

Standards-Aligned Lesson Plan

High School Social Studies: Witness Walls (Nashville, TN)

*Developed in partnership with the
Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission.*

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Initial Publication: February 24, 2015
Last Update: February 24, 2015

Planning and Presenting a Science, Social Studies, or Technical Subject/Fine Arts Lesson Based on TN Academic Standards

**US History – World History – Civics/Government
Grades 10-12**

Section I: Planning

Overview: This section focuses on the elements to consider when planning for a content-specific lesson with TN Academic literacy standards embedded, such as Content Standards, State Performance Indicators, and CCSS Literacy for the Technical Subjects. Other elements to plan include clear learning targets, task objectives, new learning for students, anticipated learning challenges, scaffolding, opportunities for differentiation, ways to prompt student thinking through assessing and advancing questions, instructional strategies to be used in the lesson, and materials and resources.

This lesson utilizes content from *The Children*, by David Halberstam (1998, New York: Random House). Teachers will need a copy of the novel in order to access all referenced content.

This lesson also references material from the documentary *A Force More Powerful* (<http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org/>)

Lesson Topic: Witness Walls: Understanding the Force of Nonviolence - Nashville in 1960	Time Frame/Lesson Length: Two 55-minute class periods
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Content Standard	CCS Literacy Standards	Assessments (Please describe the specifics of the assessment) ✓ Formative ➤ Summative
US.90 Examine the roles of civil rights advocates, including: James (Jim) Lawson US.92 Describe significant events in the struggle to secure civil rights for African Americans, including the following: influence of the Highlander	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.	✓ Formative – Students will be assessed through discussion in whole group, small group, and pairs interactions throughout the two days ✓ Formative – Students will demonstrate their knowledge of James Lawson’s life, and factors that prepared him to take on a position of leadership in the Civil Rights Movement in their biographical graphic organizer ✓ Formative – Students will demonstrate their

<p>Folk School and civil rights advocacy groups, including the SCLC, SNCC, and CORE; Nashville Sit-ins, boycotts, Diane Nash</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12-7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.</p> <p>[CCSS.ELA-Literacy. WHST.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation]</p>	<p>knowledge of the time period covered and the progressive nature of events highlighted in their timeline</p> <p>✓ Formative – Students will work in small groups to identify the main tenets supporting the strategy of nonviolent action by analyzing the philosophies and teachings of James Lawson and considering their effectiveness as seen in the events that transpired in Nashville in 1960.</p> <p>➤ Summative Students will write a personal reflection upon the conditions of life in Nashville in 1960, and where they would have seen themselves as far as involvement with “the Movement” is concerned. Specifically students will assess the personal impact of following “Lawson’s Lessons” as they relate to dealing with conflict and confronting injustice. They will also be challenged to consider and support with solid reasoning whether they believe that the methods of nonviolent action, effective in the 1960s, would carry the same “force” in today’s world.</p>
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Planning Element	Description
<p>Clear Learning Targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can explain how significant events in the life of James Lawson served to prepare him for the critical role he played in the Civil Rights Movement. • I can explain the role of James Lawson, called “the mind of the movement” and “the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world” by Martin Luther King, Jr., who helped to end the shameful era of racial segregation in America. • I can identify the main ideas behind the strategy of nonviolent action that were taught by Gandhi, MLK, and James Lawson, and why it was a successful way to approach conflict. • I can explain the cause and effect connections between the events that transpired on April 19, 1960, leading to a public statement by Mayor West acknowledging the injustice of segregation. • I can explain the unique role that Tennessee played in the Civil Rights Movement – training and giving voice to many leaders who would go on to national prominence in the Movement. • I can express my opinion on how individuals alive during 1960 Nashville would have responded the events of April 19th, based on the reading of historical texts.
<p>Task Objectives (steps to reach mastery of clear learning targets)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jigsaw Activity: The students will work together to explore four events in the life of James Lawson that shaped his confidence in nonviolent action as a powerful force for change. In groups

	<p>of four, students will first read and annotate a short encyclopedic biography together; then each student will receive a text that briefly highlights an event that had a transforming impact upon Lawson’s life. This “jigsaw” activity will require the four to relay information they gathered to the other members of their group as they will each be required to fill out a biographical graphic organizer on Lawson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will complete a timeline giving the context for the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville, and focusing on the dramatic events that took place on April 19, 1960, a day that marked the beginning of the end for segregation in Nashville • Students will gain exposure to the teaching style and methodology of James Lawson by watching video clips taken from actual footage of training sessions conducted in late 1959-1960, and then breaking back into small groups to work through “Lawson’s Lessons” activity
New Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary – civil rights, segregation, nonviolent action, sit-in, boycott, SCLC, SNCC • Concept – understanding the strategy and power of nonviolent action • Skills – Critical analysis of methods employed; personal reflection – transfer of learning to other situations
Anticipated Learning Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the school resources, it could be challenging to access technology for delivery of information in various grouping strategies • Time allotted – depth of coverage of the topic is limited by time constraints
Scaffolding opportunities (to address learning challenges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint presentations to help scaffold background information • Helpful video clips provided for visualization and contextualization • Teacher may group students by ability level • Partner and group work will allow students to support the learning of others • Personal reflection writing assignment allows students to write to their level of understanding
Opportunities to Differentiate Learning (explain how you address particular student needs by differentiating process, content, or product)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawson Biography Jigsaw Activity – texts of varied length and complexity • Lawson’s Lessons Activity – guiding questions provided in the margins to help students to analyze the text
Questioning: Planning to Illuminate Student Thinking	<p><i>Assessing questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History has taught us that one heroic person truly can make a difference in the world. Why do societies tend to honor heroes? • What makes someone a hero? And how do societies seek to honor them? • How does this project (<i>Witness Walls</i>) fall into this category – seeking to honor heroes from the past who have made a difference in the world? • What specific actions did those involved in the Civil Rights Movement take that demonstrated the power of Nonviolent Action? And how are these acts heroic? • Multiple assessing questions provided throughout

	<p><i>Advancing questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe that the “force” of nonviolent action is as powerful today, as it was in the 1960s? • Are the lessons taught by Lawson still applicable today – to society at large? How about on the personal level? • Do you think James Lawson’s life would have turned out differently – especially in terms of his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement - if any one of the biographical incidents we discussed had not occurred? Elaborate. • Compare this movement to other nonviolent movements that brought about significant change in the world (Gandhi in India, Lech Walesa in Poland, etc.)
Instructional Strategies	Direct Instruction, Pair-Share Work, Jigsaw Activity: group of four; Individual work – timeline graphic organizer
Materials and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Witness Walls</i> Intro PowerPoint Presentation (multimedia presentation) • Biographical Sketch of James Lawson, access at: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_lawson_james_1928/ • Lawson Biography Jigsaw Activity and Graphic Organizer • Nashville’s Role in the Civil Rights Movement PowerPoint (multimedia presentation) • Timeline Handout • Homework Day 1: Interview of James Lawson on Nonviolent Action: http://www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2012jly-3.html • Philosophy of the Movement Worksheet • Lawson’s Lessons (Jigsaw Activity #2) – four text excerpts and overview worksheet • Witness Walls: Personal Response Sheet

Section II: Presentation – Day One

Overview: This section focuses on the steps involved in presenting the lesson. The lesson presentation is divided into segments, such as “Framing the Lesson,” “The Texts and Task,” “Sharing, Discussing, and Analyzing” and “Closing the Lesson,” and “Extending the Learning.” For each of these lesson elements, there is an explanation of the procedure, teacher actions, and student outcomes.



🔔 Framing the Lesson: (10 - 12 minutes)		
<p>Day One Detailed Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks students to come up with a story that fits the following plot: <i>Virtuous underdog fights against all odds, and at great risk to himself, or herself, to defeat a corrupt and unjust</i> 	<p>Day One Teacher Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher will guide discussion centered on the opening question. • Transition: We love heroes - one person who makes a tremendous difference, 	<p>Day One Student Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students identify the strength of their personal desire to see justice done, and further, to be a part of something “heroic” in their lives

<p><i>power.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a number of examples are suggested by students (Matrix, Hunger Games, Divergent, Harry Potter, Star Wars, Lord of the Rings) – ask “Why do we love this story?” ... and “Have you noticed that in many of these stories, there is an element of trying to unite a ragtag group of rebels to take on the powers that be?” • Multimedia presentation is shown (Witness Walls: Force of Nonviolence Day 1 Intro), followed by a whole group discussion centering on the need for identifying and celebrating heroes in society; defining what makes an individual “heroic;” and assessing how the <i>Witness Walls</i> project is an attempt to honor those who participated in the Civil Rights Movement. 	<p>against all odds. We will be studying the lives of real people, and a movement they led, that reshaped the unjust world in which they lived. Against the odds, and in spite of centuries of mistreatment and hostilities, this group of rebels waged an unconventional war that led to the birth of a more just and fair society. An artist has undertaken the task of celebrating these courageous individuals. Let’s learn about his project that highlights the role that Nashville played in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher will deliver the multimedia presentation (Witness Walls: Force of Nonviolence Day 1 Intro) and guide discussion on the questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student interest will be generated to learn more about the “voices” that the Witness Walls will be honoring
<p>🌀 Exploring the Texts and Task (20-25 minutes)</p>		
<p>Day One Detailed Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Lawson Biography Jigsaw Activity – groups of 4 – all members read a biographical sketch on James Lawson, (see materials and resources for link), and then each individual in the group is assigned one of four important episodes from his life to read and report back on to the group. • Timeline of the Movement in Nashville – students fill out a timeline (fill-in-the-blanks) as they watch a multimedia presentation (Witness Walls: The Force of Nonviolence Day 1 Timeline) 	<p>Day One Teacher Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrange grouping in advance; have materials ready to distribute efficiently – 2-sided handout; guide students through biographical sketch on front, instruct individuals to carefully read the back, which will have one of four important events in Lawson’s life to read and analyze • distribute Timeline handout, and lead class through the multimedia presentation (Witness Walls: The Force of Nonviolence Day 1 Timeline) [direct instruction] 	<p>Day One Student Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will have a solid understanding of who James Lawson is, and how his life story prepared him to play the role he filled in the Civil Rights Movement – reinforcing that one person’s life can make a difference in the world • Students will be aware of the dramatic role that Nashville played in the Civil Rights Movement, and of the timing of the events that brought about change – noting that it was a long road, but ultimately, a single day can bring about dramatic changes in the world

<p>☺ Sharing, Discussing, and Analyzing (20 minutes)</p>		
<p>Day One Detailed Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biography Jigsaw - students will share information from their individual stories with one another and determine together how to best complete the Biography Worksheet on James Lawson • Timeline of the Movement in Nashville – group discussion 	<p>Day One Teacher Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute James Lawson Biography Worksheet while students read and answer the guiding questions related to the text they have read. Instruct that all four group members should have information to contribute to the graphic organizer; monitor/encourage groups • asking/answering questions throughout the presentation 	<p>Day One Student Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cooperative experience wherein all contributed to completing a quick overview sketch James Lawson • Appreciation of how different the world was, just over 50 years ago; and how much people were willing to risk to change an unjust system – noting the special role that Nashville played in the process.
<p>▣ Closing the Lesson (2 minutes)</p>		
<p>Day One Detailed Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article assigned as homework – an interview of James Lawson on Nonviolent Action (see materials and resources for link) • Exit ticket: on an index card students will write down (1) what they believe to be the strongest characteristic that James Lawson brought to the movement; and (2) what gave them the strongest emotional response when they learned about the important Civil Rights events that took place in Nashville 	<p>Day One Teacher Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make 2-page article available to students by directing them to the link (see materials and resources) – digital copy or handout; assign students the task of highlighting the six most important quotes from the interview • Pass out index cards and pose Exit Ticket questions – review responses to revisit on day two 	<p>Day One Student Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review James Lawson’s important role and evaluate/predict what they think will serve him best in his role with the Movement • Students have an opportunity to connect to history, and process the weight of what they have witnessed – reinforcing that important events happened in Nashville


Section II: Presentation – Day 2

Overview: This section focuses on the steps involved in presenting the lesson. The lesson presentation is divided into segments, such as “Framing the Lesson,” “The Texts and Task,” “Sharing, Discussing, and Analyzing” and “Closing the Lesson,” and “Extending the Learning.” For each of these lesson elements, there is an explanation of the procedure, teacher actions, and student outcomes.

<p> Framing the Lesson: (10 - 12 minutes)</p>		
<p>Day Two Detailed Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read excerpts/compilation of responses from previous day’s exit tickets • 6-3-1 Activity – students are in the same groups as on Day one, but this activity will require the groups of four to be broken into two pairs. Students will compare the quotes they highlighted from the previous evening. After discussing why they selected what they did, the pairs will choose the three quotes they think are the most important or meaningful. Next the two pairs will reunite as a group of four, and from each group, one quote will be decided upon as the most important. Each group will be called upon to share out their selection. 	<p>Day Two Teacher Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile about two minutes worth of excerpts from the previous day’s exit tickets and read • Give instructions for the activity; monitor groups for students who didn’t complete the assignment, and to help keep students on task 	<p>Day Two Student Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient review to give students a chance to recall the previous day’s lesson / set tone for class • Peer generated / moderated academic discussions; opportunity to be persuasive, but forced to be cooperative; collaborative completion of a task
<p> Exploring the Texts and Task (20-25 minutes)</p>		
<p>Day Two Detailed Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawson’s Lessons Jigsaw – same groups of 4 – all members read their short excerpt text and answer the three or four guiding questions. The group will then fill out the summary activity together. • The Power of Nonviolence—from <i>A Force More Powerful</i> 	<p>Day Two Teacher Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute the Lawson’s Lessons cards and review Jigsaw instructions; monitor group work; offer assistance where needed • Remind students that they will need the timeline sheet from Day 1, as they will be interacting with the back side of that sheet today (Philosophy of the Movement Worksheet) teacher will facilitate discussions after each 	<p>Day Two Student Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the teachings that gave individuals in the Movement the strength and determination to suffer for the benefit of others / for the greater good. • Students will seek to place themselves in the historical moment and imagine how they would respond; students will evaluate the success of the Movement

	segment where the students make written responses; will also answer any questions that arise	and its strategies; and finally, students will compare and contrast the competing philosophies behind the conflict, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each
☺ Sharing, Discussing, and Analyzing (20 minutes)		
Day Two Detailed Procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawson’s Lessons Jigsaw - students will share information from their lessons with one another and complete the summary activity worksheet Philosophy of the Movement Worksheet - (1) personal response - students will answer questions related to how they would respond to the “counter rules” that governed demonstrators actions while participating in a sit-in; (2) pair share – considering the “success” of Lawson’s Lessons; and (3) whole group discussion comparison-contrast of the philosophies of the two sides in the Civil Rights Movement 	Day Two Teacher Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the process, providing assistance as needed Direct instruction; facilitating discussion 	Day Two Student Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the teachings that gave individuals in the Movement the strength and determination to suffer for the benefit of others / for the greater good. Students will seek to place themselves in the historical moment and imagine how they would respond; students will evaluate the success of the Movement and its strategies; and finally, students will compare and contrast the competing philosophies behind the conflict, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each
☐ Closing the Lesson (2 minutes)		
Day Two Detailed Procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Reflections Response Sheet assigned: <i>Part One:</i> Describe the conditions of life in Nashville in 1960, in terms of race relations. Imagining that you were a college student during that time period, where would you have seen yourself as far as involvement with “the Movement” is concerned? 	Day Two Teacher Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign and explain the personal reflection writing assignment. Determine if you want to assign both portions for some students, and only one for others. Set a deadline that allows for students to give a thoughtful response 	Day Two Student Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An integrated response to history – seeing themselves in the story, and attempting to learn from the lessons of the past

Part Two: Specifically assess the personal impact of following “Lawson’s Lessons” as they relate to dealing with conflict and confronting injustice – on the personal level, as well as on a larger scale. Consider and support with solid reasoning whether you believe that the methods of nonviolent action, effective in the 1960s, would carry the same “force” in today’s world.

 **Extending the Learning**

- Students could research other important leaders in of the Movement in Nashville in 1960, who would go on to national prominence (John Lewis, Diane Nash, Marion Barry, C.T. Vivian, etc.). Taking this information, they could then work together to create a class witness wall depicting the struggles that faced a segregated society in 1960, and highlighting the heroic and inspirational efforts made by these individuals, and others, to bring about a positive change in their world, highlighting the steps by which they made it happen.
- The “Witness Wall” idea could be extended to other areas – for example, to include individuals who have been influential in expanding the notion of “equality” in the American experience, from Thomas Jefferson’s words in the Declaration of Independence, to voices speaking on behalf of women’s suffrage, the plight of Native Americans and new immigrants, etc.; or it could be used to witness the unique history of your school, or state
- Research the work of Chenoweth and Stephan on *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* – empirical study of the effectiveness of nonviolent movements to bring about change in contrast to the traditional “power” model – surprising results over the past 100 years; for an overview, start with Chenoweth’s TedTalk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJSehRIU34w>
- Create a comic book celebrating Nashville’s Role in the Civil Rights Movement – in the spirit of the 1960’s depiction of the events surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott (could also compare to John Lewis’ recent comics March: Book One & Two) <http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Comic%20Book%201957.pdf>

Appendices:

- *Witness Walls* Intro PowerPoint Presentation (multimedia presentation)
- Biographical Sketch of James Lawson access at: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_lawson_james_1928/
- Lawson Biography Jigsaw Activity and Graphic Organizer
- Nashville’s Role in the Civil Rights Movement PowerPoint (multimedia presentation)

- Timeline Handout
- Homework Day 1: Interview of James Lawson on Nonviolent Action, access at: <http://www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2012jly-3.html>
- Philosophy of the Movement Worksheet
- Lawson's Lessons – four text excerpts and overview worksheet
- Witness Walls: Personal Response Sheet



Witness Walls: Celebrating Nashville's role in the Civil Rights Movement

Jim Lawson: Architect of Nonviolent Action



The Project: Witness Walls



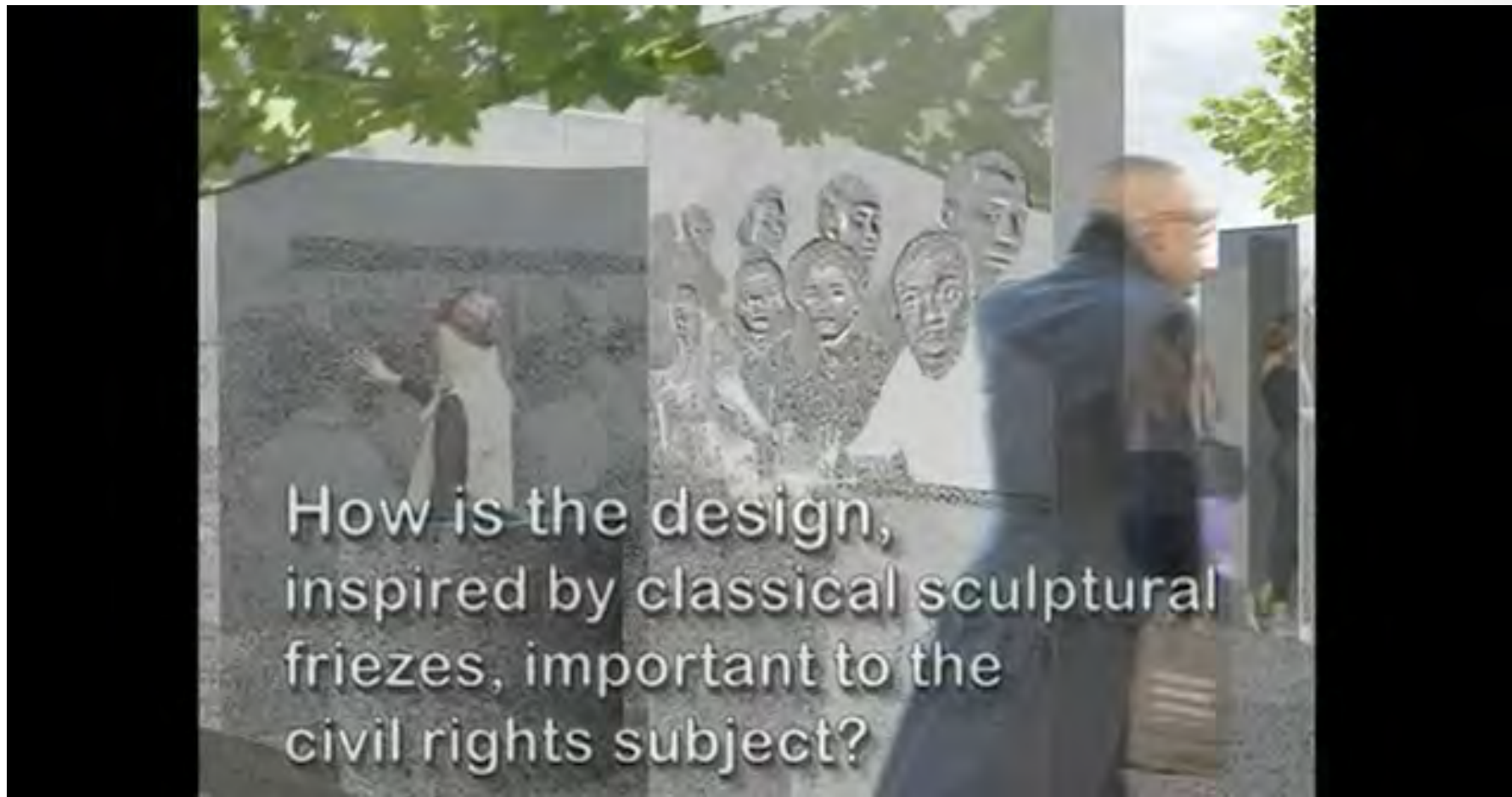
- Commissioned to highlight the role Nashville played in the Civil Rights Movement, this project celebrates the lives and sacrifices of many from Nashville who took action to confront an unjust system that in the 1960s, not only tolerated prejudice, but promoted it through segregation based upon race.
- The success that this student movement would have in bringing about the peaceful desegregation of downtown Nashville would propel many from Nashville into the national spotlight as leaders of the Civil Rights Movement
- Having been trained in nonviolent action, sit-ins, a boycott, and a silent march were the tools these students wielded to bring about a more fair and just society.



Remembering Nashville's Role

in the Civil Rights Movement

The Artist, Walter Hood's



Inspiration for the Witness Walls

The Artist, Walter Hood's



Personal Experience with Civil Rights

Witness Walls: What's the point, why bother ...?

1. History has taught us that one heroic person truly can make a difference in the world. Why do societies tend to honor heroes?
2. What makes someone a hero? And how do societies seek to honor them?
3. How does this project fall into this category – seeking to honor heroes from the past who have made a difference in the world?

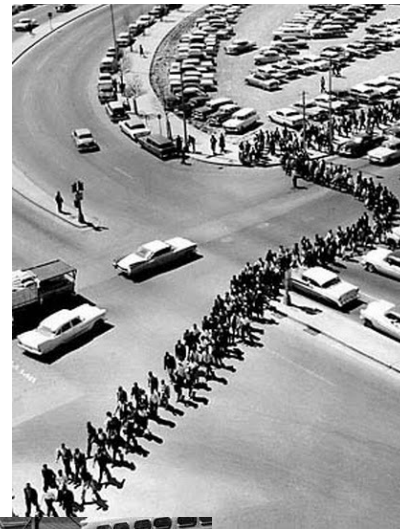
Witness Walls bears testimony to the
“Power of Nonviolence” – what
specific actions did those involved in
the Civil Rights Movement take that
demonstrated this power?

How are these acts “heroic”?

Nonviolent Action – fighting injustice with the willingness to suffer for the benefit of another



Sitting



Marching



Boycotting

Standing



One person truly can
make a difference ...



James Lawson

April 19, 1960

and one day can change everything.

Video source

- <http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Public-Art/Find-An-Artwork/Projects-in-Progress/Civil-Rights-Public-Art-Project.aspx>



Witness Walls: Celebrating Nashville's role in the Civil Rights Movement

The Force of Nonviolent Action – Timeline of Major Events



Period of Preparation

Highlander Folk School – Monteagle, TN

This was the location where many white and black activists -- including ***Martin Luther King Jr.*** and ***Rosa Parks*** -- regularly met in the 1950s and talked about how they might change the South, and it was here that many people trained for involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.



*This photo, taken by an FBI agent, shows Martin Luther King Jr., Pete Seeger, Rosa Parks and Ralph Abernathy at Highlander in 1957.
PHOTO: Highlander Research and Education Center*

<http://www.tnhistoryforkids.org/places/highlander>

James Lawson comes to Nashville

at the request of MLK – working with the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (affiliated with MLK's Southern Leadership Christian Conference) and organizes workshops for nonviolent action at a church close to **Fisk** University (1st workshop March 26-28, 1958)



Resume:

- Son of a minister
- Graduated from Bible College – was enrolled in divinity school
- Had gone to prison as a conscientious objector to the Korean War
- Was a missionary to India for three years

Period of Preparation – Ready for Action

In late 1959, after the workshops had identified downtown business lunch counters as a target for their demonstrations, Jim Lawson and other members of the NCLC's projects committee met with business leaders asking them to **voluntarily** serve African Americans at their lunch counters. This request was declined, as the store owners stated that they stood to **lose more** business than they would **gain** if they agreed.



Nashville: Period of Demonstrations

• Sit-ins

(February 13, 1960 – May 3, 1960)

- **week one:** no incidents – store owners closed the lunch counters
- **week two:** verbal abuse, no arrests
- **week three:** targeted six stores; students were “tipped off” to be prepared to be beaten and then to be arrested; 81 students wind jail after having suffered and



physical abuse (0 White Arrests)

Nashville: Period of Demonstrations

- **Sit-ins** (*February 13, 1960 – May 3, 1960*)

Special preparations for third week (February 27):

2nd and 3rd waves of demonstrators, observers who had numbers for ambulances and change for a phone call; police hang back for first fifteen minutes, allowing white citizens to abuse the demonstrators, and then arrested the first wave of demonstrators, the police, who thought they had “lowered the boom” on the problem, were surprised when they turned around to find the second wave of demonstrators sitting at the counters.

Do the Time, Don't Pay the Fine!

- February 29th, 1960
- First day of trials against student demonstrators— thousands lined the streets to show their support for the students
- Prominent civil rights attorney Alexander Looby organized a group of lawyers to defend the students – all of whom were found guilty of disorderly conduct and chose to serve their 30-day sentence rather than pay a \$50 fine (that they said would only fund a system that oppressed them)
- City resources were overwhelmed: the courts were jammed, jails were overcrowded, the workhouses were understaffed to meet the need, not to mention food, etc.



Nashville: Period of Demonstrations

- **Sit-ins** (*February 13, 1960 – May 3, 1960*)

Economic impact: strain on public resources (courts/workhouses, etc.) and also, downtown businesses were losing customers ... especially as the “unrest” increased.

- **Boycotts** (*April 1960*)

Following the arrest of students, phase two of the demonstrations begins with picketers asking patrons to boycott business that have segregated lunch counters. 98% of the black community stays away from downtown business, and their businesses suffer 40% losses of overall business.

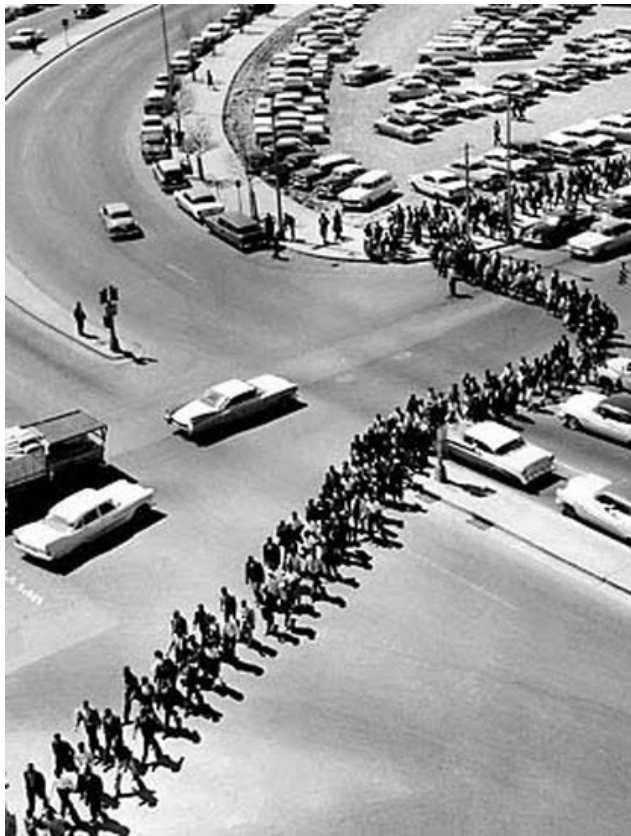
April 19, 1960 – “the turning point”

- Bombing of Alexander Looby’s house (prominent African American Civil Rights attorney)



April 19, 1960 – “the turning point”

- Silent march to city hall (3,000 - 4,000) – meeting with Mayor West



April 19, 1960 – “the turning point”

- Mayor West, responding to questions asked by Diane Nash, replied, “I could not agree that it is morally right for someone to sell them merchandise and refuse them service;” when further asked if he believes the lunch counters should be desegregated, West replies, “Yes.”



The Aftermath

- Nashville begins to publically move toward desegregation following Mayor West's pronouncement
- After meeting together, student leaders and downtown business leaders decided that no public announcements should be made; but that on a set date, the lunch counters would begin serving people of all races.
- The quest for civil rights and "equal protection" under the law and the end to discrimination , however, was far from over.
- Many of the student leaders and coordinators of the Nashville Sit-ins would go on to national prominence – serving as movement leaders and coordinators.

WITNESS WALLS: TIMELINE OF THE MOVEMENT IN NASHVILLE

Background

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) – The Supreme Court rules “separate but equal” constitutional, resulting in Jim Crow Laws and the conditions of segregation throughout the south. **List what the conditions of segregation looked like in Nashville and throughout Tennessee:** _____

Brown vs. Board of Education Decision (1954) declares “separate but equal” unconstitutional

Period of Preparation

- _____ School – Monteagle, TN – helped to train _____ and _____
- 1958 • _____ comes to Nashville (at request of MLK) – working with the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (affiliated with MLK’s SLLC) and organizes workshops for nonviolent action at a church close to _____ University (1st workshop March 26-28, 1958)
- 1959 • In late 1959, after the workshops had identified downtown business lunch counters as a target for their demonstrations, Jim Lawson and other members of student leadership met with business leaders asking them to _____ serve African Americans at their lunch counters. This request was declined, as the store owners stated that they stood to _____ business than they would _____ if they agreed.
- Reconnaissance missions for sit-ins led by students on November 28 and December 5, at two different downtown department stores

Period of demonstrations

- 1960 • _____ (February 13, 1960 – May 3, 1960)
 - week one: _____ incidents – store owners _____ the lunch counters
 - week two: _____ abuse, _____ arrests
 - week three: targeted six stores; “tipped off,” students prepared to be _____ and then _____; special preparation = 2nd and 3rd waves of demonstrators, observers who had numbers for ambulances and change for a phone call; police hang back for first fifteen minutes, allowing white citizens to abuse the demonstrators, and then arrested the first wave of demonstrators, the police, who thought they had “lowered the boom” on the problem, were surprised when they turned around to find the second wave of demonstrators sitting at the counters. (_____ arrests – _____ arrests for assault)
 - **Do the _____, Don’t Pay the _____:** February 29th, 1960 - First day of trials against student demonstrators– thousands lined the streets to show their support for the students – city resources overwhelmed; on the same day, Lawson and other black ministers met with Mayor West to discuss the sit-ins. Coverage of the meeting by the local press resulted in a harsh editorial in the *Nashville Banner* labeling Lawson as a “flannel mouth agitator.” This negative press, and his continued involvement in the movement, ultimately resulted in Lawson’s expulsion from divinity school at Vanderbilt University.
 - _____ of downtown businesses is added to the sit-in efforts – April 1960
- April 19, 1960 – “the turning point” - Nashville begins to publically move toward desegregation**
- _____ of Alexander Looby’s house (prominent African American Civil Rights attorney)
 - _____ to city hall (3,000 - 4,000) – meeting with Mayor West
 - Mayor _____, responding to questions asked by Diane _____, replied, “I could not agree that it is morally right for someone to sell them merchandise and refuse them service;” when further asked if he believes the lunch counters should be desegregated, West replies, “Yes.”

Work continues - Forming of SNCC – Freedom Rides – continued activism → Civil Rights Act 1964

Instructions for Sit-in Demonstrators:

"*Do not* strike back or curse if abused. *Do not* laugh out. *Do not* hold conversations with the floor walker. *Do not* leave your seat until your leader has given you permission to do so. *Do not* block entrances to stores outside nor the aisles inside. *Do* show yourself courteous and friendly at all times. *Do* sit straight; always face the counter. *Do* report all serious incidents to your leader. *Do* refer information seekers to your leader in a polite manner. Remember the teachings of Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King. Love and nonviolence is the way."

Respond to the above instructions – the actual instructions received by the sit-in participants

What is your impression of these instructions?

Why do you think they were so effective?

Do you think you could have followed these instructions?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (pair share/group of three – share out)

<p>WHAT WAS LEARNED IN THE “NON-VIOLENT ACADEMY”?</p>	
<p>How to:</p>	
*organize a community	*negotiate
*conduct a demonstration	*deal with the media

Give examples that show that Jim Lawson’s Nonviolent Workshops were successful in meeting these goals:

Why was the selection of lunch counters as a target for student demonstrations a good strategy? Why or why not?

Philosophy of The Movement:

Explain the Contrast: Note the importance of the concepts under each philosophy considering the effectiveness of each

- “the power of nonviolence”
- “sympathy of the majority”
 - local action ... national/international audience
- “everyone can be a participant”
- “the need to dramatize the situation”
- “converting the enemy”
- “violence can backfire”
- making segregation “costly and controversial”

Philosophy of the opponent:

- “the use of force”
- “philosophy of violence”
 - “I make you suffer more than I suffer”
- escalation of violence until the other side “gives”

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE NASHVILLE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Background

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) – The Supreme Court rules “separate but equal” constitutional, resulting in Jim Crow Laws and the conditions of segregation throughout the south. List what - conditions of segregation looked like in Nashville and throughout Tennessee: separate schools; separate water fountains, lunch counters, businesses “for whites only,” separate churches, etc. (answers will vary)

Brown vs. Board of Education Decision (1954) declares “separate but equal” unconstitutional

Period of preparation

- **Highlander** School – Monteagle, TN – helped to train **MLK** and **Rosa Parks**
- **Jim Lawson** comes to Nashville (at request of MLK) – working with the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (affiliated with MLK’s SLLC) and organizes workshops for nonviolent action at a church close to **Fisk** University (1st workshop March 26-28, 1958)
- In late 1959, after the workshops had identified downtown business lunch counters as a target for their demonstrations, Jim Lawson and other members of the NCLC’s projects committee met with business leaders asking them to **voluntarily** serve African Americans at their lunch counters. This request was declined, as the store owners stated that they stood to **lose more** business than they would **gain** if they agreed.
- Reconnaissance missions for sit-ins led by students on November 28 and December 5, at two different downtown department stores

Period of demonstrations

- **Sit-ins** (February 13, 1960 – May 3, 1960)
 - week one: **no** incidents – store owners **closed** the lunch counters
 - week two: **verbal** abuse, **no** arrests
 - week three: targeted six stores; “tipped off,” students prepared to be **beaten** and then to be **arrested**; special preparation = 2nd and 3rd waves of demonstrators, observers who had numbers for ambulances and change for a phone call; police hang back for first fifteen minutes, allowing white citizens to abuse the demonstrators, and then arrested the first wave of demonstrators, the police, who thought they had “lowered the boom” on the problem, were surprised when they turned around to find the second wave of demonstrators sitting at the counters. (**81** arrests – none for violence/assault)
- **Do the Time, Don’t Pay the Fine**: February 29th, 1960 - First day of trials against student demonstrators– thousands lined the streets to show their support for the students – city resources overwhelmed; on the same day, Lawson and other black ministers met with Mayor West to discuss the sit-ins. Coverage of the meeting by the local press resulted in a harsh editorial in the *Nashville Banner* labeling Lawson as a “flannel mouth agitator.” This negative press, and his continued involvement in the movement, ultimately resulted in Lawson’s expulsion from divinity school at Vanderbilt University.
- **Boycott** of downtown businesses is added to the sit-in efforts – April 1960

April 19, 1960 – “the turning point” - Nashville begins to publically move toward desegregation

- Bombing of Alexander Looby’s house (prominent African American Civil Rights attorney)
- Silent march to city hall (3,000 - 4,000) – meeting with Mayor West
- Mayor West, responding to questions asked by Diane Nash, replied, “I could not agree that it is morally right for someone to sell them merchandise and refuse them service;” when further asked if he believes the lunch counters should be desegregated, West replies, “Yes.”

Work continues - Forming of SNCC – Freedom Rides – continued activism → Civil Rights Act 1964

Instructions for Sit-in Demonstrators:

"**Do not** strike back or curse if abused. **Do not** laugh out. **Do not** hold conversations with the floor walker. **Do not** leave your seat until your leader has given you permission to do so. **Do not** block entrances to stores outside nor the aisles inside. **Do** show yourself courteous and friendly at all times. **Do** sit straight; always face the counter. **Do** report all serious incidents to your leader. **Do** refer information seekers to your leader in a polite manner. Remember the teachings of Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King. Love and nonviolence is the way."

Respond to these instructions that the demonstrators received.

What is your impression of these instructions?

Why do you think they were so effective?

Do you think you could have followed these instructions?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (pair share/group of three – share out)

<p>WHAT WAS LEARNED IN THE “NON-VIOLENT ACADEMY”?</p>
How to:
*organize a community *negotiate
*conduct a demonstration *deal with the media

Give examples that show that Jim Lawson’s Nonviolent Workshops were successful in meeting these goals:

students were as disciplined as soldiers/incredibly well-organized – greater community joined in; sit-ins and boycott were very effective; store owners and mayor listened/conceded; great spokespeople

Why was the selection of lunch counters as a target for student demonstrations a good strategy?

Highly visible, easily accessible, and they provided a dramatic example of the injustices faced by black Southerners every day

Philosophy of the movement:

- “the power of nonviolence”
- “sympathy of the majority”
 - local action ... national/international audience
- “everyone can be a participant”
- “the need to dramatize the situation”
- “converting the enemy”
- “violence can backfire”
- making segregation “costly and controversial”

Philosophy of the opponent:

- “the use of force”
- “philosophy of violence”
 - “I make you suffer more than I suffer
 - escalation of violence until the other side “gives”

LAWSON'S LESSONS: Summary Activity

Complete the main ideas listed below by filling in the blanks. Then explain in your own words what the lesson means – why it was an important step in preparing these young people for the challenges they would face as the movement gained momentum.

Each of these essential ideas was a lesson James Lawson labored to convey to the college students who gathered for months under his instruction to learn about nonviolent action as means to confronting the unjust system of segregation under which they had been raised. These lessons well-learned empowered and equipped the students to face the daunting challenges that they would face in the months and years that followed as their fight for equality raged on peacefully.

1. *“Your idea is not _____”*

2. *“The greater the injustice, the greater the force of the idea that _____”*

3. *How to gain _____ and end the Cycle of _____*

4. *The disarming power of _____*

Lawson's Lessons

Excerpt taken from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Pages 61-62

Therefore when he [Jim Lawson] first met with them regularly in November and December, the most important thing he had to do was change their mind-set, ... therefore others would be forced to act, and in turn to take their place.

“Your idea is not _____”

Part A

What important challenge faced Lawson at the beginning of his work in Nashville? What could be discouraging the students, and what hope did Lawson offer?

Why was the “righteousness of their idea” so important?

How could a decision by local authorities to lash out against the students, which was the response many feared, actually work to the benefit of the students' cause?

Lawson's Lessons

Excerpt taken from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Part B
“*The greater the injustice,
the greater the force of the idea that _____*”

Page 62

He was absolutely confident of this [that others would be forced to join in because of the righteousness of their cause], and it became his most basic lesson. ... for the greater the injustice, then the greater the force of the idea which opposed it.

What did Lawson say held the power to transform ordinary people into heroes?

How could city officials involuntarily help the students in their cause?

Extension: consider/research stories from the lives of Jesus and Gandhi that support Lawson's argument

What did Lawson teach would be the “force” behind the students' actions?

Lawson's Lessons

Excerpt taken from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Pages 77-78

AS THE WORKSHOPS EXTENDED into December 1959, ...They had to start by forgiving their enemies - just as Jesus and Gandhi would have done.

*How to Gain _____
and end the Cycle of _____*

Part C

What kind of treatment were the students taught to expect for their participation in the movement?

In your own words, express what Lawson said was a lesson that individual students had to learn in order to create the inner strength and confidence necessary for the movement to succeed.

How did Lawson propose to break the devastating cycle of anger, hatred, and violence – how did he claim that the other side would come to respect them?

What role was forgiveness to play in the movement? Explain fully.

Lawson's Lessons

Excerpt taken from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998) *The disarming power of* _____

Pages 78-79

His [Lawson's] teaching style was surprisingly clinical. ...where the citizenry made a constant effort to address even the most difficult problems of ordinary people.

Part D

In his efforts to confront injustice, why did Lawson value intelligence and commitment over anger?

Lawson saw love as a powerful tactic that could be used in a personal or a political crisis. In what ways can love be a disarming weapon? Examples?

In what ways did Lawson expect the students to become teachers as well as demonstrators?

Lawson talked about reshaping society into what he called "the beloved community" – what did he mean by this?

Lawson's Lessons

Excerpt taken from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Pages 79-81

In the most primal sense Lawson was trying to end the power of their accusers to destroy with words, ... source of shame and weakness into a source of strength.

Part E

What is the "age old assumption" that had to be confronted in order to reverse the social order which had been so psychologically crippling? Do you see how one word had the power to destroy individuals, or even a whole community?

Explain Lawson's argument that the use of that "crude word" said more about the one using it, than of the one it was used against.

Give two examples of actions that students were taught to use to protect themselves, or others, if attacked.

How did Lawson prepare the students to respond without violence or hatred when they were being verbally and even physically attacked?

James Lawson Biography #1

Childhood: A Life-Changing Moment

excerpts from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Pages 30-31

[W]hen Jim Lawson was about ten, he happened to come home from school alone. ... She had been right: There had to be a better way.



Child protestor in KKK garb, 1956 - not the actual child who Jim Lawson encountered, but representative of the attitude he faced

James Lawson Biography #2

The Price of Conscience – a 3-Year Prison Sentence

excerpts from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Page 35

His [James Lawson's] political beliefs ... important a course of pacifism seemed to him.



THIS man subjected himself to imprisonment and probably to being shot or hanged.

THIS prisoner and his language tending to discourage men from enlisting in the United States Army.

IT is proven and indeed admitted that among his incendiary statements were—

THOU shalt not kill and BLESSED are the peacemakers

Pages 38-39

By the time he was a junior [in college], he had already realized ... He was charged with violation of the country's draft laws.

Page 40

... There were any number of ways he could have avoided jail. ... After that she never challenged him again about his decision.

Pages 40-41

In the past year there had been more CO cases going to the courts; ... The judge gave Jim Lawson three years in a federal prison.

Witness Walls: James Lawson Biography Worksheet

NAME:

PERIOD:

Why is this person Important?

What were his/her accomplishments?

- * _____
- * _____
- * _____
- * _____
- * _____
- * _____

Birth Information

When:
Where:
Parents:
Siblings:



Quote:

James Lawson w/ MLK

Important Event # 1: _____

Important Event # 2: _____

Personal Information/Facts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Biography of James Lawson: MLK, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle - Stanford University

As a minister who trained many activists in nonviolent resistance, James Lawson made a critical contribution to the civil rights movement. In his 1968 speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop," Martin Luther King spoke of Lawson as one of the "noble men" who had influenced the black freedom struggle: "He's been going to jail for struggling; he's been kicked out of Vanderbilt University for this struggling; but he's still going on, fighting for the rights of his people" (King, "I've Been," 214).

The son of Philane May Cover and James Morris Lawson, Sr., Lawson was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, in 1928. He earned his AB from Baldwin-Wallace College in 1951 and his STB from Boston University in 1960. A draft resister, Lawson was imprisoned in 1951 for refusing to register with the armed forces. Following his parole from prison in 1952, he traveled to India and performed missionary work with the Methodist Church. While in India, he deepened his study of Gandhi's use of nonviolence to achieve social and political change. In 1956, Lawson returned to the United States and resumed his studies at Oberlin College's School of Theology from 1956-1957, and Vanderbilt University from 1958-1960.

When Lawson and King met in 1957, King urged Lawson to move to the South and begin teaching nonviolence on a large scale. Later that year, Lawson transferred to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and organized workshops on nonviolence for community members and students at Vanderbilt and the city's four black colleges. These activists, who included Diane Nash, Marion Barry, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette and James Bevel, planned nonviolent demonstrations in Nashville, conducting test sit-ins in late 1959. In February 1960, following lunch counter sit-ins initiated by students at a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, Lawson and several hundred local activists launched a similar protest in Nashville's downtown stores. More than 150 students were arrested before city leaders agreed to desegregate some lunch counters. The discipline of the Nashville students became a model for sit-ins in other southern cities. In March 1960, Lawson was expelled from Vanderbilt because of his involvement with Nashville's desegregation movement.

Lawson and the Nashville student leaders were influential in the founding conference of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), held April 1960. Their commitment to nonviolence and the Christian ideal of what Lawson called "the redemptive community" helped to shape SNCC's early direction (Lawson, 17 April 1960). Lawson co-authored the statement of purpose adopted by the conference, which emphasized the religious and philosophical foundations of nonviolent direct action.

Lawson was involved with the Fellowship of Reconciliation from 1957 to 1969, SNCC from 1960 to 1964, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) from 1960 to 1967. For each organization, he led workshops on nonviolent methods of protest, often in preparation for major campaigns. He also participated in the third wave of the 1961 Freedom Rides. In 1968, at Lawson's request, King traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to draw attention to the plight of striking sanitation workers in the city. It was during this campaign that King was assassinated on 4 April 1968.

Lawson continued to work with various civil rights groups following King's assassination. In 1973, he became a board member of SCLC and served as president of the Los Angeles chapter from 1979 to 1993. He was also the pastor of Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles from 1974 to 1999.

SOURCES: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_lawson_james_1928/

Arsenault, *Freedom Riders*, 2006.

Carson, *In Struggle*, 1981.

Richard Deats, "Fighting Prejudice Through Creative Nonviolence: An Interview with Jim Lawson," *Fellowship*, November/December 1999.

Introduction, in *Papers* 5:23, 28.

King, "I've Been to the Mountaintop," 3 April 1968, in *A Call to Conscience*, Carson and Shepard, eds., 2001.

Lawson, Interview by King Papers Project staff, 23 November 1998.

Lawson, "Statement of Purpose," 17 April 1960, SNCCP-GAMK.

Lawson to King, 3 November 1958, in *Papers* 4:522-524.

Childhood – #1

1. *Why did this moment stick with James Lawson – what was it that made this a life-changing experience for him?*
2. *Do you agree with Mrs. Lawson’s point of view / advice to her son? Why or why not?*
3. *In what way does a sense of “right and wrong” play a role in the nonviolent action movement Lawson would go on to lead?*

Conscientious Objector – #2

1. *What were the two main factors that James Lawson came across in high school that led him to consider pacifism (the belief that any violence, including war, is unjustifiable under any circumstances, and that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means)?*
2. *At 18, when he was required to register for the draft, what was the personal struggle he faced?*
3. *What could have James Lawson done to resolve the problem without having to go to prison ... and why didn’t he do it?*
4. *Why do you think James Lawson was used to as an example, and imprisoned?*

Time in India – #3

1. *How did James Lawson wind up in India, and what did he do there?*
2. *In what way did this three-year period of his life help to shape his convictions regarding nonviolent action?*
3. *How did James Lawson know when it was time to “come home” to the US?*
4. *Although he didn’t yet know him yet, reading about him from afar, how did James Lawson feel about Martin Luther King, Jr.?*

Meeting MLK - #4

1. *What did James Lawson and MLK, Jr. have in common?*
2. *What made James Lawson stand out to MLK in their first meeting? Given how recently they had met, what surprising request did MLK make to James Lawson?*
3. *How dramatically did James Lawson’s life plan change after this meeting?*

A NEW MEASURE OF POWER: *An interview with Rev. James Lawson*



In the late 1950s, James Lawson moved to the southern US state of Tennessee and, as southern secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, began training students in Nashville in nonviolent direct action. Prior to that, he had spent over a year in jail as a conscientious objector to the Korean War. The students Lawson trained launched sit-ins and other protest actions to challenge segregation in Nashville. Many of them became key figures in the Civil Rights Movement.

An example of the fortitude of the Nashville students was seen during the Freedom Rides. In 1961, a group of activists planned to travel by bus through the southern states to challenge the segregation of public transport. In Anniston, Alabama, a bus they were traveling on was firebombed by members of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Freedom Riders were savagely beaten, narrowly escaping being lynched.

When the movement's leaders decided to suspend the journey, the students in Nashville were determined that violence should not be seen to triumph over nonviolent protest and, in place of the injured riders, continued the journey at the risk of their lives. Their actions gave vital impetus to the development of the Civil Rights Movement around the country. Described by Martin Luther King Jr. as the foremost nonviolence theorist in the world, Rev. Lawson, now in his 80s, remains a vibrant voice for social justice.

SGI Quarterly: Do you remember a particular moment after you became involved in the Civil Rights Movement when you felt afraid?

James Lawson: I recall a number of moments of fear. But, I should say to you that those are isolated moments, and that from the beginning of my involvement character requirements froze out any fear.

I was going to finish my graduate degree and then probably move south to work in the movement. I had spent three years in India in '53-'56 and then came back to Ohio for graduate school. I shook hands with Martin Luther King for the first time on February 6, 1957. I had been practicing and studying nonviolence from a Gandhian perspective of methodology for 10 years. And so as we met and talked, he said I should come south immediately. I said to him, "OK, I'll come just as soon as I can," which meant that I dropped out of graduate school and moved. There was no fear in making that move.

I don't recall a single moment as I traveled around the South that I was frightened or fearful. And as we began the movement in Nashville, I wasn't aware of any moment of fear there. I was expelled from the university--I had reenrolled at Vanderbilt University. I was made the target of many public attacks.

This is the movement that produced Diane Nash, Congressman John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette and C. T. Vivian, and a whole wide range of other people.

Well, some of those people write about the fears they had in doing what they were doing. I had no such fear as we did it. Why? And of course for Diane and John Lewis and others, their fears largely evaporated as soon as we got past the first public demonstrations. Because they realized that they were fighting against that which is wrong--they knew that segregation was wrong, but they had not been given any clues as to how to go after defeating it. Our workshops in Nashville gave them the tools. Once we got past the first two weeks of demonstrations and once we got past the first violence and the first arrests, they had no fears.

Operating on fear is an issue of character. Courage is not merely, or primarily, the absence of fear. It is the taking on of tasks and concerns that are larger than the fear. It is discovering how to face your fears and moving through them as a whole person. That is what is essential. I know the testimonies of some of these persons with whom I worked back then; they found the conquest of fear. Now, for all of them there may have been certain times when the fear was very strong, but they managed by virtue of the tasks they had assigned themselves to walk through those fears and overcome them.



Civil Rights activists stage a sit-in protest at a whites-only lunch counter in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1960. These protests thrust Civil Rights into the national consciousness. [Everett Collection/Aflo]

SGI Quarterly: How did you train young activists in nonviolence?

James Lawson: I gave them concrete experiences of black people, Europeans and others in nonviolent behavior in situations of conflict. I gave them a picture of Jesus of Nazareth as a nonviolence practitioner, and an interpretation of his life from the point of view of his direct action. I especially gave them the methodology of Gandhi, as I and others had come to summarize it in 1957-58, and made him and his independence movement a major illustration of what nonviolent power can do. I put together a curriculum that helped them see that there were people not much different from ourselves who had decided that there was a better way of changing evil, rather than imitating it; and that Gandhi had called all of that nonviolence.



Secondly, we worked on the scenery of segregation, what it was about, what downtown Nashville was about and how it deprived people. Then we did a series of role-playing exercises to help them face the possibilities of certain scenarios in their lives both at a personal level and then at the concrete level of the campaign we were devising.

I gave them the tools to live with tension and fear and to have a different vision and recognize that they have the resources within themselves to exercise that different vision.

With fear, if you follow it from the perspective of adrenalin, it will mislead you in your humanity. But if you follow the fear through the perspective of your character at its best or through the task of doing good--justice that needs to be done, the tasks at hand--then the fear becomes an ally for your work.

Paintings of the mug shots of James Lawson taken after his arrest for a nonviolent protest in Jackson, Mississippi, by artist Charlotta Janssen [© Charlotta Janssen (www.charlottajanssen.com)]

SGIQ: Is it right to say that the courage of the activists created a change in the hearts and attitudes of their opponents?

JL: Well, there is such a thing as a spirituality of nonviolence, the inner resources that one can shape and exercise that allows for the conquest of fear in a great variety of personal and social situations.

In the movement back then, society used two or three major tools to reinforce the racism. There was the threat that if you do not adhere to it, you are going to be punished. The second threat was the threat of actual violence. The third was that you would be arrested. And so in our workshops we tried to deal with all three of those elements by which Jim Crow segregation was put in place.

In the Nashville movement in 1960, there developed a spirit that came to laugh at all three of those threats. In our movement -- among our students and among our adults as well--those threats were destroyed in our minds and in our hearts and in the activity of the movement.



So those powers that society had in Nashville for preserving segregation were no longer there in the minds of the people in the movement.

During the bus boycott, Martin King said that the movement saw the "emergence of a new negro" in Montgomery, because people who joined the bus boycott basically told society, "You can threaten us, but it won't mean anything to us. You can use violence against us. We are not going to be intimidated by it, and you can arrest us and we are not going to fear going to jail for the cause." When the city government took out warrants against some 90 or 100 black folks in the boycott, people shocked the community and the police and the mayor, because they went to the police station to turn themselves in. The police had never heard of such a thing.

When the first group was arrested and officially booked, other people gathered. So there were some 90 other people outside the jail waiting to be booked and wanting to be booked and very cheerful about it. Well, that had never happened before in this country in these dimensions.

So it was astonishing that blacks who had stayed in place for 60 years, now suddenly are asking to be arrested. The threat of the jail is no longer an issue.

SGI Quarterly: Is nonviolence a strategy, or is it more than that?

James Lawson: I know there are people who do it only as a "tactic." But I don't know what that means, because we human beings are not "tacticians." We have more going on in our minds and in our spirits.

For human beings to act, we must have faith--confidence, trust--in what we do, whatever the methodology is, whatever the tactic is. And if we have doubts and fears that what we are doing will not work, we're finished.

When Gandhi says nonviolence is a social science for social change, I think he's including the intellect, the heart, the personality, the emotions, the tactics, the methodology and the philosophy that you have to develop to make this work. And I think it does become a lifestyle, just as when you launch a professional military career you develop a lifestyle, or when you become a lawyer you develop a lifestyle. In that lifestyle I think you can analyze methods and tactics versus spirituality, character. But in human beings it becomes a whole cloth, a whole garment.

Today in Western civilization we have this massive mythology that the way you effect change is through violence, and that violence offers effective change. So nonviolence comes along and it has a critique of war, a critique of violence. We don't think violence has worked.



Rev. Lawson presiding over a meeting calling for the desegregation of public facilities [Time & Life Pictures / Getty Images]

<http://www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2012jly-3.html>

SGIQ: Many people are concerned about the state of the world. What do you think is necessary to galvanize people to stand against social injustices today?

JL: Basically to figure out that you do the kind of politics that was represented by the Civil Rights Movement. The politics of participation and engagement, developing the empowerment of people who bend their power together to put into the public agenda a new measure of power that can challenge the old powers.

When people collectively come together and strategize and plan, working together and acting together, they create a power that they can effectively use in their situation to effect change.

Time in India

excerpt from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)



*While imprisoned as a Conscientious Objector to the Korean War, the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church successfully petitioned the court for Lawson to be handed over to them. They assigned him to teach at Hislop College in Nagpur, India. Arriving there four years after Gandhi's death, he spent the next three years teaching. He also met numerous individuals who had worked with Gandhi and learned of the Indian campaigns firsthand from participants.**

Pages 11-12

India had been a rich experience for Jim Lawson ... Reading about it in Nagpur, he knew it was time to go home.

Page 12

Back when he had been in college and studying about Gandhi for the first time, ... Gandhi had first prophesied.

* <https://www.saybrook.edu/forum/phs/how-learn-nonviolent-resistance-king-did>

Meeting MLK

excerpts from *The Children* by David Halberstam (1998)

Page 11

THE EVENTS WHICH WERE just about to take place first in Nashville ... Movement.



On the eve of his assassination, Martin Luther King called Lawson "the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world."

By chance, a few months after Jim Lawson had arrived [as a divinity student] at Oberlin in the fall of 1956, Martin Luther King was invited to speak there.

Page 15

When the speech was over, ...sought to place each other.

Pages 15-16

Lawson spoke of his particular interest in what King and the others ...Korean War.

Pages 16-17

When Lawson mentioned his time in India, King had gotten excited and had spoken ... Jim Lawson had heard himself saying, "Yes, I understand. I'll arrange my affairs, and I'll come as quickly as I can."

