

Black Lives Matter Guiding Principles:

- **Intergenerational:** We are committed to fostering an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism. We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with capacity to lead and learn.
- **Black Families:** We are committed to making our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We are committed to dismantling the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work “double shifts” that require them to mother in private even as they participate in justice work.
- **Black Villages:** We are committed to disrupting the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and “villages” that collectively care for one another, and especially “our” children to the degree that mothers, parents and children are comfortable.

Lesson Objectives:

- Reflect on the roles elders and young people play in our lives, and celebrate examples of intergenerational practices and communities.
- Examine the roles elders and young people played in the Civil Rights Movement, and also the challenges they have faced.
- Plan individual and collective ways to continue connecting across generations.

Essential Questions:

- What do we gain from interacting with and caring for each other as a whole entire community, across generations?
- What are the barriers and challenges to including everyone in our communities and movement building?
- How have people of different ages and genders contributed to movement building?

Lesson Activities:

1. As students come in, ask them to write answers to the warm-up. After 5 minutes or so, discuss students’ responses.

Warm-up/Do Now: Describe a person over 55 who is important to you. What role has this person played in your life? Now describe a person under the age of 10 who is important to you. What role has this person played in your life?

2. Display one, several or all of the following quotes/proverbs to introduce today's themes. Ask students to (choose one and) think about/write about what it means, share with partner and share back with the group.

- *If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.* Isaac Newton
- *Society grows great when old people plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.* Proverb from Greece
- *Children talk with God.* Proverb from Botswana
- *A child is a child of everyone.* ~Sudanese Proverb
- *The old woman looks after the child to grow its teeth and the young one in turn looks after the old woman when she loses her teeth.* ~ Proverb from Akan (Ghana, Ivory Coast)

3. After the discussion, explain that today's lesson focuses on three principles of the Black Lives Matter movement: Intergenerational, Black Families and Black Villages. Then explain that next the students are going to use the Civil Rights Movement as a case study of the roles young people and elders play, and also the challenges they might face in participating.

4. The following three case studies could be shared as stations where students rotate, as a jigsaw where students learn about one and then present it to the other groups, or as a whole group lesson where you present 1 -- 2 to the class. There is a graphic organizer at the end of the case studies to allow students to record what they learn. The case studies are:

- The Children's Crusade during the Birmingham Campaign, 1963
- The role of mentor Bayard Rustin in Martin Luther King's thinking and in the March on Washington
- The relationship between Ella Baker and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

5. After the material has been explored and processed, bring the group back together for a final written or oral reflection.

Closing reflection questions: What did you learn about the role of young people and elders in the Civil Rights Movement? What surprised you? What are ways you can

continue to learn from and care for people who are older than you and younger than you in your life?

Materials and Resources:

The Children's Crusade during the Birmingham Campaign, 1963

Birmingham — The Most Segregated City in America

In 1960, Birmingham's population of 350,000 is split 60-40, white over Black. In the six years between 1957 and 1963, Black churches and the homes of Black leaders are bombed 17 times. The police make no effort to apprehend the perpetrators, and the city acquires a new nickname — ***Bombingham***.

But there are some who are not intimidated. When the NAACP is banned in Alabama, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth forms the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR).

Shuttlesworth invites Martin Luther King to come organize in Birmingham. King and other leaders arrive in late 1962 and make a plan. The basic strategy is to fill the jails with protesters and boycott Birmingham's white merchants during April's Easter shopping-season. The plan calls for commencing direct action in March of 1963. The demonstrators are expected to be adults and college students who will commit to staying at least 5 or 6 days in jail before being bailed out.

The Campaign Begins

In February, Reverend James Lawson and others begin training demonstrators in the tactics and strategies of Nonviolent Resistance. At the end of the campaign's first week, around 150 protesters are in jail. This is far fewer than hoped for, and there is little coverage in the national press.

The Birmingham Movement is faltering, the boycott is weakening, bail funds are again exhausted, and it is harder and harder to find adults willing to risk losing their jobs by going to jail. Most Blacks in Birmingham are working-poor, barely living from paycheck to paycheck. Parents who have to feed and clothe their children cannot risk being fired and blacklisted.

In response to a request from King, James Bevel and Diane Nash come to Birmingham. They focus their organizing on high school students rather than adults. The response is enthusiastic. The nonviolent training sessions for young people soon grow larger than the adult-oriented nightly mass meetings. But Dr. King and the other leaders are reluctant to allow children on the marches — Birmingham jail is no place for kids, and police records will cast shadows over their futures. Bevel and the younger SCLC staff argue that the students are eager to

participate, and when they are arrested it will not threaten the economic survival of their families.

The Children's Crusade

The debate over allowing children to confront Connor's cops and endure jail roils the movement. But the young freedom fighters are done arguing — they are ready to march and no one is going to stop them. Finally, Dr. King agrees, children who are old enough to join a church are old enough to make witness for justice.

A passion for freedom sweeps through Parker High and the other Black schools of Birmingham and Bessemer, an emotional firestorm ignited by SCLC's young field workers. It's led by class presidents and prom queens, cheerleaders and football heroes like big James Orange. It's a fire stoked and spread by "Tall Paul" White and other DJs at the Black radio stations. Thursday, May 2nd, is "D-Day" as students "ditch" class to march for justice. In disciplined groups of 50, children singing freedom songs march out of 16th Street Baptist church two-by-two. When each group is arrested, another takes its place. There are not enough cops to contain them, and police reinforcements are hurriedly summoned. By the end of the day almost 1,000 kids have been jailed.

That evening, almost 2,000 adults over-flow the nightly mass meeting at Bethel Baptist. In family after family, worried parents wrestle with their justifiable fears and the determination of their sons and daughters. Says one boy to his father:

Daddy, I don't want to disobey you, but I have made my pledge. If you try to keep me home, I will sneak off. If you think I deserve to be punished for that, I'll just have to take the punishment. I'm not doing this only because I want to be free. I'm also doing it because I want freedom for you and Mama, and I want it to come before you die.

The next day, Friday May 3rd, a thousand more students cut class to assemble at 16th Street church. With the jails already filled to capacity, and the number of marchers growing, Connor decides to suppress the movement with violence. Instead of arresting the first group of marchers he orders his fire department to disperse them with firehoses. But the students hold their ground, singing "Freedom" to the ancient hymn "Amen." Connor orders the water pressure increased to knock them off their feet and wash them away. Still singing, the young protesters sit down on the pavement and hunch their backs against the torrent.

Connor brings up "monitor guns," high-pressure nozzles mounted on tripods and fed by two hoses that are used to fight the worst fires. They're capable of knocking bricks out of a wall at 100 feet. The students are washed tumbling down the street like leaves in a flood. Outraged, the hundreds of Black on-lookers in Kelly Ingram park – including many parents – throw rocks and bottles at the cops and firemen.

To contain and intimidate the demonstrators and the angry crowd, Connor brings up his K9 Corps of eight vicious attack dogs. As John Lewis recalled it later, "*We didn't fully comprehend at first what was happening. We were witnessing police violence and brutality Birmingham-style: unfortunately for Bull Connor, so was the rest of the world.*" Television that night, and newspapers world-wide the next morning, show images of young children marching up to snarling police dogs, cops clubbing women to the ground, and high-pressure hoses sweeping young bodies into the street.

Saturday, May 4th, the student marches continue. Again Connor uses his monitor water-cannons to knock down and contain the young protesters, and again they use guerrilla tactics to evade the police cordon to reach City Hall and the downtown shopping district.

On Monday, the 6th, under pressure from a white power-structure desperate to avoid new images of savage brutality, Connor agrees to simply arrest anyone who tries to march rather than trying to beat them into submission with clubs, dogs, and firehoses. Led by Dick Gregory, the first group is arrested as they leave 16th Street church, and hour after hour, group after group are taken off to jail – almost 1,000 by day's end (more than 2,600 since D-Day). The jails are full, the improvised fairground prison is full, and many prisoners are now held in an open-air stockade without shelter from the rain. But the downtown shopping district is deserted, the stores empty as Blacks continue to boycott and white shoppers avoid the turmoil of demonstrators and massive police operations. And at the huge mass meeting that night, spread across four different churches, more children – and an increasing number of adults – step forward to march the next day.

On Tuesday the 7th, the Movement escalates its boycott tactics. While Walker and Bevel hold Connor's attention by making themselves visible at 16th Street church apparently organizing more marches, 600 students sneak downtown in small guerrilla groups. At H-Hour they grab signs hidden in parked cars and set up surprise picket lines all over the main shopping district. As the cops race towards downtown from Kelly Ingram park with sirens wailing, hundreds of young

protesters dash out of the church, evade the few remaining cops, and stream downtown to join the others.

Lines of students, now joined by hundreds of adults, weave in and out of stores, dancing to the rhythmic beat of freedom songs. Within the hour, thousands of protesters are picketing, sitting-in, blocking streets, and taunting the cops. The entire central district is gripped by nonviolent pandemonium. The *News* reports the next day: Sirens Wail, Horns Blow, Negroes Sing. The cops are stumped, the jails and holding pens are full and the budget exhausted, they cannot make more mass arrests, but they cannot shoot up Birmingham's business heart with tear gas, or risk damaging stores and offices with high-pressure fire hoses aimed at quickly dodging demonstrators.

The Settlement

By now the major media — which had ignored Birmingham until the children started to march — has almost 200 reporters covering the story. Nationally, and around the globe, newspapers and TV carry descriptions and images of clubs, dogs, fire hoses, children marching for freedom, mass civil-disobedience and the mass jailing of American citizens. Between April 3rd and May 7th, roughly 3,000 protesters are arrested and booked (an unknown number of the very youngest marchers are simply sent home without charges being filed).

Working through Burke Marshall, President Kennedy — the leader of the "free world" — prods Birmingham's power-structure to do something — anything — to end what has become a national disgrace. Finally, reluctantly, on the evening of May 7th, they agree to negotiate with Birmingham's Black community. Deep into the night the talks continue.

Negotiations resume on Thursday the 9th, reaching tentative agreement to end segregation, but King refuses any settlement that leaves Birmingham children in jail. Meanwhile, a new federal civil rights bill outlawing segregation, is introduced by House Republicans. It eventually evolves into the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

With behind-the-scenes support from the Kennedys, Harry Belafonte works with the United Auto Workers union (UAW), United Steelworkers Union (USWA), and the New York City Transport Workers Union (TWU), to raise enough money to bail out all the jailed demonstrators. Movement attorney Clarence Jones flies that night from New York to Birmingham with a briefcase full of cash. The next day, Friday the 10th, as the prison doors open and the children stream out, Shuttlesworth announces to the world press: "*The city of Birmingham has reached*

an accord with its conscience." Though it is to be phased in slowly over 60 days, the agreement amounts to a sweeping Movement victory, its main points include promises to desegregate public facilities in Birmingham, nondiscriminatory hiring practices, and ongoing public meetings between Black and white leaders.

Victory in Birmingham and the courage of the childrens' crusade inspire movements across the South. Direct action protests erupt in community after community. In the 10 weeks after Birmingham, statisticians count 758 protests in 186 cities, resulting in 14,733 arrests.

Extension Activities:

"A Letter to My Nephew" by James Baldwin

Below is a letter James Baldwin wrote to his nephew. An extension to this activity is to study this letter as a class or assign it independently. Then students could write a letter either to a younger relative giving advice or to an elder giving thanks.

Dear James:

I have begun this letter five times and torn it up five times. I keep seeing your face, which is also the face of your father and my brother. I have known both of you all your lives and have carried your daddy in my arms and on my shoulders, kissed him and spanked him and watched him learn to walk. I don't know if you have known anybody from that far back, if you have loved anybody that long, first as an infant, then as a child, then as a man. You gain a strange perspective on time and human pain and effort.

Other people cannot see what I see whenever I look into your father's face, for behind your father's face as it is today are all those other faces which were his. Let him laugh and I see a cellar your father does not remember and a house he does not remember and I hear in his present laughter his laughter as a child. Let him curse and I remember his falling down the cellar steps and howling and I remember with pain his tears which my hand or your grandmother's hand so easily wiped away, but no one's hand can wipe away those tears he sheds invisibly today which one hears in his laughter and in his speech and in his songs.

I know what the world has done to my brother and how narrowly he has survived it and I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it. One can be--indeed, one must strive to become--tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of war; remember, I said most of mankind, but it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.

Now, my dear namesake, these innocent and well meaning people, your countrymen, have caused you to be born under conditions not far removed from those described for us by Charles Dickens in the London of more than a hundred years ago. I hear the chorus of the innocents screaming, "No, this is not true. How bitter you are," but I am writing this letter to you to try to tell you something about how to handle them, for most of them do not yet really know that you exist. I know the conditions under which you were born for I was there. Your countrymen were not there and haven't made it yet. Your grandmother was also there and no one has ever accused her of being bitter. I suggest that the innocent check with her. She isn't hard to find. Your countrymen don't know that she exists either, though she has been working for them all their lives.

Well, you were born; here you came, something like fifteen years ago, and though your father and mother and grandmother, looking about the streets through which they were carrying you, staring at the walls into which they brought you, had every reason to be heavy-hearted, yet they were not, for here you were, big James, named for me. You were a big baby. I was not. Here you were to be

loved. To be loved, baby, hard at once and forever to strengthen you against the loveless world. Remember that. I know how black it looks today for you. It looked black that day too. Yes, we were trembling. We have not stopped trembling yet, but if we had not loved each other, none of us would have survived, and now you must survive because we love you and for the sake of your children and your children's children.

This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that for the heart of the matter is here and the crux of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits to your ambition were thus expected to be settled. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity and in as many ways as possible that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence. You were expected to make peace with mediocrity. Wherever you have turned, James, in your short time on this earth, you have been told where you could go and what you could do and how you could do it, where you could live and whom you could marry.

I know your countrymen do not agree with me here and I hear them. saying, "You exaggerate." They do not know Harlem and I do. So do you. Take no one's word for anything, including mine, but trust your experience. Know whence you came. If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go. The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you. Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority, but to their inhumanity and fear.

Please try to be clear, dear James, through the storm which rages about your youthful head today, about the reality which lies behind the words "acceptance" and "integration." There is no reason for you to try to become like white men and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them, and I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love, for these innocent people have no other hope. They are in effect still trapped in a history which they do not understand and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men.

Many of them indeed know better, but as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case the danger in the minds and hearts of most white Americans is the loss of their identity. Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shivering and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one's sense of one's own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar, and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations.

You don't be afraid. I said it was intended that you should perish, in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go beyond and behind the white man's definition, by never being allowed to spell your proper name. You have, and many of us have, defeated this intention and by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality. But these men are your brothers, your lost younger brothers, and if the word

"integration" means anything, this is what it means, that we with love shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it, for this is your home, my friend. Do not be driven from it. Great men have done great things here and will again and we can make America what America must become.

It will be hard, James, but you come from sturdy peasant stock, men who picked cotton, dammed rivers, built railroads, and in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of great poets, some of the greatest poets since Homer. One of them said, "The very time I thought I was lost, my dungeon shook and my chains fell off."

You know and I know that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too early. We cannot be free until they are free. God bless you, James, and Godspeed.

Your uncle,

JAMES