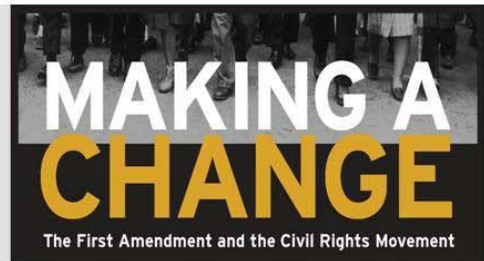


## Identifying Community Issues



### Rationale/Main Concept:

Help your students make a connection between the historic achievements of the civil rights movement and today's struggles to improve communities across the nation and around the world. In this activity, students will investigate a contemporary civil rights issue to better understand the continuing legacy of the civil rights movement and the current impact of civil rights issues the movement did not address. By focusing on an issue in their own community, students' investigation is grounded in reality and lays the foundation for further exploration and action. Students contribute to an online exhibit by creating a multimedia "panel" detailing the history and impact of a community problem they will revisit in the next two lesson plans.

### Essential Questions:

- How does the civil rights movement continue to affect our lives and communities today?
- What civil rights issues remain unresolved, particularly in our community?
- How do the problems and solutions of the civil rights movement compare to social problems and solutions today?

### Objectives — Through this lesson, students will be able to:

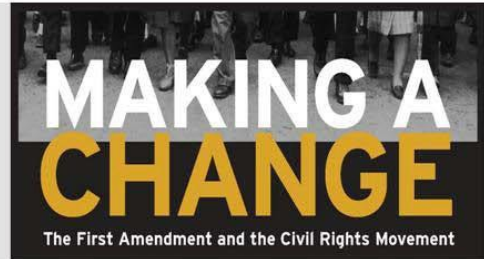
- Identify current civil rights issues and classify them in a civil rights category: social, economic or legal/political.
- Present a detailed explanation of a current civil rights issue.
- Explain how this issue affects the community.
- Create a multimedia report that effectively communicates their research and conclusions.

**Time:** 50 minutes for initial class discussion and investigation, additional time to complete multimedia projects, 30 minutes for wrap-up discussion

### Materials:

- Lesson plan
- Access to the Internet for research, viewing the interactives and creating multimedia projects
- "Identifying Community Issues" worksheet
- "References for Civil Rights Issues" list (at end of lesson plan)
- Research Guide (optional)
- Note-taking materials

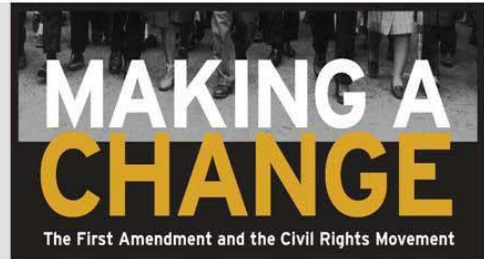
## Identifying Community Issues



### Procedure:

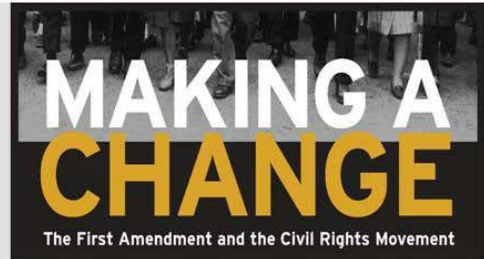
1. Ask the students to think about the word “community.” What is their community? Discuss their ideas. *Possible answers: our neighborhood, our city/town, our school, groups to which students belong (clubs, religious organizations), etc.* The most basic definition of community is a group of people who share a common culture. Today, it’s possible to develop communities online with people who do not live in the same place, but for the purpose of today’s lesson we will focus on a definition of community that also includes living in the same area, such that the communities’ achievements and shortcomings become part of the shared culture.
2. Ask students to share what they now know about the term “civil rights.” What does it mean, both in the context of the movement that peaked in the 1950s and 1960s and in a more general sense? Younger students in particular may wish to look again at the media map or the timeline for ideas and historical examples. *In short, civil rights allow individuals to be full and equal members of society. In the United States, civil rights are social, economic, legal and political liberties, many of which are guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The ability to exercise these rights gives people access to social goods and services, such as the pursuit of employment and access to the legal process, and a voice in our democracy.*
3. Explain that civil rights can be sorted into three categories: social, economic and legal/political. Using events from the color-coded timeline as examples, work with students to define each of these categories.
  - a. **Social:** Having to do with interactions with other people, community spaces and activities, including issues affecting how people socialize and with whom, etc.
  - b. **Economic:** Having to do with money, including issues affecting taxes, salaries, etc.
  - c. **Legal/political:** Having to do with the legal system (courts), laws and government, including issues affecting voting rights, lawsuits, etc.
4. Look at the Newseum-created panels of the “Making a Change Today” exhibit and label each issue as one or more of the above categories.

## Identifying Community Issues



5. Using the three issues profiled by the Newseum’s panels as a starting point, create a list of additional current social issues/problems that could be considered civil rights issues and label each one with one or more categories.
  - a. Teachers may wish to refer to the list of references on current civil rights issues at the end of this lesson plan for more background to help guide the discussion.
6. Discuss which of the issues on your list are affecting your community and cite examples.
7. Give students time to use local news sources (newspapers, television, radio, community blogs, etc.) to find stories about local social issues to complete your list. (Be sure to keep a record of sources used, as you will refer to them again in Lesson 3.) You may wish to hand out the Research Guide used in the third timeline lesson plan.
8. In pairs or individually, have your students pick one issue each to research further. Use the included “Identifying Community Issues” worksheet as a framework for their research.
  - a. Note: If you prefer, or if it proves too difficult to find sources on local civil rights issues, you can complete this lesson plan using any example of a civil rights issue from recent history (1970s to today). Students can make educated guesses about the impact of this issue in their community today rather than focusing on evidence gathered through research.
9. After completing their research, students create multimedia panels to showcase their findings using the Glogster tool built into the Digital Classroom “Making a Change Today” online exhibit.
10. Have students present their panels to their classmates and discuss their findings. Possible discussion prompts:
  - a. Which of these issues has the widest impact on our community?
  - b. Which of these issues is new? Which have been around for a long time?
  - c. Which of these issues seems most difficult/easiest to address and why?
  - d. Who has attempted to solve these issues in the past? How have they succeeded? How have they failed?
  - e. Which of these issues did the civil rights movement, which peaked in the 1950s and 1960s, address or attempt to address?

## Identifying Community Issues



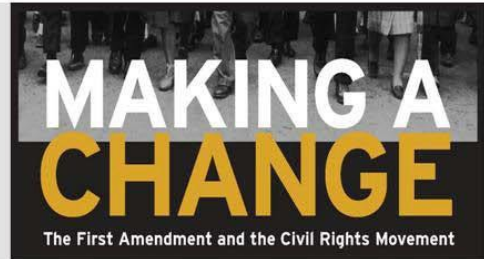
- f. How could you apply lessons learned about the civil rights movement to addressing these issues today?
11. As a class, choose one issue that you find compelling and that you think you could work to change through a class project. This issue will form the foundation for lessons 2 and 3.
- a. For more information on identifying appropriate community issues for service projects, consult the following resources:
- National Service Knowledge Network (<https://www.nationalserviceresources.org/service-activities/service-learning>)
  - National Youth Leadership Council (<http://www.nylc.org/resources>)
  - Youth Service America (<http://www.ysa.org/resources>)
  - National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (<http://www.servicelearning.org/>)
  - Campus Compact (<http://www.compact.org/resources-for-faculty/>)

### Extension Activities:

**Real World Connection:** Meet with a representative from a local nonprofit that addresses a community issue or issues (such as the local United Way, a food bank or a religious charitable organization) to find out more about how these groups identify community problems and work to implement solutions. Have your students prepare questions in advance of the meeting. They may want to view the “Interviewing Essentials” video lesson to prepare for this opportunity. Afterwards, have students write an article about the organization and its methods.

**At the Newseum:** Visit the “Civil Rights at 50” exhibit. Have your students write a paragraph about how their issue connects to one or more of the issues and events portrayed in this exhibit. Some questions to consider: Did my issue arise before or after these events? Did any of these events make my issue worse or better? How do these events compare to the ways in which people have responded to my issue? How does the attention paid to these events compare to the attention paid to my issue and why?

## Identifying Community Issues



### Identifying Community Issues

Name:

Your civil rights issue:

Is this a social, economic, or legal/political issue? Why?

Why did you choose this issue?

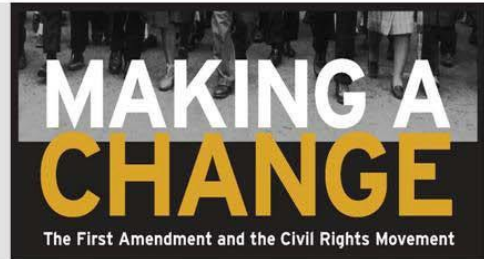
#### History:

When did this issue arise and why/how?

Whom has this issue affected in the past and how?

What efforts have others made to address this issue? Have they been effective? Why or why not?

## Identifying Community Issues



### Identifying Community Issues

#### **In Your Community:**

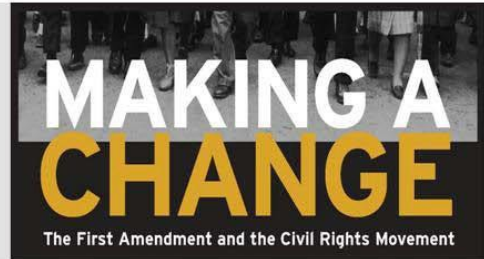
**Whom does this issue affect in your community and how?**

**How would addressing this issue improve your community?**

**Are others attempting to address this issue? If not, why not? If so, who is addressing the issue? What methods are they using? Have they been effective?**



## Identifying Community Issues



### Identifying Community Issues

**Name:** Suzy Newsington

**Your civil rights issue:** Equal access to digital technology

#### Is this a social, economic or legal/political issue?

Social, because it affects how you interact with other people; also economic because it affects your education, and you need a good education to get a good job.

#### Why did you choose this issue?

I have several friends who don't have computers or the Internet at home, and they have told me about how hard it can be to do their school assignments. They also don't get to play games online or do the other fun things that you can use computers and the Internet for.

#### History:

#### When did this issue arise and why/how?

In the 1980s and 1990s, more and more people were getting home computers and home connections to the Internet as these technologies became more affordable. But there were still a lot of people who could not afford these tools, and a "digital divide" developed between people and places who had access to computers and the Internet and those who did not.

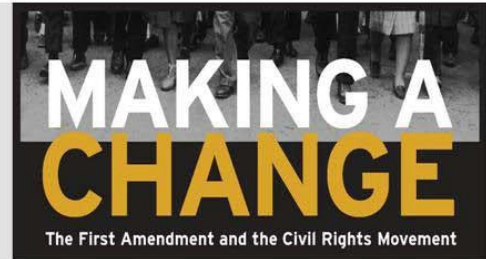
#### Whom has this issue affected in the past and how?

This issue has affected people all over the world of all ages and backgrounds. In the United States, many poor people cannot afford to own computers or pay for Internet access at their homes. In other countries, people may not even have access to public computers. Without access to computers, students have a hard time completing their schoolwork and staying informed about the world. Adults may not be able to do their jobs or communicate about important things.

#### What efforts have others made to address this issue? Have they been effective? Why or why not?

One way people have attempted to solve the problem of unequal access to technology in other countries is through the "One Laptop Per Child" program. This is an

## Identifying Community Issues



international organization that delivers basic laptops with Internet access to students in poor communities around the world. Students can use these laptops to learn and to communicate with each other. The program has reached thousands of kids, but this type of program requires a lot of money, plus access to technology manufacturing companies and international connections.

In the United States, some cities are trying to end the digital divide by providing free access to the Internet through public Wi-Fi networks. While this doesn't solve the problem of access to devices to use the Internet, it would make it much easier for students and adults who had laptops, tablets or even smartphones to complete their work and studies, even if their families could not afford Internet service at home. There are not a lot of these programs, however, and in rural areas it is very difficult and expensive to set up Internet access that can serve people who live in very spread-out communities.

### **In Your Community:**

#### **Whom does this issue affect in your community and how?**

This issue affects people of all races and ages. Most of the people it affects are poor and can't afford to buy a computer or pay for Internet access. Without access to computers, students might not be able to get their homework done or have to find public computers to do their work. Adults need computers to find out about the news and sometimes to take care of responsibilities related to their jobs.

#### **How would addressing this issue improve your community?**

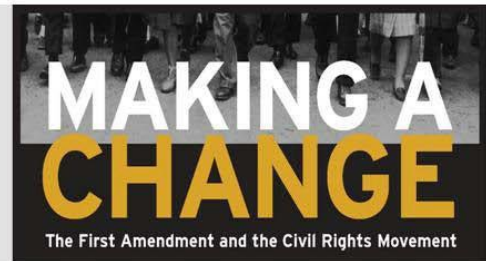
If more people had access to computers and the Internet, then students who used to have a hard time finishing homework would be able to complete their assignments more easily and get better grades. Adults could use the computers to apply for jobs, use email and stay informed about what's going on in our town and around the world.

#### **Are others attempting to address this issue? If not, why not? If so, who is? What methods are they using? Have they been effective?**

The public library has a program to give teens access to the library's computers in the afternoons to work on homework, but a lot of the students who don't have computers also don't have a way to get to a library after school. There aren't enough computers for all of the kids, so they have to set time limits. There also is a community center downtown that has a computer lab for students and adults, but their computers are old, and it is only open for a few hours on weekdays.



## Identifying Community Issues



### Additional Online Resources on Civil Rights

- ABC News Topic Page:  
<http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/issues/civil-rights.htm>
- Annenberg Classroom:  
<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/speakouts.aspx?name=what-are-the-civil-rights-issues-of-today&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>
- Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division:  
<http://www.justice.gov/otj/civilrights.htm>
- Equal Rights Center:  
[http://www.equalrightscenter.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issues\\_main](http://www.equalrightscenter.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issues_main)
- The Leadership Conference:  
<http://www.civilrights.org/issues/>