



CALIFORNIA HISTORY: BLACK WOMEN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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OVER THE COURSE OF THIS PROJECT WE WILL:

Identify the Black Women who
have lead civil rights
movements from the 1960's to
today and discuss their
leadership for change.



Essential Questions

QUESTION ONE:

Who were the influential Black women in California's history that made a difference in the civil rights movement?

QUESTION TWO:

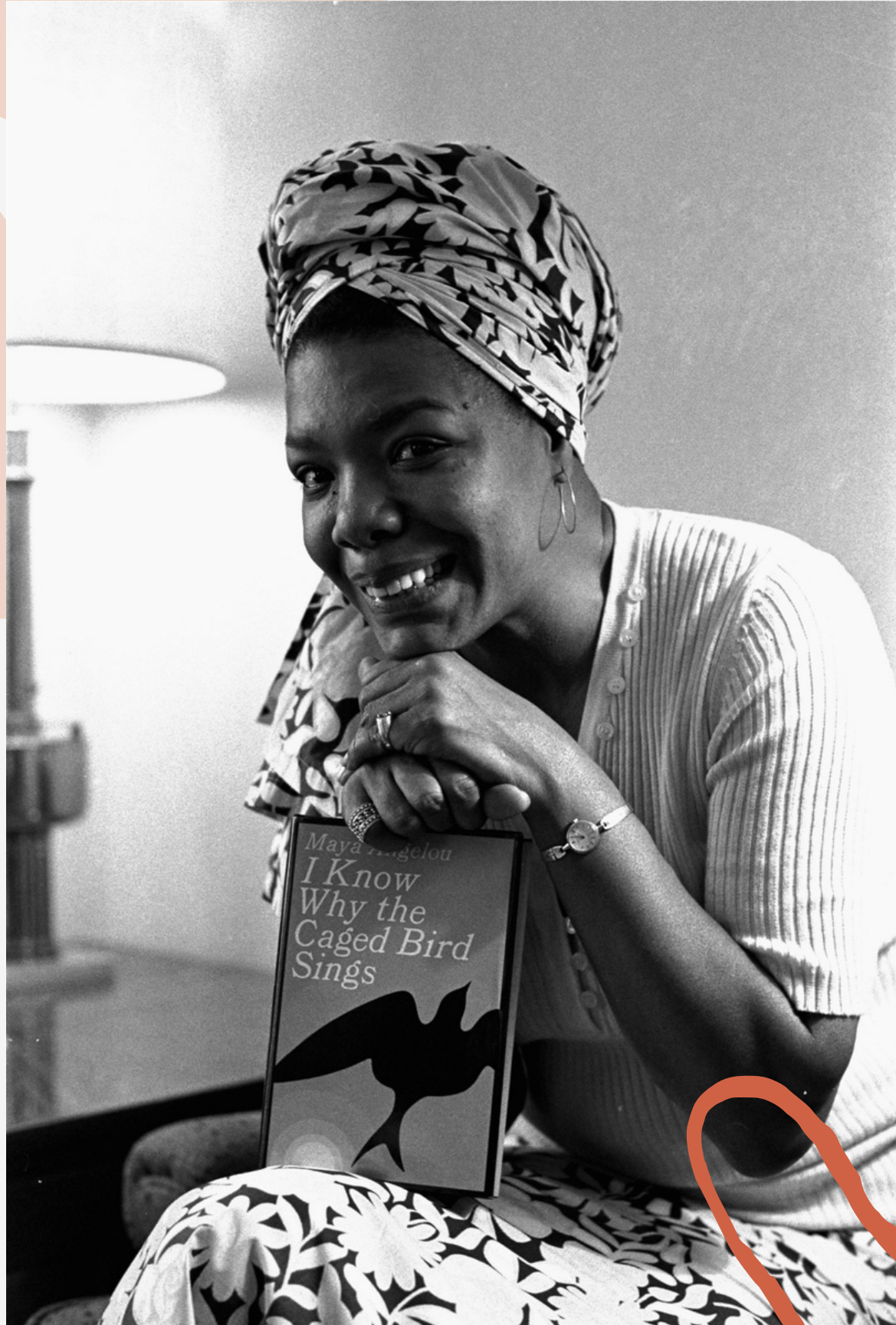
How has their work contributed to the state of our country today?

Welcome to our virtual museum.

How to navigate

The following slides include artifacts that shaped Civil Rights advances through the lives and actions of a plethora of Black Women.





Maya Angelou

I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

Maya Angelou was born on April 4th, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri. Her influential work as a poet, memoirist, educator, dramatist, producer, actress, historian, filmmaker and civil rights activist has shook the world through her stories of struggle and triumph. She shined light on Black life in America and introduced black feminism into the mainstream with her best selling novel, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Quickly making its way to the list of “banned books” for high school reading across the nation, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* started an educational movement. The novel was challenged for its content of sexually explicit content, drug use, and violence. It was believed by many who pushed for the removal of this novel to be a pathway for corruption of minors. In response to these beliefs, Maya Angelou rejected this and showed she would not be intimidated or silenced.

In this photo we see Angelou holding a copy of her ground breaking novel. Angelou continued her work through her writings and as a speaker until her death in 2014. She was inducted into the California hall of fame in 2019. Her work is now celebrated in classrooms and civil rights movements across the country.

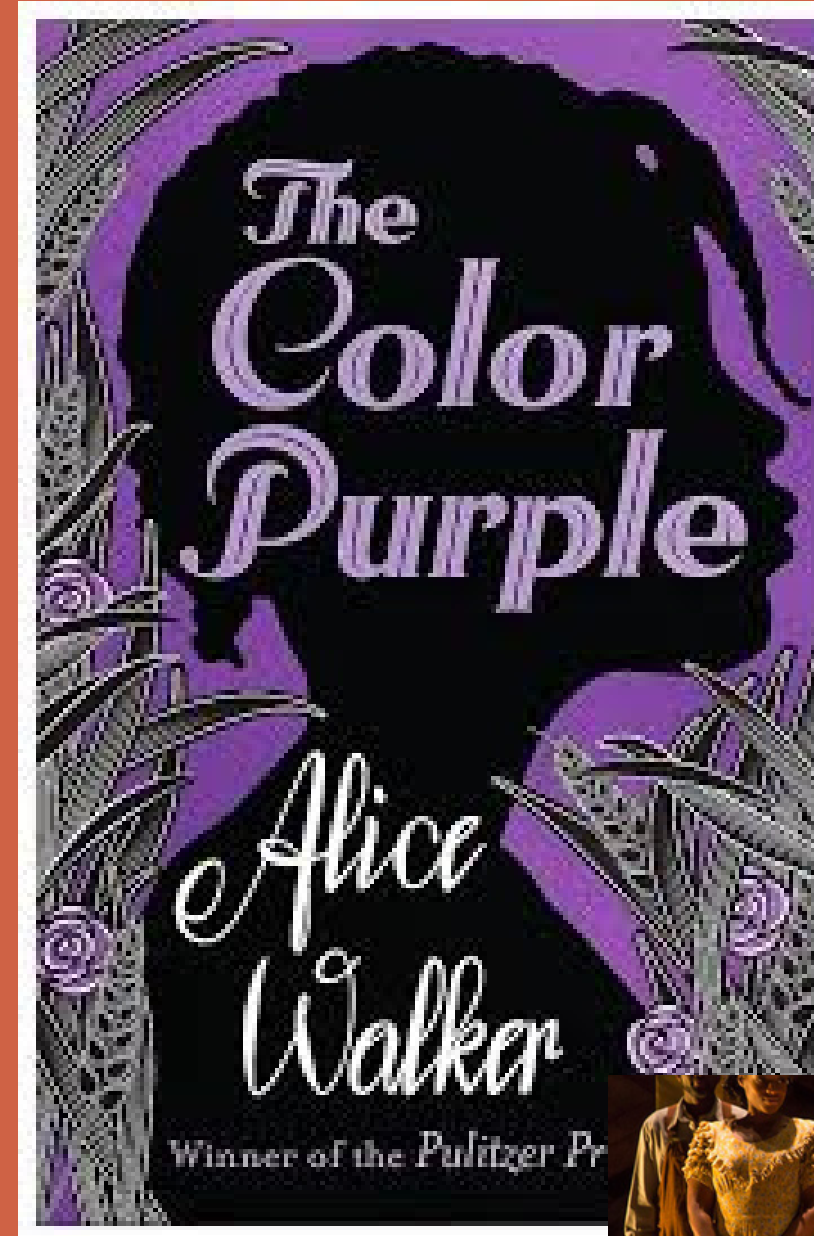
Alice Walker

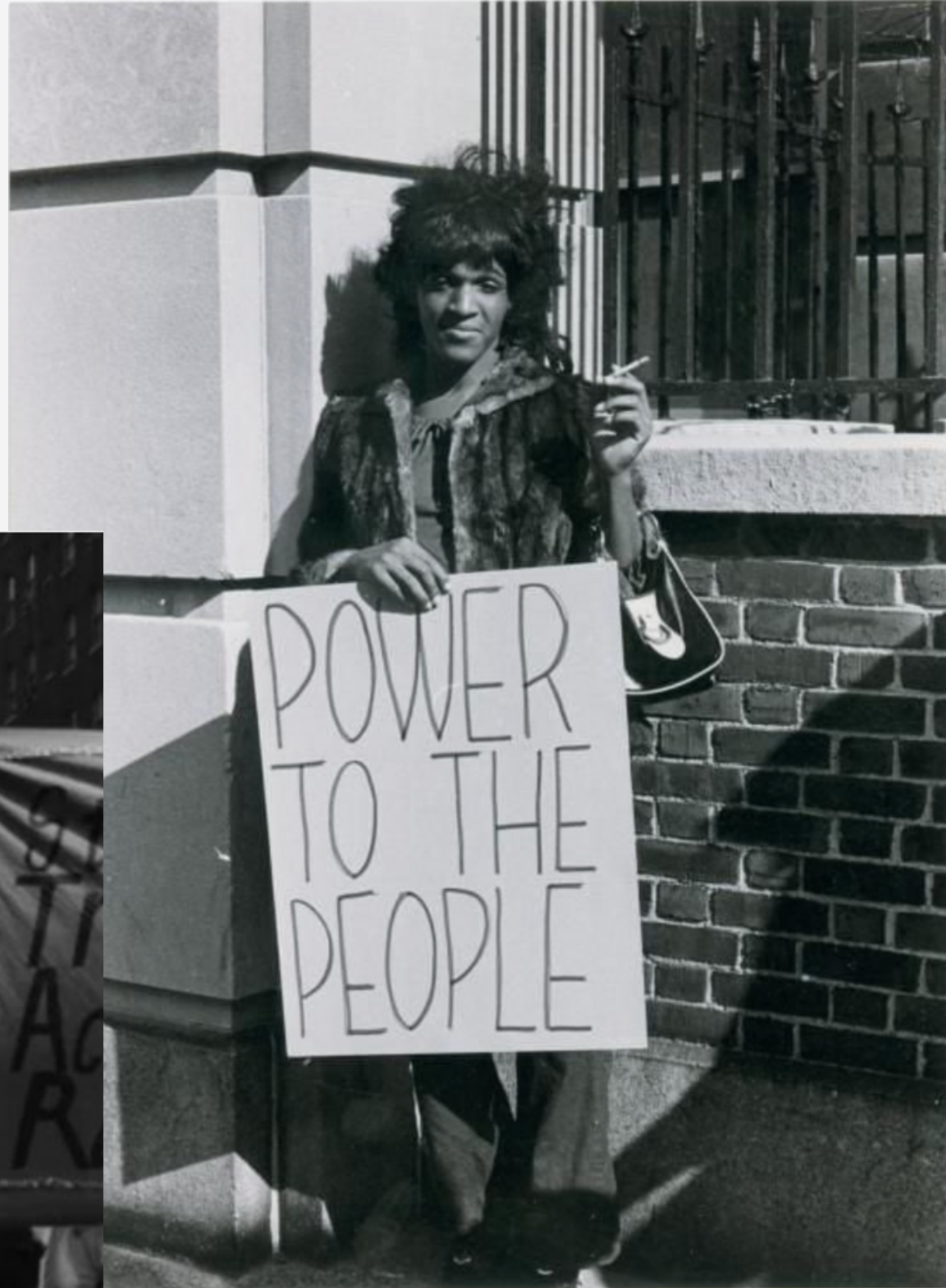
THE COLOR PURPLE

Alice Walker is an American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social advocate. Her novel, *The Color Purple*, won the Nobel Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1983.

The Color Purple is a story about two Afro-American sisters. Sexual abuse and the bravery of women in their fight for love and freedom are the main themes of the novel. The novel has since been made into a major motion picture and a Broadway production. To the right are a picture of the cover of the novel, a clip from the film, and a clip from the movie and the play. Alice Walker coined her work on black feminism as “Womanism”. Though she is best known for her work in the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements, Walker has participated in movements such as the Human and Civil Rights movement in the South, the Hands Off Cuba Movement, and the Native American and Indigenous Rights Movement.

Alice Walker was born on February 9th, 1944 in Eaton, Georgia. Walker was inducted into the California Hall of Fame in 2006. She continues her influential and relentless work across the nation still today.





Marsha P. Johnson

Activist

Marsha P. Johnson was an "activist, self-identified drag queen, performer, and survivor". She was a prominent figure in the Stonewall uprising of 1969. Marsha went by "Black Marsha" before deciding on Marsha P. Johnson. The "P" stood for "Pay It No Mind," which is what Marsha would say in response to questions about her gender. She stood at the center of New York City's Gay Liberation Movement for nearly 25 years

Additionally, she was on the front lines of protests against oppressive policing. She helped found one of the country's first safe spaces for transgender and homeless youth, and she advocated tirelessly on behalf of sex workers, prisoners, and people with HIV/AIDS throughout the United States.



"As long as my people don't have their rights across America, there's no reason for celebration." - Marsha P. Johnson

BROWN vs BOARD OF EDUCATION

Topeka, Kansas



In 1951, a plaintiff named Oliver Brown filed a class-action suit against the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, after his daughter, Linda Brown, was denied entrance to Topeka's all-white elementary schools. In this lawsuit, Brown claimed that schools for white children and schools for black children were not equal. Brown believed that the segregation of these students violated the so-called "equal protection clause" of the 14th Amendment, which states that no state can "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." This case was combined with 4 other cases related to school segregation into a single case under the name Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka. In the decision, issued on May 17, 1954, Warren wrote that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," as segregated schools are "inherently unequal." As a result, the Court ruled that the plaintiffs were being "deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment." This was the beginning of schools becoming integrated throughout the U.S.

The Ad Hoc Committee was formed in the early 1960s to help the Civil Rights Movement. U.C. Berkeley's CORE created this committee to pressure local Bay Area companies to hire more minority employees. Their goal was to picket these businesses until they agreed to end their discriminatory practices. They conducted marches and non-violent protests in Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley, and Richmond. They showed to be successful but in the end, they failed to solve the issue but sparked up other forms of black activism such as the Black Panther Party.

This relates to our main theme due to how involved young women students were in helping the Ad Hoc Committee. They showed up to protests in order to show their support. It was not only black women but women of other nationalities. Just by participating, it showed their support and want for a more fair and just world. These protests slowly but surely helped keep the civil rights movement on track.



Ad Hoc Committee

Fight to end racial
discrimination

MISS MAJOR GRIFFIN GRACY

Activist



★★★★★ (33 Reviews)

Major!

The award-winning documentary "Major!" follows the life and campaigns of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a 73-year-old Black transgender woman who has been fighting for the rights of trans...

 Amazon.com



Miss Major has spent more than 40 years advocating for the marginalized. She started to speak out when police raids of queer bars were rampant. She had spent many times in prison during the 1970s and credits a lot of her political stance on issues like abolition and Black liberation on those experiences.

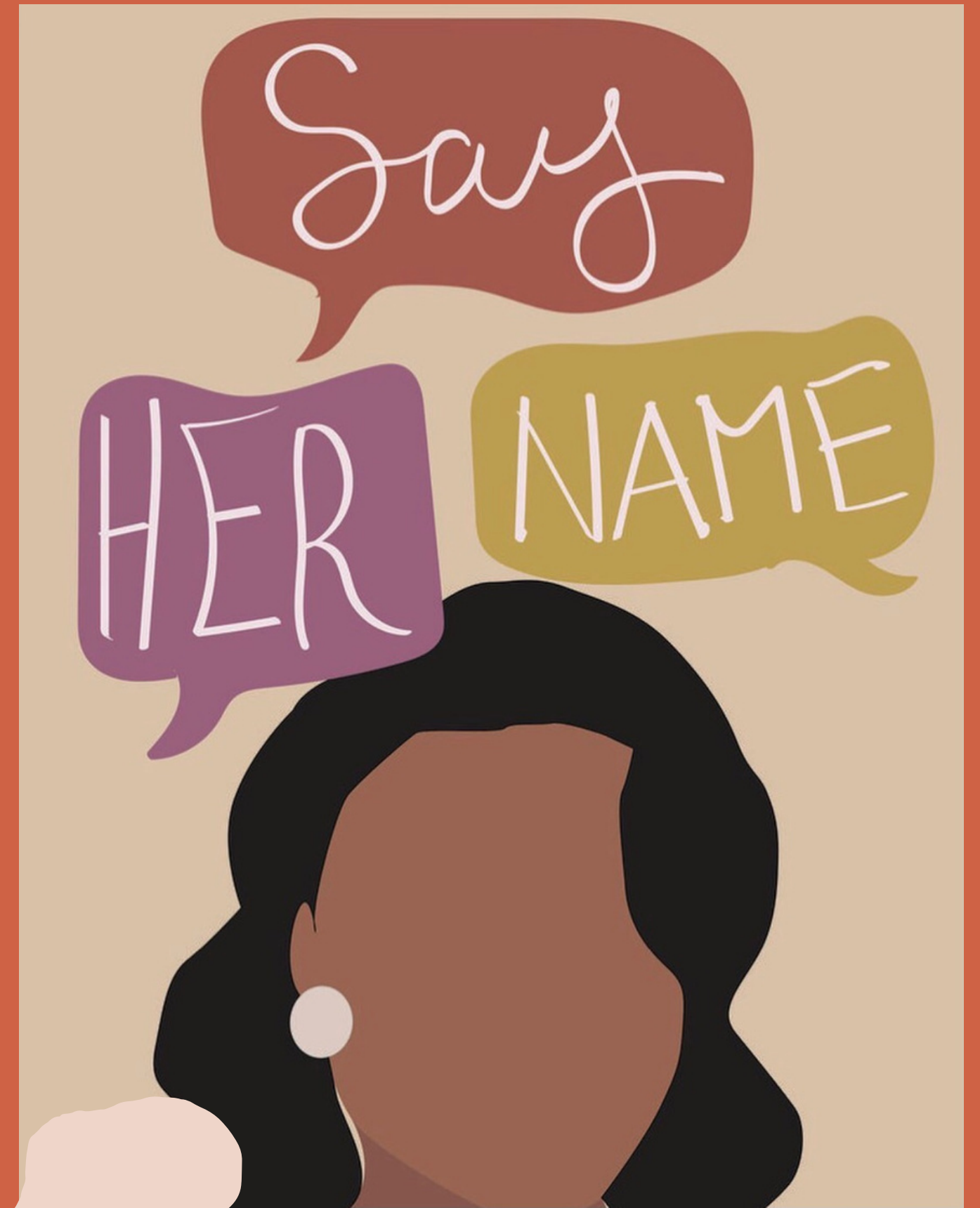
She has a documentary called MAJOR! that showcases her life. A lot of her friends have shared their positive influence she has had on their lives and the local communities she has lived within. In 2005, she joined Trans Gender Variant and Intersex Justice Project as a staff organizer and later as executive director.

Now, Miss Major is retired but is working on building House of GG's which will be a safe haven and retreat house for the transgender community. She continues to support those around her and her involvement within the civil rights movement did not go unnoticed. She had a major role in keeping people talking about civil rights. She spent a lot of her time speaking out and defending what she believed in.

Black Lives Matter

2013-Present

The Black Lives Matter movement at its core is a social movement advocating and protesting for wrongful incidents of police brutality and racially motivated violent actions against black people. The BLM movement demands that society value black lives in the way that white lives are valued and sheds light on how the institutions, laws, and policies of our country perpetuate this racial inequality. Breonna Taylor was a 26-year-old female who was shot 6 times in her own bed by 3 white police officers who forced entry into her apartment based on a false drug accusation. None of the officers have been charged with Breonna's death. Although Breonna was killed in Louisville Kentucky, her death sent shockwaves all around the country and even around the world. The phrase, "say her name" in regards to Breonna Taylor has become revolutionized throughout the whole BLM movement. "Say her name" strives to get people to recognize Breonna and the many others like her as people instead of just another fatality at the hands of the police. This presentation is about celebrating and acknowledging the black women who have made a difference but also honoring how by doing so, they are putting their lives on the line. Breonna Taylor died at the hands of the system these women are trying to dismantle. Breonna became a national figure and a reason for why these black leading women continue to fight for their rights.



Kamala Harris

Vice-President Elect

Kamala Harris is the Vice-President Elect of the United States. She is also the first female to hold this position as well as the first Black person and Asian American to hold this position. She has quickly become a symbol of success and hope for many young colored women in our country. This artifact is a short video about what Kamala Harris's speech from November 7th, 2020 meant to people. All the women and events covered in this presentation had a hand in making this moment possible. Each and every black woman who has made a difference in some way has paved the way for Kamala to be the first of many.

“Every little girl, watching tonight, sees that this is a country of possibilities.”

“But while I may be the first woman in this office, I will not be the last.”

This video cuts from Kamala's speech to 3 ladies who were inspired by it. One of the ladies, Ivani Hamilton said in regards to Kamala being the first in this position but not the last, “That line really just spoke to me, and seeing her and seeing myself in her and that she is someone who is representing me in a place that I never saw myself.” Kamala represents hope for people who did not think they would have a chance to achieve their dream due to their gender or the color of their skin and is helping our country move one step closer to having racial equality.





Reflecting on the Past.

OUR INTERVIEW WITH ROBIN RIBAKOFF

Robin Ribakoff, Alexis's grandmother, has been a social activist since the 1960s. She has fought and marched for people of all races, religions, and genders. Throughout her life, she has stood up for those who could not and let her voice be heard by marching and protesting for the things she believes in.

Robin Ribakoff

Civil Rights and Women's Rights Activist
Since the 1960s



Do you see a change in our countries since the time of the civil rights movement in terms of racial and gender equality?

Yes, I think that we absolutely did make a difference. We got the voting act, we got the Civil Rights Act and I think we had a period that was a little bit calmer. However, when we began to see this police brutality. You know, we saw Rodney King, which started one of the riots in Los Angeles, and we watched George Floyd be killed on TV we got set back. Overall, a lot more needs to be done. I think we reached a plateau. We went backward, but I don't think we went all the way back because some things got accomplished. But we have a lot more to go.

What do you remember about the civil rights movement?

Probably one of the main things was working at The Foundation for the Junior Blind and it was an integrated agency, as a matter of fact, they said **blindness is color blindness**. Meaning that, you know, everybody got along well, no matter what their color was, and we were very active in trying to help people to understand that. Now I could remember walking with black kids and they would have to hold my arm because they were blind, and people just hated me. They called me a N word lover. I can remember one time, going to a restaurant and they said well, you can eat in the restaurant but the colored people with you have to eat in the kitchen. And I said, "Well I hope your kitchen is big because if they eat in the kitchen, we all eat in the kitchen". Then later, when I was no longer working at The Foundation for the Junior Blind, I would go and demonstrate in front of the Federal Building down in Westwood California. The big gathering place for the civil rights movement was right there and I would go there, and we would sing songs and carry picket signs, and all of that.

Why did you choose to participate in the civil rights movement?

I am Jewish and I grew up in Glendale which was so prejudiced against Jews and against blacks. Blacks could not spend the night in Glendale, not even if they were a servant, or they lived in a house. After five o'clock, they had to be out of town, which was called the Sundowner Rules. So, this was when I realized what was going on. I had black friends in college, I had very good friends that were black and at that time we had the Watts Riots which was a mess. So, what got me involved was knowing what it was like for me to grow up Jewish in Glendale, which was not great, not great at all, and then knowing that other people were even more oppressed than I was. So, I wanted to be part of creating social change.

How does the civil rights movement compare to the Black Lives Matter movement?

I think there are more people involved in Black Lives Matter. The movement is still met with police brutality, tear gas, hoses, and all kinds of shit like that. See, the Civil Rights Movement was led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and he was for passive resistance. So, if they were gonna beat you, sit down, don't hit back. If they were gonna spit at you, don't say anything back. And that attitude permeated the civil rights movement. Also, the Black Lives Matter movement is more well-publicized because it's all over the news everywhere. Although the Civil Rights Movement was publicized, nothing has been publicized the way it's publicized today. One big difference between the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter is today we have cell phones. We actually watch police brutality happen. We watched in real-time as George Floyd was murdered under the knee of that police officer.

Changing the Future.



OUR INTERVIEWS WITH GABE THOMAS AND GENEVIEVE STEIRS

Gabe and Genevieve are both active voices for change in their local communities. Using social media platforms, and holding conversations with friends and family, these two are challenging societal norms and making waves of change every day.

Gabe Thomas

Member of the Black and
LGBTQ+ Communities and Civil
Rights Activist



What made you want to get in involved and march in the BLM movement this past summer?

I felt like it was my duty, I had to do it. I felt like growing up I was always the one black kid in the friend group, and I felt like, when I was younger I used to let people get away with so much, and I didn't speak up for myself because I had this warped idea of what was okay because I hadn't even educated myself yet on black culture and what is wrong and what is right. As I got older and started moving west, I stayed in touch with my friends from Pennsylvania and we were in a group chat and it was all white kids and they were all saying the N-word and stuff like that back and forth, and I was like holy - like it took me a moment to wake up one day and I was like this isn't correct, or right, and I started defending myself in that group chat. After I spoke to them about it they were so open to hearing me, so I started speaking out more, and speaking to more people, and trying to educate as many people as possible. Because the more people know, the less likely they are to be racist.

What was your experience like at the BLM protests, like what do you feel like you took away from it. What was it like being there and being a part of that.

It was super nerve wracking because all of these people are looking at you and you feel like you have to say something so insightful and life-changing to convert someone's beliefs or validate your own. It was really stressful, but then after I started speaking it was so fun, and such a safe environment and everyone was clapping and being so supportive. It was a protest for LGBTQ+ people of color and I think what made it super special for me. I feel like I have to speak out because of that intersectionality that a lot of people don't talk about because there are a lot of times where black people can be a little bit homophobic sometimes and then LGBT people can be a little bit racist sometimes and so hitting that crossroads, I knew it was going to be something special and I had to be a part of that.

What was your experience like being given the opportunity to interview First Lady Michelle Obama?

Meeting Michelle Obama was just like insane because I remember like. As a child, I did like an Obama presentation and like third grade and like having a black president like. When I was young I didn't even fit in, like, how insane, that is, Yeah, like, it's just like that whole family I had looked up to for so long and seen as like these like untouchable people but like not untouchable in like a way that like they were like snobby but like untouchable in a way like that's the apex like they have done it. They have conquered the one place that I think so many racists thought a black person would never cross that threshold to be like the face of our country. So in looking at Michelle Obama and like getting to meet her and speak with her and now seeing how much she does with the Better Make Room campaign and making sure colleges are opening doors for all people. She just wants everyone to be given the same opportunities and it's just so special to see.

Genevieve Stiers

Activist, Ally, & Teacher



What inspired you to become active in civil and environmental rights?

I've always been passionate about climate change. At age 6 I started selling hot chocolate at my sister's soccer games so I could buy an acre of the amazon rainforest to preserve it from deforestation. The environment has always been one of my focuses. It wasn't until I got to college and started taking such a diverse array of classes that I realized how climate change, climate justice, social and racial justice is completely intertwined. This inspired me to dedicate my life to fighting for justice for all, but it wasn't until the publicized murder of George Floyd that I realized my fight for justice needed to surpass my career. After that I started incorporating my fight for justice into every aspect of my life – I advocated on social media, I marched, I signed petitions, I donated, I engaged in tough conversations, and I completely changed my perspective.

What do you consider to be the biggest win for civil rights thus far?

I think the Black Lives Matter movement and the publicized murder of George Floyd of this summer have finally brought racial inequity and systemic injustice to the forefront of society's mind. Finally, it was right in front of people on their phones, on their TVs, in their conversations. It was no longer something the privileged people of the world could ignore. This shift in consciousness towards finally recognizing what people of color have been experiencing all their lives is a huge victory.

What inspired you to join the Teach for America Corps?

I've always wanted to do something like Teach for America to address systemic inequities in our world, especially focusing on children and education. I believe that a child's success and access to resources should never be determined by their zip code, the color of their skin, their socioeconomic status, or their documentation status. I can't wait to be an ally and advocate for my students, and I'm so grateful that I have found such an amazing avenue to fight for justice and equity.

Do you have a favorite black author?

Toni Morrison. *Beloved* is an incredible, eye opening book.



What does this mean for us?

Biographies and Reflections from future
teachers, change makers, and leaders.

Talia Florio

In my classroom...
A reflection and look to the future



In my classroom students will be surrounded by tokens of diversity. Whether it be a traditional rug, educational books about diverse experiences, snapshots from moments in time, or artwork used in civil movements - everywhere students look there will be an acknowledgement to different cultures and the struggles of our brothers and sisters around the world. In my K-12 education, the only classrooms who even slightly mentioned social injustice were my high school history classrooms. As the new generation of teachers move into classrooms across the nation, I have faith that we will be the change in the lives of our students. We will provide material that allows students of color to see themselves as the main character. We will read books that demonstrate love is love, and family structure is not linear. We will work together to become better teachers, leaders, and friends. At least, I know I will.

Aleeya Culhane



I Am Poem

I am an educator

I ensure my students know my classroom is a safe space
Where they feel represented and seen

Where their background does not define them

A place where diverse literature covers the bookshelves,

Cultural songs and dances are performed,

And important conversations are had

I am a resource

I am a social justice educator

I see a need for change

It is my job to make a difference

It is my job to create a space for honest storytelling

I must recognize my own background and privilege

And not only teach my students but let them teach me

I am a lifelong learner

I am an ally

I see all people as equal and will teach my students the same

I believe all student deserve equal opportunities in education

I make this a reality in my own classroom

I provide opportunities for my students to learn about many different communities of people

I believe their stories should be told

I aim to build my students into a whole person, not just an academic one

I am a mentor

I am a teacher

I will create a diverse curriculum for my students

I will encourage my students to do independent research about their world

I will make every student in my classroom feel welcome, supported, and acknowledged

I am an educator

Alexis Ribakoff

As a future educator...



As a future educator, it is my responsibility to create a safe space for all learners.

As a future educator, I will provide books that my students will be able to see themselves in.

As a future educator, I will validate all opinions and beliefs.

As a future educator, I will respect and learn about my student's cultures.

As a future educator, I will incorporate my student's cultures in classroom activities.

As a future educator, I will be empathetic and actively listen to my students.

As a future educator, I will provide equal opportunities for all my students to succeed.

As a future educator, I will create a culturally responsive classroom.

As a future educator, I will challenge my students to become better versions of themselves.

As a future educator, I will push my students to not be afraid to try new things.

As a future educator, I will foster collaboration.

As a future educator, I will promote social justice.

As a future educator, I will change lives one student at a time.



In my classroom, students will always be able to explore different cultures and perspectives. In my curriculum, I will provide opportunities to do so. As I get closer to being a teacher, I will work towards reflecting on cultural and linguistic diversity and then try to create culturally responsive instruction. Being able to reflect on these issues and incorporate them in my curriculum is important due to the idea it can promote change and openness to challenging topics. Learning, often times, influences children's values and we want them to value equity and fairness. Every day people worked hard and long for the civil rights movement, and we still have more work to do. Teachers should be promoting inclusion.

For my reflection, I drew a power fist which is often used within the Black Lives Matter Movement. To me, it signifies standing up together and speaking out about what is right. I would want my students to know I will try my best to stand up for their rights and allow them to speak out about ideas that they feel are important. My classroom will maintain to be an open and inclusive environment that allows students to talk about any social injustices they see or may face.

Caity McGuigan



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