

Of the People, By the People, For the People  
The Power of Grassroots Movements  
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**Abstract:**

This lesson explores the power of grassroots movements to effect changes in our society. The examples used in the unit occurred before, during, and after the Civil Rights Movement as we know it (1954-1968). However, all of the examples were in an effort to improve civil rights for United States citizens. After exploring the meaning of “grassroots movement,” the students will become familiar with brief examples of several movements. They will then be introduced to two more modern grassroots campaigns in order to prepare them to create an item for a grassroots campaign about an issue of their own choosing.

**Enduring Understandings:**

- A democratic society must have ways for its citizens to protest what they perceive as wrongs.
- When citizens gather together to draw attention to problems, powerful changes can be produced.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed through group discussions, a variety of graphic organizers, a final creative project, and an essay in which they apply the Enduring Understandings.

**Lesson Outline:**

*Setting the Purpose and Building Background:*

- The class should discuss what people do when they are unhappy with the way things are – as children in a family, as students in a school, as workers in a business, as members of a community, etc.
- With students in small groups, they will complete the 4-square graphic organizer **What Is A Grassroots Movement?** First they will draw pictures about the parts of the words - “grass”, “roots”, “movement” to begin the thinking process. Next, the class should brainstorm about how the expression might apply to people who are unhappy with the way things are, things they think are wrong. [where is grass? what are roots? how can they represent people? what would movement imply?] Third, a student or the teacher should provide a definition of the expression. Finally, again in groups students can discuss and jot down ideas/examples of times they have seen people striking, or protesting, or going house to house as part of a grassroots campaign.

*Interaction and Practice*

- Students will participate in a **gallery walk of photos** which focuses primarily on examples of grassroots movements within the Civil Rights Movement, but which also includes other campaigns for civil rights. In advance, the teacher should prepare posters (I’ve included 7) with photographs or other images that reflect citizens involved in a grassroots movement. [Possible images are provided in the list of resources] As small groups of students shift among the “gallery exhibits,” they will fill out **Grassroots Movements for Justice**.
- As a class, the teacher should lead a discussion on the similarities and differences seen in the exhibits. How do they fit or not fit with the definition given in ‘What Is A Grassroots Movement’?

*Relating to the Present*

- The class will view **Of the People, By the People, For the People, The Time is Now**, a multimedia presentation about the use of grassroots organizing in the present. This may be done as a full class, or small groups might watch it on computers. As the presentation is shown, the students will write down their reactions to various parts of it on **Of the People, By the People, For the People, The Time is Now**.

*Applying What You Know*

- Students will have the opportunity to consider an issue that is important to them and to create an item for a grassroots movement campaign.

- After creating their items, the students will write a **short essay** using the information they have learned about the power of grassroots movements. The essay prompt can be seen on **Of the People, By the People, For the People, The Power of Grassroots Movements**.

### **Analysis of Local Primary Sources**

In this lesson, students will analyze primary sources related to grassroots movements in Illinois, such as an anti-war rally at the University of Illinois and an immigration justice rally in Chicago, IL.

### **Ties to National Primary Sources**

In this lesson, students will also analyze primary sources from national movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement, an agricultural workers movement, the Obama grassroots campaign movement, and a current Hip Hop grassroots movement.

### **List of Materials and Sources**

What is a Grassroots Movement?

Gallery Walk Photos

Exhibit A: NAACP Voting Rights Poster, naacp-vr.jpg @  
<http://www.crmvet.org/images/posters.htm>

Exhibit B: Septima Clark teaching photo, septima.jpg @  
<http://www.crmvet.org/images/imgeyes.htm>

Exhibit C: Selma march poster, flyer-mia.jpg @  
<http://www.crmvet.org/images/imgmont.htm>

Exhibit D: Freedom School in Mississippi, fs2.jpg @  
<http://www.crmvet.org/images/imgfs.htm>

Exhibit E: Green Hip Hop Tour poster, images.jpg @  
<http://blogs.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendId=244148710&blogId=492712034>

Exhibit F: NFWA strike photo, timeline-chicana @  
<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/fightfields/timeline.html>

Exhibit G: Anti-war rally photo, rally-3.jpg @  
[www.uiuc.edu](http://www.uiuc.edu)

Exhibit H: Immigration rally photo, Immigration-Rally-Wrigley-Field-3-by-glycerine517.jpg @ [blog.su-spectator.com](http://blog.su-spectator.com)

Grassroots Movements for Justice

Of the People, By the People, For the People, The Time is Now (PPT)

Of the People, By the People, For the People, The Time is Now (reaction chart)

Of the People, By the People, For the People, The Power of Grassroots Movements (essay prompt)