

The Politics of Lynching in 1936

Summary

It is important to know that the Civil Rights movement didn't just end with the Civil War and erupt again in the 1960's. This lesson looks at a single letter from Eleanor Roosevelt regarding a federal (non)-response to lynching in the 1930s. Perhaps a good way to introduce the Civil Rights (60's) unit.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 45 minutes each

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Ideally, the students would have access to the Internet to research some of the tangents and background mentioned in the letter, but the teacher could present that info as well.

Background for Teachers

Walter White, head of the NAACP, had an ally in Eleanor Roosevelt, and thereby limited access to the President. However, political pressures of the New Deal dampened his resolve to do anything to stop lynching at a federal government level.

There is a great paper on this politics of lynching that will give you great background knowledge, as well as insight into the issue.

http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/1569/1/Whelan_Isabelle%20Dissertation%20complete.pdf

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will understand why civil rights violations, even serious ones, were not addressed at a federal level until much later. Students will also understand more about life for African Americans during this time period.

Instructional Procedures

Introduce the letter to the students in a constructivist approach and read it as a class, noting any questions that arise from the reading, as well as information that seems important.

Possible questions from the letter:

Who is Mr. White?

What is lynching?

How widespread was the lynching problem?

What kidnapping was the federal government involved with?

Why does the President suggest education and public opinion as the best solution?

So was this just a Southern issue?

What is the Van Nuys resolution?

Why might the Senate be able to help if the President can't?

What about the Roosevelts themselves? What were their backgrounds and personal opinions?

Have the students research some of these questions and present results to the class, or share the information that the teacher has if the Internet is not available to them.

Discuss how this letter fits in with the broader history of the Civil Rights movement in the US, particularly regarding African Americans?

Slavery

Civil War
Post-reconstruction South
Northern Migration
Depression
Post WWII Society
1960s
Civil Rights today

Bibliography

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/mss/mcc/015/0001.jpg>

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