

African American Civil Rights in Rhode Island Students Speak Out

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About These Materials:

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. Public exhibits and school unit plans were also created thanks to this grant.

The following lessons use many types of primary sources from local, Rhode Island collections and some created for this project, including oral history audio clips, video clips, and documents. These lessons are meant to serve as supplements to the Civil Rights history already being taught in classrooms with a focus on

local events and people. This set of lessons highlights school protests that occurred in the 1960s, 70s, and 2010s right here in Rhode Island.

The lessons are not designed to be used in lecture-style teaching or as independent homework assignments. The lessons use collections of primary and secondary sources with guiding questions and graphic organizers to help students analyze the sources and gather their thoughts to be used as points of class discussion, either in groups or as a whole class. Some of the questions ask students to formulate and back-up their own thinking. As such, there may not be right or wrong answers, and students should be encouraged to listen to and consider the perspectives of their peers.

*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.

Additional Resources:

Holden, Anna. *The Bus Stops Here: A Study of School Desegregation in Three Cities*. New York: Agathon Press; 1974

Spiegler, Jinnie. [*Teaching about Controversial or Difficult Topics*](#). Morningstar Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. December 4, 2014

Learning Objectives:

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

Students will make connections between the participation of young people in Rhode Island during the Civil Rights era to actions their peers are taking today

Students will draw conclusions about their own understandings of current issues in their lives and will think about what types of civic action they can take to move towards resolving those issues

Educational Standards:

RI K-12 GSEs for Civics and Government

GSEs for Grades 9-12

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 a policy at the school, local, state, national, or international level and describing how it affects individual rights
- b. accessing the political system (e.g., letter writing, researching an issue and communicating it to the public, organizing, petitioning, boycotting/buycotting)
- d. identifying and explaining ways individuals and groups have exercised their rights in order to transform society (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, women's suffrage)
- e. participating in and reflecting on a decision-making experience as part of a group in your classroom, school, or community (e.g., developing classroom norms, School Improvement Team member, response to community needs, such as a food drive)

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

C&G 4 –1

Students demonstrate an understanding of political systems and political processes by...

- c. analyzing and interpreting sources (print and non-print discourse/media), by distinguishing fact from opinion, and evaluating possible bias/propaganda or conflicting information within or across sources
- e. analyzing multiple perspectives on an historical or current controversial issue

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

- a. using collaborative decision making/problem solving to consider multiple perspectives on a current political, social, or economic issue, evaluating the consequences of various options, and developing a plan of action (e.g., new school policy or local, national, or international public policy)
- b. working individually or with others to identify, propose, and carry out a community/civic engagement project/initiative (e.g., making the community aware of an issue, organizing a workshop)

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

- a. critically reflecting on their own civic dispositions (e.g., tolerance and respect, concern for the rights and welfare of others, social responsibility, and recognition of the capacity to make a difference)

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

C&G 5-2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the benefits and challenges of an interconnected world by...

- a. describing the interconnected nature of a contemporary or historical issue
- b. analyzing and evaluating a contemporary or historical issue (e.g., free trade versus fair trade, access to medical care and terrorism)

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

- b. identifying and summarizing the intended and unintended consequences of a conflict, event, or course of action
- c. using deliberation, negotiation, and compromise to plan and develop just solutions to problems (e.g., immigration, limited energy resources, nuclear threat) created when nations or groups act

RI K-12 GSEs for Historical Perspectives/RI History

GSEs for Grades 9-12

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. formulating historical questions, obtaining, analyzing, evaluating historical primary and secondary print and non-print sources
- b. explaining how historical facts and historical interpretations may be different, but are related
- c. identifying, describing, or analyzing multiple perspectives on an historical trend or event
- d. using technological tools in historical research

HP 1-2: Students interpret history as a series of connected events with multiple cause-effect relationships, by...

- a. explaining cause and effect relationships in order to sequence and summarize events, make connections between a series of events, or compare/contrast events
- b. interpreting and constructing visual data (e.g., timelines, charts, graphs, flowchart, historical films, political cartoons) in order to explain historical continuity and change

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

HP 2-1: Students connect the past with the present by...

- a. explaining origins of major historical events
- b. identifying and linking key ideas and concepts and their enduring implications

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

- a. creating narratives based on a particular historical point of view
- b. synthesizing information from multiple sources to formulate an historical interpretation

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

- a. tracing patterns chronologically in history to describe changes on domestic, social, or economic life

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. tracing patterns chronologically in history to describe changes on domestic, social, or economic life
- b. formulating a position or course of action on a current issue from a choice of carefully evaluated options, taking into account the historical underpinnings

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

- a. articulating an understanding of the meaning, implications, and impact of historical events on their lives today
- b. analyzing how an historical development has contributed to current social, economic, or political patterns

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...

- b. investigating the role of demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, class) in creating cultural diversity in a society

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...

- a. analyzing how membership in particular cultural groups has affected civic engagement on the local, regional, and national level, citing evidence.

- HP 5-3: Various perspectives have led individuals and/or groups to interpret events or phenomena differently and with historical consequences by...
- a. utilizing sources (e.g., primary documents, secondary sources, oral histories) to identify different historical narratives and perspectives about the same events.

RI K-12 GSEs for Geography

GSEs for Grades 9-12

G 2: Places and Regions: Physical and human characteristics (e.g., culture, experiences, etc.) influence places and regions.

G 2-4: Students understand how geography contributes to how regions are defined / identified by...

- a. evaluating how humans interact with physical environments to form past and present communities.

G 2-3: Students identify different perspectives that individuals/ groups have by...

- a. evaluating the cultural and regional differences for potential bias from written or verbal sources.

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:

Broadside- poster or advertisement often used in the 1700s and 1800s US

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- the unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.

Ethnicity- affiliation or connection to a particular nationality or culture.

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, or colored when looking at or listening to primary documents.

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

Prejudice- opinions and assumptions, usually about a group of people, not based on reasons or actual evidence.

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

Segregation- keeping people or things apart based on difference; segregation in housing practices kept black and white families living in different neighborhoods.

Lesson 1: Issues of Race at Central High School in the Early 1970s

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 discrimination, neighborhood schools also found themselves segregated. The committee proposed re-assigning black students to schools that had a majority of white students and re-assigning white students to schools that had a majority of black students rather than having all students attend their neighborhood schools. This was called the Providence Plan. Providence's high schools were desegregated according to the Plan by the start of school in 1971. Students from the predominantly white Italian neighborhood of Federal Hill and students from the predominantly black neighborhood of South Providence attended Central High School together. In early October, racial disturbances caused by conflicting students forced the school to close for a week. As you will read, officials and the media disagreed whether the new Providence Plan contributed to racial tensions that led to the student conflict. The documents, articles, and films below center on that conflict. What conclusions can you make based on the primary sources below? What other information about the incidents can be gleaned from these sources?

Tuesday, October 5, 1971

Racial Conflict Closes Down Central High

By DANTE IONATA

Central High School was closed indefinitely yesterday because of racial disturbances outside the school involving several hundred "black and Italo-American" students.

This characterization of the conflict was drawn yesterday by Dr. Charles M. Bernardo, school superintendent, as he discussed at a news conference the violence which brought about 50 policemen into Hoyle Square and to the Broad-Westminster Street areas to keep stone-throwing gangs of whites and blacks apart.

Several persons, including an assistant school superintendent, a policeman and some students, suffered minor injuries as gangs formed during the morning, moved to close in on each other as police rushed in to disperse them.

A total of about 18 persons, most of them youths, were arrested by police. Three of them were charged. Two juveniles, a 15-year-old Cranston Street girl and a 17-year-old South Providence youth were charged with throwing bricks at policemen.

They were referred to Family Court. Joseph M. Ferreira, 18, of 46 Bishop St., was charged with possession of a dangerous weapon, a bludgeon. Police held him at the station for district court arraignment today.

The disturbances began early in the school day yesterday. By late morning, Central was closed by Louis I. Kramer, assistant school superintendent. Classes were dismissed gradually. Classical High School, which is adjacent to Central and is, with Central, part of the James L. Hanley Educational Center complex, was not affected.

The intensity of the racial animosity stunned school officials. The bitterly controversial and vehemently contested third phase of the Providence desegregation plan—that phase which desegregates high schools—was introduced when schools reopened about three weeks ago. The first weeks of school had been placid.

School officials said yesterday.
Continued on Page 4, Col. 1

Racial Conflict Closes Down Central High

Continued From Page One

day that in September there had been relatively few of the types of complaints that had evolved into racial disturbances in the schools in the past—white students' complaints that blacks extort money from them and assault them, and black students' complaints that whites get preferential treatment and that many high school courses are irrelevant to their needs.

At the news conference yesterday afternoon, Dr. Bernardo sketched out a rough plan which he said he and his staff have devised to ease racial tensions and to reopen the school. He emphasized, however, that the school department does not have a clearly defined plan to resolve the problem.

Dr. Bernardo said that "our basic philosophy is that this is a student level problem and we expect that the students, with our support and leadership, will help us resolve those problems before we turn the problem over to adult leadership."

In line with this, Dr. Bernardo said a series of meetings will be held with black and white students and with school officials to "help resolve the gut-level issues which caused the disruption." The first of these meetings was held last night. Dr. Bernardo refused to divulge which students or officials would participate in these meetings, how the students are to be selected, or where the meetings are to be held.

Dr. Bernardo said he, Charles Matoian, Central principal and other school department officials met last night for two and a half hours with 10 black and white students who had volunteered to meet with the officials to discuss the school's racial problems.

He said the meeting was held to define the problem and to determine a plan of action to resolve it. Another meeting will be held with the same students today and additional meetings will also be scheduled, Dr. Bernardo said.

Eventually, the superintendent said, it is hoped that these meetings can expand in scope to include the entire student body at Central. He said he will issue a progress report of today's meeting early in the afternoon.

Dr. Bernardo said last night's meeting was "not based on the assumption that the students were necessarily representative of the student body." He added that these 10 students "will be used as an organizing committee" to talk to other students and persuade them to resolve racial animosities.

"True representative groups" of students will evolve from the larger student meetings, he declared. Dr. Bernardo said he hopes that the mass meetings will provide the school administration with an accurate measure of the easing of racial tensions.

Dr. Bernardo said he, Mr. Matoian and Robert L. Bailey 4th, a special assistant for equal educational opportunities, had met with 10 students at midday yesterday while the disturbances continued. He said eight of the students in the afternoon meeting participated in the night session.

At the afternoon session Dr. Bernardo said students of both races "indicated to us that a terrible thing had happened and they said they will do everything that they can to help us." The afternoon session was arranged by Col. Walter A. McQueeney, police chief.

Dr. Bernardo also said he will meet with the Central High School faculty today to give them his "assessment of the situation" and to tell the faculty "what I intend to do in response to the situation."

The superintendent said "we have received assurances from

the mayor and the police chief that we will receive all the necessary support" from them during the period that Central is closed.

He also announced that the "school department will take legal steps involving suspension and expulsion decisions" where it can be clearly determined that students have broken "school rules, regulations or the law."

Central will not be reopened, Dr. Bernardo said, "until I feel that the school is ready to resume its educational program."

He said the determination that the school can be safely reopened will be made on the basis of student attitudes and their commitment to avoid violence. Dr. Bernardo said he never considered closing other schools.

He emphasized that the school administration will attempt to resolve the difficulties by first working through the students. "Basically, what I am saying is that the kids recognize the problems they are facing." He said the school administration hopes "to come up with joint solutions with them."

"If the students are incapable of solving the problem," he continued, "then the administration will have to move in and make some fundamental decisions." He would not elaborate.

Dr. Bernardo said the problems that surfaced outside Central yesterday were "community based problems, street-based problems." He declared that "we do not detect any anti-school sentiment." He explained that school officials have received no complaints of discrimination by teachers or administrators against one racial group. Nor have complaints been received about the curriculum.

"It's kid on kid, black on white, neighborhood against neighborhood," Dr. Bernardo added.

He also said that "I do not regard this disturbance in any way related to the high school desegregation plan." He declared that this conclusion that the violence is not a result of the desegregation plan is not only his but also the conclusion of all school department administrators.

In explanation of this conclusion, Dr. Bernardo said "the key figures" in the disturbances would have been assigned to Central had there been no desegregation plan. He said most of these "key figures" live "within walking distance" of the school.

The disturbances amounted to a series of small incidents which continued all morning in

the Hoyle Square and Broad Street areas. At midmorning about 150 white students marched on the state house and then returned to Central.

Fresh trouble broke out as police tried to keep the student groups scattered and apart. In a scuffle between police and black students, one of the youths was bitten by a police dog.

At noon, a line of 35 helmeted police forced a crowd of about 200 black youths down Winter and Broad Streets. Rocks were thrown and police rushed the group which retreated into a parking lot on Broad Street.

During one of the scuffles outside the school, Mr. Kramer was hit on the head by a rock. He said he did not think it was aimed at him.

Patrolman George J. Martini, 34, who was handling a police dog, suffered a bruise, sprain and possible broken ankle in a melee while trying to separate two groups, police said. Police said Patrolman Martini was hit in the ankle by a rock thrown from a group of students.

le According to police, as Pa-
1- trolman Martini fell after being
n hit, his dog lunged at and bit
e the youth who allegedly threw
" the rock. Both the youth and
" the officer were treated at
" Rhode Island Hospital.

Central's troubles began yes-
t- terday before classes started.
d About 100 white youths
t gathered across Hoyle Square
i from the school before it opened
d and stayed away from classes.

About an hour after classes
began, the whites, armed with
sticks, headed toward the high
school. A few blacks moved to-
ward them. As they closed in
on each other a white youth
was hit in the head by a rock.
Some whites threw sticks at
the blacks. Police moved be-
tween them and kept them
apart. Led by Colonel McQueeney,
police momentarily calmed
the situation.

About 150 whites then
marched to the state house
where they sought unsuccessfully
to see Governor Licht. They
displayed a petition with 200
signatures. The petition said the
whites would not return to Cen-
tral until certain of their de-
mands were met.

At his news conference, Dr.
Bernardo said he was not aware
of the demands which apparent-
ly had not been presented to the
school department. They milled
around outside the state house;
police persuaded them not to
enter. They then returned to
Central.

As the whites approached a
Central from behind the Citi-

d zens Savings Bank, a group of
g blacks ran up Cranston Street
s toward them. Police with hel-
d mets and riot sticks ran up to
head off a clash. Two of the
s policemen had dogs. Large
t stones were heaved by students.

d Blacks crowded around the
f dogs angrily demanding to
know why the dogs were not
turned against whites. Students
brandished sticks at the dogs.
Then the scuffle broke out in
which Patrolman Martini was
hurt and the youth who al-
legedly threw the stone at him
was bitten. The students
charged that the animal had
been deliberately set upon the
youth.

s A 15-year-old girl reported
r to police that she was attacked
t by four black girls and a black
s youth about 11:15 a.m. at Broad
and Winter Streets. Police re-
ported she was treated at
Rhode Island Hospital. A hospi-
tal official said there is no
record of her being treated
there. She is the daughter of a
policeman.

s A 15-year-old South Provi-
dence youth was treated at the
hospital for a sprained hand
suffered when he was hit by a
rock in the Central courtyard.
In the meantime, several white
students told police they were
assaulted by blacks inside
Central.

it Dr. Bernardo yesterday
praised the police for their
s- handling of the situation. "I
d. would have to commend the
is police for their response, flexi-
e bility, exercise of restraint, and
d the balanced approach they used
s. in" making arrests. Nine of the
s 18 persons arrested were black,
h the rest white.

h The troubles yesterday ap-
p- peared to be a spillover from
n an incident last Friday when
h about 80 whites walked out of
c. Central for a brief period com-
t plaining of fights with blacks
- and "shakedown" extortions.
n Friday's walkout was triggered
- by a fight between black and
d white students outside the
school.

n The Black Minister's Confer-
e- ence has scheduled a press con-
- ference at 9 a.m. today in the
y Hood Memorial Zion Church at
148 Wadsworth St. The Rev.
c Gerry Williams, a conference
t spokesman, said he will discuss
- what he and others saw outside
l Central yesterday and what ac-
s- tion they propose.

p The Italian American Civil
- Rights League will discuss the
- school crisis at its membership
i meeting tonight at 7:30 in the
; Kelly-Gazzerio American Legion
post on Plainfield Street in
Cranston.

The Mount Pleasant Parents
and Citizens Council, which is
contesting the desegregation

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plan in court, condemned the school department's "attitude of indifference and neglect" for not hiring civilian security guards to patrol school corridors.

Mrs. John Coughlin, president of the citizens council which has opposed the plan since it was announced last year, said yesterday, "I don't like to say I told you so" but it was obvious to all that racial tensions would eventually explode into violence.

She criticized school officials for "playing games" with a "very explosive situation" by covering up the racial animosities in the schools. She said racial tensions have been "deliberately downgraded by the school administration and the press."

(Providence Journal 05 October 1971, Copyright © 2019 The Providence Journal. Reproduced by Permission.)

Document Analysis Worksheet

1. What does the article claimed happened at Central High School, and when did this occur?
2. What were the complaints by white students? By black students?
3. What was the philosophy of Dr. Bernardo (school superintendent) regarding the incidents?
4. What do you think Dr. Bernardo meant when he said the scuffles arose from "community based, street-based problems"?

Document 2: Film clip

Watch and Listen to the following film clip of Central High School Students during the conflict that occurred on October 4, 1971



[RhIX WPRI 1971-10-04 A Excerpt](#)

Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society and WPRI

{Note that this footage does not include sound until 1:30. No transcription}

Document Analysis Worksheet

Use the chart below to help you analyze this film clip. In the first column, document who appears in the film using descriptions when names are not available. In the second column, note what the individuals or groups are doing and what actions they are taking in the film.

Individuals / groups	Action(s)

1. Synthesizing what you wrote in the chart, what courses of action are the groups of students taking?

2. Synthesizing what you wrote in the chart, what courses of action were taken against the students?

Document 3: Film clip

Superintendent Dr. Bernardo speaks about the incidents at Central High



[RhiX_WPRI_1971-10-07_A_Excerpt](#)

Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society and WPRI

Video Transcription

Superintendent Dr. Bernardo

We engaged in discussions with students and their contributions were positive. Let me run them down very, very quickly. But, they were concerned with their safety. They were concerned with the equitable application of discipline between the races. They wished to create a student sounding board which would provide for improved communications between students and administration. They were concerned for the creation of a continuing seminar situation which would deal with community problems as a part, and school problems as a part, of the curriculum. We have worked hard with them on in an attempt to implement these recommendations.

Document Analysis

1. According to Dr. Bernardo, what would the students like to see happen at their school?

-
2. Why do you think the students thought that these aims would help ease racial tensions at the school?

Lesson 2: Black Students Stage Walk-Out at Hope High School, 1969

On May 9, 1969, 150-200 black students staged a walk out at Hope High School after their principal, Max H. Faxman, refused to discuss a list of grievances they had prepared. In a meeting the following day with school officials, some resolutions were agreed upon, but the meetings came to an impasse over some of the issues. On May 13, students went on what was reported in the media as a "rampage" after negotiations met the impasse. Damage was done to school property. What conclusions can you make based on the primary sources below? What other information about the incident can be gleaned from these sources?

Document 1: Newspaper article



Negroes at Hope High Gain Concessions

Black students at Hope High School won promises of speedier action on their requests for curriculum and other changes yesterday, after about 200 of them walked out of classes.

Representatives of the students met for about two hours with school administrators, including the acting superintendent, Louis I. Kramer.

The students were told that an effort will be made to hold a "crash course in black history and literature" between now and the end of the school year, according to Charles H. Durant 3rd, executive director of the Providence Human Relations Commission. Several other commitments were made.

On Monday, the school will be closed in order to inform the faculty of the decisions reached yesterday. Classes are to resume on Tuesday.

Yesterday's demonstration was orderly, although the abruptness of the mass meeting created some confusion and apprehension. Many students left the building early and there was very little activity in the school by 1:30 p.m., about an hour before normal closing.

The walkout was prompted by the feeling that there had been too little action on a series of grievances presented to the school's principal, Max H. Flaxman. The walkout came at about 11:45 a.m. Students poured down the stairs and into the auditorium, declaring an unwillingness to speak with anyone other than Mr. Kramer.

A symbolic issue was a set of chains which kept the audi-

Continued on Page 3, Col. 1

Negroes at Hope High Gain Concessions

Continued From Page One
torium and other rooms closed when not in use. Some of the students felt these chains were altogether too reminiscent of the chains that bound slaves, according to Mr. Durant. It was agreed that they would be removed.

Explains Chains

In a statement, Mr. Kramer explained the school's position

Awarded \$25,000

Denver — (AP) — A Denver District Court jury has awarded \$25,000 to a woman who claimed she was permanently disfigured as a result of silicone breast injections she was given by a Denver osteopath.

The jury made the award to Mrs. France Klepper, 28, now of Mount Vernon, Ohio. She had asked for \$150,000 in damages in her suit against Dr. Linwood E. Downey.

on this matter: He said the chains were placed on the doors for the protection of students and equipment, because outsiders have broken into these rooms recently.

Both Mr. Kramer and Mr. Durant were complimentary of the students' presentation of their position. Mr. Kramer said, "At no time were these students discourteous or disruptive or in any way rowdy. The student committee was knowledgeable and perceptive."

Other demands presented by the students included changes in the summer school requirements and a call for additional certified black teachers.

Under former rules, no student who achieved less than a 50 average in any subject during the academic year was permitted to take summer school courses. That rule has now

been waived. Mr. Flaxman, the principal, said such a waiver had been planned.

In addition, if the student completes the summer school program with a grade of "C" or better he will not be required to take an examination in the course, reversing an earlier policy.

After the day's meetings, Jarvis Jones, the assistant principal at Hope, said he believes the demonstration is a reflection of the national uneasiness about school curriculum.

The students told officials that lack of black writers in literature courses and an inadequate attention to the history of black people was leading to disinterest, poor grades and a feeling that the courses, as now constituted, are irrelevant to them.

After the crash course, which may be taught by Mr. Durant, the school will prepare for a full black studies next fall. Plans for this new program have been in the works since February, Mr. Flaxman said.

Hostess Unaware of Invitation

Chafee Is Hero of D.

© The Washington Post News Service
Washington — Secretary of the Navy John H. Chafee, who was not invited by the hostess,

of newspaper columnists included.

Senator and Mrs. John Sherman Cooper were there.

(Providence Journal 10 May 1969, Copyright © 2019 The Providence Journal. Reproduced by Permission.)

Document Analysis Worksheet

1. What were the reasons black students staged a walk-out of Hope High School?
2. What changes did the students want to see occur at their school?

Document 2: Film clip

The following clips are a type of news clip called “man on the street” interviews. The interviews took place on May 11, a day after the student walk-out. Use the chart below to help you analyze the clips.



[RHIX WPRI 1969-05-11 7 A](#)

Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society and WPRI

Video Transcription

Man 1: I think that, I think that they're going to come out on top.

Interviewer: Who's going to come out on top, sir?

Man 1: Colored people.

Interviewer: What do you think should be done about it now?

Man 1: That I don't know. It's up to the politicians.

Man 2: Seems that uh, the Negroes thought that they weren't getting treated right, and uh, it's an unfortunate situation led to uh the other incident where some juveniles were breaking into another school just because of this and I thought it was a pretty bad influence.

Man 3: I think that it was provoked without any justifiable cause of anything that's happening on the national scene. I think that this was an excuse by hoodlums to run rampant rather than fight for any cause that had any justification. And I think that from what I have read and heard that it was influenced by other factors other than by students themselves.

Man 4: Oh well, as far as I understand is that they had a few problems with teachers and various other problems when things should have been settled um oh, probably years before.

Interviewer: Who do you think is to blame for the crisis that exists there now?

Man 4: Well, I guess maybe the superintendent of schools and maybe the school faculty.

Film Analysis worksheet

Description of speaker	Speaker opinion

1. Who did the interviewer choose to interview?
2. Why do you think the interviewer chose these four people?
3. Whose voices were not included in this series of quick interviews?
4. Whose opinions would you like to hear in order to have a better understanding of the event?

Teacher 'Racism' Target

Black Hope Students List Aims

By C. FRASER SMITH

Spokesmen for the dissident black students at Hope High School said last night they will demand dismissal, transfer or suspension of teachers at Hope High School they believe are guilty of racism.

The students said only about 80 of the 150 to 200 black students in the school the day the building was damaged were involved in the vandalism that left more than \$10,000 in wreckage in the corridors and classrooms of the East Side high school.

Formal documentation of charges against the teachers is now under way, they said. They declined to discuss details, pending presentation of their case to school authorities.

They said they hope an investigation of these charges will prove that the teachers should not be allowed to remain at Hope.

In an interview that ranged over several crucial elements of the continuing encounter between the blacks and the school, these students said that frustration and an increasing awareness of their black identity generated their demands.

They emphasized that they were not leaders of the 150 to 200 black students who have been pressing openly for change at Hope High for almost a week. But one of them, Wayne Hall, a senior, said he had been chosen as a spokesman. The other two youths asked that their names be withheld.

Each of the three denied that "outside agitators" influenced their actions. They denied that they had come to school on Tuesday with disruption of the school in mind, and they confirmed that a false rumor triggered the vandalism. They outlined their six basic demands:

- Rid the school of racist teachers.
- Give the blacks a chance

to make up failing grades in history and English.

- Include black history and black literature in the curriculum and give black students some say in what is read.

- Remove the locks and chains from the doors to the auditorium and other rooms.

- Alteration of summer entrance and credit requirements: in the future, students with year-end averages below 50 will be admitted. No examination will be required of students with a "C" average in summer school courses.

- Free tuition for summer school.

Only the first of these demands remains unresolved, and there appears to be some ne-

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Continued From Page One

gotiating room for both sides. School officials have said they will consider any evidence of racism put before them. The students have said they will make such a presentation.

The students declined to discuss reports that amnesty will be demanded. They made it clear that they would be unified in any attempt to arrest or charge students involved in the vandalism or other reported acts of violence.

Racism in the school was illustrated, they said, by encounters such as these:

- A teacher refused to help a black student with problems in English. The student found a tutor and managed to pass.
- One of the three said, "I came to school this year with natural hair. My teacher had some remarks with me. I didn't have to take that, but I did. All the white cats laughed."
- Black students were given, on one occasion, a different test, one that was harder than the test given to white students.
- One student asked his guidance counselor for help in selecting a junior college. The counselor has never "found" the college. The student is a senior.

On the question of outside agitation, they said, "They say there was a cat from Brown in there stirring people up. That's a lie." Involvement of Brown students was characterized in this way:

"We went to Brown on Saturday night to the Afro House. They wanted to know what it was all about. They said they'd do whatever they could do to help us. They told us to watch our step and not get sold out."

"We weren't sure what we wanted. We needed help. (But there) was no influence at all. The only reason they're (the school department) saying that is to protect Flaxman (Max Flaxman, the school principal)—it looked like he couldn't handle his students."

The students also said there was a delegation of students from Central High School in the auditorium.

One of the students also spoke of the developing awareness among black students:

More than a year ago when he asked about introduction of black history at Hope, he was told by a teacher that this would require Polish and Irish history. Since that time, he has had a black history class outside of school.

"Why should we have to go to school after school to find out about black people?" he asked. On the question of other minority groups — they're still white."

He took great pride in a story he had heard from a brother or sister—only 12 years old—

who is at Nathan Bishop Junior High School:

The young student gave one of the school officials a quiz. She asked him to identify several figures in American history: Washington, Lincoln, Franklin. Then she paused and asked him to identify Frederick Douglass, the black abolitionist. The man did not answer, according to the story.

There was also lengthy comment on reports that the students had come to school aiming to rampage:

"We weren't planning on tearing up the school," one of the students said.

At one point, one of the students left negotiations and returned to his black classmates in the auditorium.

"I said 'We got 'em going now. We're going to get our demands,'" he recalled. As he was about to return, he found that the entire student negotiating committee was coming back to the auditorium.

He said later that Acting Supt. Louis I. Kramer had emphatically refused to discuss the possibility of bringing the accused teachers into the conference.

"The way he said it made us feel they didn't want to be bothered with us," one of the students said. Still, at that point, they were talking of new tactics to win this last demand.

Then they learned that two white girls, who had been refused admittance to the audi-

torium, told the school principal they had been attacked.

"When it hit me, I was so shocked, I wanted to cry. 'What do they want to do to us?' I thought," the student said. He and the others felt they were being framed, he said.

His account of the affair coincides with a report made yesterday by Mr. Kramer. The students were upset, jumped from their seats and moved onto the auditorium stage. There they got sticks and other implements from the stage sets.

"We just figured if we were going to get our heads cracked, we'd hit back.

"The pot was boiling on Friday. It boiled over the weekend and you know what happens when something keeps boiling," one student said.

Repeatedly, these young men emphasized that they were not bent on violence.

"We're trying to gain an education. We're trying to make the white person open up his eyes and let the black man be himself.

"Our purpose is not violence. Our purpose is education. We got to thinking. Just what were we doing? We weren't learning nothin' about ourselves in school," they said.

Interlocking Demands

They stressed the interlocking relationship of these demands:

"What good is that (black history) if there are racist

3. What other important points did the students report on? What emotion(s) did the students report feeling?

Documents 4: Below you will find a historical broadside from 1851 and film clips and articles from both the Hope High and Central High Incidents you learned about in the previous lessons. Please look at these documents as a group. Guiding questions follow each document to aide in your analysis. Final questions will ask you to think about what thread connects these documents as you follow them through time.

CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE
OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully **CAUTIONED** and
advised, to avoid conversing with the
Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR &**
ALDERMEN, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS
AND
Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in
KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING
SLAVES. Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY,**
and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun*
them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS**
on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.

APRIL 24, 1851.

(Accessed on Wikimedia Commons)

Document 4B: Film Clip

An unknown gentleman speaks to the media on May 16, 1969 following the incidents at Hope High School



[RHIX WPRI 1969-05-16 3 A](#)

Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society and WPRI

Video Transcription

Unknown man: We felt that it uh was necessary that police not be visibly in the building or outside of the building you know, but in a normal patrol fashion available to respond immediately if the need arose.

4. In this short clip, what is this gentleman saying about police presence at Hope High School following the damages done by students at the school?

5. Why do you think he felt it was important to make this statement?

Document 4C: Newspaper article clip

Parents and students express concerns at a meeting on October 5, 1971 following the incidents at Central High School



(Providence Journal 06 October 1971, Copyright © 2019 The Providence Journal. Reproduced by Permission.)

6. Why are the black parents and students concerned about police presence at Central High School following the student melee?

Document 4D: Film Clip

Mayor Doorley speaks to the media on October 3, 1971 after the incidents at Central High School



[RhiX_1986.93.17087C_A](#)

Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society

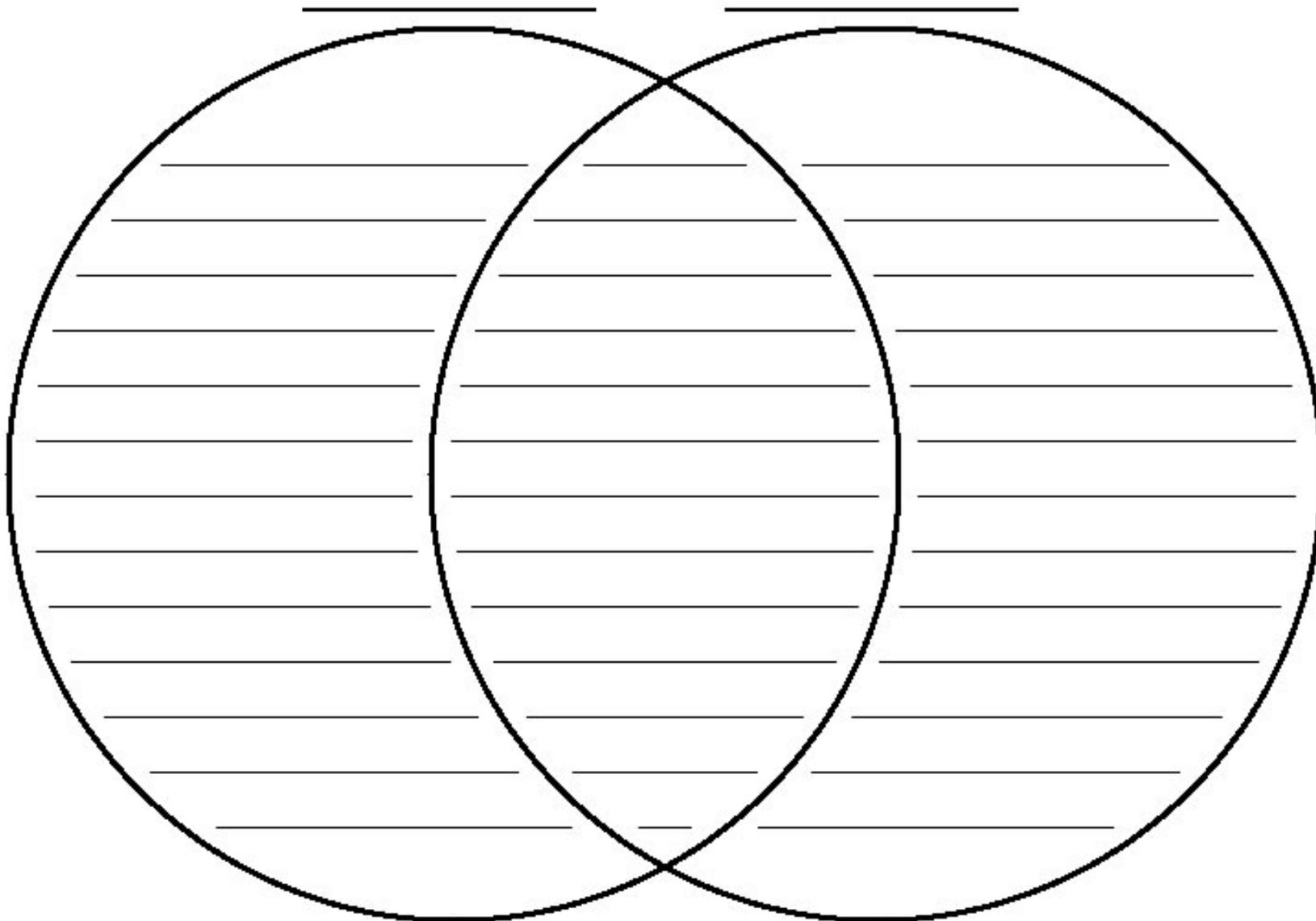
Video Transcription

Mayor Doorley: What the school administration's feeling is let these young people try to work it out themselves, see what the problems are, what are the hang-ups. Uh, the one I commonly hear is that white students are accosted and extorted in the schools. Now what are they going to do about it? I mean um, the last resort, and I say this unequivocally, and this is what the students feel from what I understand, and this is what the administration feels. The last resort is policemen in your schools. That possibly these young people can work out a program where they'll police themselves.

Another hang-up is that some of the younger black children coming from other areas back into their own area are accosted and assaulted. Now, that's outside the school building, and I think we're going to have to increase our patrols. But, here again there's gotta be some formal way of acting when a black or a white student does something wrong. And, I think that's what the young people are trying to do. They're trying to work it out themselves.

Name : _____

Venn Diagram



10. The documents above show that there were concerns about involving the police at both of the student protest events at Central and Hope High Schools. Why was there concern about making sure police involvement was a last resort?

11. Recall the historical broadside you analyzed earlier (document 4A), do you think early historical tensions between communities of color are echoed in the concerns of the black parents and officials when considering the use of police force during the high school conflicts in the 60s/70s? Explain why or why not.

12. Do members of black communities and other communities of color in the United States continue to have similar concerns with the police as an institution today? Provide evidence for your thinking.

13. What relationship(s) does your school have with the local police department? Are there students at your school who believe having a police presence at school is a problem? If yes, what are the problems they cite? Do you agree? Why or why not? If your school does or does not have a relationship with the local police, why do you think that is?

Lesson 4: Providence Student Union – Activism in the 21st Century

In the early 2000s, students at Hope High School formed a group called Hope United that staged a walk-out in efforts to change the curriculum. Soon, similar student organizations cropped up at other Providence High Schools, including Central High. The organizations merged in 2010 to form the Providence Student Union (PSU), an organization still active today.

Document 1: Providence Student Union Website

On the [Providence Student Union website](#), you will see their [Student Bill of Rights](#)

1. What items on the Student Bill of Rights are similar to what the Brown University, Hope High, and Central High students were asking for in the 1960s/70s?

Also on the PSU website, you will see a list of their [featured campaigns](#)

2. What are the campaigns that the PSU students have undertaken (list at least five)?

Comparison of student demands in the 60s/70s and today

	Central High School	Hope High School	Brown University	Providence Student Union
Differences				
Similarities				

6. What strategies have the students used / are currently using to work towards the goals of this campaign?

7. What successes have they had so far in reaching the goals of this campaign?

8. What is still left to be done to reach the goals?

Document 2: [Providence Students Say Race is a Big Part of Disconnect with Teachers](#), Providence Journal, August 16, 2019 Electronic article with accompanying audio clips

1. What problems does this article from 2019 demonstrate are occurring in the Providence High Schools?

2. What issues are similar to the issues students at Hope High had told reporters in the article you read earlier "Black Hope Students List Aims."

3. If you are in a Providence High School, do you recognize these or similar problems? If you are not at a Providence High School, do you recognize these or similar issues at your school? Does the demographic make-up at your school make a difference in how you perceive these issues? Are these issues still important at schools that have different demographics than the schools noted in these lessons? (To look up the demographics of your high school and/or the Providence High Schools, go to <http://www.eride.ri.gov/reports/reports.asp>).

Lesson 5: Issues Today. What can you do?

In the lessons in this packet, you read, saw and analyzed documents and films that demonstrate continuous civil rights issues that students have perceived in Providence high schools since the 1960s. In his 2018 oral history interview, James Vincent, president of the Providence Branch of the NAACP, was asked what he believes to be the biggest issues he notices today.

1. Listen to the clip below and think about how what he is saying has been expressed by the students you learned about in the lessons above.



[James Vincent Oral History](#)

Oral History of James Vincent, recorded Spring 2018 in 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. Image courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Oral History Transcript

James Vincent: But in terms of what I think of, and everybody else talks about leveling the playing field...the great equalizer...it's in education.

Keith Stokes (Interviewer): Yeah

James Vincent: And I think the biggest problem, and we have one of the worst education systems in the country, our state. I think the biggest problem is the fact that, for example in Providence, over 90% of the students are of color, and 80% of the teachers are white. Okay, so if I had to do one thing, it would be to try to figure out how to get more teachers of color in those classrooms. 'Cause, I think if you get teachers of color in those classrooms, it would make more of a difference than almost anything else you can do.

Keith Stokes: Because of mentorship?

James Vincent: In mentorship and and and and in terms of trying to inspire, in terms of caring, in terms of giving them advice, in terms of the fact that you can go to a Cornell. You don't have to go to a CCRI. Actually, giving people the idea that that's possible. You don't have any teachers doing that because they all live in... well, I don't want to get into that.

Keith Stokes: No, but I understand.

James Vincent: Too many of them I think are disconnected because too many of them live in the suburbs, and too many of them are not, are not culturally competent.

Keith Stokes: Yeah, and now with the rise of Asian and Latino kids and such...and, absolutely.

James Vincent: So, so, I think if I had to do one thing...you've gotta get more black and brown teachers in those classrooms, black and brown teachers in terms of guidance, black and brown teachers in terms of principals, ah, on the school committees. You know, the gamut. But, if I had to focus on one thing among that, it's the teachers.

2. Think about this and other civil rights issues that you notice are yet unresolved in your school or in our society. In a group or individually, use the space below to make a list of what you think are the most important problems facing Americans today (these can be problems that impact you directly, you see in your community, or that are facing the whole country). List at least four issues.

-
-
3. Pick one problem from the list you created above. Use this space to brainstorm some ways that you might address, or fight back against, this problem.

-
-
-
4. Pick one of the ways you listed above to address the issue. Make an action plan with step by step instructions to implement this solution and address the problem. (Consider how you will bring attention to the problem, how you could fundraise (if the solution involves money), who you can reach out to help you reach a solution, etc.)

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