

Civil Rights (8th Grade)

Objective: Students will research upcountry civil rights places, leaders and events and publish a compilation of their findings.

Essential Question: *What were some of the important events and people during the civil rights movement in the Upcountry?*

SC Social Studies Standards

8-7.4 Explain the factors that influenced the economic opportunities of African American South Carolinians during the later 20th century, including racial discrimination, the Briggs vs. Elliot case, the integration of public facilities and the civil rights movement, agricultural decline, and statewide educational improvement.

Background Information

From the Museum:

Equal Citizenship

During the 1890s, Jim Crow laws ended the promise of equality that Reconstruction granted to African Americans. For years, after the Civil War, white southerners had remained unable to recognize the equality of people they once considered property. They moved to push African Americans into second-class status. The institution of Jim Crow laws gave discrimination against blacks that force of law. African Americans suffered under legal segregation until well into the 20th century. By the 1960s, Upcountry blacks were ready to assert themselves in order to fulfill the hope offered by Reconstruction nearly 100 years before. They actively participated in the civil rights movement and beat down the old laws restraining them.

Jim Crow In the Upcountry

In the 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century, the custom of excluding and repressing African Americans was written into law in South Carolina. Through Jim Crow laws, whites segregated the races — separating blacks and whites on railroads, ferries, on trolley cars, and in places of employment like the textile mills.

At this time, African Americans found strength and consolation within their community. Black churches and schools became stable pillars that fostered unity and identity.

Signs posted all over South Carolina publicly separated blacks and whites, prompting many African Americans to leave to escape violence and the oppressive social system, as well as to find jobs.

In 1895, a new state constitution effectively repealed African American voting rights guaranteed by the 15th Amendment. Five black delegates to the convention refused to sign it.

Many African Americans continued to work on farms, but others lived near textile mills, where the men labored as bale-breakers, and their wives kept households for whites in mill villages.

Dr. Benjamin Mays of Greenwood County, a proponent of black education and desegregation, became the president of Atlanta's all-black Morehouse College in 1940, where he inspired student and future civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr.

After fighting bravely for freedom overseas, distinguished black servicemen like Lt. Col. Paul Adams returned to find that they were still treated as second-class citizens at home.

A *Christian Science Monitor* cartoon suggested that the trial of 31 whites for the lynching of murder suspect Willie Earle in Pickens County on February 14, 1947, signaled a change in Greenville's racial climate.

In May 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the US Supreme Court declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional, opening the door to desegregation in South Carolina.

Direct Action, Civil Rights

In the 1960s, Upcountry African Americans won civil rights through a combination of direct action protests and federal court orders. On January 1, 1960, protestors marched to desegregate Greenville airport waiting rooms.

The demonstration spawned three years of protests. The biggest victories came in 1963. A federal district court ordered Clemson University to admit its first black student, and the US Supreme Court ordered Greenville to desegregate its lunch counters.

In 1960, black students were arrested after attempting to use Greenville's "whites-only" main library.

Local attorneys Willie T. Smith and Donald Sampson led the legal assault on Jim Crow segregation.

On July 27, 1960, George C. Foster and Willie Nathan Campbell were beaten and arrested after sitting-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Spartanburg.

On May 9, 1961, Freedom Riders — black and white students riding busses to protest segregation laws — were beaten by a white mob at the Rock Hill terminal.

In January 1963, Harvey Gantt became the first black student at Clemson University, following a federal district court order.

After Elaine Whittenberg and five other black children were denied transfers to white schools, her father, A. J. Whittenberg, filed suit to desegregate Greenville schools on August 19, 1963.

Despite protests, Greenville County schools were desegregated during a single weekend in February 1970, requiring the transfer of 12,000 students and 500 teachers to achieve racial balance.

Other detailed background information about these topics can be found in:

The History of South Carolina in the Building of the Nation (8th Grade text) by Archie Vernon Huff, Jr. Chapter 27

Greenville The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont by Archie Vernon Huff pp.232-233; 396-407

Desegregation with Dignity by Keith Morris in Upcountry Review Vol. I Fall 1999

The South Carolina Encyclopedia edited by Walter Edgar

Greenville Cultural Exchange Center

Various books in the South Carolina Room at the Greenville Library

Primary Activity: Upcountry Civil Rights Movement

Materials:

- List of Upcountry Civil Rights places, leaders and events (attached)
- Various materials for publishing

Procedure

1. Print out the List of Upcountry Civil Rights places, leaders and events.
2. Have students pick one person, place or event from the list.
3. Students research their topic.
4. As a class decide how to publish the finding. Some options are below:

Make a quilt: Give each student a square of cotton. Have the student draw a picture of their topic with fabric crayons or markers. Add one or two lines of text below the picture. Draw a ½ inch border along the edge of the square. Attach the squares together and hang on the wall. A title square should be designed and placed in the middle of the quilt.

Opening Doors: Have students fold and design a piece of poster board to look like a door. Design the front like a door - open the door and students will draw a picture of their topic on the inside. Students write up their research and paste it below the picture – starting with the phrase:

“(Harvey Gantt) opened a door by...” Hang your doors down the hall.

Children’s book: Have student design and make a page for a children’s book with the information they got during research. Make sure the language is simple enough for younger students to understand. Share the book with younger classes.

Assessment

A rubric can be used to assess this project:

Student engages in research – 5 points

Student publishes findings in a class publication -5 points

Cross-Curricular Activities

Social Studies

* Have someone from the Greenville Cultural Exchange Center or the Sterling High School Alumni Association visit the class and talk about Civil Rights in the Upstate.

Drama

* Students can act out an Upcountry civil rights event or present a speech or short biography dressed as the person.

List of Upcountry Civil Rights Places, Leaders and Events

Harvey Gant
Jesse Jackson
Lillian Brock Fleming
Lila Mae Brock
Hattie Logan Duckett
Benjamin Mays
Brown vs. the Board of Education
March on the Greenville Airport – James and Elizabeth Hall
A.J. and Elaine Whittenberg
Freedom Riders
The Integration of Dixie Youth Baseball
Lunch Counter sit-ins – Woolworth Spartanburg
The Integration of St. Anne’s School in Rock Hill
Rev. James Rosemond
Sterling High School
The lynching of Willie Earle
Attorneys Willie T. Smith and Donald Sampson
John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church
Mattoon Presbyterian Church
Working Man’s Benevolent Temple
Marshall Stephens – Erskin College
First Baptist Church
Carolina High School
Clemson University