

Using Student Dialogues to Teach Social Studies

by Michael Pezone, Jennifer Palacio and Lauren Rosenberg

The idea of using structured student dialogues to teach social studies content, concepts and skills, and as a vehicle for building classroom community and promoting democracy, has been pioneered by Michael Pezone of Law, Government and Community Service Campus Magnet High School in Cambria Heights, NY. Michael's work with recent immigrants and mainstreamed special education students in a middle school and hard-to-reach minority youth in a troubled high school has been described in *Social Education* (Pezone and Singer, 1997), the *American Educational Research Journal* (Singer and Pezone, 2001), a book on citizenship education (Miller & Singleton, 1997), and the *New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum Guide* (Pezone and Palacio, 2001). It has been adapted by Jennifer Palacio, and Lauren Rosenberg, who have made student dialogues an important part of their own teaching. This essay is reprinted from *Social Studies for Secondary Schools* (2nd edition) by Alan Singer and the Hofstra New Teachers Network (Mahwah, NJ: LEA, in press).

In his social studies classes, Michael Pezone employs many of the practices advocated by progressive and transformative educators (Apple and Beane, 1995; Banks, 1991; Bigelow, 1988; 1990). He believes that the success of the dialogues and the experience in democracy both depend on the gradual development of caring, cooperative communities over the course of a year (Noddings, 1992; Kohn, 1986). To encourage these communities, he works with students to create an atmosphere where they feel free to expose their ideas, feelings, and academic proficiencies in public without risking embarrassment or attack and being pressed into silence. He stresses with students that the dialogues are not debates; that as students learn about a topic the entire class "wins or loses" together.

The student dialogues are highly structured. Michael believes that structure maximizes student freedom by insuring that all students have an opportunity to participate. It also helps to insure that classes carefully examine statements, attitudes, and practices that may reflect biases and demean community members.

Michael uses dialogues to conclude units; however, preparation for the dialogues takes place all the time. At the start of the semester, he and his students decide on the procedures for conducting dialogues so that everyone in class participates and on criteria for evaluating team and individual performance. Usually students want the criteria to include an evaluation of how well the team works together; the degree to which substantive questions are addressed; the use of supporting evidence; the response to statements made by the other team; whether ideas are presented effectively; and whether individual students demonstrate effort and growth. These criteria are codified in a scoring rubric that is reexamined

before each dialogue and changed when necessary. Students also help to define the question being discussed. After the dialogue, students work in small groups to evaluate the overall dialogue, the performance by their team, and their individual participation.

During a unit, the class identifies a broad social studies issue that they want to research and examine in greater depth. For example, after studying the recent histories of India and China, they discussed whether violent revolution or non-violent resistance is the most effective path to change. On other occasions they have discussed if the achievements of the ancient world justified the exploitation of people and whether the United States and Europe should intervene in the internal affairs of other countries because of the way women are treated in some cultures.

The goal of a dialogue is to examine all aspects of an issue, not to score points at the expense of someone else. Teams are subdivided into cooperative learning groups that collect and organize information supporting different views. The teams also assign members as either opening, rebuttal, or concluding speakers. During dialogues, teams "huddle-up" to share their ideas and reactions to what is being presented by the other side. After dialogues, students discuss what they learned from members of the other team and evaluate the performance of the entire class.

An important part of the dialogue process is the involvement of students in assessing what they have learned. In Michael's classes students help develop the parameters for class projects and decide the criteria for assessing their performance in these activities. The benefit of this involvement for students includes a deeper understanding of historical and social science research methods; insight into the design and

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implementation of projects; a greater stake in the satisfactory completion of assignments; and a sense of empowerment because assessment decisions are based on rules that the classroom community has helped to shape.

Michael uses individual and group conferences to learn what students think about the dialogues and their impact on student thinking about democratic process and values. Students generally feel that the dialogues give them a personal stake in what happens in class and they feel responsible for supporting their teams. Students who customarily are silent in class because of fear of being ridiculed or because they are not easily understood by the other students, become involved in speaking out. For many students, it is a rare opportunity to engage in both decision making and open public discussion "in front of other people."

From the dialogues, students start to learn that democratic society involves a combination of individual rights and initiatives with social responsibility, collective decision-making, and shared community goals. They discover that democracy frequently entails tension between the will of the majority and the rights of minorities and that it cannot be taken for granted. It involves taking risks and is something that a community must continually work to maintain and expand. Another benefit of the dialogue process is that it affords students the opportunity to actively generate knowledge without relying on teacher-centered instructional methods.

Michael finds that the year long process of defining, conducting, and evaluating dialogues involves students in constant reflection on social studies concepts, class goals, student interaction, and the importance of community. It makes possible individual academic and social growth, encourages students to view ideas critically and events from multiple perspectives, and supports the formation of a cooperative learning environment. He believes that when students are able to analyze educational issues, and create classroom policy, they gain a personal stake in classroom activities and a deeper understanding of democracy.

Students in Michael's ninth grade Law elective and Jennifer Palacio's twelfth grade Participation in Government classes participated in dialogues while helping to field-test a document packet that is part of the New York State Great Irish Famine curriculum. They researched and examined the question, "Was

British policy in Ireland during the Great Irish Famine an example of genocide?"

On day 1, students read and discussed the United Nations definition of genocide and documents describing events that could be considered examples of genocide. The documents included the 1935 Nuremburg Racial Laws in Nazi Germany; an historian's account of Turkey's attack on Armenians during the era of World War I; an enslaved African's description of the middle passage; a newspaper photograph of an open burial site in Rwanda from 1994; a chart showing the decimation of native American population centers following the arrival of Europeans; and descriptions by contemporaries of famine-era Ireland. Students used the United Nations definition of genocide, which includes a number of different kinds of actions, but requires proof of intent, to evaluate the events described in the other documents. At the end of the first class period, students decided whether they wanted to be on the team that presented evidence that British policy was an example of genocide or on the opposing team.

On days two and three, student teams were subdivided into work groups that examined a series of primary source documents from the Great Irish Famine curriculum and prepared opening and closing statements. These included newspaper articles, editorials and political cartoons, government documents, speeches, and charts showing evictions, emigration, food availability and population decline.

On day four students held their dialogues. After opening round statements, teams caucused to prepare rebuttals. Following rebuttals, teams update concluding statements. After the concluding statements, the class discusses what students learned from the dialogue and each other.

On the final day of the project, individual students used the documents and what they learned from the dialogue to write a document-based essay.

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Rules for Student Dialogues in Ms. Rosenberg's Class

Choosing Teams:

Students will select teams based on their opinions. Ms. Rosenberg may reassign some students so the teams are equally balanced.

Issues for the Dialogues:

United States History: Should the United States be the police force for the world?

Global History: Do revolutions improve people's lives?

Preparation for the Dialogues:

Student teams will be divided into study groups of three or four students. Each study group will research a topic. Using the research, individual students will prepare regents style essays supporting their position. Study group members will edit each others' essays before the dialogue.

Procedures for the Dialogue:

There will be four rounds during the dialogue. Before round one, teams will meet together and plan their presentation. Students from each team will take turns speaking. In Round 1, five students from each team will introduce the team's views. After Round 1, teams will "huddle up" to think about what the other team said. In Round 2, students will take turns responding to the ideas of the other team. Teams will huddle up again after Round 2 to plan how to conclude the dialogue. In Round 3, three students will summarize the main ideas of their team. After Round 3, teams will meet again to evaluate what students have learned. In Round 4, students will discuss what they learned from the other team.

During the Dialogue:

Students should respect each other.

Students should not attack or interrupt each other.

One person speaks at a time. Everyone must participate.

After your turn to speak, take notes and share them with your teammates.

The discussion should be as free and open as possible.

Students should speak loudly and clearly.

Team members should take turns. Don't speak too long.

Teammates must make sure that everyone speaks.

Some people who are comfortable speaking to the whole class should wait until the end.

Things to Remember:

People must listen to each other.

People must give reasons for their opinions.

People must present facts.

People have to believe what they are speaking.

People need to talk about the things that other people say.

Express your ideas clearly.

Learn and understand the ideas of other people.

Share opinions.

Discussion is more important than winning. There are no right answers.

Black Harlem's Struggle for Decent Housing

by Adam Stevens

Adam Stevens is a participant in the "Gateway to the City" project, a collaboration between the offices of Brooklyn and Manhattan High Schools, District 5 and 17, the New York City Board of Education Office of Multiculturalism/ Social Studies, the Brooklyn Historical Society and Hofstra University.

By 1920, Manhattan from 125th to 145th Street, between Lenox to Amsterdam Avenues, was populated largely by African Americans. Their numbers continued to grow throughout the 1920s as a result of the post-World War I "Great Migration" from the rural South to Northern cities.

Housing conditions for new arrivals, particularly during the Great Depression, were extremely harsh. Some buildings that had been condemned since 1864 were still standing at the onset of the depression, with squatting families risking collapsing floors and walls in order to avoid homelessness. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 1935 half of all Harlem families took in boarders. With Harlem's unemployment rate at 25% in 1931, and at about 45% by 1935, times were definitely very hard. These conditions, along with other forms of racism, contributed to the growth of a radical tenants' rights movement in Black Harlem and a series of rent strikes between 1928 and 1933.

In March/April, 1929, the *Amsterdam News* ran a weekly series on rents in Black Harlem. One article reported that the only affordable block on 135th Street, the 300 west block, offered dark and unsanitary rooms with hot water but no heat, a bath in the kitchen and a toilet in the hall, all at a low rent. Other tenements, mainly located on the large avenues, had nicer apartments. But as a headline warned, "Pre-War Houses Bring High Rentals." Describing apartments built after World War I, the *Amsterdam News* simply says, "Deluxe Apartments Require Bucks." One to four bedroom accommodations in these buildings rented for \$42, \$60, \$70 and \$80 per month. However, the average annual income of tenement dwellers in Harlem in this period was only \$829, which translates into about \$17 per week or \$68 per month. In 1932, twenty-four percent of Harlem's families earned less than \$600 per year, or \$50 per month.

In response to these conditions, the Harlem Tenants League of New York (HTL) was founded on February 12, 1928 at Rush Memorial Church in Harlem by Captain Ely, Victor Gasper, and Elizabeth Hendrickson. Richard B. Moore, an educated Caribbean immigrant to

the United States and a leading member of the Communist Party's Harlem Section (CPUSA), was elected president. A fiery and insightful street speaker, he developed a loyal personal following in the organization.

The preamble of the HTL Constitution defined it as a non-partisan organization designed to promote the enforcement of existing housing regulations and to campaign for new legislation that would improve housing and living conditions in Harlem. While tenant rent strikes were illegal, article XI of the Constitution explained the conditions under which the organization would support them. In addition, HTL members pledged themselves to:

1. Eliminate discriminatory practice because of race, creed, color, political affiliation or belief, or participation in organizational activities.
2. Enforce the rights of tenants to bargain collectively.
3. Promote safe, sanitary, healthful housing conditions.
4. Fight against unwarranted evictions and rent increases.

One of the first events the HTL organized was a candidates' night at the New York Public Library on 135th Street and Lenox Avenue. Politicians running for election to the 19th and 21st Assembly Districts of the New York State Legislature were invited to propose their solutions to Harlem's housing problems. The debate over extending emergency rent laws and legislation to improve housing conditions was heated. Grace B. Campbell, a CPUSA member, presided over the meeting. Richard Moore, President of the HTL and a candidate for Congress on the Communist Party ticket, spoke.

In early December 1928, the *Amsterdam News* notified the residents of Harlem that the Emergency Rent Law regulating rents on rooms that cost over \$10/month (as did 90% of the rooms in Harlem) was scheduled to expire on January 1, 1929. Richard Moore and the HTL spread the call for a massive tenants' strike

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at the series of mass street meetings on Lenox Avenue. The League, which had grown to 300 active members by this time, opened an office on 133rd Street that aided any Harlem tenant in need of protection from a landlord. As a result of the campaign by the HTL and other groups, the Emergency Rent Law was extended until June, 1929.

Riding the wave of popularity and credibility won in this campaign, the Harlem Tenants League had a successful and influential spring and summer in 1929. Organizing really accelerated as the June 1 date of expiration of the emergency rent law approached. Rent increases of 50 to 60% were expected and the situation looked bleak for Harlem tenants. The HTL had its first major meeting of the spring four days before the emergency rent law was set to expire. The first mass tenant protest of the Depression-era actually took place prior to the stock market crash on June 1, 1929. The *Amsterdam News* reported that two hundred people marched with the HTL, while the *Daily Worker* declared “Thousands Hail Mass Protest of Harlem Tenants.” Other organizations represented at the demonstration were the CPUSA, the United Council of Working Class Housewives, the American Negro Labor Congress and the Longshoremen’s Union.



“Rent Strike” by Jacob Lawrence

The Harlem Tenants League held another mass meeting on June 2 to consolidate new forces that had been attracted to the movement. At the meeting, block and house committees, the nuts and bolts of the tenants movement, were formed. The HTL also issued the following demands:

1. That rents be determined by the wages of the tenant.
2. That no racial discrimination in housing be tolerated by city government.
3. That there be no evictions of the unemployed.
4. That there be a more strictly enforced sanitary code in Harlem’s buildings.
5. That the right of the tenants to organize be recognized by Harlem’s landlords.
6. That the municipal government erect state housing for all workers.

On June 7 the HTL participated in two meetings where it engaged the mainstream politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties. The *Amsterdam News* reported on a meeting at the Abyssinian Baptist Church and representatives of the Democrats and Republicans attended a Communist Forum on 138th and Lenox Avenue.

The Harlem Tenants League reached the peak of its influence in June and July of 1929. On June 12, 1929, the New York City Emergency Rent Law was revised and extended again, with the proviso that it would regulate the cost of all rooms renting for less than \$15 per month. These changes however exempted many Harlem buildings and the HTL issued a call for tenants’ strikes for July 1, the day the new Emergency Rent Law would be instituted.

The night of July 1 there was a meeting of the HTL with 400 persons present. By July 6, another 200 new members had joined the HTL and volunteers were working twenty-four hours a day to handle tenants’ problems on a case-by-case basis. By July 12, the League had 1,000 members and was working in coalition with 200 local organizations.

However, while HTL actions were able to force some landlords to rescind rent increases, no large scale coordinated tenants’ strike materialized. In August, the HTL was still trying to organize building committees and momentum for broader action appears to have dissolved. Factional infighting emerged between Communists and non-Communists in the HTL and the organization split into two camps.

While the Harlem Tenants League soon passed from the scene, it had succeeded in laying the groundwork for a broader Harlem tenants’ movement that emerged in 1931 under the leadership of the Communist Party sponsored Unemployed Councils.

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High School level Activity: Black Harlem's Struggle for Decent Housing

A. Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Describes Living Conditions in Harlem

Adam Clayton Powell was a minister and civil rights activist in the New York City Black community. He wrote this article for the New York Post in 1935.

There are hovels (rundown houses) along 133rd Street where one hall toilet serves a floor of four apartments for as many as twenty-five people, no private bathrooms or public bathtubs. Some owners have installed bathtubs in the kitchens. Along Fifth Avenue, from 135th to 138th street, is one of the worst spots. Here are flats with the old-fashioned toilets, which are usually so broken that the refuse (waste) flushes down on the floor below. Gaping holes in the skylights allow cold air to sweep down the staircase, freezing the toilets so that for weeks during the winter they cannot be used. You can imagine the litter in the back yards each morning. Go further and remember these yards are rarely cleaned. What is worse, these hovels have no heat, only coal grates.

Parents of good character are forced to welcome lodgers (borders) to their homes whom they have never seen, known or heard of, and who, when they depart suddenly, will not be heard from. So that the maximum number of rooms may be rented out, an entire family usually sleeps in one room. Some families are lucky if they cannot only rent a room at night, but also get a night worker to occupy during the day the same room, same bed, same sheets and be bitten by the same bugs. The luckiest family is that one which has a bathroom and rents the tub out for a bed, covering it with boards.

Questions

1. What are some of the problems that face Harlem tenants?
2. According to Powell, why is a family lucky to have a bathroom with a tub?
3. In your opinion, why would the spread of disease be a problem in this community?
4. If you were a resident of one of these tenements, what would you have done?
5. If you were a member of the New York City Council at this time, what would you have done to improve conditions?

B. Harlem Residents Fight Back

In 1943 Benjamin Davis was elected to the New York City Council on the Communist ticket. This is a section from his memoirs.

Once a group of Negro tenants living in Columbia Hill, a small Negro ghetto about ten blocks from Harlem proper, were about to be evicted from their slums to make way for a housing project which hardly any of them would be eligible to live in, after the project was erected. They did not love the broken-down fire-trap slums from which they were forced to move. But they had nowhere to sleep except in a park. . . . I led a delegation of 30 tenants to the Housing Authority office. They refused to see us. We then staged a sit-down from 6pm to 12am and left only on the word of Frank Crosswaith, Negro member of the Authority, that our case would be taken up the next day. The next day came and the Authority members still refused to see us. Crosswaith became known as double-Crosswaith. Meantime the tenants learned that the City had re-possessed houses in a white neighborhood which it held just for accommodating tenants evicted for housing project purposes. After several move evictions and militant struggles, the City of New York was compelled to open these houses to Negro tenants in a white neighborhood. . . . The victory was only a gesture, and lasted as long as an inscription written on melting ice. The struggle served, however, as an example of coordination between my membership in the Council and the militant organizations and the movements of the people.

Questions

1. Why was Davis and his committee protesting?
2. What happened when they went to the Housing Authority?
3. How were they victorious?
4. If you lived in a tenement building at this time, would you have joined the protests? Explain.
5. Design a picket sign to carry at a tenants' rights demonstration.

Elizabeth Jennings: New York City's Nineteenth Century Rosa Parks

This article and the lesson materials were developed by Alan Singer as part of the "Gateway to the City" project, a collaboration between the offices of Brooklyn and Manhattan High Schools, District 5 and 17, the New York City Board of Education Office of Multiculturalism/Social Studies, the Brooklyn Historical Society and Hofstra University.

On July 14, 1854, Elizabeth Jennings and her friend, Sarah Adams, walked to the corner of Pearl and Chatham streets in lower Manhattan. They planned to take a horse-drawn street car along Third Avenue to church. Instead, they entered into the pages of history.

Elizabeth was a young African American woman who taught black children in New York City's racially segregated public schools. Her father Thomas L. Jennings was a leading local abolitionist.

An account of what happened to Elizabeth was presented on July 17 at a protest meeting at the First Colored Congregational Church in New York City. Elizabeth wrote the statement but did not speak because she was recovering from injuries. Peter Ewell, the meeting's secretary, read Elizabeth's testimony to the audience. We do not know how many people attended the meeting. We do know that the group passed resolutions protesting what happened to Elizabeth and sent copies to the *New York Tribune* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Both newspapers printed Elizabeth's account and the resolutions of protest. Edited versions are included here.

A. *New York Tribune*, "Outrage Upon Colored Persons," July 19, 1854, 7:2. (edited)

I (Elizabeth Jennings) held up my hand to the driver and he stopped the cars. We got on the platform, when the conductor told us to wait for the next car. I told him I could not wait, as I was in a hurry to go to church. He then told me that the other car had my people in it, that it was appropriated (intended) for that purpose. I then told him I wished to go to church, as I had been going for the last six months, and I did not wish to be detained.

He insisted upon my getting off the car, but I did not get off. He waited some few minutes, when the driver, becoming impatient, said to me, "Well, you may go in, but remember, if the passengers raise any objections you shall go out, whether or not, or I'll put you out." I told him I was a respectable (well behaved) person, born and raised in New York, that I had never been insulted before while going to church, and that he was a good for nothing impudent (rude) fellow for insulting decent persons while on their way to church. He then said he would put me out.

I told him not to lay his hands on me. I took hold of the window sash and held on. He pulled me until he broke my grasp and I took hold of his coat and held onto that. He ordered the driver to fasten his horses, which he did, and come and help him put me out of the car. They then both seized hold of me by the arms and pulled and dragged me flat down on the bottom of the platform, so that my feet hung one way and my head the other, nearly on the ground. I screamed murder with all my voice, and my companion screamed out "you'll kill her. Don't kill her." The driver then let go of me and went to his horses. I went again in the car, and the conductor said you shall sweat for this; then told the driver to drive as fast as he could and not to take another passenger in the car; to drive until he saw an officer or a Station House.

They got an officer on the corner of Walker and Bowery, whom the conductor told that his orders from the agent were to admit colored persons if the passengers did not object, but if they did, not to let them ride. When the officer took me there were some eight or ten persons in the car. Then the officer, without listening to anything I had to say, thrust me out, and then pushed me, and tauntingly told me to get redress (damages) if I could. I would have come up myself, but am quite sore and stiff from the treatment I received from those monsters in human form yesterday afternoon.

Questions

1. What did the street car conductor say to Elizabeth Jennings? Why?
2. What did Elizabeth Jennings decide to do?
3. What happened to Elizabeth Jennings?
4. What would you have done if you were Elizabeth Jennings? Why?

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B. Resolutions unanimously adopted at the First Colored Congregational Church (edited)

Resolved, That we regard such conduct as intolerant, in a civil and religious point of view, and that it calls for the reprehension (blame) of the respectable portion of the community.

Resolved, That there be a committee of five appointed to ascertain (learn) all the facts in the case, and if possible bring the whole affair before the legal authorities; and that we demand at the hands of the proprietors (owners), as colored citizens, the equal right to the accommodation of “transit” in the cars, so long as we possess the regular qualifications.

Resolved, That the above resolutions be forwarded and printed in *The New York Tribune* and Frederick Douglass’s paper.

Questions

1. Why did the meeting at the First Colored Congregational Church pass these resolutions?
2. What did they decide to do at the meeting?

At the meeting at the First Colored Congregational Church, a Black Legal Rights Association was formed to investigate possible legal action. Elizabeth Jennings decided to sue the street car company. She was represented in court by a young white attorney named Chester A. Arthur, who later became a military officer during the Civil War and a politician. In 1880, Chester A. Arthur was elected Vice-President of the United States and he became president when James Garfield was murdered in 1881.

The court case was successful. The judge instructed the jury that transit companies had to respect the rights all respectable people and the jury awarded Elizabeth Jennings money for damages. While she had asked for \$500 in her complaint, some members of the jury resisted granting such a large amount because she was “colored.” In the end, Elizabeth Jennings received \$225 plus an additional ten percent for legal expenses.

C. New York Tribune, “A Wholesome Verdict,” February 23, 1855, 7:4. (edited)

The case of Elizabeth Jennings vs. the Third Ave. Railroad Company, was tried yesterday in the Brooklyn circuit, before Judge Rockwell. The plaintiff is a colored lady, a teacher in one of the public schools, and the organist in one of the churches in this City. She got upon one of the Company’s cars last summer, on the Sabbath, to ride to church. The conductor finally undertook to get her off, first alleging the car was full, and when that was shown to be false, he pretended the other passengers were displeased at her presence.

She saw nothing of that, and insisted on her rights. He took hold of her by force to expel her. She resisted, they got her down on the platform, jammed her bonnet, soiled her dress, and injured her person. Quite a crowd gathered around, but she effectually (effectively) resisted, and they were not able to get her off. Finally, after the car had gone on further, they got the aid of a policeman, and succeeded in getting her from the car.

Judge Rockwell gave a very clear and able charge, instructing the Jury that the Company were liable for the acts of their agents, whether committed carelessly and negligently, or willfully and maliciously. That they were common carriers, and as such bound to carry all respectable persons; *that colored person, if sober, well-behaved, and free from disease*, had the same rights as others; and could neither be excluded by *any rules of the Company, nor by force or violence*; and in case of such expulsion or exclusion, the Company was liable.

The plaintiff claimed \$500 in her complaint, and a majority of the Jury were for giving her the full amount; but others maintained some peculiar notions as to colored people’s rights, and they finally agreed on \$225, on which the Court added ten per cent, besides the costs.

Railroads, steamboats, omnibuses, and ferry boats will be admonished (instructed) from this, as to the rights of respectable colored people. It is high time the rights of this class of citizens were ascertained (respected), and that it should be known whether they are to be thrust from our public conveyances (vehicles), while German or Irish women, with a quarter of mutton (lamb) or a load of codfish, can be admitted.

Questions

1. What did the jury decide in Elizabeth Jennings’ case against the street car company?
2. Do you agree with the decision? Explain.

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We learn more about Elizabeth Jennings, this case, and the struggle for equal rights in New York City in an editorial published in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* after the verdict.

D. Frederick Douglass' Paper, "Legal Rights Vindicated," March 2, 1855, 2:5 (edited)

Our readers will rejoice with us in the righteous verdict. Miss Elizabeth Jennings, whose courageous conduct in the premises is beyond all praise, comes of a good old New York stock. Her grandfather, Jacob Cartwright, a native African, was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and took active part in city politics until the time of his death in 1824; her father, Mr. Thomas L. Jennings, was mentioned in our paper as having delivered an oration on the Emancipation of the slaves in this State in 1827, and he was a founder of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief and of other institutions for the benefit and elevation of the colored people. In this suit he has broken new ground, which he proposes to follow up by the formation of a "Legal Rights League." We hold our New York City gentleman responsible for the carrying out this decision into practice, by putting an end to their exclusion from cars and omnibusses; they must be craven indeed if they fail to follow the lead of a woman.

Questions

1. What is the reaction in this article to the verdict in Elizabeth Jennings suit?
2. What new information do we learn about Elizabeth Jennings from this article?
3. What role does the article suggest Thomas L. Jennings played in the suit?
4. In your opinion, is this an historically important piece of information? Explain.

As a result of the protest by Elizabeth and Thomas Jennings and their legal victory, the Third Avenue Railroad Company issued an order to permit African Americans to ride on their cars. New York City's other transit companies in companies quickly followed their example.

Activity: Write an essay comparing Elizabeth Jennings and Rosa Parks.

Sources:

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New York Tribune, "A Wholesome Verdict," February 23, 1855, 7:4.

A Trip To China For Educators

The Chinese-American Cultural Bridge Center, a non-profit organization, has created a trip especially designed for educators. Not only will you experience the geography, history, culture, economics, government, and technology of China firsthand, but you will be provided with background information and instructional materials, which will bring China alive to your students as well. There will be opportunities to meet with Chinese educators, and share ideas and information with each other.

On this unforgettable 15-day journey, you will go to Beijing, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng, Luoyang, Shaolin Temple, Xian, and Shanghai. Explore the tomb of China's first Emperor who unified China, with its amazing army of life-size, terra-cotta soldiers. Walk along the Great Wall, marvel at Beijing's Forbidden City, speculate at Luoyang's Longmen Grottos, and experience the Ancient Song Dynasty life in Kaifeng. The journey concludes in the Shanghai. \$3,250 including International Air fare from CA, 4 star hotels, all meals, transportation, guide, and sightseeing. Tentative dates; June 25 - July 9, 2003. For detailed itineraries, check the website www.cacbc.org/go/explorechina, call toll free: 877-592-7072, or email services@cacbc.org.

Tips for Using Museums as Social Studies Resources

by Lynda Kennedy

Know why you want to take the trip. If you are clear on this, you will be able to face down any administrator or parent who still holds the old-fashioned idea that a trip is time away from schoolwork. It is important to share this with your students, so that they are also clear that this is not a break from learning. Being clear on what you want your students to get from a visit will help you choose the best place to go. Don't be afraid to think outside of the box. In addition to museums, parks and zoos, many theatres, orchestras and dance companies have education departments. When I was student teaching, I taught a unit on how food gets into the city with my first grade class. Instead of visiting a nearby farm museum, I thought about designing a trip to the local greenmarket. I called the manager of the market to make sure no one would be upset about me trooping 30 excited 6 and 7 year olds through their stalls, and they offered tours of the market for schoolchildren. My students were able to interview the farm workers, taste samples of cider, learn about the word "organic," and see a demonstration of worm composting.

Choose an institution with a strong program. Gather information anyway you can. Call and ask for the education program's brochure, surf the web, identify yourself as a teacher and ask to accompany an other group visiting the museum. Ask your colleagues where they go, why they go and how they build it into their curriculum. Borrow from the best! I like museum educator-led programs because they can do away with the need for trip sheets, which sometimes frustrate kids who have trouble with writing. The great part about the more conversational style of educator-led programs is that all students get the chance to feel successful. It is very important, however, that you choose a place with educators who are good teachers and know the content you are after. Many institutions offer free teacher workshops or open houses, so get on all their mailing lists!

Book your trip in advance. A good program will be booked up well in advance by teachers who make it an integral part of their curriculum. Plan way ahead, know which date and time you want to come and have alternative dates and times available. Leave all date information, along with every conceivable means of contacting you on the voice message or email of the person who books school groups. When you do get a human being, make sure they know of any special needs your students have and how this visit is related to what you are teaching.

Open the packet they send you. In addition to useful things like the house rules of the institution, directions, or places to eat in the area, many museums have pre- and post-visit materials with lesson ideas. Many museums have websites, so you can get lesson ideas from museums across the country.

Your involvement sends a message. It is important that you remain with your class and work with the museum educator. They have a lesson and they know how to teach it, but you are still the voice of authority and the children will take their cues from you. If the educator seems to be moving on without bringing out something that relates back to your class work, feel free to point it out or ask the educator to talk about it. You don't want to interrupt the flow of conversation between the students and the museum educator, but you know best what you want your class to bring back to school with them. To foster a co-teaching dynamic, touch base with the museum educator at the beginning of the program to reiterate what you would like to focus on. Any accompanying adults should also be briefed on what you hope the students will get out of the trip and their responsibilities for assisting crowd control.

No one is judging you. Do not be embarrassed by your students. Shyness, bus sickness, or any number of things can contribute to your students' seeming inability to answer a question you spent an hour covering in the classroom. Also, museums, zoos and parks are exciting places and the buzz of comments or forgetting to raise hands before shouting out an answer happens with almost all school groups.

Give the education department feedback on your visit. Take the time to fill out an evaluation if they give you one. Good evaluations mean more grants for new program development or free programs for more students. Poor evaluations with suggestions for improvement will help the institution be more useful to teachers. I love receiving letters from students about their experience of a program or examples of student work based on their visit.

Eighth-Grade Social Studies Exit Project: Creating a “Tree of Liberty”

by Rachel Gaglione Thompson

Most Americans argue that the government of the United States is based on the idea that all people are guaranteed freedom and liberty in a democratic society. This idea has been restated in famous speeches and written documents a number of times during American history. In the Declaration of Independence (1776), Thomas Jefferson wrote: “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Other documents proclaiming freedom and liberty as basic rights for Americans and as important themes in United States history that you have examined during your middle school experience include: Mayflower Compact; Seneca Falls Manifesto; Gettysburg Address; Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech declaring war on Japan and Germany; and Supreme Court’s *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision.

Despite these claims, the experience of being an American has varied for people from different backgrounds. Some famous speeches and written documents from United States history disagree with the idea that this country has always guaranteed freedom and liberty in a democratic society to all people. They also dispute the idea that the United States has stood for freedom and fairness in international issues.

Speaking for civil rights for African Americans at the 1963 March on Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr. claimed: “One hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land.”

Other documents that question whether the United States has always championed freedom and liberty for all people that you have examined during your middle school experience include: William Lloyd Garrison’s editorial challenging slavery; Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I A Woman” speech; Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé statement on surrendering to American troops; Bartelemeo Vanzetti’s speech to the court when he was convicted of murder; and statements opposing United States involvement in Vietnam.

The Project: This project is an opportunity to present your view of American history by constructing a “Tree of Liberty” that shows the ideas and events that have defined this country. Your task is to create either a poster on 2’ x 3’ foot poster board or a 3-dimensional representation that summarizes what you have learned about United States history and symbolizes what it means to be an American. While your ideas are completely your own, you must refer to actual historical events, issues, people and ideas and include them in your “tree.” Your final project must be accompanied by a 500 word written description of your “tree.” Be prepared to explain your work in an oral presentation to the class.

Assessment: In order to receive full credit for your work, you must satisfy the following guidelines. The project must: a) Tell your views of the American experience. b) Have a clear theme or metaphor summarizing United States history. c) Include facts and details as examples and to support your arguments. d) Be based on accurate and relevant historical data. e) Be organized in a clearly understandable way. f) Be neat, eye-catching and visually appealing. g) Demonstrate evidence of hard work and thoughtfulness.

- Your written work must: a) Explain the all ideas and images about United States history presented in your project. b) Be typed without spelling and grammatical errors.
- Your oral presentation must: a) Explain all ideas and images about United States history presented in your project and report. b) Capture and hold the attention of your audience (it can be presented in the form of a poem, song or rap).

Oral History Interviews as a Gateway to Historical Understanding

by Jennifer Jackson Gkourlias

During summer 2002, forty history teachers from grade K-16 met at the University of Rochester as part of an “American History as Dialogue” seminar. We recorded our first historical memories and struggled to recall the reactions of those around us to events that shaped these pivotal experiences. As we listened to colleagues exchange their perceptions of why we remember these events, we reflected on the power of oral history. Our charge at the conclusion of the seminar was to develop modules for involving our students in the process of creating oral histories. This article describes a module for middle school students.

Every generation has its first historical memory - that pivotal moment when innocence is lost or hope is found. For many of our students, that day will be September 11, 2001. The first full week of school was marked by memorials, moments of silence, and student questions about our national identity and our role in the world. With so much reflection and retrospective work in our communities and media, it was the perfect time to implement an oral history project. This allowed my seventh grade students at Apollo Middle School in Greece, New York to become historians and practice the crafts of historical interview and research.

Their first assignment was to interview a parent about his or her first historical memory. I informed students that they would be doing the work of historians, creating interview questions, and gathering information about the past through the eyes of their relatives. This assignment served as an introduction to the course. I wanted students to view history as a living and present part of their lives, and to view themselves as historians of their world. I also wanted this project to serve as one mode of emotional catharsis, to help in the process of healing through documentation and affirmation of the feelings they experienced on and after September 11, 2001.

Students constructed essays documenting the informant’s recollection of historical events including factual information about events that they gathered from other sources. Classes used the information to construct class timelines, spanning from the 1930’s through the present, logging each historical memory. We concluded that our families and friends are living witnesses to the past. This validated student perceptions of history as a living entity. Motivated to

learn more about history, students were primed to begin the year.

For our next activity, students wrote journal entries on the topic “How do we know about history?” and examined the cover of several magazines covering the 9/11 attacks. We discussed sources of information that historians use to find out about the world and generated a long list including news broadcasts, photographs, eye-witnesses, stories, books, newspapers, textbooks, and artifacts. Students classified the sources as either primary or secondary, discussed the merits of each type of source and analyzed appropriate uses and potential shortcomings.

My goal for the second part of the project was to have students experience authentic museum work by collecting and cataloguing artifacts for a class museum. Students searched their homes for historical evidence of the events of the past year and collected over one hundred artifacts relating to 9/11/01. These included fire hats, pins, flags, calendars, airline tickets, personal poems, artwork and newspapers. Students worked with their English Language Arts teacher to write museum identification tags for each artifact and the artifacts were displayed in two glass showcases.

Our next step was documenting student memories of September 11, 2001. Students generated a list of questions about their experiences on that day and student pairs took turns interviewing each other. In their accounts, students noted the ways that American life had changed while arguing that the displays of courage and heroism were characteristic of what it means to be an American. One student reported, “I was scared and shocked when I found out what had happened. I no longer take for granted the things I have. I appreciate my family more.” Another noted the relief he felt when he realized loved ones were alright. “My mom flew on an airplane to Wisconsin that day. I still have her tickets. We feel so relieved that she got there safely. It was very scary.”

A local television station took an interest in the student projects and reported on them in a news essay on ways children were effected by the events of September 11, 2001. As a result, the work of these 7th graders is now a part of the historical documentation of this event.

Teaching Ideas

Henry Bischoff (2002). *Immigration Issues*. Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press (www.greenwood.com)

On July 4, 2002, the front-page of the *Star-Ledger* of Newark reported the results of a survey indicating that 59% of Jerseyans want immigration either restricted or halted. This report underscores the importance of a new book by Henry Bischoff, professor emeritus of history and urban studies at Ramapo College in Mahwah, NJ. The book is intended for use in either high school or college classrooms. It is organized into four major themes with introductory essays, chronologies of events, documents and questions. Topics include *Should the United States Have an Open Immigration Policy?*; *Immigration and National Identity*; *Immigration and the Public Order*; and *Human Rights Issues*. Documents in each section are culled from the experiences of immigrants, the ideas of political activists and reform-minded social scientists, newspaper editorials, reports by public interest groups, legislation, supreme court decisions, and presidential statements. Many are written in the spirit of advocacy that makes for lively, sometimes riveting, reading. Each theme provides a “package” that can be used as a mini-unit in contemporary issues classes. The format lends itself to debates, panel discussions and short position papers. The appendix contains statistics from 1820 through 1995 documenting the numbers of immigrants and their countries of origin. *Immigration Issues* offers substantive content that extends the curriculum and expands pedagogical flexibility. It is a valuable resource for the school media center, departmental library or the classroom set. - Reviewed by William W. Goetz

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Call for Proposals

The 2003 New Jersey Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference will be held at the National Conference Center in East Windsor, NJ on October 27, 2003. Proposals should be sent to:

Jayne O'Neill,
3 Hickory Drive
Oakland NJ 07436
E-mail submission: Hxteachr@optonline.net

Deadline: June 30, 2003

**National Issues Forums Institute
“National Issue Forums in the Classroom”
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A free, ready-to-use educational program on deliberation for teachers of high school students is available from the National Issues Forums Institute. The kit includes an introductory video, a teacher’s guide, and reproducible handouts. The kit is contained in a colorful three-ring binder and is available (limit of one free kit per school) at NIF in the Classroom, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio, 45459-9602 or Call: 1-800-433-7834.