

# STORIES FROM THE ROAD TO

# FREEDOM

## CLASSROOM GUIDE

**“Whatever my individual desires were to be free, I was not alone. There were many others.”**

– Rosa Parks

### Terms to Define

The terms below are used in this program; students can define these terms and discuss their meaning in the context of the film.

Commemorate

Consciousness

Defiance

Disparity

Duress

Integration

Privilege

Prosperity

Seismic

Sharecropping

***Stories from the Road to Freedom***, a two-hour special on HISTORY® narrated by Deon Cole, gives a fresh perspective on the black movement in America, from Emancipation to the Civil Rights era. The film uses first-hand accounts, rare audio recordings, never-before-seen archival footage, and home movies to chronicle African American life as lived by regular people, in their own words, through over 100 years of social upheaval. This program is an unparalleled opportunity to see and hear from remarkable individuals who—whether they were aware of it or not—paved the way for the transformations of the Civil Rights era.

***Stories from the Road to Freedom*** features an extraordinary collection of source material including an interview with a former slave, an oral history with Pullman porter Ernest Beane, and an audio recording of African American WWI veteran Edward Nichols. Rarely seen photographs of a Juneteenth celebration in Texas in 1900, footage of wealthy black communities in Oklahoma after the Tulsa riots, video from the 1954 Memphis State Fair, and other archival pieces provide deep insights into African American life in these decades.

### CURRICULUM LINKS:

***Stories from the Road to Freedom*** would be useful for History, American Culture, African American History, and Political Science courses. It is appropriate for high school and college students. Due to some intense content, it is recommended that teachers view the program before recommending it to students. It would be a great companion for Black History Month events and activities.



Protestors at the March on Washington in August 1963

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This program explores life for African Americans in “Jim Crow” America. What is the definition of Jim Crow and how was it experienced by the people in this film? Research this term to inform your discussion and give some specific examples.
2. How does H.J. Williams describe the reality of life as a sharecropper? Why do you think sharecropping developed after the Civil War?
3. In the decades after the Civil War, many local laws, known as “Black Codes” limited the rights of African Americans. How do you think restricting the ability of African Americans to vote affected their communities during these years?
4. What was “Juneteenth” and what was the significance of Juneteenth celebrations for African Americans?
5. Despite the intense racism and discrimination they faced, tens of thousands of African Americans enlisted as soldiers during World War I. Why do you think they enlisted?
6. What was life like for African American Pullman porters? What were the positive and negative aspects of this profession?
7. How did African Americans who served in World War II featured in this film describe their experiences? How did African American veterans help spark the Civil Rights Movement?
8. What are some of the reasons African Americans left the South and moved to Northern cities? What are some examples from this film of African American experiences in the North?
9. How did the Brown v. the Board of Education Supreme Court case change American society? Given this landmark decision, why do you think it took so long for school desegregation to take place?
10. What was the story behind the Loving v. Virginia Supreme Court case? What was the outcome?



“Our lives begin to end  
the day we become silent  
about things that matter.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. mobilizes the Civil Rights Movement.

## STORIES FROM THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

### ACTIVITIES

- 1. Civil War to Civil Rights: A Timeline.** This film touches upon many key events in the post-Civil War struggle for Civil Rights, from the passage of the 13th Amendment through the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Working individually or in small groups, create a timeline of key Civil Rights-related events from this time period. Students can include short descriptions of each event with their timelines. It is important to think broadly and include events related to immigration restrictions, women’s rights, etc
- 2. Plessy v. Ferguson.** The landmark 1896 Supreme Court decision Plessy v. Ferguson solidified policies of “separate but equal” in American society. Visit NARA’s Our Documents site to read about this case at [www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=52](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=52). Then, write a short synopsis of case, the Supreme Court’s decision, and its influence on American society.
- 3. The New Negro Movement.** This film explores the Harlem Renaissance and the concept of the “New Negro” described by Alain Locke and others. Visit this Library of Congress online exhibition: [myloc.gov/Exhibitions/naacp/newnegromovement](http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/naacp/newnegromovement). Students can choose one of the related documents on this site to describe, or read passages from the book *The New Negro* (1925) edited by Alain Locke. What does this term mean? What role did women play in this movement?
- 4. Road to Civil Rights.** This film mentions many important events in the Civil Rights Movement, from the Montgomery Bus Boycotts to the lunch counter sit-ins to the march in Selma. Choose one of these events and research the background, tactics used, and organizations involved. Then, create a poster, newspaper article, or radio report about the event.

### BOOKS

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (Tribeca Books, 2013). (Originally published in 1903)

Hunter, Tera. *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. (Harvard University Press, 1998).

Holloway, Jonathan. *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919-1941*. (University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Kelley, Robin D.G. and Earl Lewis. *To Make Our World Anew: Volume II: A History of African Americans Since 1880*. (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. (Oxford University Press, Commemorative edition, 2001). (Originally published in 1955).

### WEBSITES

History.com: Black History Resources  
[www.history.com/topics/black-history-month](http://www.history.com/topics/black-history-month)

Bio.com: African American history site  
[www.biography.com/people/groups/black-history](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/black-history)

Smithsonian National Museum of American History: Brown v. Board of Education  
[americanhistory.si.edu/brown](http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown)

National Park Service: Civil War to Civil Rights  
[www.nps.gov/civilwar/civil-war-to-civil-rights.htm](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/civil-war-to-civil-rights.htm)