

African American Civil Rights in Rhode Island

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About These Materials:

Teacher materials on the Civil Rights Movement often have a focus on events in the 1960s and national topics. However, the Civil Rights Movement is rooted in and informed by much earlier periods of history. Additionally, many significant events related to Civil Rights history happened right here, in Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Historical Society, in partnership with the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, was awarded a grant from the National Park Service* for a multi-phase project on African Americans' Struggle for Civil Rights in Rhode Island: The 20th Century. The project consisted of conducting archival research, collecting oral histories, and documenting places of significance to civil rights in Rhode Island over the course of three years, 2017-2020. Public exhibits and school unit plans were also created thanks to this grant.

The following lessons reference many types of primary sources from local, Rhode Island collections and some created for this project, like the oral history in lesson 4.

These lessons are meant to serve as a supplement to the Civil Rights history already being taught in classrooms; the focus is on local events and people. Many lessons reference time periods earlier than the 1960s, while also drawing connections from those events up to today.

*This material was produced with assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund, administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

Learning Objectives:

Students will understand and evaluate differences between primary and secondary sources

Students will evaluate and analyze sources to gather historical information which will inform their own decisions and arguments

Students will make connections between the causes and events of the Civil Rights Movement to current circumstances today

Students will draw conclusions about how discrimination permeated many aspects of life for many Rhode Islanders including housing, education, and employment.

Educational Standards:

RI K-12 GSEs for Historical Perspectives/RI History
GSEs for Grades 3-4

HP 1: History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

HP 1-1: Students *act as historians*, using a variety of tools (e.g., artifacts and primary and secondary sources) by...

- a. describing the difference between primary and secondary sources and interpreting information from each (e.g., asking and answering questions, making predictions)

c. organizing information obtained to answer historical questions

HP 2: History is a chronicle of human activities, diverse people, and the societies they form.

HP 2-2: Students chronicle events and conditions by...

a. describing, defining, and illustrating by example Rhode Island historical individuals, groups and events

HP 3: The study of history helps us understand the present and shape the future.

HP 3-1: Students demonstrate an understanding of how the past frames the present by...

a. recognizing and interpreting how events, people, problems, and ideas shape life in the community and in Rhode Island

HP 3-2: Students make personal connections in an historical context (e.g., source-to-source, source-to-self, source-to-world) by...

a. using a variety of sources (e.g., photographs, written text, clothing, oral history) to reconstruct the past, understand the present, and make predictions for the future

HP 5: Human societies and cultures develop and change in response to human needs and wants.

HP 5-2: Students demonstrate an understanding that culture has affected how people in a society behave in relation to groups and their environment by...

b. identifying how a culture has changed over time.

HP 5-3: Various perspectives have led individuals and/or groups to interpret events or phenomena differently and with historical consequences by...

a. comparing how people with different perspectives view events in different ways.

GSEs for Grades 5-6

HP 1: History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

HP 1-1: Students *act as historians*, using a variety of tools (e.g., artifacts and primary and secondary sources) by...

b. using sources to support the stories of history (*How do we know what we know?*)

c. asking and answering historical questions, organizing information, and evaluating information in terms of relevance

d. identifying the point of view of a historical source

HP 2: History is a chronicle of human activities, diverse people, and the societies they form.

HP 2-3: Students show understanding of change over time by...

- a. establishing a chronological order by working backward from some issue, problem, or event to explain its origins and its development over time

HP 3: The study of history helps us understand the present and shape the future.

HP 3-1: Students demonstrate an understanding of how the past frames the present by...

- a. identifying historical conditions and events that relate to contemporary issues

HP 3-2: Students make personal connections in an historical context by...

- a. recognizing and reflecting on how the similarities of human issues across time periods influence their own personal histories
- b. recognizing and reflecting on how the differences of human issues across time periods influence their own personal histories
- c. comparing and contrasting the cultural influences that shape individuals and historical events

HP 5: Human societies and cultures develop and change in response to human needs and wants.

HP 5-1: Students demonstrate an understanding that a variety of factors affect cultural diversity within a society by...

- a. comparing and contrasting the diversity of different groups, places, and time periods or within the same group over time
- b. providing examples of cultural diversity

HP 5-2: Students demonstrate an understanding that culture has affected how people in a society behave in relation to groups and their environment by...

- b. using a historical context, describe how diversity contributes to conflict, cooperation, growth, or decline
- c. describing challenges or obstacles a civilization/ country/ nation faced as it grew over time

HP 5-3: Various perspectives have led individuals and/or groups to interpret events or phenomena differently and with historical consequences by...

- b. describing how an individual or group's perspectives change over time using primary documents as evidence

RI K-12 GSEs for Civics and Government
GSEs for Grades 3-4

C&G 3: In a democratic society all people have certain rights and responsibilities.

C&G 3–1: Students demonstrate an understanding of citizens’ rights and responsibilities by...

- b. using a variety of sources to provide examples of individuals’ and groups’ rights and responsibilities (e.g., justice, equality, and diversity)

C&G 3 –2: Students demonstrate an understanding of how individuals and groups exercise (or are denied) their rights and responsibilities by...

- c. explaining different ways conflicts can be resolved, how conflicts and resolutions can affect people, and describing the resolution of conflicts by the courts or other authorities

C&G 4: People engage in political processes in a variety of ways.

C&G 4–3: Students participate in a civil society by...

- a. identifying problems, planning and implementing solutions, and evaluating the outcomes in the classroom, school, community, state, nation, or world

GSEs for Grades 5-6

C&G 2: The *Constitution* of the United States establishes a government of limited powers that are shared among different levels and branches.

C&G 2-2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the democratic values and principles underlying the U.S. government by...

- a. exploring democratic values such as: respect, property, compromise, liberty, self-government, and self-determination

C&G 3: In a democratic society all people have certain rights and responsibilities.

C&G 3-2: Students demonstrate an understanding how individuals and groups exercise (or are denied) their rights and responsibilities by...

- a. identifying and explaining specific ways rights may or may not be exercised
- b. recognizing potential conflicts within or among groups, brainstorming possible solutions, and reaching compromises

C&G 4: People engage in political processes in a variety of ways.

C&G 4-2: Students demonstrate their participation in political processes by...

- a. using a variety of sources to form, substantiate, and communicate an opinion and presenting their opinion to an audience beyond the classroom

C&G 4-3: Students participate in a civil society by...

- a. demonstrating respect for the opinions of others

C&G 5: As members of an interconnected world community, the choices we make impact others locally, nationally, and globally.

C&G 5-3: Students demonstrate an understanding of how the choices we make impact and are impacted by an interconnected world by...

b. explaining how actions taken or not taken impact societies

Additionally, these lessons meet the ELA Common Core anchor standards of reading and writing--especially the literacy in history/social studies strand--as well as the anchor standard of speaking & listening.

Definitions:

Apex Department Stores- large department stores in Rhode Island that were very popular throughout the 1900s.

Caucasian- A term used to refer to people with white skin.

CORE- stands for "Congress of Racial Equality." This organization was nation-wide but had many state-run chapters.

De facto segregation—Refers to the separation of races. This can occur in schools, in neighborhoods, in employment, and elsewhere. "De facto" means "by fact." It is compared to "de Jure" segregation, meaning "by law."

Discrimination – Treating a person or thing unfairly because they are in some way different from oneself.

Hepzibah Realty Co.- Company created by Irving Fain which rehabilitated houses but always made sure to reserve homes for black families; meant to promote interracial housing and support legislative efforts for fair housing.

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. An organization that was formed in 1909 to advocate for fairness and equality in society.

Negro – a term used to describe people of African descent or with dark-colored skin. During the Civil Rights Movement, this word was used often whereas it is now considered disrespectful to use this word. However, some people still self-identify with this term. You may also come across the terms African American, black, person of color, colored person, colored, and in one article in this lesson even "race women."

Oral History- the collection and study of historical information using sound recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events.

PTA – Parent / Teacher Association. You will hear this abbreviation used in one of the lessons below.

Race – Grouping people together based on physical or other attributes. Skin color is an example.

Redevelopment- developing something again or differently; usually referring to new construction after demolition of old buildings

Lesson 1: Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

All primary and secondary sources in this lesson relate to the Snowtown Riot, which occurred in an African-American neighborhood in Providence and lasted from September 21 to September 24, 1831. During the Snowtown Riot, a mob of white citizens destroyed African-American properties and eventually, the governor ordered in the militia to restore order. Due to this riot and the scale of public disorder caused by it, the Town Council passed a charter that created the Office of the Mayor and ultimately made Providence a city.

This hand-out gives a quick overview of what kind of materials are considered primary and secondary sources. Review it and complete the following worksheet.

Primary & Secondary Sources

Primary Sources

Primary Sources were created at the time of an event or topic you are studying. Think of them as first-hand or eye witness account.

- Letters
- Diaries
- Photographs
- Advertisements
- Autobiographies
- Maps
- Objects & artifacts
- Business/organization records
- Government records
- Oral histories

Secondary Sources

Secondary Sources are not first-hand accounts. They include analysis and interpretation of events, people, or topics often using the primary sources listed above.

- Biographies
- Textbooks
- Research papers
- Books

Both?

Some types of sources can be either a primary or secondary source. It DEPENDS on their use and content.

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Speeches
- Film
- Art



(Chiles, 2018; and Hoyer, 2018, <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/blog/2018/03/09/teaching-primary-sources>)

Primary and Secondary Source Worksheet

In this box, list three (3) examples of primary sources:

1.

2.

3.

In this box, list three (3) examples of secondary sources:

1.

2.

3.

List some examples of primary sources that could tell us about ***your*** life:

1.

2.

3.

Are there any secondary sources that could tell us about your life? If so, list them here:

Document 1:

The following document is a broadside from 1831

100 Dollars REWARD.

At a Town Council holden within and for the town of Providence, on Thursday the 22d day of September, A. D. 1831.

Whereas a very serious riot occurred last evening in the north part of the town, which resulted in the death of one person by shooting, and wounding three or four others, the destruction of two houses, and the partial destruction of others, and otherwise disturbing the peace and good order of the town, therefore, in order that the persons concerned in promoting said riot may be brought to justice, and future tranquility secured to the citizens, it is resolved by the Town Council of the town of Providence, that a reward of One Hundred Dollars be paid to any person who shall give such information of the persons engaged in the aforesaid daring outrage as may lead to their conviction.

A true copy: Witness,

RICHARD M. FIELD, C. Clerk.

[100 Dollar Reward], 1831, RIHS Collections, RHIX36670

Document 2:

The following document is a photograph of a house taken in 1880.



[William Caesar's House], c.1880, RIHS Collections, RHiX17158

Document 3:

The following is an Internet article written in 1999 about the Providence riots in 1831

Providence Newspapers and the Racist Riots of 1824 and 1831

By [John Crouch](#), Attorney at Law, [Crouch & Crouch](#), Arlington, Virginia; (703) 528-6700; Copyright John Crouch 1991, 1999. Published 1999 by Cornerstone Books, 1 Benefit St., Providence, R.I. 02904.

[Other Crouch Articles](#)

Between the American Revolution and the Dorr Rebellion of 1842, Providence, Rhode Island was the scene of two major riots. In the Hardscrabble riot of 1824, and again at Olney's Lane and Snow Town in 1831, white rioters tore down several houses in black settlements. A handful of the Hardscrabble rioters were prosecuted, and either were acquitted or got off lightly. Leading citizens congratulated them openly. Similar riots in 1831, however, ended with the militia killing four whites. Afterwards, nearly all written opinion approved of suppressing the rioters to maintain order, and Providence voters swiftly approved a charter for a city government with strong police powers.

This article tells the story of the riots. It tries to convey a little of what Providence, its newspapers, its newspapermen, and its ruling class as a whole were like. It also looks at the way Americans learned to use the language of community and democracy in such a way as to justify using government to control, supervise and disenfranchise people of other classes and races.

Of all the records which remain for posterity, newspapers were among the most public, representative means by which the community expressed itself. With a few entertaining exceptions, Providence's newspapers took pains to put their opinions in terms which would echo the perceived sentiments of the "respectable" townspeople. In editorials they jockeyed to define the terms of debate, and to proclaim a reasonable prevailing consensus on every issue.

Ordinarily, in a town of Providence's size, spreading local news among the citizenry was not an important function of newspapers. They mostly provided advertisements, mercantile information, and news from other towns and other continents, and served as an occasional forum for opinion or literary musings. They also provided condensed, factual local news for papers in other towns to reprint. However, when faced with controversial and confusing local events (especially the 1831 riots), newspapers sought to provide readers with a definitive account.

Then as now, journalists sometimes indicated their opinions through the language of their factual reporting. They authoritatively provided loaded words with which to discuss events. It is also useful to examine which issues and facts they ignored.

Providence in the 1820s was a fast-growing port town, drawing on its hinterland's farms and manufactures to overshadow Newport, once Rhode Island's metropolis. Providence had about 11,750 people in 1820, possibly 15,000 in 1825, and nearly 17,000 in 1830. Of these about 1,000 were freemen who met the property qualification to vote in Town Meetings. This article is principally about what these people read and wrote about their black neighbors, white rioters, and themselves.

Providence Newspapers and the Racist Riots of 1824 and 1831, 1999, <http://archive.is/TR0S>

Document 4:

The following document is a letter written to Joseph L. Tillinghast in 1831

Providence November 1. 1831.

Joseph L. Tillinghast Esq.

Dear Sir,

Feeling some better and ~~and~~ also feeling some solicitude about the City Charter, I thought I would take the liberty of explaining to you a little more fully than I did, the other day, the views of the Committee in relation to the mode of choosing the Aldermen - It was the object of the Committee to have the Board of Aldermen emphatically represent the whole City, as a City, without being biased by any local prejudice and without being supposed to represent any sectional interest, it is therefore important that ^{the} Aldermen should be chosen by the whole people, and that they should feel that it is the whole people who elect them, and that they have the whole people for their constituents. By the old Charter the Aldermen were chosen from the whole City without any reference to wards, and the only reasons why we concluded to locate one Alderman in each ward were these, viz. it was thought that in case of disturbances it would be better an assurance of preserving order to have one Alderman in each ward, & again that by having one Alderman in each ward they would come together possessed of the local knowledge of the actual state of things in every part of the City, - and

and not because we intended that the Aldermen should either feel or represent any local interest or attachments. The Aldermen are to be the Senate of the City; they are in many cases the judges for the whole City, & Board of Health &c. for the whole City, they ought therefore to be chosen by the whole City, for if they have only one ward for their constituents they will feel dependent upon that ward & will act for the good of that ward instead of the good of the whole City; and in fact will become the same thing as Common Council-men & then all the balances & checks of power growing out of two separate bodies will be lost & we might have but one board. The Common Council is selected & intended to represent the particular interests of the individual wards & in this way the rights of the people are as completely represented & protected by this Charter as they ever have been or can be by any form of the most liberal government. I hope therefore if you should be of opinion with me, that you will use your exertions to prevent any such alteration in the ~~choice~~^{choice} of Aldermen & in fact any alterations, except verbal ones, so that the charter may not be again submitted to the people. Remember that all these proposed alterations come from the enemies of charter who would be pleased to make it as adverse to its friends & the people as possible, & such enemies too as will vote against the charter let ^{it} be amended as it may, I think therefore if any alterations are to be made they ought to be proposed by the friends, & not the enemies of the Charter.

I will state one other reason in addition to those I mentioned the other day why the State ought to be willing to pay the jury fees - which is, that they will undoubtedly be the gainers by it - the State have an interest in the good order of so large a portion of its citizens, and in a pecuniary point of view it will cost the State much less to pay the jury fees and have good order ~~than~~^{than} it will to pay all the expenses of riots and disturbances, the expenses to the State of the late riots in Providence (which no doubt would have been prevented if we had been a City) well, I will be bound to say, cost the State more than the jury fees will be in 40 years - only look, here are 4 or 5 persons now in jail at the expense of the State, they are to be tried & then perhaps kept in jail at the expense of the State for 2 or 3 years, what are a few jury fees in comparison with this - but for I am detaining you too long I have no doubt all the these things have passed through your mind before - I want very much to be with you, but I think it hardly probable I can come - If in the midst of all your arduous duties you can find a moment to write to me in the course of the week & tell me a little how things go on it will be a great treat to me here in my chamber -

With sentiments of esteem & regard, I am very
Respectfully Yours &c

Peter Hall

Document 5:

The following documents are clippings from the *Rhode Island American and Gazette*, written in 1831.

RHODE ISLAND AMERICAN AND GAZETTE.

VOL. LXXI. PROVIDENCE, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1831. NEW SERIES, VOL. III. NO. 23

[COMMUNICATED.]

CITY CHARTER.—It is but a short time since the freemen of this town decided upon the propriety and expediency of adopting a city form of government. The General Assembly, however, refused to grant the majority the charter, and the subject has been at rest ever since that time.

The late riots however in this town, show that a more efficient authority must be established to preserve and enforce good order and law. Our municipal government is totally inadequate for such a large population. We want a *head* man, who will have the power given him by the people to inspect personally the concerns of the town—to visit our lanes and alleys and suspicious houses—to inquire into the character of the residents—whether they have any business—how they live, and also whether they are natives of the town, &c. I say that we very much need such a man, and we cannot have him without a city charter.

Many judicious persons have expressed the opinion that the disturbances of the last week would not have happened if we were a city.—These houses that have been destroyed would be under better regulations, and we should have a less number of vagrants, and dissolute, idle people.

As for the expenses they are nothing I believe, compared to our present expenses. The reward, for instance offered for the detection of the persons concerned in the riot would pay our Mayor; and the other charges growing out of it, would defray the expense of a city government for nearly or quite one year. And what is the expense compared to the comfort, order, and security of the inhabitants?

I do, therefore, recommend to the freemen of the town to assemble in town meeting, and to vote in favor of adopting a more efficient form of government. Let us do it immediately, before any further difficulties occur. Our population is so large, and our town affairs so various, that we cannot live peaceably any longer without a change. I hope some of our principal and substantial citizens will make a move in this business. I opposed the charter before, but I now see the evil of not adopting it.

A CITIZEN.

From the Boston Gazette.

The Providence Riot.—We do not suppose that our fellow citizens of Providence, have among them a greater proportion of scoundrels, than may be found in any other city—accident only produced a combination of circumstances that brought them forth. Of the very mob, too, that took the administration of vengeance into their own hands, it is probable that the greater part are on reflection, sensible of the evil tendency of their measures. One thing, however, is certain; that the Governor and civil authorities did their duty. It is probable, however, that at Providence, where the subject must occasion excitement, that there may be found some, who would have had the pillage go on, rather than lives taken. No man, however, knows, at what point the mob would have staid their hands; or had it been suffered to go on, how great an effusion of blood it would have cost to quell it.—It has been said that there is no mob in this country: generally speaking, there is not an organized one; but the materials are in all countries—there will always be personal enmities and local excitements enough to array a body of men against the laws, if the majesty of the laws is not sufficiently respected. We hold it to be the duty of good citizens in all cities, to give their approbation of the prompt and energetic, (though inevitable) proceeding of the authorities in Providence. We have heard in this city but one opinion expressed, which is, that the authorities and the orderly citizens were, to a great degree, forbearing towards the disorganizers, and when forced to quell them by violent measures, performed that painful, but imperative duty, in a manner that will, we trust, make riots for a long time unpopular in New England.

The Boston Centinel publishes the report of the Committee with the following remarks:—Judicious men, on reading the report, will have but one mind on the general course pursued by the authorities, which is, that a longer forbearance would have been imprudent. It was high time for the strong arm of the Law to be exerted, let who would suffer. We are convinced that the State and Municipal powers have set a judicious and rigorous example, that would be promptly acted upon by the authorities of any city in the Union.

NEGROES APPREHENDED—Three negroes, viz: William Jourdan, Richard Johnson, and John Gardner, suspected of being concerned in the shooting of the sailor, in Olney's Lane, were apprehended in New-York on Thursday evening, about half past ten o'clock, by Mr Benjamin Brown, of East-Greenwich. They were immediately put in irons, and arrived in this town this morning in the steam-boat President, and are now safely lodged in the State's Jail.

These fellows, as near as we can learn, on the night of the affray, left town, passed through Warwick and East-Greenwich the next morning for Wickford, and went over to Newport with the intention of taking passage in the Benjamin Franklin for New-York, on Thursday afternoon. They did not, however, succeed, as the boat had left before their arrival. They then hired a man to transport them across the bay, intending to go to New-London, and await the departure of the Steamboat for New-York. They left the former place on Friday, and were in New-York on Saturday morning. In passing through East-Greenwich, they took breakfast at Mr Brown's house. When he learned the circumstances of their escape, &c. he started for New-York, and took one of them, on the wharf, and the other two a short time afterwards. One of them, Johnson, is the same fellow who was ordered out of town a few weeks since. Mr Brown deserves commendation for his vigilance and activity.

CITY CHARTER.—The communication of "A Citizen," in another column, comes from a highly respectable source. His suggestions are judicious and appropriate, and well worthy the attention of the freemen. It is the general opinion, and that opinion is frequently expressed, that a change in our form of government is necessary and expedient. A large number of citizens, who formerly opposed the adoption of the charter, are now convinced, that it will be for the public good to adopt it. All admit, that our present regulations are inadequate to our increasing population. We know of no one who is better calculated to move in this matter than "A Citizen."

Document Analysis Worksheet

As you look through each source, complete this worksheet. When explaining why you think something is a primary or secondary source, make sure you use evidence to support your argument.

Document #	Primary or Secondary source?	Why? Be sure to use evidence from the source to support your argument.
#1- \$100 Reward Broadside, 1831		
#2- William Caesar's House photograph, about 1880		
#3- <i>Providence Newspapers and the Racist Riots of 1824 and 1831</i> , internet article, 1999		
#4- Joseph Tillinghast Letter, 1831		
#5- Articles from the <i>Rhode Island American and Gazette</i> , 1831		

Appendix A: Teacher Answer Key

Though this answer key serves as a guideline of which sources are primary and secondary, please be sure to note that for many of these, an argument can be made either way. Encourage students to use evidence to support their arguments either way rather than just focusing on getting the correct answer.

Document #	Primary or Secondary source?	Notes:
#1- \$100 Reward Broadside, 1831	Primary	Advertisement from Snowtown Riot that did occur in 1831
#2- William Caesar's House photograph, about 1880	Secondary (could also be primary)	The house is related to the Snowtown Riot in 1831 but the photograph is from the 1880s. A logical case can be made that this is primary, though.
#3- <i>Providence Newspapers and the Racist Riots of 1824 and 1831</i> , 1999	Secondary	Written far after the event it's discussing
#4- Joseph Tillinghast Letter, 1831	Primary	From time period it's discussing to someone involved
#5- Articles from the <i>Rhode Island American and Gazette</i> , 1831	Secondary	Though it's from the time period of the Snowtown Riot, the authors were not eyewitnesses to the event

Lesson 2: Civil Rights and Housing in Rhode Island

African Americans often faced discrimination in housing--they weren't welcome in certain neighborhoods, were forced to live in buildings that weren't safe, and often had to live far away from places they used frequently like schools and churches. Students will analyze a selection of primary sources related to housing and Civil Rights.

Source #1

This is a photograph of a boy watching the construction of the Lippitt Hill Redevelopment Project in which many families, mostly African American, were forced to move to make room for new construction and building upgrades.



Providence Redevelopment Agency's Annual Report, 1960, RIHS Collections, RHIX173732

Source #1 Analysis Worksheet

Study the image for 2 minutes. First look at the picture as a whole and then examine the individual details

1. Imagine the picture is divided into four equal sections. Use the following grid to examine the four parts of the picture and write down what you see.

<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>	<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>
<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>	<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>

Source #2

[Cliff Montiero Oral History](#)

Oral History of Cliff Montiero, recorded Spring 2018 in Johnston, RI. Interviewer is Keith Stokes. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society, Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, and Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission with support from a grant by the National Park Service.

Source #2 Transcription

Cliff Montiero: Irving Fain, I met in the 1960s. I met him in the 60s when I was active in CORE. I was the President of CORE and he came in the office in late 1963 and said he was there to talk about Fair Housing and that he'd like my support and all this other stuff. I said to him "Look, you own APEX and there's no people of color at working at APEX and I need a job."

So, he became my employer. Then he (Irving Fain) would come by and see me and I would talk to him and I asked if he was buying something and he said "yeah, I want something." And then we started talking and then he said he was putting it on credit and asked "doesn't everybody use a credit card?" And I said, "poor people can't afford to buy anything, they don't have a credit card."

So, um, then I talked to him about the need to develop a housing program and then he started Hepzibah and he put me on the payroll of Hepzibah and he bought houses on Rochambeau Avenue and he bought houses in Cranston.

Interviewer: Which drove people crazy. People weren't happy about that.

Source #2 Analysis Worksheet

Based on what you heard in the clip, who was Irving Fain?

Use your own words to describe "Fair Housing" based on what you heard in the clip.

The interviewer says that people weren't happy when Irving Fain bought houses in Cranston and on Rochambeau Avenue in Providence. Why do you think people were upset by that?

Write down other observations (what you can hear and know) from this interview.

What do you want to know more about?

Source #3

This is a photograph of residents of Fox Point, a neighborhood that would soon face redevelopment like Lippitt Hill, making improvements to their home.



Providence Redevelopment Agency's Annual Report, 1963, RIHS Collections, RHIX173733

Source #3 Analysis Worksheet

Study the image for 2 minutes. First look at the picture as a whole and then examine the individual details

1. Imagine the picture is divided into four equal sections. Use the following grid to examine the four parts of the picture and write down what you see.

<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>	<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>
<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>	<p>Objects:</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>People:</p>

Lesson 3: Civil Rights in Education

African Americans have faced inequality in education in Rhode Island and elsewhere from the elementary through university levels. Students will analyze a selection of primary sources to learn of examples of civil rights issues in education.

Context for Documents 1 and 2:

On December 5, 1968, 75% of Brown University students of color staged a “walk-out” in protest of unequal representation on campus. At the time, African Americans made up 11% of the overall population in the United States, but only 2.3% of Brown’s population was African American. Study the two primary source documents below to understand what they can tell us about some of the events of that day.

Document 1: Photograph of Brown University students gathering after walking out of classes



Rhode Island Historical Society Collections RhiX39257

Image Analysis Worksheet

Study the image for 2 minutes. First look at the picture as a whole and then examine the individual details

1. Imagine the picture is divided into four equal sections. Use the following grid to examine the four parts of the picture.

Objects: Activities: People: 	Objects: Activities: People:
Objects: Activities: People: 	Objects: Activities: People:

2. From your analysis above, what can you tell about what is happening in the photograph? (Hints: Who are the people in the photograph? What time of year is it? What are the people doing? What is in the

background? What is the overall mood of the situation? Where is this taking place? Why do you think this photograph is important?) Be sure to cite specific evidence from the image. Your answer should be 1-2 paragraphs in length.

Document 2: Film clip of professor speaking to students after the walk-out

Watch and listen to the following film clip. This clip was recorded on the Brown University campus on December 5, 1968. Charles Nichols, visiting professor at the time, is the speaker.



[RIHS 1968-12-05](#)

Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society and WPRI

Document 2 Transcription

Charles Nichols: When I was a student at Brown, 20 years ago, I lived in a house with other students. The neighbors, in this area where we lived, were always taking me for the janitor because I, of course, was the only black man in the house. And their image of Brown was such that they didn't really believe that black people studied at Brown. A lot of that has changed in the years since—for the better. But I think we all realize that something more needs to be done.

Film Analysis Worksheet

After watching the film, complete the following web. The first box is completed for you:

In what year was this speech recorded? 1968	How many years ago was the speaker a student at Brown University?
About what year was the speaker a student?	About how old is the speaker when this speech was recorded?
What time of year was this recording made?	What details in the film help you conclude on the time of year?
The speaker mentions neighbors of the house he lived in while a student. What did the neighbors think of him? Who did they think he was?	Why did the neighbors conclude that he must not be a student?
Do you think the neighbors were mostly white or black?	What evidence led you to your conclusion?
Who can you see in the video is listening to the speech?	What do you notice about the composition of the students listening to the speaker? Are they mostly white or black? Male or female? Any other characteristics?

Document 3: Film clips of response to proposed busing plan

In 1967, the mayor of Providence, Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., formed a committee to try to solve the issue of de facto segregation in the public schools. Since the schools were neighborhood schools, and neighborhoods were segregated due to housing issues, neighborhood schools also found themselves segregated. The committee proposed busing black students to schools that had a majority of white students and busing white students to schools that had a majority of black students. In addition, the Flynn and Temple Schools, public neighborhood schools, were to be closed as elementary schools and used for specific alternative programs. Watch the short film clips below to hear some opinions about this plan.

Document 3A:



[RHIX 1969.81.1304](#)

Document 3A Transcription:

Speaker 1: I think that it has been stated by the Mayor that no more than 30% of any school in the City of Providence would be negro. And it is our thought that in the moving of the children from the Flynn School, that they would be moved to all of the schools of the city. And that in doing this, that no more than 30% would be in any classroom and no less than 10% of the children in any classroom would be negro. It is our feeling in this day and age that it is impossible to have quality education without integrated education. And the purpose of our integration movement to date is to accomplish this purpose.

Speaker 2: This is Mrs. Estelle Glenn who is a parent of two children at the Flynn School.

Mrs. Estelle Glenn: Yes, and the way I feel about it, we need our school. I don't appreciate them closing up our school and busing our kids all over town. Because there's a lot of days I'm at work and my kid is close to me, at my job. If they get sick over there, I don't always have money or time to get over there. So then what is the kid going to do? Nothing. I feel this way about it—if they want

the schools to integrate, bring those white kids from the East Side and Thayer over here and mix them with our kids. And we're still going to keep our school open, even if we got to fight.

Speaker 2: Mrs. William Neuson is president-elect of the Flynn School PTA and a member of the education committee for the Providence NAACP.

Mrs. William Neuson: We both, the white and the negro, each has something to offer the other. And our children must get this in their regular education system. However, as far as this Providence plan is concerned, it disturbs me that they could take six months deciding what they weren't going to do with other things and then come up here to quote, "placate the negro in South Providence" with this plan of disrupting an entire community. After all, this school to our community school which has done a tremendous job of helping parents recognize their responsibility to children, and this is the first responsibility to education; integrated or not. The parents have to have an education about their responsibility toward their children's education. That this community school has given our parents and thereby given our children, and we must have it until the job is done.

Document 3B:



[RHiX 1969.81.663](#)

Clips courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society and WJAR

Document 3B Transcription:

Male Interviewer: Ma'am, what do you think of the plan for integration as it's been set up by the city?

Female interviewee 1: Well I think it's wonderful but I think colored people want Flynn school for their school and I think they should let them have it if they want that. But, uh, this busing and transferring for the colored and the white, I think it really is good but if they want to keep their children right here at Flynn then I think they should be able to.

Male Interviewer: Do you have any children involved in this plan?

Female interviewee 1: Yes I do. I have a 9-year old boy. He also was transferred from Temple. He's going to Fogarty and I like it very much.

Male Interviewer: So you have no objections to this?

Female interviewee 1: No I don't.

Male Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Male Interviewer: Ma'am, what do you think of the idea of integrated education? Do you think colored children should be in school all by themselves and white people somewhere else or do you think they should be mixed?

Female Interviewee 2: I think they should be mixed together.

Male Interviewer: And do you think the plan that's been set up by the city to bus some children from one school to another?

Female Interviewee 2: No, I don't think so. I don't think it's right.

Male Interviewer: Even if it's designed to mix the children? Whereas if you had some schools entirely negro, and this will make it a better division?

Female Interviewee 2: I still say, I think they should be mixed together and go on the buses together.

Male Interviewer: They should?

Female Interviewee 2: Sure.

Male Interviewer: Now you're going to Roger Williams Jr. High School. Do you think all Negro education is better than mixed education?

Female Interviewee 3: Well no, because, well same as any other school, everybody doesn't always get along with everybody, I will agree to that. But most of my friends are white anyway and I get along with everybody.

Male Interviewer: You think it will improve the situation if they are mixed at the elementary school level?

Female Interviewee 3: Yes, I think so.

Female Interviewee 2: I think so, too.

Film Analysis Worksheet

1. Who are the speakers in the films? If their names are mentioned, what are their names? What are their roles in the community (they could be a parent, a student, an educator, news journalist, community leader, etc.)? What are their opinions about busing?

Speaker (description or name)	Role in community	Opinions about busing

2. List the positives and negatives to busing students as expressed by the people in the films (at least three each)

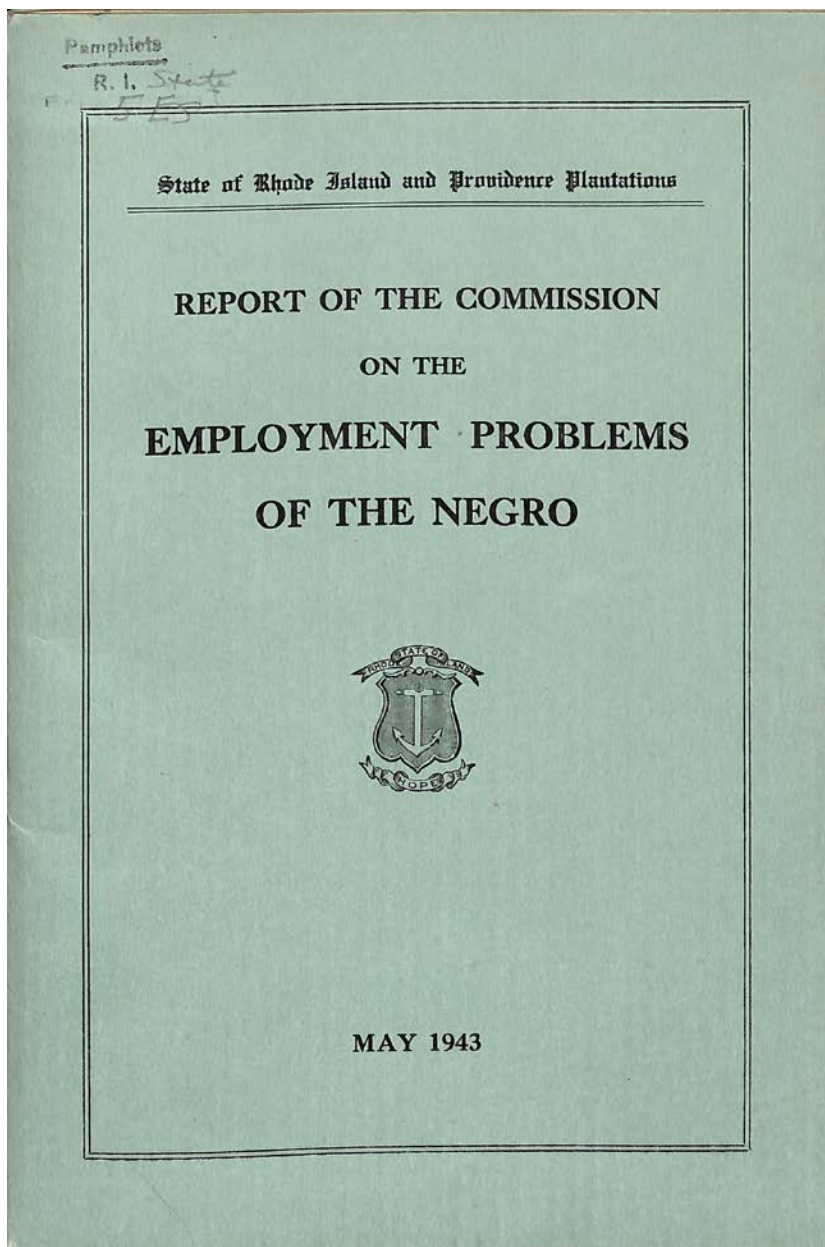
Positives	Negatives

3. Imagine you were given notice that you needed to be bused to another school outside of your neighborhood. How would you feel about that? What are your reasons for feeling that way? Write one to two paragraphs.

Lesson 4: Civil Rights in Employment

African Americans have faced discrimination in employment throughout Rhode Island's History. In this lesson, students will analyze primary source documents to learn about the problems people of color faced when trying to find gainful employment.

Document 1: Excerpts from "The Report on the Commission on the Employment Problems of the Negro, May 1943"



Rhode Island Historical Society Collections RHIX173729A

In 1943, the State of Rhode Island surveyed individuals and businesses to assess issues in employment for African Americans in the state. Below are some of the responses from African American individuals when asked: "What difficulties have been met [when applying for a job]?"

M-52—(Present job, Porter; training as machinist, shipping clerk).

"Received word to report to a company where there was a vacancy for a shipping clerk. Employer enthusiastic over the 'phone, but when I reported for job, was not hired as company did not hire Negroes."

M-26—(Industrial Chemist)

"Applied W. A. Co., Conn., G. R. Co. and other large concerns to get a job as chemist. All of these places, upon learning he was a Negro, made excuses for not hiring him. Took an out-of-State examination, placed seventh on list; although offered job, when appeared was sent home to await final notice, which was never received."

F-46—"My sons left here to get better jobs. Otherwise, they'd be taking pick and shovel work. Skilled labor unions don't allow Negroes to join."

F-41—(Domestic)

"I know there is prejudice in Rhode Island. I think chances are poor. Negroes can get something, but not anything worthwhile."

F-41—"Difficulty is color. Even smart people don't have a chance. Kids get disinterested and drop out of school."

F-78—"One friend tried to get a clerk's job in a local store. Told they were sorry that they never employ colored people. If they did, most of present clerks would cause friction. Some stores and firms come right out and say, 'No Negroes!'"

Document Analysis Worksheet 1

The chart bellows lists some of the jobs noted in the document. Since many of these occupations may not be familiar to you, research the jobs and explain what the worker does.

Porter	
Industrial Chemist	
Domestic	
Clerk	

Document Analysis Worksheet 2

1. What do the "M" and "F" stand for in the survey responses?
2. What do the numbers after the "M" and "F" mean?
3. List at least three places the people who answered the survey tried to apply for jobs.
4. List at least three responses they reported they received when they applied.

5. What other issue or issues are mentioned in the responses?
6. Some people were offered jobs over the phone, but lost them when they showed up in person. Why do the respondents think that happened? Why do you think that happened?

Below are some of the responses from businesses when asked: "If you have never employed Negroes, have there been any particular reasons, and if so what are they?"

Additional remarks, with
"Because the majority of our workers work in groups of six, we would hesitate to use Negroes in a group with other workers. We have a few jobs where the people work individually and it might be possible to use experienced ones there."

"We do not object to Negroes, but they don't fit."

"We, as you know, are located in a small town, and it is our aim to employ all local labor and we do not have any Negroes in the town that we know of."

"Inasmuch as we can procure the other kind of help, we believe it is to the best interests of all that we continue to work as we are doing."

"At the time we employed the above-mentioned Negro, he was an expert forger and lived in Pawtucket."

"The three men we have here are excellent workers, and conduct themselves as gentlemen. There has been no friction, and they mingle with other white workers freely."

"As far as this firm is concerned, racial considerations had no part in the policies of placing workers on jobs. Negro workers would have been no exception. However, we are not certain of the attitude of the bulk of our employees, who bring with them to work the hatreds and prejudices common to folks at large."

41

Rhode Island Historical Society Collections RHIX173729F

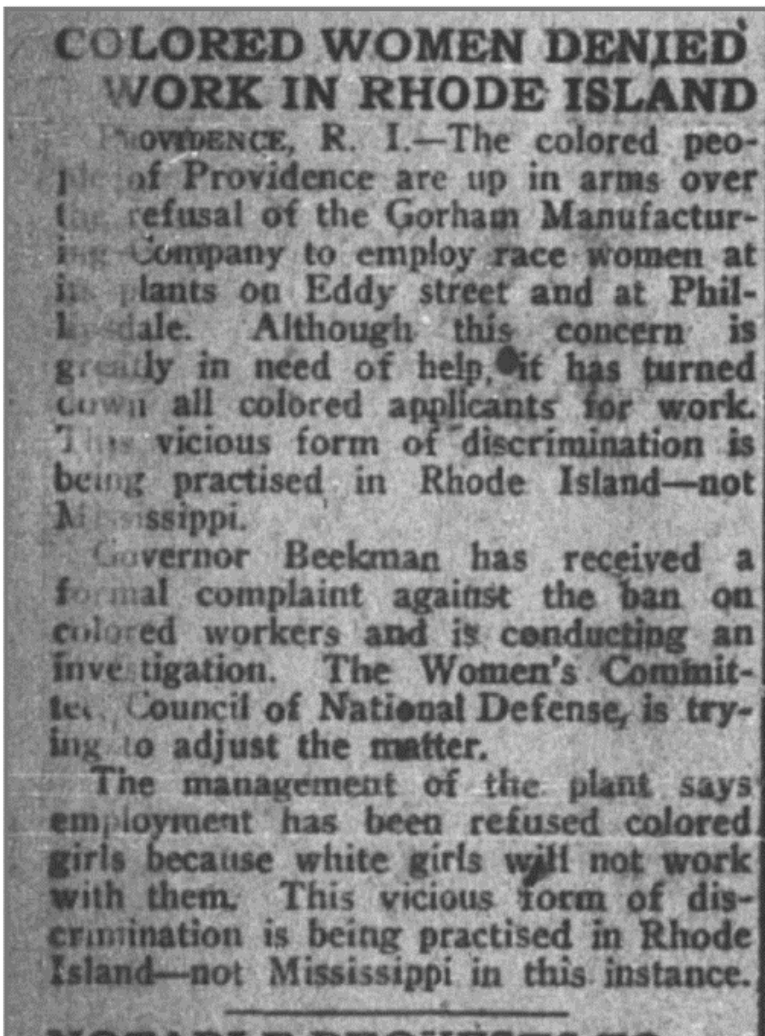
"There are absolutely no personal objections on our part. From our experience in observing relationship between employees, we are of the opinion that difficulties would arise between Negroes and white employees if they worked side by side. It seems that the only practical solution would be to keep each group apart, but this is not practical for a small concern with limited space."

Rhode Island Historical Society Collections RHIX173729

Document Analysis Worksheet 3

1. List at least three different reasons the business used to claim why they would not hire African Americans.
2. What was the solution the last business gave to possibly hiring an African American?
3. What did the last business give as a reason their solution wouldn't work at their company?
4. What positive comments did businesses give about current African American employees?
5. Are these businesses run by white owners or black owners? How do you know?
6. Given the responses from both the African Americans seeking work and from the businesses, why do you think it was difficult for African Americans to find employment at this time?

Document 2: Newspaper clipping



(From the November 9, 1918 edition of the New York Age, a Black-owned newspaper)

Document Analysis Worksheet 1

1. What is the date of this newspaper clipping?
2. Who was trying to find employment?

3. Where were they trying to find employment?
4. Why did the author of the article write “not Mississippi” twice?
5. What was the reason given for not hiring African American women?
6. Is this article older or newer than the other two documents analyzed in this lesson?
7. Do you think the excuses companies made were fair? What does it mean to be fair?
8. How can not having a job affect a person’s life? How can it affect their family’s life?

Document 3: Oral History Audio Clip

Listen to the oral history clip of Victoria Johnson

[Victoria Johnson Oral History](#)

Oral History of Victoria Johnson, recorded on April 25, 2018 in Portsmouth, RI. Interviewer is Keith Stokes. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society, Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, and Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission with support from a grant by the National Park Service.

Victoria Johnson Oral History Transcription

Victoria Johnson: When I was a senior in high school.

Interviewer: Is this Rogers High School?

Victoria Johnson: Rogers High School. And, um, myself and 4 other girls went down to fill out applications for stores, to work in stores. And they were all caucasian and we all filled out the same application. And I probably was doing more in high school than they were, in different organizations, involved, and I was the only one who didn't get a job. And they all got jobs.

Interviewer: And this was when you were in high school?

Victoria Johnson: I was a senior in high school.

Interviewer: So this was the mid-1950s?

Victoria Johnson: This was 1957. About 1957.

Interviewer: In Newport?

Victoria Johnson: In Newport.

Interviewer: And at the time, were there discussions in your house about race? Who did you discuss issues of race with? Was it parents, friends, brothers, sisters?

Victoria Johnson: My friends, my church, my mom.

Interviewer: And what were the discussions about?

Victoria Johnson: They really weren't discussions of discrimination, not really. But, the discussions were, well, "if you were white, you probably would have gotten that job." But you didn't think anything about it because that's the way it was. And unfortunately, you accepted that was the way it was. Especially in Newport. You just accepted that. That's the way it was.

Interviewer: Did you recall how you felt then? On a personal level?

Victoria Johnson: I never, I never felt any different than that I was able to do anything that I really wanted to do. And I was willing to do that.

Audio Analysis Worksheet

1. After listening to the oral history, complete the following web:

What year is Ms. Johnson speaking about?	What grade in school was she in at the time?
What school did she attend?	In what town is the school located?
What did Ms. Johnson recall doing with her friends?	Where her friends black or white? What word did she use to describe the race of her friends?
Was Ms. Johnson successful in finding a job? Where her friends?	Do you think Ms. Johnson is black or white based on the story she is telling? What evidence do you have?
Who does she say she discussed race with?	What conclusions did people have for why she didn't get a job?

2. Recalling the responses of African Americans surveyed in 1943 in Document 1, how was Ms. Johnson's experience similar to what the individuals in 1943 experienced?

3. How was Ms. Johnson's experience different to what the individuals in 1943 experienced?

4. What would you guess the stores excuses would be for not hiring Ms. Johnson had they been asked? Why do you think that?

Lesson 5: Civil Rights Actions I Can Take

Introduction:

Students have learned about different aspects of unfair practices against people of African Heritage descent throughout this unit. In this lesson, students will learn how even they can take action against something they notice is wrong.

1. Have students identify current civil rights issues they notice in their lives today. These can be personal experiences, something they heard from a friend or family member, or something they saw on television, online, or heard in the news. Write the list on the board.
2. In teams or individually, have students pick one of the issues and write letters to their congressperson. The letter should include a description of the issue and a list of resolutions. The letter should also address what the students hope the congressperson will do to satisfy the concerns.
3. Have students find out who their congressperson is and send their letters by mail or email.
4. To follow-up, ask students to identify other ways they could take action.

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