

Learn Together: Meet Some of the Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement



Using the lesson plan and Google Arts & Culture resources

This lesson plan is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories and exhibits related to the lesson topic. The images you will see here are just a sample of the media—texts, images, audio, and video—available to you on the Google Arts & Culture website. A parent or teacher might be guiding you through the lesson, or you might choose to complete it on your own.

All you need to access the lesson is an internet connection and a web browser. You may want to take notes, whether you do that digitally or with paper and pen.

The lesson plan has an **introduction**, which will describe the topic and provide some background information that will help you understand what you are seeing, hearing, and reading. Then the lesson will take you on a journey from one **Story** to another, fill in some details along the way, and pose **questions** that will help you focus on important ideas. Some lesson plans include a **project** related to the lesson topic. All end with a **quiz** and some **ideas for exploring the topic further**.

The lesson plan includes **questions** about the main stories and exhibits, and there is also a **quiz**. You will want to write answers to the questions in a notebook or on a piece of paper. Then you can check all your answers when you've finished the lesson.

Resources on the Google Arts & Culture website include Themes, Stories, Museum Views, items, and images.

- ❖ **Themes** bring together stories, exhibits, collections, images, audio, and video files that relate to a topic.
- ❖ In a **Story**, clicking on the arrow on the right side of a slide will move you forward. The arrow on the left side takes you back. Sometimes, clicking on the right arrow will zoom you in on an image. Just keep clicking to keep moving forward. Audio and videos on slides will play automatically. Clicking on an image title will take you to a page with more information about it.
- ❖ In **Museum Views**, you move through a 3D space. Click to move forward. Click, hold, and move the cursor left or right to turn.
- ❖ An **item** will take you to an individual **image**, where you can zoom in and sometimes read more about the artefact.



In this lesson, you will learn about:

- ❖ the lives of Black women who fought for equality in the United States justice system.
- ❖ Black female artists and entertainers who broke racial barriers.
- ❖ Rosa Parks, the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,” and other Black female activists.
- ❖ what Black women did to help desegregate the educational system.

You will:

- ❖ view some stories about Black women in the Civil Rights Movement.
- ❖ answer some questions about what you have seen and read.

This lesson will take **30–45 minutes** to complete.

[Civil rights march on Washington, D.C. / \[WKL\] \(Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division\)/ Warren K. Leffler 1963-08-28](#)

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History



Learn Together: Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement

The abolition of slavery. Voting rights. Equal education for all. An end to segregation. These are some of the social injustices that Black women have been fighting to end for over two centuries in the United States.

From the nation's beginning, Black women added an intellectually diverse landscape of ideas to the solution for racism and oppression. They resisted slavery. They spoke out against racism. They established women's clubs to improve conditions for Black people in the US. They worked in politics and journalism, organized black workers, supported educational measures that would lift Black people, and broke racial barriers in the arts.

In the 20th century, Black women formed the backbone of the modern Civil Rights Movement and the women's suffrage movement. They were among the grassroots leaders challenging America to embrace justice and equality for all. They formed a composite image of the new Black woman leader. Some were college-educated, some not. Some were young adults displeased with the conditions of Black, poor, and working-class people, while others were older women whose lives were testaments of struggle and survival.

Today, Black women continue to overcome the double bind of racism and sexism. They persevere and add rich, vibrant voices to the chorus of American freedom, justice, and independence.

As you view the exhibits and stories in this lesson, think about these questions:

- ❖ What are some of the injustices that Black people have endured in the United States?
- ❖ How have Black women led the fight against those injustices?
- ❖ How have issues of gender and race overlapped and affected Black women in the US?



Activism in the Courts: Dr. Pauli Murray

As a Black member of the LGBTQ+ community, women's rights activist, author, Episcopal priest, and the lawyer responsible for much of the legal theory used in several landmark civil rights cases, Dr. Pauli Murray (1910–1985) was one of the most important women of the 20th century. In 1940, Murray sat in the Whites-only section of a bus with a friend, and they were arrested for violating state segregation laws. This incident led her to her career as a civil rights lawyer. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall called her book, *States' Laws on Race and Color* (1951), "the Bible of Civil Rights law."

Click [here](#) to learn more about Dr. Pauli Murray.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. Who was Thurgood Marshall?
2. Why do some historians consider Dr. Pauli Murray one of the most important women of the 20th century?
3. Dr. Pauli Murray once said, "One person plus a typewriter equals a movement." Explain what you think she meant by this statement.

To learn about some of the unique challenges facing women and girls of color when it comes to the struggle for gender equality, racial justice, and wellbeing, click [here](#).

Activism in the Arts: Sissieretta Jones

As the cornerstone of Carnegie Hall was laid in 1890, Andrew Carnegie stated, “Here all good causes may find a platform.” At Carnegie Hall, Black artists and entertainers found, not racial segregation, but an open forum that helped strengthen recognition of the Black cultural legacy and its significance. On February 13, 1893, 25-year-old soprano Sissieretta Jones became the first African American artist to perform in Carnegie Hall’s main auditorium. In addition to her voice, Sissieretta Jones was famous for her elaborate gowns and glittering array of medals.

Click [here](#) to learn about Black history at Carnegie Hall.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What kind of artist was Sissieretta Jones?
2. Why do you think Sissieretta Jones always wore her medals?
3. How did Black female entertainers add to the Black cultural legacy and advance civil rights?

To learn about “Grown-ish” TV actor and activist Yara Shahid’s thoughts on being black, young, and female in the United States, click [here](#).



Sissieretta Jones, Napoleon Sarony c. 1895, Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery



Activism in the Streets: Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks (1913-2005) lived and worked as a seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama. She also had training in community action and was an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When the time came to take a stand, she was well prepared. One day in 1955, Parks refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus to a White patron. Her subsequent arrest triggered a nearly year long boycott of the city's bus system, and a legal case in which US Supreme Court ruled against Montgomery's segregated bus laws.

Click [here](#) to learn about Black activists who took a stand for justice.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. Why was Rosa Parks arrested in 1955?
2. Why was Rosa Parks known as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement"?
3. Research an example of a boycott of a company or institution. Write a paragraph about your findings, including the changes the boycott's organizers required to call off the boycott.

To learn about activism in civil rights movement, including the Black Lives Matter movement, click [here](#).



Activism in Education: Daisy Bates & Elizabeth Eckford

In its historic 1954 ruling in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the US Supreme Court asserted that only by abolishing segregation entirely within public schools could educational equality be promoted. Recruited by Daisy Bates, co-owner of Arkansas' largest Black newspaper and president of the NAACP's Arkansas chapter, nine African-American students enrolled at Central High School in Little Rock in 1957. On the first day of school, an angry mob of White residents gathered. In the photo to the left, one of those students, Elizabeth Eckford, is immortalized attempting to attend her first day at school.

Click [here](#) to learn about the journey to educational equality for Blacks in the US.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. Who was Daisy Bates?
2. What is segregation?
3. Study the photograph of Elizabeth Eckford. Write a paragraph describing what you see. Then, research how Elizabeth Eckford felt on that day. Compare what you wrote with what Elizabeth Eckford experienced. Cite evidence from your sources.

To learn about desegregation at Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School, click [here](#).

Quiz

Read the questions and write your answer in your notebook or on a piece of paper.

1. What role did Dr. Pauli Murray play in advancing civil rights?
2. In what year did Dr. Pauli Murray become the first African American woman to be ordained a priest of the Episcopal Church?
3. In what way was Carnegie Hall a “platform” for issues of race and gender?
4. Who was Sissieretta Jones?
5. What was the Montgomery bus boycott about?
6. Who inspired the Albany Movement in the winter of 1961?
7. True or false: The court’s ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* was met with little to no opposition in educational institutions across the South.
8. Who was Ruby Bridges?

Explore Further

This lesson has given you some information and vocabulary to talk about the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. It has also introduced you to important Black female leaders of the movement. To learn about other aspects of Black history and culture in the US, click [here](#).



It's Your Turn!

In this lesson, you learned about Black women who played important roles in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. You also learned about some of the circumstances faced by Black Americans that these women worked and fought to change. Now it's your turn to do something.

What is something you encounter in society that you would like to change? For example, are you concerned about climate change and other people's attitudes about it? Do you believe that young people should have the right to vote? Do you encounter discrimination because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or for some other reason? What might you do to bring about change?

- ❖ Identify a social problem you would like to work to solve. State the problem in writing as clearly as you can.
- ❖ Do some research to find out what other people in your area are doing about this problem. Are there activists or organizations near you working to address the issue? What are they doing? Make notes on your research.
- ❖ Make an action plan for yourself. What are some things, or one thing, you could do to address the issue? For example, could you join one of the organizations you learned about in your research. Could you write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the problem? Could you organize friends and classmates to take some action? Make a list of the possibilities.
- ❖ Decide on one thing you would like to do to bring about the change you want to see. Discuss the idea with the adults in your life and get their permission to pursue your course of action. In fact, you might want to enlist their help.
- ❖ Go for it!

Answers

Activism in the Courts: Dr. Pauli Murray

1. Thurgood Marshall was a lawyer and civil rights activist who became the first Black Supreme Court justice.
2. She was the lawyer responsible for much of the legal theory used in several landmark civil rights cases.
3. Sample Answer: Someone's words can inspire change.

Activism in the Arts: Sissieretta Jones

1. Sissieretta Jones was an opera singer.
2. Sample Answer: I think she always wore her medals because she was proud of her accomplishments and didn't want others to forget how special she was.
3. Sample Answer: Black female entertainers proved that talent had nothing to do with race. Their acceptance in traditionally White spaces helped normalize the concept of desegregation.

Activism in the Streets: Rosa Parks

1. Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a White patron on a segregated bus.
2. Rosa Parks was known as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement" because her arrest sparked a boycott and national attention to the civil rights cause.

3. Paragraphs will vary but students should show an understanding of the meaning of *boycott* (to stop using the goods or services of a company or country).

Activism in Education: Daisy Bates & Elizabeth Eckford

1. Daisy Bates was co-owner of Arkansas' largest Black newspaper and president of the NAACP's Arkansas chapter. She recruited nine African-American students to enroll at Central High School in Little Rock in 1957.
2. Segregation is the practice or policy of keeping people separate from each other—especially because of race.
3. Comparisons will vary but students should quote primary source documents on Elizabeth Eckford.



Answers

Quiz

1. She was the lawyer responsible for much of the legal theory used in several landmark civil rights cases.
2. 1977
3. Carnegie Hall was widely known and respected. In promoting Black artists and entertainers, this institution helped strengthen recognition of the Black cultural legacy and its significance.
4. Sissieretta Jones was a leading soprano and the first African American artist to perform in Carnegie Hall's main auditorium.
5. In 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a segregated bus and refused to give up her seat to a White patron. Her arrest prompted the boycott of the bus company.
6. Rosa Parks
7. False
8. Ruby Bridges was the first African-American student to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.

Rosa Parks, Georgia Public Broadcasting