

Tying in the National Civil Rights Movement to Local Efforts in Champaign Urbana, IL 1952 – 1954: The Barbershop Project on the U of I Campus (Harry M. Tiebout)

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Abstract

In this lesson, students will analyze a variety of primary sources from the University of Illinois Archives including a newspaper clipping, student testimonies, a flyer, and an obituary. Also, they will examine a selection from written recollections of a Freedom Summer student activist that went to Mississippi to help register Blacks to vote, and to provide education and support for them as well. Through this analysis, students will recognize the different levels of risk involved in standing up for what is right. Students will learn about individuals that made a difference in helping the cause of de-segregation, as well as about the efforts different groups have made to change ideas and policies.

At the American History Teacher Collaborative Civil Rights Movement Conference in Champaign, IL, on July 29, 2010, Julian Bond was a guest speaker. His words to an 11 year old boy who asked how he could grow up to be a man were simple, heartfelt, and powerful to every person in the room. Julian Bond looked straight into the young man's eyes and said words to this effect:

Do your best. Do what you can do, do as much as you can do. Just do your best. Help others that need help. Help others that can't help themselves. Don't worry about a billion people, help in your community, help your neighbors. Once you do this, once you help someone, you will feel so good. You will feel so good, you'll want to do it again. You won't be able to wait to do it again.

In this lesson, students will see examples of how individuals in Illinois and in our nation did their best, helped when they could help, helped as much as they could, helped others who could not help themselves at that time, and truly made a difference in our world.

Essential Questions

Why are rights and responsibilities important to the individual, the family, the community, the work place, the state, and the nation?

In what ways can individuals and groups influence and shape public policy?

What are some risks individuals have taken in the past to stand up for what is right?

How far will you be willing to go to help someone that needs your help because they are being treated unfairly?

Assessment Choices

1. Complete written document analysis worksheet on a U of I student testimony
2. Write an essay that includes an explanation of the U of I students' experiences at the barbershop. The essay should include: Were his needs met, did he receive a satisfactory haircut? What rights were being violated, if any? What was the level of personal threat or danger? Essay should close with a personal connection and comments made by the student.
3. Complete a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting Terri Shaw's training before she left for Mississippi to help register Blacks to vote with the "Instructions to Testers" training provided for the Black U of I students before they went into campus barber shops for a haircut.
4. Write a diary entry of a day in your life as a voter registrar in Mississippi in 1964, or a U of I student member of SCHRC trying to get a haircut on campus in 1952 – 1954.

Setting the Purpose

Students will have studied the Civil Rights Movement unit to this point and have sufficient knowledge of key concepts such as Jim Crow, segregation, Freedom Riders, Freedom Summer, sit-ins and boycotts.

Students will spend one to two days examining primary sources and doing follow-up writing regarding both the Barbershop Project in the early 1950's as well as the written recollections from Terri Shaw about the time she spent during Freedom Summer, 1964 in Mississippi.

Background Knowledge

Barbershop Project:

Between the years 1952 and 1954, Harry M. Tiebout Jr., at that time U of I instructor and member of the SCHRC (Student Community Human Relations Council), made great efforts to de-segregate the campus barber shops. Previously, similar efforts took place on campus that opened up the restaurants, movie theatres, and the Urbana swimming pool, but the barbershops were still segregated. Over the years, U of I students entered the various barbershops and either received a satisfactory haircut, or took detailed affidavits to submit to the Attorney General citing their experiences in being denied a haircut, or given an inferior haircut. Several civil suits were brought against barbers, but none were settled. Pressure from the students and some community members ended in most Blacks eventually receiving satisfactory haircuts, with a few incidents of unsatisfactory cuts.

Some of the reasons the barbers gave to deny haircuts were that the hair would dull or break their razors, the barbers didn't know how to cut that kind of hair, or other barbers would think they were not good barbers and business was bad if they had to resort to cutting Negroes' hair. At one time period during these years, signs were put up in the barbershop windows stating "shop rules", one of which was "We do not cut woolly, kinky, and curly types of hair." (from memo to Joyce C. for Student Senate Report and Resolution, May 26, 1954.- From HMT Box 3- Barbershop Project Folder, U of I Archives).

Freedom Summer:

"During the summer of 1964, hundreds of Northern college students (like Terri Shaw) traveled to Mississippi to help register black voters and encourage participation in the Civil Rights movement. Under the direction of the Council of Federated Organizations, the predominantly white students organized health clinics, established "freedom schools" to educate black school children, and sponsored voter registration drives throughout the state. Perhaps most importantly, student volunteers helped to establish the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which attempted to unseat the state's all-white regular delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. Although the Democratic Party ultimately seated Mississippi's regular delegation, the MFDP's bid for recognition raised awareness of voter discrimination in the Deep South and helped secure passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965." (from the Civil Rights Digital Library website, page 1- cited in sources)

Lesson-Analysis of Primary Sources

1. Read a U of I student testimony (affidavit) of his visit to a campus barbershop. Discuss.
 - a. Fill out a written document analysis worksheet.
 - b. Write an essay to summarize the student's experience. Be sure to include details such as did he receive a satisfactory haircut, how he was treated, were his rights being violated, was he in any personal danger, etc. Close with a personal connection and comments.
2. Read Terri Shaw's Freedom Summer Reflections from 1964- the summary of training the students went through before they traveled to Mississippi. (Warning to teacher- carefully pre-read all material for suitability of using with elementary students. Passages may need to be cut/pasted if Terri Shaw's original text is opened – see citation for link) Discuss with partner or small group. Next, read the "Instructions for Testers" document for the U of I students. Compare and contrast the two sets of instructions and training the different groups of students received. Complete a Venn Diagram to record observations and comparisons. Share findings.
3. Read the obituary of Harold M. Tiebout and fill out a written document analysis worksheet. Discuss your work.
4. Analyze the flyer "Jim Crow and the Barbers" - fill out a written document analysis worksheet. Share your work.

5. Imagine you have agreed to participate in the Barbershop Project and try to get a haircut, or in Freedom Summer and you travel to Mississippi for a summer to help register Blacks to vote. Write a diary entry of a day in your life – describe your experiences, feelings, etc. with rich detail. You may choose to imagine that the risk was too much for you to take at that time. Write your diary passage with your reasons, your feelings, other's feelings about your decision. Share your diary entry.

Sources

Civil Rights Digital Library

http://crdl.usg.edu/events/freedom_summer/?Welcome

From HMT, Box 3, Folder: Barbershop Project, University of Illinois Archives:

Instructions to Testers

Champaign Newspaper Article, 1-6-55- "S-CHRC Votes to Finance Student In Possible Suit Against Barber"

Student Affidavits (letters to Mr. John Breese, States's Attorney

Harry M. Tiebout Obituary- Illiniweek, April 28, 1983

Flyer- "Jim Crow and the Barbers"

Venn Diagram Graphic Organizer (lined)

<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/graphic-organizers.html>

Will TV American Experience: One Volunteer's Freedom Summer, 1964

http://www.pbs.org/wqbh/amex/eyesonthepize/sources/ps_summer.html

Source: Shaw, Terri. "Freedom Summer Recollections." Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive, The University of Southern Mississippi

Written Document Analysis Sheet

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>

Song

(download from I-Tunes for \$0.99)

If You Meet Me at the Back of the Bus (lyrics) – Pete Seeger