SPEAKING TRUTH

Watershed Moments in Global Leadership

High School Curriculum for Young Leaders

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John Lewis – Representative of Georgia's 5th District in Congress since 1987 – has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties. His dedication to the highest ethical standards and moral principles has won him the admiration of many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the United States Congress.

He was born the son of sharecroppers on February 21, 1940, outside of Troy, Alabama. He grew up on his family's farm and attended segregated public schools in Pike County, Alabama. (johnlewis.house.gov).

Congressman John Lewis

"I hated picking cotton and not just for what it was - dash backbreaking labor; planting, picking, chopping, fertilizing, row after row, often on your hands and knees from one end of a field to the other sun up and sun down year in year out the Alabama sun blazing down beating so hard you would pray for a glass of water and a little shade" (Lewis and D'Orso 10).

"I hated the work itself; but even more than that from a very early age I realized and resented what it represented: exploitation, hopelessness, a dead end way of life….one step forward and two steps backward that is what that way of life looked to me" (Lewis and D'Orso 10).

"As a child my parents gave me the responsibility of taking care of our family's chickens. I never took the chickens straight out into the yard to feed them, I felt the need to talk to them first" (Lewis, Aydin, and Powell 27).

By the time John Lewis was 5 years old he could read passages from the Bible that his mother read to him. He was compelled to share what was stirring deeply in his heart.

"I preached to my chickens every night, they would sit and listen quietly. 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.'…'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.' They would shake their heads. But they would never quite say Amen" (Lewis, Aydin, and Powell 27).

John Lewis continued to preach to his chickens and lodge protest every time one found its way to the family dinner table. Perhaps it was his relationship with those chickens. Or maybe it was the fact that he often wore a tie and took his school work seriously. But whatever the cause, in 1951 John Lewis's Uncle Otis took him on a trip north to Buffalo, New York. Uncle Otis saw something in his nephew. That summer John stayed with his Uncle O.C. *"White people lived next door to them. On both sides"* (Lewis, Aydin and Powell 43).

"After that trip, home never felt the same, and neither did I" (Lewis, Aydin and Powell 47).

During planting and harvesting season John's family needed him in the fields, John could not attend school. John would beg his family to allow him to attend, but they refused. So he would slip away on the way to the fields and hide until he heard the bus coming. He would then reveal

himself, climb on the bus and head to school, against his father's wishes. His father would yell but John's commitment to learning was stronger than his father's scolding.

As a young boy, he was inspired by the activism surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., which he heard on radio broadcasts.

(Lewis, Aydin and Powell 36).

> *"And then on a Sunday morning in 1955, I was listening to the radio, tuned to WRMA out of Montgomery, as always, when on the air came a sermon by a voice I'd never heard before, a young minister from Atlanta"* (Lewis and D'Orso 45).
>
> *"I listened as this man spoke about how it wasn't enough for black people to only be concerned about getting to the promised land in the hereafter…He said we needed to be concerned with the gates of schools that were closed to black people and the doors of stores that refused to hire or serve us. His message was one of love and the Gospel but he was applying those principles to now, to today"* (Lewis and D'Orso 45).
>
> *"Dr. King's message hit me like a bolt of lightning. I felt like he was preaching directly to me. I went to the library on Monday to find out everything I could about this man. At the time I could only find one newspaper article. But 1955 was a watershed year…Lines had been drawn. Blood was beginning to spill."* (Lewis, Aydin and Powell 56).

The year 1955 included a second ruling on *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the assassination of Emmett Till, and the Montgomery Bus Boycotts.

> *"Dr. King's example showed me that it was possible to do more as a minister than what I had witnessed in my one church. I was inspired."* (Lewis, Aydin and Powell 59).

John Lewis made a decision: to become a part of the Civil Rights Movement.

Five days before turning sixteen, John Lewis delivered his first sermon to an audience other than chickens. It was inspired by 1: Samuel, The Prayer of a Woman, Hannah.

1 Samuel 2 The Message

For God knows what's going on.
He takes the measure of everything that happens.
The weapons of the strong are smashed to pieces,
while the weak are infused with fresh strength.
The well-fed are out begging in the streets for crusts,
while the hungry are getting second helpings.
The barren woman has a houseful of children,
while the mother of many is bereft.

6-10 God brings death and God brings life,
brings down to the grave and raises up.
God brings poverty and God brings wealth;
he lowers, he also lifts up.
He puts poor people on their feet again;
he rekindles burned-out lives with fresh hope,
Restoring dignity and respect to their lives—
a place in the sun!

(Lewis, Aydin and Powell 64)

Content Objectives

Students will develop a list of qualities that depict positive role models.

Students will identify positive role models relevant to their life experience.

Students will examine the role of mentors/role models in the experiences of Representative John Lewis.

Role Models

Lesson Synopsis

Role Model Overview

Positive role models are important because they set examples for people to observe and pattern positive behaviors from. As people increase positive behaviors they also increase their feelings of self-worth. Patterning behaviors from positive role models can also help people build morals and positive values, teach them to set attainable goals, and provide direction in achieving those goals. Most importantly, positive role models provide a since of hope and examples to prove that dreams and goals can be fulfilled. (http://www.siue.edu/SIPDC/Library/lesson%20plan/global6.pdf)

Begin class by explaining to students that today's topic is role models. Ask if anyone has a role model and why he/she is someone to look to for inspiration. What are the characteristics of a role model?

Have the class brainstorm a list of qualities after several students have shared their examples. Be sure to have an example in case students are reluctant to share.

Divide students into groups of 3-4 have the group decide on someone that meets the class's criteria for being a role model. Have each group write a series of 7 statements about the person without revealing who that person is. Access to the internet will assist students in creating interesting bio sketches of the people their group's select. Have each group share their profiles, one statement at a time. The other groups will have a chance to guess who the group is describing after each statement is read. The statements should begin with more obscure facts and build up to an obvious conclusion.

Example:

Nelson Mandela

1. His birth name meant troublemaker.
2. His favorite sport was boxing.
3. He was on the US terror watch list until 2008.
4. "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul," is a line from one of his favorite poems "Invictus".
5. He was in jail longer than most of us have been alive.
6. He stood up against unjust government policies.
7. He was the first leader of color this nation ever had, with the initials NM.

After completing this activity students should have a list of characteristics and a list of individuals who embody those characteristics. Ask the class to reflect on why these people are important to us and how they serve as role models.

Some of the characteristics that should come from this activity and others that can be discussed with students

Role models are people who:

Feel a sense of duty to better "society" or work for the common good of the community

Are compassionate

Have developed powerful and effective habits of the mind and soul

Can work through challenges

Are committed to what he or she does regardless of consequences

Have the capacity to achieve goals and obtain self-fulfillment

Possess high standards and values

Are admired for courage and strength

Serve as models of forgiveness

Are trustworthy

Demonstrate humility, admit when they are wrong

Are wise

Understand the whole situation

http://www.siue.edu/SIPDC/Library/lesson%20plan/global6.pdf

Students will now take a look at the impact role models had on the life of Rep. John Lewis. Ask them to read from *March*, pages 75-77. Either independently or in groups students should apply their understanding of role models to the impact Martin Luther King Jr. and Jim Lawson had on the life of Congressman Lewis.

Content Objectives

Music and Activism: Finding Faith in Music

Students will explore the role of music in their lives and share their personal connection to music.

Students will examine the role of music in giving voice to a movement. Students will determine what the characteristics are of a song that "speaks" to a people in a given time.

Students will articulate how music can be a source of faith during difficult times.

Synopsis of Lesson

Begin class with a dialogue on the role of music in the lives of the students. The following may be used as conversation starters: What role does music play in your lives? Why do you listen to the music that you do? Are there some forms of music that appeal to you more than others? Why?

Students will then be tasked to bring in a song that is their go-to song; a song that he/she finds him/herself listening to over and over again. There will be students who have their music with them so this activity may be started after the opening conversation. Students who do not may bring their songs in the following day. Have each student explain why that song "speaks" to him/her. Keep track of reasons given on the board. After all class members of shared, take a look at the list of reasons why students listen to the music that they do. Consider similarities and differences related to purpose.

Ask students if there are any songs that they can all agree stand for their generation. Is there a song that years from now will be associated with who they are and their world?

Then ask students if there are any songs that they associate with a generation/period of history.

The following may serve as examples for the students of songs that have come to stand for a people and their place in history at the time:

Senzeni na: Apartheid South Africa
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fDU1PYWT8A
Video of Capetown Youth Choir performing Senzeni na

Lyrics:

Senzeni na?	What have we done?
Sono sethu, ubumyama?	Our sin is that we are black?
Sono sethu yinyaniso?	Our sin is the truth?
Sibulawayo	They are killing us
Mayibuye i Africa	Let Africa return

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UC5FlwPokY

*Trailer for **Amandla**, film on the role of music in the anti-Apartheid movement (The film can be used as a supplemental activity)*

Rais Le Bled: Tunisia Jasmine Revolution (2011)

Twenty-one-year-old Hamada Ben Amor, known as El Général—an underground rapper living in the town of Sfax south of Tunis—uploaded a song he had written called "Rais Le Bled" ("President, Your Country") to Facebook on November 7. The rap called out then-president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali for the problems faced by average Tunisians trying to make a living, including food scarcity, a lack of freedom of speech, and unemployment with lyrics like: *"Mr. President, your people are dying/People are eating rubbish/Look at what is happening/ Miseries everywhere Mr. President/I talk with no fear/Although I know I will only get troubles/I see injustice everywhere."*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeGlJ7OouR0#t=182
Video of Rais Le Bled

The rap was picked up by local TV station Tunivision and Al-Jazeera and resonated with many Tunisians who quickly began sharing the song. Soon enough, the government blocked the musician's Facebook page and cut off his mobile phone. Despite the attempt to make his music disappear, El Général's song quickly became the anthem of the Jasmine Revolution.

El Général then recorded another song of protest call "Tounes Bladna" ("Tunisia Our Country") on December 22. By that point, Ali's regime had had enough with the musician. El Général was arrested by state security on January 6, taken to the Ministry of Interior, and interrogated for three days.

He tells *The Guardian*, "They kept asking me which political party I worked for. 'Don't you know it's forbidden to sing songs like that?' they said. But I just answered, 'Why? I'm only telling the truth.' I was in there for three days, but it felt like three years." The public was outraged and began demanding his release. The pressure mounted on the government worked and he was soon released from detention.

After listening to Senzeni na and Rais Le Bled, divide students into groups of 3-4. Ask them to discuss why they think people were drawn to these songs and what characteristics these songs have in common that turned them into anthems for revolution. After a few minutes of discussion have each group select a reporter and share out with the whole class.

The following Ted Talk may be used to continue the dialogue on the qualities of powerful protest music.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iIDO7Wzs04

Rahul Ram Ted Talk on protest music, from an Indian perspective.

Music served as a source of faith and unity for those fighting injustices in the United States. One song that has been inspirational and integral to our country's history is "We Shall Overcome."

Use any/all of the following to introduce the song to the class, provide students with the lyrics.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeijYoFmnsQ

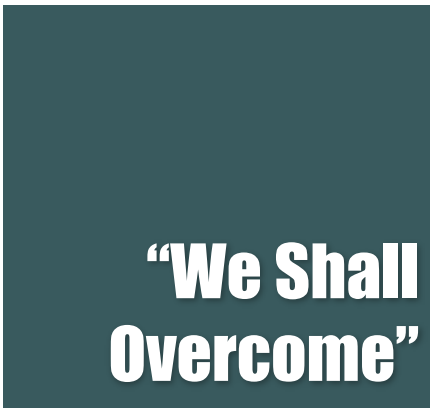
Introduction to the power of the song, "We Shall Overcome" as a song that stands for change

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkNsEH1GD7Q

Joan Baez performing "We Shall Overcome"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhnPVP23rzo

Pete Seeger singing "We Shall Overcome".



WE SHALL OVERCOME

1. We shall overcome
   We shall overcome
   We shall overcome some day

   CHORUS:
   Oh, deep in my heart
   I do believe
   We shall overcome some day

2. We'll walk hand in hand
   We'll walk hand in hand
   We'll walk hand in hand some day

   CHORUS

3. We shall all be free
   We shall all be free
   We shall all be free some day

   CHORUS

4. We are not afraid
   We are not afraid
   We are not afraid some day

   CHORUS

5. We are not alone
   We are not alone
   We are not alone some day

   CHORUS

6. The whole wide world around
   The whole wide world around
   The whole wide world around some day

   CHORUS

7. We shall overcome
   We shall overcome
   We shall overcome some day

After listening to the song ask students to consider the following: What does "We Shall Overcome" have in common with Senzeni na and Rais Le Bled?

Divide students again into groups of 3-4. Provide each student with a copy of the **Peter Drier** article that follows on the history of "We Shall Overcome". Ask each group to reflect on the following questions: What are the roots of this song? How important are the roots to the meaning of the song? Why did this song become the soundtrack of the American Civil Rights Movement?

The Little-Known Story of 'We Shall Overcome'

… The story of that song, "We Shall Overcome" which became an international anthem for human rights, reveals the civil rights movement's remarkable and complex tapestry and its lasting influence.

The song's origins go back to a refrain that slaves would sing to sustain themselves: "I'll be all right someday." Southern Black churches adopted the song and by 1901 a Methodist minister, Charles Tindley, published a version entitled, "I'll Overcome Someday."

In 1945, Black members of the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers Union from Charleston, South Carolina revised the song as part of their struggle and sang it on their picket lines. They sang: "We will overcome, and we will win our rights someday." Two years later, several of the union's activists brought the song to the Highlander Folk School, an inter-racial training center in rural Tennessee for labor and civil rights activists founded in 1932 by Myles Horton, an educator and minister who believed in the "social gospel." Zilphia Horton, Myles' wife and Highlander's music director, learned the song from the tobacco workers and included it in all of her workshops. In 1947, she taught it to folksinger Peter Seeger, who was a frequent visitor to Highlander. Seeger made a few changes to the tune, including turning "We Will Overcome" to "We Shall Overcome." (Seeger also gives credit to civil rights leader and frequent Highlander participant Septima Clark for the word change).

Highlander was a hotbed of what were then considered radical ideas and a frequent target of racist Southern politicians, who were outraged by its inter-racial meetings and its flagrant violation of segregation laws. It was one of the few places in the South where whites and blacks – rank-and-file activists and left-wing radicals – could meet together and participate as equals. In the 1950s, Highlander's focus began shifting from union organizing to civil rights. Martin Luther King, Andrew Young, James Lawson, Fannie Lou Hamer, John Lewis, Stokely Carmichael and many other activists in the freedom movement attended Highlander's workshops.

Guy Carawan, an itinerant folksinger with a math degree from Occidental College and an master's degree in anthropology from UCLA, was attracted by Highlander's reputation for linking movements and music. Born in Los Angeles in 1927 to parents with Southern roots, Carawan started listening to folk music when he was 21 years old, inspired by artists such as Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and Burl Ives. In 1959, while traveling around the country in a car with several other young folk singers, he visited Highlander in the Tennessee mountains. Myles Horton invited him to stay as Highlander's new music director to replace Zilphia, who had died three years earlier.

It was at Highlander that Carawan first heard Seeger's version of "We Shall Overcome." Carawan made his own changes to the song. He fastened the tempo and revised some words, making it easier to sing in large groups.

Late in the afternoon of February 1, 1960, four young black men – Ezell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil, all students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro – visited the local Woolworth's five-and-dime store. They purchased school supplies and toothpaste, and then they sat down at the store's lunch counter and ordered coffee. "I'm sorry," said the waitress. "We don't serve Negroes here." The four students refused to give up their seats until the store closed. The local media soon arrived and reported the sit-in on television and in the newspapers.

By the end of March sit-ins had spread to fifty-five cities in thirteen states. Many students, mostly black but also white, were arrested for trespassing, disorderly conduct, or disturbing the peace.

Over Easter weekend – April 16 to 18 - several hundred sit-in activists and their allies came to Shaw University, a black college in Raleigh, North Carolina, to discuss how to capitalize on the sit-ins' growing momentum and publicity. This gathering became the founding meeting of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), designed to build on the youthful enthusiasm of the student activists, to expand the sit-in movement, and to adopt other strategies, such as the Freedom Rides and voter registration drives.

Carawan, whose own political outlook was transformed by the civil rights movement, attended the Raleigh meeting and taught "We Shall Overcome" to the assembled activists. They quickly adopted the song as their own, using it to sustain their morale during protest marches, on the Freedom Ride buses, and in jail cells. It quickly spread throughout the civil rights movement and became its unofficial anthem.

The March on Washington helped turn the civil rights movement from a Southern crusade to a national phenomenon. After President John Kennedy was assassinated three months after the march, Lyndon Johnson helped steer JFK's Civil Rights Act through Congress. As the movement grew, Johnson was transformed from a reluctant ally into a fervent supporter. He worked in tandem with civil rights leaders to push for another key legislative measure that was one of the March's demands -- the Voting Rights Act. On March 15, 1965, LBJ announced his support for the bill in a speech before Congress, with 70 million Americans watching on television.

"It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life," Johnson said. "Their cause must be our cause too, because it is not just Negroes but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome."

By uttering those words, Johnson, who grew up in segregated Texas, had not only embraced the civil rights movement but drawn on its most cherished phrase to demonstrate his solidarity, a move guaranteed to alienate many Southern Democrats in Congress. It took five more months of protests by civil rights activists and arm-twisting by Johnson to get the House and Senate to pass the bill. On August 6, Johnson signed the Act into law.

Peter Dreier teaches politics and chairs the Urban & Environmental Policy Department at Occidental College. His most recent book is *The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame* **(Nation Books, 2012).**

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/we-shall-overcome_b_3835195.html

Content Objectives

Students will experience the importance of individuals coming together to accomplish a goal.

Students will connect the collective action of individuals to change.

Take Action

Synopsis of Lesson

The following activity will introduce students to action and their individual roles in making something happen.

Rainmaker

Have students sit at their desks or on the floor, with their hands free and the feet firmly planted on the floor. Introduce the activity by saying that the group is going to create something greater than each individual could on his/her own.

Split the group into 6 sections and explain that each section will have a task to do. Going around the room model for each section what they are to do, give them an opportunity to practice, then move on to the next section until all 6 sections have practiced.

Section actions:

1. Say "Shhhh…" like the wind blowing through trees
2. Rub your palms together
3. Snap your fingers
4. Clap your hands
5. Slap the tops of your legs
6. Stomp your feet.

Tell each of the 6 sections to do their action when you point to them and to keep doing it until you point to them a second time. Once the rainstorm has subsided debrief with students on the importance of each individual in accomplishing the task. Ask them if they have ever cooperated with others to get something done they couldn't on their own.

Can you name moments in history where people have gotten together to initiate change?

Examples: Anti-Apartheid Movement, Arab Spring, Civil Rights Movement, Women's Suffrage.

Provide students with the excerpt on pages 99-103 from Representative John Lewis's autobiography *March*. In groups of 3-5 ask students to read and then respond to the question: Do you think the list of "Do's and Don'ts" unified protesters? What are ways you have felt a part of something? (ex. team shirts)

John Lewis, who as a young student led the Nashville Student Movement in 1960. Using nonviolence and civil disobedience as their tools, Lewis and other courageous African Americans organized a series of sit-ins to demonstrate for the desegregation of Nashville.

During these campaigns, he was often harassed and beaten but always stood firm in his adherence to nonviolent social action.

In Congressman Lewis's memoir, *Walking With the Wind*, he recalls his years as a participant struggles for civil rights. In the following excerpt, Lewis remembers the Nashville sit-in he helped organize in February 1960.

> *Late that Friday afternoon we got word from Nashville's chief of police, a man named Hosse, that anyone involved in further protests would be arrested for disorderly conduct and trespassing. There were also rumors of planned attacks by groups of young whites, attacks which the police would do nothing to stop.*
>
> *This was what we had prepared for… Though many of the students who would be sitting in the next day had been trained, our numbers were swelling so fast that there were hundreds who had not. So I wrote up a basic list of dos and don'ts to be distributed the next day:*
>
> ***DO NOT***
>
> 1. *Strike back nor curse if abused.*
> 2. *Laugh out.*
> 3. *Hold conversations with floor walker.*
> 4. *Leave your seat until your leader has given you permission to do so.*
> 5. *Block entrances to stores outside nor the aisles inside.*
>
> ***DO***
>
> 1. *Show yourself friendly and courteous at all times.*
> 2. *Sit straight; always face the counter.*
> 3. *Report all serious incidents to your leader.*
> 4. *Refer information seekers to your leader in a polite manner.*
> 5. *Remember the teachings of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Love and nonviolence is the way.*
>
> ***MAY GOD BLESS EACH OF YOU***
>
> *The danger waiting for us this day was to be expected, which didn't mean I wasn't a little bit nervous. But by now I was so committed deep inside to the sureness and sanctity of the nonviolent way, and I was so calmed by the sense that the Spirit of History was with us.*

http://www.tolerance.org/activity/commitment-nonviolence-leadership-john-lewis

After students have discussed the "Do's and Don'ts" excerpt, and have read pp. 99-103 from Representative John Lewis's autobiography *March, also* ask them to respond to the following questions:

What was Mr. Lewis willing to risk to sit at the counter at Woolworths?

Why was he willing to take those risks?

What events in his life may have led to that moment?

How did Jim Lawson prepare him to act as he did?

Why do you think Mr. Lewis remembers this experience in conjunction to the song, "We Shall Overcome"?

Have you ever been moved to act because of something you believed? What are the risks with taking action? Are those risks easier to manage if you act as a member of a group?

The following conversation can occur as a whole class or by dividing the class up into smaller groups and then having those groups report out. Have students brainstorm issues that they care about. Why do they care? What can they do to impact that issue? Do they have any role models that can serve as inspiration for their action? Why haven't they done anything before about this issue?

Create a master list of concerns, offer students the opportunity to "make a difference" on one or more of the issues. At this point the class may begin working in smaller groups or tackling one concern collectively. Remind students to consider why they have this concern, if there are role models whose actions can help them plan their own courses of action, and what resources they can draw upon for strength as they move forward to make a difference.

Fund for the Future of Our Children(FFC) has supported student activism for the past decade through the award of micro-grants. Examples of student led initiatives, a micro-grant application and inspiration can be found at www.futureofchildren.net.

FFC will award up to 10 matching grants of $1,000 each, up to $10,000, where teacher-sponsored student projects have already raised at least $1,000 on their own. FFC will highlight all matching grant recipients on its website to serve as role models for other youth activists.