

NATIONAL ARCHIVES DOCUMENTED RIGHTS

educational resources

www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/

INTRODUCTION

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, our rights as citizens of the United States have been debated, contested, amended, and documented. While the Bill of Rights established our basic civil rights, it took later amendments, Presidential proclamations, court decisions, and direct civic action over periods of time to more fully define our human rights.

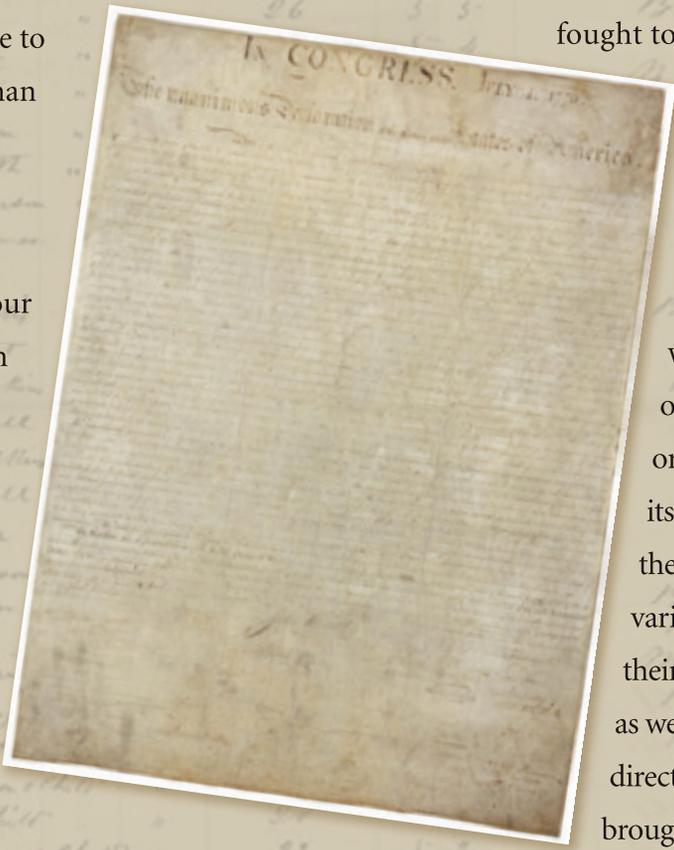
The struggles for freedom and equality throughout our history have occurred with Americans of all walks of life. From larger-than-life figures of world renown to the huddled masses yearning to breathe free, our national story is very much a story of seemingly insurmountable odds.

These endeavors cross all racial, social, ethnic, gender, and ideological borders. From runaway slaves taking emancipation into their own hands to women defying both law and convention by illegally executing their right to vote, the recognition and growth of personal rights to more people is a constant

theme in American history. The efforts of the disenfranchised cross all geographic and time boundaries as well. During both times of war and peace, in the deepest South to the extreme reaches of the Aleutian islands and the expanses of the Great Plains between, from the Revolutionary era until today, activists have fought to achieve social justice.

This growth of personal liberty did not go uncontested, however. Whether its opponents were people intolerant of others, local governments, or the Federal Government itself, Americans fighting for their fair share had to use a variety of methods to achieve their goals. Some used words as weapons while others took direct action to the streets or brought their fight to the legal corridors of power.

The following lesson plan is designed as an educational component of the “Documented Rights” Exhibit. It is designed to be a unit plan that requires students to research, analyze, and create a finished product using documents from the exhibit.



VOCABULARY LIST

Federal court
economic equality
district court
slave
cargo

manifest
customs assimilation
bill of sale
plantation
future increase

segregation precedent
interracial
due process oppression
inalienable
unalienable.

Additional key terms related to each document is available at: www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/education/vocabulary-list.html

GUIDING QUESTIONS

SECTION I. LET MY PEOPLE GO

- Does any form of slavery exist today? How does it compare to slavery described in this exhibit?
- How did advocates for slavery defend this “peculiar institution” and how did they justify it?
- How do people maintain their humanity when society or those in power deny it?
- What is resistance?

SECTION II. BROKE AT LAST

- How long did it take for human rights to reach the level at which they exist today? When did the process start?
- Looking at these documents, who would you say was treated fairly? Who was treated unfairly?
- How would you define “fair” in your life?

SECTION III. THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

- Are all men created equal?
- Is there ever a reason for denying the rights of specific groups of people?
- How did the expansion of the United States affect the rights of the Native Americans?
- Debate as a culminating activity: Should Native Americans have lost the rights to their land?

SECTION IV. A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

- What types of dissent have been documented over the years? By whom? When?
- How has the United States dealt with the challenges of righting past wrongs?
- Is there a danger that other groups could be victims of discrimination in the future?
- What issues involving civil rights do you see as possible challenges in the future?

SECTION V. WE SHALL OVERCOME

- How important have the courts been in the process of change in American human rights? Could these changes been implemented without court action?
- What factors led to school integration becoming an issue in the 1950s? Why did it take so long?
- Did *Brown vs. Board of Education* settle everything?



LESSON PLAN

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS—What are our inalienable rights as humans?

TOPIC SPECIFIC ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS—How have people struggled to have their rights recognized? How has the Federal Government responded to these struggles?

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING—A variety of different individuals and social groups have used different legal methods to have their unalienable rights recognized by the Federal Government. The success of protecting these rights has depended on a variety of outside factors.

TASK

As a member of a committee of renowned historians, you have been selected by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (UN) to explain the successes and challenges to human rights in the United States. The United Nations wants to look at how human rights have blossomed and been threatened in a variety of contexts around the world in order to better protect these rights in the future.

The committee will be broken into eight teams that will examine the struggle for freedom and equality experienced one of the following historical groups from America's past:

- African American Slaves
- African American Civil Rights Activists
- Women
- Hispanic Americans



- Native Americans
- Foreign Nationals/Immigrants
- Asian Americans
- People with Unpopular Ideas

Your task will be to explain the history of your specific group's struggle for equal rights in the United States using the resources of the "Documented Rights" exhibit. Your overall goal is to provide the UN Council with a suitable answer to the following questions:

- How have people struggled to have their unalienable rights recognized?
- How has the Federal Government responded to these struggles?
- How can current civil rights activists learn from past successes and failures?

To explain the answers you uncover to the Human Rights Council, you have been asked to create a finished product to present at this year's annual Human Rights Day. When creating your finished product, you should incorporate the appropriate primary source documents. Your finished product can be in any of the following formats:

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Dramatic Performance
- Historical Documentary

After each group presents their finished product, the entire UN Council (i.e. the entire class) will discuss their findings. They will compare and contrast, examine the historical context, evaluate the success, and assess the role of the government in the process.

Recommended Time Frame:

- 2–3 Days Research and Analyze
Primary Sources
- 3–4 Days Create Product
- 2–3 Days Presentations of
Materials and Discussions

PROCESS

In order to successfully create your finished product, you should do the following:

STEP 1. EXPLORE: Visit the “Documented Rights” online exhibit and discover all of the documents that relate to your specific topic. These documents might be in several different sections of the exhibit.

STEP 2. ANALYZE: Using document analysis worksheets from www.archives.gov/education/lessons/, start investigating the documents to determine the overall significance.

STEP 3. RESEARCH: Read secondary sources from the National Archives additional resources page and other sources from around the web to get a variety of perspectives about the actions of your social group.

STEP 4. CREATE: Decide on a format for your finished product and start designing it using the information you discovered in your exploration of “Documented Rights.” Examine the assessment rubric in order to understand how you will be evaluated for this assignment.

STEP 5. PRESENT: Groups will present their findings to the UN Council. The UN Council will have the opportunity to question each group to clarify their positions.

STEP 6. COMPARE/CONTRAST: After all groups have discussed their findings, they will look for similarities and differences among the different social groups and their struggle for rights. They will evaluate the successes and failures and discuss the role of the Federal Government.

STEP 7. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS: The UN Council will decide the lessons learned from our history of human rights struggles and recommend a way to move ahead to deal with current rights issues.

Evaluation Assessment Rubric

Use this rubric to assess individual students’ performance. You may wish to weigh certain aspects more than others.

	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1
Analysis of Primary Sources	Students always actively examined documents and made sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.	Students usually actively examined documents or mostly made sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.	Students sometimes actively examined documents or sometimes made sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.	Students rarely actively examined documents or did not make sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.
Selection of Primary Source Material	Thoughtful selection of primary source material which supports product content and themes	Most of the primary source material chosen from the DR exhibit supports the content and themes of their final project.	Some of the primary source material chosen from the DR exhibit does not support the content and themes of their final project.	The primary source material chosen from the DR exhibit does not support the content and themes of their final project.
Historical Accuracy, Analysis and Interpretation	Content is historically accurate and shows critical analysis and interpretation. The content is placed in historical context.	Content is historically accurate and shows some critical analysis and interpretation. The content is placed in historical context	Content contains some historical errors and includes little analysis or interpretation. Content is not placed in historical context.	Content contains historical errors and does not include analysis or interpretation. Content is not placed in historical context.
Teamwork	Student always participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.	Student mostly participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.	Student sometimes participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.	Student rarely participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.
Presentations and Discussions with the UN Council	Students accurately represented the views of the role they assumed. Arguments were sufficient in number.	Students mostly accurately represented the views of the role they assumed, with not more than one uncharacteristic argument. Arguments were sufficient in number, but may have needed at least one more point.	Students gave some arguments that accurately represented the views of the role they assumed, with more than one uncharacteristic argument. Arguments were sufficient in number, but may have needed more than one additional point.	Students gave insufficient arguments that accurately represented the views of the role they assumed, with more than one uncharacteristic argument. Arguments were sufficient in number, but may have needed more than one additional point.

SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Have students write a journal from the perspective of one of the figures in the documents. How did they feel about their treatment?
2. Debate an issue:
 - Has the Federal Government been a progressive supporter in establishing and protecting the rights of its citizens? Why or why not? Should it?
 - Should there be certain issues that are left to the states to decide? Should the court system handle these issues or should other branches as well?
3. Using select documents from the “Documented Rights” exhibit (working alone or in a group) create a timeline. Next, focus on how, through the years, human and civil rights in the United States have been expanded to include guarantees for various diverse groups.



“The relation between the white and colored people of this country is the great, paramount, imperative, and all-commanding question for this age and nation to solve.”

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS, MAY 1863

4. Develop “A Tribute to Those Who Have Come Before Us.” Design a public forum for historical figures to talk about their lives and impact. Using the primary source documents and other resources, have students form a panel of important historical figures. These figures will discuss their contributions to American democracy using information from the exhibit. Possible figures include Jackie Robinson, Susan B. Anthony, Abraham Lincoln, etc. After discussing their contributions, through a moderator, panel members may converse with other panel members about their common experiences or challenges.
5. Documenting Today’s Rights, students look for current events to see how rights are being denied or extended in the courts or around the world.
6. Mark locations on a map of the United States to see when and where particular rights were fought.
7. Choose a sub-topic from the exhibit and create a visual image (cartoon, map, courtroom drawing) that might have been published in a newspaper at the time.

Slavery is founded on the selfishness of man’s nature—opposition to it on his love of justice.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN, OCTOBER 16, 1854

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Documented Rights Exhibit

www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/

Explore the entire Documented Rights exhibit and download high-resolution copies of the primary sources.

Teaching With Documents

www.archives.gov/education

Teaching with primary documents encourages a varied learning environment for teachers and students alike.

DocsTeach

www.docsteach.org

With a collection of primary source documents, users can find teacher created lesson plans and create their own educational activities.

Digital Vaults

www.digitalvaults.org

The Digital Vaults enables visitors to customize their exhibit experience and to create posters, movies, and games that can be shared by e-mail.

Research at the National Archives

www.archives.gov/research

Tools and guides to help you locate many online National Archives documents.

Online Public Access (OPA)

www.archives.gov/research/search

The Online Public Access resource is the online public portal to our records and information about our records.

National Archives Exhibits

www.archives.gov/exhibits/

Discover hundreds of primary sources through the dozens of exhibits from the National Archives.

Charters of Freedom

www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/

The Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, and Bill of Rights have secured the rights of the American people for over 200 years.

Our Documents

www.ourdocuments.gov

“Our Documents” features 100 milestone documents of American history.

Presidential Libraries

www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/

to understanding of the
n experience by preserving
original materials.

Prologue Magazine

www.archives.gov/prologue/

Prologue

features stories based on the
of the National Archives
across the nation.

“Let My People Go”
We need not always weep and mourn,
Let my people go,
And wear these slavery chains forlorn,
Let my people go.
—AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL,
19TH CENTURY

ACCESS TO THE PAST

Support for this traveling exhibition is provided by the Foundation for the National Archives. Thirteen National Archives facilities across the nation from Atlanta to Anchorage, from Boston to Seattle, from New York to San Francisco, from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, and throughout the nation's heartland, encompassing Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Ft. Worth, and Denver, provide access to original documents and other records that illuminate the past. Nearly one-quarter of the total holdings of the National Archives can be found in the regions, records that document family history, science and invention, technology, civil and human rights, war and conflict, and popular culture.

Documents within this exhibit lesson plan came from the 13 National Archives facilities across the nation. You can learn more about their resources at: www.archives.gov/education/regional-resources/