

Curriculum Connections

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UPDATED ISSUE

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Unheard Voices: Stories of LGBT History

ADL
Anti-Defamation League®

In This Issue

In response to the lack of representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in school curricula and disproportionate incidents of bullying and violence against LGBT youth, ADL, [GLSEN](#) and [StoryCorps](#) have collaborated to create Unheard Voices, an oral history and curriculum project that will help educators to integrate LGBT history, people and issues into their instructional programs.

At the core of the program are brief audio interviews with individuals who bore witness to or helped to shape LGBT history in some way. Each interview is accompanied by a backgrounder with discussion questions and activities for educators, and a student reading with biographical information about the interview subject and historical background on the era.

In addition, several lesson plans are included for middle and high school students that explore broad themes—such as silence and invisibility, inclusion and exclusion, and name-calling—as well as specific topics related to the interviews, such as marriage equality and gender identity. One or more oral histories are integrated into each lesson plan.

According to GLSEN's 2009 National School Climate Survey, less than a fifth of the seven thousand students surveyed (17.9%) reported that LGBT-related topics were included in their textbooks or other assigned readings. When asked whether they had been taught about LGBT people, history or events in school, a vast majority (86.6%) of students reported that these topics were not taught in any of their classes, and only about a tenth (11.7%) of all students were exposed to positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events.

The consequences of this invisibility can be devastating for young people. The survey cited above indicates that 84.6% of LGBT students were verbally harassed and 40.1% were physically harassed at school in the past year, three-fifths (61.1%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and about a third (30%) skipped a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe. In such environments, all students are restricted by rigid sexual and gender norms and narrow conceptions of humanity.

Conversely, the GLSEN study indicates that in schools with positive representations of LGBT topics in the curriculum, LGBT students were less likely to report hearing homophobic remarks or experiencing victimization at school, and more likely to report that school personnel and their peers intervened when homophobic remarks occurred. Less than half (42.1%) of LGBT students in schools with inclusive curricula felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, compared to almost two-thirds (63.6%) of students in schools without this resource. Consequently, less than a fifth (17.1%) of LGBT students with inclusive curricula reported missing school in the past month compared to almost a third (31.6%) of other students.

Understood within this context, the resources in Unheard Voices can serve as a lifeline for LGBT youth and a potent bullying prevention tool. More generally, LGBT inclusive curricula can help educators to create more honest and accurate instructional programs, as well as safer and more affirming environments for all youth.

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A Note about the Language in this Unit

There are many terms that are used to describe what is commonly known as the “gay community.” Since the word “gay” most often refers to homosexual men, we have chosen to use the more inclusive “LGBT,” which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Though this term may sound unfamiliar at first, we encourage you to use it consistently with your students and to avoid reflexively using “gay” to describe the broad spectrum of sexual and gender identities.

There are many people within the LGBT communities who use a variety of other terms to describe themselves, including queer, questioning, and same-gender loving. Though we have chosen to use LGBT consistently here, we encourage you to respect the terms that individuals in your community have chosen to describe themselves.

While it is important to increase young people’s awareness about the damaging effects of anti-LGBT language and to discourage the negative use of words like “gay” and “queer,” it is also important to reinforce that these are not “bad” words in and of themselves and are perfectly acceptable when used in appropriate contexts.

When discussing history, it is also important to note that words like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender are modern terms that we use to describe people today, and that many historical figures would not have used these labels to describe themselves. For the sake of expediency, the labels “gay,” “lesbian,” “transgender” and “LGBT” are often used to describe people who—according to the historical record—had same-sex romantic or emotional attractions or relationships, or transgressed societal expectations with regard to gender. If you choose to use modern labels to describe historical figures, it may be useful to preface the discussion with the above explanation.

Correlation of Lessons to the Common Core State Standards

Content Area/Standard	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Reading: Key Ideas and Details					
Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	X	X	X	X	X
Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.		X	X	X	X
Reading: Craft and Structure					
Standard 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	X	X	X	X	X
Standard 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	X				
Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas					
Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	X	X	X	X	X
Reading: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity					
Standard 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	X	X	X	X	X
Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing					
Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	X		X	X	
Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge					
Standard 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	X			X	
Standard 8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.	X				

Content Area/Standard	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Writing: Range of Writing					
Standard 10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.	X		X	X	
Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration					
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	X	X	X	X	X
Standard 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	X	X	X		X
Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas					
Standard 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			X	X	
Standard 5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.			X		
Language: Conventions of Standard English					
Standard 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	X		X	X	
Standard 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	X		X	X	
Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use					
Standard 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.	X	X	X	X	X

Lesson 1: Grades 8 & Up

The Invisibility of LGBT People in History: “Peculiar Disposition of the Eyes”

Overview

This lesson explores the ways in which LGBT people, events and issues have been made invisible in mainstream accounts of history. In the first half of the lesson, students reflect on excerpts from Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* to explore the impact of invisibility on people and as a jumping off point for researching how different groups have been historically marginalized in society. In the second part of the lesson, students participate in a history matching game and listen to LGBT oral histories that increase their awareness of significant LGBT people and events, and the ways in which these topics have been erased from the historical record.

[NOTE: This lesson explores LGBT issues in an open and direct way. Given the absence of this topic in the curriculum and the disproportionate rates of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment, it is important to educate students about these issues. When discussing any new or sensitive topic, however, there is the potential for some students to react in stereotypical or disrespectful ways. It is therefore imperative that educators carefully review the lesson, assess students’ maturity and readiness to engage in the lesson prior to implementation, and establish clear parameters with students that will ensure safe and constructive dialogue. See “[Establishing a Safe Learning Environment](#)” and “[Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment](#)” for guidelines on building safe forums for discussing sensitive issues.]

Objectives

- Students will analyze literary excerpts and make “text to self” connections.
- Students will research historically marginalized groups in society.
- Students will increase their awareness of the ways in which LGBT people have been made invisible in history.
- Students will learn about historically significant LGBT people, topics and events.

Time

2 hours; if time is limited, complete Parts III and IV only (50 mins.)

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- (Optional) [Excerpts from Invisible Man](#) (one per student)
- [Examples of Marginalized Groups in Society](#) (one copy)
- [History Match-Up Historical Figures](#) (one set per small group)
- [History Match-Up Biographies](#) (one per small group)
- [History Match-Up Answer Key](#) (one copy)

Other Material:

- Unheard Voices [audio interviews and transcripts](#) and [interview backgrounders](#)
- Chart paper, markers, scissors
- Computer, speakers, Internet Access

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prepare quotes (see Part I #1 and Part II #1).

Key Words

Civil rights
 Discrimination
 Disposition
 Invisibility
 LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)
 Marginalized
 Oral history
 Resentment
 Stereotype
 Suffrage

- Using the [History Match-Up Historical Figures](#) handout, create a set of History Match-Up cards for each small group (see Part III #2). Make several photocopies, cut them into separate “cards” and mix them up. Group each set of cards so there is a complete set of historical figures for each small group.
- Make a copy of the [History Match-Up Biographies](#) for each small group (see Part III #2).
- Prepare to play [audio interviews](#) (see Part IV #2).

Techniques and Skills

analyzing primary documents, cooperative group work, critical thinking, forming opinions, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, listening skills, reading skills, research skills, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: Exploring the Impact of Invisibility (30 minutes)

1. Post the following quote from Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (but do not identify the source). Ask for a volunteer to read it aloud.

“I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids... I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.”

2. Direct students to reflect on the quote and to write a paragraph in response using the following prompts:

- Describe a time when you felt “invisible”—either unseen or unheard by others.
- What caused you to feel invisible?
- Were you able to eventually overcome that feeling? If so, how? If not, why?
- How did the experience affect or change you?

Optional: If time is limited in class, have students complete this writing assignment for homework prior to conducting the lesson.

3. Have students share their experiences in pairs or ask for a few volunteers to read their paragraph aloud to the class. As a whole group, discuss the emotional impact of being unnoticed, disregarded or silenced by others.

Part II: Researching Historically Marginalized Groups (30 minutes plus time for research)

1. Post the following and explain that it is a continuation of the quote discussed earlier. Have a volunteer read it aloud.

“That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality...you’re constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision...you often doubt if you really exist...It’s when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back...You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world...”

Optional: Distribute the handout, [Excerpts from Invisible Man](#) by Ralph Ellison, so that students can read the broader passage from which the above quotes are taken.

2. Discuss some of the following questions in response to the quote:

- What do you think the narrator means by a “disposition of the eyes”? (If students need help, define disposition as a habit, tendency or attitude of mind.)
- What is the narrator’s purpose in setting apart the idea of “inner eyes” from “physical eyes”? What factors shape what our “inner eyes” see?
- What causes “poor vision”—as the narrator sees it—in some people?
- What is the impact when others don’t see you or recognize that you “exist in the world”?

3. Ask students if they have any ideas about why the narrator in this story might have felt unseen. Explain that the quote comes from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which explores many of the social issues facing African Americans in the early 20th century. Briefly discuss the reasons why some African-American people might have felt invisible during this era.
4. Ask students if they are aware of other groups that may have felt “bumped against by those of poor vision” at different times in our country’s history (or that may feel that way now). List their responses on a sheet of chart paper. Some examples are included as a reference in [Examples of Marginalized Groups in Society](#).
5. In class or for homework, have students select one group that has been marginalized or made invisible in some way for further study. Assign them to consult at least two sources to learn more about the selected group, and to write a poem or create a piece of artwork that addresses the following questions:
 - How has the group been “bumped against by those of poor vision”?
 - How has the group been made to “doubt if they really exist”?
 - How has the group “bumped people back” and “convinced themselves that they exist in the real world”?

Make time in class for students to share and discuss their poems and artwork.

Part III: History Match-Up (30 minutes)

1. Tell students that you will continue to discuss the theme of invisibility through a matching game that explores how much they know about certain historical figures. Explain that, in small groups, students will try to match cards with the names of people to a master list of corresponding biographies.

Optional: To add an element of fun, make the matching exercise a contest in which small groups compete to see who can complete the game the fastest and/or make the most matches.

2. Divide the class into small groups of four to six students. Provide each group with a copy of the handout, [History Match-Up Biographies](#), and a set of cards created from [History Match-Up Historical Figures](#). Provide a signal for groups to begin and allow about 10 minutes for students to complete the exercise.
3. When all groups have completed the exercise, review the correct answers using [History Match-Up Answer Key](#).
4. Ask students if they were aware as they were working that all of the figures in the exercise have something in common. Challenge students to identify that commonality. If they cannot, reveal that all of the figures were/are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people.

NOTE: Make sure to explain that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender are modern terms that we use to describe people today and that many of the historical figures included in the exercise would not have used these labels to describe themselves. However, the historical record demonstrates that all of the people in the exercise had same-sex romantic or emotional attractions or relationships, or transgressed societal expectations with regard to gender.

5. Conduct a brief discussion using some of the following questions:
 - Were you surprised to find that all the figures were/are LGBT? Which ones surprised you the most? Why?
 - Which figures had you never heard of? Why do you think you never learned about them before?
 - Which figures were you aware of, but never knew they were LGBT? Why do you think you never knew about this aspect of their identity?
 - Is it important to know that these figures were/are LGBT? Why or why not? How does this information influence your understanding of history/art/politics or your worldview?
 - Why do you think the identities of LGBT people have been erased from history so frequently? What do you think is the impact of this invisibility on society?

Part IV: LGBT Oral Histories (20 minutes minimum; time will vary)

1. Tell students that three organizations—Anti-Defamation League, GLSEN and StoryCorps—teamed up to counter the invisibility of LGBT people in history by recording the oral histories of people who have made or witnessed LGBT history

in the past. Explain that by bringing these oral histories to students in schools across the country, these organizations hope to reduce anti-LGBT stereotypes, prejudice and harassment; increase awareness and appreciation of the contributions of LGBT people; and fill in some of the gaps in the history that is presented in most school books and curricula.

2. Choose one of the [interviews](#) to play for students. After students have listened, debrief using some of the discussion questions from the accompanying [interviewee's backgrounder](#).
3. Either in school or for homework, assign the student reading (found in the [interview backgrounders](#)) that accompanies the selected interview and have students complete one or more of the suggested activities.
4. Optionally, assign students to select one or two additional [interviews](#) that are of interest to them. Have them do a written reflection comparing and contrasting the various stories, and exploring some of the common threads that run through them all.

Excerpts from *Invisible Man*

By Ralph Ellison

“I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.”

“Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you’re constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren’t simply a phantom in other people’s minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It’s when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back. And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you’re a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it’s seldom successful.”

Examples of Marginalized Groups in Society

Below are examples of groups that have been unseen and unheard in different ways throughout history or, in the words of Ralph Ellison, “constantly bumped against by those of poor vision.”

1. **Women** (at one time could not own property, vote, hold elective office, attend college, make decisions about divorce or custody, enter into legal contracts)
2. **Native Americans** (experienced forced conversions and education at boarding schools, relocation from ancestral lands, denial of citizenship rights)
3. **People with Disabilities** (once considered unfit to contribute to society, forced to undergo sterilization and enter asylums, denied access to employment and educational opportunities and to public accommodations and services, such as transportation, housing, bathrooms and stores)
4. **Workers/Laborers** (once unable to organize/form unions, denied minimum wages or maximum hours of work per day/week, deprived of safe working conditions and protections for child workers)
5. **Immigrants** (have been denied job opportunities or relegated to unjust guest worker programs, kept apart from family members, denied housing or relegated to specific neighborhoods, assumed to be unpatriotic/disloyal, subject to unfair quotas and literacy tests, unjustly detained)
6. **Religious Minorities** (have been excluded from school and community celebrations, denied job opportunities and workplace accommodation, denied housing in certain neighborhoods, assumed to be unpatriotic/disloyal)

History Match-Up Historical Figures

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC)	Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)	James Baldwin (1924-1987)
Rachel Carson (1907-1964)	George Washington Carver (1864-1943)	Willa Cather (1873-1947)
Barney Frank (1940-)	Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965)	Michelangelo (1475-1564)
Harvey Milk (1930-1978)	Bayard Rustin (1910-1987)	Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Alan Turing (1912-1954)	Walt Whitman (1819-1892)	We'Wha (1849-1896)

History Match-Up Biographies

<p>The King of Macedonia and conqueror of the Persian Empire. Considered one of the greatest military geniuses of all times and an inspiration for later conquerors such as Hannibal, Caesar and Napoleon.</p>	<p>A prominent American civil rights activist who played a pivotal role in the 19th century women's suffrage movement. This leader traveled across the nation fighting for a woman's right to vote and to her own property and earnings, and also for an end to slavery.</p>	<p>American writer and activist, noted for novels on personal identity and sharp essays on civil rights struggle in the United States. This author's most famous novels include <i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> and <i>Giovanni's Room</i>.</p>
<p>U.S. naturalist and writer, who studied zoology, worked as a marine biologist for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C. and wrote four best-sellers, including <i>The Sea Around Us</i> and <i>Silent Spring</i>.</p>	<p>An American botanist, educator, and inventor, who is famous for research on peanuts and other alternative crops. Through achievements in poetry, painting and religion, this scientist also helped to dispel the widespread stereotype of the time that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites.</p>	<p>U.S. writer who published a total of 19 books, including <i>O Pioneers!</i> and <i>My Antonia</i>. This writer's novels are frequently set in Nebraska and western pioneer farm settings, and explore the power of the land and the complex relationships of those who dwell on it.</p>
<p>U.S. Democratic politician who has represented Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1980. Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, which oversees the entire financial services industry, this leader is considered to be one of the most powerful members of Congress.</p>	<p>U.S. writer and activist who started out as a journalist for <i>Freedom</i>, Paul Robeson's newspaper, and went on to write the award winning <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>, the first play by an African-American woman to be produced on Broadway.</p>	<p>Italian sculptor, painter, architect and poet who believed that art could capture and preserve the memory of beauty. Masterpieces include <i>David</i>, <i>The Last Judgment</i> and the architectural plans for St. Peter's Basilica.</p>
<p>A San Francisco City Supervisor who, along with San Francisco mayor George Moscone, was shot and killed by Dan White, a former supervisor who had resigned his seat and who became enraged when the mayor would not reappoint him.</p>	<p>U.S. civil rights activist and writer who organized the New York Congress of Racial Equality and helped to end racial discrimination in the military. A chief political advisor, strategist, and speechwriter for Martin Luther King Jr., this activist was the lead organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.</p>	<p>This Russian composer, who struggled with depression, was the creator of symphonies, ballets, and operas including <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, <i>Swan Lake</i>, <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> and <i>The Nutcracker</i>.</p>
<p>English mathematician and scientist most known for breaking the German "Enigma" code during World War II and for pioneering work in the field of technology. Considered by many to be the father of the modern day computer.</p>	<p>An American poet, essayist and journalist, and one of the most influential writers of the 19th century, this author's work presented an equal view of the races and called for an end to slavery. The writer's poetry collection, <i>Leaves of Grass</i>, and other works were often considered controversial.</p>	<p>A Zuni Native American from New Mexico who was an accomplished weaver, potter and spiritual leader, and also a cultural ambassador who helped bridge the divide between Native and Anglo Americans.</p>

History Match-Up Answer Key

Alexander the Great (356–323 BC): The King of Macedonia and conqueror of the Persian Empire. Considered one of the greatest military geniuses of all times and an inspiration for later conquerors such as Hannibal, Caesar and Napoleon.

Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906): A prominent American civil rights activist who played a pivotal role in the 19th century women’s suffrage movement. This leader traveled across the nation fighting for a woman’s right to vote and to her own property and earnings, and also for an end to slavery.

James Baldwin (1924–1987): American writer and activist, noted for novels on personal identity and sharp essays on civil rights struggle in the United States. This author’s most famous novels include *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Giovanni’s Room*.

Rachel Carson (1907–1964): U.S. naturalist and writer, who studied zoology, worked as a marine biologist for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C. and wrote four best-sellers, including *The Sea Around Us* and *Silent Spring*.

George Washington Carver (1864–1943): An American botanist, educator, and inventor, who is famous for research on peanuts and other alternative crops. Through achievements in poetry, painting and religion, this scientist also helped to dispel the widespread stereotype of the time that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites.

Willa Cather (1873–1947): U.S. writer who published a total of 19 books, including *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia*. This writer’s novels are frequently set in Nebraska and western pioneer farm settings, and explore the power of the land and the complex relationships of those who dwell on it.

Barney Frank (1940–): U.S. Democratic politician who has represented Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1980. Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, which oversees the entire financial services industry, this leader is considered to be one of the most powerful members of Congress.

Lorraine Hansberry (1930–1965): U.S. writer and activist who started out as a journalist for *Freedom*, Paul Robeson’s newspaper, and went on to write the award winning *A Raisin in the Sun*, the first play by an African-American woman to be produced on Broadway.

Michelangelo (1475–1564): Italian sculptor, painter, architect and poet who believed that art could capture and preserve the memory of beauty. Masterpieces include *David*, *The Last Judgment* and the architectural plans for St. Peter’s Basilica.

Harvey Milk (1930–1978): A San Francisco City Supervisor who, along with San Francisco mayor George Moscone, was shot and killed by Dan White, a former supervisor who had resigned his seat and who became enraged when the mayor would not reappoint him.

Bayard Rustin (1910–1987): U.S. civil rights activist and writer who organized the New York Congress of Racial Equality and helped to end racial discrimination in the military. A chief political advisor, strategist, and speechwriter for Martin Luther King Jr., this activist was the lead organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840–1893): This Russian composer, who struggled with depression, was the creator of symphonies, ballets, and operas including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*.

Alan Turing (1912–1954): English mathematician and scientist most known for breaking the German “Enigma” code during World War II and for pioneering work in the field of technology. Considered by many to be the father of the modern day computer.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892): An American poet, essayist and journalist, and one of the most influential writers of the 19th century, this author’s work presented an equal view of the races and called for an end to slavery. The writer’s poetry collection, *Leaves of Grass*, and other works were often considered controversial.

We’Wha (1849–1896): A Zuni Native American from New Mexico who was an accomplished weaver, potter and spiritual leader, and also a cultural ambassador who helped bridge the divide between Native and Anglo Americans.

Lesson 2: Grades 6 & Up

The History and Impact of Anti-LGBT Slurs

Overview

In this lesson students listen to the oral history of an advocate for LGBT family rights, and use her personal story as a vehicle for considering how anti-LGBT attitudes are formed. Students explore the derivation of the words “gay,” “faggot” and “dyke” in order to better understand the long history of judgment and hate behind these words. They also reflect on the testimony of LGBT teens about the impact of terms like “that’s so gay.”

[NOTE: This lesson explores LGBT issues in an open and direct way. Given the absence of this topic in the curriculum and the disproportionate rates of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment, it is important to educate students about these issues. When discussing any new or sensitive topic, however, there is the potential for some students to react in stereotypical or disrespectful ways. It is therefore imperative that educators carefully review the lesson, assess students’ maturity and readiness to engage in the lesson prior to implementation, and establish clear parameters with students that will ensure safe and constructive dialogue. See [“Establishing a Safe Learning Environment”](#) and [“Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment”](#) for guidelines on building safe forums for discussing sensitive issues.]

Objectives

- Students will reflect on the oral history of an individual involved in the LGBT rights movement.
- Students will learn about the history of anti-LGBT slurs.
- Students will analyze media ads about anti-LGBT language.
- Students will identify ways to reduce their use of hurtful language.

Time

55–70 mins. or two class periods

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Dictionary Print Ad: “Gay,” “Faggot” and “Dyke”](#) (one per small group; middle school option only)
- [The History of the Word “Gay,” “Faggot” and “Dyke”](#) (one per small group; high school option only)
- [Youth Voices on “That’s So Gay”](#) (one copy)

Other Material:

- Unheard Voices [audio interviews and transcripts](#) and [interview backgrounders](#)
- Scissors, computer, speakers, projector/screen (optional)

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prepare to play interview (see Part I #2).
- (Optional) Prepare projector/screen for viewing ads (see Part II #2).
- Chart questions (see step Part II #2, middle school option).
- Cut the [Youth Voices on “That’s So Gay”](#) into individual strips of quotes (see Part III #1).

Techniques and Skills

connecting past to present, cooperative group work, critical thinking, debate, forming opinions, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, media literacy, reading skills

Key Words

Advocate (n.)
Demoralized
Heretic
LGBT (lesbian, gay,
bisexual and
transgender)
Offensive
Slur

Procedures

Part I: “Two Kinds of Gay” (15 minutes)

1. Tell students that you are going to share a brief excerpt from an [interview](#) and provide the following context:

Terry Boggis is an advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights and helped to found Center Families in 1988, a New York City based program for LGBT parents and their children. In this interview, she talks about being a lesbian parent and the experiences of her son, Ned, at about the time he first started school.

2. Play the Terry Boggis [interview](#) from 0:28 to 1:22 and discuss the following questions with students.
 - Regarding Ned’s first experiences with school, Terry observes that “the larger culture starts weighing in”? What does she mean by this? Does this comment relate to any experiences that you have had?
 - What kinds of experiences do you think led Ned to ask if there are “two kinds of gay people,” “good kinds and bad kinds”?
 - Why did Terry assume that wearing the rainbow rings and expressing gay pride might invite a negative response? Would you assume the same thing about the people at your camp or school? Why or why not?
 - In your experience, what language and/or ideas are communicated among your peers that might lead some people to believe gay is “bad”?

Optional: Play the full Terry Boggis [interview](#) (2:20) if students are curious/interested.

3. Point out that expressions like “that’s so gay” are used frequently among young people, many of whom excuse this language by saying that “it’s just a joke,” “it just means silly or stupid” and “it has nothing to do with gay people.” Explain that regardless of intentions, terms like these convey damaging messages to others. Emphasize that words, like people, have histories and often carry decades—even centuries—of weight and meaning that can have a greater impact than known.

Part II: The History of Anti-Gay Epithets (Middle School or High School Options)

Middle School Option, 30 minutes

Use this option for younger students or those with limited experience discussing LGBT issues; otherwise, skip to the high school option for a higher-level investigation.

1. Tell students that they are going to explore some ads about words that are commonly used to put down LGBT people in order to better appreciate the long history of ignorance, judgment and hate that are behind these words.
2. Divide the class into small groups of three to five students and provide groups with one copy each of [Dictionary Print Ad: “Gay,” “Faggot”](#) and [“Dyke.”](#) Post the questions below and instruct groups to review the ads collaboratively and discuss the questions. Allow about 10 minutes for small group work.
 - In your experience, how and where are these words used?
 - Though these terms are sometimes intended to just mean “silly” or “stupid,” is that the way they are heard or experienced by everyone? Why?
 - How would you say that expressions like “that’s so gay” and “you’re a fag/dyke”—used regularly—impact the atmosphere or climate at school?
 - When someone tells you that they are offended by this kind of language, is it okay to just say you “didn’t mean it like that”? How else might you respond?

Optional: If your students are unable to discuss the ads with respect independently, project the ads on a large screen and conduct this discussion as a large group.

3. Reconvene the class. Suggest that the words in the ads are often tossed around without much thought about the hate or hurtfulness behind them. Ask students what they know about the history of these words and how they came to be used as insults. (Use the handouts, [The History of the Word “Gay,” “Faggot”](#) and [“Dyke.”](#) as references to help you provide some historical context.)

4. Discuss the following questions:

- Are you surprised about how these words evolved over time? Can you still use the words today based on their original meaning?
- Now that you are aware of the history behind these words, will you continue to use them as jokes or insults against others? Why or why not?
- Do you think people in general would be less likely to use these words as jokes or insults if they knew the history behind them? Why or why not?
- How do you think words like these affected Terry and Ned (from the interview)? How do you think they affect other LGBT people or families with LGBT people?
- What can you do to educate your peers about the history and impact of anti-LGBT language?

High School Option, 45 minutes

Use this option for older students or those who are able to discuss LGBT issues with more sophistication; otherwise, go back to the middle school option for younger or more inexperienced students.

1. Tell students that they are going to read about the history of some words that are commonly used to put down LGBT people in order to better appreciate the long history of ignorance, judgment and hate that are behind these words.
2. Have students count off by three's. Tell the "ones" that they will read the handout, [The History of the Word "Gay"](#); assign the "twos" [The History of the Word "Faggot"](#); and assign the "threes" [The History of the Word "Dyke."](#) Tell students that, after reading the handouts independently, they will be grouped with classmates who have read a different handout and asked to summarize their reading. Distribute the handouts and give students about 10 minutes to read.

Optional: Have students summarize their reading by creating a "found poem"—selecting descriptive words, phrases and lines from the passage and arranging/formatting them to create a poem that captures the central ideas of the reading.

3. Form new small groups and make sure that all three readings are represented within each group. Instruct students to take turns presenting the main points of each reading to the group (or sharing their "found poems" if this option is used). Allow 10–15 minutes for discussion.
4. Reconvene the whole group and discuss the following questions.
 - What was the most surprising thing you learned from the articles?
 - Why do you think it's important to know the history of words you may hear and/or use?
 - Now that you are aware of the history behind these words, would you continue to use them? Why or why not?
 - Do you think people in general would be less likely to use these words if they knew the history behind them? Why or why not?
 - How do you think words like these affected Terry and Ned (from the interview)? How do you think they affect other LGBT people or families with LGBT people?
 - What can you do to educate your peers about the history of anti-LGBT language?

Part III: Conclusion (10 minutes)

1. Ask for nine volunteers and provide each with a quote from [Youth Voices on "That's So Gay."](#)
2. Tell students that they will be hearing the thoughts of LGBT teens on how expressions such as "that's so gay" impact them. Direct students to listen and reflect silently as each quote is read. Ask the volunteers to stand and read their quotes in succession.
3. Allow students to react to the quotes (e.g., which quote do you connect with the most?). Suggest that they think about these teens the next time they are tempted to use anti-LGBT words.

Dictionary Print Ad: “Gay”

gay (gā) 1. there once was a time when all “gay” meant was “happy.” then it meant “homosexual.” now, people are saying “that’s so gay” to mean dumb and stupid. which is pretty insulting to gay people (and we don’t mean the “happy” people).
2. so please, knock it off. 3. go to ThinkB4YouSpeak.com



Dictionary Print Ad: “Faggot”

fag-got (fag'ət) **1.** there was a time when the word “faggot” meant a bundle of sticks. but then people started using it in an insulting, offensive way and things changed. so when you say things like “homo,” “dyke” and “that’s so gay” trying to be funny, remember, you may actually be hurting someone. **2.** so please, knock it off. **3.** get more information at ThinkB4YouSpeak.com



Dictionary Print Ad: “Dyke”

dyke (dīk) **1.** be honest with yourself. you’re not thinking of “an embankment that holds back and controls water.” the problem is, words like “dyke” and “faggot” are so commonly used as insults these days, it’s really hard to remember a time when they weren’t. **2.** so please, knock it off. **3.** learn more at ThinkB4YouSpeak.com



The History of the Word “Gay”

The word gay dates back to the 12th century and comes from the Old French “gai,” meaning “full of joy or mirth.” It may also be connected with the Old High German “gahi,” meaning impulsive. For centuries, gay was used commonly in speech and literature to mean happy, carefree, bright and showy, and did not take on any sexual meaning until the 1600s.

gay (gā) 1. there once was a time when all “gay” meant was “happy.” then it meant “homosexual.” now, people are saying “that’s so gay” to mean dumb and stupid. which is pretty insulting to gay people (and we don’t mean the “happy” people). 2. so please, knock it off. 3. go to ThinkB4YouSpeak.com

Ad
fund

GLSEN

At that time the meaning of gay as carefree evolved to imply that a person was unrestrained by morals and prone to decadence and promiscuity. A prostitute might have been described as a “gay woman” and a womanizer as a “gay man.” “Gay house” was commonly used to refer to a brothel and, later, “gaiety” was used as a common name for certain places of entertainment.

In the 1890s, the term “gey cat” (a Scottish variant of gay) was used to describe a vagrant who offered sexual services to women, or a young traveler who was new to the road and in the company of an older man. This latter use suggests that the younger man was in a sexually submissive role and may be among the first times that gay was used to imply a homosexual relationship.

In 1951, gay appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary for the first time as slang for homosexual, but was most likely used in this way “underground” at least 30 years earlier. For example, in the 1938 film, *Bringing Up Baby*, Cary Grant dons a feathery robe when his clothes are sent to the cleaners and says, “...I just went gay.” This line (ad-libbed by Grant) can be interpreted to mean that he was behaving in a happy-go-lucky or lighthearted way, but is accepted by many as the first use of gay to mean homosexual in a mainstream movie.

Today gay is a socially accepted term for homosexual people. However, this word is rooted in the classification of certain types of people as illicit, counterculture or behaving in ways that go against the respectable conventions of society. When gay is used today to mean stupid or undesirable (it has only been used in this way since the 1990s), it carries with it a history of negative judgment and rigid ideas about who or what is acceptable.

The History of the Word “Faggot”

You may know that “faggot” means “a bundle of sticks.” The word “faggot” has been part of the English language since the 1300s. When and how did it become an anti-gay slur?

fag-got (fag'ət) **1.** there was a time when the word “faggot” meant a bundle of sticks. but then people started using it in an insulting, offensive way and things changed. so when you say things like “homo,” “dyke” and “that’s so gay” trying to be funny, remember, you may actually be hurting someone. **2.** so please, knock it off. **3.** get more information at ThinkB4YouSpeak.com



During the European Inquisitions, “faggot” referred to the sticks used to set fires for burning heretics, or people who opposed the teachings of the Catholic Church. Heretics were required to gather bundles of sticks (“faggots”) and carry them to the fire that was being built for them.

Heretics who changed their beliefs to avoid being killed were forced to wear a “faggot” design embroidered on their sleeve, to show everyone that they had opposed the Church. Since it was hard to live with such a bad reputation, people began to use the word “faggot” to refer to anything that was considered to be a burden or difficult to bear. Unfortunately, the term quickly became a sexist insult, as people used it to disrespect women in the same way the term “ball and chain” is used today.

The word “faggot” appeared in the United States during the early 20th century. It was used to refer to men who were seen as less masculine than people believed they should be. During the course of the 20th century, the word “faggot” became the slur most commonly used to abuse gay men and men perceived to be gay. In fact, “faggot” has become a general insult that is often used to humiliate any man. Since many people are biased against LGBT people, being called “faggot” is a big fear of many heterosexual men, and thus the easiest way to hurt them. Considering the long and violent history of the word, it’s important for people to understand its meaning before they use it so carelessly.

The History of the Word “Dyke”

“Dyke” is a very old word. You may have encountered it already in a science class; it’s a mass of mineral matter that fills a hole in a rock formation. Or, you may have seen it in a geography lesson; it refers to a variety of ditches, trenches, caves and dams that have been built by many different civilizations. None of these definitions, however, relates to the modern usage of “dyke” as a slur directed at lesbian women or women perceived to be lesbian.

dyke (dīk) **1.** be honest with yourself. you’re not thinking of “an embankment that holds back and controls water.” the problem is, words like “dyke” and “faggot” are so commonly used as insults these days, it’s really hard to remember a time when they weren’t. **2.** so please, knock it off. **3.** learn more at ThinkB4YouSpeak.com



One theory about the origin of “dyke” as an anti-lesbian slur suggests that “dyke” came from the word “hermaphrodite,” which used to be a very common term describing people born with ambiguous sex characteristics. When the word “hermaphrodite” was more commonly used, popular variations such as “morphodite” and “morphodike” sprang up. Some people believe that “dyke” came from “morphodike” and was used to reinforce the stereotype that all lesbians look and act like men.

Early British history provides another theory about the origin of the word “dyke.” Boudicca (pronounced “bou-dikka”) was a chieftain/queen in the Iceni tribe in Britain during the 1st century C.E. At the death of her husband, according to his will, Boudicca was given control of the tribe. But the Romans, who were occupying Britain, did not recognize the will of Boudicca’s husband, and seized his land and property, flogging Boudicca and raping her two daughters in the process. Boudicca then led a victorious armed revolt against the Romans, but they ultimately countered the attack and slaughtered many Iceni.

No matter which theory is the most accurate, all point to the word “dyke” having its roots in beliefs about how women are supposed to look and act. Women who have refused to conform to society’s expectations of them often have been labeled as “dykes,” whether or not they have identified as lesbians.

Youth Voices on “That’s So Gay”



“If you mean ‘that’s so stupid,’ why don’t you just say ‘that’s stupid’? It’s really degrading to hear ‘gay’ being used as the new ‘stupid.’” (Austin, age 15, CA)



“If we aren’t supposed to say ‘that’s retarded’ because it’s offensive, how is ‘that’s so gay’ any less offensive?” (Michael, age 17, KS)



“I get so angry when someone says, ‘that’s so gay.’ I can’t imagine how, well, unclever someone has to be to use that phrase. I wish people were more aware of what they say.” (Adrien, age 16, WI)



“[When people say ‘that’s so gay,] I don’t get angry, they don’t mean it in a hateful way. They just say it because others do, and they don’t even know what they’re saying anymore, or who they’re hurting.” (Tyler, age 15, NC)



“When I hear ‘that’s so gay,’ I think...that’s so ignorant!” (Chris, age 15, OH)



“When I hear ‘that’s so gay,’ a chill rushes through my body and my heart drops into the pit of my stomach.” (Kaitlyn, age 17, MI)



“When I hear ‘that’s so gay,’ I get tightness in my chest. Sometimes when I hear it from several people in a large group, I get a rush of anxiety. Hearing that can really ruin my day.” (Ayanna, age 16, GA)



“[When I hear ‘that’s so gay,] I feel demoralized, as if the world does not care about others.” (David, age 16, VA)



“If I were to tell you how ‘that’s so gay’ makes me feel, would you continue saying it?” (Nate, age 17, NV)

Lesson 3: Grades 8 & Up

The Exclusion of LGBT People from Societal Institutions: In-Group, Out-Group

Overview

In this lesson, students explore the concept of exclusion on personal and societal levels. After participating in an exercise in which they experience the effects of inclusion/exclusion in a social situation, students do reflective writing in response to historical photographs depicting the exclusion of various groups in society. In the final part of the lesson, students identify ways in which LGBT people are currently excluded from societal institutions, listen to interviews of LGBT people describing their experiences with discrimination and create portraits of the interview subjects that reflect what they have learned.

[NOTE: This lesson explores LGBT issues in an open and direct way. Given the absence of this topic in the curriculum and the disproportionate rates of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment, it is important to educate students about these issues. When discussing any new or sensitive topic, however, there is the potential for some students to react in stereotypical or disrespectful ways. It is therefore imperative that educators carefully review the lesson, assess students' maturity and readiness to engage in the lesson prior to implementation, and establish clear parameters with students that will ensure safe and constructive dialogue. See "[Establishing a Safe Learning Environment](#)" and "[Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment](#)" for guidelines on building safe forums for discussing sensitive issues.]

Objectives

- Students will reflect on the ways in which individuals and groups are included/excluded on personal and societal levels.
- Students will learn about the experiences of racial, ethnic and religious groups that have experienced exclusion historically.
- Students will increase their awareness about the ways in which LGBT people are currently included/excluded from societal institutions.

Time

Parts I and II: 50 mins.; Part III: at least 30 mins.

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Images of Exclusion](#) PowerPoint
- [The Struggle for LGBT Inclusion](#) PowerPoint
- *Kendall Bailey, James Dale and David Wilson* [Interview Backgrounders](#) (one of each per student in each small group; see Part III #4–5)

Other Material:

- Unheard Voices [audio interviews and transcripts](#) and [interview backgrounders](#)
- Chart paper, markers, note paper, pens/pencils, masking tape, art supplies
- Smart board or computer/projector/screen, speakers

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Chart the discussion questions in Part II #3.
- Prepare to show PowerPoints (see Part II #3, Part III #2 and #4).

Key Words

Amend
 Avowed
 Civil union
 Commitment
 Conflict
 Constitution
 Discharge
 Dissent
 Domestic partnership
 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"
 Discrimination
 Exclusion
 First Amendment
 Gender identity
 Heterosexism
 Homophobia
 Inclusion
 LGBT
 Marriage equality
 Prejudice
 Racism
 Sexual orientation
 Systematic

- ☞ Prepare to play [audio interviews](#) (see Part III #5).
- ☞ Gather art supplies for creating portraits (see Part III #5).

Techniques and Skills

analyzing images, brainstorming, case study, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, creating visual art, critical thinking, debate, examining historical photographs, forming opinions, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, listening skills, reading skills, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: How Does it Feel to be Excluded? (20 minutes)

1. Ask for volunteers, one for each 5–6 members of the group. Instruct the volunteers to wait outside the room until you ask them to come in. Close the door so that the volunteers cannot hear the conversation inside the room.

NOTE: These volunteers will participate in an exercise in which they experience how it feels to be excluded. Select students who will not feel distressed by this simulation.

2. Instruct the remaining students to form circles with 5–6 people in each circle, standing shoulder-to-shoulder. Explain to the group that their goal is to keep the volunteers from becoming a part of their circle using any means possible except physical contact. Suggest that groups pick a subject and begin talking in a lively manner about the topic as volunteers return and try to join their circle.
3. Go to the volunteers and explain that when they go inside, their goal is to become part of one of the circles. Bring them into the room and assign each to a different circle. Allow 2–3 minutes for the interaction.
4. Instruct students to return to their seats and lead a discussion using some of the following questions:
 - If you were excluded from the group, how did it feel? What strategies did you use to try to get into the group? As time went on, did you feel like more like giving up or trying harder?
 - If you were part of the “in group,” how did that feel? What strategies did you use to keep the volunteers out? What were the benefits and costs of excluding others?
 - In real life, is there anything wrong with wanting to hang out with “your group” and exclude others? Explain your thinking.
 - In your experience, what are the reasons that some people are included or excluded?
 - How do patterns of including and excluding behavior affect the climate at school?
 - How do you think this exercise or theme relates to the way people are treated in the broader society?

Part II: Social Group Exclusion Historically (30 minutes)

1. Tell students that—bearing in mind what exclusion feels like when it occurs on a social level—you would like them to consider the impact and consequences when groups are excluded systematically on a society-wide level.
2. Explain that fear and prejudice has led to the organized exclusion of various groups from jobs, housing, goods, services and opportunities throughout history. Tell students that you will be displaying some images that illustrate this exclusion, and that they will be doing some brief reflective writing in response to one of the images.
3. Play the [Images of Exclusion](#) PowerPoint through once and instruct students to select one image for reflection. Post the prompts below and direct students to write a paragraph or two in response to one of the questions (you can either assign a third of the class to each question or allow students to choose). Emphasize that students should write in the voice (i.e., from the perspective) of the person identified in the question. Allow 10–15 minutes for students to write.
 - Imagine you are an individual from the targeted group coming across this sign/ad. What are your thoughts and feelings? What impact does it have on you?
 - Imagine you are the person who posted the sign/ad. What motivated you to do so, and what thoughts or feelings do you experience as you post it?

- Imagine that you are a member of the group responsible for the sign/ad (but not the actual person who posted it). What is your reaction and how do you respond (if at all)?

Optional: Open the PowerPoint as “Read Only” when prompted. Play the PowerPoint on a continuous loop while students write. The presentation has been set up so that slides advance automatically every ten seconds. Click on the Slide Show/Set Up and Transitions tabs to adjust settings or turn them on/off.

4. Ask for several volunteers to read their reflections aloud. Process them using some of the following questions.
 - Why did the image you selected stand out to you? How did it make you feel?
 - Why did you decide to write in the voice/from the perspective that you selected?
 - Where and when do you think signs like these existed? Why do you think these groups were targeted in that time/place?
 - What do you think was the impact of this type of discrimination on the targeted groups? On the broader community?

NOTE: Information about the images (date, photographer, location, etc.) is listed in the “Notes” section of each slide. For some of the images, limited or no source information is available.

Part III: Exclusion of LGBT people in Contemporary Times (at least 30 minutes)

1. Ask students if they think that images like the ones they viewed in the previous exercise—and the policies they represent—exist in today’s world and, if so, where and targeted at whom.
2. If students have not already identified LGBT people, suggest that this group is the frequent target of exclusionary policies. Display slide 2 of [The Struggle for LGBT Inclusion](#) PowerPoint (“Welcome or Unwelcome?”). Ask students what thoughts or feelings this image elicits and allow a few moments for them to react.
3. Comment that while signposts like this don’t literally exist (this one was Photoshopped to protest challenges to same-sex marriage in CA), the policies it represents did.
4. Tell students that they will be listening to an audio interview of a gay person who has experienced exclusion from a major institution due to his sexual orientation. Provide brief overviews of the interview subjects using slides 3–5 of *The Struggle for LGBT Inclusion* PowerPoint.
5. Divide the class into groups of 3–5 students and have each group select one of the interview subjects. Provide each group with the appropriate [interview](#) and accompanying [interviewee's background](#). Instruct groups to do the following:
 - Listen to their interview.
 - Read and discuss the background as a group.
 - Create a portrait (a visual depiction or representation) of their subject that reflects what they have learned. The portrait doesn’t have to literally resemble the subject, but should exhibit prominent themes from the interview and reading. The portrait may be drawn or fashioned from items including newspaper headlines, Web images, quotes and personal reflections.

Optional: If time is limited, skip the assignment to create a portrait or assign it as homework. If the small group structure of this activity is challenging, play one or more of the interviews to the whole class as time allows, and read/discuss the backgrounders as a large group.

6. Reconvene the class and display the portraits at the front of the room. Have each group describe the design and major themes of their portrait. Allow students to share their reactions and questions to the various portraits. Reinforce the importance of working toward laws, practices and policies that include rather than exclude people from society’s major institutions.

Lesson 4: Grades 8 & Up

Winning the Right to Marry: Historic Parallels

Overview

In this lesson, students explore marriage bans for same-sex couples within the context of earlier prohibitions, and use these historical parallels to determine the fairness of those restrictions. Students listen to the story of an individual who was personally affected by marriage restrictions and fought to change the law in his state. They then analyze similarities and differences in cases that dealt with marriage restrictions and the road to victory.

[NOTE: This lesson explores LGBT issues in an open and direct way. Given the absence of this topic in the curriculum and the disproportionate rates of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment, it is important to educate students about these issues. When discussing any new or sensitive topic, however, there is the potential for some students to react in stereotypical or disrespectful ways. It is therefore imperative that educators carefully review the lesson, assess students' maturity and readiness to engage in the lesson prior to implementation, and establish clear parameters with students that will ensure safe and constructive dialogue. See "[Establishing a Safe Learning Environment](#)" and "[Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment](#)" for guidelines on building safe forums for discussing sensitive issues. With regard to this particular lesson, see also [Discussing Marriage of Same-Sex Couples with Students](#).]

Objectives

- Students will explore past injustices within the institution of marriage.
- Students will identify marriage attributes that can be used in considering past and present challenges to marriage law.
- Students will reflect on the personal testimony of an individual involved in the movement for marriage rights.
- Students will consider the fairness or unfairness of current marriage laws and begin to develop a personal stance on the issue.

Time

75–90 mins. or 2 class periods

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [To Be Equal: The Journey of David Wilson](#) (one per student)
- [Marriage Equality Fact Sheet](#) (one per student)
- [Historical Parallels of Marriage Bans](#) (one per student)

Other Material:

- Unheard Voices [audio interviews and transcripts](#) and [interview backgrounders](#)
- Chart paper, markers, masking tape, pencils or pens
- Computer, speakers
- (Optional) Computer lab for students to conduct research on the Internet (see Part II #6)

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prepare the statements in Part I #1 and #2 on chart paper or as PowerPoint slides.
- Prepare to play [interview](#) (see Part II #1).

Key Words

Attribute
Civil marriage
Civil union
Constitutional/
unconstitutional
Discrimination
Domestic partnership
Interracial
Invalidate
LGBT (lesbian, gay,
bisexual and
transgender)
Mandate
Miscegenation
Plaintiff
Refuge
Sexual orientation
Void

Techniques and Skills

analyzing primary documents, analyzing oral histories, brainstorming, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, critical thinking, debate, forming opinions, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, listening skills, reading skills, research skills, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: Defining the Attributes of Marriage (30 minutes)

1. Post the following statements:

- *“All [such] marriages shall be absolutely void without any decree of divorce or other legal process.”*
- *Such marriages are “unnatural.”*
- *“Almighty God...did not intend for [such people] to mix.”*

Inform students that the statements come from various rulings by judges on cases involving marriage. Ask them to venture some guesses as to which group of people the statements refer.

2. After some speculation, inform students that the statements reflect decisions about interracial marriage that were prevalent until relatively recent times. Share the full text of the above quotes with students:

- *“All marriages between a white person and a colored person shall be absolutely void without any decree of divorce or other legal process.”* (Va. Code Ann. 20-57, 1960)
- *Racial intermarriage is “unnatural,” and would lead to children who are “generally sickly, and effeminate...and inferior in physical development and strength.”* (Scott v. Georgia, 39 Ga. 321, 323, 1869)
- *Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix.”* (Loving, 388 U.S. at 3, 1958)

3. Allow some time for students to react to these statements. Point out that at one time 40 states forbade the marriage of a white person to a person of color and it was not until 1948 that California became the first state to declare unconstitutional a ban on interracial marriage. Add that in the landmark 1967 case, *Loving v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court finally struck down the remaining interracial marriage laws across the country and declared that the freedom to marry is a “basic civil right.”

4. Ask students if they think that racial sameness is a necessary or important attribute of a good marriage (most will likely reject this notion). Tell students that you would like them to come up with more appropriate attributes of marriage. Form small groups of 3–5 students, ask each to select a recorder and provide each with a sheet of chart paper and a marker. Instruct each group to brainstorm a list of marriage attributes—not legal standards, but qualities they think form the basis for a sound marriage (e.g., emotional compatibility, demonstration of love, commitment over time, economic interdependence, etc.). Allow 10 minutes for groups to work.

5. Reconvene the class and have groups post their lists. Together create a master class list that reflects the major attributes from all groups. If there is disagreement amongst students, try to reach some consensus and then display the class criteria.

Part II: Researching Historical Challenges to the Marriage Law (30 minutes plus time for research)

1. Inform students that in recent years another group of Americans turned to the courts in order to secure the freedom to marry—same-sex couples. Tell them that you are going to play an [interview](#) of someone who was involved in that struggle. Provide the following introduction:

David Wilson and his partner, Rob Compton, were two of the plaintiffs in Goodridge v. Department of Public Health, the landmark case that awarded marriage equality to same-sex couples in Massachusetts. Ten years before the lawsuit, David Wilson was living with his first partner, Ronald Loso, outside of Boston, until November 29, 1994. Here, Wilson remembers that day.

2. After playing the [interview](#), provide additional context by distributing the handout, [To Be Equal: The Journey of David Wilson](#), to each student. Read the handout together as a class. Process David's story using the discussion questions found in the [backgrounder](#) that accompanies the interview.
3. Point out that while David won the right to marry in Massachusetts, for many years millions of LGBT Americans were denied the right to marry in the states where they resided, until June 26, 2015.
4. Distribute the [Marriage Equality Fact Sheet](#) to each student. Give students 10 minutes to read it silently. Discuss with the whole group by asking the following questions:
 - What didn't you know before that you know now?
 - What other questions do you have?
 - What do you think about marriage vs. civil unions? Is it fair?
 - Do you have a different opinion after reading this fact sheet?
 - Why do you think some people are against marriage equality?
 - What do you think about marriage equality?

NOTE: Some students may suggest that there are religious justifications for opposing same-sex marriage. Without passing judgment on any student's religious beliefs, make sure to clarify the difference between civil and religious marriage for the purposes of this discussion. Share, for example, the following explanation from the New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Education Fund (<http://nhftm.org/>): "There are two types of marriage—civil marriage and religious marriage. Couples may have one or both types of marriage: a civil marriage if they meet the government's requirements; and a religious marriage if they meet the requirements of their faith tradition. However, to receive the legal protections of marriage, a couple must have a civil marriage. The debate over the freedom to marry was about the right to enter into a state-created institution of civil marriage only. Even after the legalization of same-sex marriage, no court decision or legislative enactment can change the basic tenets of a religious faith."

5. Tell students they will have the opportunity to research and explore past prohibitions of marriage and discuss in class.
6. In class or for homework, have students read about the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case that ended interracial marriage bans in the U.S. and the Supreme Court ruling guaranteeing same-sex couples the right to marry. Have them compare and contrast the journey to victory in both cases. Instruct them to use the following websites as the primary resources for their research and if necessary, other resources for further clarification, including the handouts they have received during this lesson. Distribute the [Historical Parallels of Marriage Bans](#) handout to each student to complete.
 - *Loving v. Virginia*, www.history.com/topics/loving-v-virginia
 - Freedom to Marry: Winning in the States, www.freedomtomarry.org/pages/winning-in-the-states (Choose a state and read the "History and Path to Victory.")
7. Make time in class for students to share and discuss their research.
8. Engage students in a discussion using some of the following questions:
 - Do same-sex couples have the capacity to reflect the attributes on the class list brainstormed earlier?
 - Is there a justification for the definition of marriage as the union between one man and one woman?
 - Should government have the right to determine who can and cannot marry based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or any other factor?

NOTE: If the subject of religious justifications for opposing same-sex marriage arises again, reaffirm that judgment is not being passed on any student's religious beliefs. No court decision or legislative enactment can change the basic tenets of a religious faith."

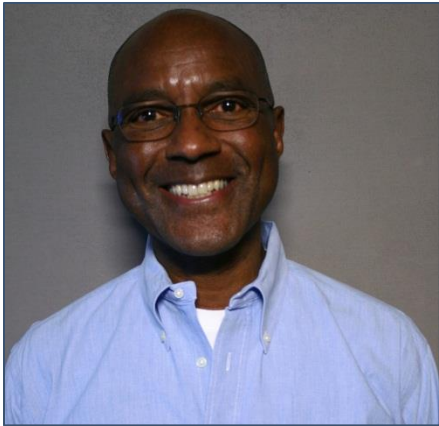
9. (Optional) For homework or as an in-class follow-up assignment, have students write an essay in which they discuss the quote below and why they agree or disagree with the author's point of view.

Surrounded as I am now by wonderful children and grandchildren, not a day goes by that I don't think of Richard and our love, our right to marry, and how much it meant to me to have that freedom to marry the person precious to me, even if others thought he was the 'wrong kind of person' for me to marry. I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex,

no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry. Government has no business imposing some people's religious beliefs over others. Especially if it denies people's civil rights.

—Mildred Loving, plaintiff in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), the U.S. Supreme Court

To Be Equal: The Journey of David Wilson



One evening, as he returned home from work, [David Wilson] found his partner lying on the ground in their driveway. He called his neighbors for help. They called 911, and when the police arrived they proceeded to arrest David assuming, that because he was black, he was breaking and entering and had assaulted the man on the ground.

“Before anything could go any further, my neighbors came to my defense and told them that we were a couple, and that they needed to find out what was going on with my partner.”

At that point, the police released him, but what would take place at the hospital still leaves David shaky-voiced.

“They wouldn’t give me any information because they did not recognize our relationship. They called my partner’s 75-year-old mother who lived in Vermont, and she gave them permission to tell me his condition. They told me that he had

suffered a massive heart attack and was dead on arrival.”

In that moment, David had to quickly come to terms with an unfortunate circumstance of being gay: there was no legal mandate acknowledging his right to medical information about his partner.

“I had never considered the problem with relationship rights until that moment. I had a lot to think about.”

[David] began reading about gay rights, and joined a group called Gay Fathers of Greater Boston. It was in this group that he met Rob Compton, a father of two who had recently relocated to Massachusetts. Rob had been fired from his job as a dentist in Michigan when he came out as a gay man. He came to Massachusetts seeking refuge under the non-discrimination law that prohibits sexual orientation discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and services. David and Rob came together around their stories. They fell in love, and moved in together.

One morning Rob awoke in excruciating pain. David led him to the car and took him to the same hospital that denied him access to his previous partner’s information. “It was five minutes away from our home. It was the local hospital, and it’s a very good one... I just wanted to get Rob to the hospital,” he explained.

Once again David was led to a waiting area while his partner lay on the other side of the wall in the emergency room. It wasn’t déjà vu, it was the sheer reality of the situation: the hospital had to adhere to the law that protects a patient’s right to privacy.

“I tried to describe what had happened to me three years earlier, and the staff didn’t really care. To them, I had no relationship to this man and, unless I could prove that I was related in some way, they would not give me any information.”

Hours later, Rob walked into the waiting room area and sat down next to him. He told David he finally got it. In the emergency room, he was in so much pain he could not answer all of the questions he was asked. He needed David to be there—to hold his hand, comfort him and tell him it was going to be okay—but he wasn’t.

When Rob recovered, the couple moved into the city, seeking a more supportive environment for their relationship. They reached out to the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders group (GLAD). It was perfect timing, GLAD was spearheading a lawsuit against the state that would grant civil marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples and was seeking plaintiffs upon whom to rest the case. More than 100 same-sex couples were interviewed and screened; David and Rob were selected along with six other couples to testify. GLAD filed the suit in April of 2001, and on November 18, 2003, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled to end the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage in the state.

This historic case, known as *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, guarantees the legal framework of protections and obligations offered in civil marriages to gay and lesbian couples, and their children too. These protections include the joint filing of taxes, the ability to purchase joint policies of insurance, protection through workers compensation and wrongful death

actions, the ability to bequeath retirement benefits, economic protections to a surviving spouse and hundreds of other protections that cannot be secured without a marriage license.

David and Rob were among the first same-sex couples to be married on May 17, 2004.

Excerpted from Bridgit Brown, "To Be Equal: The Journey of David Wilson," in *Color Magazine*, www.colormagazineusa.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=222%3Ato-be-equal-&catid=53%3Afeature&Itemid=67. Reprinted with permission.

Marriage Equality Fact Sheet

- On June 26, 2015, in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court of the United States held that the 14th Amendment requires a state to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize marriages lawfully performed in other jurisdictions. This means that marriage equality is now the law of the land in all 50 states. Prior to this historic day, 37 states plus the District of Columbia had legalized marriage for same-sex couples. In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.
- In the past, some states have passed laws granting gay and lesbian people civil unions (or domestic partnerships), but not marriage. It is important to know that married couples have 1,138 federal rights, protections and responsibilities such as: (1) social security benefits upon death, disability or retirement of spouse, as well as benefits for minor children, (2) family and medical leave protections to care for a new child or a sick or injured family member, (3) workers' compensation protections for the family of a worker injured on the job, (4) exemptions from federal income taxes on spouse's health insurance, (5) the right to visit a sick or injured loved one, have a say in life and death matters during hospitalization and many more. A civil union is not a marriage nor is it recognized in all states. It is a legal relationship between two people that provides some of these legal protections to the couple. The protections and responsibilities for civil unions/domestic partnerships do not extend beyond the border of the states in which the civil union was entered and no federal protections are included with a civil union.
- Civil unions (or domestic partnerships) are less relevant since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized marriage for same-sex couples. However, there are many people who remain in civil unions or domestic partnerships despite the availability of same-sex marriage.
- In 1996, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was signed into law. This was a federal law recognizing lawful marriages as only between a man and woman. Among other things, the law defines marriage as the union of a man and woman. That denied many federal benefits—including Social Security survivors' benefits, insurance benefits for government employees and estate taxes—to same-sex couples, even those granted the right to marry in another country or any of the states and the District of Columbia that recognized those marriages. In July 2013, the Supreme Court struck down Section 2 of this law.
- Prior to the legalization of same-sex marriage, the majority of people in the United States were in favor of marriage equality. According to a Washington Post-ABC News poll in April 2015, 61% of people believed that gay men and lesbians should be able to marry and 78% of those under the age of 30 supported marriage equality. Thirty-five percent were opposed. (See [Poll: Gay Marriage Support at Record High](#))
- President Obama has stated that marriage for same-sex couples should be legal. In May 2012, he said "I think same-sex couples should be able to get married." (See "[President Obama Supports Same-Sex Marriage](#)" by Josh Earnest, May 10, 2012, White House Blog.)

Historical Parallels of Marriage Bans

Directions: Read about the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case that ended interracial marriage bans in the U.S. and the Supreme Court ruling guaranteeing same-sex couples the right to marry. You are to compare and contrast the journey to victory in both cases. Use the following websites as your primary resources for research and if necessary, other resources for further clarification, including the handouts you received in class to answer the questions below.

- *Loving v. Virginia*, www.history.com/topics/loving-v-virginia
 - Freedom to Marry: Winning in the States, www.freedomtomarry.org/pages/winning-in-the-states (Choose a state and read the “History and Path to Victory.”)
-

1. What state did you choose from Freedom to Marry: Winning in the States to research?
2. What are some similarities in the challenges people faced during the journey to victory in each case? Be as specific as possible.
3. What are some distinct differences in the issues (i.e., government policies, societal reactions, emotional impact) they faced during their journey?
4. What policies in either of the cases do you think were unfair? Explain.

Lesson 5: Grades 10 & Up

Understanding Gender Identity

Overview

In this lesson students learn about gender identity and explore the impact of rigid gender role expectations and stereotypes. Using various media—an audio interview and a video of a spoken word performance—transgender people and issues are personalized and clarified for students. Students then discuss real-life scenarios depicting conflicts around gender expression in school settings, and brainstorm ways to be an ally to transgender and gender non-conforming people.

[NOTE: This lesson explores LGBT issues in an open and direct way. Given the absence of this topic in the curriculum and the disproportionate rates of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment, it is important to educate students about these issues. When discussing any new or sensitive topic, however, there is the potential for some students to react in stereotypical or disrespectful ways. It is therefore imperative that educators carefully review the lesson, assess students' maturity and readiness to engage in the lesson prior to implementation, and establish clear parameters with students that will ensure safe and constructive dialogue. See "[Establishing a Safe Learning Environment](#)" and "[Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment](#)" for guidelines on building safe forums for discussing sensitive issues.]

Objectives

- Students will increase their understanding of concepts related to gender identity.
- Students will learn new vocabulary and clarify their understanding of terminology related to transgender issues.
- Students will increase their awareness about gender related stereotypes and discrimination.
- Students will explore ways to be an ally to others.

Time

1½–2 hours or 2–3 class periods

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- Jamison Green [Interview Backgrounder](#) (one copy) and student reading (one per student)
- *Hir*, spoken word performance video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmfkdOAq-xk (2½ mins., Brave New Voices)
- [Hir](#) poem (one per student)
- [Gender Identity and Expression Scenarios](#) (one scenario per small group)
- [How to be an Ally to Transgender People](#) (one per student)

Other Material:

- Unheard Voices [audio interviews and transcripts](#) and [interview backgrounders](#)
- Chart paper, markers, tape, scissors
- SMART Board or computer/projector/screen, speakers

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prepare to play audio and video pieces (see Part I #1 and Part III #2).
- Chart definitions, continuum and quote (see Part I #2, Part II #1 and Part III #1).
- Cut Scenarios into separate strips (see Part III #4).

Key Words

Advocate
 Ally
 Assume/assumption
 Attire
 Conform
 Continuum
 Discrimination
 Gender expression
 Gender identity
 Gender-neutral
 Harassment
 Intersex
 LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)
 Prejudice
 Sexual orientation
 Stereotype
 Transgender
 Transition
 Transphobia
 Transsexual

Techniques and Skills

analyzing media, brainstorming, case study, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, critical thinking, forming opinions, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, listening skills, reading skills, social action, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: Jamison's Story (20–40 minutes)

1. Tell students they will listen to an audio [interview](#) and provide the following introduction:

Jamison Green is an activist and writer who has worked on behalf of transgender men and women for more than 20 years. Jamison transitioned from female to male in 1988. Here, he speaks with his daughter, Morgan Green, about what life was like for him as a child.

2. After students have listened, process Jamison's story using the discussion questions found in the [backgrounder](#) that accompanies the [interview](#).

Optional: If time allows, have students read and discuss the handout about Jamison Green included in the interviewee's backgrounder. This can be done individually, in small groups or as a whole class.

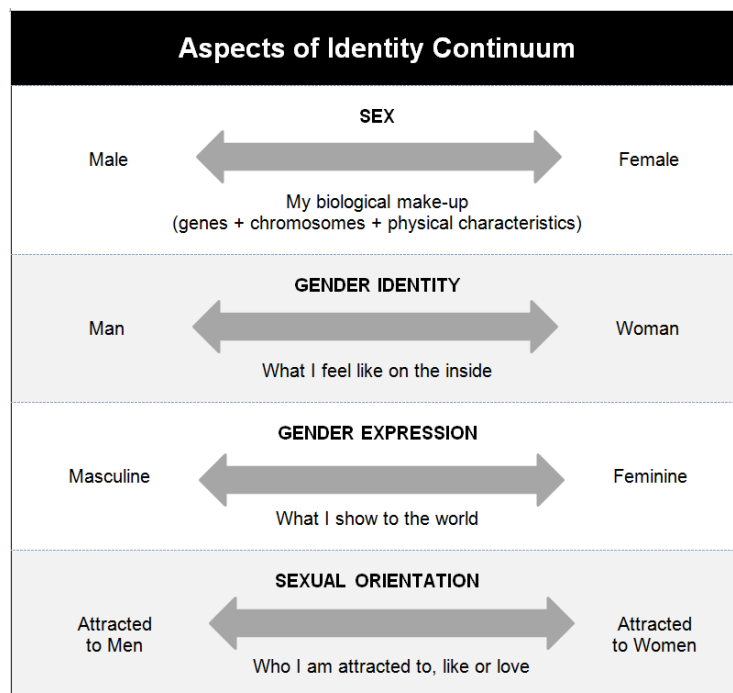
3. Note that the terms transgender and transsexual are both used to refer to Jamison. Clarify that transgender is a broad term that includes transsexual people (i.e., all transsexual people are transgender, but not all transgender people are transsexual). Post and review the following terms and definitions, and make sure that students understand their meaning.

Transgender: Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual: An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seek to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.

Part II: Aspects of Identity (15 minutes)

1. Copy the continuum pictured here on a sheet of chart paper or the board, and post where all students can see it.
2. Draw students' attention to the continuum. Explain that most people understand gender and sexual identity as consisting of two categories—male or female, gay or straight—and that most people feel as though they fit into one of those “boxes.”
3. Point out that for the majority of people, their identities line up along the left or right side of this chart. While pointing to the left side of the chart, tell students that most people born biologically male (sex) feel like a man inside (gender identity), dress and act in a masculine way (gender expression) and are attracted to women (sexual orientation). While pointing to the right side of the chart, tell students that most people born biologically female (sex) feel like a woman inside (gender identity), dress and act in a feminine way (gender expression) and are attracted to men (sexual orientation).
4. Add that for some people, their identities don't line up as neatly. For example, Jamison Green was born biologically female (sex) but felt like a man inside (gender identity), dressed and acted in a masculine way



(gender expression) and was attracted to women (sexual orientation). Conclude that to make things even more complicated, some people don't feel that they fit in either "box," but somewhere in the middle or outside the continuum. For example, some people feel neither male nor female, express themselves in both masculine and feminine ways, or feel attracted to both sexes.

- Acknowledge that these aspects of our identity are complex and can be confusing. Ask students to silently reflect on where they fit on each continuum, emphasizing that they may find themselves in a different place for each category. Answer any questions students may have and help to clarify any misperceptions about these aspects of identity.

NOTE: During this discussion, students should not be asked to disclose any aspect of their identity and should be discouraged from labeling others in any way.

Part III: The Impact of Rigid Notions about Gender Identity (45–60 minutes)

- Post or read aloud the following quote from the young adult novel, *Parrotfish*, by Ellen Wittlinger:

People changed their hair and dieted themselves down to near death. They took steroids to build muscles and got breast implants and nose jobs so they resemble their favorite movie stars. They changed names and majors and jobs and husbands and wives. They changed religions and political parties. They move across the country or the world—even changed nationalities. Why was gender the one sacred thing we weren't supposed to change? Who made that rule?

Allow students to react to the quote. Ask them what they think the rules are with regard to gender in their community (or society at large), who creates and enforces those rules, and what the consequences are for people who break the rules.

- Tell students that you will show them the video of a spoken word performance that explores the experience of a transgender student who feels imprisoned by "the rules" of gender. Play [Hir](#) by Alysia Harris and Aysha El Shamayleh. Optionally, distribute the [handout](#) with the text of the poem as a reference for students. After they have listened, discuss some of the following questions with them.
 - Who is Melissa? Why is she described as "not here" and "not what she seems"? Why doesn't Melissa want to be noticed?
 - Who is James? Why is he described as an "abstract reality"? Why does James go unnoticed by others?
 - Why does Melissa feel "trapped in the flesh of a stranger"? What does she do to try and free herself?
 - How do the people in Melissa's/James' environment add to those feelings of being trapped? Is there anything that they could do to lessen those feelings?

NOTE: The poem, "Hir," is part of HBO's *Brave New Voices* (www.bravenewvoices.org). As of this writing, the video is available on multiple sites, including www.youtube.com, www.dailymotion.com, www.vbox7.com and www.zootool.com.

- Following on the last discussion prompt above, highlight that when people express their gender in ways that fall outside community norms, they often face obstacles and resistance. Tell students that they will spend some time considering how some of those barriers might be removed. Divide the class into six groups and have each group select a recorder and a reporter. Provide each group with a sheet of chart paper and a marker.
- Assign each group a case study from [Gender Identity and Expression Scenarios](#) and provide them with the relevant scenario. Explain that these are real-life situations that have been "ripped from the headlines." Direct each group to read their scenario and discuss the questions below. Have the recorder write down the group's responses to the third question only. Allow 10–15 minutes for group discussion.
 - How was gender expression obstructed by community members or barriers in the physical environment?
 - Were there ways in which gender expression was supported by community members or accommodations in the physical environment?
 - What more could have been done to support gender expression? (Think about people's behavior, school rules/policies and changes to the environment.)
- Reconvene the class and post each group's chart. Have the reporters read aloud their scenario and share some of the ideas they charted. After all groups have shared, ask the class for additional ideas about ways to support gender expression in general and chart their responses.

6. Conclude the lesson by distributing the handout, [*How to be an Ally to Transgender People*](#), and reviewing the points that are most relevant to your community.

Hir

Poem by Alysia Harris and Aysha El Shamayleh

Melissa sits in the back of the classroom afraid to speak up.
She pulls awkwardly at her extra loose khaki cargo pants.
She doesn't want the boys to notice her.
James finds himself at the back of a classroom.
His baseball cap casts a shadow on his pimple stained forehead.
A wide shirt hangs on his broad shoulders,
But no one ever noticed him.

Melissa,

The teacher asks,
And she says nothing because she is not here,
And Melissa has never been here,
Because Melissa is just some abstract jumble of syllables that doesn't fit her position.
She is not what she seems,
She doesn't want to have to explain to her mother for the 232nd time why she doesn't want to wear a dress to prom,
Doesn't paint her face, it's 'cause her whole body is painted on.

Melissa, Melissa.

James doesn't want to have to explain where he came from,
'Cause with the exception of Melissa he has been deemed an abstract reality by everyone.
All he wishes for is to get to wear a tuxedo to prom.
And Melissa's been tucking in breasts that'll be growing for three years now,
Been using duct tape to press them down and mold them more into pecs.
She just wishes that people would understand that at birth her genitals didn't know which way to grow,
Mad at God who couldn't relay a message directly to her hormones that they should produce more testosterone.
The only person who understands her is James,
And they have been playmates since the age of four,
Around the time girls notice boys and boys notice girls.
See, James' family wanted daughters instead of sons,
And Melissa was always like that male beetle that everyone called a ladybug.

Melissa, Melissa, where is she?

Sometimes she wishes she could rip the skin off her back,
Every moment of everyday she feels trapped in the flesh of a stranger.

Melissa.

As she stands to her feet wanting to say
“I’m here, and I’ve been here since I was born, so quit asking me if I’m a him or a her,
‘Cause when you combine the two pronouns you get H.I.R, Hir,
And God combined the two genders and put me in this body transgendered.
I’m here, so quit talking about me like I’m not here.”
James falls back into Melissa’s skin,
And the two comfort each other in syncopated heartbeats,
Waiting for the day when Melissa can finally scrub off this made up genetic makeup,
When the teacher asks for James and he can say “I’m here.”

“Hir” is part of HBO’s *Brave New Voices*, www.bravenewvoices.org.

Gender Identity and Expression Scenarios

1. When 17-year-old Ceara—an honor student, trumpet player and goalie on her school’s soccer team in Mississippi—wore a tuxedo for her senior photograph, school officials sent her a letter stating that only boys could wear tuxedos. “I feel like I’m not important,” commented Ceara, “that the school is dismissing who I am as a gay student and that they don’t even care about me. All I want is to be able to be me, and to be included in the yearbook.” Ceara’s mother, who claims there are no regulations about the issue in the student handbook, says, “The tux is who she is. She wears boys’ clothes. She’s athletic. She’s gay. She’s not feminine.”
2. When Justin, an 11th-grader in Florida, showed up at school in female attire—including high heel boots, earrings and make-up—he was called into a meeting with the school principal and asked to leave school for the day. “It wasn’t anything overdramatic,” Justin said of his attire. “It’s an expression of yourself, no matter what. To dress out of your own gender shouldn’t be anything.” Justin’s principal disagreed. “He and I had a conversation about what reaction he would get from peers,” she said. “A decision was made that it would be best for him to go home. This was a group decision after healthy conversation. There was no kind of animosity. Discipline wasn’t the tone of the conversation.” A spokesperson for the school district said school administrators are permitted to call a student out on his dress if they feel his clothing is “inappropriate” and “disrupts the school process.” The County Code of Student Conduct states students must dress “in keeping with their gender.”
3. A family in Maine sued the local school district for discrimination after they prohibited a sixth grade male-to-female transgender student from using the girl’s bathroom. The parents of the child said that she experienced anxiety and depression after school officials forced her to use a gender-neutral bathroom and her peers picked on her. The school stated that they accommodated the child by training the staff, educating the students and giving the transgender student her own bathroom and locker room. This was done in response to reports of mean comments from other students and after one boy followed the transgender student into the girl’s room and harassed her by calling her “faggot.” The family feels that their child should be able to use the bathroom that matches her gender identity without harassment, and that the private bathroom only serves to isolate and alienate her from the other students.
4. Andii said she “was in shock” when she was crowned prom queen at her Florida high school. A transgender student who has gone by the names Andii and Andrew, she says she doesn’t identify completely as either a female or male, and her parents still refer to her as a male. Andii fought to get her name on the prom queen ballot after other students who didn’t feel she had the right to compete started a petition against her. In response to students who say that Andii could run for prom king, she says, “Why would I run for prom king? I’ll have to wear a tux, which I’m not going to do. I’m going to wear an evening gown.” Andii received the most votes over 14 girls for the title at her school.
5. Kevin—who likes to be called “K.K.”—was refused entrance to her senior prom when she arrived wearing a pink ankle-length gown. The Indiana high school senior—who describes herself as “an African-American transgender person whose sex is male but whose expression of gender is female”—filed a lawsuit saying the school trampled on her right to free expression and to be free from discrimination. The lawsuit says that K.K. frequently wore women’s clothing, jewelry and make-up to school, and that nearly all of the students and teachers supported her identity, including when she appeared at pep rallies as a member of the high school drill team. Although K.K. had an assistant principal’s permission to wear a dress to the prom, the school principal said she could only wear a pant-suit. When prom night came, the principal physically blocked K.K. from entering the building. The school district’s attorney stated that the lawsuit “has failed to identify how a male student has a constitutionally protected right to wear a dress to a prom.” K.K.’s attorney stated, “What should have been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for [K.K.] to share memories with friends before graduation became an episode in humiliation and exclusion.”

6. Aaron, a senior at a New Jersey university, started transitioning from female to male during high school. As college approached, Aaron felt concerned he would have difficulty living with a female roommate since he does not identify as a female despite what his records indicate. After contacting the school's Residence Life office, Aaron was placed in a double converted into a single in a dorm known for being a safe place for LGBT students. Aaron said he spent most of his first year alone. "When you're gender non-conforming, it's very easy to keep the door shut." Despite keeping to himself, when some in Aaron's building found out about his gender identity, they reacted negatively. Aaron says it is often difficult for transgender students to feel accepted. On campus, he has experienced verbal abuse. "It's kind of a daily fear that you live with." Aaron now advocates for gender-neutral housing, where men and women can reside together if they choose. More than 50 U.S. universities currently have gender-neutral residence hall options.

How to Be an Ally to Transgender People

1. Don't assume you can tell what gender a person is, what bathroom they belong in or what pronoun they go by simply by appearance. Avoid assigning labels, identities or categories to people based on your perceptions or what you've heard from others.
2. Use pronouns that reflect people's gender presentation, not their biological sex (e.g., use "he" for someone born female but who identifies and expresses himself as male). If you are uncertain which pronoun to use, ask in a respectful way. Be aware that some people prefer gender neutral pronouns (hir instead of his/her; sie or zi instead of he/she). Never call transgender people "it," "he-she," "she-male" or other insulting names.
3. Use gender-neutral language when possible, such as partner or spouse instead of boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife; and try to opt for terms like police officer or member of Congress rather than policeman or Congressman.
4. Be aware of evolving language around gender and try to use the most current and respectful terms. For example, cross-dresser (not transvestite), intersex (not hermaphrodite) and transition (not sex-change) are preferable.
5. Don't ask transgender people their "real name," birth-assigned name or ask to see photos of them as a boy (if they now identify as female) or a girl (if they now identify as male). Transgender people should not be expected to satisfy your curiosity about their past.
6. Don't describe transgender people as trendy, exotic or cool, even if you mean it as a compliment. Transgender people are simply trying to live as their true selves. No person should ever be made to feel like a curiosity, freak or token.
7. Don't assume that transgender people are gay or lesbian, or that they transition to become straight. Gender identity and sexual orientation are separate identities. Transgender people may be gay, bisexual or straight, just like anyone else.
8. Don't assume anything about a transgender person's transition process. Some people take hormones or get surgery as part of their process, but many don't. In any case, transition is a personal subject, and information about anatomy and sexuality should be considered private.
9. Avoid questioning or policing other people's restroom usage or choices. Since restrooms are often the site of harassment, challenge negative remarks from others and offer to escort a transgender friend to the bathroom if that will provide an extra level of safety.
10. Never gossip about or share the identity of a transgender person, even if you think their status is evident. Coming out is a personal process that should be determined by the individual rather than spread through rumor. If a friend comes out to you, be open, supportive and non-judgmental.
11. Challenge your own ideas about gender roles and expectations by reading, talking to others and educating yourself. Think expansively about gender and be open to new ideas and ways of thinking about the issue.
12. Don't stand for jokes or rude remarks about transgender people. Challenge prejudice in yourself and others, and show friendship and support to those who are targeted by transphobia.
13. Work to change the policies and the environment in your school or community to be more transgender-friendly. Advocate for safe restrooms and locker rooms, inclusive language on forms and records, anti-bullying and other policies that include gender identity, and school traditions (e.g., yearbook, prom) that don't discriminate on the basis of gender expression.

Discussing Marriage of Same-Sex Couples with Students

Since the June 26, 2015 Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage, students will surely bring their feelings and questions about this subject into the classroom, presenting educators with an opportunity to deepen students' thinking about matters that are of great legal, economic, social and moral importance. Students will benefit from an accurate presentation of the facts and the opportunity to discuss important issues in a safe space.

Since students are routinely bombarded with all sorts of information from television, the Internet, peers and community leaders, it is an outdated and false notion that keeping controversial issues out of the classroom will somehow protect and preserve students' "innocence." On the contrary, students are harmed more when they have no place in which to make sense of complex issues, work past stereotypes and misconceptions, and to develop a strong sense of personal ethics and morals.

It is therefore both appropriate and important that issues such as marriage of same-sex couples be discussed and debated in class. As you discuss the issues with your students, bear in mind the following ideas:

1. ***Many students have had experiences with same-sex couples:*** Don't assume that your students have no experience or knowledge about same-sex relationships. Growing numbers of children today are being raised in same-sex headed families. Many others have friends, neighbors, and relatives that are in committed, same-sex relationships. Draw upon your students' experiences to enrich the conversation and try to acknowledge the many different family constellations from which they likely come. Discussions based on personal understandings will have more meaning for students than those that are abstract or removed from the real lives of community members.
2. ***Same-sex families already exist:*** Unions of same-sex couples have existed around the world for thousands of years. Despite social and legal obstacles, same-sex partners have always found ways to demonstrate their love and commitment for one another, and to create a sense of family for themselves. Legislation that prevented or blocked recognition of same-sex marriages did not change this fact, but it did deprive millions of existent families of the legal and economic benefits that many of their heterosexual counterparts enjoyed.
3. ***There is no evidence to support the notion that marriage of same-sex couples would pose a threat to the institution of marriage or to the fabric of society in general:*** Some opponents of marriage that is inclusive of same-sex couples feel that legally permitting such unions will somehow diminish the institution of marriage and contribute to a moral decay within society. There is little objective evidence to support these claims, however. Studies of same-sex partnerships indicate that these relationships function similarly to those of opposite-sex couples in terms of commitment, endurance, and mutual care and support. Findings also support the conclusion that the great majority of same-sex couples share the kind of intimacy and economic sharing that marriage laws seek to encourage. Concerns about the integrity of the institution of marriage and societal decay are therefore unfounded. Such fears have been historically expressed when changes to the rules of marriage have been considered. When interracial marriage bans were lifted, many asserted that this would lead to polygamous coupling and incestuous relations. When England was considering allowing wives to own property, the London Times declared that doing so would "abolish families in the old sense" and "break up society into men and women" creating "discomfort, ill-feeling and distrust where hitherto harmony and concord prevailed." These foretellings of societal disaster proved foolish. Indeed, if one looks to the many countries that have given formal status to unions of same-sex couples today, there is no evidence of negative societal consequences.
4. ***The emotional health of children reared in same-sex headed families does not differ from that of other children:*** Though many married couples cannot or choose not to have children, for young students, notions of marriage and parenting are inseparably intertwined. Students may therefore question the ability of same-sex partners to be good parents. It is important to stress that the best parents are those who provide love, support and a caring home for their children. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be de-emphasized as criteria for evaluating child-rearing ability in favor of these more enduring characteristics of good parenting. There is no existing research to support the claim that same-sex parents rear children with greater emotional or identity conflicts than heterosexual parents. The American Psychological Association concluded, in fact, that "not a single study has found children of gay and lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to the children of heterosexual parents. Indeed the evidence suggests that home environments provided by gay and lesbian parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to

support and enable children’s psychological growth.” This is not to say that being raised by same-sex parents comes without difficulties; children will inevitably have to cope with teasing, feelings of embarrassment, and other realities as a result of the negative social stigma attached to homosexuality. Studies show, however, that despite these special problems, the mental health of children reared in same-sex headed families does not differ from that of other children. These children learn to deal with community stigma based on their families’ difference just as children living in other minority families. Relying on community stigma as a basis for regulating marriage is problematic, and such arguments have been rejected by the courts in cases claiming that social stigma resulting from interracial marriages would be detrimental to children.

5. ***Marriage is a basic human right:*** When discussing this issue, help students to move past preoccupations with the “rightness” or “wrongness” of same-sex coupling or homosexuality in general. Place the debate over marriage within the context of human rights, thereby expanding the dialogue beyond the realm of morality. The core concern of students—and all citizens—should transcend their moral stance and be an objective consideration of the justness of a government that denies social, legal and economic benefits and protections to one segment of the population while affording them to all others. Marriage should be understood as a basic human right and an individual personal choice. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by the United Nations in 1948 and considered the standard for human rights practices internationally, declares marriage and family a fundamental human right, stating that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state.”
6. ***This is not just a “gay” issue:*** Marriage of same-sex couples is an issue about which many citizens—both gay and straight—are concerned. Non-gay people are affected, among other ways, by attempts to use anti-marriage laws to strip away domestic partnership laws and protections. Laws that are discriminatory and unjust pave the way for future limits to our freedom, and this affects us all. Students should be encouraged to take an interest in matters that may not affect them directly, but threaten the integrity of other individuals and our society in general. It may interest them to know that Coretta Scott King and many other community leaders have expressed their support for the right of same-sex couples to marry.
7. ***Students may be directly impacted:*** Marriage legislation affects not only the couples, but the families that they support as well. By denying same-sex couples the right to marry, the government may also be denying students eligibility for financial aid and scholarships, which is often affected by marital status. Committed, same-sex couples still in school may also be denied student housing and the ability to move easily from state to state for study and work.
8. ***This is not the first instance of government interference with people’s freedom to marry:*** Less than 50 years ago, interracial couples were prohibited from legally marrying. Today, very similar discriminatory arguments are being used to prohibit same-sex couples from marrying. A Virginia judge ruled in 1958 that “Almighty God created the races...and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for [interracial] marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix.” Americans today recognize the inherent prejudice in this statement, and the right of each individual to marry the person she or he loves, regardless of race, class, religion and the like. Examined against the backdrop of interracial marriage bans, it becomes difficult to make a rational case for marriage prohibitions against same-sex couples. Students should understand both the historical parallels to marriage prohibitions against same-sex couples as well as the similarities among racism, homophobia, and all other oppressions.

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Resources on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History

Books for Adults

- Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America* by Molly McGarry and Fred Wasserman
- Becoming Visible: A Reader in Gay and Lesbian History for High School and College Students* by Kevin Jennings
- Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* by Allan Bérubé
- Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays and the Struggle for Equality* by Eric Brandt
- Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* by Jonathan Ned Katz
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Events, 1848–2006* by Lillian Faderman
- Hidden From History* by Martin Duberman
- Homophobia: A History* by Byrne Fone
- Improper Bostonians: Lesbian and Gay History from the Puritans to Playland* compiled by The History Project
- Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History and Literature* by Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe
- Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* by Eric Marcus
- Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights* by Eric Marcus
- My Desire for History: Essays in Gay, Community, and Labor History* by Allan Bérubé
- Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* by Lillian Faderman
- One More River to Cross: Black and Gay in America* by Keith Boykin
- Out in All Directions: A Treasury of Gay and Lesbian America* by Eric Marcus
- Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* by Neil Miller
- A Queer History of the United States* by Michael Bronski
- Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai
- Stonewall* by Martin Duberman
- To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done For America – A History* by Lillian Faderman
- Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* by Leslie Feinberg
- Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men* by Lester B. Brown
- Who's Who In Gay And Lesbian History* by Robert Aldrich
- Who's Who in Contemporary Gay and Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day* by Robert Aldrich
- World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* by John D'Emilio

Books for Youth

- Gay America: Struggle for Equality* by Linas Alsenas
- Gay Power!: The Stonewall Riots and the Gay Rights Movement, 1969* by Betsy Kuhn
- Gay Rights Activists* by Kate Burns
- Hear Us Out!: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present* by Nancy Garden
- Issues in Gay and Lesbian Life* (A series for teens by Chelsea House Publishers, which includes the following titles: *Lesbians and Gays and Sports* by Perry Deane Young and *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Homosexuality* by Ellen Herman)

Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians (A series for teens by Chelsea House Publishers, which includes the following titles: James Baldwin, Willa Cather, Marlene Dietrich, Rock Hudson, John Maynard Keynes, T. E. Lawrence, Liberace, Federico Garcia Lorca Martina Navratilova, Sappho, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde

Statistical Timeline and Overview of Gay Life (Gallup's Guide to Modern Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Lifestyle) by Zachary Chastain

DVDs

After Stonewall by John Scagliotti, Janet Baus, Dan Hunt; First Run Features

Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community by Greta Schiller; First Run Features

The Brandon Teena Story by Gréta Olafsdóttir and Susan Muska; New Video Group

Brother Outsider by Bennett Singer and Nancy D. Kates; Question Why Films

The Celluloid Closet by Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman; Sony Pictures

Coming Out Under Fire by Arthur Dong; DeepFocus Productions

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt by Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman; New Yorker Video

Gay Pioneers by Glenn Holsten; Glennfilms / Equality Forum

Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100 by Yvonne Welbon; Sisters in Cinema

Milk by Gus Van Sant; Universal Studios

Out of the Past by Jeff Dupre; Unapix Films

Paragraph 175 by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, J.; New Yorker Video

The Times of Harvey Milk by Rob Epstein and Richard Schmiechen; Black Sand Productions, Inc.

Websites

Black History Month Profiles: Highlighting Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender People: www.nbjc.org/news/black-history-month-profiles.html

Gay History and Literature: <http://rictornorton.co.uk>

Gay & Lesbian History in the US: A Snapshot of the 20th Century: http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/cmation/gay_les

Gay and Lesbian Studies: A Research Guide (New York Public Library): <http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/chss/grd/resguides/gay/gay.cfm>

GLBT Historical Society: www.glbthistory.org

GLBT History Month: www.glbthistorymonth.com/glbthistorymonth/2010

GLBTQ Encyclopedia: www.glbtq.com

The Lesbian Herstory Archives: www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org

LGBT History on the Web: <http://home.earthlink.net/~ruthpett/lgbthistorynw/links.htm>

ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives: www.onearchives.org

OutHistory: www.outhistory.org/wiki/Main_Page

Out of the Past: www.pbs.org/outofthepast

People With a History: www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh

Reclaiming History: www.uic.edu/depts/quic/history/reclaiming_history.html

Stonewall and Beyond: Lesbian and Gay Culture: www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/exhibitions/sw25