it high school students in your city?)

- **Based on their intended audience, thinking about the kind of language they plan on using** (Formal language to combat an institutional policy? Colloquial language to reach a high school audience?)

- **What kind of writing they feel will be best to convey their message** (An essay? Poem? Rap? Article? Short story?)

(No**te: refer back to conversations the class engaged in—or the handout students filled out—related to Frederick Douglass’s and Lupe Fiasco’s audiences, purposes, and chosen forms of writing/speaking)

- Allow students time to plan, write, and create in class. Once students have completed their writing, have them pair up or in small groups for peer review. Ensure students question the choices their partners/group members made relating to audience, language, and writing medium. Allow time for students to make revisions based on their conversations and feedback.

- Create a space for students to present their work. Some suggestions for presenting:
  - Hold a performance space, where students can get up on a “stage” and share their pieces. (Prior to this activity, remind students of Morgan Freeman’s reading of Frederick Douglass’s work and Lupe Fiasco’s song as a way to think about giving powerful performances)
  - Create a “gallery walk,” where students place their pieces in different places around a room or hang them up along the corridors of a hallway. Place an additional piece of paper next to each piece. As students “walk by” each piece, encourage them to write positive feedback and probing questions on the additional paper (this can also be done with Post-Its).
  - Place students in small groups to present to each other and engage in positive reflection on each piece.
Reflections

- What did our pieces seem to have in common? How did they differ?
- How were the pieces you wrote similar or different to the text we read by Frederick Douglass? By Lupe Fiasco?
- How do the texts we have read in this unit, our own included, help us begin to answer one of this unit’s guiding questions: How do critiques of society persist and alter over time?
- We have all just written powerful texts voicing our opinions. What is the next step for your piece? Who will you share it with—the audience that you wrote the piece for, or others? How can we assist each other in sharing our pieces with a broader audience?
### Writing for Who?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Author and Title</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What <strong>kind of language</strong> is this author using? (formal, informal, slang, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote an example from the text of the kind of language this author is using.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think this author wants to read/hear their work? Who seems to be/who is their <strong>intended audience</strong>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Think about: the language authors have chosen to write in. What might that say about who they want to listen to/read their words?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What form of writing (essay, speech, poem, article) has the author chosen to use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think the form of writing affects who will/would listen to or read this text?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LESSON 1
Read Stella Nowicki

LESSON 2
Read “In the Name of...” by Kevin Coval

LESSONS 3, 4, AND 5
Documenting Resistance
Summary
In this unit, students will identify and evaluate the causes and effects of acts of resistance. To complete the unit, students will critique the cause, form, and effect of a form of resistance they or someone they know has engaged in.

Guiding Questions
• When do people engage in resistance?
• What forms does resistance take?
• What factors determine the form of resistance people engage in?

Length
Five 45-Minute Lessons

Learning Goals
Students will:
• Identify and relate the primary components (what, why, how, and result) of resistance in Stella Nowiki’s account of working in the stockyards, Michael Pearson’s article on the Chicago Teachers Union strike, and Kevin Coval’s poem, “In the Name of...”
• Analyze and compare the causes, form, and effects of resistance in Stella Nowicki’s account and the Chicago Teachers Union strike.
• Critique the cause, form, and effect of resistance they or someone they know has engaged in.

Texts
• Stella Nowicki’s account of her experience in the Chicago stockyards, from Alice and Staughton Lynd’s Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers
• Kevin Coval’s poem “In the Name of...”
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and relate primary components (what, why, how, and result) of resistance in Stella Nowicki’s account of working in the stockyards.
- Compare their predictions of what a spoken performance would be like and an actual staged reading of Stella Nowicki’s account of working in the stockyards.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper
- Pens/pencils
- Poster paper (if students are participating in the optional vocabulary activity)
- Handout: Stella Nowicki’s account of working in the Chicago stockyards (from Alice and Staughton Lynd’s Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers)

Time Needed

45 minutes

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Addressed: ELA Anchor Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
Prepare the Space

Write “resistance” at the top of a large piece of poster paper or butcher paper. With a marker, divide the paper into four columns: what, why, how, and result.

Please Note:
The lessons in this unit focus on forms of resistance that are (often) linked to labor unions. This guide does not give specific detailed historical information on labor unions in the United States, though it does make explicit reference to them contextually. We encourage you to make use of the following Zinn Education Foundation resources (in addition to many other resources online and in print) in exploring the complex history of labor unions in the United States as it makes sense in the context of your curriculum/programming:

Labor: Teaching Resources and Tools from the Zinn Education Project
www.zinnedproject.org/teaching-materials/?themes=labor

Remind students of the guidelines of discussion:

• Disagree without being disagreeable
• Speak your truth—we listen to everyone’s truth and our response is our own truth
• Respect the mic—whichever is talking has the floor
• Watch the clock—make sure others have a chance to speak
• Other guidelines that students have suggested/added

Lesson 1

- Write the word “resistance” on the board. Ask students to respond to the following statements either as a “quick write” (where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes) or in pairs and then as a whole group:
  - What does this word mean to you?
  - Where have you heard it?
  - Do you associate this word with “bad” or “good” things? Why?
LESSON 1

Read Stella Nowicki

- Make sure students have a chance to share with the class. As they do so, begin to fill in the “what” part of the poster with student responses. Explain that the class will be coming back to the poster throughout the unit. *(Optional: have students create their own mini-version of the larger poster on a piece of notebook paper. Here, they can keep their own notes on what is being said/written throughout the unit)*

- Explain that today, students will be reading an account by Stella Nowicki, who exhibited resistance throughout her life.

- Introduce the context of the piece (also included on the handout):

  Chicagoan Vicky Starr, who also used the alias Stella Nowicki, told historians Alice and Staughton Lynd about her experiences in the “Back of the Yards”—the meatpacking factories. Unless you’ve read the Lynds’s book *Rank and File* or saw the 1970s documentary *Union Maids* that features Stella Nowicki, you’d never know this story. But it was the Stellas of Chicago—the “rank and file” members of the city’s unions—who won protections that saved workers’ lives.

- Hand out copies of Stella Nowicki’s account of her experience in the stockyards of Chicago. Ask students to read the account silently to themselves. Once students have read the piece, briefly pose the following questions to the class for discussion:
  - What is happening in this account?
  - What does this piece have to do with “resistance”?*
  - What is the tone of this account (what is the feeling or mood)?
  - We are about to watch a performance of this account being read. How do you predict it will sound when delivered by an actor?

- Watch Maritza Cervantes read Stella Nowicki’s account ([www.vimeo.com/48836126](http://www.vimeo.com/48836126)). Encourage students to read along with the text and take notes if they have further thoughts during this second reading. Ask students after watching:
  - What was it like watching this account be performed?
  - Did your prediction of what the account would “sound” like match with the performance?
  - Did watching this performance help you understand the text we just read in a different way, or in more depth? If so, how?
LESSON 1

Read Stella Nowicki

- Ask students to get into small groups (of three to four each) and answer the following questions:
  - Why did Stella Nowicki resist?
  - How did Nowicki resist?
  - What were the results of Nowicki resisting?
  - Were Nowicki’s actions effective? If so, why?
  - Do you think the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of her actions related to how Nowicki resisted? In what way?

- Bring students back together, and have small groups share. As they do so, fill in the poster from the beginning of class. Encourage students to respond to each other. Make sure to leave room on the paper, as it will continue to be used in the next class.

Reflections

- After looking more closely at the ways in which Stella Nowicki resisted, is there anything we should change/add/take away from our definition(s) of resistance created at the beginning of class?
I ran away from home at age 17. I had to because there was not enough money to feed the family in 1933 during the Depression.

I was doing housework for $4 a week and I hated it. So Herb suggested that I get a job in the stockyards. One of the ways to get a job was to go down to the employment office. Every morning you got there by six or six-thirty. There were just so many benches and they would all be filled early. They would only need one, maybe two people.

This woman, Mrs. McCann, women’s hiring director, would look around for the biggest and brawniest person. “Have you had experience?” she asked. I said, “Well not in the stock yards but we used to butcher our own hogs at home.” I carried this big steel and that impressed her. Mrs. McCann hired me.

In 1933–34 we worked six-hour shifts at 37 1/2 cents an hour. We would have to work at a high rate of speed. It was summer. It would be so hot that women used to pass out. The ladies’ room was on the floor below and I would help carry these women down almost vertical stairs into the washroom. We started talking union.

The thing that precipitated it is that on the floor below they used to make hotdogs and one of the women, in putting the meat into the chopper, got her fingers caught. There were no safety guards. Her fingers got into the hotdogs and they were chopped off. It was just horrible.

Three of us “colonizers” had a meeting during our break and decided this was the time to have a stoppage and we did. All six floors went on strike. We just stopped working right inside the building, protesting the speed and the unsafe conditions. We got the company to put in safety devices.

Soon after the work stoppage the supervisors were looking for the leaders because people were talking up the action. They found out who was involved and we were all fired. I was blacklisted.

I got a job doing housework again and it was just horrible. I just couldn’t stand it. I would rather go back and work in a factory, any day or night.
A friend of mine who had been laid off told me that she got called to go back to work. Meanwhile she had a job in an office and she didn’t want to go back to the stockyards, so she asked me if I wanted to go in her place. She had used the name “Helen Ellis.”

I went down to the stockyards and it was the same department, exactly the same job on the same floor where I had been fired. But it was the afternoon and Mrs. McCann wasn’t there. Her assistant was. She told me that I would start work the following afternoon.

I got my hair cut really short and hennaed. I thinned my eyebrows and penciled them, wore a lot of lipstick and painted my nails. I came in looking sharp and not like a country girl, so I passed right through and I was hired as Helen Ellis on the same job.

After several days the forelady, Mary, who was also Polish, came around and said, “OK, Helen, I know you’re Stella. I won’t say anything but just keep quiet.”

She knew I was pro-union and I guess she was too, so I kept the job as Helen Ellis until I got laid off. Later on I was blacklisted under the name “Ellis.”

When I look back now, I really think we had a lot of guts. But I didn’t even stop to think about it at the time. It was something that had to be done. We had a goal. That’s what we felt had to be done and we did it.
Lesson 2

Voices in the Classroom

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and relate the primary components (what, why, how, and result) of resistance in Michael Pearson’s article on the Chicago Teachers Union strike and Kevin Coval’s poem, “In the Name of...”
- Analyze and compare the causes, form, and effects of resistance in Stella Nowicki’s account and the Chicago Teachers Union strike.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper
- Pens/pencils
- The poster or butcher paper begun in Lesson 1: Read Stella Nowicki
  OR, a contemporary example of resistance relevant to your area/community.
- Handout: Kevin Coval’s poem, “In the Name of...”
- Access to a few computers with the Internet, or students’ smartphones
- Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)

Time Needed

45 minutes

Lesson 2

- Write the dictionary definition of resistance on the board: Ask students to respond: does this correspond to the definitions we came up with? Does this definition offer something new or different? What doesn’t this definition offer that we recorded?
LESSON 2

Read “In the Name of...”

- Divide students into groups of three to four each. Explain that yesterday, students began to explore how resistance operates in action, and looked closely at the resistance of Stella Nowicki as an example. Today, students will be looking at a form of modern-day resistance.

- Pass out the article “Wins, Losses and Draws in Chicago School Strike” by Michael Pearson. Ask students to read through the text silently or aloud with their small group. Assign each group one of the following questions to discuss/report back to the class:
  - Why did the Chicago Teachers Union resist?
  - How did the Chicago Teachers Union resist?
  - What were the results of the Chicago Teachers Union resisting?

- Hand out Kevin Coval’s poem “In the Name of...” Ask students to follow along as they listen to Kevin Coval read the poem (available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLD4etrWXJY). Discuss the following as a class:
  - How was listening and reading this poem about the Chicago Teachers Union strike different than reading the newspaper article?
  - What were some of the references Coval made that you weren’t familiar with? Write these on the board, assigning one reference to every two to four students to look up on a computer or smartphone. Allow students a few minutes to look these up, then share with the class.
  - How/do these references, now that we know what they are, help us understand the message of the poem more clearly?
  - What can we add to the poster about the why/how/what after reading this poem? What did reading this poem help make clearer?

Reflections

- How were the reason for, actions, and results of the Chicago Teachers Union strike resisting similar to Stella Nowicki’s? How were they different?
"In the Name of..."
by Kevin Coval

“The revolution will not be standardized. The assault on public education started here. It needs to end here.” —Karen Lewis, CTU president

of course the teachers march in Chicago. they know & inherit & honor the history of the many standing against the tyranny of the few

this is a union town Most radical of all American cities: Big Bill Haywood’s town Nelson Algren would say

this is a fight against a mayor who is anti-union who sold unions out in NAFTA and the Clinton white house

the teachers strike for the heart & future of public education in this city in this country.

they strike after decades of republican-democrat strides toward charters. toward the right of public education being privatized.

they strike against Arne Duncan Obama’s architect of standardized education that privileges the privileged, whose kids are in the suburbs
or University of Chicago lab schools

the teachers strike
in the Chicago Tradition
allied with trade unionists
and Pullman Porters, in solidarity
with the Haymarket Martyrs
and Republic Window workers.

the teachers honor those who died
in the 1937 Memorial Day massacre
when cops shot steel workers.
they honor those who build
the country, who ensured the 8-hour day
in the name of;
Lucy Parsons
Albert Parsons
& Rudy Lozano

in the name of;
Gene Debs
Mother Jones
Addie Wyatt &
Jane Addams

in the name of;
Studs Terkel
his red socks
in solidarity, he rocks, from the grave.
he would’ve been on this picket line
with the teachers
fighting the good fight
in the long haul
standing with the many
against the tyranny of the few.
standing with the teachers

firmly rooted on the shoulders of giants
in the great & honorable
Chicago Tradition:
the good fight
fighting for the future
of All
Lesson Objectives

Students will:
• Critique the cause, form, and effect of a form of resistance they or someone they know has engaged in.

Materials Needed

• Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
• Post-Its
• Pens/pencils
• Access to computers with the Internet, envelopes, and stamps (if engaging students in the first writing option, below)

Time Needed

Three class periods (45 minutes each) dedicated to (1) brainstorming and creating a first draft of writing, (2) peer editing/revising, and (3) presenting/reflecting on work.

Lessons 3, 4, and 5

- Hand out Post-Its to students.
- Ask students to respond to the following statement:
  • Throughout the course of this unit, we have been exploring people and groups of people who resisted. When have you, or someone you know, resisted? Write your response on a Post-It and place at the front of the room.
- Make sure students get to share what they wrote, either with partners and then the class, or a few students with the class as a whole.
- Ask every student to stand up and go to the poster, picking up one Post-It note that isn’t his or hers at random.
■ Explain that over the course of this unit, students have been reflecting on what it means to resist and why, when, and how people do so. While these forms of resistance were written about, there are many examples of people who exhibit resistance that aren’t ever recognized. Students will be exploring in more depth the acts of resistance that people in their class have engaged in, pairing up with the person whose Post-It note they are holding.

■ Share the steps students will take to discuss and share a classmate’s example of resistance:
  - Students will interview the classmate whose Post-It they chose about a time they resisted, either personally or with a group of people. Students will make sure that they gather facts about why and how the person/group of people resisted, what the effect was, and how the person feels looking back on it now. (Note: students do not necessarily have to discuss the incident they wrote about on the Post-It.)
  - After their interview, students will create a visual depiction (in the form of a piece of art, collage, or media presentation) of the event their partner has shared, or write about it in the form of a story or poem.
  - Students will write a short additional piece that makes sure to explain: who they interviewed, what the resistance was that the person discussed, why they decided to resist in the instance they discussed, how they did so, what the effects were, and what the person says or feels about what took place now.

■ Allow students time to interview each other in class, as well as time to decide and work on their depiction of the event and the short, accompanying description. (Note: this is anticipated to take two class periods.)

■ Create a space for students to present their work and the incidents of resistance by their classmates. Some suggestions for presenting:
  - Create a “gallery walk,” where students place their pieces in different places around a room or hang them up along the corridors of a hallway. Place an additional piece of paper next to each piece. As students “walk by” each piece, they can write positive feedback and probing questions on the additional paper (this can also be done with Post-Its).
  - Place students in small groups to present to each other and engage in positive reflection on each piece.
  - Find a prominent display arena (in your school or local community) where students can come to present, discuss, and hang their work. Invite students’ family members and local community members to come view the presentations.
Reflections

- After engaging in the texts and incidences of resistance we discussed over the course of this unit, what do you think determines whether resistance is effective?
- How do you see yourself using what we have discussed in this unit to make decisions about if, why, and how you will resist in the future?
Unit 5: Gender and Society

LESSON 1
What We Identify

LESSON 2
Read Sojourner Truth and Watch Kerry Washington Read “Ain’t I A Woman?”

LESSON 3
Read Willie Perdomo’s Poem “Crazy Bunch BBQ at Jefferson Park” and Tony Medina’s Poem “My Old Man was Always on the Lam”

LESSON 4
Manifestos
Unit 5: Gender and Society

Overview

Summary
In this unit, students will examine gender perceptions and identity. Students will complete the unit by creating “gender manifestos” critiquing societal or interpersonal gender assumptions.

Guiding Questions
- Where do notions of gender identity come from?
- How do people express their understanding of gender identity roles?
- How could interpretations of gender be altered?

Learning Goals
Students will:
- Identify the primary messages of Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” and “Truth I Want to Thank You” by Alicia Hinton and Dimple Cage.
- Relate the explicit and implicit examinations of gender in Tony Medina’s “My Old Man Was Always on the Lam” and “Crazy Bunch Barbeque at Jefferson Park” by Willie Perdomo.
- Evaluate and hypothesize the origin of gender roles and associations.
- Create “gender manifestos” based on their critique of societal or interpersonal gender associations.

Texts
- “Ain’t I a Woman?” by Sojourner Truth
- “Crazy Bunch Barbecue at Jefferson Park” by Willie Perdomo
- “My Old Man Was Always on the Lam” by Tony Medina
- “Truth I Want to Thank You” by Alicia Hinton and Dimple Cage

Additional Resources
This unit deals heavily with issues related to sex, gender, and identity. In addition to the discussions and texts that ask students to reflect on sex, gender, and societal assumptions, there may be other resources you wish to consult in making informed decisions about the presentation of materials, including:

• GLSEN:
  www.glsen.org

• Safe Schools Coalition:
  www.safeschoolscoalition.org

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Addressed: ELA Anchor Standards**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Create collage and word posters in relation to the words “man” and “woman”
- Evaluate the differences of opinion in their class
- Analyze their associations with “man” and “woman” as related to sex, gender, or both

Materials Needed

- Poster or butcher paper
- Pens/pencils
- Magazines and newspapers
- Access to technology (computers or smartphones)

Time Needed

45 minutes

Prepare the Space

Remind students of the guidelines of discussion:

- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Speak your truth—we listen to everyone’s truth and our response is our own truth
- Respect the mic—whoever is talking has the floor
- Watch the clock—make sure others have a chance to speak
- Other guidelines that students have suggested/added

Lesson 1

Ask students to respond in writing to the following:

- When you think of the word “man,” what words and images come to mind?
- When you think of the word “woman,” what words and images come to mind?
What We Identify

- Make sure students have a chance to share, either in pairs and/or with the class as a whole.
- Divide students into small groups of three to four each or pairs.
- Explain that students will be making collages and drawings to go along with the words they wrote down on poster paper with their groups/partners, sharing ideas and adding words as groups discuss throughout the course of their work.
- Pass out magazines, scissors, glue, and other supplies. Encourage students to make small drawings on their posters if they do not find a picture that fits what they are trying to convey.
- After students have completed their posters, briefly ask each group to share their poster with the class, explaining their choice of words and visual imagery. (Note: be sure to hang the posters after students have presented.)

Reflections

- What did this activity cause you to reflect on?
- In presenting the posters, what commonalities did you see in our class in terms of what we associate with “man” and “woman”? What differences did you observe? What might account for these commonalities and differences?
- Oxford Dictionary defines sex as: “a person’s genitals” and gender as: “The state of being male or female, typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.” Is what we’ve written and recorded on these posters relevant to sex, gender, or both? What are some examples of each?

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the primary message of Sojourner’s Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?”
- Compare their predictions of a spoken performance and an actual staged reading of Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?”
- Relate the message of “Ain’t I a Woman?” to their own thoughts, opinions, and assumptions about gender and sex.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Paper (or student notebooks)
- Access to technology (computers or smartphones)
- Handout: “Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?”

Time Needed

45 minutes

Prepare the Space

Write the following vocabulary words on the board, as well as their definitions for referencing prior to and while reading Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” (Note: These are recommended words to review with students. We encourage you to preview the poem and choose additional words you feel your students would benefit from knowing in advance.)

- Kilter: harmony or balance
- 'twixt: Stands for “betwixt,” meaning “between”

Lesson 2

Ask students to respond to the following statements either as a “quick write” (where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes) or share in pairs and then as a whole group:

- When have you or someone you’ve known had assumptions made about them based on their sex or gender? What happened? (Note: In posing this question, be sure to highlight the difference between gender and sex that students discussed at the end of the previous class.)

Make sure students have a chance to share, either in pairs and/or with the class as a whole.

Explain that students will be reading one remarkable woman’s speech declaring her thoughts on the rights of women and Black people, while questioning assumptions of what it means to be a woman. Be sure to note that this speech was recorded (in writing) by someone witnessing Truth’s speech, thus, there is a point at which an audience member interjects and Truth responds.

Introduce Sojourner Truth through reading the following aloud (also located on the handout):

Born enslaved in New York, Sojourner Truth later became a champion for the rights of Black people and a widely known antislavery spokesperson. At a gathering in support of women’s rights in Akron, Ohio (while slavery was still a common practice in many states), she gave her famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?” The speech became widely known as a powerful social critique and left an enduring mark on feminist history.

Pass out Sojourner truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” Ask students to read the speech silently to themselves. Once students have read the speech, briefly pose the following questions to the class for discussion:

- What is Sojourner Truth critiquing in this speech?
- What is the tone of this speech (the feeling or mood)?
- We are about to watch a performance of this speech being read. How do you predict it will sound when delivered based on the tone?

Watch Kerry Washington read Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” (available online at www.vimeo.com/15268513) Encourage students to read along with the text and take notes if they have further thoughts during this second reading. Ask students (as a class) after watching:

- What was it like watching this speech be performed?
Reading Sojourner Truth

- Did your prediction of what the speech would “sound” like based on the tone match with the performance?

- Did watching this performance help you understand the text we just read in a different way, or in more depth? If so, how?

- Ask students to get into small groups (of three to four) to discuss the following questions, and remind them to take notes on their discussion (alternatively, assign each group one question to share in the discussion). After discussing, be sure groups share responses with the class, encouraging other groups to ask questions and respond:
  
  - Do you think the message of this speech is still relevant today? Why or why not?
  - If Sojourner Truth were to write what it means for her to be a woman, similarly to what we completed in our last class, what do you think her list would include? Would anything on this list coincide with what you wrote on your posters?

Reflection

- Did anything Sojourner Truth wrote about coincide with what you wrote in your quick write and/or discussed at the beginning of class regarding assumptions about gender? How?

- What did reading Sojourner Truth’s speech help you reflect on?

- After our reading, discussion, and reflection, is there anything you’d like to add to the posters you created in our last class? Anything you wish to alter?
“Ain’t I a Woman”
Sojourner Truth (1851)

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter.

I think that ’twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon.

But what’s all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman?

Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman?

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Born enslaved in New York, Sojourner Truth later became a champion for the rights of Black people and a widely known antislavery spokesperson. At a gathering in support of women’s rights in Akron, Ohio (while slavery was still a common practice in many states), she gave her famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?” The speech became widely known as a powerful social critique and left an enduring mark on feminist history.
I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman?

I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what’s this they call it? . . . [member of the audience: Intellect . . .] That’s it, honey. What’s that got to do with women’s rights or negroes’ rights?

If my cup won’t hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ’cause Christ wasn’t a woman.

Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!

And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.
Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Evaluate and hypothesize the origin of gender roles and associations.
- Relate the explicit and implicit examinations of gender in Tony Medina’s “My Old Man Was Always on the Lam” and “Crazy Bunch Barbecue at Jefferson Park” by Willie Perdomo.

Materials Needed

- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)
- Handout: Willie Perdomo’s “Crazy Bunch Barbecue at Jefferson Park”
- Handout: Tony Medina’s “My Old Man Was Always on the Lam”
- Access to technology (computers or smartphones)

Time Needed

45 Minutes

Lesson 3

- Ask students to respond to the following statements as a “quick write” (where students jot their thoughts down for a few minutes):
  - Where do people’s ideas about gender and gender roles come from?
  - What or who do you think has had the most influence on how you think about and understand gender and gender roles?
LESSON 3
Reading Willie Perdomo and Tony Medina

- Make sure students have a chance to share, either in pairs or with the class as a whole.
- Explain that today students will be reading two poems, each from different poets. These poets address issues of gender, specifically masculinity, in their poetry.
- Divide the class into two groups (or several small groups), giving half of the class Willie Perdomo’s “Crazy Bunch Barbeque at Jefferson Park” and the other half Tony Medina’s “My Old Man Was Always on the Lam.”
- Ask each group to do the following:
  - Read the poem to themselves, then aloud (either taking turns or as a group)
  - Discuss the following:
    - How does the author show and/or tell what gender they are in this poem?
    - Where does it seem that the author is getting their idea of gender? Who is influencing this author’s ideas of gender?
    - Do you think this poem is primarily (mostly) about gender? What else do you think the author wants us to “get” or understand from reading this poem?
- Have groups each present the poem they read and their subsequent group discussion. Encourage the other group(s) to respond and speak to the group’s responses.

Reflection

- How did the poems we read compare in how they showed/talked about gender?
- How did the poems we read compare to Sojourner Truth’s speech?
- How did reading these poems and discussing where these poets’ influences were at compare to what you wrote about at the beginning of class?
- After our reading, discussion, and reflection, is there anything you’d like to add to the posters you created in our first class? Anything you wish to alter?
This is definitely
for the brothers who ain’t here;
who would’ve demanded that I
write a poem about
this get-together:
For those of us
who age in gangster years
where one night can equal
the rest of your life &
surviving the trade-off
was worth writing on the wall
& letting the world know
that we were here
forever.

The barbeque started
with a snap session:

Jerry had the best snap of the day
when he said that my family was so broke &
the fellas yelled “How broke?” & Jerry said,
“So broke that on Thanksgiving they had to eat
turkey-flavored Skittles.”

The laughter needed no help
when we exposed the stretch marks
of our growing pains.

Phil had barbeque on the grill.
He slapped my hand
when I tried to brush
extra sauce on a chicken leg:

Yo, go find something to do—
write a poem
write something
do something
I got this
I'm the Chef
you the Poet
talk about how glad you are to be here
look at that little boy on the baseball diamond
look at him run circles around second base
today is his birthday
write about how the wind
is trying to snatch his red balloon

It use to take a few shots
of something strong
before we could cry & say,
I love you.

We have always known
how to curse & bless the dead.
Now we let the silence work &
like the little boy's sneakers
disappearing in a cloud of dirt
we walk home in the sun
all grown up & full.

This is definitely
for the brothers who ain't here;
who would've forced me to
write a poem about
this get-together:
For those of us
who age in gangster years
where one night can equal
the rest of your life &
surviving the trade-off
was worth writing on the wall
& letting the world know
that we were here
forever.

New Hampshire, 2015

*“Crazy Bunch Barbeque at Jefferson Park” was originally published in *Smoking Lovely* by Willie Perdomo. Copyright 2003 Willie Perdomo. Published by Rattapallax Press, New York, NY. Reprinted by permission of author.*
My Old Man Was Always on the Lam
by Tony Medina

My old man was always on the lam
From love & life from family & me
Ran the streets like they was a

Treadmill & he, Richard Simmons,
Charles Atlas or Jack LaLanne
Ran through women like they was

The Holland Tunnel & he, a little
Red Corvette, a rented limo, a
Taxi with the meter off

My old man was always on
Course to get his mack on or his
Jones on with style for miles

Oh my old man had smarts, my old
Man had pride & integrity, read history
Books & studied society, he could’ve been a

Preacher a politician or magician
Put a spell on you with disappearing acts
Have you believe a lie was true

My old man I sure did love
As trite as it may sound or seem
As often as he would slide & scheme

My old man was always on the move
A black cat with nine lives
Landing on his feet

Had young girls come
To his funeral discreet
Behind straw hats
Had folks talk about him like he was
Stagolee or Shine, like life was the Titanic
& he was lapping fine

Stroke for stroke
What finally took him out
Maximized on pleasure

Left a hell of a good-looking corpse
My old man, so smooth & fine,
I hated to burn him up

Tony Medina
Lesson Objectives
Students will:

- Identify the primary message in “Truth I Want to Thank You” by Alicia Hinton and Dimple Cage.
- Create “gender manifestos” based on their critique of societal or interpersonal gender associations.

Materials Needed
- Loose-leaf paper or poster paper
- Pens/pencils
- Access to media technology, the Internet, and audio speakers (SmartBoard, projector)
- Handout: “Truth I Want to Thank You” by Alicia Hinton and Dimple Cage
- Access to technology (computers or smartphones)

Time Needed
45 minutes

Prepare the Space
Write the following word and definition on the board:

**Manifesto**: A written statement that describes the policies, goals, and opinions of a person or group.¹

Lesson 4
- Pass out “Truth I Want to Thank You” and ask students to read the poem in pairs (aloud or silently), discussing the following when they are completed:
  - What is the main message of this poem?
  - What do these authors want to see changed?
  - How do the authors cite Sojourner Truth to get their message across?
  - Refer to the definition of manifesto on the board. How might this poem be considered a manifesto? What are the manifesto goals that the authors indicate?

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary. [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)
LESSON 4 Manifestos

- Bring students together and share response to the discussion questions. Ask students to think about/keep in mind the different ways in which the authors they have read (in this unit) have critiqued and written about gender roles.

- Explain that students will be writing their own “manifesto” related to gender.

**Options to complete this activity are to:**
*(Note: offer students all options, add your own, or focus on one option for the class.)*

- Create a picture or collage that expresses how they would like gender (a specific gender, their experience with gender, or gender in general) to be understood and perceived by society.

- Write scripts showing how a “gendered” occurrence might happen now in their lives, and how they’d ideally like it to play out. Have other students act out each other’s scripts for the class or in small groups.

- Ask students to write an essay or a poem in which they creatively submit or explain their manifesto.

- Create a space for students to present their manifestos. Some suggestions for presenting:
  - Create a “gallery walk,” where students place their pieces in different places around a room or hang them up along the corridors of a hallway. Place an additional piece of paper next to each piece. As students “walk by” each piece, they can write positive feedback and probing questions on the additional paper (this can also be done with Post-Its).
  - Place students in small groups to present to each other and engage in positive reflection on each piece.
  - Find a prominent display arena (in your school or local community) where students can present, discuss, and hang their work. Invite students’ family members and local community members to come view the work and ask questions/leave notes.

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**Reflection**

- What did engaging in this final project help you reflect on?
- What did creating and hearing/reading your classmates’ manifestos cause you to reflect on?
- Looking back at the original posters you created the first day of the unit, what would you change/add/take away?
- Who else outside of this class can you share your manifesto with? Who do you think could benefit from hearing/reading your manifesto?
Truth I want to thank you
For speaking nothin’ but
You fit the definition perfectly according to Webster
—the true or an actual state of the matter
“Where did Christ come from?
From GOD and Woman
Man had nothin’ to do with it”
As those words that form that phase
That has never received as much praise
As it deserved
Lingers in my mind and for EVER is preserved
Because I know I, We, Us, You, Me
Deserve the best place everywhere
Cuz we are WOMEN
And no mud shall ever touch our shoes
And if that man over there
Isn’t man enough to help me over that ditch
I’m woman enough to admit
I don’t need your help in to any carriage
Over that ditch
Or given that best place any because
I am a WOMAN

Ain’t I a woman in words of Sojourner Truth
Man didn’t she speak the truth
Reaching out to our female youth.
I feel it’s time we are treated fair,
back in the day men say we didn’t belong there
In the work force only forced to stay at home just
to keep it clean
but those stereotypes boosted my self-esteem,
Motivated me to ignore the ignorance
and overcome all the struggles,
to walk over all those puddles, to get in those
carriages
and to find my own best place not just
because my race because my gender
I AM A WOMAN
Who will not surrender!
Ain’t I a woman who came from a woman that
came from a woman
So you do the math
We are the key to every path
We are the switch to every light
WITHOUT WOMAN THERE IS NO LIFE
The Problem Is Civil Obedience
By Howard Zinn (November 1970)—unabridged

I start from the supposition that the world is topsy-turvy, that things are all wrong, that the wrong people are in jail and the wrong people are out of jail, that the wrong people are in power and the wrong people are out of power, that the wealth is distributed in this country and the world in such a way as not simply to require small reform but to require a drastic reallocation of wealth. I start from the supposition that we don’t have to say too much about this because all we have to do is think about the state of the world today and realize that things are all upside down. Daniel Berrigan is in jail—a Catholic priest, a poet who opposes the war—and J. Edgar Hoover is free, you see. David Dellinger, who has opposed war ever since he was this high and who has used all of his energy and passion against it, is in danger of going to jail. The men who are responsible for the My Lai massacre are not on trial; they are in Washington serving various functions, primary and subordinate, that have to do with the unleashing of massacres, which surprise them when they occur. At Kent State University four students were killed by the National Guard and students were indicted. In every city in this country, when demonstrations take place, the protestors, whether they have demonstrated or not, whatever they have done, are assaulted and clubbed by police, and then they are arrested for assaulting a police officer.

Now, I have been studying very closely what happens every day in the courts in Boston, Massachusetts. You would be astounded—maybe you wouldn’t, maybe you have been around, maybe you have lived, maybe you have thought, maybe you have been hit—at how the daily rounds of injustice make their way through this marvelous thing that we call due process. Well, that is my premise.

All you have to do is read the Soledad letters of George Jackson, who was sentenced to one year to life, for a seventy-dollar robbery of a filling station. And then there is the U.S. Senator who is alleged to keep 185,000 dollars a year, or something like that, on the oil depletion allowance. One is theft, the other is legislation. Something is wrong, something is terribly wrong when we ship 10,000 bombs full of nerve gas across the country, and drop them in somebody else’s swimming pool so as not to trouble our own. So you lose your perspective after a while. If you don’t think, if you just listen to TV and read scholarly things, you actually begin to think that things are not so bad, or that just little things are wrong. But you have to get a little detached, and then come back and look at the world, and you are horrified. So we have to start from that supposition—that
things are really topsy-turvy.

And our topic is topsy-turvy: civil disobedience. As soon as you say the topic is civil disobedience, you are saying our problem is civil disobedience. That is not our problem. . . .

Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is the numbers of people all over the world who have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience. And our problem is that scene in All Quiet on the Western Front where the schoolboys march off dutifully in a line to war. Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world, in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves, and all the while the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem. We recognize this for Nazi Germany. We know that the problem there was obedience, that the people obeyed Hitler. People obeyed; that was wrong. They should have challenged, and they should have resisted; and if we were only there, we would have showed them. Even in Stalin's Russia we can understand that; people are obedient, all these herdlike people.

But America is different. That is what we've all been brought up on. From the time we are this high—and I still hear it resounding in Mr. Frankel's statement—you tick off, one, two, three, four, five lovely things about America that we don't want disturbed very much.

But if we have learned anything in the past ten years, it is that these lovely things about America were never lovely. We have been expansionist and aggressive and mean to other people from the beginning. And we've been aggressive and mean to people in this country, and we've allocated the wealth of this country in a very unjust way. We've never had justice in the courts for the poor people, for black people, for radicals. Now how can we boast that America is a very special place? It is not that special. It really isn't.

Well, that is our topic, that is our problem: civil obedience. Law is very important. We are talking about obedience to law—law, this marvelous invention of modern times, which we attribute to Western civilization, and which we talk about proudly. The rule of law, oh, how wonderful, all these courses in Western civilization all over the land. Remember those bad old days when people were exploited by feudalism? Everything was terrible in the Middle Ages—but now we have Western civilization, the rule of law. The rule of law has regularized and maximized the injustice that existed before the rule of law, that is what the rule of law has done. Let us start looking at the rule of law realistically, not with that metaphysical complacency with which we always examined it before. When in all the nations of the world the rule of law is the darling of the leaders and the plague of the people, we ought to begin to recognize this. We have to transcend these national boundaries in our thinking. Nixon and [Leonid] Brezhnev have much more in common with one another than we have with Nixon. J. Edgar Hoover has far more in common with the head of the Soviet secret police
than he has with us. It’s the international dedication to law and order that binds the leaders of all countries in a comradely bond. That’s why we are always surprised when they get together—they smile, they shake hands, they smoke cigars, they really like one another no matter what they say. It’s like the Republican and Democratic parties, who claim that it’s going to make a terrible difference if one or the other wins, yet they are all the same. Basically, it is us against them.

Yossarian was right, remember, in Catch-22? He had been accused of giving aid and comfort to the enemy, which nobody should ever be accused of, and Yossarian said to his friend Clevinger: “The enemy is whoever is going to get you killed, whichever side they are on.” But that didn’t sink in, so he said to Clevinger: “Now you remember that, or one of these days you’ll be dead.” And remember? Clevinger, after a while, was dead. And we must remember that our enemies are not divided along national lines, that enemies are not just people who speak different languages and occupy different territories. Enemies are people who want to get us killed.

We are asked, “What if everyone disobeyed the law?” But a better question is, “What if everyone obeyed the law?” And the answer to that question is much easier to come by, because we have a lot of empirical evidence about what happens if everyone obeys the law, or if even most people obey the law. What happens is what has happened, what is happening. Why do people revere the law? And we all do; even I have to fight it, for it was put into my bones at an early age when I was a Cub Scout. One reason we revere the law is its ambivalence. In the modern world we deal with phrases and words that have multiple meanings, like “national security.” Oh, yes, we must do this for national security! Well, what does that mean? Whose national security? Where? When? Why? We don’t bother to answer those questions, or even to ask them.

The law conceals many things. The law is the Bill of Rights. In fact, that is what we think of when we develop our reverence for the law. The law is something that protects us; the law is our right—the law is the Constitution. Bill of Rights Day, essay contests sponsored by the American Legion on our Bill of Rights, that is the law. And that is good.

But there is another part of the law that doesn’t get ballyhooed—the legislation that has gone through month after month, year after year, from the beginning of the Republic, which allocates the resources of the country in such a way as to leave some people very rich and other people very poor, and still others scrambling like mad for what little is left. That is the law. If you go to law school you will see this. You can quantify it by counting the big, heavy law books that people carry around with them and see how many law books you count that say “Constitutional Rights” on them and how many that say “Property,” “Contracts,” “Torts,” “Corporation Law.” That is what the law is mostly about. The law is the oil depletion allowance—although we don’t have Oil Depletion Allowance Day, we don’t have essays written on behalf of the oil depletion allowance. So there are parts of the law that are publicized and played up to us—oh, this is the law, the Bill of Rights. And
there are other parts of the law that just do their quiet work, and nobody says anything about them. It started way back. When the Bill of Rights was first passed, remember, in the first administration of [George] Washington? Great thing. Bill of Rights passed! Big ballyhoo. At the same time [Alexander] Hamilton’s economic program was passed. Nice, quiet, money to the rich—I’m simplifying it a little, but not too much. Hamilton’s economic program started it off. You can draw a straight line from Hamilton’s economic program to the oil depletion allowance to the tax write-offs for corporations. All the way through—that is the history. The Bill of Rights publicized; economic legislation unpublicized. You know the enforcement of different parts of the law is as important as the publicity attached to the different parts of the law. The Bill of Rights, is it enforced? Not very well. You’ll find that freedom of speech in constitutional law is a very difficult, ambiguous, troubled concept. Nobody really knows when you can get up and speak and when you can’t. Just check all of the Supreme Court decisions. Talk about predictability in a system—you can’t predict what will happen to you when you get up on the street corner and speak. See if you can tell the difference between the Terminiello [Terminiello v. Chicago] case and the Feiner [Feiner v. New York] case, and see if you can figure out what is going to happen. By the way, there is one part of the law that is not very vague, and that involves the right to distribute leaflets on the street. The Supreme Court has been very clear on that. In decision after decision we are affirmed an absolute right to distribute leaflets on the street. Try it. Just go out on the street and start distributing leaflets. And a policeman comes up to you and he says, “Get out of here.” And you say, “Aha! Do you know Marsh v. Alabama, 1946?” That is the reality of the Bill of Rights. That’s the reality of the Constitution, that part of the law which is portrayed to us as a beautiful and marvelous thing. And seven years after the Bill of Rights was passed, which said that “Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech,” Congress made a law abridging the freedom of speech. Remember? The Sedition Act of 1798.

So the Bill of Rights was not enforced. Hamilton’s program was enforced, because when the whisky farmers went out and rebelled, you remember, in 1794 in Pennsylvania, Hamilton himself got on his horse and went out there to suppress the rebellion to make sure that the revenue tax was enforced. And you can trace the story right down to the present day, what laws are enforced, what laws are not enforced. So you have to be careful when you say, “I’m for the law, I revere the law.” What part of the law are you talking about? I’m not against all law. But I think we ought to begin to make very important distinctions about what laws do what things to what people.

And there are other problems with the law. It’s a strange thing, we think that law brings order. Law doesn’t. How do we know that law does not bring order? Look around us. We live under the rules of law. Notice how much order we have? People say we have to worry about civil disobedience because it will lead to anarchy. Take a look at the present world in which the rule of law obtains. This is the closest to what is called anarchy in the popular mind—confusion, chaos, international
It is the only order that is really worth anything does not come through the enforcement of law, it comes through the establishment of a society which is just and in which harmonious relationships are established and in which you need a minimum of regulation to create decent sets of arrangements among people. But the order based on law and on the force of law is the order of the totalitarian state, and it inevitably leads either to total injustice or to rebellion—eventually, in other words, to very great disorder.

We all grow up with the notion that the law is holy. They asked Daniel Berrigan’s mother what she thought of her son’s breaking the law. He burned draft records—one of the most violent acts of this century—to protest the war, for which he was sentenced to prison, as criminals should be. They asked his mother, who is in her eighties, what she thought of her son’s breaking the law. And she looked straight into the interviewer’s face, and she said, “It’s not God’s law.” Now we forget that. There is nothing sacred about the law. Think of who makes laws. The law is not made by God, it is made by Strom Thurmond. If you have any notion about the sanctity and loveliness and reverence for the law, look at the legislators around the country who make the laws. Sit in on the sessions of the state legislatures. Sit in on Congress, for these are the people who make the laws which we are then supposed to revere.

All of this is done with such propriety as to fool us. This is the problem. In the old days, things were confused; you didn’t know. Now you know. It is all down there in the books. Now we go through due process. Now the same things happen as happened before, except that we’ve gone through the right procedures. In Boston a policeman walked into a hospital ward and fired five times at a black man who had snapped a towel at his arm—and killed him. A hearing was held. The judge decided that the policeman was justified because if he didn’t do it, he would lose the respect of his fellow officers. Well, that is what is known as due process—that is, the guy didn’t get away with it. We went through the proper procedures, and everything was set up. The decorum, the propriety of the law fools us.

The nation then, was founded on disrespect for the law, and then came the Constitution and the notion of stability which [James] Madison and Hamilton liked. But then we found in certain crucial times in our history that the legal framework did not suffice, and in order to end slavery we had to go outside the legal framework, as we had to do at the time of the American Revolution or the Civil War. The union had to go outside the legal framework in order to establish certain rights in the 1930s. And in this time, which may be more critical than the Revolution or the Civil War, the problems are so horrendous as to require us to go outside the legal framework in order to make a statement, to resist, to begin to establish the kind of institutions and relationships which a decent society should have. No, not just tearing things down; building things up. But even if you build things up that you are not supposed to build up—you try to build up a people’s park, that’s not tearing down a system; you are building something up, but you are doing it illegally—the militia comes in and drives you out. That is the form that civil disobedience is going
to take more and more, people trying to build a new society in the midst of the old.

But what about voting and elections? Civil disobedience—we don’t need that much of it, we are told, because we can go through the electoral system. And by now we should have learned, but maybe we haven’t, for we grew up with the notion that the voting booth is a sacred place, almost like a confessional. You walk into the voting booth and you come out and they snap your picture and then put it in the papers with a beatific smile on your face. You’ve just voted; that is democracy. But if you even read what the political scientists say—although who can?—about the voting process, you find that the voting process is a sham. Totalitarian states love voting. You get people to the polls and they register their approval. I know there is a difference—they have one party and we have two parties. We have one more party than they have, you see.

What we are trying to do, I assume, is really to get back to the principles and aims and spirit of the Declaration of Independence. This spirit is resistance to illegitimate authority and to forces that deprive people of their life and liberty and right to pursue happiness, and therefore under these conditions, it urges the right to alter or abolish their current form of government—and the stress had been on abolish. But to establish the principles of the Declaration of Independence, we are going to need to go outside the law, to stop obeying the laws that demand killing or that allocate wealth the way it has been done, or that put people in jail for petty technical offenses and keep other people out of jail for enormous crimes. My hope is that this kind of spirit will take place not just in this country but in other countries because they all need it. People in all countries need the spirit of disobedience to the state, which is not a metaphysical thing but a thing of force and wealth. And we need a kind of declaration of interdependence among people in all countries of the world who are striving for the same thing.
The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro
By Frederick Douglass (1852)—unabridged

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens:

He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I know that apologies of this sort are generally considered flat and unmeaningful. I trust, however, that mine will not be so considered. Should I seem at ease, my appearance would much misrepresent me. The little experience I have had in addressing public meetings, in country school houses, avails me nothing on the present occasion.

The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a Fourth of July Oration. This certainly sounds large, and out of the common way, for me. It is true that I have often had the privilege to speak in this beautiful Hall, and to address many who now honor me with their presence. But neither their familiar faces, nor the perfect gage I think I have of Corinthian Hall seems to free me from embarrassment.

The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable—and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former are by no means slight. That I am here today is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if in what I have to say I evince no elaborate preparation, nor grace my speech with any high sounding exordium. With little experience and with less learning, I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together; and trusting to your patient and generous indulgence, I will proceed to lay them before you...

[Y]our fathers, who had not adopted the fashionable idea of this day, of the infallibility of government, and the absolute character of its acts, presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of some of those burdens and restraints. They went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers. Such a declaration
of agreement on my part would not be worth much to anybody. It would, certainly, prove nothing as
to what part I might have taken, had I lived during the great controversy of 1776. To say now that
America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not
less than the noble brave, can flippantly descant on the tyranny of England towards the American
Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when to pronounce against England, and
in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men's souls. They who did so were accounted in their
day plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. To side with the right against the
wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! Here lies the
merit, and the one which, of all others, seems unfashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be
stabbed by the men who glory in the deeds of your fathers. . . .

Fellow-citizens, I am not wanting in respect for the fathers of this republic. The signers of
the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too—great enough to give
frame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly
great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly, the most favorable;
and yet I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen,
patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with
you to honor their memory. . . .

They were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage.
They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed
forbearance; but that they knew its limits. They believed in order; but not in the order of tyranny.
With them, nothing was "settled" that was not right. With them, justice, liberty and humanity were
"final"; not slavery and oppression. You may well cherish the memory of such men. They were great
in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these
degenerate times. . . .

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today?
What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles
of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to
us? And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess
the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?
Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully
returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For
who is there so cold, that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to
the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid
and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains
of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might
eloquently speak, and the “lame man leap as an hart.”

But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common.—The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak today? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrevocable ruin! I can today take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people! . . .

Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, “may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!” To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then fellow-citizens, is American slavery. I shall see this day, and its popular characteristics from the slave’s point of view. Standing there identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! “I will not equivocate; I will not excuse”; I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just. . . .

What, am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them
with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to 
sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve 
them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system thus marked with 
blood, and stained with pollution, is wrong? No! I will not. I have better employment for my time and 
strength, than such arguments would imply. . . .

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, 
and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting 
reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the 
gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the 
nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation 
must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man 
must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, 
more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. 
To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, 
swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, 
brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and 
hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, 
mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would 
disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and 
bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms 
of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found 
the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, 
that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.