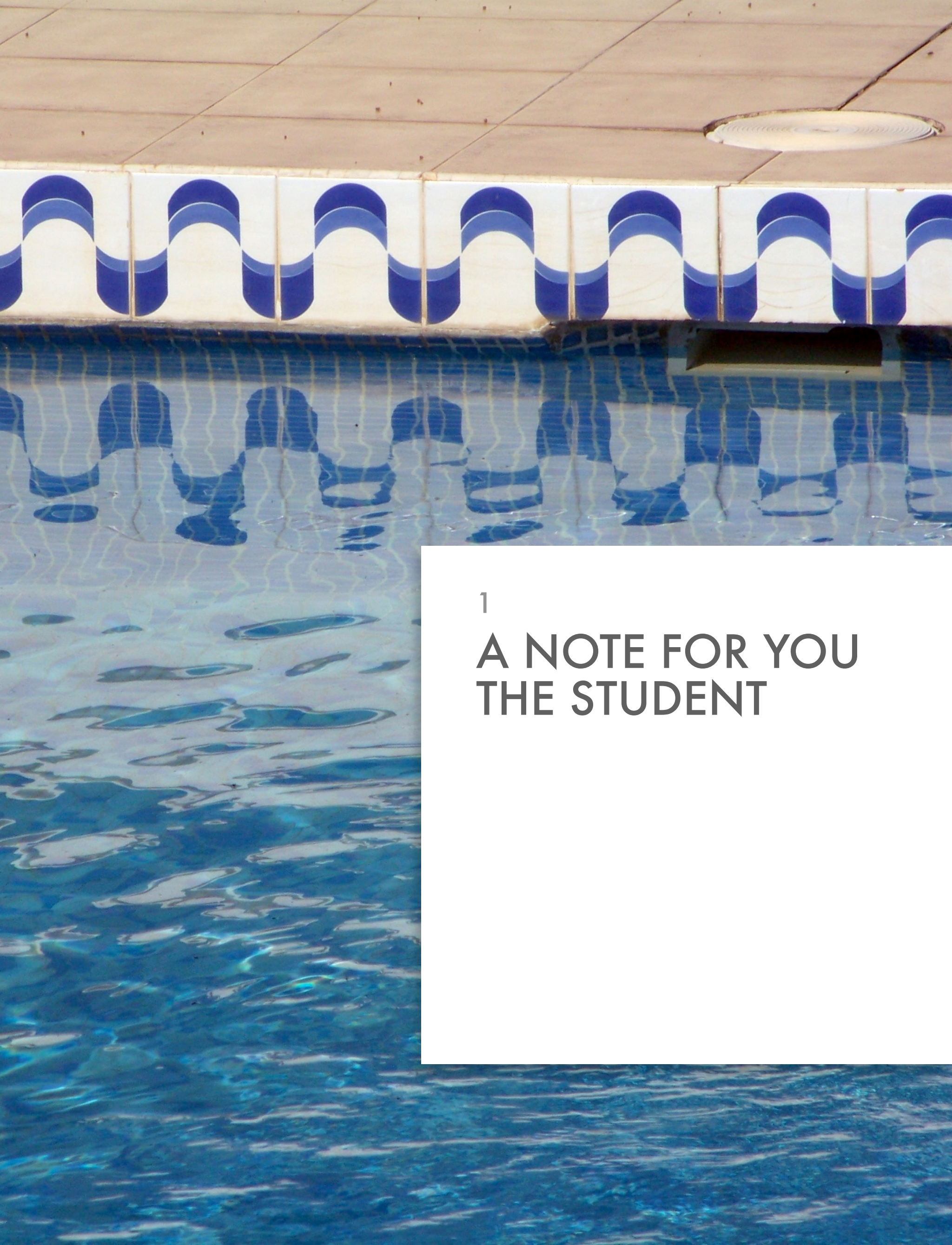




CIVIL RIGHTS: STANDING UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

AUTHOR: LEO ADAM BIGA

ILLUSTRATOR: WESTON THOMSON



1

A NOTE FOR YOU THE STUDENT

In this book you will see pictures that go along with the text. Tap on the picture if you would like to see it full screen. You will also see vocabulary words in this book that are darker than the rest. You can tap on these words to see the definition of it. Here are all the vocabulary words for this book:

Activists

Advocated

De Porres Club

Demonstrate

Discrimination

Emphasized

Jim Crow

Protests

Segregation

Solidarity

Click Here to hear
the vocabulary



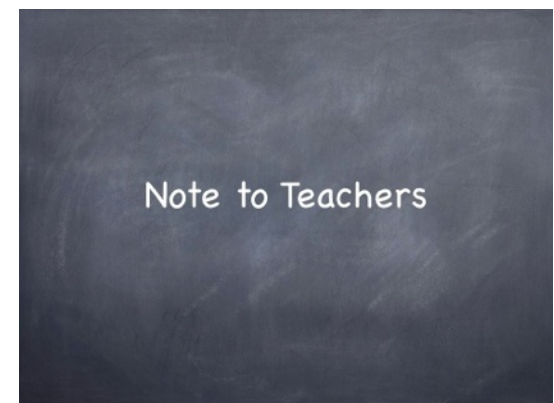
There are activities and questions at the end of the story that help you demonstrate what you have learned. As you read this book the question you should be always asking yourself is, **“How would I feel if this happened to me?”**

Have fun reading and enjoy!

Please click on the link below and complete our survey:

https://ops.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_diBncGgPTCsGMTz

Teachers Click Here



During the summer of 2013, eight Omaha Public Schools teachers each developed an iBook on a topic of Omaha and Nebraska history as it relates to African American History. The four 3rd grade books are: Then and Now: A Look at People in Your Neighborhood; Our City, Our Culture; Civil Rights: Standing Up for What's Right to Make a Difference; and The Great Migration: Wherever People Move, Home is Where the Heart is. The four 4th grade books are: Legends of the Name: Buffalo Soldiers in Nebraska; African American Pioneers; Notable Nebraskans; and WWII: Double Victory.

Each book was written by a local Omaha author, and illustrations were created by a local artist. Photographs, documents, and other artifacts included in the book were provided by local community members and through partnership with the Great Plains Black History Museum.

These books provide supplemental information on the role of African Americans in Omaha and Nebraska history topics. It is important to integrate this material in order to expand students' cultural understanding, and highlight all the historical figures that have built this state. Each book allows students to go beyond the content through analysis activities using photos, documents, and other artifacts. Through these iBooks, students will experience history and its connections to their own cultures and backgrounds.

You can use the iBook's **Speak Selection** function to listen to the iBook be read aloud.

To enable **Speak Selection**:

Launch the **Settings** app from the Home screen of your iPad.

Now tap on **General**.

Scroll down and towards the bottom, tap on **Accessibility**.

Tap on the **Speak Selection** option and turn it to **On**.

You can customize the speed the selection is spoken.

You can also choose to have each word highlighted as it is spoken.

To use **Speak Selection** in the iBook:

Highlight the text and in the text edit popup, select **Speak**.

Your iPad will now speak the text back to you.



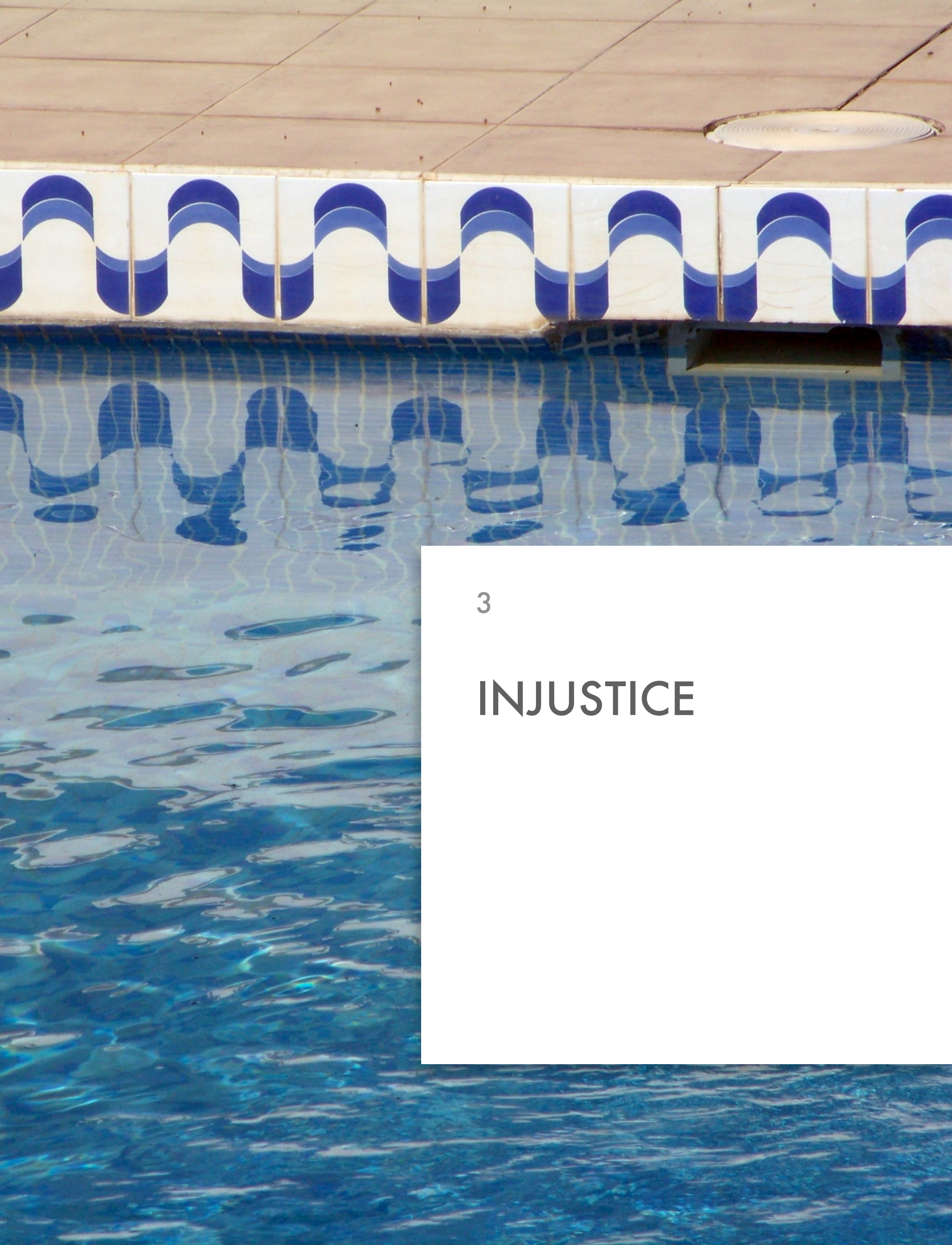
2

INTRODUCTION

Imagine wanting to go swimming on a hot summer's day at a big public pool. You arrive there with the simple expectation of laying out in the sun and cooling off in the refreshing water. But when you show up at the front gate ready to enter the pool and have fun you are turned away because you are black.

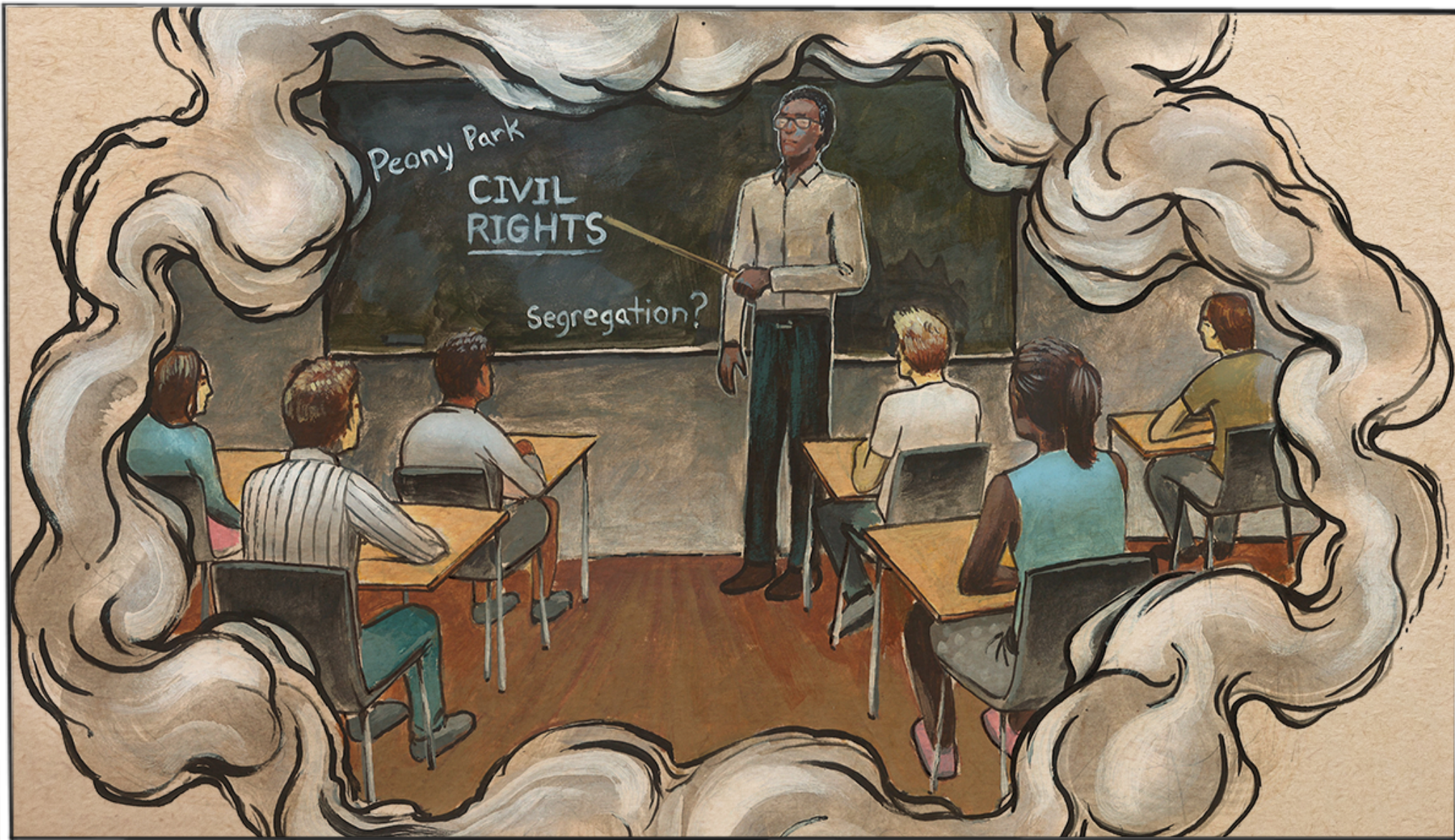
Naturally, your feelings are hurt. You're probably angry and confused. How unfair that you cannot go swimming where everyone else can just because of your skin color. "What can be done about this?" you wonder.

It may surprise you to know this actually happened in Omaha, Nebraska, and the young people who were denied admission decided to do something about it. Some of them were Omaha Public Schools students. In 1963, they organized **protests** that forced the swimming pool owners to let everyone swim there.



3

INJUSTICE



How were people's
civil rights violated at
Peony Park?

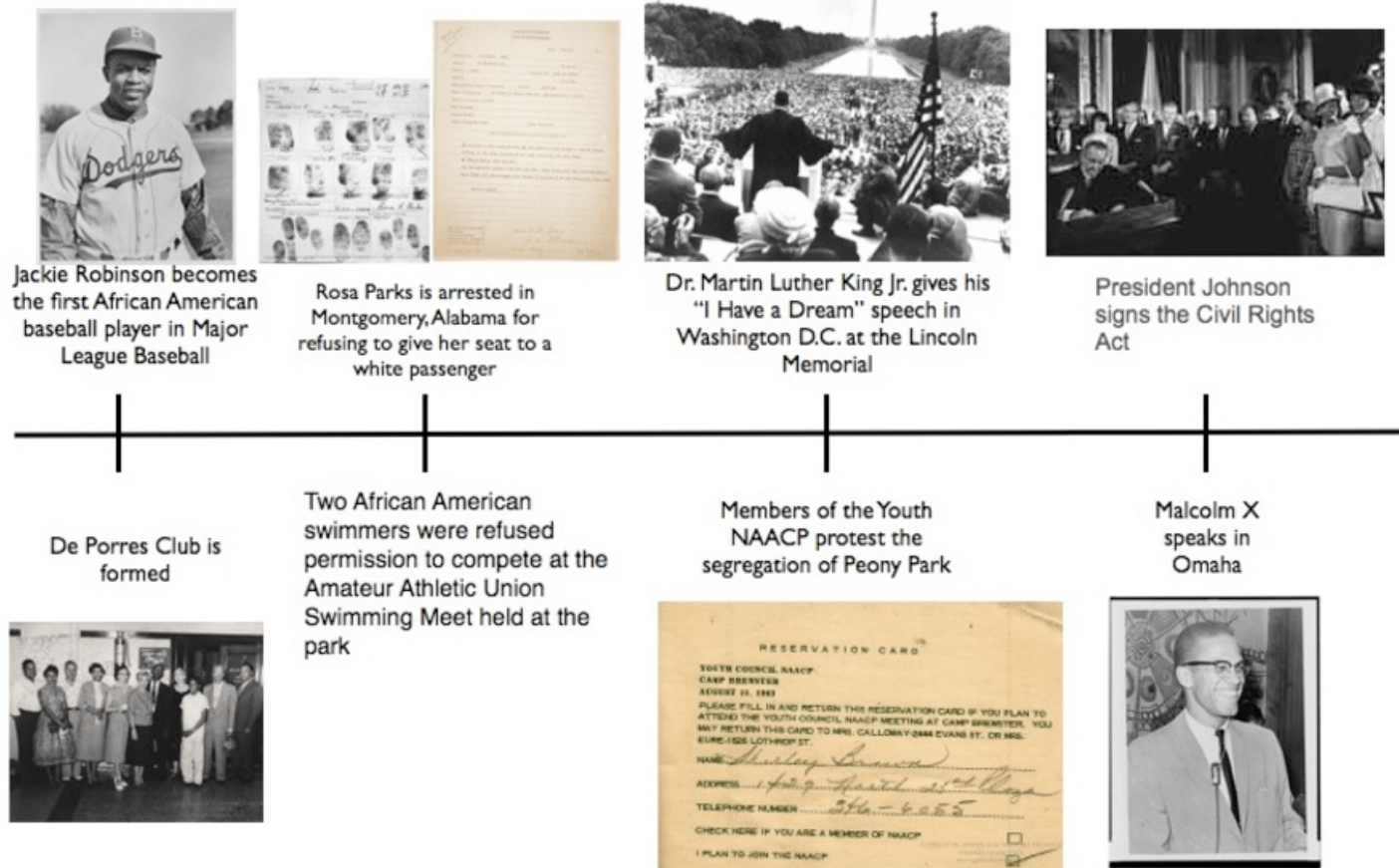
Injustice

There was a time in America when black people and other racial minorities were denied basic human rights because of the color of their skin. Racism and **discrimination** made life difficult for African Americans. Often, they had to use separate facilities, such as black-only water fountains, or take their meals in the back of restaurants. Even something as ordinary as a swimming pool could be off-limits. **Segregation** in all aspects of daily life **emphasized** that African Americans were not equal and this system could be enforced with violence. If a black person tried to take a sip of water at a fountain, eat at a counter reserved for whites, or sit in the front of a bus, they could be arrested or attacked.

The system of segregation in America was called "**Jim Crow**." In the South, Jim Crow segregation laws severely restricted blacks from using public facilities. But these laws were in place all over the nation. These harsh measures were put in place after the end of slavery. Though African Americans were now citizens, Jim Crow laws made black

Civil Rights Timeline

U.S.A.



Omaha

people second-class citizens, denied opportunities open to everyone else.

Tap
above to
view
timeline

African Americans experienced racial **discrimination** in Omaha. A popular amusement park that used to be here, Peony Park, did not let blacks use its big outdoor pool. Unfair practices like that sparked the civil rights movement. People of all races and ethnicities joined together to march and **demonstrate** against inequality. They **advocated** blacks be given equal rights in voting, housing, jobs, education, and recreation.



4

DOING THE RIGHT THING



Members of The De Porres Club.
Photograph courtesy of the Great Plains Black History Museum

Doing the Right Thing

Following World War II protestors with the **De Porres Club** in Omaha peacefully **demonstrated** against local businesses that refused to serve or hire blacks. Members of the De Porres Club included the people of Omaha's African American community, college students from Creighton University, and more. They were active from about 1947 to the early 1960s.

In 1963, members of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Youth Council, some still high school teenagers, decided to challenge Peony Park and its racist policies. "Activism was in its heyday, activism was alive and well. Every community of black folks around the country was involved in some initiative and that was the Omaha initiative," said Youth Council Vice President Cathy Hughes. Though only 16 at the time, Hughes was a veteran civil rights worker. As a little girl she carried picket signs with her parents when they participated in De Porres Club **protests**.

RESERVATION CARD

YOUTH COUNCIL NAACP
CAMP BREWSTER

AUGUST 11, 1963

PLEASE FILL IN AND RETURN THIS RESERVATION CARD IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE YOUTH COUNCIL NAACP MEETING AT CAMP BREWSTER. YOU MAY RETURN THIS CARD TO MRS. CALLOWAY-2444 EVANS ST. OR MRS. EURE-1626 LOTHROP ST.

NAME Shirley Brown

ADDRESS 1429 North 25th Place

TELEPHONE NUMBER 346-6055

CHECK HERE IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF NAACP ☐

I PLAN TO JOIN THE NAACP

© GREAT PLAINS BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM
OMAHA, NEBRASKA
www.gpblackmuseum.org ☒

Reservation card to become a member of the Youth NAACP. Image courtesy of the Great Plains Black History Museum



Mr. Archie Godfrey was asked, "What did you think when you first heard African Americans were being turned away?" Tap above to hear his answer.

The Youth Council decided to protest at Peony Park after one of their members, a young black woman, was turned away along with her little sister. "She was told she couldn't get into the pool," recalled Archie Godfrey, the then-18-year-old Youth Council President. "It happened the same day we were having a meeting. She came to the meeting like she always did and said, 'Guess what happened to me?' And here was an issue that paralleled what was going on nationally.' What do we do? All we knew is our member got rejected from Peony Park and we were going to make it right, and that's how that thing got started."

Godfrey and his peers closely monitored the civil rights movement and saw an opportunity to do here what was being done in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, where Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others were waging nonviolent social actions. Omaha Youth Council members had trained in nonviolent protest methods at NAACP regional events. Godfrey said, "We decided, 'Well, let's do what they taught us. We'll test it.'" And they did.



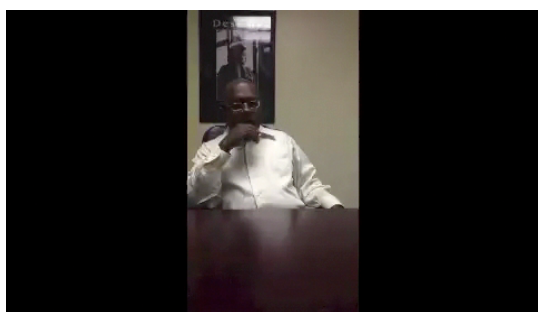
5

STAGING THE PROTEST





Media played an important role in documenting the protests



Mr. Archie Godfrey was asked, "How did you stage the protests?" Tap here to hear his answer

Staging the Protest

The Youth Council **activists** came up with a plan for their protest. First, members tried to gain admission to the pool. Each time they were told it was full, even though whites were let in. Members next removed the ignition keys from their cars to block the entrance and exit. "That was the beginning of the demonstration," said Godfrey. "We were nonviolent, we didn't go out and shout and scream at them, we didn't throw bricks, we didn't spit, we didn't do anything but **demonstrate** for the next two weeks." Protesters also made sure the media was present to document their activities.

The group sang freedom songs to relieve the tension from counter-protestors, who were opposed to the civil rights movement. The Youth Council was aware things could turn violent as they did down South. "One of the reasons why we sung is because of how stressful and explosive a situation like that could be," said Godfrey. "The singing of the civil rights songs as a group was like a medicine that kept us bound and understanding we were not alone, that there was unity. By singing



From the beach of
Peony Park.
Photograph courtesy of
the Omaha World-
Herald

to the top of our voices 'We Shall Overcome,' we didn't hear the words that came from across the street from people calling us nasty names."

He said the human chain they formed with clasped arms outside the front gate was only as strong as its weakest link. They needed **solidarity** to keep their cool. "If one of us had lost self control and got mad and went across the street and hit one of the those kids all hell would have broke out and it would have killed everything," Godfrey observed. Cathy Hughes said all their training paid off. "We were disciplined, we were strategic." No violence ever erupted. No arrests were made.



6

WINNING THE FIGHT

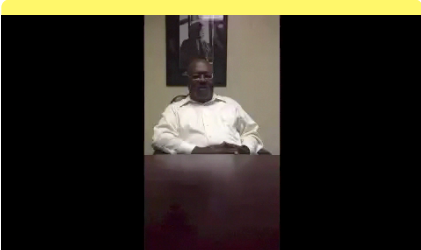


Picture taken in 1963 after Peony Park was desegregated. Picture courtesy of the *Omaha World-Herald*

Winning the Fight

For a time the Malec family that owned and operated the park resisted making any changes. But after losing business, being challenged with lawsuits, and getting negative publicity, they opened the pool to everyone. The youth protestors won.

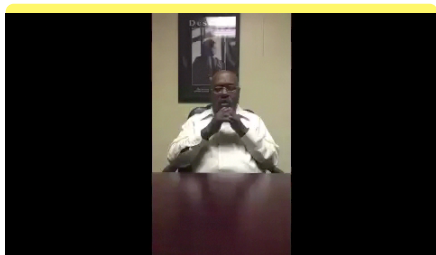
The success of the demonstration raised interest in the Youth Council. "We went from a few dozen members to 300 members that summer," Godfrey said, "because of the attention, the excitement and people pent up wanting to do something like people were doing all over the country. We jumped on everything that was wrong that summer." He said the Council staged **protests** at restaurants and recreation sites. "Each one opened its doors after we started or even threatened to **demonstrate**, that's how effective it was."



Mr. Archie Godfrey was asked, "How did it feel to win?" Tap here to hear his answer.



Picture of Peony Park swimming area. Picture courtesy of the *Omaha World Herald*



Mr. Archie Godfrey was asked, "What advice would you give young adults to make change?" Tap here to hear his answer.

The events of that summer 50 years ago helped shape Godfrey. The lesson that youth can change things for the better has stayed with him. "I've been an activist and politically involved all the rest of my life," he said. Cathy Hughes said the experience "instilled in me a certain level of fearlessness and purpose and accomplishment that I carried with me for the rest of my life," adding, "It taught me the lesson that there's power in unity." She has never hesitated to speak out against injustice since then.

Demonstrations like these helped push Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which put into place many safeguards to prevent **discrimination** on the basis of race or ethnicity. Today, people of any color or background can go anywhere they choose. That freedom, however, was hard earned by people like Archie Godfrey and Cathy Hughes who stood up to speak out against wrong.



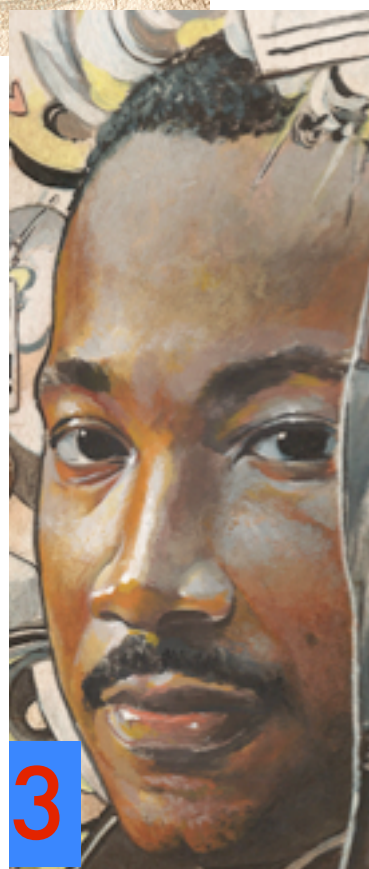


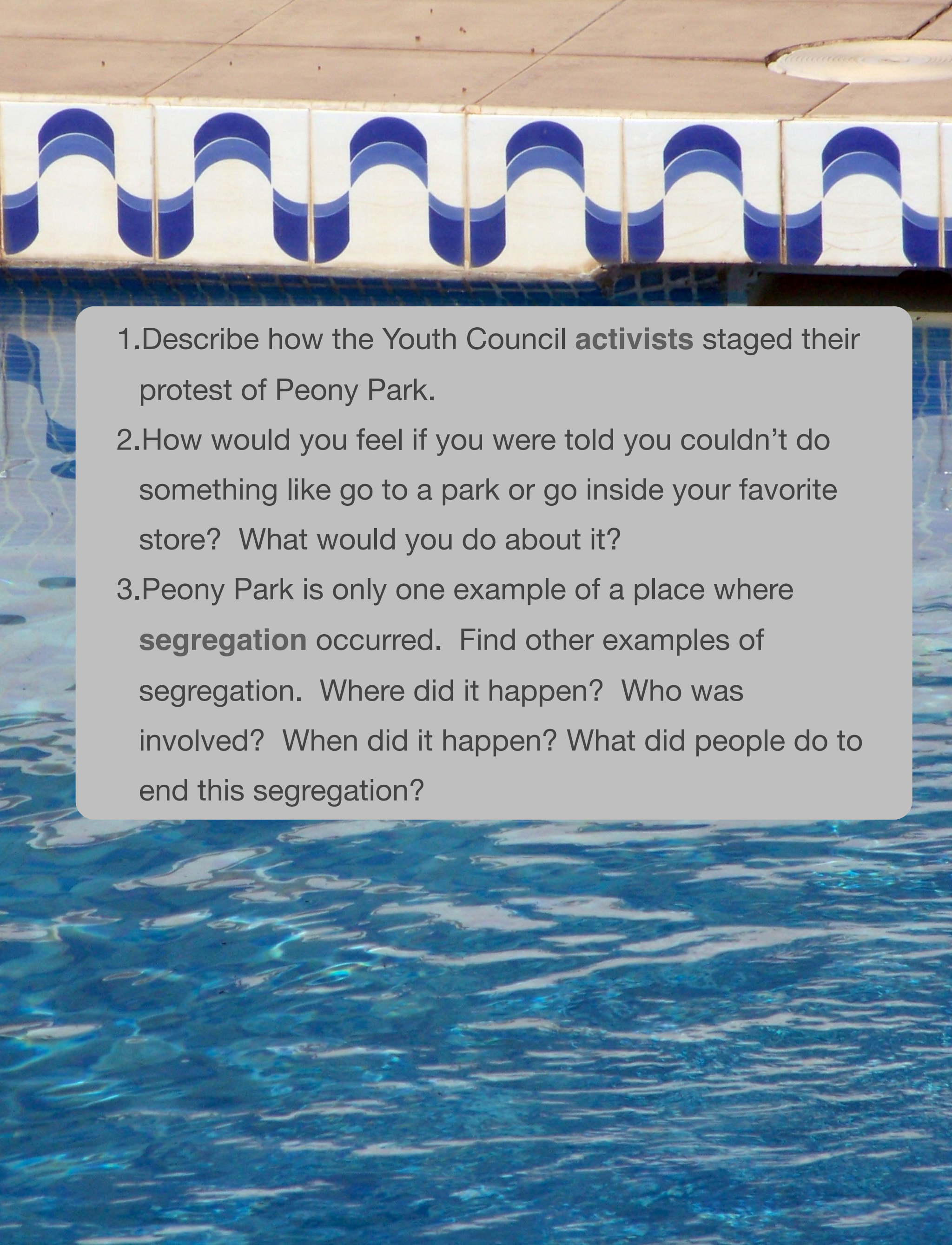
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ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

ACT IT OUT

In a small group you will become a person from this picture. Be able to explain why you are important to the picture and answer questions other students may have. One member from the group will be a reporter that will interview each person.



- 
1. Describe how the Youth Council **activists** staged their protest of Peony Park.
 2. How would you feel if you were told you couldn't do something like go to a park or go inside your favorite store? What would you do about it?
 3. Peony Park is only one example of a place where **segregation** occurred. Find other examples of segregation. Where did it happen? Who was involved? When did it happen? What did people do to end this segregation?



?

Tap on
blank sign
above to
design your
own **protest**
sign.

DESIGN A MONUMENT

You will design a monument that will recognize the accomplishments of the individuals who helped to desegregate Peony Park. Included with your design should be some words telling people what your monument represents.

The front gates to
Peony Park.
Photograph courtesy of
the *Omaha World-
Herald*



JUL 17 1963 A.M.
A Lifeguard at Peony

Omaha.

I am 19 years old, a graduate of Westside High School, a sophomore at Harvard University. This is my sixth summer as an employe of Peony Park, Inc., my fourth summer as a lifeguard.

On the week end of July 13 and 14, when Negroes peacefully sought admission to Peony Park, my employer turned them away. The World-Herald of July 14 quoted him as describing integrationist attempts as "hysteria," and explained his policy of barring Negroes "for fear of incidents."

Although policemen were present, some lifeguards were summoned to the front gate to aid in preventing Negroes' entrance.

The presence at the gate of a number of young men in Peony's employ could only suggest force. This could hardly make an incident less likely.

Peony Park's policy is not only wrong, but irresponsible and dangerous,

I will not work as a lifeguard while others are paid lifeguard's wages for time spent away from the pool in a display of readiness to forcefully prevent Negroes from entering.

I appreciate my employer's concern for his business. The cause of this concern is primarily the responsibility of the white community whose reaction to the prospect of integration might well be deemed hysterical.

In the event of a disturbance, I will not be associated with the wrong side.

David W. Allen.

QUESTIONS

1. WHY DID PEONY PARK WANT TO KEEP AFRICAN AMERICANS OUT?

2. WHY DID THE LIFEGUARD THINK THIS WOULD BACKFIRE?

3. THIS LIFEGUARD RISKED LOSING HIS JOB FOR SOMETHING HE BELIEVED. DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD DO THE SAME IN HIS POSITION? WHY OR WHY NOT?

4. THIS ARTICLE USES THE WORD "HYSTERICAL." WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHY IS FEAR OF AN INTEGRATED POOL CALLED "HYSTERICAL"? USE IT IN A SENTENCE.



8

MEET THE AUTHOR

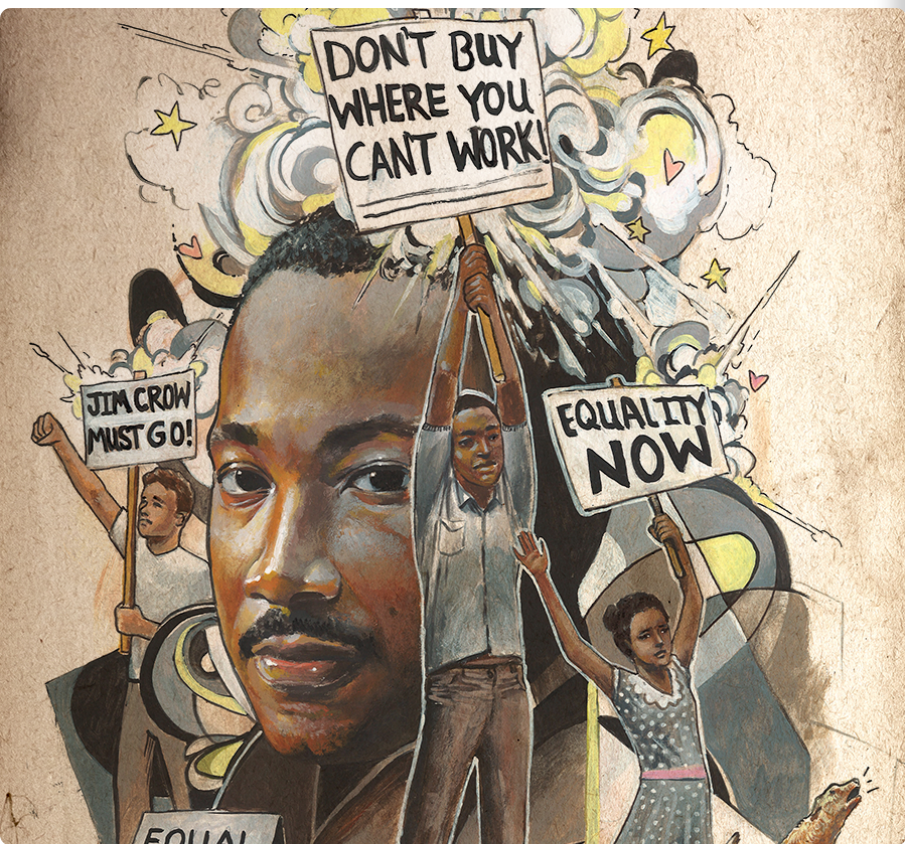
Leo Adam Biga is an Omaha-based author-journalist-blogger best known for his cultural writing-reporting about people, their passions and their magnificent obsessions. His book *Alexander Payne: His Journey in Film* is the first comprehensive treatment of the Oscar-winning filmmaker. Biga's peers have recognized his work at the local, state and national levels. To sample more of his writing visit, leoadambiga.wordpress.com or www.facebook.com/LeoAdamBiga

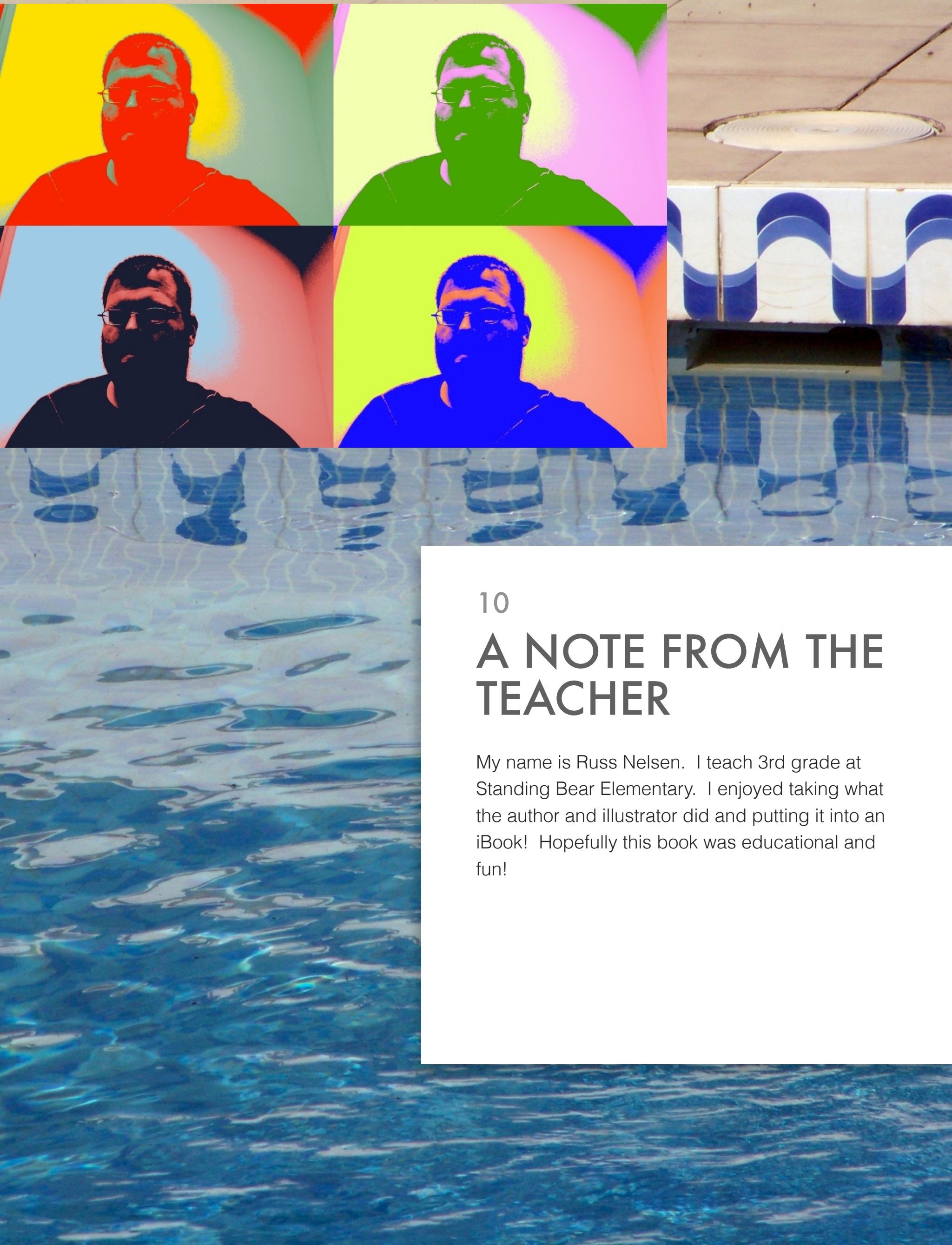


9

MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR

Weston Thomson is a multidisciplinary artist and non-profit arts organization director living in Omaha, Nebraska. His work ranges from graphite, ink, and acrylic illustrations to 3D printed sculptures.





10

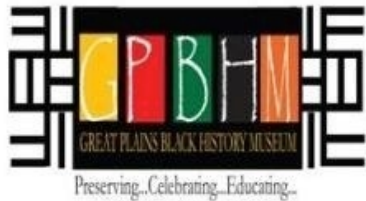
A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER

My name is Russ Nelsen. I teach 3rd grade at Standing Bear Elementary. I enjoyed taking what the author and illustrator did and putting it into an iBook! Hopefully this book was educational and fun!

This book created in partnership with



Making Invisible Histories Visible



**Douglas
County
Historical
Society**



**THE
Sherwood
FOUNDATION®**

Directed by: Emily Brush

Edited by: Dr. Jared Leighton

Historical Consultant: Dr. Patrick Jones

Special thanks to Harris Payne and Barry Thomas

Making Invisible Histories Visible is an initiative of the Omaha Public Schools

ACTIVISTS

Advocating or opposing a cause or issue vigorously, especially a political cause

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

- Chapter 1 - A Note For You
- Chapter 5 - Staging the Protest
- Chapter 7 - Activities and questions

ADVOCATED

To publicly recommend or support.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

DE PORRES CLUB

The DePorres Club was a unique group of white and black students working together in order to achieve equality, including desecration.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

DEMONSTRATE

To bring attention to a cause with a group of people with the goal of bringing awareness to a particular subject.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

DISCRIMINATION

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on grounds of race, age, or gender.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

EMPHASIZED

To make something more important. To stress a particular item.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

JIM CROW

The former practice of segregating black people in the US.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

PROTESTS

A protest (also called a remonstrance or remonstration) is an expression of objection, usually by words or by actions, to particular events, policies or situations.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

SEGREGATION

The action or state of setting someone or something apart from other people or being set apart.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

SOLIDARITY

Unity or agreement of feeling or action, esp. among individuals with a common mutual support within a group.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here