

Teacher Tool 145: Stories of the Civil Rights Movement – Percy Green Bernice Thompson

Study Guide

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HEC-TV Live! Presents
History in the First Person: Stories of the Civil Rights Movement

Original Air Date: February 9, 2012

Grade Levels: 5-10

Program Description:

What was it like to grow up black in America in the 1940s, 50s and 60s? What did it mean when words like “equality” and “justice” seemed to have a different meaning for you than for others in American society? What was it like to be inspired by leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr.? Why would you have chosen to participate in the struggle for Civil Rights? For this very special program, take your study of American history and the Civil Rights Movement in America to the individuals who participated in the struggle. Ponder these questions and more as you learn from two individuals whose actions made a difference in civil rights for people in their native St. Louis as well as throughout the nation.

Our focus in this program is not on exploring the details of America’s struggle for Civil Rights throughout its history, but is to provide students the rare and important opportunity to speak directly with those who lived during one chapter in that time and are excited to share their experiences with others. What would your students like to know about what it was like to live and work during this time? Our guests for both programs were participants in CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), the St. Louis Jefferson Bank boycott of 1963, the 1964 protest for minority employment opportunities at the Gateway Arch, and the creation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday as well as many other events related to Civil Rights. These four main topics will be used as examples for students to provide both content and context and also an organizational framework for the program. Guests for the program are Percy Green and Bernice Thompson. Web resources related to these events as well as short biographies of our guests are included in the program-related activities for students to use to prepare for viewing the program archive.

Program Objectives:

1. The participant will gain a greater understanding of what it meant to live during and participate in the struggle for Civil Rights for black Americans.
2. The participant will interact with individuals providing primary source accounts of recent world events.
3. The participant will meet people and hear stories from diverse perspectives.

Program Format:

The archived program consists of the following segments.

1. Welcome and Introduction—Student groups and experts will be introduced and welcomed to the program.
2. Context of the Time—Guests share personal memories dealing with general information on lifestyle, employment opportunities, educational realities, etc. of their lives growing up in American in the 1940's, 50's and 60's. Students will be able to ask questions during this segment dealing with these contextual points.
3. Getting Involved—Guests share personal memories of getting involved in Civil Rights activities in 1960's St. Louis as well as later examples including the creation of the Martin Luther, King Jr. National Holiday. 1960s examples will include the formation of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), the 1963 boycott of the Jefferson Bank in St. Louis, and the 1964 protest for minority employment opportunities at the Gateway Arch. Student questions are integrated throughout the program and should be focused on the topics listed in this segment description. Web resources to learn more about these events are included in the program's curriculum materials later in this document.
4. Closing Segment--Including summary of topics discussed and final questions from students.

Featured National Standards (History):**Grades 5-12:****Historical Thinking Standards**

2. Historical Comprehension

B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

C. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

F. Appreciate historical perspectives--(a) describing the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; (b) considering the historical context in which the event unfolded--the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (c) avoiding "present-mindedness," judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

4. Historical Research Capabilities

A. Formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.

B. Obtain historical data from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films, oral testimony from living witnesses, censuses, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators.

5. Historical Issues—Analysis and Decision-Making

A. Identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

Featured State Standards (Missouri):

Schools from across the country are invited to join in the program. Missouri state standards are provided for Missouri schools since partial funding for this program comes from Missouri organizations.

Show Me Performance Standards:

Goal 1 – 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9

Goal 2 - 1, 2, 4, 7

Goal 3 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Goal 4 - 1, 5, 6

Social Studies Knowledge Standards - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Communication Knowledge Standards - 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Program-Related Activity Suggestions:

- 1. Learn About the Program Guests**—At the end of this document, you will find brief biographical information about each program guest. Students should view this material to gain a frame of reference for what each guest shares during the archived program.
- 2. Learn More About the Topic**—Use the web resources provided with these curriculum materials to provide students additional background information about the program’s guests as well as the Civil Rights movement in general. Consider having students look at different sites in small groups and then share what they learn with each other.
- 3. Share What They Have Learned**—Have students compare their previous understanding of what they thought it would mean to be a black American in the 1940s, 50s and 60s with their view of that situation after participating in the program. What surprised them the most? What reinforced what they already believed? What new insights did they gain into the military and wartime experience? Have students share their thoughts in class discussion, journal entries, or written reports.
- 4. Bring in a Guest Speaker**—Have students research the struggle for Civil Rights in their own area and see if they can locate a guest speaker to come to your class and share their story. Think in terms of individuals who participated in the struggle for black American rights as well as those who joined in other civil rights struggles for women and/or other minorities.

Supplemental Resources:

<http://www.civilrights.org/resources/civilrights101/desegregation.html>

Learn a great deal about the development of Civil Rights in American history from its origins until today. The site includes a chronology, glossary, explanations of important events in Civil Rights history including the movement for Black American civil rights as well as additional movements for other minority groups and women.

<http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/> Website of the National Civil Rights Museum. Teacher and student educational resources are included.

http://www.stlamerican.com/black_history/article_30a46f40-3aaf-11e0-b7b9-001cc4c002e0.html Article in the St. Louis American on Percy Green's protest at the Arch in 1964.

<http://www.ksdk.com/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=207036> Watch video from a 1964 St. Louis television news station showing Mr. Green's protest at the Gateway Arch. A short advertisement will play before the news video begins.

<http://www.rivercityexaminer.com/percy.html> Biography of Percy Green including information on his 1964 protest at the Arch and his historic Supreme Court case, McDonnell v. Green.

<http://www.stlbeacon.org/region/104466-norman-seay-looks-back-on-jefferson-bank-and-local-struggle-for-civil-rights> Article from the St. Louis Beacon about Norman Seay and the Jefferson Bank boycott of 1963.

<http://urbanreviewstl.com/2011/08/jefferson-banks-1956-move-south-of-delmar-away-from-pruitt-igoe-1963-protest/> Read information about the Jefferson Bank boycott and see video of the protest and interviews with participants in a short video included on the page.

<http://coe.umsl.edu/web/centers/tlc/web/dighistory/change-core.cfm> Article describing the origins of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) with a bit of information on the Jefferson Bank boycott also.

<http://www.core-online.org/> Learn more about the history and mission of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) at its website.

<http://mlkday.gov/> Find out more about the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service.

Guest Biographies

Percy Green

Percy Green has worked tirelessly for four and a half decades championing equality for all in St. Louis and throughout the nation. A native of St. Louis, Green worked in the 1960's with CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and then helped form ACTION, a St. Louis group formed to target St. Louis areas of discrimination. Green is perhaps best known for scaling the Gateway Arch as it was being constructed to protest the city's use of federal funds to build the arch while discriminating against minority contractors. His landmark case, Green v. McDonnell, went all the way to the United States Supreme Court and broke new ground in equal employment hiring practices. Additional web resources concerning Mr. Green and these two landmark events are included in the civil rights web links provided as part of the program materials.

Bernice Thompson

Bernice Thompson is a licensed clinical social worker. Her life has been dedicated to helping those in need, especially those with psychiatric illnesses. She was involved in Civil Rights efforts, mainly in support of the work of other people such as Norman Seay. Probably her best known work during the Civil Rights era is her efforts to champion a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday in St. Louis. She, Norman Seay, and (the late) Bill Bailey worked on establishing the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Committee. Like others, she had to deal with the impact of Jim Crow laws and lived stories of segregation when she was one of a few black students while in college in the Kansas City area. She is a lifelong St. Louisan.