



# DEMOCRACY REIGNITED



Tampa Bay  
**Times**  
**NIE**  
newspaper in education  
tampabay.com/nie

**FPES**  
FLORIDA PRESS  
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES INC.  
FPESNIE.ORG

Florida  
HUMANITIES



# Democracy in America

## Civic engagement

Our democracy demands action, reaction, vision and revision as we continue to question how to form “a more perfect union,” as written in the Preamble of the United States Constitution. Democracy is a system of government that requires civic engagement and participation. It is formed by citizens’ responses to ongoing questions:

- Who gets to participate?
- How do you motivate people to participate?
- Is there a way for citizens to participate beyond voting?
- What are the basic rights and responsibilities of the citizenry?

How do you participate as a citizen? From the revolution and suffrage to civil rights and casting ballots, everyone in every community is part of this ever-evolving story — the story of our American democracy.

Democracy requires sharing power with people you may not know, trust or agree with. Of course, there is a diversity of thought and ideals. The American Experiment is aspirational and assumes that the optimism of the human spirit propels people forward. The ultimate questions are: What does it take for a free people to govern themselves? Are we up to the task?

## Leap of faith

When American revolutionaries waged a war for independence, they took a leap of faith that sent ripple effects across generations. They embraced a radical idea of establishing a government that entrusted the power of the nation not to a monarchy, but to its citizens. That great leap sparked questions that continue to impact Americans: Who has the right to vote? What are the freedoms and responsibilities of citizens? Whose voices will be heard?

*“We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weavings of individual threads form one to another that creates something.”*

– SANDRA DAY O’CONNOR, RETIRED ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

## We the people

Democracy succeeds when “informed, active and humane citizens coexist with institutions that uphold the rule of law and shared values,” according to Facing History and Ourselves. Democracy can be fragile, especially when we the people do not actively participate.

A democratic society represents more than just voting in elections. Self-government requires citizens who are “informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, are involved in the political process, and possess moral and civic virtues,” defines 4-H.

The cornerstone of successful democracies is the protection of certain rights found in our Bill of Rights: the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom of the press, the freedom to assemble peaceably and the freedom to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Sources: Facing History and Ourselves; 4-H

## Using your power

“The reimagining of civics as the teaching and learning of power is so necessary . . . If you don’t learn how to practice power, someone else will do it for you — in your name, on your turf, with your voice, and often against your interests,” writes Eric Liu, author and founder and CEO of Citizen University.

Engaged citizens are essential to a healthy democracy. That is where **you** enter into the process. Do you know what it means to be a good citizen? What types of power does a citizen hold? How do citizens learn to use their power to make changes?

## Why does this matter?

“Democracy can survive only as strong democracy, secured not by great leaders but by competent, responsible citizens,” notes author Benjamin Barber. “Effective dictatorships require great leaders. Effective democracies need great citizens. And citizens are certainly not born, but made as a consequence of civic education and political engagement in a free polity.” What is a responsible citizen? How important do you think it is that ordinary people understand that they, too, have power to make change?

### Cover images:

**Top photo:** Plant High school students during a vigil to remember and honor victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland at Curtis Hixon Park, Tampa, Feb. 19, 2018.  
Dirk Shadd, Times Photo

**Other images:** Courtesy of National Museum of American History

**Bottom photo:** March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Aug. 28, 1963.  
Rowland Scherman, Photo





## Sharing history

Established in 1973 as an extension of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Florida Humanities is

dedicated to advancing the NEH's core mission of providing access to the humanities and its various disciplines to all citizens. For more than 45 years, Florida Humanities has remained passionately committed to sharing Florida's stories by promoting a better understanding of the state's rich history, literature and culture through partnerships with public libraries, museums and historical societies across Florida.

From its walking tour app and exhibition partnership with the Smithsonian Institution to family literacy programs in public libraries, Florida Humanities is the only organization of its kind dedicated to bringing the humanities to every Floridian, wherever located, from the Panhandle to the Keys.

To date, Florida Humanities has awarded more than \$14 million toward grants and public programming statewide. Learn more about Florida Humanities at [floridahumanities.org](http://floridahumanities.org).



The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education (NIE) program is committed to educating people of all ages and is honored to join the Florida Humanities and its partner museums, libraries and historical centers with this project. This NIE educational publication is a supplement to the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street traveling exhibition, *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*, which will tour Florida in 2020.

To learn more about the Tampa Bay Times NIE program, go to [tampabay.com/nie](http://tampabay.com/nie).

## Thank you to our Sponsors

Funding for this publication was provided through a grant from Florida Humanities with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of Florida Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Florida Humanities would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support of this publication: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Gulf Coast Community Foundation and Pallet One.

## Going beyond the text

## Compare and contrast



When the forefathers of the United States of America decided to form a new government, it was a bold, radical and dangerous idea. It was feared that a country could not survive without a king. A democratic society could not work. In his Gettysburg Address, President Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as being "of the people, by the people, and for the people." What does that phrase mean? How have the people changed the United States throughout the decades? Citizen involvement is essential for a democracy to work properly. From Thomas Jefferson and George Washington to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, political ideals, principles and people's rights have evolved.

In small groups, make a list of all the different ways citizens can be involved in society, their communities and government.

Next, look through your local newspaper to find more ways citizens can participate in society. Find examples of people who contribute to democracy in your community. Who are these people? What makes them good citizens? Where are they participating? How are they contributing to society and the community? What can you do to contribute to your community? Choose one of the activities you have read about to participate in with your friends and family. Go to the following websites for more ideas: [volunteerflorida.org](http://volunteerflorida.org) and [nationalservice.gov/serve](http://nationalservice.gov/serve). Share what you have learned with your classmates and on social media.

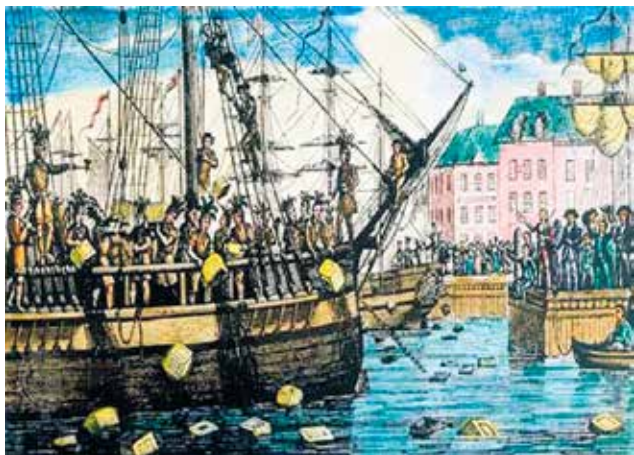




# A Great Leap of Faith

## Taking a stand

The American colonists believed that England's King George III was abusing his power. They were being taxed, but they had no representation in the government. So what were the taxes being used for? The tax on tea was the last straw. The policy of imposing taxes without the consent of the people incurred the wrath of the colonists, because they believed the British government did not care about the colonists' concerns.



On June 11, 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a committee of five delegates to create a document declaring independence from the British government. The delegates were John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia,

Robert R. Livingston of New York and Roger Sherman of Connecticut. This letter, addressed to King George, became known as the Declaration of Independence.

## Common sense and enlightenment

Penning the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson was influenced by the Enlightenment ideals of John Locke and Thomas Paine.

The statement "All men ... are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" reflects the Enlightenment ideals as expressed by Locke. Locke wrote at length about natural law and natural rights. Locke's writings argued that all people are born with natural rights to life, liberty and



property. He believed these rights were independent of any government or social laws.

Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense," written in 1776, blamed King George for the problems in the American

colonies. It also challenged the authority of the British government and monarchy. Paine argued that the colonists should declare their independence from Britain and emphasized the right to and benefits of self-government.

## Why does this matter?

On YouTube, watch the video "How America Misunderstands the Declaration of Independence" presented by political theorist Danielle Allen. Allen reminds us that the language of the Declaration states "that among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." What other unalienable rights might there be? Share your thoughts with your class.

## Going beyond the text Citizen rights

Look through your local newspaper for examples of people celebrating the following statement in the Declaration of Independence: "All men ... are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Find an article, photograph or cartoon for each of these rights. In your notebook or journal, write a few sentences about each article or photograph you find. Share what you have learned with your class.

## Research activity: points to ponder

Just how revolutionary was our new democracy led by the people? Who were "the people" at this time? The governed, according to Locke and the founding fathers of the United States of America, were even the smallest landowners, allowing all men to have a say in the government. Did each landowner have an equal vote in the new government? Who is excluded in this government representation? Research these points in your school media center or local library. Compare these ideas to what was happening in England and France during this time period. After writing down the information you have learned, determine just how revolutionary our new democracy led by the people was. Share your thoughts with your class.

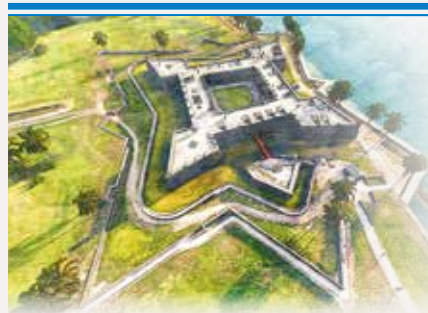
## Going beyond the text Compare and contrast

"Although many of the Founding Fathers acknowledged that slavery violated the core American Revolutionary ideal of liberty, their simultaneous commitment to private property rights, principles of limited government, and intersectional harmony prevented them from making a bold move against slavery. The considerable investment of Southern Founders in slave-based staple agriculture, combined with their deep-seated racial prejudice, posed additional obstacles to emancipation," writes Anthony Iaccharino, an editor for *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Read "The Founding Fathers and Slavery" by Iaccharino at [britannica.com](http://britannica.com). Write down the main ideas in this article. Next, read "Founding Fathers and Slaveholders" by Stephen E. Ambrose in *Smithsonian Magazine* at [smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com). Write down the main points presented in this article. Using a chart or Venn diagram, compare the two articles. Write a blog post or response about what you have read.



# FLORIDA'S BEGINNINGS



**1776**

The American Revolution begins. Although Florida became an English colony in 1763, it does not join the 13 English colonies in the revolution. Its previously sparse population swells overnight as Tories escape into loyalist Florida, mostly settling in St. Augustine. Many indigenous Southerners, including Creeks and Seminoles, side with the British in the American Revolution. In 1783, Florida reverts back to Spain.

**1812**

In March 1812, a group of Georgia settlers, known as the Patriot Army, invades Spanish East Florida. The Patriots hope to convince the inhabitants of Spanish East Florida to join them in declaring independence from Spain. The Patriots eventually lose the support from the U.S. government and abandon the Florida project in early 1813.

**1817-1818**

American soldiers invade Spanish Florida, burning Seminole homes and capturing escaped slaves, in what comes to be known as the First Seminole War.

**1821**

Spain sells Florida to the United States for

**\$5 million.**

**1838**

A convention in St. Joseph begins on December 3, 1838, to create a Florida Constitution so Florida could be accepted into the Union.

**1845**

Florida becomes the 27th state.



**1858**

The third and final Seminole War ends. By 1842, there are fewer than 200 Seminoles remaining in Florida.



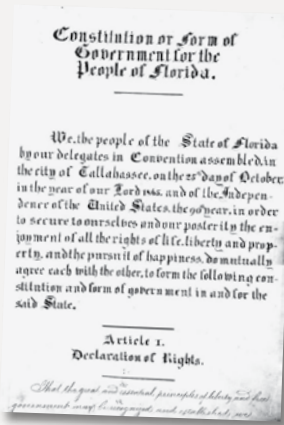
**1861**

On January 10, an Ordinance of Secession is adopted and a new constitution, substituting the words "Confederate States" for "United States" passes.



**1865**

To re-enter the Union, a new Florida Constitution is created, but the U. S. Congress rejects it and puts Florida under military rule until 1868. The first of many Jim Crow laws is passed, enforcing "separate but equal" laws on railroad cars.



**1868**

The Reconstruction constitution returns civilian control of the state. It enfranchises Black males and requires each voter to take an oath of loyalty to the State of Florida and the United States Government. The new constitution also grants representation to the Seminoles in both houses of the legislature. The seats are never occupied, and the provision disappears in 1885.

**1928**

The Tamiami Trail, from Miami to the Gulf Coast, officially opens.



**1950**

Florida becomes the **20th most populous** state in the country.

**1968**

A new constitution is ratified by the voters. This is the constitution that is currently in use.

**2019**

With an approximate population of **21.5 MILLION**, Florida is now the **third most populous** state in the nation.

Source: Florida Memory Project; Florida Department of State; U.S. Census Bureau

## Florida's entry into the Union

Florida became the 27th state in the United States on March 3, 1845. William D. Moseley was elected the new state's first governor. David Levy Yulee and James D. Westcott, Jr. became the first senators from Florida on Dec. 1, 1845. Florida has been governed by six constitutions: 1838, 1861, 1865, 1868, 1885 and 1968. The Florida Constitution can be read at [flsenate.gov/laws/constitution](http://flsenate.gov/laws/constitution).

While the United States Constitution forms the bedrock of laws in the nation, each state has its own constitution. State constitutions vary in length and scope, are often broader in scope than the federal constitution, and are amended more frequently. State constitutions can provide additional protections and rights not found in the federal law. For example, the Florida Constitution protects the right to privacy and equal rights for women. See Article I, Sections 2 and 23. State laws cannot deprive a state's residents of their federal constitutional rights.

Sources: Florida Department of State; Florida Senate; Georgetown University Law Library





# One Voice, One Vote

## By the people, of the people, for the people

The United States of America, as its name implies, is one nation – united, indivisible. Yet, through our stormy history, we have often been divided in theory, philosophy and practice. The word “democracy” implies all people should have a voice in the political process.

There is a diverse body of voters today, but not every American has always had or wanted the right to vote. The fight for fair representation, suffrage and a voice at the polls has meant struggle and changes to laws ever since the birth of the United States.



*of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”*

## Going beyond the text

### Amendments

Research and analyze the impact of the 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th and 26th amendments on the participation of minority groups in the American political process. Split your class into six groups. Each group will be responsible for researching one of the amendments. Be sure to analyze not only the content of the amendments, but also the context, focus and purpose of the amendment.

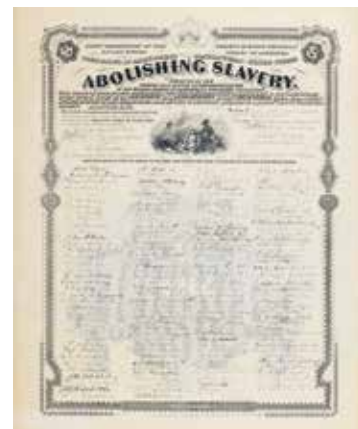
## The power of words

The Constitution might never have been ratified on Sept. 17, 1787, if the framers hadn't promised to add a Bill of Rights. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution gave citizens more confidence in the new government and contain many of today's Americans' most valued freedoms.

The preamble to the Bill of Rights and the first 10 amendments were ratified on Dec. 15, 1791. “The conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.”

To read both documents, go to [archives.gov/founding-docs](http://archives.gov/founding-docs).

## A government for all the people



**13th Amendment print**

Artist and engraver Walter Shirlaw produced this commemorative print in 1868, which reproduced the signatures of the amendment's congressional supporters.

Between 1865 and 1971, six constitutional amendments were ratified enabling all United States citizens over the age of 18, regardless of gender and race, to participate in the democratic process.

At the end of the Civil War in 1865, Congress needed to address the many challenges the nation now faced, particularly the integration of

4 million newly emancipated Black Americans into the political life of the nation, and the readmission to federal representation of former states in rebellion. Congressional Reconstruction included the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, which extended civil and legal protections to previously enslaved people.

**In 1924, Native people won the right to full citizenship** when President Calvin Coolidge signed the Indian Citizenship Act.



**Presentation Indian moccasins**

A delegation of Plains Indians gave these beaded moccasins to President Ulysses S. Grant during an 1870s peace conference in Washington, D.C. The design unites motifs and forms from both cultures as a powerful statement of hopeful coexistence. Gift of Mr. Chapman Grant

The 13th Amendment, ratified on Dec. 6, 1865, abolished slavery “within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” Congress required former Confederate states to ratify the 13th Amendment as a condition of regaining federal representation.

Ratified on July 9, 1868, the 14th

Amendment granted citizenship to all persons “born or naturalized in the United States,” including former enslaved persons, and provided all citizens with “equal protection under the laws,” extending the provisions of the Bill of Rights to the states. In addition, it granted Congress the power to enforce this amendment, a provision that led to the passage of other landmark legislation in the 20th century, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The 15th Amendment, ratified on Feb. 3, 1870, prohibited states from disenfranchising voters “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” The amendment left open the possibility, however, that states could institute voter qualifications equally to all races, and many former Confederate states took advantage of this provision, instituting poll taxes and literacy tests, among other qualifications. The 24th Amendment, ratified in 1964, eliminated poll taxes.

The 19th Amendment, guaranteeing American women the right to vote, was ratified in 1920. Ratified on July 1, 1971, the 26th Amendment granted the right to vote to American citizens aged 18 or older.

**Sources:** United States Senate; U.S. National Archives



**A Sign of Citizenship, 1952**

Irene Lourdes, a Chinese American preparing to vote in New York City. Courtesy of Arthur Sasse ©Bettmann/CORBIS



## Women's suffrage

Women first organized and collectively fought for suffrage, the right to vote, at the national level in July of 1848. Suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott convened a meeting of more than 300 people in Seneca Falls, N.Y. In the following decades, women marched, protested, lobbied and even went to jail. By the 1870s, women pressured Congress to vote on an amendment that would recognize their suffrage rights.

## Women's suffrage in Florida

In the late 1800s, regional suffrage organizations began to form in states across the U.S. But the suffrage movement had roots in abolitionism. As a result, Southern women's suffrage groups were slower to organize. Organized efforts to promote women's suffrage were slow in Florida until Ella C. Chamberlain founded the Florida Women's Suffrage Association in 1893. When Chamberlain moved out of the state four years later, the organization disbanded.

Women's suffrage did not have widespread support in Florida until the 1910s, when groups such as the Florida Equal Franchise League and the Orlando Suffrage League were founded. Many women's suffrage groups in Florida often only supported the white woman's right to vote. As a result, Black women were frequently excluded from the suffrage organizations.

Women from Florida were also involved in national organizations like the National Woman's Party. When Mary Nolan of Florida joined the National Woman's Party, she picketed the White House in 1917 and was arrested and imprisoned.

States across the country held special sessions to vote on passing the 19th Amendment, which would allow women to vote. Some states ratified the amendment while others voted to reject it. Florida, however, did not hold a vote on the amendment. Many politicians and newspapers in the state were against women's suffrage.

On May 13, 1969, Florida showed its support for women's suffrage by belatedly ratifying the 19th Amendment.

Source: National Park Service



Three suffragettes demonstrate in New York City to promote Suffrage Hike of 1912 from Manhattan to Albany and distribute their "Votes for Women Pilgrim" leaflets. Shutterstock



### Suffrage March

Photo by Richard W. Strauss, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

### 19th Amendment pen

Pennsylvania Governor William Cameron Sproul used a pen in the women's suffrage movement's signature yellow hue to sign his state's ratification of the 19th Amendment.

## Why does this matter?

Does everyone have equal voting rights in Florida today? If not, why not? Are all voting opportunities equal? Should voting be made easier? If so, why and how?



Mrs. Frederick (Mary) Nolan  
ca. 1910-1920  
Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain



### Selma March

Photo by Matt Herron, 1965

## Going beyond the text Suppressing voters

In October 2013, University of South Florida St. Petersburg professor emeritus Darryl Paulson wrote a series of articles for the *Tampa Bay Times* focused on the ways that Florida has discriminated against Black voters from the Civil War forward. Read these three articles:

- [tampabay.com/news/perspective/floridas-history-of-suppressing-blacks-votes/2146546/](http://tampabay.com/news/perspective/floridas-history-of-suppressing-blacks-votes/2146546/)
- [tampabay.com/news/perspective/how-florida-kept-blacks-from-voting/2147745/](http://tampabay.com/news/perspective/how-florida-kept-blacks-from-voting/2147745/)
- [tampabay.com/news/perspective/florida-so-often-denied-black-voters/2154126/](http://tampabay.com/news/perspective/florida-so-often-denied-black-voters/2154126/)

Write down the main ideas of these articles. Be sure to include the following ideas. What are the main points in each article? Who is the audience? Why is Paulson writing these articles? What lessons can be learned from each article?

Next, look through the current and archived issues of your newspaper for other voting issues. Look for articles dealing with voter rights or amendments focusing on voting? Does everyone in your community have an equal vote? Write an argument essay based on the information you have learned from all the research you have done.



Former Governor LeRoy Collins mediating during civil rights march, 1965, in Selma, Ala.

John Lewis (later U.S. Representative) in second row at far left. "Collins' role as mediator in the Selma, Ala., march doomed his later political career. Conservative southerners roasted him as a turncoat when photographs showed him with civil rights leaders Andrew Young, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King and Ralph Abernathy." State Archives of Florida



# The Machinery of Democracy

## Democratically-based government

The United States of America's government is a democracy, right? Yet nowhere is the word "democracy" mentioned in the Declaration of Independence or the U.S. Constitution. As a matter of fact, some of the Founding Fathers feared democratic rule. In *The Federalist Papers*, James Madison wrote, "...Instability, injustice, and confusion ...Have in truth been the mortal disease under which popular governments everywhere perished ..."

Even though a democratically-based government was looked at as superior to the monarchies of Europe, the colonists believed a government ruled by the people would result in chaos, disorder and disruption.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica

## Democratic republic

James Madison defined a "pure democracy" as "a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person." He defined a republic as "a government in which the scheme of representation takes place." According to Madison, "The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic, are first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater the number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended." In other words, for Madison, "democracy meant direct democracy, and republic meant representative government."

Sources: "The Federalist Papers No. 10," Encyclopedia Britannica

## Indirect democracy

The American founders put in place an indirect or representative democracy. In this type of system, citizens vote for representatives, who, in turn, make decisions on behalf of those citizens. As noted in the Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia, people tend to use the terms "republic" and "democracy" interchangeably. "A widespread criticism of representative democracy is that the representatives become the elites that seldom consult ordinary citizens, so even though they are elected, a truly representative government doesn't really exist."

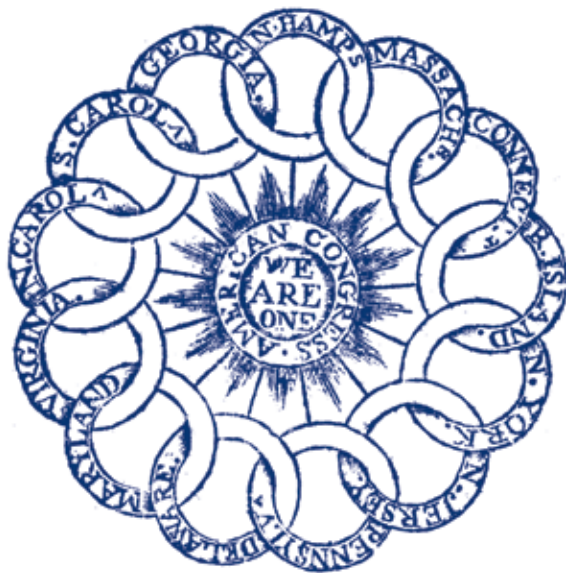
The United States of America has a constitutional democracy with a limited government, majority rule, limited by constitutional structure and provisions.

The Founding Fathers wanted to ensure that there was no absolute power by the government, which is why three branches were put in place: executive, legislative and judicial. These three branches serve as a system of checks and balances for each other.

Source: Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."*

- AMENDMENT I, THE U.S. CONSTITUTION



"The Chain of States" as it appeared on Continental paper money, 1776.

Photo by Jaclyn Nash, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

## The Fourth Estate

United States citizens participate in the political system through state and national parties, nominating conventions and campaigning for our candidate of choice. Learning about the candidates and issues is one of our most important roles as citizens.

One way citizens gain knowledge of how they are being governed is through the press. During the time the Constitution was being written, the press was information printed by a printing press. The meaning of "press" has expanded throughout the years, though. The Supreme Court has interpreted "press" as covering "not only talking, writing and printing, but also broadcasting, using the Internet and other forms of expression," note Geoffrey R. Stone and Eugene Volokh, professors of law. Throughout history, journalism has been regarded as an important factor in government, so vital to the functioning of a democracy that it has been portrayed as an integral component of democracy itself. Thomas Jefferson said, "The only security of all is in a free press."

"Franklin" common press, about 1720.

Benjamin Franklin identified this printing press as the one that he had used while learning his trade in England in the 1720s. Photo by Hugh Talman, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution



In 1841, Edmund Burke wrote, "there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all." Four years earlier, Thomas Carlyle had used the phrase in his French Revolution: "A Fourth Estate, of Able Editors, springs up, increases and multiplies; irrepressible, incalculable." Carlyle saw the press as instrumental to the birth and growth of democracy, spreading facts and opinions and sparking revolution against tyranny.

## Freedom of the press

In 1971, Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black noted, "The press was to serve the governed, not the governors," in 1971 in the court case of *New York Times Co. vs. United States*. The freedom of the press is essential to a democracy in which the government is answerable to the people.

Democracy requires informed citizens. The role of the press is to inform the citizens as well as to provide feedback to the government from those same citizens. As the fourth member of the checks and balances system, a key role of the press is to make the actions of the government known to the public. Citizens then have the option of using their power to change the government and rules through voting, petitions, protests and letter writing.

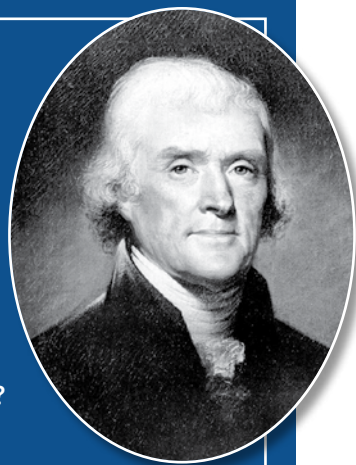




## Think about it

Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost." What do you think Jefferson meant? Do you agree with him? Do you think press freedoms should be absolute, or do you think they should have limits? How can you tell which news source is reliable?

As a consumer of information, what can you do to fact check the information you read and see? Can press freedoms come into conflict with other societal needs and priorities?



## Journalist watchdogs

"Journalism has an unusual capacity to serve as watchdog over those whose power and position most affect citizens. It may also offer voice to the voiceless," defines the American Press Institute (API). Being an independent monitor of power means "watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny," authors Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel write in their book *The Elements of Journalism*. API notes the following ideals about journalism:

- Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
- Its essence is a discipline of verification.
- Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
- It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
- It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.

In today's digital world, the average person often works like a journalist, by writing a blog, commenting on social media, sending a tweet or posting a photo. By sharing information, everyday people have entered the world of reporters.

Kovach and Rosenstiel note two things that separate the process from an end product that is journalism. The first is motive and intent. "The purpose of journalism is to give people the information they need to make better decisions about their lives and society. The second difference is that journalism involves the conscious, systematic application of a discipline of verification to produce a 'functional truth,' as opposed to something that is merely interesting or informative."

Source: American Press Institute

## Open government

Emory J. "Red" Cross saw a problem with the communication loop between the governed and the government in Florida. Cross was a "classic Florida character, a state legislator who strolled the marble halls of Tallahassee clad in a white suit, a Stetson and a string tie," writes author and Florida native Craig Pittman.

During the 1950s and '60s, Cross spent 16 years in the Florida Legislature. For 10 of those years, he worked hard trying to pass a groundbreaking Government in the Sunshine Law.

Paula Rausch, reporter for the *Gainesville Sun*, writes, "Shortly after Cross was elected to the House, he attended a meeting of the local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and was given a copy of a model open-meetings law put out by the SPJ." Although Cross was laughed at by the other lawmakers, the bill was finally put into law in 1967.

"It was the first in the nation with teeth, including civil and criminal penalties. And because of it, Floridians were likely able to know more about their government than the people of any other state," Rausch writes.

Sources: Tampa Bay Times; Gainesville Sun

## Government in the sunshine

Today, the Sunshine Law regarding open government can be found in Chapter 286 of the Florida Statutes. These statutes establish a basic right of access to most meetings of boards, commissions and other governing bodies of state and local governmental agencies or authorities.

Throughout the history of Florida's open government, its courts have consistently supported the public's right of access to governmental meetings and records. As such, they also have been defining and redefining what a public record is and who is covered under the open meetings law. One area of public concern was whether the legislature was covered under the open meetings requirements. To address that concern, constitutional amendments were passed in 1990 and 1992 to expand and reaffirm open government to all branches of government.

The Florida Sunshine Law, established in 1995, is a series of laws designed to guarantee that the public has access to the public records of government bodies in Florida. Public records include all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data

processing software or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics or means of transmission made or received pursuant to law to ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.

Sources: The Office of the Attorney General; National Freedom of Information Coalition



## Going beyond the text

### Journalism matters

"Without a serious study of journalism, there can be no understanding of citizenship, democracy or community," writes Roy Peter Clark, author and senior scholar at the Poynter Institute, a school for journalists in St. Petersburg, Fla. How do you interpret this statement? Do you agree with it? Look for examples of this statement in your local newspaper. Find examples of articles that keep people informed and create a chart and/or infographic listing the importance of those articles to the community. Go to a county government meeting and take notes. Compare your notes to an article in the newspaper about that same meeting. Was the meeting covered accurately? Share what you have learned with your class.

## Why does this matter?

Does the press have a right or an obligation to publish information? Why is this relevant? Government surveillance has made it increasingly more dangerous for journalists and whistleblowers to share information. Yet without this information and a watchdog on the government, can a democracy thrive? Listen to the TED Talk "How free is our freedom of the Press" by Trevor Timm, Freedom of the Press Foundation co-founder, at [tedtalk.com](http://tedtalk.com).



# Beyond the Ballot

*"The great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right."*

— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., 1955

## The right to protest

The First Amendment of the Constitution establishes that Congress shall make no law restricting "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Not limiting their participation to electoral politics, individuals and groups with very different resources have brought their interests and concerns before the nation.

While petitioning has been open for everyone, it was especially important for those barred from voting. In the early history of the United States, mass petitioning gave poor white men, women, free Black people and other minorities a means to voice grievances and to claim a role in determining the direction of the country.

One of the first nationally organized petitioning drives was a protest against the federal government removing Cherokee Indians from their eastern native lands. Since then, petition drives have focused on topics as diverse as one can imagine.



About 100 people attended a protest in St. Petersburg asking Gov. Ron DeSantis to veto a bill that would build a toll road to Georgia, and they say, would threaten much of Florida's remaining wildlife. Tim Martin, Conservation chair of the Sierra Club Florida, urged people to call the governor's office and ask him to veto the bill. Caitlin Johnston — Times Photo, 5/14/2019

## Types of protests

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the following terms :

- > A petition is "a formal written request made to an official person or organized body such as a court" or other government office.

- > A boycott is "a concerted refusal to have dealings with (a person, a store, an organization, etc.) usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions."
- > To strike is "to stop work in order to force an employer to comply with demands."
- > A sit-in is "an act of sitting in the seats or on the floor of an establishment as a means of organized protest."

## Freedom Riders

Between May and November 1961, "more than 400 Black and white Americans risked their lives—and many endured savage beatings and imprisonment—for simply traveling together on buses and trains as they journeyed through the Deep South. Deliberately violating Jim Crow laws in order to test and challenge a segregated interstate travel system, the Freedom Riders met with bitter racism and mob violence along the way, sorely testing their belief in nonviolent activism," according to the WGBH Educational Foundation.

On June 15, 1961, 10 members of the Interfaith Freedom Ride were arrested in the Tallahassee Municipal Airport after attempting to eat at a segregated airport restaurant. The group rode from Washington, D.C. to Tallahassee in a move of protest against the segregated interstate busing system in the south, ending their trip in Tallahassee.

The group planned to then fly back to Washington, D.C. from the Tallahassee Municipal Airport and decided to sit in at the Savarin Restaurant inside the airport when 10 of the protestors were arrested. Dubbed the "Tallahassee 10," they were released on bond the next day, although they came back to Tallahassee to serve brief jail sentences in 1964 after being convicted.

Sources: WGBH Educational Foundation; the Florida Historical Society



Freedom Riders being arrested at the Tallahassee Municipal Airport. 1961.  
State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

## Airport Restaurant In Tallahassee Bars Flying 'Freedom Riders'

See Photo Page 2-A  
Times Wire Services

TALLAHASSEE — Ten "freedom riders" faced with a closed white restaurant at the Tallahassee Airport where they attempted to get food service asked the Interstate Commerce Commission last night to intervene in their behalf.

## Jacksonville Indifferent To 'Riders'

By DAVE LAVENTHOL  
Of The Times Staff

JACKSONVILLE — Two groups of "freedom riders" who arrived in an indifferent Jacksonville yesterday are expected in St. Petersburg today.

The 14 members of the "union and professional" group, traveling in two units, also will stop in Ocala and Tampa.

The first group is scheduled to leave Jacksonville at 6 a.m. and is scheduled to arrive in St. Petersburg at 12:45 p.m. The second group is scheduled to leave Jacksonville at 9 a.m. and will arrive in St. Petersburg at 3:55 p.m.

The Tampa stop will be for only a few minutes.

The "freedom riders" are expected to leave St. Petersburg, the last scheduled stop on their trip through the South, as soon as they can find transportation north.

The "union and professional" group includes two white and one Negro women, and six Negro and five white men. One Negro and one white minister, and one white rabbi are included in this group.

The "freedom riders" were almost completely ignored as they debarked from a Greyhound bus at the downtown terminal here about 5 p.m. yesterday. Persons in the station had no comment when the "riders" came in.

The "riders" looked like any other travelers on a hot afternoon trip when they stepped, rumped and weary, off the bus

Shortly before 9 p.m., a group of about 20 white men appeared at the airport terminal. Among them were Homer Barrs and Jack Newell, leaders in the extreme segregationist White Citizens Council.

The whites stood mostly outside the terminal but in groups of two and three entered and surveyed the "freedom riders" who were seated with several local Negroes in the terminal.

At the time only two Tallahassee policemen were at the terminal. Two city plainclothesmen arrived a short time later. About 10 p.m. a fairly strong contingent of city police arrived and they were followed by a group of seven or eight state highway patrol men.

The group of white and Negro clergymen sat down in the terminal and a spokesman said they intended to remain until served on an integrated basis.

They sent a telegram to the chairman of the ICC complaining they had been denied food service by the restaurant.

The spokesman, the Rev. J. W. Collier Jr., Negro, said they had asked an immediate reply. He added that they intended to remain at the terminal until the restaurant was opened on an integrated basis. Both the white and Negro eating facilities were closed.

Eight of the group of clergymen had left earlier by plane to fly back north after their two-day trip into the south testing integration at bus terminals.

ANOTHER GROUP of professional workers and union members arrived in Jacksonville just after 1 p.m. yesterday and is to make a test run to St. Petersburg and Tampa today.

The "freedom riders" after being served integrated in the white lunch room at the Tallahassee Greyhound Bus Terminal without incident, found the airport restaurant closed on arrival.

The group milled around the

(See JACKSONVILLE, Page 11-A)

(See RIDERS Page 2-A)



## Going beyond the text Passive resistance

Black people struggled for decades to win legal equality. Segregation was deep-rooted in the South. Schools, public transportation and many public places were segregated. Lawsuits to challenge segregation in schools took place from the 1930s through the 1954 landmark decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In 1955, the Montgomery Bus Boycott took on segregated city buses. And sit-ins challenged segregation at lunch counters starting in 1960. During the summer of 1961, with the civil rights movement well underway, activists challenged yet another segregation stronghold: interstate bus travel. Although this segregation was illegal, it continued. Most Black Americans did not try to assert their rights because of the likelihood of violence and retaliation. However, in 1961, a group of Black and white Freedom Riders challenged segregation on interstate buses and in terminals. As a result, these citizens challenged federal officials to enforce U.S. law.

The Freedom Rides became a defining part of the

civil rights movement, and the Freedom Riders became models of the heroism that transformed race relations. Research the Freedom Riders in your school media center or local library. Examine not only the history of this heroic group of people, but also the concepts of nonviolent protest and upstanders vs. bystanders.

Now that you have learned about the journey of the Freedom Riders, look in your local newspaper for an example of a citizen who is standing up for his or her rights. Summarize the information in the article and find a sentence in the article that best describes this person or his or her challenge. Write a fully developed essay focused on your research. Be sure to include the information from the newspaper in your paper. Share your research with your class.

You can learn more about the Freedom Riders. Read *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* by Ray Arsenault. View *Freedom Riders*, a Public Broadcasting film by Stanley Nelson.



### Freedom Riders

Black leaders march down Jefferson Street at the head of a group of 3,000 demonstrators and heading toward City Hall to protest the Z. Alexander Looby bombing. Leaders are Rev. C.T. Vivian, front row left Diane Nash from Fisk University; Bernard Lafayette of American Baptist seminary; Curtis Murphy of Tennessee A&I, back row center and Rodney Powell of Meharry Medical College. Jack Corn /The Tennessean 4/19/1960

## Going beyond the text Awakening the public

Throughout the agricultural regions of the U.S., Latino families have worked long hours harvesting crops for inadequate wages and no protection from poor working conditions. The food we buy from grocery stores and restaurants often is purchased at cut-rate prices, which affects the workers farming those products. Learn about the United Farm Workers (UFW) at [ufw.org](http://ufw.org). Research the UFW. Compare the struggles of Mexican Americans to Black Americans. Research the protests organized by the Immokalee Farmers and the Florida United Farm Workers organizations. Find a current issue regarding Florida farmers in the local newspaper. Add the current information you find to your research and create a graphic organizer or infographic to show your comparison. Share what you have learned with your class.

### Simple Justice

In the book *Simple Justice*, Richard Kluger explores the monumental court case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In the view of constitutional scholar Louis H. Pollak, this 1954 Supreme Court ruling is "probably the most important American government act of any kind since the Emancipation Proclamation." Watch the PBS *American Experience* episode "Simple Justice," at [youtube.com/watch?v=7f47vOWjFBY](http://youtube.com/watch?v=7f47vOWjFBY). Discuss the main ideas presented in the video with your class. Think about why Pollak's quote is applicable. Think about how the world today compares to the world in 1954. Write a review of the movie to share with your class. Use the movie reviews in your local newspaper as models.



## Why does this matter?

Is the right to express your opinion and protest important today? What issues concern you? As an active citizen of Florida, what would you like to see changed and why? What is the best course of action to facilitate change?



Approximately 200 students walked out of Plant City High School and went to City Hall in Plant City to show their support for the proposed immigration bill in the U.S. Senate. These students, joined by their parents and other migrant workers, waved both the Mexican and U.S. flags and cheered as cars drove by honking with support. Garnett, Joseph Jr. /Times Photo, Plant City, FL 04/10/2006



Veteran Tampa civil rights activist Bob Gilder leading a protest at the Tampa Housing Authority. Times Photo, 08/16/1968



# Creating Citizens

## "We the People"

Americans have prided themselves on being a nation of immigrants who helped to build the country and enriched its society and culture. Yet there has been an ongoing tension between welcoming newcomers and concern that the character of the nation might be changed.



**Proud Americans**  
Arab American children from the Nicola family, around 1920. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Ever since the creation of the Constitution, Americans continue to interpret, expand and shape the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. What is the meaning of citizenship? What rights and responsibilities do citizens have? How have these rights and responsibilities shaped our national identity and our complex national story?

## Students' rights

The landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Tinker vs. Des Moines* (1969) defined the First Amendment rights of students in U.S. public schools, finding that students or teachers do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." The ruling also recognized that an individual's right of free speech should not "materially and substantially interfere" with the operation of the school.

*Tinker's* applicability to student publications has since been tempered by subsequent decisions. One case upheld a school's ability to censor student expression that is vulgar, lewd or obscene. The other, *Hazelwood School District vs. Kuhlmeier* (1988) hindered the fight for free press rights of student journalists.

Cathy Kuhlmeier was the editor of her high school newspaper, *The Spectrum*. The May 1983 edition included an article about teen pregnancy and another about divorce, both with student interviews. In the teen pregnancy article, the students' names were changed to protect their identity.

In the divorce article, written permission to publish had been granted by those interviewed and their parents. Before publication, the principal removed two pages that included the two articles, which he found objectionable. In total, seven stories were eliminated, and the students only found out about the change upon delivery of the printed editions.

In response, Kuhlmeier and two fellow reporters, with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union, filed suit against the school in January 1984 on the grounds that their First and 14th Amendment rights had been violated.

In May 1985, the district court judge in a bench trial ruled that no violation of First Amendment rights had occurred and held that school officials may restrict student speech in activities that "are an integral part of the school's educational function" as long as the restriction has "a substantial and reasonable basis."

On appeal in 1986, the U.S. Court of Appeals

for the Eighth Circuit reversed the district court's decision, citing the school newspaper as a "public forum" and "a conduit for student viewpoint."

Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case and overturned the circuit court with a 5-3 split decision that schools could censor student expression if their actions were "reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical (teaching) concerns" thus impacting student voices to this day.

**Source:** NYNPA News Media Literacy/NIE Program

## Youth taking charge

In the weeks following the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Feb. 14, 2018, in Parkland, Fla., students from Parkland met with government leaders in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., took to social media in a call for school safety and new gun control legislation, and met with



Students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School protest outside of the Florida Capitol in Tallahassee on Feb. 21, 2018, as they met with lawmakers on gun laws and reform. Their high school was the scene of a mass shooting the previous week. Scott Keeler, *Times* Photo.

## Going beyond the text

### Defining citizenship

Using the 14th Amendment as a basis for this exploration assignment, define the word "citizen." The content of the amendment can be read here: [constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xiv](https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xiv).

With your class, discuss the obligations and/or responsibilities of citizens as they relate to active participation in society and government. Create a chart listing your ideas. Next, explore the unique role of a Florida citizen – possible ideas may include protecting the environment and habitats; water conservation; voting; constitutional amendments. You can use the Florida Constitution as a guide: [dos.myflorida.com/media/693801/florida-constitution.pdf](https://dos.myflorida.com/media/693801/florida-constitution.pdf).

## Did you know?

In 1955, nine months before Rosa Parks' famous stand, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin refused to move to the back of a bus in Montgomery, Ala. She was arrested for her protest.

## Going beyond the text

### Exercising free speech

Find examples of people exercising free speech in different ways in the local newspaper, in your school newspaper and online. Then write a personal column, discussing the ways you and your peers exercise freedom of speech in your daily lives. A free press provides a platform to report important issues from many points of view. As a class, discuss your thoughts and opinions about potential censorship of student journalists. Discuss school rules between free speech and disruptive speech. For more information about this issue, go to [aclu.org/other/students-know-your-rights-presentation](https://aclu.org/other/students-know-your-rights-presentation).



students from Chicago who had been advocating for these same measures for years. After that meeting, on March 4, 2018, Parkland student activist Emma González observed, “Those who face gun violence on a level that we have only just glimpsed from our gated communities have never had their voices heard in their entire lives the way that we have in these few weeks alone.”

In addition to speaking with lawmakers and the media, Parkland student activists took to social media to involve youth nationwide in the National School Walkout and the March for Our Lives in Washington, D.C.

Parkland student activists join a long tradition of youth around the world who have embraced activism to confront racism, human rights abuses, oppressive government regimes and lack of inclusion in school curricula, to name just a few of the issues for which young people have taken a stand.



## Going beyond the text Exercising free speech



Hundreds of students and community activists protested at Curtis Hixon Park, on February 23, 2018 in Tampa, Fla. The group marched from Blake High School to Curtis Hixon park. The protest was held in the wake of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland, Fla. that killed 17 people. Monica Hernon, *Times Photo*

### Exploring student activism

On the Internet, read the *New York Times* article “7 Times in History When Students turned to Activism” by Maggie Astor. Use the article as a basis for placing into historical context the efforts of Parkland survivors and youth activists across the country to raise awareness and call for change in school safety measures and gun legislation.

Divide the class into eight groups. Each group will be assigned one historical case study from the *New York Times*. For example, one group will read about the Greensboro sit-ins, another will read about the university uprisings in 1968, and so forth. The eighth group will read, on the Internet, the *Los Angeles Times* article “Parkland student activists should study the East L.A. Blowouts that launched a movement in California.” After reading aloud the introduction of the *New York Times* article with the class, groups should go through the following steps:

- Examine the image for the historical event and then do a verbal See, Think, Wonder with the group.
- Read aloud the short section of “7 Times in History When Students Turned to Activism” that

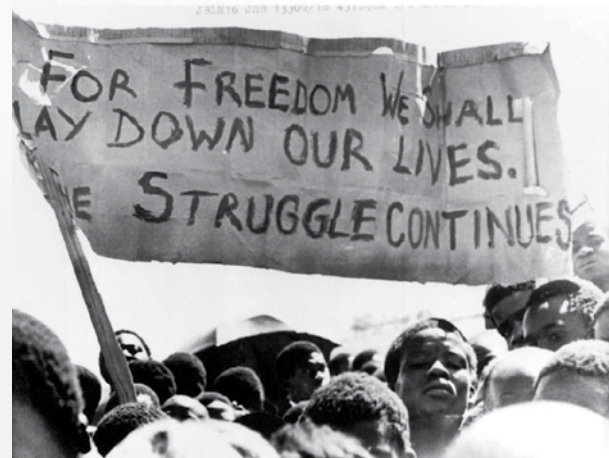
corresponds with the group’s historical event and discuss the following questions with the group members. Depending on their event, students might not be able to answer all the questions.

- Who were the young people involved in this event?
- What did the young people want to change?
- What motivated the young people to act?
- What strategies did the young people use to press for change?
- How successful were their efforts? What factors might have contributed to their success or lack of success?
- Group members should then choose one of the articles linked in their section of the text to read and discuss, adding any new information and insights about the role students played in demanding change. Students might revisit the five questions (above) to guide their discussion.
- Finally, each group will present its historical event to the class and discuss the following questions as a whole group:
  - What stories of student activism from the article stood out to you and why?
  - Why do you think young people are often at the forefront of social movements?
  - Why does youth participation matter?
  - What do the examples from the article suggest about the potential challenges and opportunities of young people participating in activism?
  - What lessons do you draw from these examples?
  - What role does nonviolent protest play in the functioning of a democracy?

Adapted from Facing History and Ourselves



The lunch counter sit-ins of 1960 began with four college students in Greensboro, N.C. Bettmann, via Getty Images



A rally in Soweto, South Africa, in October 1976 after the funeral of a Black student who died in jail. Associated Press



A student overcome by tear gas at the University of Tehran in July 1999. Associated Press



Children march around Vinoy Park during a Black Lives Matter children's rally on July 19, 2020 in St. Petersburg, Fla. Adults led the kids around a circular sidewalk on the south end of the park. Tampa Bay Times



# Democracy Reignited

## Living locally, thinking globally

Each day our world becomes increasingly complex. Ann Marie Borders, columnist for the National Education Association, writes, "Humans have never been more connected or interdependent."

"These changes have brought life to the concept of Global Citizenship, or the idea that we are one global community, and therefore our choices and actions may affect people and communities locally, nationally or even internationally. Global citizenship nurtures respect and tolerance for others, global awareness and empathy."

Global citizens "see the interdependence of globalization, how the world has shrunk as technology has made it easier than ever to communicate, trade, and move around the world in record time. This awareness results from a combination of empathy and knowledge of the interconnectedness of the world," defines the American Field Service (AFS).

Global citizenship is important because it encourages collaboration across typical divides.

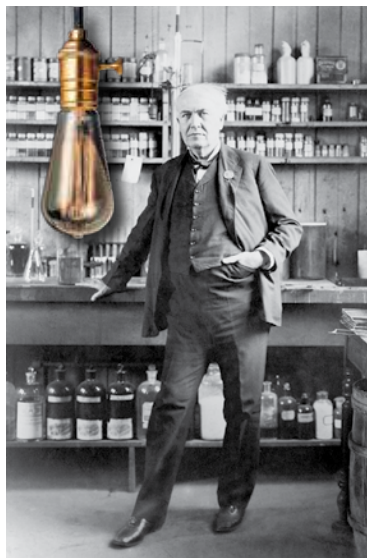
**Sources:** American Field Service; National Education Association

## Changemakers

Everyday people, from entrepreneurs to developers to educators, politicians and forward thinkers, are responsible for developing and growing the nation and, of course, Florida. Below is a list of some of those people. Choose one of these changemakers to research. Create a Power Point or Prezi presentation to share with your class. Be sure to address the basic journalism questions when doing your research: Who, what, where, when, why and how?

John James Audubon  
Mary Lou Baker  
Robert M. Beall  
Susan Benton  
Mary McLeod Bethune  
"Alligator" Ron Bergeron  
Dr. Robert Cade  
Marjorie Harris Carr  
Betty Castor  
Jacqueline Cochran  
Gay Culverhouse  
Marjory Stoneman Douglas  
Jack Eckerd  
Thomas Alva Edison  
Gloria Estefan  
Henry Flagler  
Jake Gaither  
Jonathan Gibbs  
Althea Gibson  
Clarence Earl Gideon  
Carl Hiaasen

Marion Hammer  
Paula Hawkins  
H. Wayne Huizenga  
Zora Neale Hurston  
Tony Jannus



Thomas Alva Edison in his laboratory, ca. 1911. Shutterstock

George Jenkins  
James Weldon Johnson  
Beth Johnson  
Stetson Kennedy  
Carrie Meek  
Addison Mizner  
Ransom E. Olds  
Osceola  
Ruth Bryan Owen  
Rutledge Henry Pearson  
Tom Petty  
Henry Plant  
Asa Philip Randolph  
Robert Rauschenberg  
Charles Ullman Smith  
Charles Kenzie Steele  
Harriet Beecher Stowe  
Robert K. Turpin  
Josiah T. Walls  
John Walsh

## Going beyond the text Local newsmakers

The list of changemakers on this page is not exclusive. There are many people who made a difference in their communities. You can find more important Floridians on the following websites: Great Floridian Program, Florida Heritage Project, Florida Women's Hall of Fame and the Florida Memory Project.

With a partner, look through your local newspaper to find other important Floridians who have become or are becoming successful and/or important changemakers in your community. Choose one of those men or women to research and present an oral report about to your class.

## Why does this matter?

An **ally** is someone who speaks out on behalf of someone else or takes actions that are supportive of someone else.

An **advocate** is someone who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.

An **activist** is someone who gets involved in activities that are meant to achieve political or social change. This also includes being a member of an organization that is working on change.

Where do you fit in as an active citizen? Think about examples that fit all of these definitions. Make a list of ways you can participate in your school and community.

**Source:** Teaching Tolerance





## Get involved

Most of us care deeply about our communities and want to make our society better. One of the biggest barriers that individuals face in getting involved is that it is hard to know what concrete actions to take. The scope of the problems we face can be overwhelming. It can be hard to see how one individual can effect change.

Think of social justice movements such as the U.S. Civil Rights movement, the fall of the Berlin Wall or the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. These events weren't inevitable, and they weren't the work of one person or even one group. Instead, they resulted from many people who each believed that they could make a positive difference – and took action to bring about the changes they wanted to see.

Here are some simple ways that you can start to be a changemaker.

**Write your elected officials:** Look up who your elected officials are at the local, state and national level at [dos.myflorida.com/elections/contacts/elected-officials](https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/contacts/elected-officials). Write each of them a short letter about an issue that you care about.

- Find a sample letter from the American Library Association at [ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aboutaasl/aaslcommunity/quicklinks/el/Sample\\_Letter\\_to\\_Elected\\_Officials.pdf](https://ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aboutaasl/aaslcommunity/quicklinks/el/Sample_Letter_to_Elected_Officials.pdf).

**Volunteer:** Many people shy away from volunteering because they don't know where to start or aren't sure they can make a long-term commitment. But there are lots of one-time or short-term volunteer opportunities out there.

- Start by exploring opportunities with organizations whose causes you support. Your school, workplace or place of worship may also offer opportunities to get involved.
- Many community organizations and environmental groups host one-day projects, such as planting trees, picking up trash, painting over graffiti or collecting recyclables. If you're a student, sign up for a volunteer project over spring or winter break.
- Browse for volunteer opportunities at [idealists.org](https://www.idealists.org) or [unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer](https://www.unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer).

**Register to vote – and vote:** Local elections often are decided by a matter of tens, not thousands, of votes. Your vote truly makes a difference in determining who will represent your interests at the local, state and national level.

- Register to vote in Florida online at [registertovoteflorida.gov](https://registertovoteflorida.gov) or in person at your county's Supervisor of Elections office. In Florida, 16- and 17-year-olds can register in advance to vote when they are 18.
- The best resources to learn about your candidates include your local newspaper and the League of Women Voters. Many issue-based organizations also publish voter guides for their supporters.
- In Florida, you can vote by mail, vote early in person at an early voting polling place or vote in person on Election Day at your assigned polling place. Find details for your voting precinct on your local Supervisor of Elections website.

**Donate:** Support organizations that work on causes that matter to you. If you can't donate cash, check with the organization to see what items they need.

**Boycott:** Don't support organizations that go against your beliefs or take advantage of their workers.

**Get involved:** Attend local government meetings: county commission, school board, zoning. Sign up for public comments. Go to homeowner association meetings. Join the student government and Parent Teacher Student Association at your school.

**Stay informed:** Read the daily and weekly newspapers in your community. Watch the local news television broadcasts. Pay attention to school announcements.

**Sources:** Facing History and Ourselves, "Choosing to participate" and "How to Find Your Civic Superpower"



Students clean up litter in 2017.  
Keep Pasco Beautiful



**Sophia Torres and John Stratton [Special to the Times]**  
Sophia Torres, a Hernando High School senior, pictured here with Hernando County Schools Superintendent John Stratton, admitted that her emotions were running strong, but she kept her composure as she thanked student delegates for electing her the student member of the Hernando County School Board for 2019-2020. The election took place on Sept. 18, 2019, in the school board office.



## Why does this matter?

Why should young people spend their time getting involved in their communities? Why vote? How do these actions impact the present and future?





Florida Humanities published a special issue of its FORUM magazine on democracy. In the spring 2020 issue, scholars from around the state and country explore our enduring “of the people, by the people, for the people,” form of government. You’ll find a thoughtful look at the still-relevant lessons of the Declaration of Independence, and experience how democracy plays out in our state – from dramatic moments in Florida’s history to our evolving constitutions to how we vote, participate and learn to talk civilly to one another across our political divides.

The issue also celebrates the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street traveling exhibit, *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*, which is scheduled to tour Florida in 2020-2021 and the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote.

Would you like a copy? Visit [FloridaHumanities.org/FORUM](http://FloridaHumanities.org/FORUM) to see a digital version of the issue, or to order a physical copy.

## Going beyond the text Analysis

Respond in your journal to the following quotation from civil rights movement activist Franklin McCain: “Inevitably, people ask me, ‘What can I do?’ What kind of question is that? Look around you. Once you identify what you want to do, don’t ask for the masses to help you, because they won’t come.” In addition, read the following articles:

- [tallahassee.com/story/news/2019/04/03/bill-arm-teachers-postponed-parkland-protesters-set-up-gauntlet-capitol/3355493002](http://tallahassee.com/story/news/2019/04/03/bill-arm-teachers-postponed-parkland-protesters-set-up-gauntlet-capitol/3355493002)
- [washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/02/20/florida-students-chanting-we-want-change-walk-out-of-schools-to-protest-gun-violence](http://washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/02/20/florida-students-chanting-we-want-change-walk-out-of-schools-to-protest-gun-violence)

Take notes while reading the articles and prepare to discuss the ideas presented in small groups. Explore the following questions in

relationship to all three articles. Why do you think the students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School have succeeded in sustaining a conversation about gun control where others have failed? Why is their approach effective? How do you think their identities have influenced how they are received? What stories of student activism from the article stand out to you and why? What role does nonviolent protest play in the functioning of a democracy?

Reflect on McCain’s quote. How do you interpret this quotation? How do the youth in these articles embody McCain’s philosophy?

What issues in your school or community would you like to address? What steps might you take to address this issue?

## Why does this matter?

In your own words, explain what it means to be a good global citizen and why it matters. In 2015, countries came together to create a set of 17 “Global Goals” to be achieved by 2030. The United Nations Foundation defines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as “the world’s shared plan to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and protect the planet by 2030.” Ann Marie Borders writes, “The SDGs demonstrate what it means to be a global citizen – working together to contribute to the wider world community. Check out these goals on the United Nations Foundation website. Is it important to be a good citizen? The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the world’s shared plan to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and protect the planet by 2030.

Tampa Bay

Times

NIE

newspaper in education

tampabay.com/nie

Newspaper in Education

This publication was created by the Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education (NIE) program in partnership with Florida Press Educational Services (FPES). NIE is a cooperative effort between schools and newspapers to encourage the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources – a living textbook.

Our educational resources fall into the category of informational text, a type of nonfiction text. The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world. NIE teaching materials cover a variety of subjects and are aligned to the Florida Standards.

For more information about FPES and NIE, visit [fpesnie.org](http://fpesnie.org). For more information about the Tampa Bay Times NIE program, go to [tampabay.com/nie](http://tampabay.com/nie).

Follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/TBTimesNIE](https://twitter.com/TBTimesNIE).

Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/TBTNIE](https://facebook.com/TBTNIE).

Project coordination

Sue Bedry, *Times* staff,  
[sbedry@tampabay.com](mailto:sbedry@tampabay.com)  
Jodi Pushkin, *Times* staff,  
[jpushkin@tampabay.com](mailto:jpushkin@tampabay.com)  
Karen Tower, FPES,  
[ktower@flpress.com](mailto:ktower@flpress.com)  
© Tampa Bay Times 2021

Credits

Written by Jodi Pushkin, *Times* staff  
Designed by Patricia Langgle, *Times* staff

Florida Standards

This publication and its activities incorporate the following Florida Standards.

**Social Studies:** SS.68.C.1.1; SS.68.C.1.2; SS.7.C.1.3; SS.7.C.1.4; SS.7.C.1.7; SS.7.C.2.1; SS.7.C.2.3; SS.7.C.2.4; SS.7.C.2.5; SS.7.C.2.10; SS.7.C.2.11; SS.7.C.3.4;

SS.7.C.3.6; SS.7.C.3.7; SS.7.C.3.12; SS.7.C.3.13; SS.7.E.2.4; SS.8.A.1.1; SS.8.A.1.2; SS.8.A.1.3; SS.8.A.1.5; SS.8.A.3.2; SS.8.A.3.3; SS.8.A.3.4; SS.8.A.3.5; SS.8.A.3.6; SS.8.A.3.7; SS.8.A.3.8; SS.8.A.3.16; SS.8.C.1.5; SS.8.C.1.6; SS.912.A.1.1; SS.912.A.1.2; SS.912.A.1.3; SS.912.A.1.7; SS.912.A.2.4; SS.912.A.3.13; SS.912.A.4.11; SS.912.C.1.1; SS.912.C.1.2; SS.912.C.1.3; SS.912.C.2.1; SS.912.C.2.2; SS.912.C.2.3; SS.912.C.2.8; SS.912.C.2.10; SS.912.C.2.15; SS.912.C.3.10; SS.912.H.1.2; SS.912.S.1.4; SS.912.S.2.12

**Language Arts:** LAFS.612.L.1.1; LAFS.612.L.1.2; LAFS.612.L.2.3; LAFS.612.L.3.4; LAFS.612.L.3.6; LAFS.612.RH.1.1; LAFS.612.RH.1.2; LAFS.612.RH.1.3; LAFS.612.RH.2.4; LAFS.612.RH.2.5; LAFS.612.RH.2.6; LAFS.612.RH.3.7; LAFS.612.RH.3.9; LAFS.612.RI.1.1; LAFS.612.RI.1.2; LAFS.612.RI.1.3; LAFS.612.RI.2.4; LAFS.612.RI.3.8; LAFS.612.RI.3.9; LAFS.612.SL.1.1; LAFS.612.SL.1.2; LAFS.612.SL.1.3; LAFS.612.SL.2.4; LAFS.612.SL.2.5; LAFS.612.SL.2.6; LAFS.612.W.1.1; LAFS.612.W.1.2; LAFS.612.W.1.3;

LAFS.612.W.2.4; LAFS.612.W.2.5; LAFS.612.W.2.6; LAFS.612.W.3.7; LAFS.612.W.3.8; LAFS.612.W.3.9; LAFS.612.W.4.10; LAFS.612.WHST.1.1; LAFS.612.WHST.1.2; LAFS.612.WHST.2.4; LAFS.612.WHST.2.5; LAFS.612.WHST.2.6; LAFS.612.WHST.3.7; LAFS.612.WHST.3.8; LAFS.612.WHST.3.9; LAFS.612.WHST.4.10

**Florida's Best:** ELA.612.C.1.3; ELA.612.C.1.4; ELA.612.C.2.1; ELA.612.C.3.1; ELA.612.C.4.1; ELA.612.C.5.1; ELA.612.C.5.2; ELA.612.R.2.2; ELA.612.R.2.3; ELA.612.R.2.4; ELA.612.R.3.2; ELA.612.R.3.4; ELA.612.V.1.1; ELA.612.V.1.3; ELA.612.F.2.1; ELA.612.F.2.2; ELA.612.F.2.4; ELA.612.EE.1.1; ELA.612.EE.2.1; ELA.612.EE.3.1; ELA.612.EE.4.1; ELA.612.EE.5.1; ELA.612.EE.6.1

Project scholars

Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan, Ph.D., University of South Florida St. Petersburg  
Steven Noll, Ph.D., University of Florida

16 tampabay.com/nie