

# Lesson 10: The Civil Rights Era

*“There is also the danger in our culture that because a person is called upon to give public statements and is acclaimed by the establishment, such a person gets to the point of believing that he is the movement.” —Ella Baker*

**Social Justice Standards: Justice 12, 15**

## Summary

Many of us are taught that history is a chronicle of events—a record of things that have happened in the past. The truth is far more complicated. History is incomplete. It is biased. It is revisionist and often lost. It can also be present and predictive. Learning lots of “new” history can therefore be disorienting. Civil Rights and African American history, specifically, are not well integrated into American education. It is understandable then that many Americans, especially white Americans, don’t know what they don’t know. We kindly urge you to remember that curiosity, not mastery, is the goal. And that this is an opportunity to catalyze your children’s learning journey as well as reignite your own.

## Booklist

- *Belle, the Last Mule at Gee’s Bend: A Civil Rights Story* by Calvin Alexander Ramsey and Bettye Stroud, illustrated by John Holyfield
- *We March* by Shane W. Evans
- *28 Days: Moments in Black History that Changed the World* by Charles R. Smith Jr., illustrated by Shane W. Evans
- *Seeds of Freedom: The Peaceful Integration of Huntsville, Alabama* by Hester Bass, illustrated by E. B. Lewis
- *A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson, illustrated by Eric Velasquez

## Consider This

- What do you know about the Civil Rights movement? How do you know it?
- Many educators are looking for a fundamental shift in what history is taught. Do you remember any history that you learned that could be problematic today?
- What perspectives and themes should be included with a more inclusive view of history?

## *Talk Together*

- Have you ever been curious about what it would be like if there were a select group of children that were not allowed to come to your school? How would your school look differently?
- Who do you think should have a say about the schools more—adults or kids? Why?
- Do you think your school or community allows all people to live and succeed?

## *Engage*

There are still many people in our families and communities that lived through the Civil Rights Era. Find someone to talk to about their experiences and how they have seen it play out through history. We encourage you to try and find multiple perspectives. You can also find interviews online if you're not able to find a conversation partner.

## *Explore More*

- The Smithsonian American Art Museum's "The Struggle for Equality"
- National Humanities Center's The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s
- *U.S. Civil Rights Trail: A Traveler's Guide to the People, Places, and Events that Made the Movement* by Deborah D. Douglas