

The Influence & Impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the Civil Rights Movement

Overview

This lesson will focus on how students of Historically Black Colleges and Universities created a culture of change and resistance that impacted the Civil Rights Movement within America. Utilizing varied sources, such as clips from the Southern Oral History Program's recordings, film clips, articles, primary source documents, and various websites, students will work independently to discover how the agency and actions of HBCU students led to tangible social change, both in the areas surrounding their schools and across America.

Grades

8-12

Essential/Compelling Questions

- How did student leadership on the campuses of HBCUs influence the Civil Rights Movement?
- What changes in attitudes, thinking and/or action took place in 1960s society because of the leadership & participation of HBCU students?

Materials

- Computer with internet access, speakers and a projector
- SOHP's Pauli Murray Interview excerpt at <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/hbcu-1-pauli-murray>
- *Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Black Colleges and Universities*, clip of "Official Trailer" and "Rising," both which are around 1 minute long and available at <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/tell-them-we-are-rising/>
- [*Love, the Band*](#) (4 min., 30 sec.), which covers the importance of marching bands at HBCUs with a look at Winston Salem State
- Student Research Packet (attached), which includes instructions and questions for the following materials:
 - North Carolina's HBCU's website: <http://www.ncpedia.org/education/hbcu>
 - "The Civil Rights Movement and HBCUs" article, from <https://hbculifestyle.com/>
 - SOHP's Julian Bond Interview excerpt - <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/hbcu-2-julian-bond> (6:23)
 - "An Appeal for Human Rights," attached
 - Freedom Riders: The Student Leader, film excerpt at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2p5zvQIQ0k> (4:44)
 - SOHP's Ella Baker interview excerpt at <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/hbcu-3-ella-baker> (stop at 12:07)
 - 13 HBCUs that Played Pivotal Roles in the Civil Rights Movement website: <https://msil lineup.com/2016/02/01/13-hbcus-that-played-pivotal-roles-in-the-civil-rights-movement/>
 - Students Reflect on the 50th anniversary of the Greensboro Sit Ins website: <https://newsone.com/427532/hbcu-students-reflect-on-50th-anniversary-of-civil-rights-sit-ins/>
 - The Sit-In Movement Timeline at <https://www.sitinmovement.org/history/sit-in-movement.asp>
 - 4C's Student Reflection Handout, attached
- Laptops with internet access and sound for each student (or each group)
 - If conducting this activity in a small space, each laptop will also have headphones. (And, if conducting this activity in groups, headphone splitters or listening centers for each laptop would be ideal so that multiple students can listen at the same time.) Otherwise, teachers may want to consider reserving a

larger space, such as the media center, so that students can listen from the laptops speakers without disturbing each other.

- Optional/Additional Resources
 - Howard University and the Civil Rights Movement interview (13:37) in which Howard University graduate, Francine "Fran" Carter (72) discusses her experiences attending Howard University during the Civil Rights Movement; available at <https://soundcloud.com/user-473633564/mby015523-edit-1960s-jfk-march-civil-rights?in=user-473633564/sets/audio-stories>
 - Analyzing Oral Histories
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Oral_Histories.pdf
 - Primary Source Analysis Tool
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf

Student Preparation

Students should have prior knowledge regarding the state of enslaved people after they were freed and the progression of Black Codes into Jim Crow, as well as a basic understanding of the events of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's. Specific student knowledge should include:

- "Separate but Equal"
- National Association of the Advancement of Colored People
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
- Segregation Laws
 - Prior knowledge of these specific topics will assist in the students understanding of how HBCU students collaborated with each other to impact social change during the Civil Rights Movement.

Teacher Preparation

- Teachers should determine how much class time and/or homework time will be devoted to the Student Research Project, in which students are provided specific materials to independently discover the role of HBCUs in the Civil Rights Movement.
- Teachers should also decide whether the independent research project will be completed individually or in groups.
 - If assigning the project in groups, have the room arranged in groups of around 4 students and assign students to a group upon entering the room (i.e., label each group with a number, have them draw a number and report to the corresponding group, or if the teacher would like to control which students work together, simply label each grouping with a page of names assigned to that group.)
 - Teachers may also want to assign students particular group work roles to help ensure productivity; examples are available [here](#).

Procedure

An Introduction to Historically Black Colleges and Universities in North Carolina

1. Open class by asking what the students can tell you about Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), both in general and in North Carolina specifically. Teachers can pose probing questions based on what students share:
 - What is an HBCU?
 - Can anyone name any HBCUs?
 - Does anyone know why HBCUs were created and what their purposes were/are?
2. Ensure students understand that **historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)** are institutions of higher education that were established before the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** with the intention of primarily serving the African-American community. This was due to the overwhelming majority of predominantly

This lesson plan was completed in collaboration with teacher Iris Robinson as part of the 2017 Carolina Oral History Teaching Fellows Program in Civil Rights, sponsored by UNC-Chapel Hill's [Southern Oral History Program](#) and [Carolina K-12](#).

white institutions of higher-learning banning qualified African Americans from enrollment during segregation. There are now 101 HBCUs in the United States, including public and private institutions.

3. Tell students that you are going to play a 7 minute clip from **Pauli Murray**, a champion for civil and human rights who grew up in Durham, in which she discusses her application to UNC-Chapel Hill in November of 1938. Explain to students that the clip will highlight some of the realities of the challenges African Americans faced in the 1900s in terms of education, and will thus highlight the important role of HBCUs. Play the clip at <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/hbcu-1-pauli-murray> (make sure to pause the clip at 7:06 or the next clip will play) and instruct students to write down any challenges or examples of injustice that they hear, as well as Murray’s response to these. Afterwards discuss:
 - What does Pauli Murray notice about the application sent to her from UNC and how does she respond on the application?
 - How did Dr. Frank Porter Graham respond to Murray’s application? Did Murray accept this rejection?
 - Murray mentions the Lloyd Gains case as one she thought would change her rejection to UNC. Have you ever heard about Lloyd Gains? Do you know anything about him and/or *Gaines v. Canada* (1938)?
 - Share with students that after being denied admission to the University of Missouri School of Law in 1935 because he was black and refusing the university's offer to pay for him to attend another neighboring state's law school with no racial restriction, he filed suit. His case, *Gaines v. Canada* (1938), became one of the most important court cases in the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1930s. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled in his favor, holding that the separate but equal doctrine required that Missouri either admit him or set up a separate law school for Black students.
 - What did Frank Graham do after Murray challenged her rejection, citing the Gaines case?
 - Why does Murray’s application to UNC become national news?
 - Why does Murray contact Thurgood Marshall at the NAACP? Why does she think her case is so strong?
 - Why did the NAACP reject Pauli Murray’s case? What about her, based on what you’ve learned or on your own inferences, might have led the NAACP to determine she wasn’t a sure win? Why is she surprised by this?
 - Although the Supreme Court ruled that year in *Gaines v. Canada* (1938) that state schools were required to provide graduate education to black as well as white students, Murray was rejected on the basis of her race. Largely working on her own, Murray corresponded with the university’s president, Frank Porter Graham. She sent copies of their letters to the African-American press and implored Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP to take her case. Her fight for admittance made national news. The university still denied Murray admission, and the NAACP refused to represent her—a decision that was likely based on her “maverick” tendencies as well as questions about her gender and sexual identity. (Source: <http://communications.yale.edu/anna-pauline-pauli-murray-yale-1965-jsd-1979-hon-ddiv>)
 - While this excerpt highlights the importance of fighting for equal access to all educational institutions, how does Pauli Murray’s struggle also highlight the important of HBCUs?
4. Provide a brief overview of HBCUs for students to peak their interest, and let students know that they are going to be learning about the incredibly important HBCUs in North Carolina in today’s lesson:
 - Prior to the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, the majority of African Americans in the United States were enslaved persons living in the southern states. Education for African Americans was sparse, especially in the South with laws such as North Carolina’s that prohibited teaching enslaved persons to read and write. It was a rare occurrence for an African American to be literate. While there were a few schools dedicated to African American education in the North prior to the Civil War, the first college available to African Americans in the South was Shaw University (in Raleigh, NC!), which

opened its doors in 1865. A number of institutions dedicated specifically for the education of African Americans were founded in the era immediately following the Civil War and others followed when segregation limited equal access to education. These schools are often known as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or "HBCUs". North Carolina has twelve historically black colleges and universities, including the oldest in the South, Raleigh's Shaw University, founded in 1865, and North Carolina's newest HBCU, North Carolina Central University, founded in 1910 in Durham. Ten of these schools continue to operate today. (Source: <https://www.ncpedia.org/education/hbcu>)

5. To further peak student interest, play the first two brief video clips from the documentary *Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Black Colleges and Universities*: <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/tell-them-we-are-rising/>. The first is the "Tell Them We Are Rising Official Trailer" and immediately following is "Rising." Afterwards, discuss:
 - Based on the clips you viewed, why are HBCUs so important? What did they offer to African American students that they could not find elsewhere? (i.e., the opportunity to be affirmed, be yourself, exist in an unapologetic black space, the freedom to explore, etc.)
 - What is so incredible about the creation and success of HBCUs, especially considering the society in which they were created and the adversity African Americans were facing?
 - Why do you think this film about HBCUs is titled "Tell Them We are Rising?" What message is inherent in this phrase?

Optional: For a NC specific look at HBCUs, play the 4 min. [Love, the Band feature](#), which covers the importance of marching bands at HBCUs with a look at Winston Salem State.

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6. Explain to students that they are now going to (either individually or in groups) conduct some guided, independent research to uncover the influence and impact of HBCU students on the Civil Rights Movement. Provide each student with the attached Student Research Packet and let them know how long they will have to complete their research. Teachers will need to determine where students will log their answers to the questions (i.e., on paper, electronically, etc.)
7. Once students have completed their packet, culminate with a class discussion that focuses on the various ways students have identified that HBCU students influenced and impacted 1960s society in the fight for civil rights.

Name: _____

STUDENT RESEARCH PACKET

Guiding Question: How did students of Historically Black Colleges and Universities fuel and impact the Civil Rights Movement?

Take the following steps to research this question, completing the tasks as outlined. Use notebook paper or your computer to write down your answers.

- 1. Begin by browsing the website** <http://www.ncpedia.org/education/hbcu> to learn more about HBCU's in North Carolina. After browsing, choose one particular HBCU to learn a few facts about and answer:
 - What is the name of the HBCU you chose?
 - When and where was the HBCU founded? Who was the founder of the university?
 - Why was it founded?
 - Why was the development of this HBCU important? What positive impacts do you think this HBCU has had?
 - List something you find interesting, inspiring, or something you'd like to learn more about.
- 2. Read the attached article "The Civil Rights Movement and HBCUs." Answer:**
 - According to the article, "it's not an exaggeration to say that the Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century would not have happened or been as successful without the participation of HBCU students." Write a paragraph summarizing the evidence the article notes to back this statement up.
- 3. Listen to the excerpt of SOHP's Julian Bond Interview at** <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/hbcu-2-julian-bond> (6:23) **then answer:**
 - How did Julian Bond become involved in the Atlanta civil rights movement while he was a student at Morehouse, an HBCU in Atlanta? What events were taking place elsewhere that influenced him? (i.e., the Greensboro Sit-Ins)
 - How did he and his fellow students impact the Civil Rights Movement?
 - What was the "Committee on Appeal for Human Rights?"
 - What was Julian's Bond's specific role on the Committee? Why was this role so important?
 - What was the Atlantic Inquirer Weekly and what was significant about its creation?
- 4. Skim through the attached primary source document "An Appeal for Human Rights." Answer:**
 - What do the authors of this document want?
 - What arguments do they make as to why they should have what they want?
 - In your opinion, what is the most effective piece of this document and why?
- 5. VIEW: Freedom Riders: The Student Leader** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2p5zvQIQ0k> (4:44) **then answer:**
 - Who was Diane Nash? How did she impact the Civil Rights Movement while a student at HBCU Fisk University?
 - What challenges to you imagine she faced as both an African American and a female while fighting for civil rights throughout the 1960s?
 - What risks were Diane and other activists taking in order to fight segregation?
 - Based on what you viewed, what words would you use to describe Diane Nash?

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6. Listen to the excerpt of SOHP's with civil rights leader Ella Baker at <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/hbcu-3-ella-baker> (stop at 12:07). In this clip, Ella Baker discusses her role as a leader in the civil rights movement while a student at Shaw University, an HBCU in Raleigh, NC. She specifically references conflicts within the leadership and participants of the civil rights movement, highlighting that not everyone involved always agreed on the best way to bring about change and end segregation. Answer:
- What conflict does Ella Baker describe that existed within the leaders and participants of the Civil Rights Movement? Does it surprise you to hear that there were inner-conflicts such as this within the Movement leaders?
 - What does Ella Baker ultimately argue regarding whether you could register black voters without confrontation? What is your opinion regarding the debate of whether you can remain non-violent while conducting voter registration for African Americans during this time period?
 - How was Ella Baker able to encourage compromise? Why do you think young people were in a better position to deal with differences in the movement and work together?
 - Similar to Diane Nash, what challenges do you imagine Ella Baker faced by being a young African American woman in a role of leadership during this time?
 - What issues did NAACP and SCLC have with SNCC? Why do you think SNCC wanted to remain independent? How might this illustrate the differences in the way young people and adults often see the world?
 - What was Move on Mississippi and how did this highlight the divisions and differences between SNCC and other groups?
7. Read:
- Students Reflect on the 50th anniversary of the Greensboro Sit Ins <https://newsone.com/427532/hbcu-students-reflect-on-50th-anniversary-of-civil-rights-sit-ins/>
8. Browse the Sit-In-Movement Timeline at <https://www.sitinmovement.org/history/sit-in-movement.asp>.
- In looking at this timeline, who would you characterize the role of HBCUs in the sit-in movement?
9. In culmination, complete the attached 4C's Student Reflection Handout.

The Civil Rights Movement & HBCUs

On February 1, 1960 four A&T freshmen helped to orchestrate the sit-in movement starting with the F.W. Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Photo via North Carolina A&T State University.



Most college campuses boasts statue of and tributes to college founders and important politicians. But there's something different about [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University](#): the campus features a striking statue of the [Greensboro Four \(A&T Four\)](#), the four young A&T students who took a historic stand against racism on February 1, 1960 by sitting in at the segregated Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C. Ezell Blair, Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil and David Richmond ushered in a new era of change in the United States—one that underscores the political importance of [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#) (HBCUs).

In fact, it's not an exaggeration to say that the Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century would not have happened or been as successful without the participation of HBCU students. Not only did HBCUs produce some of the great leaders of the movement, including **Medgar Evers** (Alcorn State), **Diane Nash** (Fisk University), **Rosa Parks** (Alabama State), **Stokely Carmichael** (Howard University), and **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** (Morehouse College), they were also indispensable centers of the fight for equality.

While some HBCU's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement is more known, such as the boycotts and marches led by students at Fisk University that ended segregation in Nashville, countless lesser-known HBCUs participated in ways that are not as familiar. For instance:

- [Shaw University](#) was the site of the first meeting of the [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee](#) (SNCC), which led voter registration drives and the Freedom Rides.
- [Claflin University](#) was the central force working to dismantle segregation in Orangeburg, S.C., marching and protesting well before the 1960 date that most historians date as the start of the student civil rights movement.
- [South Carolina State University](#) students also fought against discrimination in Orangeburg, S.C.; one attempt to desegregate local bowling alleys ended in the 1968 Orangeburg Massacre, when three student protestors were killed.
- [Knoxville College](#) students and professors in Tennessee began one of the first voter registration drives in 1957 and forced the 1960 desegregation of downtown stores and restaurants, well before many of the more well-known desegregation efforts succeeded.
- [Tougaloo College](#) students not only marched and protested against racial discrimination, they also reached out to white entertainers and encouraged them not to perform at segregated venues.

These examples are only the tip of the iceberg; as [Brian McClure](#) explains, "HBCUs served as institutions of solidarity. Dorm rooms were transformed into meeting locations; quads became rallying centers, chapel basements transformed into training grounds for non-violent protests, and campuses banded together creating an intricate system of social networks."

Scratch the surface of any HBCU brochure, and you'll find a rich history of commitment and selfless dedication to the cause of racial equality—and probably find a large number of alumni and parents who were part of that mission. (Source: <https://hbculifestyle.com/hbcu-civil-rights-movement/>)

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The 4Cs Student Reflection Handout on HBCUs

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Connections</u></p> <p>What connections do you draw between today's lesson and other topics that you have learned about in class?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <p>What ideas, positions or assumptions were effectively challenged by HBCU students during the Civil Rights Movement? Explain your answer.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Concepts</u></p> <p>What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from today's lesson?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Changes</u></p> <p>What changes in attitudes, thinking or action happened during the Civil Rights Movement because of the leadership & participation of HBCU students?</p>

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