

THE COLOR OF LAW: DO SOMETHING

What?

Students use primary resources to collaboratively research local policies, analyze histories of local communities and construct a comprehensive historical narrative of economic, housing and school inequity. Students will use their findings to scaffold a visual exhibition sharing the comprehensive historical narrative with their community.

Note: This Student Task is modeled after a Teaching Tolerance Educator Grant, “[Land of Freedom: Civil Rights Movement in East Alabama.](#)” To learn more about our grant opportunities, please visit our [grants page](#).

Estimated Time

Three to Four Weeks

Why?

Researching and sharing the local policies and practices that cultivated contemporary housing inequity will allow students to understand the historical reasons that shape their current conditions. Considering the economic relationship between schools and neighborhoods, this historical knowledge can help students best advocate for their needs and the needs of their community.

How?

GET READY

1. Choose a book, video or other media that will frontload students with essential understandings, such as the book *The Color of Law* or the documentary *Crisis in Levittown*.
2. Compile primary resources and localized tools that can help students gather necessary information on local housing policies and practices, such as [The Opportunity Atlas](#) maps, [The Living New Deal](#) website or the [Digital Public Library of America](#) database.
3. Prepare fieldwork opportunities, such as interviewing community elders or visiting public archives. [StoryCorps](#) is a useful tool for conducting interviews with community elders and people who hold historical memory.

4. Determine student research groups and formulate a system for sharing information with each other. [Flipgrid](#) is a useful tool for students to engage in thoughtful and interactive dialogue about their findings.

GET SET

1. Explain to students that they will be researching their local histories to understand how government policies and practices allow, support and cultivate racial segregation in housing and schools. Explain to students that understanding the historical policies and practices that shape their current conditions allows them to advocate for their own rights and the rights of their community.
2. Have students engage with the selected media using the [Thinking Notes](#) teaching strategy to ensure a close and critical reading of the foundational text or alternative media.
3. Have students explore and analyze primary resources. Throughout this process, ensure that students are accessing information that will help contextualize their local community experience.
4. Have students conduct research in the field. Throughout this process, ensure that students are effectively documenting their research so they are able to utilize it later in the process.
5. Ask students, “What is the story you want to tell about our community?” Have students decide what story they will share. [PBS LearningMedia](#) and [Canva](#) have both digital and paper-based storyboarding tools to help students plan their presentation.
6. Ask students, “How do you want to tell your community story?” Have students decide how they want to share their story. [Share Your Learning](#) has a resource bank of ideas to help students plan their presentation.
7. Ask students, “Who do you want to tell your story?” Have students decide who the audience is for their stories—their peers, their families and/or their larger school community.
8. Using a project planning guide, have students outline the necessary steps for creating and sharing their story with their chosen community. Throughout this process, ensure that students are considering necessary materials, time constraints and their answers to previous reflection questions.

GO!

1. Students create their presentation. Throughout this process, ensure that students are mindful of their timeline and have the necessary materials.
2. Secure the presentation date and location. Invite the chosen community and confirm their attendance.
3. Students share their presentations with their chosen community. Throughout this process, ensure that students have the supports needed for presenting—practice time, technology and interpretation, among others.

Reflection

Have students return to the following questions and determine if they were able to effectively follow through with their plan to create and share their community story.

- What is the story you want to tell about your community?
- How do you want to tell your community story?
- Who do you want to tell your story?

English Language Learners

Researching historical archives, interviewing community members and presenting findings can be challenging for English language learners. If possible, provide opportunities for ELL students to read translated texts, interview community members who speak their home language and present in their home language. Ensure that English language learners are given opportunities to engage in all activities with modifications and supports such as interpretation and translation.

Connection to anti-bias education

Researching the history of policies and practices that shape current conditions allows students to understand the relationship between schools and housing. This understanding can encourage students to advocate for their needs and the needs of their community and provide them with the necessary background knowledge to inform their actions going forward.

Links

Land of Freedom: Civil Rights Movement in East Alabama

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/land-of-freedom-civil-rights-movement-in-east-alabama>

Teaching Tolerance grants page

<https://www.tolerance.org/educator-grants>

The Color of Law, Richard Rothstein

<https://books.wwnorton.com/books/The-Color-of-Law/>

Crisis in Levittown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXQQ9o3R-Rc>

The Opportunity Atlas

<https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

The Living New Deal

<https://livingnewdeal.org/what-was-the-new-deal/timeline/>

Digital Public Library of America

<https://dp.la/>

StoryCorps

https://storycorps.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwwODIBRDuARIsAMy_28Xmw_2fPhop7sX1YAtFJPGIWKUU-Q2Z7s0oMU-HFP_belBnOk70jDoaAol5EALw_wcB

Flipgrid

<https://flipgrid.com/>

Thinking Notes

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/close-and-critical-reading/thinking-notes>

PBS LearningMedia

<https://aptv.pbslearningmedia.org/>

Canva

canva.com



Share Your Learning

<https://www.shareyourlearning.org/>