

Florida's Fight for Civil Rights

CIVIL RIGHTS ERA LESSON 1

Even after the Civil War ended and the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in America, African Americans still faced terrible *discrimination*, or unequal and unfair treatment. For decades people have fought against such discrimination. The late 1940s through the 1960s saw many gains for equal rights, through efforts we now call the Civil Rights Movement.

National leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. are famous for their roles during the movement, but important work was also done in local communities. Here in Florida, some very impressive community leaders made a huge impact in our state. One was Mary McLeod Bethune.



Bethune started her career as a teacher, but she was also an activist for women's rights and civil rights. It was common for civil rights leaders also to be educators, because access to equal educational opportunities for African Americans was a major part of the Civil Rights Movement.

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During this time, schools were *segregated*, which means that black students and white students went to separate schools. This was not fair, because the schools for black children received less money than the white schools, so their buildings were not as nice, and they did not have good-quality books and supplies. Sometimes black children in rural communities had no school at all. What they did have, however, were great teachers like Mary McLeod Bethune, who worked tirelessly for their education!

Seeing the need for quality education in her community, Bethune opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904. This school later joined with the all-male Cookman Institute in 1923 and eventually became what we know today as Bethune-Cookman University.

Mary McLeod Bethune worked her whole life to fight for equality and to end discrimination. She made a big difference in Florida and beyond. President Franklin Roosevelt named her director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration, making her the highest-ranking African American woman in government from 1936-1944!



Spread the Word!

ACTIVITY

The story of the Civil Rights Movement and the life of Mary McLeod Bethune prove that big changes can start in a small way. What kind of change would you like to see in the world? Make a poster to start spreading the word about something that matters to you!

What you'll need:

- Paper or poster board (you can make a small poster or tape several pieces of paper together to make a big poster)
- Markers, crayons, paint, glitter, or anything else you can think of!



Spread the Word!

ACTIVITY



WHAT TO DO:

1. Decide what cause matters to you. Some ideas include human rights, animal rights, climate change, education reform, or anything else where you could inspire positive change!
2. Create a slogan – try something short and impactful like “Save the Earth” or “Rock the Vote.”
3. Design your poster. Make sure your slogan is clear and that your poster is eye-catching.
4. Ask a grown-up for ideas of how you can safely display your poster to start sharing your message!

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Sources

Exploring Florida. "Civil Rights Movement in Florida." Accessed on April 17, 2020.

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Michals, Debra. "Mary McLeod Bethune." National Women's History Museum, 2015.

www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mary-mcleod-bethune



This lesson helps reinforce these Florida State Standards for K-5th grade:

- SS.1.A.2.1 Understand history tells the story of people and events of other times and places.
- SS.1.A.2.2 Compare life now with life in the past.
- SS.2.C.2.4 Identify ways citizens can make a positive contribution in their community.
- SS.2.C.2.5 Evaluate the contributions of various African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, veterans, and women.
- SS.3.C.2.1 Identify group and individual actions of citizens that demonstrate civility, cooperation, volunteerism, and other civic virtues.
- SS.4.E.1.1 Identify entrepreneurs from various social and ethnic backgrounds who have influenced Florida and the local economy.
- SS.4.A.5.2 Summarize challenges Floridians faced during Reconstruction.
- SS.4.A.6.3 Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida.
- SS.4.A.8.1 Identify Florida's role in the Civil Rights Movement.

