

Editor's Notebook

This issue of *Social Education* presents stimulating articles and valuable lesson plans across the range of social studies.

In our Looking at the Law column, Catherine Hawke reviews some key decisions made by the Supreme Court in its last term, when the Court reaffirmed First Amendment protections on unpopular free speech, but also issued decisions rejecting some class action lawsuits. In the coming term, the Court will hear controversial cases on the use of Medicaid, GPS systems to track suspects, and broadcasts that include nudity and expletives.

Robert Cohen and Janelle Pearson present a strategy for teaching students about the realities of slavery and emancipation in classes that combine both history and literature. In a collaborative effort, they used as a primary source a powerful letter written by a former slave, Jourdon Anderson, rejecting an invitation from his former master to go back and work for him, asking instead for compensation for the unpaid work done by Anderson when he was a slave. The students also studied Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, and this combination of historical sources and literature gave them profound insights into the condition of slaves.

The failure of Reconstruction after the abolition of slavery meant that the African American community remained economically depressed and subject to discrimination. Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker recounts the initiatives taken by Eleanor Roosevelt to support the rights of African Americans during the New Deal period, which prepared the way for the post-World War II breakthroughs in the struggle against discrimination.

Sandra J. Schmidt emphasizes that geographic knowledge is much more than the ability to identify the characteristics of places on a map; it has a human dimension that requires an understanding of peoples, cultures, and political structures. She presents a lesson plan investigating the rationale for dividing the world into continents as a means of highlighting this human dimension.

Income inequality in the United States has increased in the last three decades. Margaret S. Crocco, Anand R. Marri, and Scott Wylie offer a lesson plan that can bring this issue to the classroom by asking the topical question: how progressive should U.S. tax rates be? The authors provide detailed statistics on income inequality and tax rates, and identify the arguments for and against higher rates on individuals at the top of the income scale.

In his Internet column, C. Frederick Risinger underlines the importance of improving students' knowledge of global issues and world history. The sites he recommends can help teachers with both global education and the world history curriculum, as well as special themes such as the role of women in history.


One of the goals of social studies is to prepare students for an active civic life. Alexander Pope, Laurel Stolte, and Alison K. Cohen describe the approach taken by the program Generation Citizen, whose projects in Boston, Providence, and New York

have engaged students in issues ranging from school closings to gang violence and hunger.

While the Internet is an indispensable component of our lives, it is also a forum for the free exchange of ideas that have not been subjected to any vetting process. How can students be taught to differentiate between credible sites and those that present unsubstantiated judgments? In this issue's Research and Practice column, Mark Baidon and James Damico suggest strategies that will improve the ability of students to undertake the critical analysis of materials found on the Internet.

This fall, the population of the world is projected to reach 7 billion people. Pamela Wasserman, vice president for education at Population Connection, discusses the implications of this milestone and suggests ways of teaching about it in class. A poster developed by Population Connection to describe the "Quick Trip to 7 Billion" is included in the polybag containing this issue of *Social Education*.

In today's classrooms, the pressure of standardized tests often makes it easy to give less attention to developing students' research abilities. Doug Selwyn highlights the importance of encouraging student research, and identifies the key components of a strategy that can raise student research capabilities.

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

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