

Editor's Notebook

This edition of *Social Education* examines both historical milestones and major contemporary issues. Its coverage ranges from the first televised U.S. presidential debate to a special section that examines vital aspects of humanitarian law. Other features include a review of key Supreme Court cases, an examination of the segregation that the civil rights movement challenged, and a look ahead to the upcoming mid-term elections.

This month's Teaching with Documents column by David L. Rosenbaum examines an innovation in political campaigns that occurred during the 1960 presidential election, in which the first televised debates took place between presidential candidates. The featured document is a memorandum from Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger, to Herb Klein, his counterpart on the Nixon campaign, about the preparations for the first debate. The concern expressed in the memorandum with the selection of the panel of questioners and the procedures for taking photographs was a forerunner of future strategies by experts on media relations in political campaigns. Rosenbaum and Lee Ann Potter recommend activities to accompany the use of the document in the classroom.

In our Looking at the Law column, Charles F. Williams and Catherine Hawke present *Social Education's* review of major cases decided by the Supreme Court during the 2009–2010 term, in which the Court took a number of important decisions on issues that included gun laws, first amendment rights, animal cruelty, and workplace privacy. Williams and Hawke preview upcoming cases in the 2010–2011 term, which will include important decisions on the employment of illegal immigrants, first amendment rights, and the sale of violent video games to minors.

This issue includes a special section of four features on Exploring Humanitarian Law that draws on a curriculum developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Mat Morgan, who has worked in the Red Cross relief efforts in Haiti several times this year, leads off the special section with an article on the humanitarian response to the Haiti disaster, and a teaching activity identifying the needs of populations confronted by natural disasters or armed conflict, and the challenges facing humanitarian organizations that respond to these needs.

Bullying in schools is the focus of "The Bystander's Dilemma," a collaborative article by Lauren Woglom, a long-time Red Cross volunteer, and social studies teacher Kim Pennington. The authors point out that "a startling 78 percent of American students who witness bullying fail to report it," (255) and recommend ways in which schools can use the Exploring Humanitarian Law curriculum to encourage students to be more proactive in coming to the support of victims of bullying.

TJ Adhietty addresses the principles of protecting basic human rights in times of conflict, with a particular focus on the prohibition of the torture of prisoners of war and detainees. He highlights the importance of the Geneva Conventions and the Lieber Code drafted for the Union Army in the Civil War as historic milestones, and emphasizes the importance for Americans of "living our values" in the treatment of prisoners and detainees.

Isabelle Daoust, who has served as a Red Cross representative promoting humanitarian law in difficult situations, recounts some of her experiences. She describes the procedures used by the Red Cross to investigate the conditions of prisoners and detainees, and offers a lively account of a visit by herself and a colleague to imprisoned soldiers in Cote d'Ivoire in the aftermath of a coup, and her later discovery of the significant impact of their visit.

John A. Stokes, one of the plaintiffs in *Brown v Board of Education*, has been a teacher and school principal, and a featured speaker at the NCSS annual conference. In an article for this issue coauthored with NCSS editor Steve Lapham, he outlines an activity simulating a bus ride that can bring home to students the harsh reality of the era of segregation. Based on the allocation of different colored cards that serve as bus tickets (and that cause a rearrangement of seating when the bus enters "segregated" places), he shows how the re-enactment of the past can stimulate student inquiry into this important phase of history.

This year's mid-term elections include many intense contests for the House and Senate, as well as some important close races for gubernatorial positions. In his Internet column, C. Frederick Risinger makes suggestions for covering the elections in the social studies classroom, and recommends websites that he finds exceptionally useful. *Social Education* complements his suggestions with a list of resources that teachers can use to monitor close races across the country as the election draws near.

While there will be many hotly contested races, it is just as striking that most House seats are firmly in the control of one party or the other. This raises questions about how congressional district lines are drawn, an extremely important dimension of politics that is much less studied than electoral contests. Emily Juckett and Joseph R. Feinberg examine this subject with a particular focus on the perennial risk of gerrymandering, and make suggestions on teaching about gerrymandering in the classroom with the assistance of an online simulation, the ReDistricting Game.

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