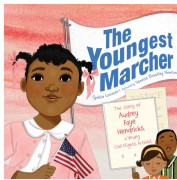


The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist



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C3 Framework Key term:

Democratic principle: A principle that should guide the behavior and values of institutions and citizens in a democracy.

SYNOPSIS

Audrey Faye Hendricks wanted to help end segregation in Birmingham. Although she was young, she marched and fought for integration alongside the adults. When she heard their plans to picket and march and fill the jails she stepped up and volunteered. She marched in the first youth march in the summer of 1963. She went to jail for seven days and on her fifth day they couldn't fit one more person into the cells. Although it was difficult, she fought for what she believed in. Audrey and the other children who marched that summer inspired youth protests all over the country. This event, and a later event in Alabama State University, prompted President Kennedy to take action.

DISCUSSION

Provide a historical summary: In 1963, hundreds of college students and students in the elementary, middle, and high school grades marched in the Birmingham Children's Crusade. Their plan was to peacefully walk downtown to talk to the mayor about integration of schools. The local police stopped the children using fire hoses and police dogs. Many children were arrested. **Say:** *Although Audrey was young, Audrey volunteered to march for her beliefs. She made this choice knowing the risk.* **Ask:** *Why do*

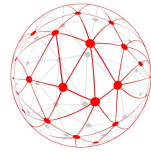
you think she did this? **Say:** *Some youth were encouraged by parents and elders in the community, who told them that their generation will make a difference. Others liked to study and wanted to compete academically with white children. And other children wanted to have the same school facilities and educational opportunities as white children. Some of the young marchers defied their parents and teachers by skipping school and joining the march.*

GROUP ACTIVITY

Show students a segment from President Kennedy's [civil rights address](#) on June 11, 1963 (A transcript of this segment is included in this lesson plan; for a transcript of the full speech, see the [American Presidency Project](#)). **Write** on the board: American Ideals versus American Realities. **Ask:** *How does President Kennedy contrast American ideals and realities in his speech?* **Say:** *President Kennedy knew that passing an Act that protects the rights of African American people is not enough to change their lives. He needed American citizens to buy into this law and support it in their everyday actions. In groups, imagine you are in 1963 and you need to self-reflect what you can do to support the new civil rights law. Make a list of things you can do, and how you can encourage others to support equal opportunities and respect to all people.*

FUN ACTIVITY

Say: *We are going to make picket signs like the ones Audrey and the other child marchers used. In groups, you will come up with a short phrase about equality and then on a poster board you will write your phrase and add an illustration. On a separate sheet of paper, you will write what equality means to you and how your phrase represents the principle of equality. In your writing, you should also explain the decorations on the sign.*



Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights, June 11, 1963

President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963)

We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who will represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?

One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it. And we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is the land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes.

Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. We have a right to expect that the Negro community will be responsible, will uphold the law. But they have a right to expect that the law will be fair, that the Constitution will be color blind, as Justice Harlan said at the turn of the century. This is what we're talking about, and this is a matter which concerns this country and what it stands for, and in meeting it, I ask the support of all our citizens. Thank you very much.