
REVOLUTION, REACTION, REFORM IN HISTORY
NATIONAL HISTORY DAY 2026

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WHAT IS NATIONAL HISTORY DAY®?

National History Day® (NHD) is a nonprofit organization that creates opportunities for teachers and students to engage in historical research. NHD is not a predetermined, by-the-book program but rather an innovative curriculum framework. Students learn history by selecting topics of interest and launching into year-long research projects. The mission of NHD is to improve the teaching and learning of history in middle and high school. The most visible vehicle is the NHD Contest.

When studying history through historical research, students and teachers practice critical inquiry, asking questions of significance, time, and place. History students become immersed in a detective story. Beginning in the fall, students choose a topic related to the annual theme and conduct primary and secondary research. After analyzing and interpreting their sources and drawing conclusions about their topics' significance in history, students present their work in original papers, exhibits, performances, websites, or documentaries. These projects are entered into competitions in the spring at local, affiliate, and national levels, where professional historians and educators evaluate them. The program culminates at the national competition held each June at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Each year, National History Day uses a theme to provide a lens through which students can examine history. The annual theme frames the research for students and teachers alike. It is intentionally broad enough to allow students to select topics from any place (local, national, or world) and any period in history. Once students choose their topics, they investigate historical context, historical significance, and the topic's relationship to the theme. Research can be conducted at libraries, archives, and museums; through oral history interviews; and by visiting historic sites.

NHD benefits students and teachers. For students, NHD allows self-direction of their learning. Students select topics that match their interests. NHD provides program expectations and guidelines for students, but the research journey is unique to each project. Throughout the year, students develop essential skills and foster intellectual curiosity. Through this process, they gain critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to manage and use information now and in the future.

The classroom teacher is a student's greatest ally. NHD supports teachers by providing instructional materials and hosting workshops at local, affiliate, and national levels. Many teachers find that bringing the NHD model to their classroom encourages students to watch for examples of the theme and to identify connections in their study of history across time. To learn more, visit **nhd.org**.

2026 THEME NARRATIVE: *REVOLUTION, REACTION, REFORM IN HISTORY*

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The theme for National History Day® (NHD) 2026 is *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*. The first question that comes to mind is, "Do students have to focus on all three words—revolution, reaction, reform?" No, students do not have to focus on all three aspects of the theme. It depends on the topic. If the topic involves all three, then students should be sure to include all three. The distinctions among revolutions, reactions, and reforms are sometimes blurred. Revolutions and reforms are often reactions to ideas, actions, or events; in turn, revolutions and reforms inspire reactions. Think of it as a domino effect—knock one down, which knocks the next one down, which knocks . . .

To get started, let's consider the terms. Dictionaries define them as:

Revolution

"the forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system," or "a dramatic and wide-reaching change in the way something works or is organized or in people's ideas about it."

Reaction

"an action performed or a feeling experienced in response to a situation or event; the resistance or opposition to a force or movement."

Reform

"the effort to change to a better state or form; to improve by alteration, substitution, abolition."

Most revolutions and reform movements are too large and complex for an NHD student research project. Rather than attempting to research and analyze an entire revolution or movement (and the related reactions and reforms), look for more manageable topics associated with it. What ideas led to revolution? Who reacted to or was affected by a revolution or movement? Did the revolution result in reform? How? Why or why not?

The American Revolution comes to mind when thinking about political revolutions, especially since the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence will be commemorated in 2026. One way to make studying the American Revolution manageable is to examine one or two of the elements that led up to it or caused a reaction on the way to revolution. Let's begin with an example of where political and economic history intersect. How did American colonists react to the Stamp Act of 1765? How did it influence the road to the American Revolution? How and why were the tea parties (up and down the East Coast) in 1773 a reaction to the British Townshend Acts? What was the reaction of the British to the tea parties? What kind of reform were colonists seeking that ultimately led to revolution?

Protesters denouncing the 1765 Stamp Act. Library of Congress (2006679820).

Consider examples from social history. In what way did ordinary citizens shape the cause of the American Revolution? How did they react, and why? What were the consequences? What about those who had little say in the colonists' desire for independence? For instance, how were Native Americans affected by the rebellion? What factors led some Indigenous nations to align with British forces and others to sign treaties with the emerging American government? Or, think about enslaved people. How did they use the American Revolution to fight for their freedom? Why did some choose to support the revolting colonists who held enslaved people in bondage? Boston King chose to join the British Army. Why did he and others like him choose to side with the loyalists and support the British Crown?

How did the British and the American loyalists react? Did the Crown see it as a revolution or a rebellion? What is the difference?

Although the predominant narrative of the American Revolution focuses on the original thirteen colonies, the war also had a Western theater. Spanish, British, and French imperial ambitions came to a head in the Western Territories. Which countries allied themselves with the American colonists against the British? How did conflict with the Native Americans who lived there play a role in shaping the American Revolution and, ultimately, form the foundation for the American West?

Students who want to make connections between the American Revolution and their local communities (outside of the original thirteen colonies) might begin by exploring which imperial power laid claim to their community. Students in Mobile, Alabama, might investigate how Spanish colonization, enslavement, and the American Revolution intersected. Petit Jean was an enslaved cattleman who became a spy for the Spanish. Why? What role did he play in supporting the naval operations of the American military? Check local community archives for resources on people who played a role in supporting the American Revolution.

In the Ohio River Valley, George Rogers Clark fought the British and their Native American allies during the war. Who was he and why did he consider that important? What did he hope to accomplish? Conflict also broke out in various settlements west of the thirteen colonies, such as at Boonesborough and Blue Lick, both in present-day Kentucky. What were they reacting to and why? What was the impact?

Portrait of Joseph Brant, also known as Thayendanegea, who led the expedition that ended George Rogers Clark's plans to attack Detroit. The portrait was painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1786. National Gallery of Art.

Why did the colonists in Detroit (in present-day Michigan) react by choosing loyalty to the British Crown instead of joining the original thirteen colonies in their rebellion? What was that area's contribution to the war? How and why did the area become a prison for American prisoners of war? Students might research the many other local conflicts connected to the Revolution and consider the reactions of local settlers and Native Americans to the cultural and political exchanges that happened as a result of the conflict.

People in places that would become Texas and California supported the American Revolution. How and why did Tejanos, descendants of Mexican Creoles, assist Spanish naval forces that were supporting the Americans? What role did religion play? How did Spanish missionaries in California react to the cause of the Revolution? Why did they use their Catholic religion to justify raising money in their communities to send to the Continental Congress? How did the Congress use the funding to help defeat the British at Yorktown?

Of course, there are many more revolutions in history to explore: the French Revolution, Russian Revolution, Chinese Cultural Revolution, October (Bolshevik) Revolution, Glorious Revolution, February Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and the Student Movement. And let's not forget the many agrarian, social, green, velvet, quiet, technological, ideological, religious, and information revolutions!

How can a revolution in one country influence reactions and reforms in another? What impact did the American Revolution have on other countries in the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth centuries? What was the reaction of the United States and other nations to the communist revolutions of the twentieth century?

Political, religious, and social revolutions of almost every century were complex events that were years in the making, providing a plethora of potential topics for an NHD project. Students interested in immigration-related topics might look at the impact of the European revolutions of the late 1840s. Political revolutions took place in France, Italy, Germany, and the Austrian Empire. Choosing one such revolution, what questions come to mind? What led to the revolution? Was it successful? Why or why not? What reaction or reforms followed, if any? How did the economic depression in Europe and unstable political situations drive immigration to the United States? How and why were local communities, such as Milwaukee, Wisconsin, or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, transformed as a result?

Are all revolutions political? Of course not.

Students with an interest in economics or business can consider how entrepreneurs and business leaders revolutionized industries, created new products or processes, and influenced the lives of workers and consumers. How did new ideas and inventions have an impact on society? What kind of change did they lead to and why? How did Madam C.J. Walker or Mary Kay Ash revolutionize the beauty industry? In what ways were their efforts reactions to perceived needs?

The graduating class of Walker Agents from the Mme. C.J. Walker Beauty Shoppe in Tulsa, Oklahoma, c.1930-1949. Courtesy of the Madam C.J. Walker Papers, Indiana Historical Society (dc109).

What about scientific or technological revolutions? Consider environmental history. Rachel Carson, whose book, *Silent Spring*, inspired the environmental movement and subsequent Green Revolution, is a popular topic for NHD students. Why not look for topics with local connections instead of choosing a topic that many have already covered? How and why have local communities reacted to issues of pollution and climate change? How and why were reforms, such as industry regulations, implemented or not? What was the reaction of local industries or the local population?

In what ways have science and technology changed the way we live, work, and entertain ourselves? How have scientific discoveries, ranging from the discovery and sequencing of DNA to germ theory and antibiotics, fundamentally reformed medicine? In what ways were these discoveries reactions to perceived needs? Of course, historians want to know the consequences of such discoveries. If these discoveries revolutionized medicine, what was the impact? To understand historical change on society is to understand the consequences of that change.

A good example of this is Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope—an invention that evolved into the motion picture industry. How did that change the way we receive and react to information and entertainment? What was the impact of that change on how we learn about the news, severe weather alerts, or the latest fashion trends? Why does this matter? What reactions or consequences did such technology cause?

Enough about revolution.

What about reform in history?

We know that reform is "the effort to change to a better state or form; to improve by alteration, substitution, abolition," and that it is often a reaction to an idea or event. The movement to abolish slavery comes to mind. Like other reform movements or revolutions, attempting to research the entire Abolitionist Movement would be too daunting and too big for an NHD project. Think locally. Many local historical societies have excellent archival materials to dig into to find local abolition societies.

Another resource is Chronicling America, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress, which offers more than 20 million digitized newspaper pages dating from 1777 to 1973. Check it out at **chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/** and dig into historical newspapers for answers and evidence! What impact did local reformers have on their own communities? How did they contribute to or influence the national movement?

The Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a time marked by widespread social, political, and economic reform. It arose as a reaction to the challenges of industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and political corruption, aiming to improve conditions for the working class, regulate business practices, and expand democracy. Photographer Lewis Hine and Hull House founder Jane Addams are perennial favorites for NHD student research. Rather than research one of these two

people, students might look for related topics in their own communities. What impact did immigration have on local communities? How and why did local residents react to mass immigration? What reforms were put in place to help new immigrants and why? How did immigrants affect their new communities? What were the consequences? Conversely, how did mass immigration affect the countries they left? To answer that, of course, we have to ask why they left. What were they reacting to that led to their decisions to leave their home countries?

Students might research local or state reforms that have influenced elections and campaigns. Why did people believe reforms were necessary? What was the impact of such reforms? One example is Robert M. LaFollette's Wisconsin Idea and its push for labor and political reforms. Who was LaFollette and why did he advocate for reform? What was he reacting to and what were the reactions of Wisconsinites? Consider the Farmers' Alliance in Oklahoma (1870s–1890s) and its effort to organize tenant farmers. Why and how was the Alliance created? Was it successful? Why or why not?

How did Ida B. Wells react to lynching of African Americans during the post-Reconstruction era? How did she use her skills as a journalist to raise awareness and seek reform to put a stop to lynching? What were the reactions of her fellow Americans? What about local and state governments? When did the passage of the federal Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act, which finally made lynching a federal hate crime, happen and why did it take so long?

There are scores of topics related to reform that have influenced local, state, national, and even global events. How did grassroots activism in South Africa, such as local boycotts and protests, play a critical role in dismantling Apartheid? What were the global reactions and repercussions? In what ways have local sanitation projects and clean water reforms addressed diseases, such as cholera and malaria, worldwide? What sparked such reforms and why? What were the reactions and consequences locally and globally?

A group of men called a "Cholera Squad" assemble in the Philippines, c.1915-1920. Access to clean water and soap and good sanitation are key elements in preventing the spread of cholera. Library of Congress (2014710631).

Why did Martin Luther post his 95 Theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517? What kind of church or religious reform did he seek? How did the Catholic Church react? How did people beyond the Catholic Church hierarchy react? What were the consequences for Christianity in Western Europe? Can his theses be considered revolutionary? How and why?

How did the nonviolent activism of Mahatma Gandhi help India gain its independence from British rule? How can his actions be considered revolutionary? What impact did his nonviolent resistance have on civil disobedience movements around the world? Why did Símon Bolívar agitate for the independence of Latin American countries? What was he reacting to and what were the consequences? What impact did this have on the unification of countries in Latin America? What social reforms developed? How, why, and what changed as a result?

What about reaction?

Reaction is the significant and critical element to analyzing any topic, whether related to revolution, reform, or both.

A revolution causes reaction; reform causes reaction; reaction can cause reform and revolution. So, back to the first question at the beginning of this article: there may be topics related to revolution; there may be topics related to reform; there may be topics that include both revolution and reform. But any way you look at it, reaction is key to understanding the change.

To get students started, ten NHD affiliates have contributed articles and images about local issues to help show how the nation's 250th anniversary and the NHD theme apply to topics ranging from 2,000 years in the past to the 1960s. Explore these ideas and see if any spark an interest.

The theme, *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*, is very broad. Students should select their topics carefully, start with a research question, read secondary books written by historians, dig into primary material, think critically, and develop a historical argument. Then, students may produce thoughtful NHD projects related to the theme in which they analyze and interpret the impact of their topic in history.

To access more theme resources, go to nhd.org/theme.

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Celebrating National History Day!

Harrison Shao, *Senior Paper Winner*
with Teacher Kayla Hester

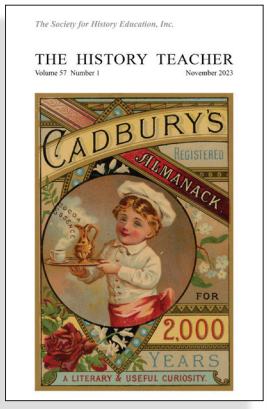
"From Small Wonder to Big Salvation: How the Mass Production of Penicillin Became Possible in the Early 1940s"

Zania Hierlmaier, *Junior Paper Winner*
with Teacher Katie Craven

"The Creation of the Birth Control Pill: A Turning Point for American Women's Education, Economics, and Role in Society"

Congratulations to these student historians, whose phenomenal National History Day papers are published in ***The History Teacher***.

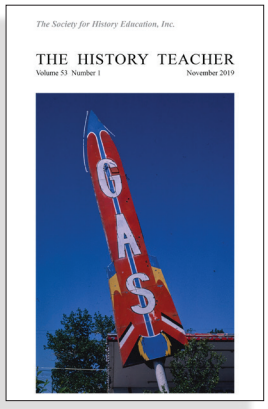
Stay connected with history education! The Society for History Education's free newsletter delivers **lesson plans, professional development, and conference updates** every other Wednesday. **Sign up today** at thehistoryteacher.org/news.



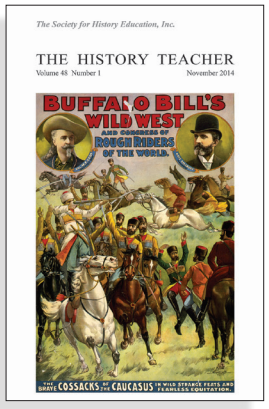
NHD Theme
Turning Points in History

NHD Theme
Frontiers in History

NHD Theme
People, Ideas, Events



NHD Theme
Breaking Barriers



NHD Theme
Leadership and Legacy

The History Teacher
OAH Organization of American Historians
American Historical Association
NHD National History Day

Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History

National Council for the Social Studies magazines *Social Education* and *Social Studies and the Young Learner* help you explain to students how historical changes in civic rights and the responsibilities of individuals and leaders impact their daily lives.

Become a member of the National Council for the Social Studies and gain:

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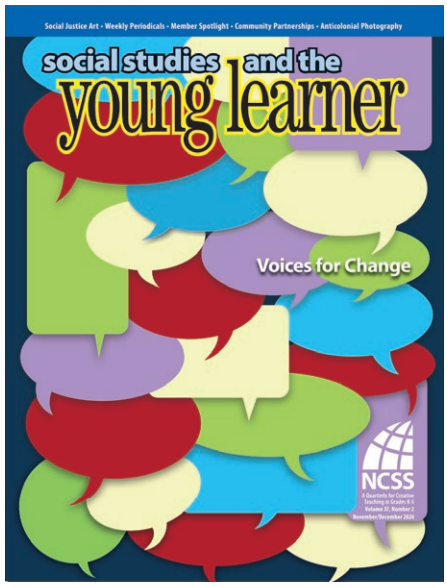

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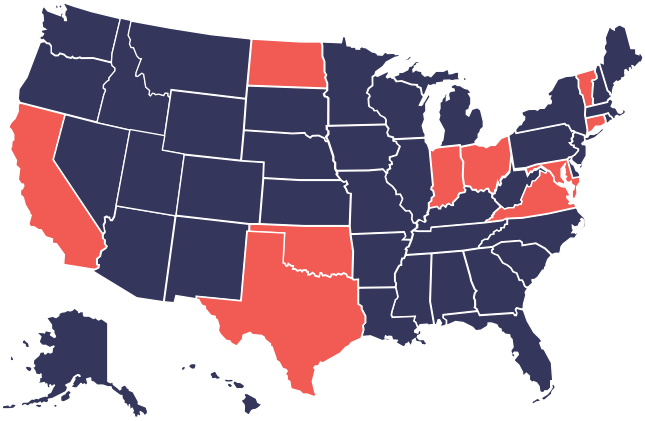
CELEBRATING AMERICA 250 AND INSPIRING NATIONAL HISTORY DAY® TOPICS

As National History Day® (NHD) prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, we are continuing a series that started in 2025 and will appear across theme books through 2030. Each year, we ask NHD affiliates to contribute topics to inspire NHD students to explore the annual theme through the lens of local history. One strength of the United States is its diverse stories of people, places, and events. There is no one American story—instead, there are millions of them. This year, we hope that exploring what makes their communities unique will inspire NHD teachers and students to discover examples of revolution, reaction, and reform in history in their own backyards.

Local topics from ten affiliates follow. Each page includes an image (a painting, sketch, photograph, etc.) that connects to local history and is accompanied by a description and questions to encourage students to consider the topic in light of the 2026 NHD theme, *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History.* We hope these topics will provide inspiration to students across the nation and around the world as they work to identify their NHD topics.

CONTRIBUTING AFFILIATES



Explore these NHD resources that address and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. All are created by teachers and for teachers and are available for free download on the NHD website.

Revolutionary Ideals
nhd.org/RevIdeals

Revolutionary Ideals is a resource created by teachers who participated in a 2022 NHD teacher institute in Providence, Rhode Island. The book, created in partnership with the Rhode Island Historical Society, includes two essays and 15 lesson plans created by NHD teachers. These lessons explore the ideals that drove the American Revolution and how they were (or were not) applied. The book includes lessons that explore the *Gaspee* Raid, the Philadelphia Tea Party, the Regulator Rebellion, the role of a free press, the Rhode Island First Regiment, mercantilism and the Triangle Trade, the Indigenous roots of revolutionary ideas, and the impact of the American Revolution in France and Haiti. Teachers can download the lesson plan book or the individual lessons, which include the supporting materials (primary sources, graphic organizers, student instructions, and more).

Building a More Perfect Union
nhd.org/250

Building a More Perfect Union is a two-part resource series (published in 2021 and 2023) that explores how individuals and groups have worked to make the United States a better place for all its citizens. Developed in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the series includes four historical essays and 30 lesson plans. The topics span from the colonial period to modern American history and include inquiry-based lessons in which students explore primary source content using active learning strategies. The lessons are designed to be used in full, mined for primary source content, or modified or adapted to meet the needs of learners.

NORTH DAKOTA

MADISON MILBRATH, Education Outreach Supervisor, National History Day in North Dakota Coordinator, State Historical Society of North Dakota

A.C. Townley, founder of the Nonpartisan League (NPL), addresses an NPL meeting in Glencoe, Minnesota, 1916. The NPL was first active in North Dakota and then spread into Minnesota. State Historical Society of North Dakota (B0921-00001).

The Nonpartisan League (NPL), a political movement dating from the early 1900s, changed North Dakota's economy and government, helping farmers who felt they were being treated unfairly by big businesses. By 1915, many farmers in North Dakota were struggling. Out-of-state companies controlled the grain markets and banks, making it hard for local farmers to earn a living. A.C. Townley, a former farmer and newspaper editor, saw the need for change. In February of that year, he presented his idea for a new political movement, which would not be associated with the existing political parties, to farmer Frank B. Wood near Deering, North Dakota. He promised to take power away from these companies and give it back to the people of North Dakota. The NPL's ideas were **revolutionary** because they pushed for the state to control important industries, such as banking and grain processing, so farmers could have more say over their businesses.

The NPL used the North Dakota primary election to take control of the Republican Party in 1916. At this time, their influence began to spread and they garnered followers in Minnesota as well. In the 1917–1918 elections, the NPL was on the ballot in both North Dakota and Minnesota. After the 1918 elections, the NPL successfully dominated the state government. They soon made **reforms**, including creating the Bank of North Dakota in 1919, the first (and only) state-owned bank in the United States. This bank gave farmers low-interest loans, allowing them to avoid the high rates of private banks. The NPL also built the North Dakota Mill and Elevator, which allowed farmers to process their grain locally and sell it for more money.

However, not everyone **reacted** well to the changes. Big companies and some political groups accused the NPL of being too extreme and called them socialists. The fight between the NPL and their opponents came to a head in 1921, when voters removed North Dakota Governor Lynn Frazier, a key NPL leader, from office in the first recall election in U.S. history. This **reaction** showed how divided people were about the NPL's **reforms**.

Even though the NPL faced strong opposition, some of their **reforms** still exist. The Bank of North Dakota and the state-owned mill and elevator continue to operate, demonstrating the lasting impact of the NPL on North Dakota's economy and government.

- Why did the rise of the Nonpartisan League represent a **revolution** in North Dakota politics?
- How did **reactions** to Governor Lynn Frazier's 1921 recall reflect North Dakota's divided political landscape?
- In what ways did the NPL's **reforms** shape the future of North Dakota's farmers and businesses?

CONNECTICUT

REBECCA TABER, Director of Secondary Education Programs, Connecticut History Day State Coordinator, Connecticut Democracy Center

One of the most significant legal cases of the mid-nineteenth century revolved around the freedom of a group of men and children who led a revolt aboard a Cuban schooner, *La Amistad*, after having been illegally captured from what is today Sierra Leone as part of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Although Spain signed a treaty with Great Britain in 1817 to abolish the slave trade in the Spanish colonies, including Cuba, enslavers continued the practice. In 1839, two Spanish plantation owners, José Ruiz and Pedro Montes, purchased 53 West African people (49 men and four children) in Havana, Cuba. They planned to transport the captives on *La Amistad* to nearby plantations.

Shortly after the voyage started, Sengbe Pieh, also known as Joseph Cinqué or C-Cinqué, escaped his shackles, freed the other captives, and ignited a **revolution** on board the ship. Two captives and two crew members died during this revolt. The Africans took control of the ship and ordered Ruiz and Montes, whose lives they spared because of their navigational skills, to sail east to West Africa. However, at night, the Spaniards changed course to sail along the East Coast of the United States.

In August 1839, a U.S. Navy brig, *Washington*, intercepted *La Amistad* in Long Island Sound and towed the schooner to New London, Connecticut. American officials **reacted** by imprisoning the *Amistad* captives on charges of murder and piracy while allowing Ruiz and Montes to remain free. Spain's foreign minister insisted that the ship and its cargo be returned to Spain, a demand President Martin Van Buren wished to grant to preserve international relations.

The first court case, held before a U.S. Circuit Court in Hartford, Connecticut, dismissed murder charges against the *Amistad* Africans. Questions remained about the ownership of the ship and its contents and whether the *Amistad* captives would be considered to be free men or cargo. The Spanish government, *Washington's* captain, and Ruiz and Montes each claimed their right of possession. The Court ruled it did not have jurisdiction and sent the case to a U.S. District Court in New Haven.

The *Amistad* trials captured the public's imagination. Abolitionists **reacted** during the first hearing and began assisting the prisoners by raising money, finding translators, and hiring defense lawyers. Abolitionist and proslavery newspapers covered the trial, and artists, such as John Warner Barber and Nathaniel Jocelyn, depicted the *Amistad* Africans to publicize the case and rally support. Thousands of people visited the New Haven jail that housed the *Amistad* prisoners and packed the courtrooms.

Sengbe and other *Amistad* prisoners provided eyewitness testimony. The U.S. District Court recognized their freedom. Not accepting this verdict, President Van Buren's administration appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Former President John Quincy Adams eloquently defended the *Amistad* Africans before the Supreme Court, which ruled that the Africans had been illegally seized and were not enslaved in March 1841.

The Supreme Court did not hold any party responsible for their return to their homelands. *Amistad* survivors toured the Black and White churches in the Northeast to raise money for their voyage to Sierra Leone. Of the 53 *Amistad* Africans, the surviving 35, accompanied by five missionaries, sailed to Freetown, Sierra Leone, in January 1842.

The *Amistad* trials raised awareness about the continued practice of the slave trade and mobilized support for the growing abolitionist **reform** movement as slavery continued to expand in the United States. Reverend James W.C. Pennington, who was born into slavery, and his congregation supported the *Amistad* captives and helped them return to their homeland. Images produced by artists helped portray *Amistad* Africans as individuals and pushed back against racist imagery and stereotypes. The *Amistad* became a widely recognized story of resistance that helped strengthen the anti-slavery movement.

- How might the *Amistad* uprising be considered a **revolution**?
- How did the justices and activists in Connecticut **react** when the *Amistad* arrived in New London?
- How did the U.S. government **react** to the court rulings in the *Amistad* case and why?
- Why was the *Amistad* case important to anti-slavery **reform**?

Portrait of C-Cinqué, by Nathaniel Jocelyn, c. 1840. New Haven Museum.

OKLAHOMA

SARAH A. DUMAS, Oklahoma National History Day Coordinator, Oklahoma Historical Society

MATTHEW PEARCE, Ph.D., State Historian, Oklahoma Historical Society

U.S. Highway 66, popularly known as Route 66 or the Mother Road, **revolutionized** transportation in Oklahoma. Before the creation of an integrated highway system, leisure travel and shipping in the United States relied upon railroads. Established in 1926, Route 66 spanned approximately 400 miles in Oklahoma as part of an all-weather route connecting the Midwest to the West Coast. By the time the highway was decommissioned in 1985 in favor of interstate highways, Route 66 had contributed to a golden age of American automobile travel.

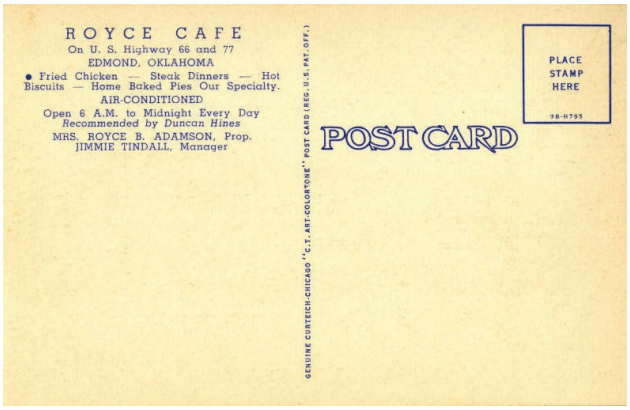
Motorists on Route 66 passed through small towns and large cities in Oklahoma. Locals, such as Royce and Neva Adamson of Edmond, who opened the Royce Café in 1933, **reacted** to the growing influx of travelers by establishing motels, diners, garages, service stations, and other roadside businesses. Unique roadside architecture and folk art encouraged motorists to stop for a brief respite.

Travel on Route 66 was a boon to many local economies and contributed to the emergence of a consumer culture that emphasized speed and convenience. Demand for new car models and well-maintained roads invigorated the automobile, petroleum, and construction industries. Tourism became (and remains) an important facet of Oklahoma's economy, otherwise dominated by oil and natural gas production and agribusiness.

Not all travel along Route 66 was for leisure, however. During the Great Depression, Route 66 was a lifeline for drought- and poverty-stricken Oklahomans seeking jobs and a better life in California. Dismissed and disdained as "Okies," these migrants symbolized the plight of many in America, and were immortalized in songs, novels, and films.

Meanwhile, state-mandated segregation often prompted Black motorists to avoid Route 66 while traveling through Oklahoma. Many businesses refused to offer services to Black travelers, and several communities along the route were known as "sundown towns" that prohibited African Americans from even stopping within city limits. African Americans **reacted** by creating travel guides and establishing their own businesses along or near the route. For example, the Threatt Filling Station near Luther, Oklahoma, established by Allen Threatt, Sr., around 1915, served Black motorists on Route 66 for decades.

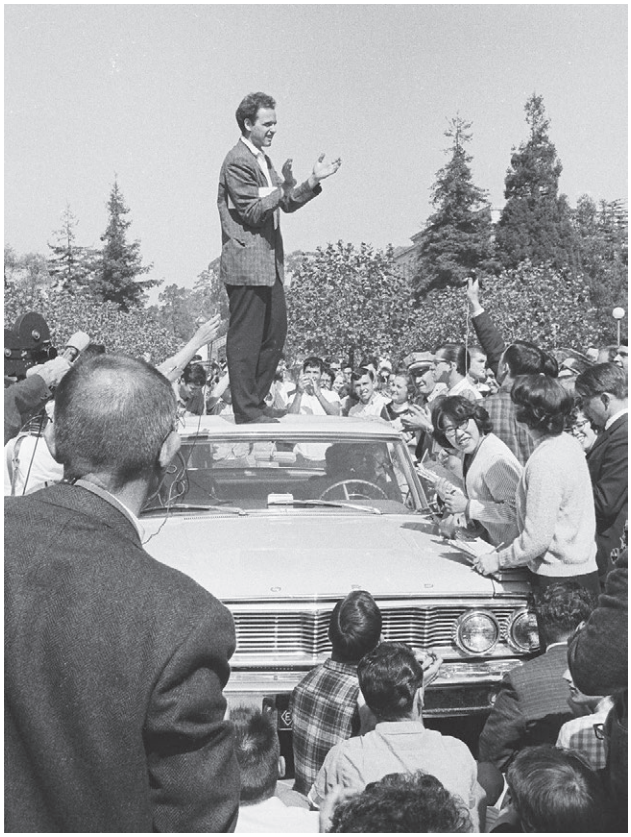
- In what ways does the construction of Route 66 represent a **revolution** in transportation? How did Route 66 connect Oklahoma towns to the broader national culture?
- How did African Americans **react** and respond to segregation and threats of violence while traveling on highways such as Route 66?
- How did communities **react** to migrants traveling along Route 66 during the Great Depression?
- What local or national **reforms** were inspired by its impact on communities and economies along Route 66?



Restaurants such as the Royce Café were a common sight for travelers along Route 66. Postcards of cafés, service stations, and other roadside services have contributed to the nostalgia of Route 66 as the "Main Street of America." Oklahoma Postcards Collection, Oklahoma Department of Libraries (OKCOL1PC0097).

CALIFORNIA

WHITNEY OLSON, History-Social Science Educational Consultant, Co-Coordinator History Day California, Sacramento County Office of Education



Undergraduate student Mario Savio speaking at the 1964 protest on the University of California, Berkeley, campus that started the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. Photograph by Steven Marcus. Courtesy of The Regents of the University of California, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (BANC PIC 2000.002–NEG Strip 6:7).

The Free Speech Movement (FSM) rocked the University of California, Berkeley, campus during the 1964–1965 academic year. Throughout the movement, thousands of students engaged in civil disobedience, reacting to university rules that banned student participation in political activities on campus. These acts of civil disobedience revolutionized the student experience on college campuses, affirming their rights to free speech and unleashing the political activism among college students that became a trademark of the 1960s. While the FSM succeeded in **reforming** rules and traditions on college campuses, the conservative **reaction** to student activism resulted in a new conservative movement called the New Right, popularized by Ronald Reagan.

The FSM students and their tactics had strong ties to the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the fight for civil rights in Mississippi. During the summer of 1964, some Berkeley students worked with CORE during Freedom Summer. When they returned to school in the fall, these students continued their work for CORE by setting up tables on campus to recruit volunteers. In September, school officials suspended eight students for violating the new rule prohibiting political activism on campus. On October 1, graduate student Jack Weinberg was arrested for working at a CORE table on campus, sparking a spontaneous student sit-in that surrounded a police car for 32 hours. Mario Savio, a CORE volunteer in Mississippi and one of the previously suspended students, jumped on top of the police car and became the movement's spokesperson.

October and November were filled with student marches and negotiations between the FSM and administrators. By late November, it was clear that the university would not agree to grant freedom of speech on campus. On December 2, approximately 1,500 students began a sit-in in Sproul Hall, the location of the offices of the chancellor and other top administrators. California Governor Edmund "Pat" Brown **reacted** by ordering the arrest of 800 students, the largest mass arrest in California history.

The FSM led to **reforms** in higher education, as students won the right to political activism, free speech, and a say in the courses offered on campus. As the FSM shifted the university away from reactionary policies toward the ideas of the New Left, the New Right formed in **reaction** to the FSM and student activism.

The New Right gained momentum on college campuses as conservative students organized to bring a new voice to conservative politics in the United States. Ronald Reagan began his first term as Governor of California in 1967. During his 1970 re-election campaign, he advocated for campus reforms to curb student activism, aligning himself with the ideology of the New Right. This movement continued to gain followers during and after his presidency (1981–1989).

The FSM marked the beginning of a **revolution** on college campuses that questioned the university's role and the rights of students as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Connecting the **revolutionary** ideals of the Civil Rights Movement to the **reactionary** Vietnam War student protests, the FSM exposed the fault lines rumbling beneath the surface of America's youth, establishing a tradition of student activism that continues today.

- How did the FSM lead to **revolutionary** changes in the ways people participated in government and society?
- How is the FSM an important link between other **revolutionary** movements?
- How did the revolutionary actions of the FSM lead to **reform** and **reaction**?

VERMONT

DANIELLE HARRIS-BURNETT, Museum Educator, State Coordinator for Vermont History Day, Vermont Historical Society

A political button in support of the 2000 Vermont Civil Union Act. The pink triangle was originally used as a symbol to oppress gay men in Nazi Germany. In the 1970s, the pink triangle became a symbol for the LGBT equal rights movement. Vermont Historical Society (2013.9.22).

Gay and lesbian Americans have long faced discrimination and challenges both legally and socially. Vermonters became leaders as LGBTQ activists fought against discriminatory treatment across the U.S. Although activists first identified as LGBT, their understanding of identity shifted to become more inclusive over time.

In 1992, the Vermont Legislature passed a law making it illegal for employers to discriminate based on sexual orientation. Before the law, LGBTQ people had no legal protection in the workplace and could lose their jobs. Then, in 1999, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples needed marriage protections.

Vermont **reacted** by passing *An Act Relating to Civil Unions* in 2000. Civil unions are domestic partnerships between two adults. They differ from marriages in that they are only recognized by individual states, meaning that couples who moved to another state could lose their legal recognition. Vermont was the third state to recognize same-sex couples, following Hawai'i and California. Together, these three states **revolutionized** LGBTQ rights in the United States. The Vermont bill helped protect same-sex couples and their families by providing the same basic legal protections as marriage, including parental rights and the ability to claim unemployment benefits, inheritance, and property.

However, not all Vermonters supported civil unions. Anti-civil union protesters **reacted** and organized a campaign called Take Back Vermont. While protesters voted out some state representatives who supported civil unions, they were unsuccessful in overturning the law. In 2009, same-sex marriage became legal in Vermont, replacing the need for civil unions. In 2015, the United States Supreme Court decision *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruled that bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional nationwide.

The Vermont Civil Union Act brought national attention to marriage inequality. It also provided an example for LGBTQ activists in other states to introduce legal **reform**. Before the 2015 Supreme Court decision, only 37 states and the District of Columbia had legalized same-sex marriage. Vermont LGBTQ activists helped take the first steps toward nationwide marriage equality.

- The Vermont Civil Union Act helped influence other states to pass similar laws. Later, these same states passed civil marriage laws. How did Vermonters act as leaders in this **revolution**?
- How did legislators and LGBTQ activists in Vermont overcome adverse **reactions** from anti-Civil Union protesters?
- How did Vermont's Civil Union Act **reform** marriage equality in the United States?
- The Vermont Civil Union Act is more than 25 years old. How can historians learn from **revolutionary** actions taken in the recent past?

MARYLAND

DEYANE MOSES, Director of Programs and Partnerships, Afro Charities

In the summer of 1961, African diplomats from newly independent nations faced discrimination at rest stops and restaurants along Maryland's U.S. Route 40, drawing national and international attention. Although President John F. Kennedy issued an apology, the diplomats were humiliated. Concerned about the impact on U.S. relations with African nations, President Kennedy **reacted** by sending a special task force to Route 40 to address the discriminatory policies of these establishments toward African diplomats.

This announcement was met with cynicism in the reporters' offices of Baltimore's *The Afro-American* newspaper.[1] Ordinary Black Americans had been denied service for decades at these same places without the same public concern. Reporter James D. Williams recalled in a 1978 article, "It was clear that the Federal forces were not being deployed out of any strong concern for Black Americans; rather, these forces were sent along Route 40 to persuade restaurant owners to serve Black foreigners, thereby addressing an embarrassing situation for the State Department and aiding America's foreign policy."

The reporters **reacted** to the restaurant owners' racism and Kennedy's task force with a plan of their own. The idea was simple: dress two reporters as diplomats and one as an interpreter, add accents and a photographer, and see if the White restaurant owners on Route 40 could distinguish them from actual diplomats. George W. Collins and Herbert Magrum (diplomats), and Rufus Wells (interpreter) led the hoax, playing their roles convincingly. *The Afro-American* publisher Carl Murphy approved the plan. The group visited five restaurants, with mixed results: two restaurants served them, while three others refused. The newspaper published the details, sparking both laughter and outrage. The story, which would become known as the "Great Route 40 Hoax," gained national attention, highlighting the absurdity of segregation and embarrassing the restaurant owners who had unknowingly served Black Americans.

Despite the negative publicity and federal pressure, most restaurant owners continued to refuse service to Black citizens and African diplomats. After hearing about the discrimination happening along Route 40, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) decided to take more **revolutionary** action and directly push for change. The group announced plans to send 1,500 Freedom Riders to Maryland, led by activist Julius Hobson. At the last minute, most restaurants agreed to serve everyone. CORE ultimately rescheduled the ride for December 16, with 500 participants. Most were served, though not always gracefully, and eight were arrested. Nevertheless, CORE declared the ride a success.

"The Great Route 40 Hoax," orchestrated by *The Afro-American*, was a bold and clever act of journalism that demonstrates the power of the press and grassroots activism in challenging and ultimately **reforming** societal norms.

- How did the Civil Rights Movement influence Baltimore's *The Afro-American* newspaper's **reaction** to discrimination during "The Great Route 40 Hoax"?
- What other significant actions did the newspaper and its reporters undertake during the Civil Rights Movement? How did they contribute to the **revolution** against segregation?
- How did the actions of *The Afro-American* and CORE spark **reform** in the local community and the nation as a whole?

The Afro-American

70th Year, No. 6 — BALTIMORE, MD., SEPTEMBER 2, 1961 — NATIONAL EDITION — 28 PAGES 15 CENTS

Coed Rider, 20, Prefers Jail

African, Yes--American, NO

Will serve 6 months hard labor

Finds robes make a difference

By RUFUS WELLS

Everybody eats but

"African, Yes–American, NO." *The Afro-American*, September 2, 1961. Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives.

1 Baltimore's *The Afro-American* newspaper is archived at the Afro Archives. Learn more at afro.com/archives/.

VIRGINIA

SAM FLORER, Manager of Public Programs, State Coordinator for Virginia History Day, Virginia Museum of History & Culture

Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, Virginia's hot-button political issue revolved around the state's pre-war debt. Standing at more than $45 million by 1871, most of Virginia's annual budget went to debt payments instead of funding popular programs, such as the recently created public school system. Political factions soon formed on both sides of the debt issue. Funders believed the state should pay off the full debt to avoid a downgrade of Virginia's credit rating, while Readjusters wanted to refinance the debt to free up more money for public programs. The issue disrupted the established Republican and Democratic parties in Virginia.

It was in this new political atmosphere that former Confederate general William Mahone saw an opportunity to gain power. Mahone, a Virginia railroad magnate, former Democrat, and opponent of Reconstruction, harbored resentment toward many of Virginia's traditional elite, especially those who opposed his railroad expansion schemes. Mahone **reacted** to the disrupted political status quo by bringing together a biracial coalition of refinance supporters. He promised increased spending on public schools, which benefited poor White and Black families alike, and opposed a recently enacted poll tax. By appealing to class instead of race, Mahone's policies attracted support in both rural and urban centers. In 1879, the newly founded Readjuster Party swept to power in the Virginia General Assembly and elected Mahone to the U.S. Senate. Many African American Readjusters won races alongside Mahone at both the local and state levels.

Over the next four years, the Readjuster Party continued to win elections by adopting populist **reforms**, including readjusting the state's debt, lowering taxes on farmers and small businesses, and raising taxes on larger corporations. With this new tax revenue, the Readjusters invested in the public school system and created the South's first public college for African American teachers, Virginia State University. They also eliminated the whipping post as punishment and abolished the poll tax. In a period often associated with the beginning of racially restrictive Jim Crow laws, Virginia's Readjuster Party proved **revolutionary** as a successful biracial reform party in the heart of the former Confederacy.

The Readjusters' opponents **reacted** to that success by attempting to divide their racial unity. The Funders accepted the Readjusters' changes to the debt and reorganized themselves as the old Democratic Party. They began appealing to White voters by stoking racist fears of African American political domination. The Readjuster Party struggled to combat these tactics, and their biracial coalition fell apart. By 1883, Democrats won a majority in the General Assembly, and by 1885, the Readjuster Party ceased to exist. These **reactions** culminated in the 1902 Constitution of Virginia, which codified literacy requirements to vote, poll taxes, and school segregation. The new constitution disenfranchised most Black and many poor White Virginians.

- How did the Readjuster Party **revolutionize** Virginia politics after the Civil War? What were the short- and long-term effects of the Readjusters' reforms?
- What tactics did opponents of the Readjusters use to **react** to their successes? How did these tactics change over time?
- How do the Readjusters fit into or challenge the standard narratives about the end of Reconstruction and rise of the Jim Crow era?
- Why would William Mahone, a former Confederate general and opponent of Reconstruction, lead a biracial political party and appoint African Americans to positions of power?

The Readjuster State Convention at Richmond, June 25, 1881, Library of Virginia.

INDIANA

RAY BOOMHOWER, Senior Editor, IHS Press, Indiana Historical Society

LEXI GRIBBLE, Manager, Education and National History Day in Indiana, Indiana Historical Society

Senator Robert F. Kennedy announcing the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 1968. Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society (P0303).

On April 4, 1968, Robert F. Kennedy, U.S. Senator from New York, appeared in Muncie, Indiana. This visit was part of his campaign for the Indiana Democratic presidential primary, which would be held in May. In the primary, he faced opposition from Indiana Governor Roger Branigin and fellow U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy. As Kennedy prepared to leave Muncie for a short flight to Indianapolis, where he would appear at another rally, he learned that **revolutionary** civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been shot outside his hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. Before his plane landed at Weir Cook Airport in Indianapolis, Kennedy heard news that King had died from his wounds. Despite warnings from police officials that they could not guarantee his safety, Kennedy decided to proceed with plans. He brushed off concerns from his staff and prepared to address an outdoor rally. The event was scheduled to take place in the heart of the city's Black community at the Broadway Christian Center's outdoor basketball court on Seventeenth and Broadway.

Kennedy broke the news of King's death to a crowd that had been anticipating a typically raucous political event. The stunned audience of Black and White voters **reacted** with disbelief. Kennedy gave an impassioned, extemporaneous six-minute speech on the need for compassion in the face of violence. To help explain the tragedy, Kennedy referenced Aeschylus, the Greek tragedian whose words had comforted him following the assassination of his brother, President John F. Kennedy. He told the crowd: "My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He once wrote: 'Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.'" Kennedy ended his remarks by urging the crowd: "Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and to make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people."

The **reaction** to King's death sparked outrage and violence across the country. As riots broke out in more than 100 cities, and approximately 75,000 National Guard and federal troops were called out to maintain order, the streets of Indianapolis remained quiet. "We walked away in pain but not with a sense of revenge," remembered William Crawford, who went on to have a distinguished career in the Indiana legislature.

Abie Robinson, a U.S. Navy veteran who attended the speech and later worked at the memorial commemorating it, noted that Kennedy's speech and temperament changed the **reactions** of those who were angry about King's death. "I was thinking revenge right away," Robinson remembered. "But then the words [Kennedy] used and his calmness made me understand the right response in the face of Dr. King's assassination. [Kennedy's] speech made me reflect on what Dr. King stood for and that was peace and getting together and creating change. It made me realize one person could make a difference."

Today, the Kennedy-King National Commemorative Site, located on the site where Kennedy made his April 4, 1968, speech, honors the memory of both men. Situated within Indianapolis's Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Park, it includes the Landmark for Peace memorial designed by writer Greg R. Perry. The memorial was constructed with two large curves of Cor-Ten steel cut with the outlines of Kennedy and King, cast by Indianapolis sculptor Daniel Edwards. From each of these rounded steel curves, the half figures of Kennedy and King reach out to one another.

- How can this event help us understand the time of change and **revolution** the United States was experiencing?
- Describe the **reactions** people had to the event depicted in the image.
- What type of **reform** was Kennedy calling for in his speech?
- What short- and long-term effects did Kennedy's speech have on Indianapolis?

OHIO

MORGAN MCQUEEN, Education Coordinator, Ohio History Connection

Across central and southern Ohio are eight massive, **revolutionary** works of human genius built by American Indians 2,000 years ago. Known as the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, these UNESCO World Heritage Sites were constructed as places of ceremony and gathering connected to the cosmos, created with incredible precision and alignment to the key risings and settings of the moon and sun. Groups of American Indians came together from across Eastern North America to build these complex pieces of landscape architecture as part of a spiritual movement that linked many small communities.

The size, majesty, and precision of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks first drew archaeologists to the sites in the 1780s. Their exploration was often destructive and disregarded the voices and experiences of American Indians. As archaeological investigation of the sites increased in the nineteenth century, the unique and artifact-rich nature of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks played an important role in the origin of American scientific archaeology.

Archaeological exploration in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries included excavation that permanently damaged the Earthworks and led to the removal of many sacred artifacts, human remains, and objects related to the burial of human remains. Despite American Indian protest and **reaction**, remains and objects removed from the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, like many American Indian artifacts at the time, were kept by scientists and museums at the cost of fully respecting the human dignity and sacred nature of the remains and objects.

Before the twenty-first century, there was no standardized approach to removing, storing, handling, or returning American Indian artifacts and remains. Archaeologists conducted excavations as they saw fit, often without consulting American Indian Tribes. Once museums or other organizations acquired remains or artifacts, tribes were either ignored or unable to reclaim them.

American Indians held differing views on the appropriate treatment of sites and what was removed from them. However, a consensus existed that museums and the scientific community generally discounted or ignored American Indian voices, and they did not treat the remains and associated objects with adequate respect or reverence.

Though there had been protests against archaeological practices at sites of historical importance for American Indians for years, the large-scale **reaction** that led to the prioritization of American Indian voices and practices did not come until the late 1980s. In 1987, the U.S. Congress considered a bill that would **reform** practices by providing for the repatriation (return) of American Indian remains and associated objects to the Tribes with whom they are affiliated. Through the introduction of the bill, subsequent investigation, and discussions between American Indian Tribes and museums, a national outcry arose demanding legal guidance on the protection and repatriation of American Indian remains and artifacts, culminating in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990.

In tandem with the implementation of NAGPRA, the 1990s and 2000s saw a shift in best practices in managing and interpreting American Indian sites around the United States. At the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, partnerships, educational initiatives, and consultation programs led to significant change, including using innovative and less invasive technologies in archaeological exploration, and elevating American Indian voices at the sites. Thanks to these **reforms**, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks are now recognized as sites of great historical and cultural importance, earning a UNESCO World Heritage inscription.

- How did the archaeological explorations of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries reflect and challenge the norms of interaction between American Indians and scientists or museums?
- Widespread change in the treatment of American Indian sites and artifacts did not come until the late 1980s to 1990s with the introduction of NAGPRA. Why might it have taken a large-scale **reaction** to bring about change in the treatment of American Indians' graves and associated artifacts?
- Not all American Indians share the same feelings about the excavation and management of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. How might the differing perspectives on this issue have impacted the **reforms** made to the management and interpretation of the sites?
- How does the history of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks reflect broader societal **reform** in the appropriate treatment of American Indian graves and associated artifacts?

American Indian protesters and archaeologists gather for a pipe and prayer ceremony on July 30, 1992, after American Indians and supporters protested the archaeological excavations being conducted at the Great Circle Earthworks. Ohio History Connection.

TEXAS

LISA BERG, Director of Education Services, Texas State Historical Association

Lorenzo de Zavala, signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and advocate for establishing the Republic of Texas, in 1836. Courtesy of the Star of the Republic Museum, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site.

Lorenzo de Zavala became an unlikely leading figure in the Texas fight for independence from Mexico. Born in 1788 in the small Yucatán village of Tecoh, he graduated from the Tridentine Seminary of San Ildefonso in Mérida in 1807. After graduating, he established and served as editor for various newspapers. His support for democratic **reforms** and **revolutionary** change led to his imprisonment in 1814 by the Spanish government of Mexico.

De Zavala began his political career in 1821, when Mexico gained its independence from Spain. He served in many offices during a time of political turmoil. In 1829, Federalist Vicente Ramón Guerrero became Mexico's second president. In June 1830, Guerrero was overthrown by Centralist Vice President Anastacio Bustamante, forcing de Zavala into exile in the United States. Upon his return to Mexico in the summer of 1832, de Zavala served as governor of the state of Mexico and as a representative to Congress for the Yucatán state.

In October 1833, Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna appointed de Zavala as the first minister plenipotentiary (power to act independently on behalf of Mexico) to Paris. However, this post was short-lived when Santa Anna grabbed dictatorial power in April 1834. This shift in power was contrary to the ideals de Zavala advocated, and he resigned in response. He became a **revolutionary** when he joined the Texas fight for independence from Mexico in 1835, making him a traitor to his beloved country.

De Zavala **reacted** with purpose to Texas's fight for independence by serving in the Permanent Council, the governing body of Texas that lasted only three weeks, and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1836. As the representative for Harrisburg (now part of Houston), he signed the Declaration of Independence from Mexico and helped write the Constitution for the Republic of Texas, which included **reforms** he championed during his political career. His fellow delegates elected him as the interim vice president of the Republic before they fled to avoid being captured by Mexican forces led by Santa Anna.

After the Texans defeated Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, leaders chose de Zavala to be part of a commission to negotiate a treaty with Mexico, but they later canceled the plan. He returned to his home near the San Jacinto battlefield, where he resigned as vice president in October 1836 due to poor health. He died on November 15, 1836, from pneumonia.

Lorenzo de Zavala's influence contributed to the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845. He left behind a rich literary legacy, including a respected two-volume history of Mexico titled *Ensayo histórico de las revoluciones de México, desde 1808 hasta 1830* (Paris and New York, 1831 and 1832). A Texas county and numerous schools bear his name. He certainly inspired his granddaughter, Adina de Zavala, to help establish the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and fight to preserve the Alamo as a historical landmark.

- What makes one country's **revolutionary** hero another country's traitor?
- How did de Zavala's **reaction** to Santa Anna's power grab lead to joining the Texan rebellion against the Mexican government?
- What types of **reforms** would be considered democratic?
- In what ways can you compare the **revolutions** in the United States in 1776 and in Texas in 1836?

To access more theme resources, go to nhd.org/theme.

Revolution, *Reaction*, Reform...and **Research**

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THE STRUGGLE FOR DISABILITY RIGHTS: FROM OBJECTS OF REFORM TO ADVOCATES FOR EQUALITY

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RICH CAIRN, History, Civics and Social Studies Inclusion Specialist, Emerging America, Collaborative for Educational Services

KATE MELCHIOR, Associate Director of Educator Engagement and Outreach, Massachusetts Historical Society

ROSS NEWTON, Ph.D., History Teacher, HEC Academy, Collaborative for Educational Services

GRAHAM WARDER, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, Keene State College

> "Whenever we have joined various disabilities together, we find our strength . . . We are no longer asking for charity. We are demanding our rights!"
>
> —Ed Roberts, San Francisco, April 30, 1977[1]

Ed Roberts, independent living organizer and Director of the California Department of Rehabilitation. William Bronston, California Department of Rehabilitation, 1981.

A 1977 sit-in by a diverse group of disability activists in San Francisco, California, marked a revolutionary milestone in the long struggle for disability rights. Activists occupied a federal building, refusing to leave until President Jimmy Carter's administration agreed to implement the long-delayed, detailed regulations found in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. After 26 days, these people, known as 504 protesters, prevailed when the government signed the Section 504 regulations on April 28, 1977. For the first time, U.S. law recognized the basic humanity of all disabled people and prohibited discrimination against them.

Disability activists insist on full and equal human rights. Across 250 years of American history, disabled people have struggled for education, access, and rights, while society's attitudes toward disability have shifted from pity to empowerment. Reformers trying to improve conditions for disabled people in the nineteenth century called for charity or pity. Later, reformers promoted a narrative depicting disabled people as broken and in need of fixing. Today, a social model of disability recognizes that it is discrimination that most limits the options of the 60 million adults and seven million students with disabilities, not their physical or mental characteristics. An emerging disability justice movement insists that "all bodies have strengths and needs that must be met,"[2] including each person's ability, race, gender, class, nationality, language, or religion.

1 "Worth Repeating: Ed Roberts' 504 Sit-In Victory Rally Speech," Ollibean, accessed October 5, 2024. https://ollibean.org/ed/.
2 "Disability Justice," Movement Generation, accessed December 11, 2024. https://movementgeneration.org/disability-justice/.

The subject of disability rights is bursting with potential topics that strongly fit this year's theme: *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History.* Students should consider the following questions as they research their topics.

- Are the demands of disabled activists across U.S. history reformist or revolutionary?
- What actions have people with disabilities taken to secure rights?
- How successful were the efforts of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformers to help people with disabilities?
- What factors led to the reactionary eugenics movement and other efforts to control and even eliminate disabled people?
- How do efforts by early reformers compare to the more radical goals and methods of disabled activists since the 1970s?

Many words, images, and ideas about disability in primary sources from earlier times are offensive or upsetting in today's usage. It may be necessary to quote, display, or cite such terms, and to do so correctly and respectfully. However, those words should not be repeated when analyzing or discussing the source. The Disability Language Style Guide of the National Center on Disability Journalism can be helpful: **ncdj.org/style-guide/**.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION: REFORM OR DEHUMANIZATION AND ABUSE?

In rural early America, most people with disabilities lived and worked on their family farms. However, many very poor people with disabilities ended up homeless and often in their town's poorhouse or jail.

In the period before the Civil War, many reformers who worked for temperance, equal rights for women, and the abolition of slavery also came together to create schools for students with disabilities. Starting in 1817, teacher Laurent Clerc, who was deaf, created the program of the first school for deaf children and helped to invent a new world language: American Sign Language (ASL). By 1900, almost every state had one or more schools for the deaf. A rich Deaf culture developed in these schools. Similarly, following the opening of Perkins School for the Blind in 1829 by abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe, states also built schools for blind students.

Laura Bridgeman (right) was a deaf-blind student and teacher at the Perkins School for the Blind. Library of Congress (2003674412).

Howe and mental health reformer Dorothea Dix founded the first school for students with intellectual disabilities in 1848. Finding appalling conditions in poorhouses and jails, Dix traveled the country securing funds for state mental health asylums, which she envisioned as well-supported institutions with a nurturing home-like environment that she called "moral treatment."[3] States built asylums and hospitals for people with mental illness across the country with mixed results. Outside institutions, people with less visible disabilities encountered stigma and discrimination similar to those with visible disabilities.

From the mid-nineteenth century on, exposés on the treatment of people with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities caught public attention. In the 1850s, Isaac Hunt wrote of the terrible experiences he endured while a patient in the Maine Insane Asylum. Elizabeth Packard, committed to an insane asylum by her husband over theological disagreements, described cruel treatment in Illinois in the 1870s. In 1887, journalist Nellie Bly got herself committed to the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island in New York City and revealed the brutality there. Clifford Beers launched a mental hygiene movement in the 1910s, seeking reform of treatment, following his own difficult institutionalization. However, these stories changed little. The number of people confined to state hospitals and schools grew each decade to 559,000 in 1955.[4]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, states began to recognize the sheer number of individuals with disabilities who were not attending school. As public education attendance became compulsory, a new

3 Dorothea Lynde Dix, *Memorial: To the Legislature of Massachusetts [protesting against the confinement of insane persons and idiots in almshouses and prisons],* Munroe & Francis, 1843. Library of Congress (11006306). https://www.loc.gov/item/11006306/.

4 Grob, Gerald N. "Public Policy and Mental Illness: Jimmy Carter's Presidential Commission on Mental Health." *The Milbank Quarterly* 2005 83(3): 425-456. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2690151/.

generation of reformers endeavored to understand how those individuals might be brought out of their homes and trained to become part of society. From that, state schools for the "feeble-minded" were founded.

In the late 1800s, state institutions came increasingly to be shaped by the goals and methods of a reactionary eugenics ideology, which aimed to rid society of immigrants and disabled people who they viewed as "defective." The 1882 Immigration Act established a system to examine and exclude disabled people. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Buck v. Bell* (1927) that the state of Virginia could sterilize institutionalized people against their will. By the 1970s, state institutions across the nation had sterilized at least 60,000 people. Ultimately it took an association with Nazism to discredit eugenics.[5]

Students might want to explore these links to gain a general understanding of some of the disability history resources available:

The Disability History through Primary Sources portal to collections and curriculum on EmergingAmerica.org includes student research guides on disability history topics.
emergingamerica.org/accessing-inquiry/disability-history-through-primary-sources

The Reform to Equal Rights: K-12 Disability History Curriculum includes background on the topics above, as well as 250+ primary sources and extensive secondary sources.
emergingamerica.org/disability-history-curriculum

The Disability History Museum offers thousands of primary sources as well as background essays.
disabilitymuseum.org/dhm

The Disability Social History Project offers resources and links for disabled people to reclaim disability history and determine how to define themselves and their struggles.
disabilityhistory.org/

Resource Guide: Disability History and Studies from the Choices Program at Brown University identifies resources on the ideas and methods of disability studies.
choices.edu/teaching-news-lesson/resource-guide-disability-history-and-studies/

DISABLED VETERANS LEAD THE WAY

Disability and war are inseparable in American history. The larger the war, the greater the scale of disabled bodies and minds to which the nation has felt compelled to respond. It was war that forced the federal government to become directly involved in the care of people with disabilities.

Before and during the first part of the American Civil War (1861–1865), treatment of disabled soldiers was slow, haphazard, and inconsistent. However, the nearly one million veterans disabled by the Civil War led to reform in the way Americans came to understand the responsibility to care for people with disabilities.[6] By the end of the nineteenth century, the cost of veterans' pensions and dozens of soldiers' homes dwarfed the cost of the war itself. Tens of thousands of veterans lived in the National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers created by Congress in 1865.[7]

National Soldiers Home, Dayton, Ohio, the largest of the veterans' hospitals created after the Civil War, c.1878. Library of Congress (2003667095).

Meanwhile, veterans' pensions became the largest single item in the federal budget, creating a divisive political issue. Pension programs, promoted by veterans' organizations, such as the politically formidable Grand Army of the Republic, expanded to include aging veterans in addition to those disabled during the war. By the 1890s, federal law

5 Dr. Howard Markel, "Column: The false, racist theory of eugenics once ruled science. Let's never let that happen again," *PBS News,* February 16, 2018. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/column-the-false-racist-theory-of-eugenics-once-ruled-science-lets-never-let-that-happen-again.

6 *How Civil War Veterans Transformed Disability,* online exhibition, Emerging America. https://emergingamerica.org/exhibits/how-civil-war-veterans-transformed-disability.

7 "Central Branch of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers - Dayton, Ohio," *How Civil War Veterans Transformed Disability,* online exhibition, Emerging America. https://www.emergingamerica.org/exhibits/how-civil-war-veterans-transformed-disability/cast-characters/central-branch-national.

redefined old age itself as a disability. Pensions thus provided a precedent for the Social Security Act included in President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s. While many Americans lauded disabled Civil War veterans as heroes, a popular reaction cast them as drunkards, malingerers, and parasites dependent on government largesse.

By the time the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, many Americans had come to view the disabled veterans' policy as a mistake. This time, government reformers sought to offer veterans rehabilitation services instead of pensions, hoping that scientific and technological progress could eliminate disabilities. Such hopes were unrealistic, and veterans continued to live with the many kinds of disabilities caused by the devastating new weapons of war, such as heavy artillery, aerial bombs, and poison gas.

Following World War II (1939–1945), disabled veterans responded in ways that challenged cultural definitions of disability promoted by the eugenics movement. Disabled veterans organizations, including the Blind Veterans Association (BVA), collaborated with labor organizations to oppose discrimination and to assert rights.[8] The BVA even linked racism with ableism. The post-war years also saw the beginnings of an organized cross-disability rights movement that began to assert the revolutionary idea that disabled people should be accepted as involved community members, valued workers, and full citizens. Disabled film stars and athletes in the newly created wheelchair basketball and Paralympics defied stigma as they demonstrated their capabilities. Disabled veterans lobbied for services and transformed the physical environment for all by introducing curb cuts and other innovations that support physical accessibility.

Students who are interested in learning more about disabled veterans might want to explore some of these websites:

Online Exhibition, *How Civil War Veterans Transformed Disability*, Emerging America
emergingamerica.org/exhibits/how-civil-war-veterans-transformed-disability

Military Resources, National Archives and Records Administration
archives.gov/research/alic/reference/military

Disabled Veterans, Serving Our Voices: Stories from the Veterans History Project, Library of Congress
loc.gov/collections/veterans-history-project-collection/serving-our-voices/impact-of-service/disabled-veterans/

Veterans were not alone in making disability a rights issue. In the 1950s, parents of students with intellectual disabilities banded together to demand quality education for their children. They created organizations, such as The Arc, which mobilized a broad-based group of reformers advocating for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. President John F. Kennedy, whose own sister had an intellectual disability, supported such efforts.[9]

THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Real change took decades. News media played a crucial role. Many conscientious objectors to the draft worked in state institutions during World War II. In 1947, their experiences appeared in a book by Frank L. Wright, Jr., titled *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*.[10] Magazine articles followed. In 1972, Geraldo Rivera's television exposé on the Willowbrook State School in New York revealed deplorable conditions and abusive treatment. A subsequent lawsuit, *New York State Association for Retarded Children v. Paterson* (1975), resulted in its closing.[11] In the following decades, similar legal challenges closed state institutions nationwide.

Students who are interested in learning more about the founding, operation, and closing of state institutions can explore these websites:

Asylum Projects
asylumprojects.org/index.php/Main_Page

List of Schools for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
deafandhoh.com/directory/schools/

Perspectives on Schools and Asylums, Lesson Plan, Reform to Equal Rights: K-12 Disability History Curriculum
emergingamerica.org/curriculum/disability-history-curriculum/grades-8-10-founding-schools-and-asylums

Schools for the Blind, Teaching Students with Visual Impairments
teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/schools-for-the-blind.html

8 Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States* (Beacon Press, 2012), 150–154.
9 "John F. Kennedy and People with Intellectual Disabilities," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, accessed December 12, 2024. https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/john-f-kennedy-and-people-with-intellectual-disabilities.
10 Frank L. Wright, Jr., *Out of Sight, Out of Mind* (National Mental Health Association, 1947), Disability History Museum, https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=1754.
11 "The Closing of Willowbrook," Disability Justice, accessed December 30, 2024. https://disabilityjustice.org/the-closing-of-willowbrook/.

The Disability Rights Movement educated the public on the collective grassroots power, civil rights, and access needs of disabled persons. It also helped individuals with different disabilities to identify with a larger disability community and to demand equality. Reform was no longer enough.

Ed Roberts, quoted at the beginning of this article, and many of the other 504 protesters, first became activists as they sought independence from institutions. In 1971, Berkeley, California, became the site of the first Center for Independent Living, run by and for people with disabilities. The movement grew as disabled people organized new centers in many cities and lobbied for greater access to education, employment, transportation, and housing.

By 1977, the 504 protesters had gained support from a broad coalition. Judith Heumann, one of the San Francisco sit-in leaders, received a telegraph from Cesar Chavez pledging the full support of the National Farmworkers Union.[12] Brad Lomax, a member of the Black Panther Party, took part in the sit-in, and the Panthers provided food for the participants for the entire time.[13] Chavez and the leaders of the Panthers found common ground between their revolutionary advocacy for economic and civil rights for workers and racial minorities and the demands and actions of disability rights protesters.

In the 1970s, courts expanded opportunities for persons with disabilities to pursue their vocational dreams, work and live in their communities, and make their own choices. In *PARC v. Pennsylvania* (1971), a federal court required the state to provide free public education to children with intellectual disabilities. Meanwhile, Congress passed the 1975 *Education for Handicapped Children Act*, establishing special education programs in schools and guaranteeing free, appropriate public education nationwide to every child with a disability.

Disability activists used many tactics and strategies to share discrimination experiences and advocate for change. American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (ADAPT) held its first national convention in Denver, Colorado, in 1983. Using public protests, sit-ins, marches, picketing, and other forms of civil disobedience, ADAPT called out discrimination in public transit systems across the country. Signs reading "No Taxation Without Transportation" and "I can't even get to the back of the bus" evoked earlier revolutions. Through direct-action campaigns, Denver became the first of many cities to redesign public transportation with accessibility in mind.[14]

Meanwhile, institutionalized individuals across the nation successfully sued for freedom from confinement and body restraints and access to appropriate care and education. Roland Johnson, a Black man who suffered abuse at Pennhurst State Hospital in Pennsylvania, testified powerfully in *Pennhurst State Sch. v. Halderman* (1984), which mandated its closure. Johnson became a leader in the self-advocacy and independent living movements.[15] Johnson, Anita Cameron, and other Black disability activists raised awareness that disabled people of color face disproportionate discrimination.

By the 1980s, disability activists recognized the need for federal disability legislation. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed Justin Dart, Jr., as vice-chair of the National Council on Disability. Dart, who contracted polio in 1948 and used a wheelchair for mobility, and his wife, Yoshiko, visited every state to gather stories from individuals with disabilities. As they shared these accounts of injustice and hardships with allies in Washington, D.C., Congress began public hearings. Dart became the most important advocate for the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA).

Civil Rights Movement leader Jesse Jackson greets disability advocate Justin Dart, Jr., who uses a wheelchair, during a hearing of the House Committee on Education and Labor on the draft of the Americans with Disabilities Act, July 17, 1989. Library of Congress (2019646232).

12 "Cesar Chavez Sends a Mailgram," Western Union mailgram, April 2, 1977, Patient No More, San Francisco State University. https://longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/cesar-chavez-sends-mailgram.

13 "Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement," Berkeley Library, University of California, accessed November 26, 2024. https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/visit/bancroft/oral-history-center/projects/disability-rights.

14 "'Gang of 19' activists occupy Denver intersection to protest inaccessibility on the city's bus system," HISTORY, updated June 28, 2024, accessed November 26, 2024. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/gang-of-19-disability-activists-protest-denver-bus-system.

15 Glenn Rifkin, "Overlooked No More: Roland Johnson, Who Fought to Shut Down Institutions for the Disabled," *The New York Times* [New York, NY], July 31, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/obituaries/roland-johnson-overlooked.html.

In 1988, the Deaf President Now campaign at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., pushed disability rights onto the evening news. Even though Gallaudet, the oldest Deaf college in the U.S., had never had a deaf president, students and faculty were shocked when the university board announced that it had chosen Elizabeth Zinser, the only non-deaf candidate, as the new president. The Deaf community mobilized and shut down the campus, demanding that Zinser resign and a deaf president be selected, the Board of Trustees consist of at least 51% deaf members, and there be no reprisals against the protesters. After days of dialogue, the board met the demands. Zinser resigned, and I. King Jordan became the first deaf president of Gallaudet.[16]

Grassroots activism and media attention boosted the push for federal disability rights legislation. Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa, who spoke ASL with his deaf brother, authored legislation, and Republican President George H. W. Bush signaled support. ADAPT and other groups staged a week of direct-action pressure in Washington in March 1990. The most memorable moment occurred on March 12 when 60 protesters crawled up the steps of the Capitol to illustrate the daily barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. Congress passed the ADA with stunning majorities, and on July 26, 1990, Bush signed it into law, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.[17]

IMPACTS OF THE MOVEMENT

The ADA was revolutionary in its conception of the equality of all, regardless of ability. Yet, what has been its effect? For thousands of citizens confined in institutions without their consent, the impact has been profound. The Supreme Court decision *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) ruled that unjustified segregation of people with disabilities is discriminatory under the ADA. As Lois Curtis, a plaintiff in the case, put it, "I feel good about myself. My life a better life."[18]

The ADA has also broadly impacted accessibility in buildings from restaurants to government offices, as well as parks and other open spaces. Most new construction since 1999 incorporates features such as ramps, wide doors, audio signals, braille signage, and handicapped parking. The digital world continues to add accessibility tools, such as alt text, which describes images for those with visual impairments, and closed captioning, which provides text for spoken content to assist people with hearing impairments. However, barriers, such as low wages that make it difficult to hire enough home aides to meet the need, still exist. Disability activists continue to lobby and rally for funding for Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs that provide essential services.

At a rally in front of the U.S. Capitol, Justin Dart and others protest proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. The "trojan horse" figure represents protesters' interpretation of the Republican Medicare plan, 1995. Library of Congress (2019646368).

A major goal of the ADA was to boost the employment rates of people with disabilities. Yet despite the ADA and other laws, such as the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, high rates of unemployment for people with disabilities persist. In 2019 (before COVID-19), only 19.3% of people with disabilities over age 16 were employed, compared to 66.3% of people with no disability.[19]

Voting rates for those with disabilities improved in the last decade, though many barriers to civic participation remain.[20] Barriers to voting include lack of access to polling sites, inability to see or read ballots, long waits in line, and the requirement for a consistent signature. Recent laws to restrict voting have disproportionately blocked disabled voters.

In 2010, in a dramatic sign of the revolutionary change in the legal and social status of disabled Americans, the State of North Carolina created the Justice for Victims Foundation to compensate victims forcibly sterilized by the state's Eugenics Board, some as recently as 1974.[21] In those 36 years,

16 "The Deaf President Now (DPN) Protest," National Deaf Life Museum, Gallaudet University, accessed December 12, 2024. https://gallaudet.edu/museum/history/the-deaf-president-now-dpn-protest/.
17 *Americans with Disabilities Act 1990, Public Law Number 101-336*. https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/senate-bill/933.
18 "The Art of Autism Mourns The Passing of Lois Curtis: Artist and Disability Advocate," The Art of Autism, November 12, 2022. https://the-art-of-autism.com/disability-history-month-lois-curtis-artist-and-disability-advocate-paved-the-way/.
19 "Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics – 2019, News Release, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, February 26, 2020. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/disabl_02262020.pdf.
20 "Voter Turnout and Voting Accessibility" from the Program for Disability Research at Rutgers University includes regular updates on the barriers to voting and changes in the experiences and relative voting rates of disabled voters. Visit this resource at smlr.rutgers.edu/faculty-research-engagement/program-disability-research/voter-turnout-and-voting-accessibility.
21 "An excerpt from the final report to the governor of North Carolina on compensating sterilization victims in 2012," January 27, 2012, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources via North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, Digital Public Library of America. https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/eugenics-movement-in-the-united-states/sources/1632.

North Carolina moved from treating some of its people like cattle to making cash payments to affirm the humanity of those citizens.

In recent years, youth-led groups such as Youth Organizing! Disabled & Proud and the #TeachDisabilityHistory campaign of Easter Seals Massachusetts have joined the Disability History Museum, ADAPT, Longmore Institute, Disability Social History Project, Emerging America, and a growing constellation of organizations to advocate for and support a more complete and accurate historical narrative that includes disability.

Resources for Exploring the History of People with Disabilities

ARTICLES

"Disability History: The Disability Rights Movement"
National Park Service
nps.gov/articles/disabilityhistoryrightsmovement.htm

"Disability History Series Introduction"
National Park Service
nps.gov/articles/disability-history-series-introduction.htm

COLLECTIONS/EXHIBITIONS

Disability History
Smithsonian's National Museum of American History
americanhistory.si.edu/explore/topics/disability-history

Disability History Museum
disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/index.html

Museum of disABILITY History, Albertson, New York
museumofdisability.org/virtual-museum/

GOVERNMENT AND UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Disability & Employment: A Timeline
Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
dol.gov/agencies/odep/ada/ada30timeline

Voter Turnout and Voting Accessibility
School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University
smlr.rutgers.edu/faculty-research-engagement/program-disability-research/voter-turnout-and-voting-accessibility

MULTIMEDIA

It's Our Story: Of, By, and For . . . People with Abilities
youtube.com/channel/UCn0ds7Jjrcxwm5TcE_DRC3A

Tom Olin Collection
tomolincollection.com/

ORAL HISTORIES

Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement
Berkeley Library, University of California
lib.berkeley.edu/visit/bancroft/oral-history-center/projects/disability-rights

Disability Visibility Project
Longmore Institute
disabilityvisibilityproject.com/

PRIMARY SOURCE SETS

Free to Use and Reuse: Disability Awareness
Library of Congress
loc.gov/free-to-use/disability-awareness/

RESEARCH GUIDE

Disability Law in the United States: A Beginner's Guide
Library of Congress
guides.loc.gov/disability-law

RESOURCE GUIDE

Disability History and Studies
Choices Program, Brown University
choices.edu/teaching-news-lesson/resource-guide-disability-history-and-studies/

To access more theme resources, go to nhd.org/theme.

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THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS IN U.S. NATIONAL PARKS: READING HISTORY IN THE LANDSCAPE

EMILY BUTTON KAMBIC, Bureau Historian, National Park Service

Students are encouraged to use National Park Service (NPS) resources to explore the ways revolution, reaction, and reform reshape the physical world in which we live. When exploring topics for National History Day® (NHD) projects, students, acting as historical detectives, can read NPS landscapes for clues to how Americans have supported, resisted, and remembered different revolutions across our history.

This article will explore negative reactions in the United States toward the Haitian Revolution that changed only with the success of the U.S. abolitionist reform movement, the ways monuments in Washington, D.C., honoring nineteenth-century Latin American revolutionaries reflect twentieth-century democratic alliances, and how reform in the ways we do history has shaped more honest and inclusive remembrance of the American Revolution.

Research Tip

When visiting websites of National Park Service locations, click on the "Learn About the Park" and "History and Culture" options to learn more about the background and history of the location. Some of the histories are bound to surprise you!

REACTIONS AGAINST REVOLUTION

The American Revolution was one of the first major political movements of the "Age of Revolutions" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The United States achieved independence in 1783 and ratified the Constitution in 1788. In 1789, the French Revolution began. While free Black and White residents of the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue debated their rights, enslaved people on the island rose in revolt against bondage. The Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) was their war for freedom and self-rule at a time when Napoleon Bonaparte was attempting to reinstate slavery.

Despite setting its own revolutionary example for the world, the United States did not widely support the Haitian Revolution because of its own dependence on enslaved labor. Haiti became the first Black-led independent nation in 1804.[1] Its rejection of slavery made the limits of freedom in the United States more visible. Amidst fears of political leaders that uprisings against enslavement would become contagious, the United States pursued an isolationist policy against Haiti during the first half of the nineteenth century and did not recognize it as an independent nation until 1862. National Park sites reflect both the reactions of White planters and leaders against the Haitian Revolution and the African American enlistment of this revolutionary legacy toward the abolition of slavery.

In the 1790s, most of the refugees who arrived in the United States from Saint-Domingue were White enslavers fleeing the violence of total war.[2] In 1794 and 1795, a family of planters, the Vincendières, fled to rural western Maryland. They purchased land on the Monocacy River and established L'Hermitage, a large Caribbean-style plantation on which they enslaved as many as 90 people, a massive number for the area. They were known for their harsh treatment and violence until they sold the land in 1827.[3]

1 Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).
2 "The United States and the Haitian Revolution, 1791–1804," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 29, 2024. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1784-1800/haitian-rev.
3 "L'Hermitage: A French-Caribbean Plantation," Monocacy National Battlefield, National Park Service, accessed October 29, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/mono/learn/historyculture/hermitage.htm. On July 9, 1864, this land in Frederick County, Maryland, was the site of a Civil War battle. The Confederate Army won the battle but failed to capture its ultimate objective, Washington, D.C. To learn more, see "The Battle of Monocacy," Monocacy National Battlefield, National Park Service, accessed December 28, 2024. https://nps.gov/mono/learn/historyculture/the-battle-of-monocacy.htm.

The white house and stone barn that stand on a hill overlooking an uncultivated field in **Monocacy National Battlefield** (**nps.gov/mono/index.htm**) were preserved by later owners of L'Hermitage. However, cabins in which archeologists believe enslaved people lived were not.[4] The story of the people who dwelled there, including their experiences of surveillance, violence, and domination, became hidden. The slave village was first discovered in 2003, and excavation began in 2010.[5] For over a decade, NPS has been working with researchers to recover the archeology and genealogies of the enslaved people and tell their stories.[6] These diverse stories offer new insights and examples of revolution, reaction, and reform in history.

This stone barn at Monocacy Battlefield was part of the L'Hermitage plantation built by the Vincendières, who fled Saint-Domingue with the people they enslaved. National Park Service/Mark Bias.

Many nineteenth-century African Americans who fought to end slavery in the U.S. recognized the Haitian Revolution's connection to their own struggle, making their resistance both symbolic and necessarily covert. **Fort Sumter National Historical Park** (**nps.gov/fosu/index.htm**) in Charleston, South Carolina, tells the story of Denmark Vesey, a Black carpenter born enslaved who bought his freedom and advocated for abolition. In 1822, he was accused of plotting an armed insurrection of enslaved people against White enslavers that the insurrectionists hoped would end with an escape to Haiti in time for Bastille Day.

The White community reacted swiftly and brutally, arresting Vesey and 130 other men. They convicted 67 and hanged Vesey along with 34 others. Afterward, White citizens destroyed the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church where Vesey had worshiped and militarized a guard and citadel in Charleston.[7] Additionally, South Carolina passed a state law imprisoning free Black sailors while in port to prevent them from influencing local Black residents.

In 2014, following almost 20 years of community effort and advocacy, the Preservation Society of Charleston dedicated a memorial to Vesey in 2014.[8] In an environment of reform, Haiti's revolutionary legacy had become safer to remember in public.[9]

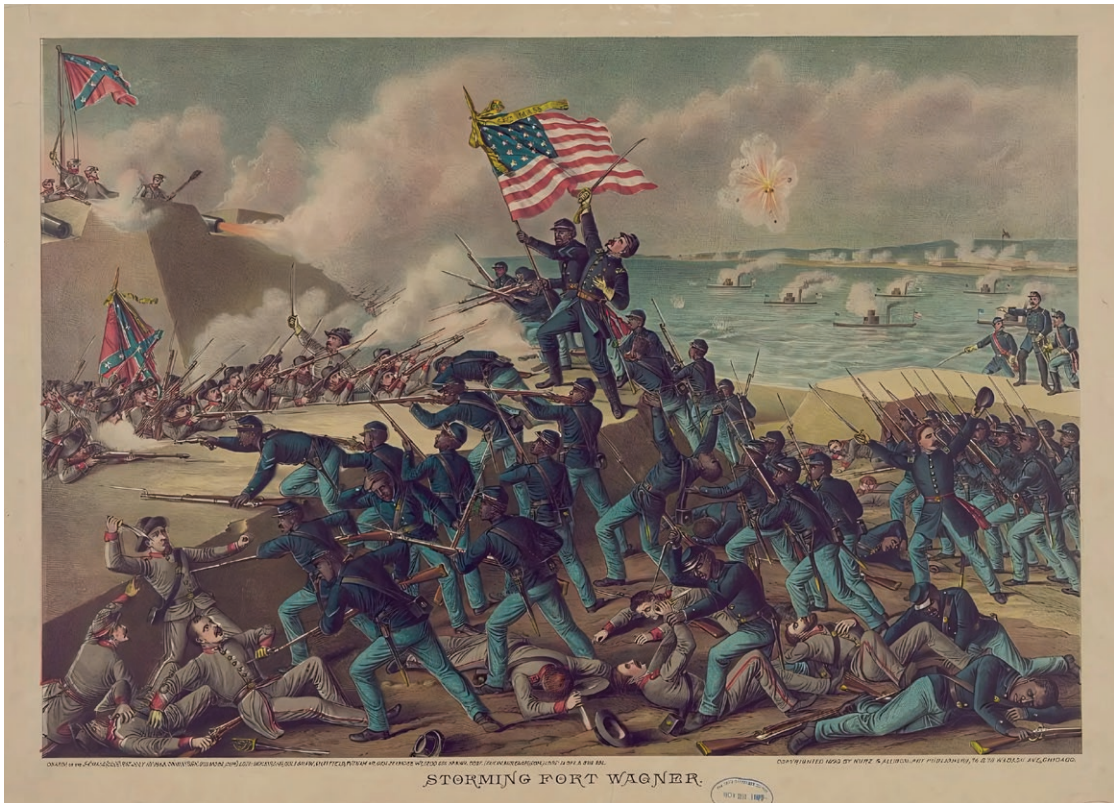
One of the stories told at the **Boston African American National Historic Site** (**nps.gov/boaf/index.htm**) is that of David Walker, a Black tailor and abolitionist who, in 1829, published his *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, which urged Black resistance to slavery and racism. He relied on sailors to carry his book to forbidden southern ports.[10]

Another story is that of Sergeant William H. Carney, a 23-year-old freedman who joined the Black militia Toussaint Guards (named after the leader of the Haitian Revolution) in early 1863. The U.S. military soon began recruiting Black soldiers, and the Guards joined the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. The unit led the charge on Fort Wagner in July of that year. When their flag bearer was shot, Carney retrieved the flag and, though he was wounded himself, never let it touch the ground. He was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1900, one of 22 African Americans to receive the medal for Civil War service.[11]

Questions for Students

- Through historical research, can you find a place where a history of revolution is (or was) missing in the physical world around you?
- Who has the power to preserve these stories?
- Where do we see examples of reactions against revolutionary change?
- How has a longer-term history of reform changed the stories you can learn about in these places?

4 Megan Bailey, "Surveillance and Control on a Plantation Landscape," Monocacy National Battlefield, National Park Service, accessed October 31, 2024. https://home.nps.gov/articles/surveillance-and-control-on-a-plantation-landscape.htm.
5 Katherine D. Birmingham and Joy Beasley, *Archeological Investigation of the L'Hermitage Slave Village, Monocacy National Battlefield, Frederick, Maryland* (National Park Service, 2014).
6 "The Enslaved Community of L'Hermitage," Monocacy National Battlefield, National Park Service, accessed November 26, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/enslaved-community-of-l-hermitage.htm.
7 "Denmark Vesey," National Park Service, accessed October 29, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/people/denmark-vesey.htm.
8 "Denmark Vesey Monument," Preservation Society of Charleston, accessed October 29, 2024. https://www.preservationsociety.org/locations/denmark-vesey-monument/.
9 Marty Blatt, "Reflections on 'Roots of Liberty: the Haitian Revolution and the American Civil War," National Council on Public History blog, August 29, 2013. https://ncph.org/history-at-work/reflections-on-roots-of-liberty/.
10 Stephen Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (Penguin Press, 2012).
11 "William H. Carney," Boston African American National Historic Site, National Park Service, accessed October 29, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/articles/william-h-carney.htm.



Sergeant William H. Carney (holding the flag) and the Toussaint Guards became part of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, which stormed Fort Wagner, near Charleston, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863. Library of Congress (2012647346).

REVOLUTIONARY MEMORIALS IN CONTEXT

In contrast to reactions against the Haitian Revolution in the nineteenth century, a group of memorials erected in Washington, D.C., during the twentieth century show how recognition of shared revolutionary heritage can be a tool in reforming international relations.

As the "Age of Revolutions" continued, the years from 1808 to 1836 were transformative for Latin America. After Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power in France, his imperial ambitions incited what historian Jeremy Adelman calls "total Atlantic-wide war."[12]

Napoleon defeated Spain in 1808 and installed his brother as the new monarch. It was the spark that inspired revolutionary change. Local groups known as juntas began to form across Spain and Latin America to resist French control. When a national assembly was held in Cádiz, Spain, delegates from the Americas attended. The resulting Spanish Constitution of 1812 guaranteed specific freedoms for all citizens, including Indigenous people in Spanish-controlled South America.

These reforms included the end of the Spanish Inquisition, Indian tribute, and forced labor; enfranchising all men not of African descent; and forming local governments with broad popular participation. Nevertheless, wars broke out as local juntas refused to recognize the government in Spain. Some opposed these juntas, while others battled over the scale and sovereignty of local and regional power. These conflicts increasingly shifted to become independence movements in response to Spain's attempts to repress them.[13]

Venezuela declared its independence in 1811, followed by Argentina in 1816. Alliances of Latin American revolutionaries across all of the Spanish colonies in Central and South America broke away from European control in wars for independence lasting until 1826. Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay trace their independence to this period. Initially, much of the northern and western part of the region formed a nation, known as Gran Colombia, under the leadership of Venezuelan Simón Bolívar. Mexico and Brazil achieved independence separately from Spain and Portugal in the early 1820s.

In 1826, most of the new Latin American nations met at the Panama Congress, a diplomatic gathering that the United States planned (but failed) to attend. This time, the U.S.

12 Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions," *The American Historical Review,* 113, no. 2 (April 2008): 322. https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.113.2.319.
13 Jaime E. Rodríguez O., "The Emancipation of America," *The American Historical Review,* 105, no. 1 (February 2000): 144–145. https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/105.1.131.

reacted very differently than it did to Haitian independence when it validated and recognized the new countries. This indicated that U.S. leaders did not perceive Latin American revolutions as threats to the status quo.[14]

The most prominent symbols of Latin American independence on American soil were not built until over a century later. In the early twentieth century and again during the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy highlighted friendship between the nations of the Americas.[15] That is when Latin American revolutionary history became visible on the streets of Washington, D.C., near the National Mall and the White House. The Organization of American States, a National Historic Landmark, was built as the Pan-American Union in 1908 and renamed after the new alliance of American governments in 1948.[16] Nearby, the governments of Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela donated memorials from the 1950s through the 1970s, highlighting shared American revolutionary histories. The statues of liberators José Gervasio Artigas, Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, and Benito Juárez honor their contributions to independence in South America and democracy in Mexico, while the memorial to Bernardo de Gálvez commemorates his support for the American Revolution as governor of Spanish Louisiana.[17]

A close-up image of the face of the statue of Simón Bolívar in Washington. D.C. The statue sits near the Department of the Interior and the Organization of American States Buildings at the intersection of Virginia Avenue, 18th Street, and C Streets. National Park Service/R. Mendoza.

These memorials illustrate the important principle that memorials are not historic in relation to what they commemorate but in relation to when and why they are made. They are not artifacts of any of the revolutions. Instead, they are more recent evidence of the importance the United States and its Latin American allies placed on positive relations and shared identities within the Western Hemisphere.

Questions for Students

Find a memorial connected to a revolutionary movement or person.

- When was it created?
- Who advocated, fundraised, or passed a law establishing it?
- What did the artist intend to communicate?
- Why was it placed where it is?

After researching these questions, analyze why this revolution was important to the memorial's creators, and what that tells you about the later reactions or reforms that emerged as a result.

AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HISTORY

The National Park Service includes more than 30 sites directly associated with the American Revolution, including battlefields, historic homes, and locations of important political and economic events.[18] Many also serve as examples of more recent revolutions and reforms that have transformed how we experience the past.

For instance, early in the twentieth century, Congress authorized the construction of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which opened in 1932—the 200th anniversary of the first president's birth—and connected Washington, D.C., with his home at Mount Vernon in Virginia.[19] Linking a major memorial with transportation

14 Rodriguez O., "The Emancipation of America"; and Alison Russell, "Sister Revolutions: American Revolutions on Two Continents (Teaching with Historic Places)," National Park Service, accessed October 29, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/sister-revolutions-american-revolutions-on-two-continents-teaching-with-historic-places.htm.

15 Russell, "Sister Revolutions."

16 "U.S. Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States," National Museum of American Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State, accessed October 29, 2024. https://diplomacy.state.gov/encyclopedia/u-s-permanent-mission-to-the-organization-of-american-states/; Susan Cianci Salvatore, "Pan American Union Headquarters National Historic Landmark Nomination," National Park Service, updated 2021, accessed October 29, 2024. https://home.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/upload/Pan_American_Union_NHL_WSecFinal_2021-08-12.pdf.

17 "Avenue of Latino Leaders: National Mall and Memorial Parks, Washington, DC," National Park Service, accessed October 29, 2024. https://nps.gov/articles/000/avenue-of-latino-leaders-national-mall-and-memorial-parks-washington-dc.htm; Shannon Garrison, *Virginia Avenue, NW Corridor: Cultural Landscape Inventory, National Mall and Memorial Parks, National Park Service* (National Park Service, 2018). https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2253709.

18 "The American Revolution," National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/americanrevolution/visit.htm; M. J. Mattes, *Landmarks of Liberty: A Report on the American Revolution Bicentennial Development Program of the National Park Service* (National Park Service, 1989). https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2204634.

19 Robinson & Associates, Inc, *George Washington Memorial Parkway Administrative History* (National Park Service, 2011), 2. https://irma.nps.gov/Portal/.

infrastructure, land conservation, and the idea of scenic and recreational driving was a new and creative strategy that reflected the modern American turn toward building landscapes for cars.

During the Bicentennial Celebration of the American Revolution in 1976, historians were actively involved in changing the ways NPS visitors experience historic places. The Bicentennial Celebration was a national program of events, media, and construction designed to commemorate the revolution and its values of "individual liberty, representative government, and the attainment of equal and inalienable rights."[20] The National Park Service spent over $100 million to plan, research, design, and reconstruct facilities to improve visitor experiences at sites of the Revolution.[21]

For example, work at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia (**nps.gov/inde/index.htm**) included a pavilion for the Liberty Bell, preservation and reconstruction of historic buildings, and even design of new memorials, such as the site of Franklin Court (**nps.gov/places/000/benjamin-franklin-museum.htm**). At Fort Stanwix National Monument in New York (**nps.gov/fost/index.htm**), painstaking archeological research informed a reconstruction of the eighteenth-century fort. Yorktown Battlefield in Virginia and North Carolina's Guilford Courthouse saw both historic landscape restoration and new construction of roads and visitor centers.[22]

The Bicentennial celebration's major public events included President Gerald Ford's visit to Independence Hall in Philadelphia on July 4, 1976. National Park Service/Richard Frear.

At the same time, other historians and activists noted what was missing from such major funded projects, using the anniversary as an opportunity for public dialogue about how we understand American history and values. The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation noted that the National Park Service could not tell the full story of American history without including the contributions of African Americans. The committee proposed 30 sites for national recognition and suggested ways historic preservation could be more inclusive.[23]

Historian Jesse Lemisch advocated that nationally supported publication projects stop focusing on the papers of Founding Fathers and instead document the histories of everyday people, especially those previously excluded, such as Black Americans, women, and Indigenous people.[24]

Connecting history with contemporary issues, the People's Bicentennial Commission was founded in 1970 to draw attention to corporate power and economic injustice through the language and symbolism of the American Revolution.[25] Their influences in democratizing and expanding historical narratives and practices are visible across the field today, showing how the work of history itself can influence reform. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the America 250 initiative within the NPS continues and transforms this work by looking at our unfinished revolutions and the people who drove them.[26]

Questions for Students

Identify a place that represents an unfinished revolution to you in 2026.

- What historical roots of revolutionary change are present?
- What reactions did it spark?
- What reform is still needed?
- What clues to that story can you find in the physical features of this place?

20 *An Act to establish the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, and for other purposes.* Public Law 93-179, 87 Stat 1973. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-87/pdf/STATUTE-87-Pg697-2.pdf; "Records of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration [ARBA]," National Archives and Records Administration. https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/452.html.

21 Mattes, *Landmarks of Liberty,* 2.

22 Mattes, *Landmarks of Liberty,* 53, 70, 75–103, 116–124.

23 Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation, *Beyond the Fireworks of 76: A Summary Report of Thirty Sites Determined to Be Significant in Illustrating and Commemorating the Role of Black Americans in United States History* (Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation, 1974). https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2304346.

24 Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Bicentennial and the Papers of Great White Men," *Perspectives on History,* November 1, 1971. https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/the-american-revolution-bicentennial-and-the-papers-of-great-white-men/.

25 Christoper B. Daly, "The Peoples Bicentennial Commission." *The Harvard Crimson,* April 28, 1975. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1975/4/28/the-peoples-bicentennial-commission-pif-you/.

26 "NPS Commemorations and Celebrations," National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/npscelebrates/usa-250.htm.

The annual Cultural Showcase, a joint event by Fort Stanwix National Monument and the Midtown Utica Community Center, highlights the stories of the park's newest neighbors in front of the Bicentennial-era reconstruction of the fort. National Park Service.

CONCLUSION

Revolutions across the Western Hemisphere created new nations independent from European rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. American reactions to the Haitian Revolution's rejection of slavery have resulted in few physical memorials, with many stories remaining hidden in U.S. National Parks. In the wake of the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century and the greater American role in international relations in the twentieth, memorials in parks began to recognize both Black and Latin American liberators. As the dialogue around the past Bicentennial and upcoming America 250 commemoration shows, the meaning of the Age of Revolutions is always being re-formed in the present.

The National Park Service preserves places that embody the different ways in which Americans have remembered movements of revolution, reaction, and reform. Reading cities, landscapes, buildings, and memorials for clues to their physical histories and looking at how they have been built, destroyed, and transformed over time are ways of uncovering the choices and systems that shaped the visible and tangible realities around us today. Researching and understanding these physical spaces can help students explore the interplay between revolution, reaction, and reform in the past and consider how they will choose to engage with those revolutionary histories and values in the present and future.

Students who are interested in studying these topics in more depth might consider the following approaches:

- Explore how a recently designated unit of the National Park Service connects to these themes in American history. For example, the Emmett and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument in Mississippi connects to revolution (Mamie Till-Mobley's actions), reaction (repeated vandalism and violence against sites and signage), and reform (long-term impact on the Civil Rights Movement). Learn more about recent changes to the National Park system at **nps.gov/aboutus/recent-changes.htm**.
- Analyze a memorial or commemorative place or program in your town or state. If possible, visit the site, talk with NPS personnel, and consider ways to incorporate maps, photographs, and video into your NHD project.

To access more theme resources, go to nhd.org/theme.

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Jefferson Cipher Disk, 1790

WHAT'S IN A WORD? BEING THOUGHTFUL ABOUT TERMINOLOGY IN HISTORICAL WRITING: A CLASSROOM GUIDE

RENEE ROMANO, Ph.D., Robert S. Danforth Professor of History, Professor of Comparative American Studies and Africana Studies, Oberlin College

Everything has a history, and that includes language. When students conduct historical research in primary sources, they may encounter terms describing race, ethnicity, sexuality, or disability that are no longer in use today or that are considered offensive. Words have power. Historically, people have used derogatory or stigmatizing terms to express their superiority over others, to justify unequal treatment, and even to excuse violence. History students have a particular responsibility to understand the power of language, remain aware of the historical context of terms used in different eras, and make respectful choices about their own language use.

Language choices can be especially challenging in historical work. On the one hand, the language used in a primary source from a different historical era might be important evidence that makes it possible to understand conditions in the past or the perspective of the writer. A primary source reflects the ideas and values of the time in which it was written, and as historians, we are trying to understand those past beliefs. On the other hand, repeating outdated or offensive language when analyzing primary sources can detract attention from the argument and might offend readers in unintended ways. This short guide explores some of the issues that might be encountered in historical research and offers current best practices when making language choices when writing about history.

As teachers, it is important to model this behavior for our students in class and explain why we speak the way that we do about people in the past. This will help students to do the same in their National History Day® (NHD) projects.

OUTDATED TERMS

Some terms that were once commonly used to talk about race, sexuality, or disability are today considered outdated. These include terms that might even have been considered respectful in a particular historical time period. See examples of outdated language below that you or your students might find in primary sources, along with their favored contemporary alternatives.

Outdated Term	Preferred Contemporary Term
Negro or Colored	African American people or Black people
Caucasian	White people
Miscegenation or Amalgamation	Interracial relationships
Oriental	Asian American
Crippled	A person with a physical disability
Feeble-minded, Imbecile, Retarded	A person with an intellectual or cognitive disability
Homosexual	Gay, lesbian, queer
Minorities	People of color, non-Whites, marginalized populations

Many of these terms are considered outdated because the group they are supposed to describe has rejected them. As a rule, it is most respectful to use the terminology preferred by the group in question to describe themselves. Some of the terms referenced in the table originated not simply as descriptions but as part of definitions that stigmatized or mischaracterized people. The word "homosexual" was first used by psychiatrists who defined same-sex attraction as a disease. "Caucasian," a term historically used to describe people of European descent, was coined by German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in 1795. Blumenbach believed that humanity had its origins in the region of the Caucasus Mountains in Eastern Europe and that people from that region were the most beautiful in the world, so he used the term "Caucasian" to refer to people who were considered White. The term reflects a discredited theory of biological racism.

Teachers and students should avoid using outdated terms when writing in their own voices. If an author needs to use dated terminology when discussing a subject in its historical context, these terms should be placed in quotation marks to indicate an understanding that the word is dated. Modern-day terms should be used in the analysis rather than repeating the outdated term.

Some organizational or institutional titles may incorporate terms that were once respectful but are today considered outdated. For example, when they founded the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1909, the organizers chose to use the term "Colored" in its title, and the organization continues to use the same name today. The many political conventions organized by African Americans from the 1830s to 1870s are known as the Colored Conventions Movement. The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, like the NAACP, has maintained the same title since its founding in 1896. The Black baseball teams of the early twentieth century were known as the Negro Leagues.

Formal titles of organizations should not be changed. It is not disrespectful to use terms, such as "colored" or "Negro," when they are part of an organization's title. However, the outdated term should not be used when referring to the organization. For example, it would be appropriate to write: "African Americans in Philadelphia in 1830 held the very first Colored Convention."

It is also now outdated to use descriptors of racial or ethnic identities, such as Black or Latino, as nouns. "Blacks" or "the Blacks" are not used when describing a group of people of African descent. Instead, these descriptors are used as adjectives (Black people, Latino soldiers, African American women). Using a racial identity as a noun is considered dehumanizing because it reduces a person to a racial category. African American or Asian American are acceptable terms because the terms "African" or "Asian" in these instances are adjectives that describe American.

Latino/Latina is commonly used to describe people living in the United States who are originally from Latin America. It describes people who came from a particular geographic area. Hispanic refers to people who are from Spanish-speaking countries. For example, a person from Spain could properly be described as Hispanic but not Latino.

PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

Historians today prefer what is known as people-first language, which means using terms that prioritize the individual above any specific identity or condition. People-first language recognizes that a person's status or diagnosis does not define them. It focuses attention on people's humanity rather than their identity characteristics or conditions imposed upon them. Some examples of language choices that many historians today prefer:

- *enslaved person* instead of a slave
- *incarcerated person* instead of an inmate
- *a person with a disability* instead of disabled or crippled
- *a person with a learning disability* instead of learning disabled.

SLURS AND OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE

Beyond outdated language, students may also encounter terms that are racial, ethnic, or sexual slurs in a primary source. Slurs are terms that are insulting and demeaning. They were used historically (and may still be used today) to attack and denigrate a person based on their racial, ethnic, or sexual identity.

Understanding the power and significance of these terms can be an important part of historical analysis. In historical context, using an insulting and denigrating term might be evidence of the writer's or speaker's personal attitudes.

Offensive language might also be a sign of broader cultural attitudes. Finding racial slurs used in political speeches helps illuminate the nature of political debates at the time of the speeches and could well be evidence of how certain groups of people were marginalized in the political sphere. Offensive language, in short, deserves attention and analysis.

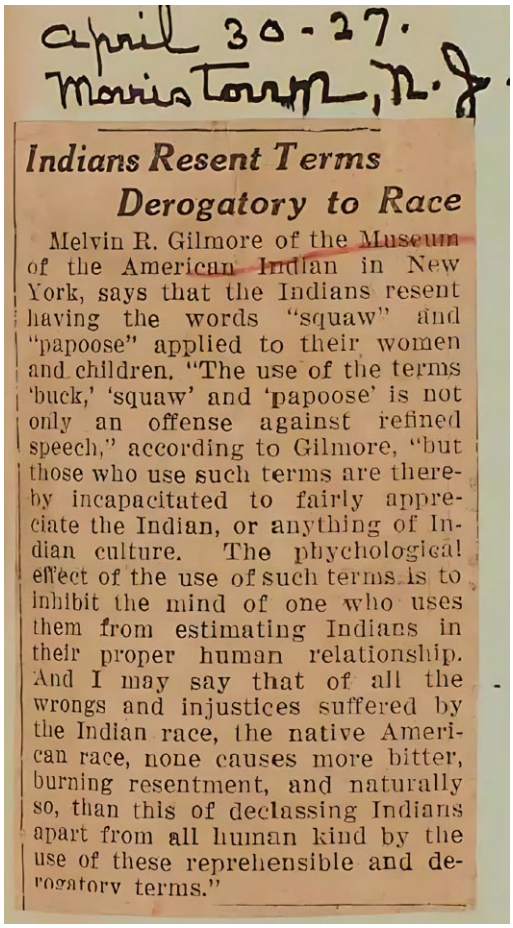
ANALYZING SOURCES THAT CONTAIN OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE

How is offensive language analyzed without repeating the offense in your own writing or when teaching your students? It is challenging, even in writing this guide, to discuss how to deal with offensive language without using or quoting that language. Here are some guidelines to follow and share with students when dealing with language from the past that is degrading and designed to stigmatize others.

- If you are unsure how offensive a term might be to others today, do additional research or ask. Some terms that once might have been considered slurs (such as the term "bloody") no longer carry such negative meanings. But many slurs that refer to people of different religious, racial, or ethnic backgrounds or to women or queer people are highly inflammatory today. If you are not familiar with a word you find in your research but can tell from context that it is meant to be an insult, try to learn more so you can make informed decisions in your own writing.
- If you determine a word is a slur, do not use it when writing in your own voice. If you feel you must quote a primary source verbatim that uses a racial, ethnic, or sexual slur to convey an argument or to be truthful to the meaning of the original source, be careful not to repeat the slur as part of your analysis.
- Consider carefully whether you need to use a quotation that contains insulting or degrading language. If you are analyzing rhetoric or if you are making a case about a particular individual's attitudes or the cultural attitudes at the time, you might feel like it is necessary to offer evidence in the form of a direct quotation that contains a slur. But often, it is possible to make the argument without the direct quote. Consider whether you might be able to paraphrase without compromising your analysis. You might explain that the author of a source used harmful or derogatory language without quoting the source directly.
- If you do feel that you need to use a quote that contains a slur, you should acknowledge that the language is offensive and explain why you chose to use it, either in your analysis or in a footnote. Some writers choose to write just the first letter of the word and substitute asterisks (*) or dashes (–) for the other letters. If you make that kind of change to a source, you should again acknowledge that in the text or a footnote.

CONCLUSION

Historical work should be true to the past and should not shy away from telling hard stories or acknowledging racism, sexism, or other forms of discrimination. At the same time, historians need to consider how to best communicate with and respect their present-day audience. They must be thoughtful about the terminology they use in their historical work and communicate openly with their audience about their choices. By doing so, they demonstrate both an understanding of the past and a sensitivity to the present.



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Indians Resent Terms Derogatory to Race

Melvin R. Gilmore of the Museum of the American Indian in New York, says that the Indians resent having the words "squaw" and "papoose" applied to their women and children. "The use of the terms 'buck,' 'squaw' and 'papoose' is not only an offense against refined speech," according to Gilmore, "but those who use such terms are thereby incapacitated to fairly appreciate the Indian, or anything of Indian culture. The phychological effect of the use of such terms is to inhibit the mind of one who uses them from estimating Indians in their proper human relationship. And I may say that of all the wrongs and injustices suffered by the Indian race, the native American race, none causes more bitter, burning resentment, and naturally so, than this of declassing Indians apart from all human kind by the use of these reprehensible and derogatory terms."

Complaints about the use of derogatory terms are not new. This 1927 newspaper article describes how terms, such as "squaw" and "buck," once used to describe and stereotype Native American men and women, are dehumanizing and cause anger and resentment among Indigenous peoples. Excerpt from Scrapbook of Newspaper Articles on MAI, May 1926–Sep 1927, MAI-Heye Foundation Records, Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI.AC.001).

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TRACING THE HISTORY OF REVOLUTION, REACTION, AND REFORM THROUGH TREATIES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

AMANDA SALAZAR, Pathways Intern, National Endowment for the Humanities

In 1868, the United States government signed the Fort Laramie Treaty with the Lakota people, promising them the sacred Black Hills in perpetuity. Yet within a decade, gold was discovered, and the U.S. government broke its promise, seizing the land and leaving the Lakota to fight for their survival. This reversal is just one example of the countless treaties that reshaped Indigenous lives, forcing communities onto undesirable lands while breaking promises of respect and sovereignty. Despite such treatment, Indigenous peoples, such as the Lakota, have endured, turning their history of dispossession into a legacy of resilience. Their fight to reclaim the Black Hills and preserve their heritage continues to inspire movements for rights across Native communities today.

The impact of treaties on Indigenous communities throughout the United States has been profound and far-reaching because these agreements, often framed as tools of diplomacy, led to dispossession. The U.S. government historically established treaties with various Indigenous tribes as legally binding agreements. Even though negotiations often included duress, coercion, and lack of proper translation, these documents held legal authority, allowing the government to assert control over large areas of Indigenous lands.

Treaties established systems that restricted tribes to designated reservation lands where they were relocated as compensation for the ancestral territories they were compelled to leave behind. Unfortunately, the lands designated for Indigenous peoples were frequently undesirable, unusable, or unsuitable for farming. Despite the many problems created by these treaties, the reaction of Indigenous communities has been one of resilience, prompting movements for reform that honor their rights and heritage. As students consider the 2026 National History Day® (NHD) theme of *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*, there are countless stories of the strength and determination of the Indigenous peoples of North America that should be celebrated.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TREATIES

Since the nation's inception, treaties have played a significant role in the relationships between the United States government and sovereign entities. Among these entities are many Indigenous tribes, each with its own distinct cultures and governance structures. However, not all tribes have been formally recognized as sovereign nations under U.S. law, leading to varying degrees of legal status and rights.

Historically, treaties with Indigenous peoples have served multiple purposes, including delineating land boundaries and regulating hunting and fishing rights. Some were signed because of the promises they held, and others were signed as an act of goodwill and peace-seeking. The first treaty between the U.S. government and a Native American tribe was established in 1778 between the Lenape (Delaware) people and the Continental Congress. This revolutionary treaty aimed to ensure safe passage for American troops engaged in the fight for independence in exchange for congressional recognition of the tribe's sovereign powers.[1]

This initial agreement was revolutionary in setting a crucial precedent; it established that Indigenous tribes would be officially recognized and dealt with as were other sovereign

1 "First Written Treaty Between the U.S. and a Native American Nation To Be Shown at the American Indian Museum," Smithsonian Insitution, April 18, 2018. https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/releases/first-written-treaty-between-us-and-native-american-nation-be-shown-american-indian-museum.

nations. The early treaties were predominantly focused on forming military alliances that were essential for the survival of colonial forces during the Revolutionary War. However, these agreements often evolved into documents that restricted Indigenous tribes to specific lands, which frequently contradicted their traditional customs and land use practices. Consequently, the relationship between the U.S. government and Indigenous peoples has been complex and fraught with challenges rooted in the shifting dynamics of power, culture, and governance.

One significant example of this attempt at pragmatic decision-making is the Treaty of New Echota, signed in 1835 by a small faction of Cherokee leaders.[2] The treaty stipulated the cession of Cherokee territory in the Southeastern United States in exchange for compensation and promises of new lands in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). The Cherokee leaders believed that by agreeing to the treaty, they could negotiate peace and prevent further violence and hostility directed toward their people during a time of increasing pressure from the U.S. government to remove Native American tribes from their ancestral lands.

The Cherokee National History Museum in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, became the capital of the Cherokee Nation after their forcible relocation through the Treaty of New Echota. Library of Congress (2020743810).

However, this decision proved catastrophic. Despite the hopes for peace, the treaty ultimately served as a catalyst for the forced removal of thousands of Cherokee people, now known as the Trail of Tears. Many suffered from harsh conditions, disease, and starvation, resulting in the deaths of thousands along the perilous journey. The consequences of the treaty and the resulting removal marked a dark chapter in American history and had lasting repercussions for the Cherokee Nation.[3]

To explore topics about the treaties established between the United States government and Indigenous nations, visit the following collections:

American Indian Law: A Beginner's Guide
Library of Congress
guides.loc.gov/american-indian-law/Treaties

American Indian Treaties
National Archives and Records Administration
archives.gov/research/native-americans/treaties

Native American & Indigenous Communities
University of California Merced Library
libguides.ucmerced.edu/native-american-indigenous/maps-treaties

Tribal Law Gateway
National Indian Law Library
narf.org/nill/triballaw/treaties.html

Tribal Treaties Database
Oklahoma State University Libraries
treaties.okstate.edu

Why Treaties Matter: Self-Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations
Minnesota Humanities Center, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian
treatiesmatter.org/exhibit/

CONFLICTING WORLDVIEWS

A crucial element of the discourse surrounding treaties is the issue of language barriers combined with insufficient availability of interpreters committed to advocating for tribal interests. This communication gap often led to misinterpretations of the treaties and their intentions. The 1833 treaty with the Pawnee provides an instructive example.[4] During these negotiations, the parties used a French interpreter as an intermediary since no Pawnee leader spoke English, and no U.S. representative spoke Pawnee. The resulting agreement represented vastly different interpretations of the concessions made by the Pawnee as well as the promises made by the U.S.[5]

2 Charles J. Kappler, Ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. Vol. II (Treaties). (Government Printing Office, 1904). Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-New-Echota-1835.pdf.

3 Tim Alan Garrison, "Cherokee Removal," New Georgia Encyclopedia, updated July 23, 2018, accessed December 30, 2024. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/cherokee-removal/.

4 *Ratified Indian Treaty 190: Pawnee - Grand Pawnee Village, Platte River, October 9, 1833*, treaty, October 9, 1833, National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 124218433). https://catalog.archives.gov/id/124218433.

5 "The Pawnee Treaties of 1833 and 1857," Native Knowledge 360°, Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, updated 2019, accessed December 30, 2024. https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pawnee-treaties.

To comprehend why tribal leaders would consent to such agreements, it is essential to understand the historical context. For tribal leaders, signing a treaty was often perceived as a pragmatic decision—an opportunity to safeguard the existence of their people and establish a pathway for potentially beneficial relationships with the U.S. government. Developing inter-tribal agreements was not unknown to some tribes. The Haudenosaunee (hoe-dee-no-SHOW-nee) Confederacy, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy or the League of Five Nations, united the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk tribes to ensure strength against other groups in the area.[6]

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy included a representative from each tribe who advocated for the interests of their group, particularly in matters of trade and war, and operated under a framework that prioritized communal well-being and collaboration. In fact, recent scholarship argues that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy served as a foundational model for the modern United States government. Sources show, for example, that Benjamin Franklin, who was responsible for negotiating treaties with the Iroquois Confederacy, remarked in 1751 that the Six Nations (Tuscarora became the sixth nation in 1722) should serve as a model for the "ten or a Dozen English Colonies" working together. During the Constitutional Convention, John Adams suggested that the framers should study "the ancient Germans and modern Indians" because of their well-devised separation of powers within their governments.[7]

Consequently, when engaging in treaties with the U.S. government, tribal leaders genuinely believed that these agreements would be honored and interpreted in accordance with their communal values. This stark contrast to the colonizers' individualistic mindset, primarily focused on personal gain, is crucial in understanding the complexities and nuances of treaty agreements. Recognizing these historical contexts and community perspectives is vital for fostering meaningful dialogue around the enduring implications of treaties and the ongoing struggles faced by Indigenous populations in the United States.

A STORY OF OPPOSITION

Many examples of resistance since the beginning of the treaty era continue to hold relevance in the modern day. One story that is rarely told and is treated as merely local history rather than as an important part of American history is the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. At this point, the United States Army was embroiled in the American Civil War. Residents of southeastern Minnesota dealt with friction and frustration between homesteaders and the Dakota people. Due to a treaty written in 1805, the Dakota had lost most of the land they had lived on and the ability to follow migrating animals for food and shelter necessities.[8] The frustration of the Dakota people was founded in years of back pay that the government officials did not fulfill.[9]

The conflict ignited when a group of young Dakota men, fueled by a deep-seated resentment over their circumstances, took the bold step of attacking local homesteaders. It was a desperate expression of their grievances and an attempt to intimidate the settlers into abandoning the area. However, what began as a spontaneous act of defiance quickly escalated into a prolonged conflict, marked by months of hostage-taking and battles on both sides.

The situation grew increasingly complex as discord emerged among the Dakota people themselves. While some leaders advocated for a peaceful resolution, emphasizing diplomacy and negotiation, others saw the hostages as bargaining chips to leverage better living conditions and meet specific demands from the settlers and the government.[10] This internal division further complicated the conflict's landscape, as differing opinions led to tension and fractured unity within the Dakota community. The war transformed the relationships between the Dakota and the settlers, impacting the very fabric of their societal dynamics.

Little Crow, a Mdewakanton Dakota chief, was one of the leaders of the Dakota in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Library of Congress (2021630471).

6 "The Six Nations Confederacy During the American Revolution," Fort Stanwix National Monument, National Park Service, accessed December 30, 2024. https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-six-nations-confederacy-during-the-american-revolution.htm.
7 Robert J. Miller, "American Indian Constitutions and Their Influence on the United States Constitution," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 159, no. 1 (2015): 32–56. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24640169.
8 *Treaty with the Sioux, 1805,* treaty, 1805, Oklahoma State University Digital Collections. https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29395/rec/1.
9 "US-Dakota War of 1862," University of Minnesota Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, accessed December 30, 2024. https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/us-dakota-war-1862.
10 Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, Eds., *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988).

The Dakota eventually released the hostages under an agreement that there would be no more death. Once the battles ended, the military court tried almost 500 Dakota men. More than 300 were sentenced to death. These trials had no jury and were completed in record time, many under five minutes. The names of those sentenced to be hanged were sent to President Abraham Lincoln. He and his advisors reviewed the cases and commuted most of them, sentencing 39 to be hanged for their alleged involvement in civilian massacres. Authorities hanged 38 men (one man received a last-minute reprieve) in the largest mass hanging in U.S. history, and sent those whose sentences were commuted to an internment camp in Iowa. Minnesota voided treaties with the Dakota in 1863 and relocated the remaining Dakota to Nebraska.

The legacy of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 continues to influence modern interactions in complex ways. In the 1970s, a memorial was erected in Mankato, Minnesota, on the site of the executions. In 2012, then-Governor Mark Dayton apologized for the events and declared August 17, the anniversary of the war's onset, a Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation.[11] Until 2022—the 160th anniversary of these events—the Dakota tribe held horseback marathon rides from South Dakota to Mankato each December. These rides were both a memorial and a tribute, providing those who completed them with a way to reconnect with their ancestors and acknowledge that many of those ancestors took the same path when they were pushed into South Dakota from Minnesota. One reaction to the U.S.-Dakota War is a law prohibiting Dakota peoples from living in the state of Minnesota. While it is not necessarily enforced, it is still in place.[12]

LONG-STANDING IMPLICATIONS

In the face of adversity and broken promises, many Indigenous communities have shown remarkable ingenuity. Some tribes reacted by identifying innovative ways to cultivate arable land or manage livestock effectively. By employing sustainable farming practices and using their resourcefulness, these tribes have enhanced their financial stability, allowing them to secure necessities, including food and healthcare, which are vital for the survival and well-being of their communities. Many tribes continue to ensure the fulfillment of treaty agreements, working to safeguard what was promised to them. The Diné (Navajo) tribe has gone to great lengths to bring back sustainable farming by creating the Navajo Ethno-Agricultural Educational Farm.[13] The Intertribal Agricultural Council, founded in 1987, works with tribes around the country to improve agricultural practices and governance structures in the promotion of tribal self-determination.[14]

The inconsistent enforcement of treaties between Indigenous tribes and government entities resulted in significant and enduring consequences for these communities, profoundly affecting their daily lives. Many tribes experienced substantial land loss, which restricted their territorial rights and diminished access to traditional hunting and fishing grounds. The result was a ripple effect on their cultural practices and community cohesion.

Many Indigenous peoples hold the belief that land should not be owned by individuals but shared collectively. This philosophy underscores their relationship with the land, emphasizing stewardship and communal benefit rather than privatization. Despite ongoing challenges, this belief remains a vital aspect of their identity and way of life, illustrating the ongoing struggle for recognition and rights in the face of historical injustices.

The reaction of Indigenous peoples in North America is ongoing and dynamic, showcasing their remarkable ability to adapt and sustain their cultural practices over time. This is particularly evident in the way they have embraced and modified farming techniques, integrating traditional methods with contemporary agricultural practices to enhance their food sovereignty and environmental stewardship.

A prayer and color presentation at the Colorado Springs Native American Inter-Tribal Powwow in 2015. Powwows celebrate Indigenous resiliency. Library of Congress (2015633356).

Some of these reforms center on preserving cultural practices. The revival of traditional dance forms and the revitalization of Indigenous languages speak to a profound commitment to cultural preservation. These practices serve as vital links to their heritage, honoring the ancestors who fought to maintain these traditions despite historical oppression. Indigenous communities deeply honor those

11 Mark Dayton, *Governor Mark Dayton's Statement Commemorating the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862*, speech, August 16, 2012. https://www.leg.mn.gov/docs/2018/other/181224/governor/newsroom/indexfaf7.htm.
12 "US-Dakota War of 1862."
13 "Navajo Farming," Navajo Ethno-Agriculture, accessed December 30, 2024. https://navajofarming.org/.
14 "Intertribal Agriculture Council," Intertribal Agricultural Council, updated 2024, accessed December 30, 2024. https://www.indianag.org/.

who came before them, recognizing the sacrifices made by those forcibly removed from their homes, languages, and cultural practices by colonization and systemic injustice. This acknowledgment fosters a sense of identity and community resilience that remains strong today.

CONCLUSION

The history of treaties within the United States reflects a complex relationship between Indigenous tribes and the government, often marked by broken promises and disputes. Nevertheless, the spirit of resilience and a revolutionary mindset to uphold their core values existed long before the establishment of these treaties. This enduring strength empowers Indigenous peoples as they continue to advocate for their rights, react against injustices, preserve their identities, and assert their sovereignty in a changing world while also striving for reform in policies that affect their communities.

Teachers can access more resources on EDSITEment (**edsitement.neh.gov/**) to help their students learn more about Native Americans:

Lesson Plan: *Native Americans and the American Revolution: Choosing Sides*
edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/native-americans-role-american-revolution-choosing-sides

Lesson Plan: *Who Belongs on the Frontier: Cherokee Removal*
edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/who-belongs-frontier-cherokee-removal

Teacher's Guide: *Commemorating Constitution Day*
edsitement.com/teachers-guides/commemorating-constitution-day

Media Resource: *The Papers of the War Department*
edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/papers-war-department

To access more theme resources, go to nhd.org/theme.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW? THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPACT OF NATIONAL HISTORY DAY® ON FORMER STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

AMANDA MORRISON, Director of Communications, National History Day®

Creating a National History Day® (NHD) project, while often challenging, is a uniquely impactful experience. Each year since 1974, students have developed entries showcasing their historical knowledge and creativity. First hosted at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio with 127 students competing in three entry categories (exhibit, performance, and paper), NHD has expanded to become an international educational program, adding the media (now documentary) category in the 1980s, followed by the website category in 2006. The lessons students learn from NHD, both historical and skill-based, guide them in life and their future careers.

In this article, you will meet six NHD alums from different eras and discover how NHD impacted them as students and continues to influence them today. Although their professions span many disciplines, they all continue to use the lessons learned through NHD.

SRI RAO

Film Director, Producer, and Writer

NHD alum and filmmaker Sri Rao, 2024. Courtesy of Sri Rao.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Sri Rao is a film director, producer, and writer in New York City, where he is one of only a few Americans to work on films coming out of India and Bollywood. He most recently created the series, *The Fame Game*, for Netflix. His successful career in film started with National History Day when, in 1987, he designed a media presentation. He remembers National History Day being the first time he "learned how to tell stories in a meaningful way, woven together with a point of view and with emotional impact." The theme in 1987 was *Liberty: Rights and Responsibilities in History*, and Rao researched Japanese incarceration camps in the United States during World War II. To show two contrasting images during his presentation, Rao built "a contraption with four slide projectors that I had to manually operate timed to the narration and the music," which was "ambitious for the time."

Rao credits his National History Day experience with laying the groundwork for his current work as a filmmaker. It is where he learned "how to take a topic that was really complex and multi-faceted and sensitive and tell it in a meaningful way, with the combination of facts as well as primary interviews and research, but woven together with a point of view and with emotional impact to present a full picture of not just what happened, but also the implications of what happened." It is, he believes, "the most profound thing you could ever offer a young person."

CLAUDIA ACEVEDO

Social Studies Teacher

NHD alum and Social Studies Teacher Claudia Acevedo, 2024. Courtesy of Claudia Acevedo.

Claudia Acevedo currently empowers young people to take ownership of their historical research. Acevedo competed in the exhibit category in 1995 and 1996 and is now a Social Studies Teacher who uses NHD in her classroom. "I often show my students pictures of my high school project and annotated bibliography on the day I introduce NHD to them," Acevedo noted. "They giggle when they see a photo of me 30 years younger and become curious about building a project of their own. It helps them see an example of what this competition might look like for them."

Not only does Acevedo participate in NHD with her students, but she also draws on the research skills she learned from National History Day every day. "As a teacher, you have to research all the time," she explained. "I am always searching for resources to share with my students, so research skills are essential. Reading and writing and being able to communicate and summarize information is most of what I do."

As Acevedo tells her students, by committing an amount of time to NHD each day, what seems impossible can be accomplished. "Don't be afraid of hard work. Continue digging and finding more information as you research. Whatever you do, don't give up."

RYAN LENORA BROWN

Foreign Correspondent

NHD alum and journalist Ryan Lenora Brown, 2024. Courtesy of Ryan Lenora Brown.

For Ryan Lenora Brown, writing and communicating are her bread and butter. As a foreign correspondent living in Johannesburg, South Africa, she covers political, economic, and social events on the African continent, reporting from nearly two dozen countries. Brown said, "NHD taught me to be a journalist in fundamental ways. It's where I learned to do research and where I learned to interview people. Doing NHD documentaries made me realize that if you are shy but curious (which I very much was as a teenager), reporting cracks open the door to befriend the people who interest you most."

Brown competed in the junior and senior individual documentary categories from 2002 to 2006, placing first in the nation in 2006 with her documentary on Colorado Governor Ralph Carr and his political career-ending stand against the internment of Japanese Americans. She commented, "I always chose topics that shone light on a piece of history I felt had been forgotten or overlooked. I think this really shaped the kind of work I do today."

Brown reminds students that "done right, interviewing people can be one of the most profound ways to honor someone's life experience. It allows you to approach people and say—You are the expert. You have the knowledge. I am here to learn from you . . . I think there is nothing more human than to listen to someone, to say: I hear you, I see you, I am bearing witness."

QUINLAN PULLEYKING

Marketing Coordinator

NHD alum and marketing professional Quinlan Pulleyking, 2024. Courtesy of Quinlan Pulleyking.

Born and raised in southwestern Missouri, Quinlan Pulleyking uses the communication skills she learned from NHD in her professional life. She participated in National History Day from 2010 to 2012 and enjoyed communicating history through performance. Now, as the Marketing Coordinator for Missouri State University's Career Center, she applies the communication skills and creativity she refined as an NHD student to her work—most recently spearheading an initiative to bring a wheelchair-accessible Professional Headshot Booth to campus—in addition to her social media management duties. After her first year in her current position, she was awarded the Division of Student Affairs' "Outstanding New Staff Member Award" for excellence in communication.

Pulleyking's main takeaway from participating in NHD: "National History Day instilled in me (early on) the necessity for sound research," she said. "History itself is so important—but the way that we tell it and pass it on—it is our responsibility to do it with as much accuracy as possible."

She would tell students, "It is less about how you place in competition with others, and more about how you educate yourself and the people around you in the process." She cites the fact that she still thinks about one of her first NHD group performances about women getting the right to vote when she exercises her own right to vote.

OCTAVIA BARYAYEBWA

Licensed Professional Counselor

NHD alum and licensed professional counselor, Octavia Baryayebwa, 2024, Courtesy of Octavia Baryayebwa.

Octavia Baryayebwa is another NHD alum who values telling important stories in history. While participating in National History Day in 2014 and 2015, she studied and created performances about the lives and legacies of civil rights activist Bayard Rustin and LGBTQ+ activist Vito Russo. Baryayebwa knows NHD equipped her "with the essential skills to pursue deeper, more nuanced answers rather than settling for the readily available information"—skills she uses in her career as a licensed professional counselor in Maryland. "Daily, I engage in a process of curiosity within the therapeutic space, allowing me to remain attuned to my clients' diverse lived experiences."

That same curiosity prompted the creation of NHD's Equality in History Special Prize. As a student competitor, Baryayebwa approached the president of the Board of Trustees and asked why there was not a prize recognizing LGBTQ+ leaders in history. This question sparked the idea for today's Equality in History prize, awarded in both the junior and senior divisions to an outstanding entry in any category that illuminates the history of human equality. Baryayebwa said the idea for the prize came to her almost instinctively "given the profound personal connection I felt to my research."

She advises NHD students "to find something, anything, no matter how small, that brings them a personal sense of life and vitality and to follow that thread wherever it may lead them. Be curious and open to the possibilities that you can create for yourself in this life."

FRANCO ORELLANA

Case Manager

NHD alum and case manager Franco Orellana, 2024. Courtesy of Franco Orellana.

Franco Orellana competed in both websites and performances during the four years he participated in NHD in Colorado, studying topics varying from the history of the Supreme Court to Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. His 2017 senior individual performance about Maximilien Robespierre placed third at the National Contest. During college, he interned for National History Day in Colorado and served as a co-coordinator for the Denver City Region. Although he enjoyed studying history, he ultimately chose to pursue a career in public health, and the critical thinking skills he developed through National History Day paved the way for his college degree and current career.

"I originally intended to go into practicing medicine and began doing ride-alongs as a Paramedic Explorer," Orellana said. "It was there that I began to notice the pattern of health disparities in the healthcare setting. It's thanks to NHD that I found myself wondering what the systemic issues were and what historical context was causing populations to go unserved in healthcare. The combination of my love for helping others and my skills from NHD is what led me to pursue Public Health as a degree, a decision that I am incredibly proud of."

Orellana currently works as a case manager for a human services organization serving migrants. Outside of work, he still volunteers and judges at the Colorado Affiliate Contest because he believes "supporting NHD is essential so that other students can learn the skills I did and have access to the opportunities I did." He reminds current students that "NHD is great because you get to choose your project. You get to choose something you're passionate about and really understand what it's like to be able to study something that you enjoy."

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