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Dear Educator:

Welcome to the Find Your Voice K-12 Curriculum! We are thrilled that you have chosen to teach your students more about the life and legacy of the indomitable human rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer. By way of introduction, allow me to provide you with background information about, and an overview of, this truly unique collaborative project.

Project Background

As a White woman from the North, who's spent the last fifteen years studying the life of a Black woman from the South, I often return to Jacqueline Jones Royster's instructions for cross-boundary analysis. In her essay, "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own," Royster writes:

When you visit other people's 'home places,' especially when you have not been invited, you simply can not go tramping around the house like you own the place, no matter how smart you are, or how much imagination you can muster, or how much authority and entitlement outside that home you may be privileged to hold . . . the concept of 'home training' . . . acknowledges that when we are away from home, we need to know that what we think we see in places that we do not really know very well may not actually be what is there at all . . . Coming to judgment too quickly, drawing on information too narrowly . . . [is] not appropriate. Such behavior is not good manners.

And such behavior certainly doesn't make for good scholarship. The way Royster features the concept of "home places" in this passage, as a metaphor to frame research across the boundaries of identity, inspired me to consider: what does it mean for me to be on my best manners while conducting research in Hamer's home place of the Mississippi Delta? In my own home place, I learned long ago to never show up empty-handed to another's home. As I thought about how this early lesson in manners from my home place could extend to my work in the Delta, I began to see Hamer's home place with fresh eyes--not just as a place where I could go to gain knowledge and information for my Hamer-related research projects, but rather as a place where I should simultaneously share the research I've gathered and where I should responsively engage with, and promote, existing community-led projects.

One of the earliest and most meaningful community-led projects I engaged with was the Fannie Lou Hamer Statue Fund Committee. After several years of conducting oral history interviews in the region, I was asked by members of Hamer's hometown to join the board of the Statue Fund Committee, a group of local activists hoping to bring a full-sized statue of Hamer to her hometown of Ruleville, Mississippi. Working together with the Hamer family, her friends, and fellow activists, as well as nationally-recognized scholars and media personalities, we raised enough money for the statue and we agreed upon the design concept. We also planned an unveiling celebration--to be held on what would have been Hamer's 95th Birthday. The committee members and I publicized the unveiling by reaching out to local and national media organizations, political representatives, and well-known supporters of Fannie Lou Hamer. We also invited local public school teachers, hoping they would bring students to this truly monumental celebration, to be held on October 6, 2012.

The teachers' responses to our outreach really surprised me. I knew that Mississippi was one of the first states in the nation to require that the Civil Rights Movement be taught in public schools and I was aware that their state standards explicitly mention Fannie Lou Hamer by name. So, when the teachers told us that they had no materials to teach about Hamer and that students had only a vague idea of who she was or why she was significant. I was, indeed, shocked. Back in 2012, I responded to the Delta-area teachers by providing CDs of Hamer's songs and speeches, copies of campaign posters, and newspaper articles. I hastily gathered anything I could think of from my Hamer research that would get Delta students interested in learning about this phenomenal woman from their home county. But back then, I didn't have the time or resources to create a meaningful, coherent curriculum that would adequately contextualize the primary source material I shared with these teachers.

And then this happened.

The day after the big unveiling celebration, during a more modest annual birthday party thrown in Hamer's honor by her friends and family, I glimpsed this young girl looking up at the statue with reverence and awe. I'll admit, as I snapped this picture I was momentarily patting myself on the back for a job well done.

But then, a powerful expression of Hamer's came to my mind:

"Don't say you're behind me. I don't want you back there. Say you're with me and we'll march up this freedom road together!"



Fannie Lou Hamer Statue in Ruleville, Mississippi

As I considered this statement, my heart sank a bit, and I wondered if the Statue Fund Committee had unwittingly created a larger-than-life hero out of an activist with whom we had hoped young people in her community would relate. After all, we had literally set Hamer on a pedestal. I wondered, had we set her accomplishments out of reach as well? Without proper context and background knowledge, I worried, was this statue potentially disempowering to Delta-area students?

These concerns stayed with me. And rather than viewing the statue as a successful contribution to her local community, I began hoping that the statue could become an opening salvo to a more meaningful public education project.

Thankfully, it became just that.

My colleague, Davis W. Houck, connected me with Mrs. Hamer's niece, the celebrated journalist, Ms. Monica Land, and she shared with us her dream of creating a documentary about her great aunt. Ms. Land asked if Houck and I would work with her as researchers on this project. We agreed and started pooling our resources. We soon learned that together we had a veritable treasure trove of Hamer-related material, including images, songs, speeches, interviews, television and radio appearances, personal letters Hamer penned to northern activists, over one hundred Hamer-related newspaper clippings spanning nearly sixty years, campaign platforms, receipts from her Freedom Farm, a cookbook, signed children's books, telegrams and much more.

As we read across our collection, we realized that through these materials we could create not only the first Hamer documentary told exclusively in her own words, but also the K-12 curriculum I had been dreaming about. Fast forward through several grueling years of fundraising efforts by the incredible Land, continued research by us all, and a year-long partnership with teachers across the Mississippi Delta and the Find Your Voice K-12 Curriculum is now ready to share with you and your students!

Curriculum Overview

During our year-long partnership with award-winning Mississippi educators, we developed eighteen curricular units, containing a total of thirty-two lesson plans, that span the subject areas of Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Science, American Government, US History, Geography, Black History, Women’s Studies, Politics, Economics, Agricultural Studies, Journalism, Filmmaking, and Musicology. The plans we’ve collaboratively designed are flexible--adaptable for multiple grade levels, depending on how you calibrate the depth of knowledge. The plans also contain learning objectives that are broad enough for you to adapt to your school, district, and state standards. Further still, many of the plans can be contracted to a single lesson or expanded to span several days, as instruction time and student interest permits.

The plans include high impact pedagogies ranging from a puzzle-piece gallery walk that features timeline events and corresponding images of Hamer to a STEM project that leads students in the process of growing crops for a local food bank. Further still, these units introduce students to rich concepts such as the West African idea of “Griots” or culture carriers, even as the lesson plans compel classrooms to grapple with complex contemporary questions about allyship, public memory, poverty politics, and voter disenfranchisement. The learning materials supporting each unit are innovative as well--featuring Freedom Songs from the 1960s, a federal trial transcript, historical newspapers and census data, as well as rare audio-visual recordings of Hamer’s speeches and television appearances.

Moreover, the curricular units debut new Hamer resources we created--including two new children’s books, original poems, a biographical sketch, a timeline, and an image gallery. In addition to helpful worksheets and assignment templates. The plans have also gathered existing Hamer-related teaching resources such as Carol Boston Weatherford’s award-winning book *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer the Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* and the Scholastic play about Hamer entitled, *A Long Road to Freedom*.

Throughout the design process, I had the great fortune of working on the Find Your Voice project with Mississippi educators as well as teachers and students at Lowrie Primary School in my hometown of Wilsonville, Oregon. While trying out lesson plans in elementary classrooms, I saw how much the younger students enjoyed BrainPOP Cartoons. So I reached out to the organization and consulted on the creation of the first Fannie Lou Hamer cartoon. BrainPOP is generously providing free access to this episode through our website and you’ll find that teachers have woven it into the Find Your Voice Curriculum as well. Older students are sure to enjoy the *Find Your Voice* film created by the Sunflower County Film Academy. The Academy’s inaugural summer-long workshop, led by Joy Davenport, Pablo Correa, and R.J. Fitzpatrick, culminated in this short film, which premiered at the 2019 Crossroads Film Festival in Jackson, Mississippi. Finally, the feature film *Fannie Lou Hamer’s America* by the acclaimed filmmaker, Joy Davenport, is also available for free on the Find Your Voice website. *Fannie Lou Hamer’s America* would make a great

multi-media complement to any of the 9-12 grade lesson plans. What's more, you can find a community discussion guide for the film on our website. Find Your Voice: The Online Resource for Fannie Lou Hamer Studies website was expertly designed by Pablo Correa to become not only a clearinghouse of resources for students, scholars, artists and activists alike, but also a space to promote contemporary people who "Fight Like Fannie Lou." Check back often for updated materials and inspiration!

The eighteen curricular units we collaboratively designed carry forth Fannie Lou Hamer's spirit by encouraging students to reflect on injustices that surround them and to stand up to these injustices through the creation of their own speeches, film sketches, opinion editorials, debates, narrative poems, and much more. As the editor of this project, I sincerely hope you and your students enjoy learning more about Fannie Lou Hamer through the materials we've created. Most importantly, I hope you are all inspired to Find Your Voice!

Yours in the struggle,



Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD

Editor, Find Your Voice K-12 Curriculum
Researcher, Fannie Lou Hamer's America
Assistant Professor, Willamette University



From left to right: Dr. Davis W. Houck, Mrs. Valerie D. Fairley, Mr. R.J. Morgan, Mrs. Brenda Kirkham, Mrs. Alicia Ervin-Rawls, Mrs. Latasha S. Rodgers, Mrs. Danielle Creel Martin, and Dr. Maegan Parker Brooks



Planting Seeds

Subject Areas: Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Science, Black History, Women’s History, US History

Learning Objectives:

- To recognize an underrepresented historical figure as a community helper
- To learn about the connection between voting rights and the democratic form of government
- To enhance vocabulary (see glossary within Planting Seeds)
- To understand how a life unfolds in time (see [timeline](#))
- To consider the connection between literal and figurative modes of representing ideas
- To learn more about plant life cycles
- To recognize oneself as a potential community helper

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Smithsonian Folkways, “Songs My Mother Taught Me.” [Selected songs](#) available on YouTube
- Planting Seeds: The Life and Legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer by Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD
- Small pots (one per student), potting soil, and sunflower seeds
- Protest Plants Handout
- Discussion questions (provided within)

Background Knowledge:

You may wish to enhance/refresh your own knowledge by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the “Planting Seeds” unit.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: To pique student interest, you can show the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode or play a song Hamer sang from the “Songs My Mother Taught Me” album.

Step Two: Read Planting Seeds: The Life and Legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer to the class. This book is written with a

simple rhyme structure that will appeal to young learners, but it might be helpful for you to read it aloud a few times to yourself first to perfect the cadence.

Guided Practice

Step Three: Work through the following discussion questions as a class, returning to the Planting Seeds text. The glossary from Planting Seeds and the timeline linked above could be particularly helpful here. You might also provide additional background information from your own reading of the lengthier biographical sketch. Consider recording student responses to question number three (below) on a piece of chart paper that you can post in the classroom and come back to throughout the school year.

Planting Seeds Discussion Questions:

1. America is a democracy. In a democracy, each person should have the right to vote. Why would someone want to take this right away from someone else? Why is it important for democracies to protect all people’s right to vote?
2. Fannie Lou Hamer thought that every person in America also had the right to education, food and shelter. Why are these rights important in a democracy? How can we help provide education, food, and shelter in our own communities?
3. In Fannie Lou Hamer’s community, many people worked on farm land. When farm machines were introduced, many people lost their jobs. Without jobs, those farmers could not buy food or pay for places to live. So she started a community farm where people could share their resources and use their skills as farmers to grow food and make money.

What changes are happening right now in your community? While changes can be good for some, they might bring problems for others. Are there problems that need to be solved in your community? How can you be like Fannie Lou--using your skills and resources to help solve these community problems?

Activities

Step Four: The activities described below move from the literal to the figurative to help make abstract ideas tangible for early learners. The activities combine Social Studies, ELA, and Science learning objectives.

A. If your class is already engaged in a standard life cycle curriculum, this assignment could build upon their existing knowledge by planting sunflower seeds in small pots. Students could then observe and care for their plants throughout the school year. You could note the relevance of sunflowers to Hamer's story, as Fannie Lou Hamer hails from Sunflower County, Mississippi.

B. As students water their plants, place them in the light, and weed them as necessary, you can lead the class in a discussion about metaphors--those figures of speech that carry across meaning from the realm of tangible knowledge to things we are less certain about.

For instance, you might ask the class: what is "perseverance"? What does "perseverance" look like? Abstract ideas might be difficult for young learners to concretize. They can, however, readily describe the process of how plants grow. Describing community activism as a process of planting seeds and diligently caring for them could, therefore, be a useful way for students to understand how Fannie Lou Hamer persevered throughout her life and activist career. The category of "activist" is also a great extension of community helper curriculum standards for early learners.

Issues of economic justice and political representation motivated Fannie Lou Hamer's community activism.

You can ask your students the series of questions described in number three (above) to identify issues your students are passionate about within their own communities. Then, students can construct their own figurative "plants" by filling in the outline of a sunflower with a protest slogan which advocates for an issue they are passionate about. For example, the metaphorical seeds Hamer planted grew into: "Justice for All," "Black Lives Matter," "Educational Equality," and "Civil Rights are Human Rights." This handout can be accessed here and copied for your class.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Early learners will find their voices through this unit by drawing inspiration from Hamer's activism, considering problems within their own communities, and creating protest slogans to bring greater awareness to these problems. In this manner, students will come to recognize their potential to become community helpers, who advocate for a more just world.

Assessment of Student Learning: Students will improve their reading comprehension by working through guided questions about the book, *Planting Seeds*, with their teacher. Students will gain hands-on experience studying a plant's life cycle by planting sunflower seeds and caring for their plants throughout the year. Students will create their own protest slogan posters.

Lesson Plan Author: Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD

Brooks is a professor at Willamette University. She earned her PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she wrote a dissertation about Fannie Lou Hamer. Her dissertation became a rhetorical biography of Hamer, [A Voice that Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement](#). Brooks also co-edited the first collection of Hamer's speeches, [The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell it Like It Is](#) (with Davis W. Houck). Her third book, *Fannie Lou Hamer: America's Freedom Fighting Woman*, will join Rowman & Littlefield's Library of African American Biography in February 2021. Brooks is a board member of the Fannie Lou Hamer Statue and Education Fund Committee, a lead researcher for the film *Fannie Lou Hamer's America*, editor of the Find Your Voice K-12 curriculum, and the director of the Find Your Voice: Online Resource for Fannie Lou Hamer Studies website. Brooks has two elementary-aged children and loves volunteering in their classrooms.



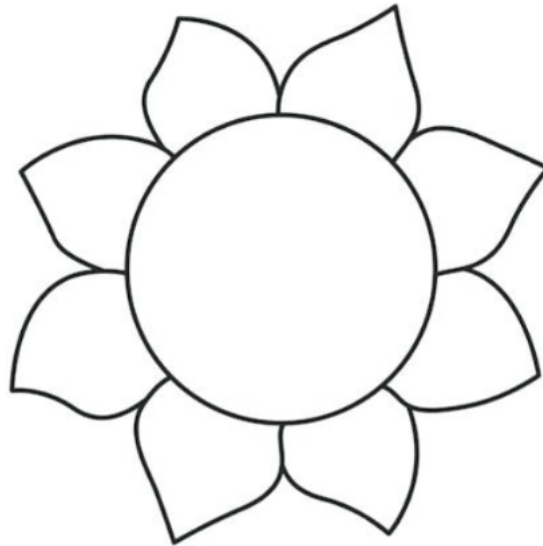


Protest Plant Handout

Describe a community problem that you would like to fix:

Protest Plants: Fill in the outline of this sunflower plant with your very own protest slogan. This slogan should help bring awareness to the community problem you would like to fix.

For example, the metaphorical seeds Fannie Lou Hamer planted grew into protest slogans like: "Justice for All," "Black Lives Matter," "Educational Equality," and "Civil Rights are Human Rights."



Shining Lights

Subject Areas: Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Black History, Ethnic Studies, Women's History

Learning Objectives:

- To recognize an underrepresented historical figure as a culture carrier and a community helper
- To enhance conceptual vocabulary by learning about metaphors and the West African concept of a Griot
- To distinguish between autobiographies and biographies
- To work with primary sources, considering multiple dimensions of expression and cultural heritage (e.g. song-leading and storytelling)
- To recognize oneself as a potential community helper

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Fannie Lou Hamer's performance of "[This Little Light of Mine](#)" at Newport Folk Festival in 1966
- Mother Goose Club's version of "[This Little Light of Mine](#)"
- [To Praise Our Bridges](#), Fannie Lou Hamer's autobiography
- Planting Seeds: The Life and Legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer by Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD
- Shining Lights Worksheet
- Background Knowledge: You may wish to enhance/refresh your own knowledge by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the "Shining Lights" unit.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: To pique student interest, start this lesson with Fannie Lou Hamer's powerful performance of "This Little Light of Mine" at the 1966 Newport Folk Festival. [Here's](#) an audiovisual recording of the song. The [Newport Folk Festival](#) is an annual event, which draws musicians and audiences from across the world. Mrs. Hamer was a featured artist at the 1965 and 1966 events.

Step Two: After the students watch and listen to the song, you can share with your class that the song, "This Little Light of Mine" has a rich history. It was originally

a gospel song that was adapted during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s and most famously sung by the activist, Fannie Lou Hamer. When Mrs. Hamer sang this song, she inspired ordinary people—farmers, maids, teachers, and students—to discover how they could stand up for what they believed was right. Her song's lyrics encouraged audience members to consider how they could let their lights shine. In this way, the light in the song works as a metaphor, representing action and engagement.

Guided Practice

Step Three: You can explain to your students that a metaphor is a language tool that helps carry across meaning from a more concrete object to another more abstract idea. In this case, we don't necessarily know what "action" and "engagement" look like. These ideas are difficult to visualize, but most of us (with the exception of some visually impaired learners) are familiar with light. So imagining the qualities of light help concretize the idea of action and engagement—how light makes us feel, how it spreads, and how it helps us see things more clearly. Beyond the metaphorical message this song carries, when Mrs. Hamer's sang "This Little Light of Mine" people say her voice could be heard all over town! Her powerful voice gave people who had been denied rights for generations the strength to stand up and fight for what they were entitled to as US citizens.

Step Four: You can transition to the idea that just as songs provide strength and direction, so too do words told through the stories of people's lives. Once you have demonstrated Fannie Lou Hamer's cultural significance as a singer, you can enrich knowledge about Mrs. Hamer as a [griot](#) or culture carrier. This concept comes from West Africa, where it is used to describe a person who passes down a group's history through storytelling. You can demonstrate one way Fannie Lou Hamer passed down her culture's history by reading her short autobiography aloud to the class.

Further still, you can spark a discussion with your students about how her autobiography highlights a range of circumstances and conditions related to the struggle for civil rights. You can access her autobiography here: [To Praise Our Bridges](#).

Step Five: To enhance students' vocabularies and understanding of literary genres, you can move from Mrs. Hamer's specific story to the larger sub-genre of nonfiction writing, by defining what autobiographies are and what they seek to accomplish.

To explore the sub-genre of autobiographies, you can explain that autobiographies are accounts of people's lives, told directly by that person, and that these accounts often provide direction for our own lives. Ask students to reflect more deeply on Hamer's *To Praise Our Bridges* by considering: how (in which ways specifically) did Mrs. Hamer let her light shine--even in times of grave darkness?

Step Six: You can then compare autobiographies to biographies by reading Maegan Parker Brooks's biography of Hamer, *Planting Seeds: The Life and Legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer*.

Before you read this book, ask students to be mindful of how the two books--the autobiography Hamer told about her own life and the biography Brooks told about Hamer's life--differ. There are noticeable stylistic differences, so this can be a great point of entry, but encourage your students to dig deeper into how the story differs depending on who is telling it.

Application

Step Seven: Students can then return to their desks and respond in writing or in picture form to the prompts: How can I stand up for what I believe is right? How can I let my light shine? A worksheet template for this reflection can be found below.

Step Eight: Invite students to share their responses with the larger class, before closing the session by singing along with either Mrs. Hamer's or with the Mother Goose [children's version](#) of "This Little Light of Mine."

Assessment of Student Learning: Students will be guided through a series of textual analysis questions as they consider the different forms of cultural heritage transmission: song, autobiography, and biography. Students will also reflect on their own values and potential contributions through the Shining Lights worksheet.

Ideas for Adapting Plan to Various Grade Levels: The "Shining Lights" unit can be adapted to grade levels K-3 by varying its complexity. For instance, for early learners, the lesson plan can exist at the levels of information recall and basic reasoning, wherein students experience Mrs. Hamer's performance and they listen to her autobiography before being asked to describe how she let her light shine. To increase the depth of the plan, even early learners can apply lessons from Mrs. Hamer's life to their own circumstances, considering how they can stand up for what they believe in and how they can let their lights shine. For early learners, this knowledge can be communicated in picture format.

To adapt this lesson plan for more advanced learners, you can ask students to identify themes or patterns in Mrs. Hamer's life that seem similar to our lives today. You could ask learners to consider which actions Mrs. Hamer took during her lifetime that people living today could utilize to bring about social, political, and economic change. Additionally, by encouraging students to reflect, write, and share, the "Shining Lights" unit enables students to hone critical thinking, as well as written and oral presentation skills. Last, by engaging with an audiovisual text (the "This Little Light of Mine" performance) as well as a text that was passed down orally (recorded) and distributed in writing (*To Praise Our Bridges*) students are encouraged to understand Fannie Lou Hamer as an activist as well as an artist, and to appreciate the multiple forms of her artwork.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Drawing inspiration from Hamer's performance of "The Little Light of Mine," in addition to her autobiography and a biography written about her, students will reflect on how they can let their little lights shine in their communities.

Lesson Plan Author: Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD

Brooks is a professor at Willamette University. She earned her PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she wrote a dissertation about Fannie Lou Hamer. Her dissertation became a rhetorical biography of Hamer, [A Voice that Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement](#). Brooks also co-edited the first collection of Hamer's speeches, [The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell it Like It Is](#) (with Davis W. Houck). Her third book, *Fannie Lou Hamer: America's Freedom Fighting Woman*, will join Rowman & Littlefield's Library of African American Biography in February 2021. Brooks is a board member of the Fannie Lou Hamer Statue and Education Fund Committee, a lead researcher for the film *Fannie Lou Hamer's America*, editor of the Find Your Voice K-12 curriculum, and the director of the Find Your Voice: Online Resource for Fannie Lou Hamer Studies website. Brooks has two elementary-aged children and loves volunteering in their classrooms.





This Little Light of Mine Brainstorm

1. How can I stand up for what I believe in?

Example: I believe that all people have something special to contribute to our world.

Your Turn:

2. How can I let my light shine?

Example: I can encourage others to speak up and share their ideas by asking questions and listening carefully to their answers.

Your Turn:

Grade
Level:
**Adaptable,
grades K-3**

Guiding Lights

Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Media Studies, Black History, Women's History, US History

This is a four-part lesson plan that can be divided into several days, depending on grade level and instruction time available.

Learning Objectives:

- To introduce biography as a sub-genre of nonfiction
- To guide students in the creation of core learning materials featured in the biographic sub-genre of nonfiction
- To engage the range of media and formats (songs, books, oral presentations, and films) through which people tell their stories/ share biographical information with audiences
- To cultivate an appreciation for the study of figures drawn from Black Women's History by demonstrating the lessons their lives can teach us in our present context
- To cultivate an appreciation of the people in students' communities who can provide inspiration

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#), Smithsonian Folkways Album, select tracks available on YouTube
- [To Praise Our Bridges](#), Fannie Lou Hamer's autobiography
- Grade-Level appropriate biography, options include:
 - A. (K-3) Planting Seeds: The Life and Legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer by Maegan Parker Brooks
 - B. (4-8) Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement by Carole Boston Weatherford, available for purchase [here](#)
- Guiding Lights Brainstorm Worksheet
- [Kid President Martin Luther King, Jr. Episode](#)
- [Super Speech Worksheet](#)
- [Fannie Lou Hamer's America](#) documentary trailer
- [Short Video](#) about documentary filmmaking from Fannie Lou Hamer's America filmmaker
- Design Your Own Documentary worksheet

Background Knowledge:

You may wish to enhance/refresh your own knowledge by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the "Guiding Lights" unit.

Part One: Identifying Guiding Lights

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Step One: This lesson plan can build upon the ["Shining Lights"](#) lesson or stand alone.

If building upon, you should start by recapping the previous lesson. Invite students who did not have the chance to respond orally to the prompt from the previous session to share "How can I stand up for what I believe is right?" and "How can I let my light shine?"

If featuring the "Guiding Lights" as a stand alone lesson, you might wish to pique students interest by playing the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free through the Find Your Voice website and/or a song Fannie Lou Hamer sang from the Songs My Mother Taught Me album. You should also explain the difference between autobiographies and biographies. While autobiographies are stories we tell about our own lives, biographies are stories we tell about other people whose light guides our way in this world.

Guided Practice

Step Two: To further exemplify the distinctions between biographies and autobiographies, you can read an excerpt from Fannie Lou Hamer's autobiography, [To Praise Our Bridges](#) and contrast how she tells her own story from how her life story is related by others (see recommended biographies broken down by grade level above).

You might even wish to push this analysis a step further by comparing biographies written about Hamer, noting that two people writing about the same person might choose to do so in very different ways.

Independent Practice

Step Three: After reading the selected biography and comparing/contrasting it with an excerpt or excerpts from Hamer’s autobiography, students can return to their desks and brainstorm (either in drawing or words) specific people from their community (coaches, teachers, clergy-people, family members, neighbors, etc.) who inspire them. A Guiding Lights Brainstorm Worksheet can be found below.

Closure

Step Four: Invite students to informally share information about the Guiding Light they brainstormed.

Part Two: Interviewing Guiding Lights

Guided Practice

Step Five: Encourage students to interview the person from their community whom they identified as a Guiding Light. It is helpful to practice interviewing an adult from school as a class. This can be done by inviting another teacher, an aid, or a member of the administration to your class for a fifteen-minute interview. See below for sample interview questions.

It is helpful to identify which students will ask which questions beforehand and to encourage all students to take notes on the responses. Immediately after the interview, work through the questions with the class, encouraging all students to share what they learned and to compile a collective record of the interview. It might be interesting to note how different researchers recall different things about the same interview.

Part Three: Sharing Lessons Learned from the Guiding Lights Research Through Speech

Direct Instruction

Step Six: Once all students conduct their interview and complete their own record of the conversation, you can help them transform their interview notes into a Super Speech about their Guiding Light. Show students the Kid President Martin Luther King, Jr. Episode as a model

speech. Ask students to pay attention both to what Kid President says about King, as well as how he says it. After watching the speech, reflect on what aspects of Kid President’s content were effective--guiding students

to recognize that super speeches convey a clear purpose and have a beginning, middle, and an end.

Also encourage students to recognize what aspects of Kid President’s delivery were effective, e.g. eye contact, rate of speech, and volume. You can compile their reactions into a customized Super Speech guide and/or you can adapt this Super Speech [worksheet](#) example.

Find Your Voice Highlights

The Guiding Lights Unit encourages students to find their voices by introducing them to an inspirational figure from history, inviting them to recognize inspirational figures from their communities, and encouraging them to share what is inspirational about these figures through a variety of media.

Independent Practice

Step Seven: Students can then plan out their Super Speech, using their notes from the Guiding Lights Interview and their observation of the Kid President model.

Peer Review and Presentation

Step Eight: Set aside enough time for each student to practice their presentation with a peer and to give their speech to the class.

Part Four: Sharing Lessons Learned from the Guiding Lights Research through Film

Direct Instruction

Step Nine: Share with your class this short trailer for the [Fannie Lou Hamer’s America](#) documentary. After viewing it, you can also show them a [short video](#) created by the Fannie Lou Hamer’s America filmmaker. In this video, Davenport explains how the genre of film is similar to and different than other forms of storytelling such as books.

Independent Practice

Step Ten: After watching Davenport’s short video and the film trailer, you can encourage students to sketch out their own documentary about their Guiding Light. See below for an adaptable Design Your Own Documentary worksheet.

Closure

Step Eleven: To conclude this unit, you can invite students to share their documentary designs before encouraging them to reflect upon the multiple ways we share information about a person's life--through songs, through cartoons, through autobiographical stories and books, through speeches, and through film too.

You can pose reflection questions like: how does each medium affect the message? Which mode of storytelling do you prefer? Why?

Assessment of Student Learning: The Guiding Lights unit contains multiple assessment opportunities, including: a Guiding Lights Brainstorm worksheet, an interview for students to complete, a speaking outline, and a documentary design activity.

Lesson Plan Author: Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD

Brooks is a professor at Willamette University. She earned her PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she wrote a dissertation about Fannie Lou Hamer. Her dissertation became a rhetorical biography of Hamer, [A Voice that Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement](#). Brooks also co-edited the first collection of Hamer's speeches, [The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell it Like It Is](#) (with Davis W. Houck). Her third book, *Fannie Lou Hamer: America's Freedom Fighting Woman*, will join Rowman & Littlefield's Library of African American Biography in February 2021. Brooks is a board member of the Fannie Lou Hamer Statue and Education Fund Committee, a lead researcher for the film *Fannie Lou Hamer's America*, editor of the Find Your Voice K-12 curriculum, and the director of the Find Your Voice: Online Resource for Fannie Lou Hamer Studies website. Brooks has two elementary-aged children and loves volunteering in their classrooms.





Guiding Lights Brainstorm

Directions:

Think of people you know who have done the following things and fill their names in the blank space. See the example below for additional ideas.

Example:

I believe that all people have something special to contribute to our world.

_____ encourages me to do my best

_____ does a job I might like to do someday

_____ always gives me great advice and ideas

Which one of these people would you like to learn more about the most? Why?

Examples:

My dad, my basketball coach, and my teacher encourage me to do my best

The school principal, my pastor, and my neighbor do jobs I might like to do someday

Mrs. Jones at church, my uncle Jackson, and my friend's mom always give me great advice and ideas

Which one of these people would you like to learn more about the most? Why?

Example:

I would like to learn more about my basketball coach because she is friendly and good at coaching



Design Your Own Documentary Worksheet

1. My documentary would be titled:

2. My documentary would be about:

3. My documentary would have _____ type of music

4. My documentary would include images like these (draw them in the space below)



Guiding Lights

5. Are there any sayings or famous quotations that motivate you?

6. What words do people use to describe you?

7. What are some of your life goals?

8. What would you like to teach others about?

Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 3-5

Getting to Know ALL About Her

Social Studies, English Language Arts, Art, US History, Black History, Women's History

This is a three-day unit that can be taught in discrete parts or as an extended lesson plan, depending on grade level and available instruction time.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will identify Fannie Lou Hamer as a significant historical figure, while learning more about the context in which she lived, especially those circumstances and conditions that gave rise to her activism.
- Students will deepen their understanding of Mrs. Hamer by reading and interpreting passages, answering comprehension questions, studying a map, and creating a timeline.
- Students will also be encouraged to find their voices by creating a collaborative art project and opinion pieces, through which they will support their points of view based on reasons and evidence.

Necessary Materials:

- [Image Gallery](#) compiled by Alicia Ervin-Rawls and Maegan Parker Brooks
- Carole Boston Weatherford, [Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer](#) (available for purchase [here](#))
- Biography.com, "Fannie Lou Hamer: Civil Rights Activist, Philanthropist (1917-1977)" Article, Discussion Questions, and Map Bonus! Activity (print enough copies for each student or for pairs of students to work directly with)
- Fannie Lou Hamer Fact Sheet and Timeline Template
- Maegan Parker Brooks, [Fannie Lou Hamer Timeline](#) example
- SNCC Digital Gateway, "[Fannie Lou Hamer](#)" entry
- Two large sheets of paper/poster board, chart paper, markers, scissors, ruler, index cards, and highlighters.

Instruction Steps:

Day One

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Display a photo of Mrs. Hamer from the [Image Gallery](#). Explain how important Mrs. Hamer

was in the Civil Rights Movement, especially her voter registration work on behalf of African Americans.

Step Two: Read and discuss *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer* by Carole Boston Weatherford to the class. You may wish to engage with aspects of the [lesson plan and discussion questions](#) provided by Candlewick Press.

Guided Practice

Step Three: Pair students and issue each student a copy of the Biography.com article, discussion questions, chart paper, highlighter, and a marker.

Step Four: Explain that the students will read the article on their own and then, with their assigned partner, they will answer the questions. Encourage them to highlight the evidence supporting their answers directly on the relevant section of the article.

Step Five: Once students have answered their questions and highlighted the evidence for their response, come around with a container holding the numbers 1-6. Have a student from each pair draw a number from a container with numbers 1-6 (depending on the size of your class, you might need multiple number sets). The number drawn will be the question that they will summarize and write on the chart paper, to be displayed around the room.

Closure

Step Six: Working in order of the reading questions 1-6, each pair will present their response to the class. Encourage the students who are listening to their peers to take notes about their responses directly on the discussion question hand out.

Step Seven: Refer to the Map Bonus! Activity and discuss the significance of where Fannie Lou Hamer came from. [The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area](#) website is a great place to learn about this historic area of the United States.

Day Two

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Review the previous day’s discussion of Mrs. Hamer by selecting students to state one sentence about Mrs. Hamer.

Step Two: Review the meaning of the word “segregation” by revisiting the student charts and responses.

Direct Instruction

Step Three: Explain today’s objectives, which are to enrich student knowledge of Fannie Lou Hamer as an important historical figure by understanding the context surrounding her activism and recognizing how her life unfolded in time.

Step Four: Review passages from Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer that feature dates.

Step Five: Model and explain what a timeline is. For example, “a timeline is a list of important events arranged in the order in which they happened. Timelines are often used in history textbooks and biographies — they explain what happened during a certain period of time or to a particular person, starting with the earliest event and moving forward through time.” You may wish to read from or display [this](#) lengthier timeline and mention that students will be making a shorter version of this.

Guided Practice

Step Six: Divide students into four or five working groups. Issue each group a copy of the Fannie Lou Hamer Facts Assignment, the [Fannie Lou Hamer Image Gallery photographs](#), chart paper, markers, ruler, scissors, and index cards.

Step Seven: Each member of the group will independently review the Fannie Lou Hamer Facts sheet—encourage students to highlight facts they find to be particularly significant as they are reading.

Step Eight: As a group, the students will then determine which five facts they would like to place on their timeline.

Step Nine: Encourage students to pair relevant images from the gallery to the timeline of events they have created.

Step Ten: Using the materials provided (photographs, chart paper, markers, ruler, index cards, and scissors) the student groups will create a timeline using the information and materials given.

Closure

Step Eleven: Select groups to share their timelines to the class. Display their timelines in the classroom or the school hallway, if possible.

Step Twelve: Ask students to reflect on why they chose the particular events and photographs that they featured on their timelines. Was there disagreement among group members about what to include? How did you resolve those differences? You can mention here that when historians, biographers, and documentarians communicate the past to contemporary audiences they also have to make choices about what to include in their work.

Day Three

Overview

*Prior to this lesson, draw a large silhouette of Fannie Lou Hamer on each large sheet of paper/poster board. This should be a recognizable outline of her form that will be filled in with student-supplied adjectives and core aspects of her life story.

Step One: Identify the day’s objective. Based on the passage we read about Mrs. Hamer, students will create an opinion writing piece describing Mrs. Hamer. What’s more, the class will create two pieces of art to hang in the classroom or school hallway.

Step Two: Explain what adjectives are: “Adjectives are words or phrases that name an attribute, added to or grammatically related to a noun to modify or describe it.”

Step Three: Have students list one word or phrase that would describe themselves and state a reason why they chose that adjective.

Step Four: Select students to share their responses.

Guided Practice

Step Five: Distribute copies of the [Fannie Lou Hamer Entry from SNCC Digital Gateway](#) with highlighters. Encourage students to read the sketch, highlighting passages that they find significant.

Step Six: Once students read the article, ask them to think of adjectives that best describe Mrs. Hamer.

Step Seven: Encourage each student to share at least one adjective and record these on a large piece of paper or poster board. Fill in the first large silhouette with the adjectives provided by the students. It might be fun to let students choose from a few colors or to let them each write in their own adjective.

Independent Practice

Step Eight: Instruct students to re-read the Fannie Lou Hamer passage, especially those passages highlighted from their previous engagement with the text.

Step Nine: Direct students to respond to the following writing prompt.

Fannie Lou Hamer played an important role in United States History. After reading the passage about Mrs. Hamer, in your opinion, how would you describe Mrs. Hamer? Refer to the passage for evidence to support your description of Mrs. Hamer.

Closure

Step Ten: Select students to share their responses with the class. As they share, encourage the other students to listen carefully and take notes about the common themes that recur across student responses.

Step Eleven: Conclude this lesson by encouraging students to identify the core aspects of Mrs. Hamer's life story. Then, fill in the second silhouette with these core aspects. If you are able to display the silhouettes in the school hallway, you can lead in to this assignment by noting that your class will be teaching the school about an under-represented, yet highly significant figure, from American history.

Find Your Voice Highlights

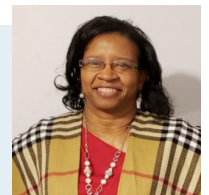
Students are encouraged to find their voice throughout this unit. In particular, students will benefit from reporting to the class about partner and group projects, identifying adjectives to describe themselves and to describe Fannie Lou Hamer, as well as being empowered to form their own opinions about the most significant aspects of Hamer's biography.

Assessment of Student Learning: Students will improve their reading comprehension by engaging with short articles about Fannie Lou Hamer and responding to reading questions. Teachers can also assess student comprehension through their group work participation and class discussions woven throughout this unit. In all, students will produce an opinion essay, two collaborative art projects, a timeline, a color-coded map, and worksheet responses to reading questions.

Lesson Plan Author: Brenda Kirkham

Lesson Plan Author: Brenda Kirkham is a fourth-grade teacher at Carver Elementary School in Indianola, Mississippi. She has been an educator for the past twenty-three years. She received her Bachelor's degree from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi in 1996. In 2003, she received her Master's degree from Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, Mississippi.

Being an educator from the Mississippi Delta, she felt that she should know more about people from Mississippi and the role that they played in the history of Mississippi, like Mrs. Hamer. She became interested in this project because Mrs. Hamer was from Mississippi and she wanted to know about her life and her struggles.





Getting to Know ALL About Her

Name: _____

Date: _____

Biography.com Article and Comprehension Questions

**Fannie Lou Hamer (October 6, 1917–
March 14, 1977) was a civil rights activist.
She fought to expand voting rights for
African Americans.**

Fannie Lou Hamer was born in Montgomery County, Mississippi, during a time of segregation. African Americans in the South couldn't eat at the same restaurants as white people. They couldn't go to the same schools either.

Hamer's parents worked long hours on a cotton farm. She began picking cotton when she was only 6 years old. By age 12, Hamer had dropped out of school. She began working full-time in the fields.

But Hamer's life changed in 1962. That's when she attended a civil rights meeting. She was 44 years old. "They talked about how it was our rights as human beings to register and vote," she told the New York Times. "I never knew we could vote before. Nobody ever told us."

At the time, African Americans had the legal right to vote. But many Southern states made it extremely difficult for them to register to vote. For example, African Americans often had to pass literacy tests before they could register. The tests required them to read and understand complicated government documents. In addition, many African Americans who attempted to register faced violence.

Braving Threats

Despite these challenges, Hamer decided to brave the voter-registration process. In 1962, she took a bus to the Sunflower County Courthouse, in Mississippi. There, she was allowed to complete the paperwork. But she was not allowed to register. Why? She was told she had failed the literacy test.

Hamer's right to vote was also challenged by her boss. He gave her a choice. She could either withdraw her voter-registration application or lose her job.



© ASSOCIATED PRESS Fannie Lou Hamer speaks on behalf of the Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, in Atlantic City, New Jersey.



© ASSOCIATED PRESS Fannie Lou Hamer (center) meets with Annie Devine and Victoria Gray outside the Capitol on January 4, 1965. The civil rights advocates traveled from Mississippi to Washington, D.C., to increase public understanding about barriers preventing African Americans from voting.

Hamer walked off the plantation. She dedicated herself to the civil rights movement.

Call to Action

Within a few months, Hamer began working as an organizer with a major civil rights group. She traveled around the South to educate black people about voting rights. Her life was threatened many times.



Getting to Know ALL About Her

In 1963, Hamer was arrested in Winona, Mississippi on false charges. In jail, she was badly beaten. The attack left her with kidney damage and a limp. But the beating didn't stop Hamer from continuing her fight for justice.

In 1964, Hamer organized Freedom Summer. It was a major effort in Mississippi to help African Americans register to vote.

That same year, she gained national attention when she spoke at the Democratic National Convention. It was held in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

During her speech, Hamer described the terrible effect of segregation. She also explained why the convention's Mississippi delegation should be integrated. "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of

the brave," she said, "where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings—in America?"

Hamer's speech was televised around the country. It became a key moment of the civil rights movement. Four years later, Hamer achieved her goal. She joined an integrated delegation from Mississippi at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

For the rest of her life, Hamer would continue to champion black voting rights. Andrew Young Jr. spoke at her funeral. He was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. According to the New York Times, Young said that the civil rights movement was indebted to the "sweat and blood" of activists like Hamer.

1. Who was Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer?

2. Where and when was Mrs. Hamer born?

3. Describe her early childhood.

4. What happened to Mrs. Hamer in 1963, in Winona, Mississippi?

5. Why did Mrs. Hamer become an activist?



Getting to Know ALL About Her

6. Read paragraph one. Determine the meaning of the word “segregation” using context clues. Then, write a sentence using the word segregation.

Paragraph One:

Fannie Lou Hamer was born in Montgomery County, Mississippi, during a time of segregation. African Americans in the South couldn't eat at the same restaurants as white people. They couldn't go to the same schools either.

Segregation Sentence

7. Map Bonus! Mississippi is a state in the Southeastern United States. It is bordered by the states: Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Alabama. There are 82 counties in the state of Mississippi. Sunflower County is located in the Northwest corner of the state in what is known as the Mississippi Delta. On the map below, color-code the county where Mrs. Hamer was born.





Biography.com Article and Comprehension Questions

Directions:

Read the facts about Fannie Lou Hamer to yourself, highlighting facts that seem particularly important to you. Next, work with your group members to create a timeline using five interesting facts. You can use the Timeline Template below or create your own using the materials provided.

Fannie Lou Hamer Facts from Biography.com

Early Years

- Hamer started working in the fields when she was only six years old.
- Around the age of 12, Fannie Lou dropped out of school in order to work full-time and help her family.
- She continued to be a sharecropper after her 1944 marriage to Perry "Pap" Hamer.
- The couple worked on a cotton plantation near Ruleville, Mississippi.
- They were unable to have children because during a surgery to remove a tumor, the surgeon gave her a hysterectomy without her consent.

Civil Rights Activist

- In the summer of 1962, Fannie Lou made a life-changing decision to attend a protest meeting.
- She met civil rights activists who encouraged African-Americans to register to vote.
- She was one of a small group of African-Americans in her area who decided to register themselves.
- On August 31, 1962, she traveled with 17 others to the county courthouse in Indianola to accomplish this goal.
- They encountered opposition from local and state law enforcement along the way.
- Such bravery came at a high price for her. For registering to vote, she was fired from her job and driven off the plantation she'd called home for nearly two decades.
- But these actions only solidified Fannie Lou's resolve to help other African-Americans exercise their right to vote.
- She dedicated her life to the fight for civil rights, working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
- This organization comprised mostly of African-American students who engaged in acts of civil disobedience to fight racial segregation and injustice in the South.

- These acts were often met with violence by angry white people.
- During the course of her activist career, Fannie Lou was threatened, arrested, beaten and shot at.
- She was severely injured in a Winona, Mississippi, jail in 1963. She and two other activists were taken into custody by police after attending a training workshop.
- Fannie Lou was beaten so badly that she suffered permanent kidney damage.
- In 1964, she helped found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which was established in opposition to her state's all-white delegation to that year's Democratic convention.
- She brought the civil rights struggle in Mississippi to the attention of the entire nation during a televised session at the convention.
- The following year, she ran for Congress in Mississippi, but was unsuccessful in her bid.
- Along with her political activism, Fannie Lou worked to help the poor and families in need in her Mississippi community.
- She also set up organizations to increase business opportunities for minorities and to provide childcare and other family services.
- She helped establish the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971.

Death and Legacy

- In 1976, Fannie Lou was diagnosed with breast cancer.
- She continued to fight for civil rights, despite her illness and died on March 14, 1977, in a hospital in Mound Bayou, Mississippi.
- Hundreds crowded into a Ruleville church to pay their respects to this tireless champion for racial equality.
- On her tombstone is written one of her most famous quotes: "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."



Getting to Know ALL About Her

Name: _____

Date: _____

Timeline Template











Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 3-5

Finding Fannie Lou

Social Studies, Literacy, English/Language Arts, Black History, Women's History, US History

This is a two-part lesson plan that can be adapted depending on grade level and available instruction time.

Learning Objectives:

- To explain what the Civil Rights Movement was and how it impacts the lives of people today
- To identify who Fannie Lou Hamer was and why she was a significant historical figure during the Civil Rights Movement
- To enhance reading and writing skills through guided writing prompts and close reading activities
- To practice posing and responding to substantive questions

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Finding Fannie Lou by Danielle Creel (forthcoming)
- Finding Fannie Lou Discussion Questions
- [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#), album produced by Smithsonian Folkways. Selected songs available on YouTube.
- "Fannie Lou, Fannie Lou, Who are You?" Poem by Valerie D. Fairley
- Character Study Outline (you can create your own or use any free or purchasable resources available on [Teacher's Pay Teachers](#))
- Discussion Questions for Finding Fannie Lou
- Several small bags with vocabulary words for students to define in small groups
- Question strips (strips of paper cut large enough for a student to pose a question, two per student)

Background Knowledge:

You may wish to enhance/refresh your own knowledge by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the "Finding Fannie Lou" lesson.

Day One

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Start this lesson by listing other relevant Social Studies topics discussed or by reviewing other Civil Rights leaders that students are familiar with.

Step Two: Narrow the lens to focus on Fannie Lou Hamer's contribution to the movement by playing the BrainPOP Fannie Lou Hamer episode. After viewing the episode, ask students to reflect on what stood out to them about Mrs. Hamer. This will lay the groundwork for the character outlines they will complete. Students may also read the poem "Fannie Lou, Fannie Lou, Who Are You?" by Valerie D. Fairley to learn more about Mrs. Hamer.

Guided Practice

Step Three: Read Finding Fannie Lou and ask students to focus specifically on the questions below.

Step Four: Work through each question as a class and return to the text when needed for specific examples and evidence.

Group Activity

Step Five: Divide the class into groups of four or five. Each group will receive a bag of core vocabulary words used in the book. The words will be written on the front of cards and students will work to collaboratively define the words on the back, with the help of the book Finding Fannie Lou (understanding the word in context), internet sources, or dictionaries. Taking turns, each group will explain their bag's words and definitions with the other groups.

Word/phrase suggestions from the story: segregation, voting rights, "sick and tired of being sick and tired"

Independent Practice/Closure

Step Six: Students will work independently to list three things that they learned about Fannie Lou Hamer, two questions they have about her (written on individual strips of paper), and one favorite part of the story, Finding Fannie Lou.

Collect the question strips and identify several core themes that span the questions. Rephrase (if necessary) enough research questions to divide the class into groups of four or five the following day.

Day Two

Anticipatory Set

Step Seven: Review the previous lesson by asking several students to share one of the things they learned about Fannie Lou Hamer and one of their favorite parts of the book, Finding Fannie Lou.

Group Work

Step Eight: Distribute the research questions you created by reviewing the students' question strips. Divide students into teams of four or five to discuss answers to the questions, with reference to the story Finding Fannie Lou.

Independent Practice

Step Nine: Students should then work independently, responding to the question they discussed with their peers in an essay format. Gather these responses and select one from each group to read aloud during the following class period.

Closure

Step Ten: Read the book, Finding Fannie Lou, an additional time and lead the students in a discussion of any questions that remain.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Students will answer guided reading questions and create a character outline. They will also define core vocabulary terms and gather their insights into three lessons learned, two questions, and one notable aspect of a book. They will discuss answers to central student questions with their peers and they will write individual essays responding in depth to a particular question.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students will learn more about Fannie Lou Hamer's contributions to her community and to the larger country. They will also gain practice posing and responding to substantive questions about Hamer's life and legacy.

Lesson Plan Author: Danielle Creel Martin

Danielle Creel Martin is an elementary teacher from Yazoo City, Mississippi. Ms. Martin began her journey with Mrs. Hamer through a history workshop where she found herself surrounded by wonderful educators discussing Mrs. Hamer. Ms. Martin began to research Mrs. Hamer and developed a passion for spreading the word about Mrs. Hamer's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, her hometown in the Mississippi Delta, and to the young college age students she encountered from all over the country. Ms. Martin has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education as well as a Master's degree in Reading Literacy from Belhaven University. She lives in Pearl, Mississippi with her two dogs and husband to whom she is newly married.





Reading Comprehension and Discussion Questions

1. What did Anthony learn about Fannie Lou Hamer?

2. How do you think that Fannie Lou Hamer was important to the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement?

3. What do you think Anthony could do to make Fannie Lou Hamer more well-known?

4. What can we learn from Anthony's character?

5. What can we learn from Fannie Lou Hamer?

Fannie Lou, Let Your Voice Be Heard

English/Language Arts, Music, Black History, Women's History, US History

This is a two-part lesson plan that can span more than one class period, depending on grade level and available instruction time.

Learning Objectives:

- To demonstrate how a poem can tell a story
- To identify particular story elements within a poem
- To identify how words—spoken and sung—engage audiences
- To recognize how an author's point of view is expressed through the poetic form
- To enhance students' vocabularies through the exploration of key concepts (e.g. stanza, line, point of view, perspective, conflict, and setting)

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode (available for free on the Find Your Voice website)
- "Fannie Lou, Who Are You?" and "Fannie Lou: She-ro" Poems and Questions for Analysis by Valerie D. Fairley
- Poetry journal for each student

Background Knowledge:

You may wish to enhance/refresh your knowledge of Fannie Lou Hamer by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the "Fannie Lou, Let Your Voice Be Heard" unit.

Instruction Steps:

Part One: Poetic Performance

Anticipatory Set

Step One: To pique student interest in Fannie Lou Hamer, and to provide general background information about her, view the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode. This episode is available for free through the Find Your Voice website.

Step Two: Preview the unit for your class. Explain that during this unit, students will learn about Fannie Lou Hamer, an historical figure who made her voice heard and brought about important social, political, and

economic change. Further, explain that they will explore poetry and learn about ways to tell stories through poetry. At the end of the unit, they will create their own narrative poem and recite it out loud for the class!

Direct Instruction

Step Three: Provide an example of a poem that tells a story and engages an audience by reciting the poem, "Fannie Lou, Who Are You?" or "Fannie Lou: She-ro" to your class. As you recite this poem, be careful to model voice, articulation, physical presence, evidence of understanding through storytelling, and dramatic appropriateness. Ask the students what their general reactions were to the poem and record these reactions on the board.

If possible, you could also partner with the school music teacher or a parent volunteer to set the poem to music. If you do so, encourage the students to engage with the rhythm and beat of the song—dancing or clapping along as they feel moved.

Independent Practice

Step Four: As students retrieve their poetry journals, write these three questions on the board:

What did you notice about the **words**?

What did you notice about the **way the teacher spoke**?

What did you notice about the **way the teacher expressed herself nonverbally** (through facial expressions and physical gestures)?

Explain what each question means and encourage students to record their observations in their poetry journals while you recite the same poem a second time.

Peer to Whole-Class Engagement

Step Five: Recite the poem a second time. When you are finished, ask students to discuss their observations in pairs--using the questions on the board as a guide.

Step Six: Have the class come back as a whole and share their partnered observations with the larger class. Record these alongside the earlier observations, noting how they are digging deeper. This deeper dig is called a “Poem Analysis.”

Part Two: Poetry Analysis

Direct Instruction

Step Seven: Distribute the text of the poem, with the questions for analysis. Instruct students to place the text of the poem inside their poetry notebook. Label and explain the core elements of the poem (including its stanzas and lines) on a larger projected version of the text.

Step Eight: Next, explain to students that although this is a poem, it still provides a clear narrative, or story about the life of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer. This is what is referred to as a “Narrative Poem,” ask students where they find evidence of a story being told within the poem. Encourage them to specify stanza and line in their responses.

Guided Practice

Step Nine: Guide the students through the first three questions for further analysis. Encourage each student to respond with specific evidence (stanza and line) from the poem:

- Who is the **main character** in the poem?
- What is the **setting** of this poem?
- What was the **conflict/problem**? How was it **solved**?
- *Who is telling this story? What words/phrases help you determine this?

Step Ten: *Before you get to the fourth question, provide a bit more explanation of the “point of view” concept. Explain to students that one way to express your point of view or to let your voice be heard is to write about a topic. Sometimes, authors choose

speakers or narrators for their poems. This means that the voice narrating the poem is telling the story from their point of view or the way the character sees things. Return collectively to the poem, “Fannie Lou, Who Are You?” and ask the students to consider question four: Who is telling this story? What words/phrases help you determine this? As the students consider this big question, write the phrase “point of view” on the board, define it, and draw a thumbnail sketch of an eye to provide a visual representation for this abstract concept.

If students are having difficulty answering this abstract question, you can use supporting questions like: An author’s point of view shapes his/her opinion. What is the topic of the poem? What is the speaker’s opinion of Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer? What words or phrases helped you to determine this? Be sure students are clear by the end of the discussion that Fannie Lou Hamer is not the author of the poem, Valerie D. Fairley is, but Fairley is writing the poem from Hamer’s perspective.

Independent Practice/ Peer Review

Step Eleven: Encourage students to create their own narrative poems by brainstorming individually or in pairs about a story they would like to tell, which will include a setting, characters, and conflict, and which will express a point of view. Unlike stories the class is used to, however, this story will unfold in lines and stanzas--the poetic form.

Group Share

Step Twelve: Once the students have drafted and edited their narrative poems in pairs, prepare them to recite their poems before the class by returning to their analysis of your earlier performance of the “Fannie Lou, Who Are You?” poem, specifically noting how poems that are performed engage their audiences through vocal and facial expressions as well as physical gestures.

Closure

Step Thirteen: Recap what students have learned from analyzing the “Fannie Lou, Who Are You?” poem, specifically:

- Poems unfold in lines and stanzas
- Narrative poems tell a story

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students recognize poetry as a form of self-expression, a means of telling a story, and of considering alternative points of view. Students gain practice communicating in prose as well as nonverbally, as they consider the performative power of facial expressions and physical gestures. Students are inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer’s example to speak up, speak out, and let their voices be heard.

- Stories have conflicts that are solved by characters
 - Stories have settings
 - Poems express a point of view
 - Words—spoken and sung—hold performative power to engage audiences
- pairs, and perform their poems before the class.

Assessment of Student Learning: Students will engage in a guided narrative poem analysis and record their reflections in poetry journals. Students will also create their own narrative poems, edit these poems in

Lesson Plan Author: Valerie D. Fairley

Valerie D. Fairley is a native of Moorhead, Mississippi. During her childhood in the Mississippi Delta, her grandmother, Minnie would often attend meetings where Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer was the featured speaker. Her grandmother would share information about this remarkable woman who wasn't afraid to stand up against the Jim Crow laws of the South. Later, she began to read and study the life of Mrs. Hamer and became fascinated with the courage that she exemplified during such turbulent times in Mississippi's dark history. Mrs. Fairley obtained a Bachelor in Elementary Education from Mississippi Valley State University. She received a Masters and Specialist in Elementary Education from Delta State University. She did further studies toward a Doctorate in Teacher Leadership from Walden University.





Fannie Lou, Let Your
Voice Be Heard

Poems and Discussion Questions

Fannie Lou, Who Are You?

by Valerie D. Fairley

Fannie Lou, Fannie Lou

Who are You?

I'm the lady from Ruleville
Who decided to vote
In Indianola, Mississippi
So please take note,
I didn't back down and I passed
The literacy test, paid the poll tax
And laid that to rest.

Fannie Lou, Fannie Lou

Who are You?

I am the woman who was brutally beaten
In Winona's jail
Laid up a month or two
But lived to tell
I'm the delegate who spoke at the 1964 Democratic Convention
And did I fail to mention
Brought the cruelties of Mississippi to
World-wide attention.

Fannie Lou Fannie Lou

Who are You?

I'm the businesswoman who started Freedom Farm
To feed the hungry families and raise the alarm,
I'm the one who started the pig bank, helped nearly 200
Families rise through the rank
I helped secure decent housing along with other unknown things
Even help furnish a garment factory with sewing machines

Yes, I'm Fannie Lou Hamer, that's who I am.
A woman from Ruleville, Mississippi who took a stand
I'm here in spirit so here's your chance.
I'm handing you the baton, so take a stand
Stand for the rights and freedom of every boy, girl, woman, and man.



Fannie Lou, Let Your Voice Be Heard

Fannie Lou: She-Ro

by Valerie D. Fairley

She rose from the flatlands of the Delta
To gain international fame
Fannie Lou Hamer was her name.

She registered in Indianola
and was beaten in Winona
thrown off Marlow's plantation by its owner.
She rose to international fame
Fannie Lou Hamer was her name,

She spoke before the National Democratic Convention in 1964
Stood proudly and proclaimed, Mississippi's indignities and shame
Rose to international fame
Fannie Lou Hamer was her name.

She helped feed the hungry and secure decent houses for the poor
Bought Freedom farm and did so much more
You asked me what's her name?
Fannie Lou Hamer say it loud and make it plain
A Mississippi She-Ro who rose to International fame.



**Fannie Lou, Let Your
Voice Be Heard**

Name: _____

Date: _____

Questions for Poetry Analysis

1. Who is the main character in the poem?

2. What is the setting of this poem?

3. What was the conflict/problem? How was it solved?

4. Who is telling this story? What words/phrases help you determine this?

Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 3-5

Freedom Farm

Science, Math, Social Studies, Black History, Women's History, US History, Literacy

Lesson example provided at 5th grade level, but is adaptable for grades 3-5.

This is a three-part lesson plan that requires several class sessions spread out over the course of several months.

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the life cycle of crops such as tomatoes, beans, corn, and squash
- To understand the processes of photosynthesis, as well as soil and water conservation
- To practice observation, measuring data, and graphing
- To formulate conclusions about how matter works together to make plants grow
- To recognize needs in our own communities and to imagine ways to give back to those communities

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode. Available for free on the Find Your Voice website.
- [Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement](#) by Carole Boston Weatherford. Available for purchase [here](#).
- Model supplies: graphing paper and pencils, as well as craft sticks, cardboard containers, twine, scissors, and tape.
- Planting supplies: containers, soil, seeds, fertilizer, water, buckets, shovels, and parent volunteers.
- Observation supplies: A Freedom Farm journal for each student to record the steps of, and reflect upon, the planting process
- Consider bringing in members of the community to talk about growing crops, nutrition, and/or food pantry programs (e.g. farmers, nurses, food pantry employees).

Background Knowledge:

You may wish to enhance/refresh your own knowledge by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the "Freedom Farm" unit. Further still, John T. Edge recently wrote an Op-ed in The New York Times that discusses the contemporary relevance of Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm, see [The Hidden Radicalism of Southern Food](#). You should also research food banks/community outreach programs

in your area so the class has a clear goal in mind for their produce. Last, if you're not already aware of which plants grow best in your area during the time of year you have to devote to this lesson, do a bit of research to set your class up for success.

Instruction Steps:

Part One: Preparing to Plant

Anticipatory Set

Step One: To pique student interest in Fannie Lou Hamer, and to provide general background information about her, view the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode. This episode is available for free through the Find Your Voice website.

Direct Instruction

Step Two: Read Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement. After reading this book, focus the class discussion on the final pages, "No Rest," wherein Weatherford discusses Hamer's efforts to provide food for her community. Then explain that the students will follow in Hamer's footsteps to become community helpers by planting container gardens that will yield actual produce. If the project is successful, the class can donate whatever has been yielded to a local food bank or other outreach program.

Group Work

Step Three: Break students up into teams, for example: "Team Tomatoes," "Team Corn," "Team Carrots," and "Team Squash." Provide each team with a seed packet and a large piece of graphing paper. Encourage the students to study the seed packets, noting the seed's specific growing needs such as water, sunlight, seed depth, and soil. It might be helpful to either introduce or review the process of photosynthesis.

Step Four: Based on their observations, lead students in the process of designing a model container to hold ten plants of the same kind. Remind students that each container must have enough length and width for their

plants, as well as enough depth for each seed. Note that these models will become a “blueprint” for the real containers that will be used for the plants the class will soon grow. If possible, provide craft materials such as small cardboard boxes, craft sticks, glue, and twine for students to create three-dimensional models of the containers.

Closure

Step Five: Collect the blueprints and/or models from each group and invite students to share with the class what they created and why. Have students reflect on the process of creating their model containers within their Freedom Farm journal. Close this portion of the unit by reminding students that they will soon be creating real containers to provide food for people in their communities, just as Mrs. Hamer did. (If possible, have students volunteer to bring buckets for water and small shovels to school for the planting exercise).

Part Two: Planting Day

Guided Instruction

Step Six: On planting day, model the planting process by following the directions on the seed packet and assign a parent volunteer to each planting group. Guide students through the process of preparing, planting, and watering their containers.

Independent Reflection

Step Seven: Encourage the students to reflect on the planting process by describing it, step by step in their Freedom Farm journal.

Long-term Engagement

Step Eight: The weeding, watering, and observation part of the process will take place over the course of several months. During this time, activities such as weekly photo logs to capture the growth and life cycle of the plants; tracking of plant life and contributions

of soil, water, and light that helps the plant to grow; experimenting with plants grown with different types of soil and sunlight; brainstorming, formulating, and what might be contributing to the growth or deterioration of plants; as well as journaling or writing based on success or failure of container garden will help enrich the process.

Throughout the process, you can also return to core concepts like photosynthesis, soil, and water conservation, all the while connecting the class community garden back to Mrs. Hamer and her contributions to her community.

Part Three: Sharing the Plants' Produce

Step Nine: If the growing process is successful, engage the students as much as possible in the donation of their produce. If it is not possible for the class to all physically travel to the donation site, take pictures of the donation and solicit a thank you letter or statement from the organization so the students can better understand how their plants will actually make a difference in the lives of people in their communities.

Step Ten: If the growing process is unsuccessful, that's ok! That, too, is a learning process. Students can reflect on what went wrong and make a plan to improve their models and process next time. Students could also be encouraged to seek out other ways to contribute to their community.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students are inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer to recognize needs within their own community and to see themselves as community helpers, who can take action and help those in need.

Assessment of Student Learning: Students will design model containers. Those model containers will become blueprints for the actual containers they plant seeds in. Students will record the planting process, as well as reflect upon the gardening process, in their Freedom Farm journals. Students will either donate their produce (if the garden is successful) or reflect upon what went wrong with the gardening process (if the garden doesn't yield produce).

Lesson Plan Author: Danielle Creel Martin

Danielle Creel Martin is an elementary teacher from Yazoo City, Mississippi. Ms. Martin began her journey with Mrs. Hamer through a history workshop where she found herself surrounded by wonderful educators discussing Mrs. Hamer. Ms. Martin began to research Mrs. Hamer and developed a passion for spreading the word about Mrs. Hamer's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, her hometown in the Mississippi Delta, and to the young college age students she encountered from all over the country. Ms. Martin has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education as well as a Master's degree in Reading Literacy from Belhaven University. She lives in Pearl, Mississippi with her two dogs and husband to whom she is newly married.



Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 6-8

Who is Fannie Lou Hamer?

Social Studies, US History, Black History, Women's Studies, American Government

Learning Objectives:

- To introduce and cultivate an appreciation for the significant, but lesser-studied, human rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer
- To gain experience analyzing primary source documents, including a sound recording and an autobiography
- To examine the interconnection between movements for social and political change: The Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War Movement.

Provided Materials:

- [Video Clip of Fannie Lou Hamer at Vietnam War Demonstration](#) (play 0:21-1:18 only)
- National Archives, ["Analyzing a Sound Recording" Worksheet](#)
- [To Praise our Bridges](#), Hamer's Autobiography
- National Archives, ["Analyzing a Written Document" Worksheet](#)
- Maegan Parker Brooks, [Timeline of Fannie Lou Hamer's Life](#)

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this brief [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before leading this lesson. Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Open this introductory session, "Who is Fannie Lou Hamer" by enabling your students to experience her powerful public speaking firsthand. Play the short speech Hamer gave at a 1971 demonstration against the Vietnam War.

Guided Practice

Step Two: Distribute the National Archives', "Analyzing a Sound Recording" worksheet and play the speech again. Provide students the time to work through the questions on the sheet individually before guiding them through the questions in a large group setting.

Step Three: Ask how many students know who Fannie Lou Hamer is and then ask those students to share what they already know about her, recording their observations on the board.

Step Four: Distribute Fannie Lou Hamer's autobiography pamphlet (if it's not possible to make copies for the whole class, you can also read this aloud or have students take turn reading sections of it aloud).

Step Five: Once students have had a chance to read the autobiography, divide them into small groups and distribute the National Archives', "Analyzing a Written Document" worksheet. Encourage students to complete the worksheet in small groups.

Step Six: Return to the large group and ask student to help expand the class's knowledge of Fannie Lou Hamer based upon what they learned in her autobiography. Record their observations on the board.

Activity

Step Seven: Note here that Hamer's autobiography was recorded in 1965. She died in 1977, so much of her activist career is missing from this primary source. To fill in the later years of Hamer's life, divide the *Timeline of Fannie Lou Hamer's Life and Legacy* into three sections (you may wish to start on page 3, where her autobiography leaves off). Distribute those sections to students working in small groups and ask them to review the particular period in Hamer's life and ask them to creatively present it to their peers. Presentations could include a poem, song, skit, or story, but should not consist of simply reading the timeline back to the class when their turn arrives.

Closure

Step Eight: Close the lesson by asking students to record three facts about Fannie Lou Hamer’s life and one question. This could be a question about a new vocabulary term, historical event, person or practice related to Hamer’s life. Collect these and use them as the basis to begin the next lesson on Fannie Lou Hamer, if time permits you to extend this unit.

Assessment of Student Learning: The “Who is Fannie Lou Hamer” lesson assesses student learning at three key points. First, through their analysis of a sound recording. Next, through their analysis of a written document. And, finally, through their analysis of a timeline and creative presentation of the facts within.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Within this lesson, students are inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer’s emphatic opposition to the Vietnam War and they are empowered to creatively present a portion of Hamer’s activist career through the timeline presentation activities.

Lesson Plan Author: Mrs. Ervin-Rawls

Mrs. Alicia Ervin-Rawls is the Social Studies Content Specialist at T.L. Weston Middle School, in which she has been a seventeen-year educator of the Greenville Public School District. She was first the district’s Social Studies Instructional Coach from 2012-2017. Prior to that time, she was a high school social studies teacher for ten years. She is responsible for guiding the development and coordination of curriculum and instructional services in her content area. Additionally, she guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of pre-service and in-service training programs regarding test data analysis for professional and paraprofessional personnel in her assigned content area. She is one of the authors who helped with writing the Mississippi Social Studies Curriculum Framework. She is a graduate of Delta State University where, Mrs. Ervin-Rawls received both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Social Science Education. She also commits her energy to economic and cultural development initiatives such as the Fannie Lou Hamer Project.



Grade
Level:
**Adaptable,
grades 6-8**

Fannie Lou Hamer and the Cotton Kingdom

US History, Social Studies: Civil/Human Rights, Economics, and Culture

Learning Objectives:

- To introduce students to Fannie Lou Hamer as a significant figure in American Civil and Human Rights History
- To engage primary source materials (particularly the US Census)
- To encourage critical thinking about the connection between the US Census and Political Representation
- To encourage critical reflection about the connections between racism, White supremacy, and economics

Necessary Materials:

- BrainPOP episode about Fannie Lou Hamer, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Biographical sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer available [here](#)
- [1940 Federal Census for Sunflower County](#)
- Federal Census Analysis Questions
- Speaking Outline
- Journals, one for each student

Background Knowledge:

Depending on your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer and the cotton economy, you might wish to engage in additional reading. Chris Myers Asch's book, [The Senator and the Sharecropper](#), provides a rich and detailed background about the connection between race, politics, and economics. Further, Ta Nehisi Coates's award-winning essay, [The Case for Reparations](#), can help you conclude and extend this lesson. You can draw upon Coates to link southern and northern histories of racist policy and discuss contemporary implications of racism's legacy.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: To pique student interest in Fannie Lou Hamer, start the "Cotton Kingdom" lesson plan by

showing the [BrainPOP episode](#) about her. After watching the episode, ask students:

"Who is Fannie Lou Hamer?" and highlight several of the key points by writing them on the board as students share. You may wish to add in additional/relevant points from your own reading of the Biographical Sketch.

Teacher Input

Step Two: Narrow the lens here and ask students to consider how Hamer came to live in Sunflower County, Mississippi in 1919. You may wish to note here that: Hamer was the youngest of 20 children, born to Lou Ella and James Lee Townsend and landowners commonly paid sharecroppers to swell their workforce by offering them a \$50 per child incentive. Before chemical weed killers and machinery, tending to the cotton crop required a big labor force: planting, weeding, thinning, and picking.

Step Three: Given this intensive work, in which her entire family participated, ask your students to consider what life was like for sharecropping families: where did they live? When did the sharecropping children go to school? For how long? And who taught them?

You may wish to note here that families who sharecropped commonly lived right on plantations where they worked. Families paid for housing, food, and supplies by selling their cotton back to the landowner. Many families were cheated because they couldn't read or write or do math. If you were cheated, you were still stuck because you couldn't move off of the plantation until your debt was paid and those who held the power to settle disputes (law enforcement officials) also benefited from the system of white supremacy so they were not willing to take the side of black families. Some of your students might wonder why families didn't leave Mississippi and head North. You can encourage this question, if you would like to engage with the history of the Great Migration. Many of Hamer's brothers and sisters did, in fact, move North, but Fannie Lou--the youngest--stayed back to care for her aging parents.

By the time she reached adulthood, she refused to leave because she felt she had a right to live “as a decent human being” in the land of her birth.

If they attended school Black children typically went only from November to March, at best, simply because cotton required so many months and hands, beginning in March and culminating with a late summer, early fall harvest. As a consequence, children went to school during winter when it was very cold and these schools often had little heat, poor accommodations and even worse books and materials. One teacher could be responsible for more than 50 children, and that teacher was often poorly trained.

Guided Practice

Step Four: Transition to primary source analysis by distributing or projecting the Federal Census. By examining two families that were contemporaries of Hamer’s (Townsend) family, you can guide students through the process of learning more about what Sunflower County looked like in 1940--when Fannie Lou Townsend (soon Hamer) would have been 23. Core points of discussion should include, what the function of the census is, how census data links to political representation, and how this ostensibly neutral tool was used to maintain white supremacy.

For example, by age 32, Martha Green had had 9 children and almost no education. Her family sharecropped on a farm. Her husband worked 52 weeks, 60 hours a week for no income; she did the same for 36 weeks, 30 hours per week. How do you have no net income? How is that possible? This example demonstrates the ways in which the sharecropping system trapped its workers into what many have recognized as a modern form of slavery. Also, take careful notice of the first names of the family. Why might so many of the Green children have biblical names?

Independent Practice:

Step Five: Print out Federal Census Data from five families in Sunflower County from this time period. Break students into five groups and ask them to analyze a family by asking the following questions:

1. Describe the family unit at a demographic level, i.e., how much education do they each have?; how old are they?; how young were mom and dad when they started a family?; how much income did they have in the preceding year?

2. How can several family members work (often more than 50 hours per week) and not report any income?
3. If family members don’t report any income, why don’t they simply move to a place where there were better paying jobs?
4. If young boys and young girls weren’t earning official income for the family, and they also weren’t attending school, what were they doing?
5. If mom and/or dad had very little formal education, how did this affect their ability to be voters and participate in local politics?
6. Fannie Lou Hamer’s formal education ended when she was 12. Was she very educated compared to young boys and girls in Sunflower County in 1940?
7. Does your particular family have first names that are found in the bible? If so, why might that be? Also, why do many men have first names of famous white men (Roosevelt, for example)?
8. Can you imagine a more difficult way to grow up? If so, what would that be? And, how can you escape it? In other words, is there a way to fight back?
9. The United States entered World War 2 in December 1941. How would that event possibly affect a sharecropping family in Mississippi?
10. The Delta is still all about agriculture and farming. But why are so few people employed in that line of work?
11. In what ways could a family possibly have fun in this incredibly hard life?
12. What did the census taker miss in their questions?

Step Six: Encourage each group to present their findings to the class by following this speaking outline:

1. Introduce your group’s family by name
 - Present the most interesting/important family members (specify why).
 - Did your group’s family make any money in 1940?
 - Nearly 80 years later, who had the best chance for success in that family and why?
2. How hard would it be for your group’s family to become successful in the years to come?

3. Nearly 80 years later, what has changed from 1940 to 2020, when we will do another census?
4. What question(s) would your group add to the census and why?

Close with a discussion about the legacy of racism. Here you might incorporate ideas from Coates’s piece, “The Case for Reparations” as you ask students to reflect on how learning about the lives of families in the Mississippi

Delta, over 80 years ago, might reshape how they understand the legacy of racism and the perpetuation of privilege. Here an initial time to journal before orally responding can help students give form to their thoughts.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Students will engage in primary source analysis, presenting their findings orally to the class. Students will also reflect on big questions related to the legacy

of racism, the perpetuation of white privilege, and the purpose of primary historical sources in their journals.

Closure

Step Seven: Write the aphorism “Geography is Destiny” on the board. Ask students to reflect first in their journals and then aloud in pairs/or to the class on the meaning of this phrase for the families they studied.

Ask students to reflect first in their journals and then aloud in pairs/or to the class on how the Federal Census provides a “snapshot” of what life was like nearly 80 years ago in Sunflower County. What does the Census capture; what does it crop out?

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students are encouraged to find their voices by creating a presentation about one family living in the Mississippi Delta in the year 1940. Through this process of primary source engagement, students will also come to find their voices—by reflecting in writing and orally to big questions regarding the legacy of racism in the United States.

Lesson Plan Author: Davis W. Houck

Davis Houck is the Fannie Lou Hamer Professor of Rhetorical Studies at Florida State University, where he has taught since 2000. He has authored or edited 12 books including *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (with Maegan Parker Brooks).



Grade
Level:
**Adaptable,
grades 6-8**

Fannie Lou Hamer, the Civil Rights Activist

Social Studies, US History, Black History, Women's History, American Government, Literacy

Learning Objectives:

- To deepen student knowledge of Fannie Lou Hamer by focusing on her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement
- To analyze the significant events, figures, groups, events and strategies of the mid-20th Century Movement for Black Freedom
- To examine the conflict between the Federal and State Governments during the Civil Rights Era
- To consider the lasting impact of the Civil Rights Movement in our contemporary context
- To strengthen reading comprehension skills by answering questions in response to a video, a sound recording, a speech transcript, and an article

Provided Materials:

- American Experience video segment, "[Fannie Lou Hamer's Powerful Testimony](#)" (3 min, 40 sec)
- [Complete audio recording of Fannie Lou Hamer's 1964 Democratic National Convention Speech](#) (8 minutes, 10 sec)
- [Transcript of 1964 Democratic National Convention Speech](#) and Reading Comprehension Questions
- National Archives, "[Analyze a Video](#)" Worksheet
- Kay Mills, "[Fannie Lou Hamer: Civil Rights Activist](#)"
- Reading Comprehension and Discussion Questions for "Fannie Lou Hamer: Civil Rights Activist"

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer and the mid-20th Century Civil Rights Movement, you may wish to consult this [timeline](#) of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's activism and this brief [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before leading this lesson.

Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and

Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*. Further still, several contemporary articles have been written about the 1964 Democratic National Convention Credentials Committee Challenge and Hamer's pivotal role within the challenge. See, for example, DeNeen L. Brown, "[Civil Rights Crusader Defied Men--and Presidents--Who Tried to Silence Her](#)" (also available as a podcast episode).

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Distribute the National Archives, "Analyze a Video" worksheet and pique student interest in the day's lesson by showing the American Experience video segment, "Fannie Lou Hamer's Powerful Testimony."

Teacher Input

Step Two: If you are extending upon the "Who is Fannie Lou Hamer?" lesson plan, you may wish to lead students in a Socratic Seminar regarding Hamer's political contributions to refresh their memories. You may also wish to group and list the facts they identified about her life during the previous session on the board before they arrive for today's lesson. Further, you could respond to common questions raised and/or work through new vocabulary identified in their responses.

Step Three: If you are teaching this lesson as a first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you should summarize key aspects from the Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer for the students.

Guided Practice

Step Four: Whether you are extending upon the previous "Who is Fannie Lou Hamer?" lesson or featuring this lesson as an introduction to Mrs. Hamer, you should now return to the Analyze a Video Worksheet and perhaps show the American Experience clip again for the students to complete the analysis.

Step Five: Note that the American Experience video only shows a clip of Hamer’s powerful speech. Distribute the entire speech transcript and play the complete audio-recording of the whole (8 minute, 10 second speech) for the class. In addition to the reading comprehension questions provided, ask your students to reflect on what they gained from hearing the complete speech as well as what stands out as most powerful about Hamer’s testimony.

Group Work

Step Six: Provide additional context for the speech by distributing Kay Mills’ article, “Fannie Lou Hamer: Civil Rights Activist.” After students read the article independently, break them into small groups to work through the reading comprehension questions below.

Step Seven: Project this picture:



August 8, 2015 Black Lives Matter protestors in Seattle, Washington interrupt Presidential Candidate, Bernie Sanders’ political rally. The protestor who speaks to the crowd about Black Lives Matter’s concerns dons a “Fight Like Fannie Lou” t-shirt.

Step Eight: Ask students what does it mean to: “Fight Like Fannie Lou”? Encourage them to summarize their responses into one or two sentences, which they will each share with the class.

Closure

Step Nine: Conclude the lesson by asking students what they learned from studying her activism. Push further to inquire about how those lessons could inform contemporary protest movements like Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, the Yellow Vest Protestors in France, and the Fight for \$15.

Assessment of Student Learning: Student learning is assessed in the “Fannie Lou Hamer, the Civil Rights Activist” at three points. First, students will complete a video analysis worksheet. Next, they will collaboratively engage in reading comprehension and discussion questions based on their independent engagement with an article. Last, students will summarize Hamer’s enduring legacy in their own words and share this summary with their class.

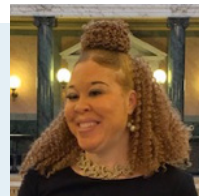
Additional Materials and Assessments: If time permits, you can expand this lesson plan by having students perform the Scholastic play about Fannie Lou Hamer entitled, [“A Long Road to Freedom.”](#)

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students will be inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer’s powerful testimony at the 1964 Democratic National Convention and they will learn about the larger strategy used by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to gain political representation for Black people. They will interpret Hamer’s lasting legacy in their own words and share what it means to “Fight Like Fannie Lou” with their class.

Lesson Plan Author: Mrs. Ervin-Rawls

Mrs. Alicia Ervin-Rawls is the Social Studies Content Specialist at T.L. Weston Middle School, in which she has been a seventeen-year educator of the Greenville Public School District. She was first the district’s Social Studies Instructional Coach from 2012-2017. Prior to that time, she was a high school social studies teacher for ten years. She is responsible for guiding the development and coordination of curriculum and instructional services in her content area. Additionally, she guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of pre-service and in-service training programs regarding test data analysis for professional and paraprofessional personnel in her assigned content area. She is one of the authors who helped with writing the Mississippi Social Studies Curriculum Framework. She is a graduate of Delta State University where, Mrs. Ervin-Rawls received both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Social Science Education. She also commits her energy to economic and cultural development initiatives such as the Fannie Lou Hamer Project.





Fannie Lou Hamer,
the Civil Rights Activist

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Testimony Before the Credentials Committee at the Democratic National Convention,” Atlantic City, New Jersey: August 22, 1964. Recording

Mr. Chairman, and to the Credentials Committee, my name is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I live at 626 East Lafayette Street, Ruleville, Mississippi, Sunflower County, the home of Senator James O. Eastland and Senator Stennis.

It was the thirty-first of August in 1962, that eighteen of us traveled twenty-six miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to become first-class citizens. We was met in Indianola by policemen, highway patrolmen, and they only allowed two of us in to take the literacy test at the time. After we had taken this test and started back to Ruleville, we was held up by the city police and the state highway patrolmen and carried back to Indianola where the bus driver was charged that day with driving a bus the wrong color.

After we paid the fine among us, we continued on to Ruleville, and Reverend Jeff Sunny carried me four miles in the rural area where I had worked as a timekeeper and sharecropper for eighteen years. I was met there by my children, who told me that the plantation owner was angry because I had gone down, tried to register. After they told me, my husband came, and said the plantation owner was raising Cain because I had tried to register. And before he quit talking the plantation owner came and said, “Fannie Lou, do you know—did Pap tell you what I said?”

And I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “Well I mean that.” Said, “If you don’t go down and withdraw your registration, you will have to leave.” Said, “Then if you go down and withdraw, then you still might have to go because we are not ready for that in Mississippi.”

And I addressed him and told him and said, “I didn’t try to register for you. I tried to register for myself.” I had to leave that same night.

On the tenth of September 1962, sixteen bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker for me. That same night two girls was shot in Ruleville, Mississippi. Also, Mr. Joe McDonald’s house was shot in.

And June the ninth, 1963, I had attended a voter registration workshop—was returning back to Mississippi. Ten of us was traveling by the Continental Trailways bus. When we got to Winona, Mississippi, which is in Montgomery County, four of the people got off to use the washroom, and two of the people—to use the restaurant—two of the people wanted to use the washroom. The four people that had gone in to use the restaurant was ordered out. During this time I was on the bus. But when I looked through the window and saw they had rushed out, I got off of the bus to see what had happened. And one of the ladies said, “It was a state highway patrolman and a chief of police ordered us out.”

I got back on the bus and one of the persons had used the washroom got back on the bus, too. As soon as I was seated on the bus, I saw when they began to get the five people in a highway patrolman’s car. I stepped off of the bus to see what was happening and somebody screamed from the car that the five workers was in and said, “Get that one there.” And when I went to get in the car, when the man told me I was under arrest, he kicked me.

I was carried to the county jail and put in the booking room. They left some of the people in the booking room and began to place us in cells. I was placed in a cell with a young woman called Miss Euvester Simpson. After I was placed in the cell, I began to hear sounds of licks and screams. I could hear the sounds of licks and horrible screams. And I could hear somebody say, “Can you say, ‘yes, sir,’ nigger? Can you say ‘yes, sir’?” And they would say other horrible names.



Fannie Lou Hamer, the Civil Rights Activist

She would say, "Yes, I can say 'yes, sir.'"

"So, well, say it."

She said, "I don't know you well enough." They beat her, I don't know how long. And after a while she began to pray, and asked God to have mercy on those people.

And it wasn't too long before three white men came to my cell. One of these men was a state highway patrolman and he asked me where I was from. And I told him Ruleville and he said, "We are going to check this." And they left my cell and it wasn't too long before they came back. He said, "You's from Ruleville all right," and he used a curse word. And he said, "We are going to make you wish you was dead."

I was carried out of that cell into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The state highway patrolmen ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack. The first Negro prisoner ordered me, by orders from the state highway patrolman, for me to lay down on a bunk bed on my face.

And I laid on my face and the first Negro began to beat. And I was beat by the first Negro until he was

exhausted. I was holding my hands behind me at that time on my left side, because I suffered from polio when I was six years old. After the first Negro had beat until he was exhausted, the state highway patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack. The second Negro began to beat and I began to work my feet, and the state highway patrolman ordered the first Negro had beat me to sit on my feet—to keep me from working my feet. I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush. One white man—my dress had worked up high—he walked over and pulled my dress, I pulled my dress down and he pulled my dress back up.

I was in jail when Medgar Evers was murdered.

All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America? Thank you.

Reading Comprehension Questions:

Now that you have watched, listened to, and read the speech, go back through and answer the following questions.

1. Fannie Lou Hamer states she is from the same county as Mississippi Senators Eastland and Stennis. That county is _____.
2. On _____, 19 _____ she traveled with _____ people to the courthouse in _____, Mississippi, to register to vote.
3. Only _____ people were allowed to take the literacy test.
4. They were stopped by the Highway Patrol and the bus driver was charged with _____.
5. The plantation owner she worked for said that if she wanted to continue working she'd have to _____.
6. On September 10, 1962, _____ homes were fired into and _____ girls were shot.
7. Hamer was again arrested in _____, Mississippi, when trying to enter a restaurant and washroom.
8. The police ordered two other Black men to _____ her.



Fannie Lou Hamer, the Civil Rights Activist

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Comprehension and Discussion Questions to Accompany the Article

“Fannie Lou Hamer: Civil Rights Activist”

1. Which best describes Fannie Lou Hamer’s family’s responsibilities as sharecroppers?
 - a. Her family worked land they owned and shared the crops with neighboring families.
 - b. Her family worked land owned by another individual and kept the crops they were able to harvest.
 - c. Her family were permitted to work land owned by another individual and were obligated to share the crops.
 - d. Her family worked as sharecroppers wherever they were allowed to.

2. Fannie Lou Hamer’s decision to register to vote caused which of the following consequences?
 - a. She lost her home
 - b. She lost her job
 - c. Her life was threatened
 - d. All answers are correct

3. Civil disobedience is _____.
 - a. violently refusing to obey laws
 - b. staging violent protests
 - c. engaging in violent demonstrations
 - d. peacefully opposing unjust laws through protests, sit-ins or demonstrations

4. The poll taxes were unjust laws, rules and policies that prevented blacks from voting in the early to mid -1900’s?
 - a. True
 - b. False



Fannie Lou Hamer, the Civil Rights Activist

5. Hamer was severely injured while in police custody in a Montgomery County Jail in what year?
- a. 1963
 - b. 1942
 - c. 1975
 - d. 1952
6. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress for Racial Equality Committee (CORE)
- a. helped convince voters to register.
 - b. registered blacks in the South to vote
 - c. created mock elections to show support for black candidates.
 - d. all of the above

Fill in the Blank

7. What is the name of the segregation laws in the South? _____
8. What does Fannie do for the Black people as a civil rights worker? _____
9. When does the Voting Rights Act become a law? _____
10. In addition to civil rights work, what other causes did Hamer champion?

Grade
Level:
**Adaptable,
grades 6-8**

Remembering Fannie Lou Hamer

Visual Arts, Social Studies, US History, Black History, Women's History, Ethnic Studies

Learning Objectives:

- To cultivate an appreciation for the study of underrepresented figures drawn from African American History by demonstrating the lessons their lives can teach us in our present context
- To gain experience with visual analysis as a mode of historical inquiry
- To gain experience creating public visual art

Provided Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Fannie Lou Hamer, [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#), Smithsonian Folkways (select songs available on YouTube)
- Maegan Parker Brooks, [Fannie Lou Hamer Timeline](#)
- [Fannie Lou Hamer Image Gallery](#) compiled by Alicia Ervin-Rawls and Maegan Parker Brooks
- National Archives, Analyze a Photograph [Worksheet](#)
- Learn about [The Fannie Lou Hamer Statue](#) in Ruleville

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this brief [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before leading this lesson. Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: If you are extending upon the previous lessons, "Who is Fannie Lou Hamer?" and/or "Fannie Lou Hamer, the Civil Rights Activist" you can begin by asking students what they've learned about Hamer so far. Record their observations on the board, answer any

lingering questions about the previous lessons, and help define any new vocabulary words.

Step Two: If this is your students' first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you might wish to either begin by playing the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode available for free on the Find Your Voice website or by summarizing her major contributions based upon your reading of the Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer.

Guided Practice

Step Three: Project an image of Fannie Lou Hamer from the Image Gallery and guide students through the process of analyzing a photograph, as outlined in the National Archives Worksheet.

Independent Practice

Step Four: Create stations around the classroom by projecting or posting pictures of Fannie Lou Hamer from the Image Gallery and corresponding information about her life from the Timeline.

Step Five: Distribute the National Archives, "Analyze a Photograph" Worksheet to students and encourage them to participate in a gallery walk throughout the room. Consider playing songs from Fannie Lou Hamer's album, "Songs My Mother Taught Me," as students proceed through the gallery you've created. Once they identify a particular photograph of interest, they should conduct an analysis of that photograph using the worksheet as a guide.

Group Work and Creative Activities

Step Six: Group students according to their chosen photographs. As a group, students should create a brief presentation for the class, highlighting the most noteworthy and interesting aspects of their analyses. Be sure to note that these presentations should not consist of reading the analysis worksheet or the timeline information displayed. Encourage students to be creative in their presentation of the photograph and their analytical findings.

Step Seven: After each group has presented, introduce the day's final activity. Project the Fannie Lou Hamer Statue Fund website so students can see an example of an existing historical marker honoring Mrs. Hamer's legacy. Then, ask students to create a flyer announcing the unveiling of an historical marker they have created to commemorate Fannie Lou Hamer. The announcement should (a) describe the memorial/historical marker and (b) explain why they chose to represent her as they did.

Step Eight: Invite students to display their flyers around the classroom so their peers can participate in one final gallery walk, learning more about each historical marker along the way. Encourage students to take note of common themes they see across the historical marker flyers, as well as significant differences or unique aspects.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students will become inspired by the life and activism of Fannie Lou Hamer told through visual images they encounter on their gallery walk. They will find their voices by presenting what they consider to be the most interesting aspects of their collaborative image analysis to the class. Further, as they are encouraged to imagine their own historical marker/memorial, students will find their voice by creating a flyer announcing the unveiling of their marker, intended for broad distribution.

Closure

Step Nine: Gather the class back together to discuss their findings: themes, differences, and unique aspects. Close the lesson by asking students to reflect on the larger questions today's lesson raised, such as: how do photographs teach us about history? Why is it important to remember the historical contributions of activists

like Fannie Lou Hamer? Why are there so few Black women memorialized in the American statuary? What could their historical markers/memorials teach future generations?

Assessment of Student Learning:

Student learning will be assessed at three points within the "Remembering Fannie Lou Hamer" lesson. First, students will complete worksheet based on their analysis of a photograph. Next, they will collaboratively create a presentation for the class based upon their analysis and the

analysis of their group mates. Finally, students will each create a flyer announcing the unveiling of a historical marker/memorial that they have imagined.

Lesson Plan Author: Mrs. Ervin-Rawls

Mrs. Alicia Ervin-Rawls is the Social Studies Content Specialist at T.L. Weston Middle School, in which she has been a seventeen-year educator of the Greenville Public School District. She was first the district's Social Studies Instructional Coach from 2012-2017. Prior to that time, she was a high school social studies teacher for ten years. She is responsible for guiding the development and coordination of curriculum and instructional services in her content area. Additionally, she guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of pre-service and in-service training programs regarding test data analysis for professional and paraprofessional personnel in her assigned content area. She is one of the authors who helped with writing the Mississippi Social Studies Curriculum Framework. She is a graduate of Delta State University where, Mrs. Ervin-Rawls received both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Social Science Education. She also commits her energy to economic and cultural development initiatives such as the Fannie Lou Hamer Project.



Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 6-12

Freedom Song

Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Music, US History, Black History, Women's History

This is a two-day lesson plan that can be expanded/contracted depending on student interest and available instruction time.

Learning Objectives:

- To recognize the multiple roles music plays in movements for social change
- To analyze a sound recording and draw inferences regarding its meaning and significance
- To enrich student understanding of underrepresented figures in African American History, Women's History, and US History
- To critically examine the role of white allyship in the movement for Black Freedom
- To conduct independent research about a protest song, including lyrical and contextual analysis, culminating in an essay and a class presentation

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer, "[Songs My Mother Taught Me](#)", Smithsonian Folkways, selections available on YouTube
- SNCC Digital Gateway, "[Freedom Singing](#)"
- Bernice Johnson Reagon, "[The Songs are Free](#)"
- Fannie Lou Hamer, "[Go Tell It On the Mountain](#)," Newport Folk Festival, July 26, 1965
- National Archives, "[Analyze a Sound Recording](#)"
- Fannie Lou Hamer, "Woke Up This Morning," Songs My Mother Taught Me, [recording](#), lyrics
- Dahleen Glanton, "[Is There Room for Whites in the Fight for Black Equality?](#)" Chicago Tribune January 11, 2016
- Peter, Paul & Mary, "[Blowin' in the Wind](#)" March on Washington, August 28, 1963, lyrics
- Bob Dylan, "A Pawn in their Game" [recording](#), lyrics
- Pete Seeger, "We Shall Overcome" [recording](#), lyrics
- Journals for each student to reflect

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this brief [Biographical Sketch](#)

[of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) and/or this [Timeline](#) before leading the "Freedom Song" unit.

Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*. For more information about the role of music in the movement, you may also wish to consult the book [Freedom is a Constant Struggle, Songs of the Freedom Movement](#). And for more information about Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, you can visit her [website](#). Finally, to further explore the controversial role of White activists within SNCC, see "[SNCC Staff Meeting at Peg Leg Bates' Club](#)"

Instruction Steps:

Day One

Anticipatory Set

Step One: As students enter the classroom, play a selection of songs by Fannie Lou Hamer. If this is your student's first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you should provide background information about her larger significance in the history of the Black Freedom Movement and American Politics. This information can be gleaned from the Biographical Sketch, Timeline, and/or lengthier biographies listed in the Background Information section above.

Step Two: As students settle into the space, ask them to reflect on or journal about a song—any song—that they have identified with emotionally. Invite several students to share their responses.

Teacher Input

Step Three: After asking a few students to share their reflections, guide the class in a discussion about the power of music, and how it can elicit emotion. Note that

this power was harnessed during the Civil Rights Movement, to connect, inspire, and cope. For more information about the role of music within the movement, see suggestions for Background Knowledge above.

Group Activity

Step Four: Next, divide the class into small groups of 4–6 students and ask them to read and discuss the “Freedom Singing” article from the SNCC Digital Gateway. Write the following questions on the board for each group to discuss:

- What are some specific examples of how music made a difference in the Civil Rights Movement?
- Why was it important that Freedom Singing be “congregational”?
- Has music ever “calmed or empowered” you?

Guided Practice

Step Five: After groups have completed their discussion, each group should report out in a full-class setting, with the teacher guiding further discussion—especially in relation to the idea of music imbuing listeners with courage.

Step Six: To further demonstrate this concept, share the short (4 min, 34 sec clip) of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Freedom Singer Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon’s interview with Bill Moyers. You can note by way of introduction that Reagon was a SNCC Freedom Singer, she went on to become a widely-celebrated scholar, activist, and co-founder of the a cappella group “Sweet Honey in the Rock.” For more on Dr. Reagon, see Background Information above. You can also note that Fannie Lou Hamer sang alongside Dr. Reagon and the SNCC Freedom Singers, most famously on the Atlantic City Boardwalk during the 1964 Democratic National Convention.

Step Seven: Last, show students the July 25, 1965 audiovisual recording of Fannie Lou Hamer’s performance at the Newport Folk Festival, “Go Tell it On the Mountain” and distribute the National Archives’ “Analyze a Sound Recording” Worksheet. In addition to taking notes guided by the worksheet, also encourage

students to pay particular attention to Hamer’s performance of the song, the setting, and especially how the song makes them feel. Ask the students if they recognize this song as a Christmas Carol and note the particular ways in which Hamer changes the lyrics to make it relevant to the Civil Rights Movement, all the while harnessing the power of the old Gospel song. (Specifically: Hamer substitutes “Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ has come” for “Go tell it on the mountain to let my people go.”)

Closure

Step Eight: Complete the day’s lesson by asking students a big question such as: What roles does music play in social movements? Can they offer contemporary examples (e.g. Kendrick Lamar’s “It’s Gonna Be Alright” and the Black Lives Matter Movement)

Day Two

Anticipatory Set

Step One: As students enter the classroom for this second day of the “Freedom Song” unit, play Fannie Lou Hamer’s “Woke Up This Morning” from the Songs My Mother Taught Me album. Distribute or project the

song lyrics and encourage students to sing along and clap together—to experience the full empowering congregational effect.

Step Two: Review the previous day’s lesson, noting especially the multiple roles music played within the Civil Rights Movement—uniting and empowering people, offering courage and direction, drawing

upon familiar resources within communities (e.g. Gospel music) to underscore the significance of the present moment and more.

Independent Reading and Reflection

Step Three: Ask students to read Glanton’s article in the Chicago Tribune, “Is there room for Whites in the fight for Black equality?” and journal their thoughts about this significant question.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students are encouraged to find their own voices by experiencing the transformative power of song, reflecting upon the role songs play within movements for social change, and critically examining the role of artist-allies. Further, students should be encouraged to express their views regarding the complex practice of allyship in writing, speech, or through a musical performance.

Discussion

Step Four: Invite students to share their thoughts about this controversial question with the class. Preface the discussion by noting that the larger issue of allyship raised in the column is a controversial one with no clear “yes” or “no” response. In fact, Fannie Lou Hamer was a staunch supporter of white allies within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. You can mention that she adamantly opposed SNCC’s decision to expel white people. For more about the controversial role of White activists within SNCC, see Background Information above. Encourage students to think about the benefits of White allies, for example, but also the drawbacks and to weigh those aspects in particular situations.

Teacher Input

Step Five: After students have had time to voice their perspectives, engage the class in a discussion about White allies from the 1960s folk movement and the role they played in expanding the nation’s understanding of the Civil Rights Movement.

Guided Practice

Step Six: Play the first 3 minutes and 40 seconds of Peter, Paul & Mary discussing their performance of “Blowin’ in the Wind” at the March on Washington, 1963.

Step Seven: Distribute the National Archives’ “Analyze a Sound Recording” worksheet and the lyrics. Encourage students to take notes on both sheets and lead students in a discussion of the meaning of the song, the historical setting, and the significance of it being sung by White singers.

Collaborative Work

Step Eight: If you have time in the session, students can work in small groups to repeat the process of viewing performances, analyzing lyrics, and drawing inferences about the songs’ contextual significance for Bob Dylan’s “Only A Pawn in Their Game” and Pete Seeger’s “We Shall Overcome.”

Closure

Step Nine: Invite groups to share back with the large group about their small group discussions.

Step Ten: Conclude this unit by reviewing the variety of functions music serves for advancing the cause of social

change and ask students to grapple with big questions: Why is White allyship problematic? How can it be helpful? How can people seeking to ally themselves with groups and causes to which they do not belong do so in ways that minimize harm and promote the cause they identify with?

Assignment

Step Eleven: Provide students with a list of 1960s protest/freedom songs from a variety of artists (see recommendations below). Ask students to select one for advanced research and present their finding to the class. Presentations should include a summary/analysis of the song’s lyrics and their meaning, any famous performances, key historical events that either inspired the song or were happening around the time of its release, its impact on society, and any personal reflections the student developed through their research.

Freedom Songs

- Eyes on the Prize by *Sweet Honey in the Rock*
- For What It’s Worth by *Buffalo Springfield*
- A Change is Gonna Come by *Sam Cooke*
- If I Had a Hammer by *Pete Seeger*
- The Times They Are A-Changin’ by *Bob Dylan*
- We Shall Not Be Moved by *Mavis Staples*
- Everyday People by *Sly and the Family Stone*
- Oxford Town by *Bob Dylan*
- Ohio by *Crosby, Stills & Nash*
- Here’s to The State of Mississippi by *Phil Ochs*
- Chimes of Freedom by *Bob Dylan*
- Mississippi Goddam by *Nina Simone*
- Strange Fruit by *Billie Holiday*

Assessment of Student Learning: Student learning is assessed at multiple points during the “Freedom Songs” unit. First, student engagement with the material can be determined by their participation in large class and small group discussions. Second, students will be engaging in individual journal reflections, lyrical, and contextual analyses throughout the lesson. Third, students will conduct original research and present their findings to the class.

Lesson Plan Author: R.J. Morgan

R.J. Morgan currently serves as executive director of the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association and teaches writing and reporting courses at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss). He earned his undergraduate and master's degrees at Mississippi State University and previously taught history and journalism at Starkville High School, where he received honors including STAR Teacher, Third Congressional District Teacher of the Year, the Paul Cuicchi Innovative Educator Award, and the MSPA High School Journalism Adviser of the Year (three times). His media experience includes freelance writing for The Associated Press, Sporting News magazine, The Oxford Eagle, The Commercial Dispatch, The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal and The Memphis Commercial Appeal. Morgan is the recipient of the 2018 Elizabeth Dickey Distinguished Service Award from the Southern Interscholastic Press Association, has earned Certified Journalism Educator status from the Journalism Education Association, and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in K-12 education leadership. He is also researching the impact of the 1963 Delta Folk Jubilee on the civil rights movement in Greenwood, Miss., for a future book.





Freedom Song

“Woke Up This Morning” Lyrics

Led by Fannie Lou Hamer

Woke up this morning with my mind

Stayed on freedom

Woke up this morning with my mind

Stayed on freedom

Woke up this morning with my mind

Stayed on freedom

Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah.

I'm walking and talking with my mind

stayed on freedom

I'm walking and talking with my mind

stayed on freedom

I'm walking and talking with my mind

stayed on freedom

Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah.

I'm singing and praying with my mind

Stayed on freedom

Yeah, I'm singing and praying with my mind

Stayed on freedom

Singing and praying with my mind

Stayed on freedom

Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah.

Come on and walk, walk

Come on and walk, walk

Come on and walk, walk

With your mind on freedom

Come on walk, walk

Come on walk, walk

Come on walk, walk

Come on walk, walk

Oh, oh, oh

Come on and talk, talk

Come on and talk, talk.

Ain't no harm to keep your mind

Stayed on freedom

Oh, there ain't no harm to keep your mind

Stayed on freedom

There ain't no harm to keep your mind

Stayed on freedom

Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah.



Freedom Song

“Blowin’ in the Wind” Lyrics

Performed by Peter, Paul & Mary

Written by Bob Dylan

How many roads must a man walk down

Before they can call him a man?

How many seas must a white dove sail

Before she sleeps in the sand?

How many times must the cannonballs fly

Before they’re forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind

The answer is blowin’ in the wind

How many years can a mountain exist

Before it is washed to the sea?

How many years can some people exist

Before they’re allowed to be free?

How many times can a man turn his head

And pretend that he just doesn’t see?

The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind

The answer is blowin’ in the wind

How many times must a man look up

Before he can see the sky?

How many ears must one man have

Before he can hear people cry?

How many deaths will it take ‘til he knows

That too many people have died?

The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind

The answer is blowin’ in the wind

The answer is blowin’ in the wind



Freedom Song

“Only a Pawn in Their Game” Lyrics

Written & Performed by Bob Dylan

A bullet from the back of a bush
Took Medgar Evers' blood
A finger fired the trigger to his name
A handle hid out in the dark
A hand set the spark
Two eyes took the aim
Behind a man's brain
But he can't be blamed
He's only a pawn in their game

A South politician preaches to the poor white man
“You got more than the blacks, don't complain
You're better than them, you been born with white skin,
” they explain
And the Negro's name
Is used, it is plain
For the politician's gain
As he rises to fame
And the poor white remains
On the caboose of the train
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game

The deputy sheriffs, the soldiers, the governors get paid
And the marshals and cops get the same
But the poor white man's used in the hands of them all
like a tool
He's taught in his school
From the start by the rule
That the laws are with him
To protect his white skin
To keep up his hate
So he never thinks straight

'Bout the shape that he's in
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game

From the poverty shacks, he looks from the cracks
to the tracks
And the hoofbeats pound in his brain
And he's taught how to walk in a pack
Shoot in the back
With his fist in a clinch
To hang and to lynch
To hide 'neath the hood
To kill with no pain
Like a dog on a chain
He ain't got no name
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game

Today, Medgar Evers was buried from the
bullet he caught
They lowered him down as a king
But when the shadowy sun sets on the one
That fired the gun
He'll see by his grave
On the stone that remains
Carved next to his name
His epitaph plain
Only a pawn in their game



Freedom Song

“We Shall Overcome” Lyrics

Performed by Pete Seeger

We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

Black and white together
Black and white together
Black and white together, now

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We are not alone,
We are not alone,
We are not alone, TODAY

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

The truth shall make us free
The truth shall make us free
The truth shall make us free, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We are not afraid,
We are not afraid,
We are not afraid, TODAY

We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 6-12

Photographing Like Fannie Lou

Art, Media Production, Communication, Journalism

This is a three-day unit that can be taught in approximately one-hour segments.

Learning Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of basic digital camera functions
- To learn filmmaking fundamentals
- To consider how visual images can help make abstract concepts tangible
- To gain practice using a digital camera to take photos that visually share information about an idea or concept
- To gain experience presenting conceptual art
- To gain experience providing analysis and feedback regarding conceptual art

Necessary Materials:

- One digital camera per group (Phone camera and iPad cameras will also work)
- Smartboard, projection equipment, or class Flickr or Google Photo account for sharing photographs

Provided Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer [Image Gallery](#), compiled by Alicia Ervin-Rawls and Maegan Parker Brooks
- National Archives, [“Analyzing a Photograph”](#)
- Fannie Lou Hamer’s America, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Find Your Voice, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website

Background Knowledge:

To enhance your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this [brief biographical sketch](#). To enhance your knowledge of filmmaking, you may wish to consider this [Filmmaking 101: Camera Shot Types](#) guide.

Day One

Instruction Steps

Anticipatory Set

Step One: If this is your class’s first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to assign the biographical sketch about her for homework. You may also wish to begin this lesson by asking students to recount how and why she is a significant historical figure. You can also pique student interest in Fannie Lou Hamer by showing them her [1964 Democratic National Convention speech](#) and/or playing a song from the [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#) album.

Guided Practice

Step Two: Show students sample photographs from the Fannie Lou Hamer [Image Gallery](#) or from sources like [CNN’s Civil Rights Movement in Photos](#) collection, the [TIME Civil Rights Movement in Photographs](#) collection, or [TIME the Most Influential Images of All Time collection](#).

Step Three: Share the “Analyzing a Photograph” guide with the students. You may wish to refer to this teacher’s [guide](#) also from the Library of Congress as you lead them in a discussion of photography analysis.

Teacher Input

Step Four: Introduce students to the rule-of-thirds, extreme close-up, close up, medium shot, and long shots.

Homework

Step Five: Assign the film Fannie Lou Hamer’s America, available for free on the Find Your Voice website, for homework or screen the short film Find Your Voice in class. Ask students to find examples within the film of the different shots you covered in class and come ready to discuss those on Day 2.

*Consider setting up an out of class/community screening of the films. You can also find a discussion guide for the film Fannie Lou Hamer's America on the Find Your Voice website.

Day Two

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Screen the short BrainPOP Fannie Lou Hamer episode and review the concepts from Filmmaking 101. Review the core aspects of Hamer's life the class learned about during the previous lesson; these include oppression, struggle, and resilience.

Step Two: Introduce the photography assignment for the day, which encourages students to use this medium to capture feelings and document oppression, struggle, and resilience in their own lives.

Group Work

Step Three: Split the students into small groups of three or four and encourage them to brainstorm how a concrete image from their own lives could convey the more abstract concepts and experiences of oppression, struggle, and resilience.

Direct the groups to work collaboratively to plan their own own shots within the perimeters you define—is it possible for the students to go outside or to a public area? Or will they remain within the classroom/building? How long will they have to shoot?

Step Four: Demonstrate how to upload the photos the students took throughout the class period to a class Flickr or Google Photo account. Each photo should be labeled with the group name and the technique illustrated.

Day Three

Anticipatory Set

Step one: Begin today's lesson talking about trial, error, and perseverance by drawing upon specific events from Fannie Lou Hamer's life for inspiration. For instance, you could mention how Hamer and the integrated

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party fought to be seated in the place of the segregated delegation sent from Mississippi to the 1964 Democratic National Convention. The MFDP was not officially seated or recognized by the DNC, instead they were offered a meager compromise of two at large seats—but the Democratic party did vow to never again seat a segregated delegation.

You might also mention that Hamer ran for public office several times and never won. Or even that she, Annie

Devine, and Victoria Gray Adams fought to unseat the US Congressmen sent to the House of Representatives from their state in 1965. As representatives of the MFDP, Devine, Gray, and Hamer argued that Black people had been barred from voting across Mississippi and therefore the representatives did not truly represent their state. Hamer lost this challenge too. Nevertheless, she persisted—fighting for voting rights and

fair representation until her death.

This frame connects to the focus of today, which is providing analysis and suggestions for improvement based upon the photos taken by groups during the previous day's session.

Group Work

Step Two: Have students return to their groups and plan out brief presentations for the class. These presentations should focus on how their photos demonstrate each of the required concepts, as well as how they used a particular image to convey the more abstract experiences of oppression, struggle, and/or resilience.

Presentations and Feedback

Step Three: Each group will take turns presenting their photos and the rest of the class will gain practice sharing constructive comments and engaging in analysis of their peers' photos.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students recognize how images have been used in American History and today. Students are inspired by examples of images to relay emotions and concepts and are encouraged to use photography to capture feelings and document oppression, struggle, and resiliency in their own lives. Students are encouraged to find their own voices by capturing photos which highlight their personal stories.

Questions to help guide conversation include:

- Does the image represent the required concept?
- If not, how could the image be adjusted to better fit the concept?
- How does the image make you feel?
- What is the focus of the image?
- What unique qualities do you see in the image?

Closure

Step Four: Return to the [Fannie Lou Hamer Image Gallery](#). Encourage students to reflect individually about one image, revisiting similar questions asked throughout the unit (it would be helpful to write these questions on the board): which photo speaks to them

the most and why? How does the image make them feel? Why is it important historically? What is its focus? Unique qualities? What type of shot does it represent? Encourage each student to share a brief summary of their written reflections with the class.

Assessment of Student Learning: Student learning will be assessed through a scavenger hunt assignment where students will work individually or in small groups to take photos representative of the required concepts. Students will present their photography to the class and share how their photo represents the required concept.

Lesson Plan Author: Dr. Pablo Correa

Dr. Pablo Correa is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Civic Communication and Media department at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. Correa specializes in digital media and documentary film, with a special focus on the interests of minorities, especially Black and Hispanic people in America. His work highlights racial relations, stories of tension, as well as stories of perseverance and success. Correa has worked on an award-winning documentary highlighting civil rights in Florida, as well as projects commemorating Emmett Till and documenting the racial reconciliation movement in the Mississippi Delta, including the Till Memory Project. Correa is currently working on the Fannie Lou Hamer's America team as webmaster, assistant cameraman for the film, and co-instructor for the Young Filmmaker's Workshop which instructs and empowers Mississippi Delta high school students to tell their own stories through digital media.





Fannie Lou Hamer and the Fight for Economic Justice

Social Studies, US History, Economics, American Government, Black History, Women's History

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the relationship between economic exclusion and political exclusion
- To recognize the range of Fannie Lou Hamer's contributions, as a civil rights activist as well as a human rights activist
- To acknowledge how power and privilege perpetuate over time, taking note of the economic inequality that still exists in America today
- To recognize areas in students' own communities where civil and human rights activism is needed

Provided Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Video Clip from News Segment, ["Hunger: American Style"](#)
- Video Clip, PBS ["Slavery by Another Name"](#)
- Video Clip, Black History Minute, [Fannie Lou Hamer](#)
- SNCC Digital Gateway, ["Freedom Farm Cooperative"](#)
- Video Clip, ["One in Five Mississippians Lives in Poverty"](#)
- To better understand the many solutions Hamer proposed to grappling with poverty in the Mississippi Delta, consider this summary of her Freedom Farm Cooperative and this contemporary article by John T. Edge, ["The Hidden Radicalism of Southern Food."](#)

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this brief [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before leading this lesson. Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*. You may also wish to familiarize yourself with economic, educational, or political inequalities that exist in the

community where you teach so you can help students recognize areas where they can contribute to social change.

Instruction Steps

Anticipatory Set

Step One: If this is your students' first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you might wish to either begin by playing the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode available for free on the Find Your Voice website or by summarizing her major contributions based upon your reading of the Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer.

Teacher Input

Step Two: Whether you are continuing your study of Hamer with this lesson or introducing Hamer to students for the first time, you can transition here from her voting rights and expressly political activism encapsulated in her involvement in the 1964 Democratic National Convention challenge to her fight against poverty. You can make this transition by showing students this clip of Hamer from the 1968 CBS documentary, *Hunger: American Style*. The entire documentary can be accessed [here](#).

Step Three: Mention that the poverty Hamer described was an outgrowth of the Sharecropping System. To explain this system in more depth, you can play the ["Slavery by Another Name"](#) and follow up with the [Black History Minute](#), devoted to Fannie Lou Hamer.

Step Four: Detail Hamer's many contributions to fighting poverty in the Mississippi Delta. These ranged from her advocacy of voting rights as a means to vote out white supremacist elected officials who kept black people in poverty, to her involvement with Head Start (the first Head Start Centers in the nation were introduced in Mississippi in the summer of 1965), to her creation of the [Freedom Farm Food Cooperative](#) (here is a brief summary of that program).

Step Five: And yet, despite Hamer’s best efforts, you can inform the class that poverty persists in the Mississippi Delta to this day. One demonstration of that poverty is [this](#) contemporary coverage of a recent flood and its aftermath on the most vulnerable in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Use this clip as an entry point to explaining issues of systemic and environmental racism, as well as the flip side—how power, wealth, and privilege compound over time.

Independent Reflection

Step Six: Ask students to independently reflect on what problems (economic, political, social) they see in their own communities and what potential solutions to those problems might be.

Activity

Step Seven: Group students according to the nature of the problems they identify. For example, there might be a group focused on “voter disenfranchisement,” another on the “school to prison pipeline,” and another on the effect “residential segregation has upon the public school system.”

Step Eight: Ask students to write the script for a news report addressing this problem. It might be helpful to show the Vicksburg clip again so students can use this news report as a model. Depending upon how much time you have to devote to the lesson, students can spend time researching the problem they have identified, collaboratively generate a script to raise

awareness about the problem, and even incorporate relevant visuals into their final presentation. Students can also record these presentations on their phones or cameras (if available) and play them for the class. If that technology is not available, students can orally present their segment.

Closure

Step Nine: Lead students in a discussion by asking open-ended and review questions, including:

- What problems motivated Fannie Lou Hamer to become an activist?
- What solutions did she promote to those problems?
- What problems continue to face our community and our country today?
- What stands in the way of activism?
- How can we overcome those obstacles and work to solve our community’s problems?

Assessment of Student Learning: Assessment of student learning occurs at three points in the “Fannie

Lou Hamer: Beyond Civil Rights” lesson. First, students will be asked to independently reflect upon and identify contemporary problems related to race, politics, and economics in their communities, as well as to consider potential solutions to those problems. Next, students will be asked to collaboratively create a news segment raising

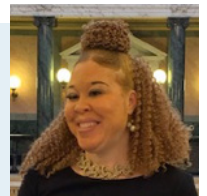
awareness about one of those contemporary community problems. Last, students’ knowledge will be assessed through their participation in the discussion questions that serve as a conclusion of the lesson.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students are inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer to find their own activist voices. Just as Hamer identified problems in her community and developed solutions to solve those problems, so too are students encouraged to raise awareness about contemporary community problems.

Lesson Plan Author: Mrs. Ervin-Rawls

Mrs. Alicia Ervin-Rawls is the Social Studies Content Specialist at T.L. Weston Middle School, in which she has been a seventeen-year educator of the Greenville Public School District. She was first the district’s Social Studies Instructional Coach from 2012-2017. Prior to that time, she was a high school social studies teacher for ten years. She is responsible for guiding the development and coordination of curriculum and instructional services in her content area. Additionally, she guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of pre-service and in-service training programs regarding test data analysis for professional and paraprofessional personnel in her assigned content area. She is one of the authors who helped with writing the Mississippi Social Studies Curriculum Framework. She is a graduate of Delta State University where, Mrs. Ervin-Rawls received both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Social Science Education. She also commits her energy to economic and cultural development initiatives such as the Fannie Lou Hamer Project.



Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 9-12

The Origins of Fannie Lou Hamer's Civil Rights Activism and Why It Matters

US History, Geography/Map Studies, Social Studies: Civil/Human Rights, Economics, and Culture

This curricular unit is written to span two class sessions.

Learning Objectives:

- To discover the origins of Fannie Lou Hamer's civil rights activism can be traced back to her childhood.
- To gain a deeper appreciation of her late in life activism, by more fully understanding why the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was organizing in the Mississippi Delta.
- To learn how Mrs. Hamer and SNCC persuaded fellow Black Mississippians to begin the process of becoming citizens.
- To critically consider the multiple barriers to activism, rooted in a brief exploration of Black Deltans' lived experiences in the early-to-mid Twentieth Century.

Provided Materials

- Drew Leader newspaper article, December 21, 1923, p. 1. [“Negro Runs Amok. 4 Killed and 6 Wounded Near Drew.”](#) (there are several additional newspaper articles reporting on the incident, if your class is interested in researching further.)
- The Negro World newspaper article, [“Died With His Boots On!”](#)
- [Freedom Vote Mock Ballot](#)
- Fannie Lou Hamer September 1964 [Speech in Indianola](#)
- Fannie Lou Hamer, [“To Praise Our Bridges,”](#) in which Hamer recounts the “Joe Pulliam” story (transcript); [audio version](#)
- Film [“Mississippi and the 15th Amendment”](#)
- [Mississippi population map](#) by county and race and registered voters
- [Picture of Pullum's Corner in the Drew Cemetery](#)

Background Knowledge:

To learn more about the Joe Pullum story that informed Hamer's early understanding of Black resistance to White Supremacist violence, you can consult the

Wikipedia page on “Joe Pullen” for background information on his story (note: that his name was in fact, Joe Pullum, not Joe Pullen nor Joe Pulliam). As several autobiographical sources confirm, Pullum's willingness to stand up to White lynchers directly informed Fannie Lou Hamer's early memories of Black-White relations in the Delta and his act of defiance later informs her courage in the face of mortal danger. She kept loaded shotguns in each corner of her house. To learn more about the 1963 Freedom Vote, you can consult SNCC Digital Gateway's entry on the [1963 Freedom Vote](#).

Instruction Steps

Day One

Note: If this is your students first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you should demonstrate her historical and contemporary significance before diving deeper into this lesson plan. You can demonstrate her significance for your students by assigning the brief biographical sketch of her life available above for homework or by screening the Fannie Lou Hamer's America Film and/or the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP! episode, both available for free on the Find Your Voice website.

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Review Fannie Lou Hamer's historical significance for students and pique their interest in this multi-day unit by playing a song from the [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#) album, most tracks are available for free on YouTube or screening a clip such as the [PBS American Experience coverage of her 1964 Democratic National Convention Testimony](#).

Guided Practice

Step Two: To help frame the day's discussion, write the following questions on the board and/or distribute a hand-out for the students to fill out as they engage with several primary sources:

Questions for students:

- What prompted the conflict between Pullum and Sanders?
- How did Pullum evade capture? How was he eventually caught?
- What did locals do with his body?
- Why does Hamer hold Pullum in such high esteem?
- Why did the newspapers reach different conclusions about Joe Pullum?

Step Three: Ask students to consider these questions as they listen to Fannie Lou Hamer tell the story of Joe Pullum, available in the audio version of her autobiography.

Step Four: Next, you can read aloud, or encourage students to read aloud, parts of the Drew Leader article and The Negro World article.

Step Five: (if possible) Project Google Maps to show where the “Wild Bill Bayou” is relative to both Drew and Ruleville. This map-study will demonstrate to your students that Hamer was very close to where the shoot out and the subsequent lynching took place.

Group Activity

Step Six: You can show students the picture of “Pullum’s Corner” in the Drew cemetery before returning to the guiding questions. It might be helpful to divide students into groups to consider the questions before returning to the large group.

Closure

Step Seven: Guide your students to question why it took Fannie Lou Hamer more than forty years after the Pullum events to become a public civil rights activist? Ask them to consider multiple answers to this question as homework and come with a short written explanation to share.

Day Two

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Encourage students to reflect on the previous day’s lesson by sharing their theories as to why Hamer did not become a public civil rights activist earlier in her life.

Guided Practice

Step Two: The answer to that question is revealed, in part, in Hamer’s recounting of what happened on her trip to the county courthouse in Indianola. Starting at the 1:10 minute mark in the Hamer, “We’re On Our Way” speech Hamer delivered in Indianola in 1964, play this segment aloud for your students.

Step Three: Ask students to consider the following questions either as a class or in small groups:

Questions for students:

- What was Mrs. Hamer trying to do on August 31, 1962? Did she succeed?
- What happened on the group’s way back to Ruleville?
- What happened to Mrs. Hamer once she returned to the Marlow Plantation?
- What happened to Mrs. Hamer less than a week later?

Step Four: Now work backwards to Hamer’s baptism into the movement by asking the critical question: Why was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizing Black men and women in the Delta?

Step Five: Project the county map of Mississippi. Note several of the Black-to-White population ratios in various counties, including Sunflower. Describe how the harvesting of cotton, which historically relied first upon slave labor and then the exploitative system of sharecropping contributed to the majority Black populations in many of these counties. Ask students to consider why White people would be threatened by the Black-to-White population ratios—especially in a supposed democracy?

Step Six: The aim in this step is to hear from one very prominent White Mississippian, W. Dudley Conner, justify why White people opposed Black Mississippians from getting the franchise. Start “Mississippi and the 15 Amendment” at the 19:50 mark.

1. Does Conner offer a reason why Black people shouldn’t vote?
2. What does he assume about all Black men and women?

Group Work

Step Seven: This is the critical step in this lesson as it relates to Black men and women like Fannie Lou Hamer becoming empowered to try and register to vote; it involves the October/November “mock election” known

as the Freedom Vote. Break the students up into groups and either project or distribute the the mock ballot featuring Aaron Henry and Rev. Edwin King.

Step Eight: Ask the groups to consider the following questions and prepare to report back:

- Why run a Black man and White man for the Governor/ Lt. Governor?
- Who is allowed to cast a ballot and where?
- Why would Black men and women bother to cast a voting ballot that doesn't really count?

*As you circulate around to talk with groups, encourage students to see the point here is that SNCC realized a mock election practiced being a citizen and that practice was the first step toward the real thing.

Closure

Step Nine: Bring the class back together as a large group and work through the core questions regarding the Freedom Ballot posed above. Mention to the class that the Freedom Vote showed the entire country that Black Mississippians wanted to vote: 80,000 Black people across the state cast ballots in just a few days! This

emboldened SNCC and Mrs. Hamer to keep organizing around the vote; locals like her did want to participate in politics.

Step Ten: SNCC orchestrated the Freedom Vote election to demonstrate not only that Black Mississippians

wanted to vote, but that they would vote in droves if barriers to access were removed. So, they held the elections not in county courthouses, which were recognized as bastions of White Supremacy, but rather in local churches, beauty salons, and pool halls. Talk with your students about

why SNCC would choose these locations and how the change in venue engendered different results.

Step Eleven: You can encourage students to further explore the mock election phenomenon by holding a mock election in class, studying mock elections orchestrated around the world—such as the elections that inspired SNCC that took place in South Africa—or to consider how mock elections in the US might help dramatize contemporary problems related to voting such as redistricting, access, voter ID laws, felon laws, and more.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students are encouraged to find their own voices within this unit through a short writing assignment, group work, and an extended Freedom Vote activity of the teacher's choosing.

Lesson Plan Author: Davis W. Houck

Davis Houck is the Fannie Lou Hamer Professor of Rhetorical Studies at Florida State University, where he has taught since 2000. He has authored or edited 12 books including *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (with Maegan Parker Brooks).



The Fight for Voting Rights

Journalism, Social Studies, US History, Black History, Women's History, American Government

This lesson plan can span three days or be contracted to one class period, depending upon grade level and instruction time available.

Learning Objectives:

- To demonstrate connections between our contemporary world and historical movements for social and political change
- To analyze a range of primary sources including Fannie Lou Hamer's famous 1964 Democratic National Convention Testimony and a variety of newspaper articles
- To critically consider how historical context shapes beliefs
- To advocate—with reasons and evidence—on behalf of one's beliefs

Provided Materials:

- [Mitchell, Jerry. "Miss. Group Helped Lay Groundwork"](#)
- [Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party \(MFDP\) Timeline](#)
- Questions for the MFDP Timeline
- [Fannie Lou Hamer's 1964 Democratic National Convention Testimony Before the Credentials Committee](#)
- Newspaper Articles related to MFDP Seating: [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#), and [Four](#)

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer and the 1964 Democratic National Convention, you might find this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#), this [background information about the 1964 MFDP Challenge](#), and this [timeline of the struggle for voting rights in the US](#) helpful. For contemporary connections, you might consider reading Michelle Alexander's [The New Jim Crow](#) and watching Ava DuVernay's [13th](#), especially considering the way in which felon laws disenfranchise Black voters.

Day One

Instruction Steps

Step One: Before students enter the classroom, write these core questions on the board:

In what ways was Barack Obama's nomination and presidential election historic?

What factors made this election possible?

How did Fannie Lou Hamer impact the election of Obama?

Once the students arrive, distribute Jerry Mitchell's article, "Miss. Group Helped Lay Groundwork." Encourage students to read the article with the questions on the board in mind. Once they are finished reading, lead a discussion of these core questions in a manner that works backward, as Mitchell does, from more current events to events that occurred in the 1960s.

Based on this discussion, ask students to collaboratively generate a list of further questions. You can provide examples to help spark student curiosity: Why couldn't Black people vote? Why was voting so important? Who was Fannie Lou Hamer? What was the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and why was it significant? What happened at the 1964 Democratic Convention? What did the the Voting Rights Act of 1965 seek to accomplish? Refrain from answering these questions now, rather compile a list of student curiosities to explore further.

Step Two: If there is time in class, you can distribute the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) Timeline and accompanying questions. If there is not time in class, you can assign these materials for homework.

Day Two

Step Three: Encourage the students to write a journal entry, reflecting on the MFDP Timeline and accompanying questions. What were you most surprised to learn?

Step Four: Lead a discussion of the questions about the timeline, working through each question in turn. When you finish with question nine, pause and play Fannie Lou Hamer’s testimony for the students to experience. The speech is eight minutes and ten seconds long. The transcript is available [here](#), if you would like to distribute it to the class.

Following the testimony, invite students to respond to its impact more fully based on their experience of listening to Mrs. Hamer’s speech.

Day Three:

Step Five: Distribute the four newspaper articles related to the seating of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Break the students into four groups and instruct each group to consider each article, summarize it, and report back to the large group about it.

While the students report out, help them make connections about how this historical moment unfolded and emphasize the importance of using primary source documents to more fully understand the past.

Assessment of Student Learning: Pose the big question: “How are voting rights restricted today” to the class. This could include discussions on race, citizenship status, gender, age, or other factors. You might ask students to read or listen to [this NPR story](#) on Florida’s recent law restoring voting rights to felons. You might share [this story](#) about Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s recent support for lowering the national voting age to 16, or [these arguments](#) for doing so by the National Youth Rights Association.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students recognize how voices have been silenced in American History and today. Students are also inspired by examples of resistance to this oppression—Barack Obama, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the MFDP. Students are also encouraged to find their own voices by speaking out against contemporary voter disenfranchisement.

Depending on the time you have to devote to answering this complex question, students could research allegations of voter disenfranchisement within their region and generate essays, supported by examples, in response to the question.

Or, you might ask students to write their own editorial columns that speak out against some type of disenfranchisement.

These could also be submitted to the school (or local) newspaper for publication. [This presentation](#) is a good starting point for teaching editorial writing, and [here](#) are some student editorial exemplars that have won awards at the national level.

Another option would be to have students work collaboratively in small groups to create class presentations addressing the same prompt. Here you might draw upon your background knowledge of The New Jim Crow and 13th and encourage students to consider how Felon Laws disproportionately affect black voters.

Lesson Plan Author: R.J. Morgan

R.J. Morgan currently serves as executive director of the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association and teaches writing and reporting courses at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss). He earned his undergraduate and master’s degrees at Mississippi State University and previously taught history and journalism at Starkville High School, where he received honors including STAR Teacher, Third Congressional District Teacher of the Year, the Paul Cuicchi Innovative Educator Award, and the MSPA High School Journalism Adviser of the Year (three times). His media experience includes freelance writing for The Associated Press, Sporting News magazine, The Oxford Eagle, The Commercial Dispatch, The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal and The Memphis Commercial Appeal. Morgan is the recipient of the 2018 Elizabeth Dickey Distinguished Service Award from the Southern Interscholastic Press Association, has earned Certified Journalism Educator status from the Journalism Education Association, and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in K-12 education leadership. He is also researching the impact of the 1963 Delta Folk Jubilee on the civil rights movement in Greenwood, Miss., for a future book.





Questions for MFD Timeline

1. By the end of 1963, what percentage of Black people in Mississippi had the right to vote?

2. All the elected officials in Mississippi belonged to which political party?

3. Describe the types of delegates Mississippi usually sent to national conventions.

4. Who was the President of the United States running for re-election in 1964?

5. Why did Mississippi Democrats oppose the President?



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6. In your own words, what were the four arguments the MFDP made for being Mississippi's "real" delegates to the national convention?

7. How many Black people in Mississippi tried to register to vote during Freedom Summer? How many succeeded?

8. How many delegates did the MFDP send to Atlantic City? Who was their leader?

9. How did the President use the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) against the MFDP?

10. Why do you think Fannie Lou Hamer's testimony was so powerful?



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11. How did the President react to Fannie Lou Hamer's testimony?

12. What "compromise" was offered to the MFDP?

13. How did Martin Luther King, Jr. feel about the compromise?

14. Did the MFDP accept the party's compromise? What did Fannie Lou Hamer say about it?

15. In your own words, why does John Lewis say the MFDP challenge was a real turning point for the civil rights movement in the United States?

Grade
Level:
Advanced,
grades 11-12

The Beginning of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi

US History, Black History, Social Studies: Civil/Human Rights, Economics, and Culture

Learning Objectives:

- To understand why many claim that the Civil Rights Movement started only in 1954
- To understand why White southerners responded so negatively to the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision
- To learn why the Citizens' Councils formed and with what effect
- To learn about the historical public arguments White people made about Black Mississippians
- To understand what motivated the reaction against Fannie Lou Hamer's activism

Necessary Materials:

- The [Murder of Emmett Till](#)
- The [Supreme Court's Brown decision](#).
- December 1955 [speech](#) by James O. Eastland
- The ["Confession"](#) by Emmett Till's killers
- [Photograph](#) of Citizens' Council meeting house in Indianola.
- [Letter](#) to parents previewing and explaining the controversial and sensitive nature of this particular lesson plan

Background Knowledge:

Teachers should consult the Supreme Court's [verdict](#) in the May 17, 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling to see on what legal grounds the Court argued that segregated schools were inherently inferior schools. Basic sources on the [Citizens' Councils](#) should also be consulted in order to connect the threat of interracial schools with the threat of interracial relationships and marriage. Students should be made aware of the fact that integration was seen, first and foremost, as a sexual threat—that Black boys would have intimate access to White girls; this would lead to the feared "mongrelization" of the White race. Hortense Powdermaker's [After Freedom](#) provides excellent historical fieldwork from her research in Indianola,

Mississippi and Stephanie R. Rolph's book [Resisting Equality: The Citizens' Council](#), 1954-1989 provides extensive background information about this influential White supremacist organization.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Read aloud key segments of the Supreme Court's *Brown* verdict, highlighting those portions featuring the effects of segregation on Black schoolchildren. Have each student read a sentence or two so that each gets to participate in the reading.

After reading together, watch the first 5-8 minutes of *The Murder of Emmett Till*. Underscore that Till was murdered by men strongly influenced by the rhetoric of the Citizens' Councils.

With overhead projection, and using Google Maps, you may wish to show how close Indianola, MS is to Money, MS.

Guided Practice

Step Two: The aim in this step is to draw a bold line (you may wish to do this on the board) from May 17, 1954 to July 11, 1954, and then to August 28, 1955. Clarify the significance of each date: the first is the *Brown* decision, the second is the formation of the first Citizens' Council in Indianola, and the third date is when Emmett Till was kidnapped and lynched.

The key move in this step is getting students to understand why so many White people in the South were horrified and very angry about the *Brown* verdict. This will be hard. It involves the threat of interracial relationships (White girls, Black boys). Students will need to understand that following slavery, and to keep Black southerners in a state of terror, public lynching was employed. Many times these lynchings were prompted by a claim that a White woman had been assaulted or threatened by a Black man. White people in the South grew up believing that Black men were

inherently attracted to White women, and could not control themselves around them. The threat of lynching could create enough fear, it was thought, to keep black men in their place. Guilt motivated White men to project onto Black men their worst fears. Why? Because White men had systematically raped Black women for centuries during slavery.

Step Three: Project an image of the Citizen’s Council house in Indianola, and have students comment on the house and what sort of person might live in that house and that particular neighborhood. The aim here is to get students thinking about economic class, specifically how White men could control Black behavior through economic means. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the Citizens’ Council did not want to be the Ku Klux Klan; its membership sought a social respectability that the Klan didn’t have.

Who was at that first meeting? Plantation managers, bankers and lawyers. Why? The key here is to get students to do a bit of role playing: if a student is a banker, for example, how can they hurt a Black man or woman who has an outstanding loan, or someone who needs credit to run a store? In other words, show students how economics was leveraged to punish blacks seeking more freedoms. Economics was its own form of racial violence.

Step Four: Watch the trial section of *The Murder of Emmett Till*, then read out loud with students the closing of the William Bradford Huie “Confession” article.

Ask the students this question: what does J. W. Milam’s decision to kill Emmett Till have to do with the Brown verdict? What was the “poison” Till was supposedly filled with, and who filled him with it?

Be sure to let students know that the Huie so-called “Confession” article is a series of lies made by Bryant and Milam to keep their “friends” from being tried for kidnapping and murder. Since they had been declared “not guilty” on September 23, they were free to confess.

We know from Willie Reed, who was an eyewitness to Till’s torture and murder, that many men were involved in the crime, not just Milam and Bryant.

Step Five: One of the most powerful men in the U.S. Senate in 1955 was Senator James O. Eastland, who lived in Doddsville, Sunflower County, Mississippi. Eastland was one of the main mouthpieces for the Citizens’ Councils, speaking on their behalf throughout the Deep South as well as in Washington, D.C.

Read several key parts of his December 1, 1955 address out loud, notably those sections that deal with “miscegenation” and “amalgamation.” What are these terms code for? Why did they need to be phrased in code?

Independent Application or Group Work

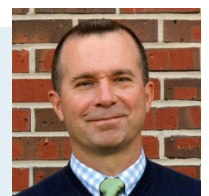
Step Six: Have students author a song or poem in which they adopt the persona of Fannie Lou Hamer remembering Emmett Till. The song can be in any genre, perhaps ones that your students are most familiar with. If students are comfortable, have them share their lyrics on the board with the entire class.

Closure

Step Seven: This is a very hard lesson plan, but we shouldn’t avert our gaze from the hard history it confronts. Frankly, if we don’t know the people and the ideology that Fannie Lou Hamer was up against—beginning in her very own county—we do her bravery and mission a grave disservice.

Lesson Plan Author: Davis W. Houck

Davis Houck is the Fannie Lou Hamer Professor of Rhetorical Studies at Florida State University, where he has taught since 2000. He has authored or edited 12 books including *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (with Maegan Parker Brooks).



Grade
Level:
Advanced,
grades 11-12

The Great Divide: Separating the Wheat from the Tares

US History, Black History, Women's History, English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Argumentation and Debate

This is a week-long five day unit that can be expanded or contracted based upon grade level and available instruction time.

Learning Objectives:

- To enhance knowledge of an underrepresented figure in American history by studying a defining aspect of her personal narrative (her beating while in jail) which became a key touchstone in her political activism.
- To critically compare and contrast how the legacies of public figures are constructed by studying the legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer as well as the legacy of Officer John L. Basinger, who ordered her jailhouse beating.
- To gain practice analyzing and evaluating primary source information, thereby developing critical thinking, reasoning, and argumentation skills.
- To gain practice engaging in the complex processes of character/characterization analysis and the analysis of public memory.
- To express an informed perspective, supported through the process of primary source evaluation and analysis.
- To consider and reflect upon the opposing viewpoint.

Provided Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer's Testimony Before the Credentials Committee at the 1964 Democratic National Convention:
 - A. American Experience video segment, "[Fannie Lou Hamer's Powerful Testimony](#)" (3 min, 40 sec)
 - B. [Complete audio recording of Fannie Lou Hamer's 1964 Democratic National Convention Speech](#) (8 minutes, 10 sec)
 - C. [Transcript of 1964 Democratic National Convention Speech](#)
- [The United States of America v. Earle Wayne Patridge, Thomas J. Herod, Jr., William Surrell, John L. Basinger, and Charles Thomas Perkins](#), Federal Trial Transcript. The full transcript is hundreds of pages long. We recommend focusing on the following testimonies: Hamer's [first](#) and [second](#);

Basinger's first and second; Anelle Ponder's [first](#) and [second](#).

- Fannie Lou Hamer, [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#), Smithsonian Folkways. Select songs are available on YouTube.
- Thomas A. Johnson, "Fannie Lou Hamer Dies; Left Farm to Lead Struggle for Civil Rights," *The New York Times*, March 15, 1977. ([obituary](#))
- National Archives, [Analyze a Written Document Worksheet](#)
- [Fannie Lou Hamer @ISSUE](#), Mississippi Public Broadcasting, October 6, 2017 (27 minutes)
- Fannie Lou Hamer's America, "[Centennial Tribute Video](#)," October 6, 2017 (4 minutes)
- National Archives, [Analyze a Video Worksheet](#)
- Robert L. Long, "[Brothers Create Scholarship](#)" *DeSoto Times-Tribune*, January 13, 2011
- Sarah Sapp, "[Endless Generosity: Winona Couple Preserving the Past, Investing in the Future](#)," *Northwest Now* (Spring 2013): pp. 12-14.
- Read, Write, Think "[Debate Rubric](#)"
- "[John Basinger's Obituary](#)," *Winona Times*, August 26, 2016

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this brief [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) and [Timeline](#) before leading this lesson. Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*. Additionally, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Digital Archive contains a [concise overview](#) of the 1963 beatings of civil rights activists in the Winona Jail and Davis W. Houck's lengthier book chapter, "Fannie Lou Hamer on Winona" is available [here](#).

Instruction Steps:

Day One

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Project the following pictures of both young wheat and tares, without labeling the two:



Step Two: Ask students to indicate what type of vegetation is being shown. After students have made an educated guess, ask for a few volunteers to share their responses. After this has transpired, disclose to the students the eerie truth that both pieces of vegetation are not one and the same but are, in fact, different—young wheat and tares. Then explain that in nature, during early stages of development, both types of vegetation appear to look or be the same, but after maturation occurs, it is very easy for an individual with a well-trained or discerning eye to notice the subtle difference. A skilled farmer, like Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, would know that tares are actually weeds, while wheat are grass-like grains used to produce cereal and other edibles. In fact, wheat is the most important worldwide crop, feeding masses of people, while tares have no nutritional value. What’s worse, tares can actually injure people during the wheat harvest. So farmers go to great lengths to carefully separate the tares from the wheat and burn them.

Unit Overview

Step Three: Inform students that during this unit, they will become inspectors, discerning the character, comparability, and subsequent legacy of two,

well-respected and historic figures from the state of Mississippi: Officer John Basinger and Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer. Explain that you will guide students through the process of separating the “wheat” from the “tares.” That is, they will learn to distinguish between facts and falsehoods in relation to each of the aforementioned individuals’ legacies.

Guided Practice

Step Four: If this is the students’ first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, consider showing the excerpt from her memorable 1964 DNC Credentials Committee Speech, playing the speech in its entirety (roughly eight minutes), and providing them with a transcript of the speech. You can also provide additional background information about who she was and why she is a significant historical figure by drawing upon information gleaned from the Biographical Sketch and Timeline linked in the Background Information section.

Step Five: If your students are already familiar with Fannie Lou Hamer and have a general understanding of her historical significance, then you can distribute excerpts from the transcript of the trial: [The United States of America v. Earle Wayne Patridge, Thomas J. Herod, Jr., William Surrell, John L. Basinger, and Charles Thomas Perkins](#), wherein Basinger and other law enforcement officers are accused of allegedly beating Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and other members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Winona, Mississippi in June of 1963.

Step Six: Demonstrate how to “inspect” facts using textual evidence and the assistance of a T-chart. Label the first column Claim, the second column Wheat (indicating truth), and the third column Tare (non-truth). Show students how to closely engage with the text to determine the information for each column. If possible, project excerpts from the transcripts so all students can follow along and encourage them to mark up the text by underlining and making annotations. See example of how the chart should look below.

T-Chart (Basinger 1)

Claim	Wheat	Tare
p. 643 Earlier in Basinger’s testimony, he claims that none of the prisoners resisted arrest.	Basinger’s statement of the prisoners not resisting arrest was corroborated by the testimonies of the prisoners themselves implicitly (Hamer 1; pp. 141-142); (Ponder 1; pp. 78-79); and by himself on pp. 643-644.	p. 649 Basinger claims that James West resisted arrest.

Collaborative Inquiry

Step Seven: Divide students into small groups. Instruct the groups to closely read, examine, identify, and analyze the claims made by Basinger and Hamer. Encourage the students to work together to complete T charts for each of the testimonies.

Closure

Step Eight: Direct students to reflect upon their personal observations, thoughts, and emotions associated with the excerpts from the trial transcript they analyzed. Ask them further to explain why they think they feel the way that they do about this material. Then invite volunteers to share their reflections with the class.

This closure is significant for at least two reasons: (1) it encourages students to internalize and processing the information presented to them; and (2) it helps them begin to form opinions regarding Basinger and Hamer’s legacies.

Day Two

Anticipatory Set

Step One: As students enter the class, you may wish to center their attention on today’s focus: Fannie Lou Hamer. You can do so by playing songs from the Songs My Mother Taught Me, Smithsonian Folkways Album (selected songs are available on YouTube and linked in the Provided Materials section above).

Guided Practice

Step Two: Explain that the focus of today’s lesson will be on assessing Fannie Lou Hamer’s legacy. To do so, the class will analyze two sources (1) Thomas A. Johnson’s obituary of Fannie Lou Hamer and (2) Mississippi Public Broadcasting’s video, “Fannie Lou Hamer@ISSUE” (27 minutes) OR Fannie Lou Hamer’s America “Centennial Tribute” (4 minutes)—depending on the time you have to devote to this session.

Step Three: Distribute and explain the National Archives’ “Analyzing a Written Document” worksheet. Also, distribute copies and/or project Johnson’s obituary of Fannie Lou Hamer.

Independent Practice

Step Four: Circulate as students read and analyze Johnson’s obituary of Hamer. Remind them that they will be asked to share their findings in a class discussion following their analysis.

Discussion

Step Five: Pose large questions to engender student discussion: how does Johnson’s obituary of Fannie Lou Hamer begin to construct her legacy? What about her life does it emphasize? Are there important aspects of her life that it overlooks? Ask what other insights students gained from their analysis of the obituary.

Guided Practice

Step Six: Transition to considering a more contemporary artifact that is contributing to the construction of Hamer’s legacy. Show students the Mississippi Public Broadcasting “Fannie Lou Hamer@ISSUE” episode. Preview this episode by explaining that the video provides biographical information about Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer from the point of view of scholars and fellow civil rights activists and that it was released in honor of Fannie Lou Hamer’s 100th Birthday. If time does not permit to show this nearly thirty minute video, you can show the four minute Centennial Tribute, which was also released in honor of Fannie Lou Hamer’s 100th Birthday.

Step Seven: Distribute and explain the National Archives’ “Analyze a Video” worksheet. Encourage students to take notes on this worksheet while watching the video.

Closure

Step Eight: Return to the large questions you posed when asking students to analyze Hamer’s obituary, now asking the group to consider: how does this video of Fannie Lou Hamer construct her legacy? What about her life does it emphasize? Are there important aspects of her life that it overlooks? Ask what other insights students gained from their analysis of the video. And close with a discussion of if and how these sources have changed their developing assessment of Fannie Lou Hamer’s character.

The Great Divide Debate: Days Three, Four, and Five

Anticipatory Set

Step One: The focus for this day’s lesson will be on assessing Officer John Basinger’s legacy. Share that we will do this by reading and analyzing two articles written about his legacy (1) “Brothers Create Scholarship” and (2) “Endless Generosities.” To begin, provide students with five minutes to reflect in writing on what they learned about Basinger on Day 1 of this unit. Invite several students to share their reflections with the class; record their observations on the board.

Guided Practice

Step Two: Distribute the article, “Brothers Create Scholarship,” and two copies of the National Archives’ “Analyze a Written Document” per student. Ask students to first read the “Brothers Create Scholarship” article and then, as a class and with the National Archives’ document, work through the analysis of the article together. Return to the previous day’s big questions, asking them now about Basinger: how does this article about Basinger construct his legacy? What about his life does it emphasize? Are there important aspects of his life that it overlooks?

Independent Application

Step Three: Distribute the article “Endless Generosities” and ask students to read and complete their second “Analyze a Written Document” worksheet based on their engagement with this article.

Discussion

Step Four: Divide the students into small groups and ask them to consider the same set of large questions, now based on the “Endless Generosities” article: how does this article about Basinger construct his legacy? What about his life does it emphasize? Are there important aspects of his life that it overlooks?

Step Five: Reconvene as a large group and ask students to report what character traits were emphasized in the two articles they read and analyzed about Basinger. Record these on the board next to the initial traits and observations they made at the beginning of the session. Note the clear division concerning Basinger’s character and legacy.

Teacher Input/Day 3 Closure

Step Six: Remind students of the opening “wheat” and “tare” exercise they engaged in on the first day of this unit. And remind them that they have been engaging in this primary source analysis to become inspectors. Based upon their analysis, students must take a stance in response to the question: is Officer John Basinger a “wheat” or a “tare”?

Find Your Voice Highlights

Through the process of primary source analysis and in the face of competing claims, students will be encouraged to develop an opinion on a controversial issue and argue for one side. Students will also consider the merits of the opposing side and reflect on the complexity of public memory.

Step Seven: Split the class into two teams and assign one team to argue that Basinger should be remembered as a “wheat,” someone who nourished Mississippi. Assign the other team the opposing view, Basinger should be remembered as a “tare” someone who caused great injury. During the following session, students will reconvene and collaboratively construct their case. Consider assigning as homework that each student review their notes and come to class with arguments and evidence in support of their case.

Day Four/Step Eight: Review the Great Divide Debate Assignment and provide students with a working class session to collaboratively construct their cases and to nominate two speakers from each side.

Day Five/Step Nine: For the Great Divide Debate, distribute and explain the Read, Write, Think Debate Rubric. Ask the students who are not speaking during the debate to use this rubric and take notes about each of the four speakers.

Step Ten: Provide each team with two opportunities to speak. A representative from Team Wheat goes first, speaking for four minutes. A representative from Team Tare goes second, speaking for four minutes. Provide a working break from the debate, wherein each side can consider the other’s arguments and collaboratively decide how to respond during their final speech. After the break, Team Wheat provides a two-minute rebuttal and then Team Tare provides the final two minute speech.

Closure

Step Eleven: After the debate, ask students to provide feedback, based upon the rubric, to their peers.

Step Twelve: Engage in a larger concluding discussion about the contested nature of public memory. You might raise questions, such as: How can there be compelling arguments on each side of this debate? How do we determine (is it possible to determine?) the truth in this instance? Whose truth would this be? Does John Basinger’s legacy impact Fannie Lou Hamer’s legacy? If so, why? How?

Assessment of Student Learning: Student learning is assessed at multiple points during this five-day unit. First, students will create T charts based upon their close reading of testimonies from a federal trial transcript. Next, students will complete worksheets based on their analysis of written documents and videos. Further, students will collaboratively create oral arguments for and against a proposition. Finally, student participation in this unit can be assessed through their engagement in multiple reflection discussions.

Lesson Plan Author: Mrs. Latasha S. Rodgers, Ed.S.

Mrs. Latasha S. Rodgers, Ed.S., is a seventeen-year veteran educator from Greenville, Mississippi. She has taught elementary, middle school, and high school English/Language Arts courses in both urban and rural school districts. Mrs. Rodgers believes in teaching the whole child and is very passionate about promoting self-directed learning as well as critical thinking. Over the years, Mrs. Rodgers has won numerous awards for her excellence in teaching and has been a mentor, faculty advisor, teacher consultant, professional development coordinator and lead teacher.





“Testimony Before the Credentials Committee at the Democratic National Convention,” Atlantic City, New Jersey: August 22, 1964. Recording

Mr. Chairman, and to the Credentials Committee, my name is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I live at 626 East Lafayette Street, Ruleville, Mississippi, Sunflower County, the home of Senator James O. Eastland and Senator Stennis.

It was the thirty-first of August in 1962, that eighteen of us traveled twenty-six miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to become first-class citizens. We was met in Indianola by policemen, highway patrolmen, and they only allowed two of us in to take the literacy test at the time. After we had taken this test and started back to Ruleville, we was held up by the city police and the state highway patrolmen and carried back to Indianola where the bus driver was charged that day with driving a bus the wrong color.

After we paid the fine among us, we continued on to Ruleville, and Reverend Jeff Sunny carried me four miles in the rural area where I had worked as a timekeeper and sharecropper for eighteen years. I was met there by my children, who told me that the plantation owner was angry because I had gone down, tried to register. After they told me, my husband came, and said the plantation owner was raising Cain because I had tried to register. And before he quit talking the plantation owner came and said, “Fannie Lou, do you know—did Pap tell you what I said?”

And I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “Well I mean that.” Said, “If you don’t go down and withdraw your registration, you will have to leave.” Said, “Then if you go down and withdraw, then you still might have to go because we are not ready for that in Mississippi.”

And I addressed him and told him and said, “I didn’t try to register for you. I tried to register for myself.” I had to leave that same night

On the tenth of September 1962, sixteen bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker for me. That same night two girls was shot in Ruleville, Mississippi. Also, Mr. Joe McDonald’s house was shot in.

And June the ninth, 1963, I had attended a voter registration workshop—was returning back to Mississippi. Ten of us was traveling by the Continental Trailways bus. When we got to Winona, Mississippi, which is in Montgomery County, four of the people got off to use the washroom, and two of the people—to use the restaurant—two of the people wanted to use the washroom. The four people that had gone in to use the restaurant was ordered out. During this time I was on the bus. But when I looked through the window and saw they had rushed out, I got off of the bus to see what had happened. And one of the ladies said, “It was a state highway patrolman and a chief of police ordered us out.”

I got back on the bus and one of the persons had used the washroom got back on the bus, too. As soon as I was seated on the bus, I saw when they began to get the five people in a highway patrolman's car. I stepped off of the bus to see what was happening and somebody screamed from the car that the five workers was in and said, "Get that one there." And when I went to get in the car, when the man told me I was under arrest, he kicked me.

I was carried to the county jail and put in the booking room. They left some of the people in the booking room and began to place us in cells. I was placed in a cell with a young woman called Miss Euvester Simpson. After I was placed in the cell, I began to hear sounds of licks and screams. I could hear the sounds of licks and horrible screams. And I could hear somebody say, "Can you say, 'yes, sir,' n--r? Can you say 'yes, sir'?" And they would say other horrible names.

She would say, "Yes, I can say 'yes, sir.'"

"So, well, say it."

She said, "I don't know you well enough." They beat her, I don't know how long. And after a while she began to pray, and asked God to have mercy on those people.

And it wasn't too long before three white men came to my cell. One of these men was a state highway patrolman and he asked me where I was from. And I told him Ruleville and he said, "We are going to check this." And they left my cell and it wasn't too long before they came back. He said, "You's from Ruleville all right," and he used a curse word. And he said, "We are going to make you wish you was dead."

I was carried out of that cell into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The state highway patrolmen ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack. The first Negro prisoner ordered me, by orders from the state highway patrolman, for me to lay down on a bunk bed on my face.

And I laid on my face and the first Negro began to beat. And I was beat by the first Negro until he was exhausted. I was holding my hands behind me at that time on my left side, because I suffered from polio when I was six years old. After the first Negro had beat until he was exhausted, the state highway patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack. The second Negro began to beat and I began to work my feet, and the state highway patrolman ordered the first Negro had beat me to sit on my feet—to keep me from working my feet. I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush. One white man—my dress had worked up high—he walked over and pulled my dress, I pulled my dress down and he pulled my dress back up.

I was in jail when Medgar Evers was murdered.

All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?

Thank you.



Fannie Lou Hamer: A Biographical Sketch

By Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD

“I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hook because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?”

With this critical question, delivered at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, Fannie Lou Hamer became revered across the nation. Malcolm X referred to her as the “country’s number one freedom fighting woman” and rumor has it Martin Luther King, Jr—though he loved her dearly—feared being upstaged by Hamer’s soul-stirring speeches. Over her lifetime (1917-1977), Fannie Lou Hamer traveled from the Delta of Mississippi to the Atlantic City Boardwalk, from Washington, D.C. to Washington State, from Madison, Wisconsin to Conakry, Guinea—always proclaiming the social gospel that all human beings are created equal and that all people are entitled to basic rights of food, shelter, dignity, and a voice in the government to which they belong.



FIGURE 1: Fannie Lou Hamer addresses the 1964 Democratic National Convention.

Fannie Lou Hamer held strong convictions, but she was no idealist. Born the twentieth child of James Lee and Lou Ella Townsend, Fannie Lou and her large family struggled to survive as sharecroppers on plantations controlled by Whites. As an outgrowth of slavery, the sharecropping system was largely designed to keep Black people indebted to White landowners. This economic control held social and political implications as well.



FIGURE 2: The sharecropping system replaced slavery as a means of securing cheap labor, as well as social and political control for White people. The sharecropping system replaced slavery as a means of securing cheap labor, as well as social and political control for White people.

system was largely designed to keep Black people indebted to White landowners. This economic control held social and political implications as well.

The Townsends encouraged their children to get an education so they might imagine a life beyond sharecropping’s constant toil. Fannie Lou began picking cotton at the age of six, but for four months of the year—when her labor wasn’t needed in the fields—she attended a one-room plantation school house. Fannie Lou loved school; from her teacher, Professor Thornton Layne, she learned to read,

write, and proudly recite poetry written by Black artists. Unfortunately, Fannie Lou was forced to drop out of school in the sixth grade to help her aging parents in the fields.

As a teenager, she continued her education informally—listening carefully to stories her mother shared and songs Lou Ella would sing that emphasized race pride and that encouraged her children to see that God was on the side of the oppressed. Her father reinforced these messages from the pulpit, serving as a preacher at the Strangers Home Baptist Church. In this Black-controlled space, Fannie Lou developed a strong voice—often performing what would become her signature civil rights anthem, “This Little Light of Mine.”

After her father died from a stroke in 1939, Fannie Lou and her mother moved to the W.D. Marlow plantation, where they met Perry “Pap” Hamer. Fannie Lou fell in love with this strong and kind man; the two were married in 1944. Marlow soon promoted Fannie Lou Hamer from sharecropper to the position of timekeeper on the plantation. In this highly respected position, she weighed and recorded her fellow sharecroppers’ harvest.

The Hamers shared a love of young people and eventually adopted two daughters from their community: Dorothy Jean and Vergie Ree. Throughout the 1950s, the couple worked tirelessly to provide for their girls and to care for Lou Ella Townsend, who lost her eyesight and was confined to a wheelchair.

Fannie Lou suffered from severe menstrual cramping and sought medical treatment in the early 1960s. The White doctor she visited informed her that she had a uterine tumor, which would require a simple procedure to remove. She later learned that during the procedure, the doctor gave her a hysterectomy—without her knowledge or consent. Fannie Lou was devastated to know she would never be able to bear children. By the time of her mother’s death in 1961, Hamer had grown so sick of the system of exploitation she endured that she began looking for a chance to “really lash out and say what she had to say about what was happening in the state of Mississippi.”

That chance came in the form of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who visited William’s Chapel in August 1962. James Forman and James Bevel informed the parishioners that they had a right to vote and the civil rights activists encouraged the congregation to formally register. Fannie Lou Hamer was among the first eighteen people SNCC brought to Indianola to take the registration test. By the time she made it home to Ruleville from the nearby county seat, the plantation owner had already learned of her civic assertion—Marlow fired her that evening and evicted her from his plantation. Being fired from the plantation where she fell in love with Pap, raised her young children, buried her mother, and worked as a timekeeper for eighteen years was a heart-wrenching experience for Mrs. Hamer. This pain of this experience prompted her to realize that she had nothing left to lose. After being fired from the plantation, she began working full time for the civil rights movement.



FIGURE 3: Fannie Lou Hamer and Perry “Pap” Hamer

At the age of 44, Fannie Lou Hamer became SNCC's oldest fieldworker. She traveled across the South encouraging other Black people to register and vote. To train for this work, she attended voter registration workshops. In June of 1963, on the return trip from one such workshop, Mrs. Hamer and several other civil rights activists were arrested and brought to the Winona jailhouse. The group was charged with resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. They were locked in cells, beaten, and tortured by prisoners, prison guards, and state highway patrolmen. SNCC workers tried desperately to bail them out. Days into their captivity, Andrew Young and Dorothy Cotton, of the Southern Christian Leadership Council, finally secured their release. Steps out of the prison door, Mrs. Hamer learned that the NAACP Field Secretary, Medgar Evers, had been shot and killed on the front lawn of his Jackson home.

Mrs. Hamer cast White Supremacist retaliation in Biblical terms—understanding herself and the activists with whom she worked as “walking through the valley of shadow of death”—her faith sustained her and, “fearing no evil,” the retaliation she endured drove her activism. Hamer helped train Freedom Summer volunteers, she ran for political office, and she was selected as a delegate to the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. There she delivered her damning Credentials Committee testimony; the live television coverage of which was interrupted by President Lyndon B. Johnson. That evening, however, her testimony was replayed in full and



FIGURE 4: Fannie Lou Hamer singing and speaking on the Atlantic City Boardwalk during the 1964 Democratic National Convention.

carried into the homes of all Americans by the three major television networks. This testimony introduced the nation to Fannie Lou Hamer and the Democratic Party was flooded with telegrams of support for seating the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) delegates in the place of the all-White segregated delegation officially sent from the state. Although the MFDP's challenge to be seated was unsuccessful, organizations across the country reached out to Mrs. Hamer and invited her to speak at their churches, universities, and community centers.

Before embarking on what would become a decade of speaking tours, Mrs. Hamer enjoyed a rare and unforgettable moment of respite. Famed performer and ardent civil rights supporter, Harry Belafonte, provided a trip to West Africa for the embattled SNCC activists. Returning to the home of her ancestors was a moving experience that stayed with Hamer for the remainder of her life. Experiencing the Black-led state of Guinea, witnessing the beauty of the African people, and recognizing the similarities between her family and the families with whom she interacted helped reverse a lifetime of White Supremacist ideology, which justified the exploitation of Black people and the separation of the Anglo-Saxon and African “races” based upon erroneous Social Darwinist principles.

When Hamer returned from Africa, she spearheaded another national challenge—this time she, Annie Devine, and Victoria Gray, as representatives of the MFDP, went straight to the United States Congress and demanded to be seated in place of the representatives sent from

their respective districts. Through thousands of affidavits documenting voter discrimination, intimidation, and outright prohibition, the MFDP demonstrated that Black people had been illegally barred from participating in the election process; therefore, the representatives sent from their districts were illegally elected—not at all “representative” of the people they ostensibly served. Although the Congressional Representatives from Mississippi were ultimately allowed to serve their terms, the MFDP’s demonstration prompted a nine-month investigation into civil rights abuses in Mississippi. When the motion to unseat the representatives was called to a vote, Hamer, Devine, and Gray became the first three Black women to ever be seated on the floor of the US House of Representatives. Further still, the MFDP’s 1965 Congressional Challenge contributed to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

After the 1964 DNC Challenge and the 1965 Congressional Challenge, Hamer became increasingly virulent in her critique of the Democratic Party’s hypocrisy. She nevertheless represented Mississippi as part of the integrated “Loyalist” delegation sent from the state to the 1968 DNC. Inside the convention, Mrs. Hamer received a standing ovation from the delegates when she took her hard-earned seat as an officially recognized delegate. Outside the convention, police clashed violently with antiwar demonstrators. An early critic of the Vietnam War, Hamer was disgusted by how the protestors were treated by the state.

In 1971, Mrs. Hamer spoke at the founding of the National Women’s Political Caucus. Widely recognized as an inspirational female leader, Hamer was frequently asked to speak at gatherings of second wave feminists. She used these occasions to preach a Black Feminist message—emphasizing the multiple facets of her intersectional identity as an impoverished pro-life Black woman from the rural South—and warning her audiences against using the banner of “sisterhood” to paper over significant differences in women’s lived experiences.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mrs. Hamer was a driving force behind several poverty programs in the state of Mississippi. The Mississippi programs were part of the national War on Poverty. In her more cynical moments, Hamer would quip: “that’s exactly what it is—a war against poor people.” She felt its attacks acutely. In 1967, the Hamers lost their older daughter, Dorothy Jean, to complications related to malnutrition. Dorothy left behind two young daughters—Jacqueline and Lenora. Becoming the primary caregivers for an infant and a toddler, while also



FIGURE 5: Fannie Lou Hamer’s trip to Africa belied the White Supremacist ideology of Black inferiority and reinforced messages of Black pride her mother and father taught her as a child.



FIGURE 6: Victoria Gray, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Annie Devine challenge the United States Congress, becoming the first three Black women ever to be seated on the floor of the House of Representatives.

caring for teen-aged Vergie, the Hamers continued to struggle financially. Fannie Lou Hamer had learned about the Office of Economic Opportunity while visiting northern cities on speaking tours in the mid-1960s. That knowledge, combined with the mentorship of Drew-native Dr. L.C. Dorsey, who helped found the North Bolivar County Cooperative, lay the foundation for Mrs. Hamer's own Freedom Farm.



FIGURE 7: Along Freedom Farm road, outside of Drew, Mississippi

Hamer bought Freedom Farm's the first forty acres outright—donations she received from northern organizations like Madison's Measure for Measure and Walks for Hunger, which took place in cities from Milwaukee to Cambridge covered the cost. To meet the growing needs of her community, consisting largely of sharecropping families displaced by farm mechanization, Hamer continued to solicit donations, apply for grants, and pour the honoraria she received from speaking engagements into the farm. Freedom Farm grew from the initial forty acres Hamer purchased to nearly 700 acres; this land yielded

cash crops like cotton and soybeans, as well as crops such as corn, potatoes, and rice—grown to feed its cooperative members. For protein, Freedom Farm developed a Pig Bank program sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women. Mrs. Hamer also helped nearly 200 families in and around Ruleville secure decent housing through federal loan programs; and she even furnished a garment factory with sewing machines donated from northern activists whom she met on her national speaking tours.

By the mid 1970s, Mrs. Hamer's health began to deteriorate rapidly. She suffered from anxiety, breast cancer, hypertension, and diabetes—compounded by a demanding travel schedule and an unyielding desire to care for her children, her beloved husband, and those in her Delta community. On March 14, 1977, at the age of 59, Mrs. Hamer died of heart failure. Insistent that she not be buried on a plantation, Charles McLaurin, the civil rights torch-bearer and dear friend of Mrs. Hamer, worked with the City of Ruleville to bury her on Freedom Farm's first forty acres. Her gravestone aptly engraved: "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired."

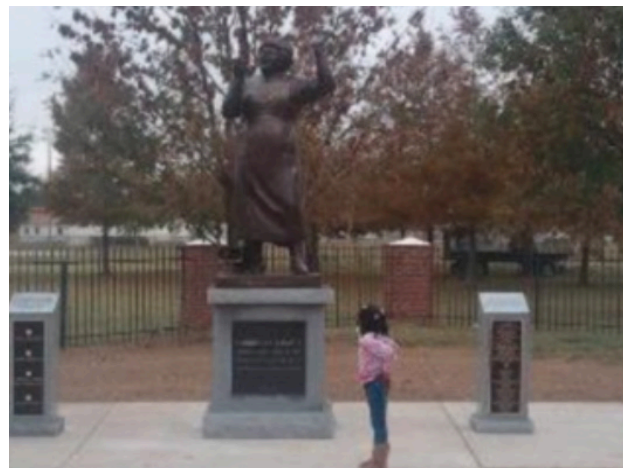


FIGURE 8: A young girl looks up to Mrs. Hamer at the 2012 Statue Unveiling

In the fifty years since Mrs. Hamer's passing, she has not been forgotten. Her gravestone is now surrounded by a memorial garden, a bronze statue, and a recreation center. On her birthday each year, family, friends, fellow activists, and long-time admirers from across the globe gather to honor her. The state of Mississippi issued a commemorative postage stamp, featuring



FIGURE 9: A Black Lives Matter Protestor, donning a “Fight Like Fannie Lou” t-shirt demand to be heard during a Bernie Sanders’ campaign appearance in the summer of 2015

her image merged with Medgar Evers’. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum includes tributes to Ruleville’s first lady throughout; the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis and the National Museum of African American History both recognize her fearless activism. Contemporary Black Lives Matter activists carry her spirit forward donning “Fight Like Fannie Lou” t-shirts and she even has her own Twitter page, wherein @FannieLouHamer declares she’s “sick and tired” of contemporary politicians and exploitive political practices.

A new documentary, *Fannie Lou Hamer’s America*, told entirely through rare recordings of Mrs. Hamer’s speeches, songs, and interviews is forthcoming. With that film, the Find Your Voice K-12 curriculum, developed in partnership with renowned educators from the Mississippi Delta, and the Find Your Voice: The Online Resource for Fannie Lou Hamer Studies, we hope to keep the complexity of Mrs. Hamer’s message alive and inspiring for generations to come.



Timeline of Fannie Lou Hamer's Life and Legacy

By Maegan Parker Brooks, PhD

October 6, 1917 Fannie Lou Townsend was born the twentieth child of James Lee and Lou Ella Townsend in Montgomery County, Mississippi.

1919 In search of work, the Townsend family moved to E.W. Brandon's plantation in Sunflower, County Mississippi.

1930 Fannie Lou left school so she could help her family financially by working fulltime in the fields.

1944 Fannie Lou Townsend marries Perry Hamer and moves to the W.D. Marlow plantation, four miles outside the city of Ruleville, Mississippi.



1944-1961 Fannie Lou and Perry Hamer adopt two children from their community, Dorothy Jean and Vergie Ree. They also care for Lou Ella Townsend, Fannie Lou's disabled mother, while working on W.D. Marlow's plantation.

August 27, 1962 Fannie Lou and Perry Hamer attend a mass meeting at William's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. There they learn from civil rights activists that African American people have a constitutionally-guaranteed right to vote.

August 31, 1962 Fannie Lou Hamer attempts to register to vote at the Sunflower County Courthouse in Indianola, Mississippi. She fails the registration test. As punishment for her attempt, she is fired and evicted from the Marlow plantation upon her return home.

Fall-Winter of 1962 Fannie Lou Hamer becomes the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) oldest voter registration worker. She attends workshops across the South to learn how to encourage people in her community to become politically active.

January 1963 Passes the voter registration test on her second try and becomes among the first registered black voters in Ruleville, Mississippi.



June 1963 Arrested in Winona, Mississippi on her return trip from a voter education workshop.

- • • She and several other civil rights activists with whom she is jailed are beaten while in police custody.

Spring of 1964 Becomes the first Black woman to run for US Congress and the first Black person to run from her district since the 19th Century.

August 22, 1964 On behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Hamer testified at the Democratic National Convention about the harassment and abuse she experienced in Mississippi for trying to vote. Her testimony is broadcast nationally.

September-October 1964 Travels to the West Coast of Africa, with other members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, as an honored guest of the Guinean government.

December 1964 Speaks to crowds in Harlem, New York alongside the Black Nationalist Leader, Malcolm X.



January 4, 1965 On behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Hamer, Annie Devine, and Victoria Gray challenge the seating of the five US congressmen sent from Mississippi. They argue that since black people are unconstitutionally prohibited from voting in Mississippi, the representatives do not actually represent the state and, therefore, shouldn't be allowed to serve in the United States' Congress.

April 23, 1965 Becomes the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit *Hamer v. Campbell*, suggesting that elections in Sunflower County should be suspended until black people are given a fair chance to register.



June 1966 Marched alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. and spoke to protestors along the Meredith March Against Fear in Mississippi.

Spring 1967 Fannie Lou Hamer's eldest daughter, Dorothy Jean, dies from complications related to anemia, malnutrition, and inadequate access to health care. Fannie Lou and Pap Hamer adopt Dorothy Jean's two daughters, Jacqueline and Lenora.



August 20, 1968 Formally seated as a delegate from Mississippi to the Democratic National Convention, Hamer receives a standing ovation from the convention floor for her tireless advocacy of voting rights.

1968 With the help of the National Council of Negro Women, Hamer starts a "Pig Bank" in Sunflower County to provide protein to malnourished members of her community.

1968-1972 Fannie Lou Hamer receives honorary doctorates from numerous universities, including Columbia College and Tougaloo College. She also was named the “First Lady of Civil Rights,” by the League of Black Women and she received the “Noble Example of Womanhood” and the Mary Church Terrell Awards during this period.

1969 With money she raised by speaking to audiences across the country, Hamer buys the first 40 acres of “Freedom Farm,” a cooperative established to provide food and jobs for people in her community. Freedom Farm eventually grows to nearly 700 acres and becomes the third largest employer in Sunflower County.



July 10, 1971 Spoke at, and participated as a founding member of, the National Women’s Political Caucus in Washington, D.C.

July 13, 1972 Hamer is an official delegate from Mississippi to the Democratic National Convention, where she offers a speech in support of Frances Farenthold’s candidacy for Vice President.

1972-1976 Helps secure affordable housing for people in Ruleville, while traveling nationally to raise funds for Freedom Farm and advocating for prison and poverty program reforms in Mississippi.

1976-1977 Battles breast cancer, hypertension, and diabetes.



March 14, 1977 Dies of heart failure at a hospital in Mound Bayou, Mississippi.

Examples of Her Legacy

July 27, 2004 The Democratic National Convention honors Fannie Lou Hamer on the 40th Anniversary of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's Credentials Committee Challenge.

2006 The United States Congress reauthorizes the 1965 Voting Rights Act and names it after Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King.

February 17, 2009 The International Slavery Museum recognizes Hamer as a "Black Achiever" and hangs her portrait next to one of President Barack Obama in their permanent exhibit.



February 21, 2009 The US Postal Service included Fannie Lou Hamer among twelve civil rights pioneers honored on postage stamps in recognition of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's 100th Anniversary.

October 6, 2012 In her hometown of Ruleville, Mississippi, an eight-foot bronze statue of Fannie Lou Hamer is dedicated on what would have been her 95th Birthday.

August 8, 2015 Black Lives Matter protestors in Seattle, Washington interrupt Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders' political rally. The protestor who speaks to the crowd about Black Lives Matter's concerns dons a "Fight Like Fannie Lou" t-shirt.



• • • **August 2018** Shelby County, Tennessee
Commissioner, Tami Sawyer, is sworn into
office on a biography about Fannie Lou Hamer
and a collection of her speeches.

Summer 2019 The feature film, *Fannie Lou
Hamer's America* and the K-12 Find Your Voice
curriculum is released on the Find Your Voice:
Online Resources for Fannie Lou Hamer Studies
website: www.findyourvoice.willamette.edu



Fannie Lou Hamer Image Gallery



Fannie Lou Hamer marches during a Freedom Day Rally in Hattiesburg, Mississippi (1963)



The Federal Bureau of Investigation took color images of Fannie Lou Hamer's battered body after she was beaten in a jail cell at the Montgomery County Jail in Winona, Mississippi (June 1963). (Photo from FBI files).



Fannie Lou Hamer at a meeting of the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union, a union of domestic workers and day laborers, who were striking for better wages during the summer of 1965. (Photo from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History Files).



Fannie Lou Hamer was elected Vice President of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's 1964 Delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. Here she raises the banner for freedom (August 1964). (Photo Credit: Fred DeVan. The Tougaloo College Civil Rights Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History)



Fannie Lou Hamer, Victoria Gray Adams, and Anne Devine, on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, challenged the five white male congressional representatives sent from their home state to the US House of Representatives. As the congress considered their challenge, Hamer, Adams, and Devine became the first three black women in history to be seated on the floor of the US House of Representatives (1965).



Hamer marched alongside Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Andrew Young during the Meredith March Against Fear. She also spoke to the marchers and inspired them with her Freedom Songs (June 1966) (Photo Credit: Jim Pepler, Alabama Archives)

FANNIE LOU HAMER

RENOWNED BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER
 FOUNDER OF MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY
 FOUNDER OF FREEDOM FARM COOPERATIVE
 DYNAMIC LECTURER AND WARM, LOVING HUMAN BEING

*Hear and meet Fannie Lou Hamer
 You owe it to yourself*

**BLACK
 MISSISSIPPI TO
 DATE**

THURS. JAN 29th..... NOON..... HUMANITIES BLDG. RM.3650
OPEN TO PUBLIC

SPONSORED BY:
 MADISON MEASURE FOR MEASURE
 WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM
 AFRO-AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE COURSE of the DEPT. of AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES
 MADISON CHAPTER of the INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, Fannie Lou Hamer often traveled to northern states like Wisconsin and Massachusetts to raise money for her Freedom Farm Cooperative. Here is a poster advertising a speech she gave at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. (Poster: Courtesy of Jean Sweet)



While traveling north, supporters would often host gatherings in private homes to raise additional funds for Freedom Farm. Here Mrs. Hamer is speaking to members of the Madison, Wisconsin-based Measure for Measure organization in January of 1976. (Photo courtesy of Jean Sweet)



In the spring of 1977, Fannie Lou Hamer died at the age of 59 from complications related to breast cancer, hypertension, and diabetes. She left behind three adopted daughters, Vergie Ree, Lenora Aretha, and Jacqueline Denise. (Photo courtesy of Christopher T. Hexter)



Northern supporters of Freedom Farm would lead food, clothing, and supply drives and then transport the materials they collected down to Ruleville. Here's a group of Measure for Measure activists from Madison, Wisconsin with a full U-Haul (no date) (Photo: Courtesy of Jean Sweet)



In 1968, the Loyalist Party from Mississippi challenged the segregated delegation sent to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Hamer was a part of the integrated Loyalist coalition, which was seated as the official delegation sent from Mississippi. She received a standing ovation from convention delegates gathered from across the country.



In 1969, Fannie Lou Hamer founded the Freedom Farm Cooperative in Sunflower County to help feed the sharecroppers and day laborers across the region, who had been displaced by chemical weed killers and large machinery.



Tougaloo College, a private, historically Black, liberal arts institution in Mississippi, presented Fannie Lou Hamer with an honorary doctorate degree. (Photo: Tougaloo College Civil Rights Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History).



Fannie Lou Hamer spoke at the founding meeting of the National Women's Political Caucus in Washington, D.C. (1971). She is seated here next to Betty Smith, former vice chairman of GOP in Wisconsin; Dorothy Haener, International Representative Women's Department United Automobile Workers Union; and Gloria Steinem, member, Democratic National Policy Council.

Elect
INFORMED



MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI

MRS.
Fannie Lou
HAMER
STATE SENATOR
District 11 – Post No. 2
BOLIVAR AND SUNFLOWER COUNTIES
NOVEMBER 2, 1971

Fannie Lou Hamer's campaign card for her 1971 bid for Mississippi State Senate. (Card: Courtesy of Jeff Goldstein)



Partners:

The Fannie Lou Hamer's America/Find Your Voice Multimodal Project to Enhance Public Knowledge of Fannie Lou Hamer was made possible by generous support from individuals and from several organizations, including:



The W.K. Kellogg Foundation



The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership

The Phil Hardin Foundation

To Improve the Education of Mississippians

The Phil Hardin Foundation



The Mississippi Humanities Council



The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights



Tougaloo College



Willamette University



The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University



The Sunflower County Consolidated School District



Gentry High School



Lowrie Primary School