National Museum *of* American Diplomacy

Lesson Plan
Seeing the World Differently: Avraham Rabby's Advocacy for Blind Diplomats

Brief abstract:

- This lesson plan explores Avraham Rabby's advocacy for blind U.S. Foreign Service Officers, highlighting his efforts to promote fair access for all, regardless of their disability.

Recommended Grade Levels:

- 9th-12th

Course/Content Area:

- American History
- Government / Civics

Essential Questions:

- How did Rabby advocate for change?
- How do efforts for disability rights impact American society as a whole?
- Does having a foreign service that reflects the country it represents affect diplomacy?

Standards Alignment:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1**: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2**: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- **US2.70**: Use historical context to analyze the reaction to movements for political, social, and economic equality.

Skills of Diplomacy:

- **Analysis** - Study and think critically about situations.
- **Leadership** - Make decisions using what information is available. Keep the big picture in mind. Take steps to fill gaps in knowledge and understanding.
- **Composure** - The ability to work with others in a professional manner and calmly deal with the range of attitudes and behaviors exhibited by counterparts, difficult partners, and adversaries.
- **Advocacy** - The ability to speak on behalf of and pursue the goals and mission. Speak up for those who are not in a position to advocate for themselves.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to
    - Analyze primary source and secondary source documents

- Draw inferences from secondary source texts
- Analyze ways to seek change, promote the common good, and protect rights.
- Generate questions about change and the significance of actions.

Materials needed:

- Teacher computer
- Projector and screen
- Digital or printed copies of the worksheet and reading (the story of diplomacy and "levers of power" worksheet from Facing History and Ourselves)
- Google Slides (This resource is set to "view only." Please make a copy to modify the resource and use it with your students)

Bell Ringer:

- Project slide 4 (image of Rabby's globe and cane with questions) on the board as the students enter the room.
- Allow the students 5 minutes (depending on class length) to look at the images by themselves or with a neighbor and answer the questions.
- After 5 minutes, go over each question with the entire class.
- After fielding student responses, tell students that these objects represent a crucial moment in the foreign service and disability access.

Pre-Activity Discussion:

1. Project slide 5 (sections 501 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Give students a moment to read through the sections or read out loud.
2. Analyze the sections. Use the questions below to guide a quick analysis of sections 501 and 504.
    a. Who does Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protect?
    b. What institutions have to follow sections 501 and 405?
    c. Infer - how would institutions implement sections 501 and 504?
3. Explain to students that these sections, especially Section 504, were a huge victory in disability rights. These sections become the first step in disability access, representation, and protection in the United States.
4. Following section 504, ask students if they know what the foreign service is. Move on to slide 6. Play the "What is the U.S. Foreign Service?" video so students understand what the foreign service is and its function. (Depending on time, you can watch the whole video, but if pressed for time, play the video from start to 1:50).
5. Following the video, project slide 7. Have students describe what the U.S. Foreign Service is and what a foreign service officer does. Answers will vary but will revolve around supporting the U.S. Department of State at its locations across the world. Then ask, who can be a foreign service officer? Answers will vary but will revolve around anyone who applies and passes the selection process.

6. Present slide 8. Tell students that they are going to look at the case of Rami Rabby, a key figure who paved the way for foreign service officers who were blind. Mention that the objects from the beginning of the lesson were from Rabby.
7. Prompt students: what was section 504 again? This was a law that prompted protections for disabled people. Well, Rabby was completely blind, having lost his sight as a child due to detached retinas. He applied to be a foreign service officer in the mid-1980s but was denied.
8. Present slide 9. Our objective today is to not only learn about Rabby's story but also how he leveraged power to fight against ableism and lead to overall change within the Foreign Service.

Main Activity: Article and worksheet

1. Present slide 10. This can remain on the board during the activity so students remember what they need to do.
2. Either alone or with a partner, have students read through the story of diplomacy, using the "levers of power" worksheet from Facing History and Ourselves to guide them.
    - The "Levers of Power" worksheet helps students identify how individuals make political and social change.

Activity Debrief and Exit Ticket

1. After students have completed the reading and worksheet, open the class to discussion or assign questions related to disability rights, access for people with disabilities, and how people can advocate for change. Slide 11 has the discussion questions below.
    - Some example discussion questions:
        - Should Rabby have been denied a position in the foreign service?
        - How did Rabby advocate for change?
        - What are the lasting effects of Rabby's advocacy?
        - How does this story impact our lives?
        - How do efforts for disability rights impact American society as a whole?
        - With Rabby breaking the barrier for diplomats who were blind, how do you think this might affect disability access in our countries? How might it help travelers with disabilities?
        - Does having a foreign service that reflects the country it represents affect diplomacy?
        - Is it important to have representation of all kinds of people in the foreign service?
        - What actions can we take as citizens to support the rights of people with disabilities?
2. Following discussion, project slide 12 (exit ticket).
3. After discussing Rabby's story and the importance of disability access and visibility, have students answer the exit ticket question in one paragraph before leaving the room.

- Does having a foreign service that reflects the country it represents affect diplomacy? Is it important to have representation of all kinds of people in the foreign service? Explain.