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Editor's Notebook

As we look forward to a momentous presidential election, this back-to-school issue of *Social Education* offers articles on some historic milestones and guiding principles of our democracy. The contributions include attractive and interesting lesson plans for U.S. history, civics and government classes, as well as a provocative feature on the competing views of the purposes and practice of world history advocated by different sets of educators.

The two opening articles deal with different dimensions of voting rights. In a Looking at the Law column, Elizabeth M. Yang and Kristi Gaines point out that although universal suffrage has been one of the major accomplishments of U.S. history, there are still obstacles to the participation of a number of citizens in elections, such as stringent voter identification laws, lack of election information for citizens not conversant with English, and the denial of the vote to convicted felons (a practice that varies greatly across the different states). James Landman's teaching activity reviews a recent Supreme Court decision upholding an Indiana law requiring voters to show a state-issued photo identification card.

Misty D. Rodeheaver and Mary E. Haas outline ways of addressing the "Who Can Vote?" question in class by introducing students to the historical expansion of the franchise, and using voting statistics from past elections to illustrate this process as part of a class activity. In any discussion of the opportunity to vote, they point out, "the most difficult question remains: 'Why do so many American citizens still choose not to vote?'" (233)

Habeas corpus is a pillar of our legal system, but its protection of the individual against arbitrary imprisonment has developed into a controversial issue as a result of the detention of suspected members of Al Qaeda after September 11, 2001. To make the habeas corpus concept real to students, Carolyn Pereira and Nisan Chavkin suggest grade-appropriate lesson plans—a readers' theater activity for the elementary level on the lack of habeas corpus under England's absolute monarchy, a middle school case study dating to the Civil War, and a high school activity relating to the detentions at Guantanamo Bay, whose background and legal decisions are the main subject of Pereira and Chavkin's article.

In another article highlighting the need to study the Constitution to understand its implications, Robert Cohen points out that the period leading up to the Civil War was one characterized by avid debate about whether the Constitution supported slavery. He examines the subject through the eyes of Frederick Douglass, the abolitionist African American leader who was once a slave himself, and discusses the evolution of Douglass's thought from the belief that the Constitution was an instrument of slaveholders to the conviction that it offered U.S. leaders the power to end slavery.

In a companion article, James Oakes, author of an acclaimed book on Douglass and Lincoln, describes the evolution of his own thinking on the relationship between the Constitution and slavery. As he studied the views of Douglass and Lincoln on the subject, he found himself developing an affinity with Lincoln's view that the Constitution recognized slavery, but also gave the government the power to emancipate the slaves.

C. Frederick Risinger's Internet column introduces readers to the resources of presidential libraries for classes studying U.S. government and twentieth century history. Many of these presidential collections offer captivating primary documents, audio or video clips, and class activities that can give students a real sense of the times and challenges experienced by presidents between the years 1929 and 2000.

Never one to steer clear of controversy, Ross E. Dunn discusses disagreements about the world history curriculum in this issue's Research and Practice column. In his view, educators have divided into two different arenas of opinion about the correct focus of world history: the first concentrates on patterns of historical change that transcend particular countries and on comparisons of historical phenomena in different parts of the world, while the second arena contains rival camps in conflict with each other that seek to promote cultural norms through the teaching of world history. On one side of this deep divide are those who believe that western history is the world history that counts, while their opponents maintain that world history education should reflect and advance multicultural ideals.

Our Elementary section focuses on teaching young learners about World War II. In the first article, Mary E. Haas offers an in-depth guide to helping students conduct effective interviews with people who experienced World War II, either as veterans or as civilians. In the second feature, Theresa M. McCormick introduces students to the wartime atmosphere that led to the internment of Japanese Americans. Her lesson plan shows students how a population's fear and panic can combine with prejudice to strip a minority of its rights.

The issue concludes with a Teaching with Documents feature by Lee Ann Potter about the Treaty of Paris of 1783, in which the British government recognized the independence of the United States. The agreement was reached after a slow process in which one of the American negotiators was arrested by the British (and later exchanged for a British general captured by the American forces), and in which the U.S. Congress, caught in the middle of its move from Princeton to Annapolis, fell behind the schedule required in the agreement for its ratification. Potter's teaching suggestions will help students understand the background to one of the seminal documents of our history.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at **socialed@ncss.org.**