

Teaching Controversial Issues in a Time of Polarization

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg and Rey Junco

Although civic education has experienced a significant revitalization during the past two decades, America's high schools are not adequately preparing young people for self-governance and civic participation. While an estimated 90 percent of American high school students take a Civics or American Government course, a majority of graduates are deemed less than "proficient" in their knowledge of civics in a standardized exam.¹ Nor does taking a course translate into civic action, as turnout among America's newest voters (18- to 20-year-olds) was only 15 percent in the 2014 midterm elections and 39 percent in the 2016 presidential election.² Furthermore, young people's access to civic-learning opportunities varies greatly by race, ethnicity, geography, and income level, producing unequal capabilities to participate fully in civic life.³ Empirical data on overall levels of youth participation and on staggering inequality warrant a need to explore new approaches, along with ways to improve current practices. In this article, we explore the latter by asking how discussion of controversial issues—one of the Six Promising Practices presented in *The Civic Mission of Schools*—can be more widely deployed so that all students, regardless of their background, have access to meaningful and productive discussions about contentious topics that affect our society.⁴ We focus on the role of two sets of prospective allies—families and principals—in fostering these discussions.

Defining the Problem

The need to integrate controversial-issue discussions across disciplines and grades has become even more pressing as opportunities for this foundational means of democratic engagement become increasingly rare in society at large. Modeling of productive disagreement and civil discourse may be vanishing; one can easily find myriad news stories and opinion pieces lamenting the erosion of shared norms for public discourse. Our political leaders have walked in step with American voters who often demand ideological purity, resulting in the devaluation of political compromise and stagnation in Congress.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that the United States is becoming more politically polarized, while at the same time Americans are less likely to hear diverse opinions in their networks and through the news they consume online because of self-selection into like-minded physical and virtual communities.⁵ Residential self-sorting has the effect of entrenching community members more deeply into their own views and providing fewer opportunities for dialogue with individuals who hold opposing views. This phenomenon is explained by Cass Sunstein's *law of group polarization* and supported by research that asks individuals with similar ideological views to deliberate.⁶

For instance, David Schkade and his colleagues recruited people from liberal and conservative communities and had them deliberate political issues among their own ideological groups. Those from the liberal community became more liberal, those from the conservative community became more conservative, and the ideological distance between the two groups widened as a result of the interaction. Such polarization has led to lower levels of comfort and tolerance for people with dissimilar views.⁷ Political polarization—coupled with economic, racial, and ideological self-sorting—may help explain why only 33 percent of Americans think they can trust others, a far lower proportion than just a decade ago.⁸

Media Echo Chambers

Although the media theoretically offer a vast range of opinions and facts that enrich students' formation of ideas, the reality is starkly different. Research reveals that, either concomitantly with or as a byproduct of residential self-sorting, the media ecosystem roughly follows the overall polarization trend.⁹ This self-sorting has an especially powerful impact on youth because of their use of social media and their habits for consuming news. Specifically, a larger proportion of youth get their news online than any other age group, and young people are substantially more likely to get their news online than via other platforms.¹⁰ In addition, youth are more likely to use

social media than members of other age groups.¹¹ Individuals who get their news online typically choose media outlets that are ideologically similar and rarely read news from the opposing side. In fact, these individuals are rarely exposed to moderate viewpoints.¹² Social media, in turn, allow not only for informational self-sorting as with online news, but also for a process akin to residential self-sorting. The effect of online interactions in these *echo chambers* mirrors the research showing how offline deliberation with like-minded individuals produces further polarization. The net result is that online interactions with like-minded individuals produce insulated communities in which individuals polarize towards the dominant community narrative.¹³

Embracing Disagreements

The ability to embrace productive disagreements based on serious consider-

ation of fact patterns, and on the opinions that emerge from these facts, is a key civic competency that often results in compromises or changes in opinion. One effective remedy to unproductive political discourse and ideological shifts toward the poles is for youth to engage in cross-cutting communication about political issues. In these communications, individuals with differing political views have conversations about their own positions with the goal of understanding the other's position and increasing tolerance. Cross-cutting political discussions are important in helping students understand, rather than demonize, people who hold different views.¹⁴ Engaging in controversial-issues discussions in schools provides a powerful counterbalance to the stream of negative political discourse that young people experience. Indeed, youth who engage in more discussions of controversial issues do better in terms of their level of civic knowledge, support

for democratic values, and frequency of actions associated with deliberative democracy.¹⁵ We argue that it is important to help young people develop the habit of engaging in productive, cross-cutting discussions about contentious social issues during their high school years rather than after their political identities become firmly entrenched and closed to alternative perspectives.

Failing to develop the necessary skills for productive discussions of controversial issues can result in serious consequences, including the propensity to avoid politics altogether. Indeed, adult Americans are becoming averse to normal and legitimate political conflict.¹⁶ Because they have this aversion to conflict—and because they lack experience engaging with people with whom they disagree—a growing number of Americans are less likely to participate in the political realm. This appears to be the result of a vicious cycle: People become

NEVER LESSON PLAN AGAIN!

www.StudentsofHistory.com

Every lesson for every unit of the year in:

- US History
- World History
- Civics & American Government

...all planned out for you with engaging, interactive resources that you and your students will love.

Includes interactive notebooks, digital learning, PBL, primary sources, worksheets, PowerPoints with guided notes, curated videos, fun review games, editable tests, and lesson plans on how to use every resource!

Download our free lessons or use code **NCSS** for 50% off your first month!



embedded in like-minded communities and embrace a fact-pattern that conforms to a preexisting view. They then become more likely to express negative emotions when deliberating, which can become unproductive and even include personally damaging comments and behaviors, especially in online discussion of political issues. For some people, the final step in this cycle is to withdraw entirely from political participation.¹⁷

Anticipating Pushback

The increase in polarization within local communities makes educators fear pushback from parents when they incorporate anything that can be viewed as “political” into their teaching.¹⁸ Because of this dynamic, many teachers choose to avoid talking about controversial issues altogether.¹⁹ Others have remarked on how polarization promotes accusations of bias against teachers and schools.²⁰ In these cases, teachers may employ certain

practices, such as discussion of current events, but may not fully embrace cross-cutting dialogue strategies because they fear that doing so will unleash opposition that could affect their career and livelihood. What is the pathway through which teachers make decisions to engage in—or more commonly not engage in—the discussion of current and controversial issues in their classrooms? We probe this question below, focusing on the ways in which administrative and community support affects what teachers believe and do in relation to discussion of controversial issues. The goal of this examination is to explore additional ways to encourage more controversial-issue discussions in schools.

Looking at the Numbers

The results of our analyses of survey data from high school Civics and American Government teachers indicated that teachers who perceive more support from

their district were more likely to promote student voice and to have more positive feelings about classroom deliberations.²¹ Furthermore, we found a relationship between perceived community support (i.e., families in the community supporting a Civics teacher’s decision to integrate elections and political issues) and indicators of community disadvantage (such as higher poverty rates and lower college-going rates): teachers in schools in more disadvantaged communities reported less community support. The results of our analyses elucidated the influence of stakeholder support. Figure 1 (on p. 327) summarizes the results of our analyses: both perceived support from principals and parents directly impacted teachers’ values about student voice. The more support educators perceived, the more comfortable they were with students’ right to express their opinions and to disagree with them. Additionally, values about student voice directly affected the

Michele Luck’s Social Studies

Fun, Engaging, Interactive Resources for Grades 4-12
Differentiated, Rigorous, & Collaborative

Scavenger Hunts &
Task Card Activities

Walking Tours &
Archeology Digs

Primary Source &
Mapping Analysis

Geography
World History
U.S. History
Government

Critical Thinking &
Response Prompts

Compare & Contrast
Activities

Review Games &
Game Board Activities

www.tptsocialstudies.com



High school students participating in Tisch College's Leadership for Social Change program in the summer of 2018 engaged in informed discussions about controversial issues and learned ways to effect positive social change.

frequency with which teachers engaged in controversial-issue discussions, with those who held more positive values about student voice engaging in more frequent discussions of controversial issues. Finally, while there was no direct relationship between perceived support from principals and controversial-issue discussions, there was a direct correlation between perceived parental support and the frequency of discussions of contentious issues.

Takeaways and Implications

We propose three takeaways from our analysis. First, educators' beliefs about expression of student voice, including their feelings about student disagreement with teachers, are an important indicator of teachers' actual practice. The more educators endorse this idea, the more likely they are to integrate controversial-issue discussions with high frequency. Second, it appears that when multiple stakeholders support teachers' deci-

sions to talk about elections and political issues in their classrooms, educators are more likely to express their firm belief in the value of student voice, which in turn increases their use of controversial-issue discussions. Parents seem to be a particularly important driver: systematic inequalities in civic participation may reflect how teachers perceive parental support to teach about elections and politics. In disadvantaged communities, teachers may not get explicit support from parents even if they support this type of teaching in principle. Thus, there is a need to provide additional support and encouragement for teachers who want to conduct controversial-issue discussions in schools located in disadvantaged communities. Finally, we observed the important, albeit indirect, role that principals play in encouraging student voice schoolwide, which contributes to a greater likelihood that controversial-issue discussions will take place.

From Theory to Practice

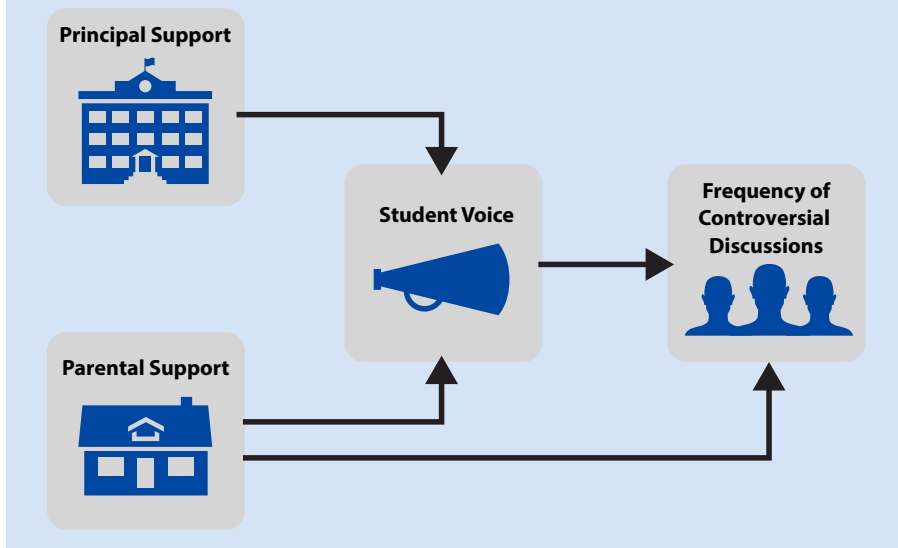
At the time of this writing, there is support from special-interest groups and at least one state-level policymaker for a ban against teachers discussing any political issues, court cases, and current legislation in schools.²² Despite such opposition, controversial-issue discussions are central to supporting youth civic learning and promoting the health of a democracy by countering the worrying trends in polarization and incivility. Our findings have three major implications:

- Teachers who already value promoting discussions by making sure that students have a voice are in a unique position to be champions for integrating controversial-issue discussions into their schools' curriculum. These teachers could be some of the first that the school or district supports with professional development to integrate controversial-issue discussions; then they could help other

teachers through mentorship and a train-the-trainer model.

- Teachers and other school personnel need to engage in outreach to parents to help them understand civic education, with a particular focus on collaborating to promote controversial-issue discussions in a nonpartisan context. It is especially important to cultivate parental support by promoting parent engagement in more disadvantaged communities. Conducting outreach to parents can not only help garner support, but also alleviate concerns that teachers may be interested in indoctrinating students in a certain viewpoint. Furthermore, parents can encourage their children to discuss current and controversial issues at home, which in and of itself is a strong driver of civic competencies.
- Unequivocal and explicit support from principals to frame school as an active site of rigorous discourse about wide-ranging social and political issues has enormous, yet often overlooked, potential to advance civic learning. Principals can embody a school climate that not only welcomes discussions of controversial issues, but that also allows students to feel comfortable explor-

Figure 1: Graphic showing the relationship among principal and parental support, student voice, and the frequency with which teachers engage in controversial discussions in their classes, based on analysis of survey data. The results were: (1) Principal and parent support directly influences teachers' values about student voice. The more support teachers perceive from principals and parents, the more comfortable they are with students' right to express their opinions and to disagree with them. (2) Teachers' values about student voice and parental support directly influence the frequency of controversial discussions in classrooms. The more parental support that teachers perceive and the more comfortable they are promoting student voice, the more likely they are to engage in controversial discussions in their classrooms. (3) Principal support only influences the frequency of controversial discussions by its impact on teachers' values about student voice.



ing their opinions and views on political issues without indoctrinating them into a specific set of beliefs. Educators may want to consider involving principals in conducting outreach to and partnerships with parents in the community as a strategy for fostering civic learning.

The ability to navigate the political climate of the community in which they teach is a serious issue for a significant number of educators. Although high school Civics and Government teachers' primary charge is to prepare students for informed civic participation, our survey data show that 25 percent feared that

Paving the Way to Effective Discussions

The Teaching for Democracy Alliance toolkit recommends the following steps to promote discussions of controversial issues:

- **Teachers** should assign and facilitate discussion and deliberation of local or national issues or policies. They should also teach students about the process of deliberation. Lastly, and most importantly, teachers should seek opportunities for training/professional development in controversial-issue discussion.
- **School leaders** should explicitly support classroom discussion of current and controversial issues. They should also provide training on classroom discussion for teachers as well as providing discussion activities in all social studies classes about timely material or connecting history to today's election topics.
- **District leaders** should explicitly support classroom discussion with resources when appropriate and potentially accompany resources with a letter of support.

they would face pushback from their stakeholders, especially parents. Many teachers indicated that their fears were based on the experience of receiving vigorous criticism from a parent or supervisor when they thought they were simply teaching civics in a nonpartisan manner. We were reminded of this important finding in 2017, when our partners on the Teaching for Democracy Alliance (TFDA) voiced similar concerns coming from the educators they work with. Many teachers felt the need to integrate controversial-issues discussions more than ever because of the many reasons cited above, yet they often felt helpless upon realizing that they had to win their own campaign to do so. That is why TFDA member organizations co-created a 2018 toolkit to help teachers advocate for strong civic-learning experiences for all students.²³ The toolkit provides concrete ways for schools to self-assess which of their practices are consistent with research-based best practices to promote civic learning. It is designed as a conversation tool for teachers, school administrators, parents, and others who are interested in advancing civic education of students in their community. The TFDA toolkit is but one way to help teachers and stakeholders feel more confident about engaging in controversial-issues discussions and ultimately to support youth civic learning and engagement in ways that promote productive contributions to society. Today's students are introduced to political discourse through adults' examples, and currently these examples are far from ideal. At the same time, we have an opportunity to reinvent how we promote productive deliberation in our classrooms and whom we can enlist to support these efforts in order to encourage better civic-learning outcomes for all students. 🌐

Notes

1. National Center for Education Statistics, "The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2010" (Washington, D.C.: NCES, 2011), <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2010/2011466.pdf>.
2. The Center for Information and Research on Civic

Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, "All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement" (Medford, Mass.: CIRCLE, 2013), <https://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CIRCLE-youthvoting-individualPages.pdf>; CIRCLE, "From #Parkland to the Polls: Teen Activism and Youth Voting in 2018" (Medford, Mass.: CIRCLE, 2018), <https://civicyouth.org/from-parkland-to-the-polls-teen-activism-and-youth-voting-in-2018>.

3. Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, "Do Discussion, Debate, and Simulations Boost NAEP Civics Performance?" (Medford, Mass.: CIRCLE, 2013), https://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CIRCLE_NAEPBechtelFactSheetApril30.final_.pdf; National Center for Education Statistics, "The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2010."
4. Peter Levine, Cynthia Gibson et al., "The Civic Mission of Schools" (Medford, Mass.: CIRCLE and Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003), <https://civicyouth.org/special-report-the-civic-mission-of-schools>. *The Civic Mission of Schools* was originally published in 2003 as a result of a consensus among civic education experts on the six practices that were essential in preparation of students for civic life. These practices included formal instruction in government, history, law, and democracy; incorporation of classroom discussions of current issues and events; community service and service learning; extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for students to be involved in their schools and communities; student participation in school governance; and opportunities for simulation of civic practices.
5. Stanley Feldman, Simon Jackman, Shaun Ratcliff, and Shawn Treier, "Measuring Ideology over Time: Sorting Out Partisan and Electoral Polarization in the American Public" (Princeton, N.J.: Authors, 2018), <https://asiapolmeth.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/polmeth/files/shawntreier.pdf>; Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009); Cass Sunstein, *Echo Chambers: Bush v. Gore, Impeachment, and Beyond* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/sunstein/echo.pdf>; *polarization* is defined here as the tendency for people to have more extreme political views, with fewer individuals adopting moderate positions.
6. Cass Sunstein, "The Law of Group Polarization," *University of Chicago Law School, John M. Olin Law & Economics Working Paper No. 91* (December 1999), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=199668>.
7. David Schkade, Cass Sunstein, and Reid Hastie, "What Happened on Deliberation Day?" *University of Chicago Law School, John M. Olin Law & Economics Working Paper No. 298, AEI-Brookings Joint Center Working Paper No. 06-19* (2006), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=911646>; Pew Research Center, "Partisanship and Political Animosity in 2016" (Washington, D.C.: Pew, 2016), www.people-press.org/2016/06/22/partisanship-and-political-animosity-in-2016.
8. University of Chicago NORC, "General Social Surveys data: Can people be trusted?" (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago NORC, 1972–2016), <https://gssdataexplorer.norc.uchicago.edu/variables/441/vshow>.
9. Stanley Feldman, Simon Jackman, Shaun Ratcliff, and Shawn Treier, "Measuring Ideology over Time: Sorting Out Partisan and Electoral Polarization in the American Public," a paper presented at the Asian Political Methodology Meetings. (Princeton,

N.J.: Princeton University, 2018), <https://asiapolmeth.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/polmeth/files/shawntreier.pdf>; Robert Faris, Hal Roberts, Bruce Edling, Nikki Bourassa, Ethan Zuckerman, and Yochai Benkler, "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election" (Cambridge, Mass.: Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, 2018), <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:3375925>.

10. Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Michael Barthel, and Elisa Shearer, "The Modern News Consumer: News Attitudes and Practices in the Digital Era" (Washington, D.C.: Pew, July 2016), <http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/07/the-modern-news-consumer/>.
11. Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet" (Washington, D.C.: Pew, February 2018), www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media.
12. Seth Flaxman, Sharad Goel, and Justin Rao, "Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80 (2016), 298–320.
13. Michela Del Vicario, Gianna Vivaldo, Alessandro Bessi, Fabiana Zollo, Antonio Scala, Guido Caldarelli and Walter Quattrociocchi Del Vicario, "Echo Chambers: Emotional Contagion and Group Polarization on Facebook" *Scientific Reports* 6 (2016), www.nature.com/articles/srep37825; Walter Quattrociocchi, Antonio Scala, and Cass Sunstein, (June 13, 2016). "Echo Chambers on Facebook," available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2795110> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2795110>
14. Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
15. Judith Torney-Purta, Rainer Lehmann, Hans Oswald, and Wolfram Schulz, "Citizenship and Education in Twenty-Eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen" (Amsterdam: The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement [IEA], 2011), http://pub.iewa.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Electronic_versions/CIVED_Phase2_Age_Fourteen.pdf; Michael McDevitt and Spiro Kiouis, "Experiments in Political Socialization: Kids Voting USA as a Model for Civic Education Reform" (Medford, Mass.: CIRCLE, 2006), <http://civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP49McDevitt.pdf>.
16. Diana Hess, *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2009); Gina Masullo Chen and Shuning Lu, "Online Political Discourse: Exploring Differences in Effects of Civil and Uncivil Disagreement in News Website Comments," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 61 (2017), 108–125.
17. Michela Del Vicario, Gianna Vivaldo, Alessandro Bessi, Fabiana Zollo, Antonio Scala, Guido Caldarelli and Walter Quattrociocchi Del Vicario, "Echo Chambers: Emotional Contagion and Group Polarization on Facebook," *Scientific Reports* 6 (2016), www.nature.com/articles/srep37825; Walter Quattrociocchi, Antonio Scala, and Cass Sunstein, "Echo Chambers on Facebook" (Cambridge, Mass.: Authors, June 2016), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2795110; Ellen Middaugh, Benjamin Bowyer, and Joseph Kahne, "U Suk! Participatory Media and Youth Experiences with Political Discourse," *Youth & Society* 49 (2017), 902–922; Gina Masullo Chen and Shuning Lu, "Online Political Discourse: Exploring Differences in Effects of Civil and Uncivil Disagreement in News Website Comments," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 61 (2017), 108–125.

18. Michael Dimock, Carroll Doherty, Jocelyn Kiley, and Russ Oates, "Political Polarization in the American Public" (Washington, D.C.: Pew, 2014); Morris Fiorina and Samuel Abrams, "Political Polarization in the American Public," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 563–88; Gary Orfield and Erica Frankenberg, "Increasingly Segregated and Unequal Schools as Courts Reverse Policy," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 50 (2014): 718–34; Sean Reardon, Demetra Kalogrides, and Ken Shores, "The Geography of Racial/Ethnic Test Score Gaps," *The American Journal of Sociology* (forthcoming), <http://cepa.stanford.edu/content/geography-raciaethnic-test-score-gaps>; Sean Reardon, "The Widening Academic Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations" in *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children*, eds. Greg Duncan and Richard J. Murnane (New York, N.Y.: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011); Sean Reardon and Kendra Bischoff, "Growth in the Residential Segregation of Families by Income, 1970–2009," (Stanford, Calif.: US2010 Project, November 2011), <https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Diversity/Data/Report/report111111.pdf>; Sean Reardon and Kendra Bischoff, "Income Inequality and Income Segregation," *American Journal of Sociology* 116 (2011): 1092–153; The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, "All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement."
19. Diana Hess, "Controversies about Controversial Issues in Democratic Education," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37 (2004): 257–261.
20. Peter Levine and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, "Civic Education and Deeper Learning" (Boston, Mass.: Jobs for the Future, 2015), <https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Civic-Education-and-Deeper-Learning-012815.pdf>.
21. For more detailed information about our methodology, please refer to the CIRCLE report "All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement," <https://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CIRCLE-youthvoting-individualPages.pdf>.
22. Avery Anapol, "Pennsylvania Lawmaker Introduces Bill to Ban Teachers from Discussing Politics, Government in Classrooms," *The Hill* (September 19, 2018), <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/407415-pennsylvania-lawmaker-introduces-bill-to-ban-teachers-from-discussing>.
23. Teaching for Democracy Alliance, "Teaching for Democracy Alliance Toolkit" (Teaching for Democracy Alliance, 2018), www.teachingfordemocracy.org/join-us.html.

KEI KAWASHIMA-GINSBERG is the Director of The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University. **REY JUNCO** is the Senior Researcher of the CIRCLE, which is a nonpartisan national research institute that focuses on youth civic learning and engagement.



Teaching Social Justice with Primary Sources

The Alfred Dreyfus Affair

Lesson plans drawn from the Lorraine Beitler Collection of the Dreyfus Affair, University of Pennsylvania Libraries

sceti.library.upenn.edu/dreyfus/lesson_plans.cfm

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA LIBRARIES KISLAK CENTER

Citizen U[®]
Preparing tomorrow's citizens today

Inspire students with civic action. [Citizen U](#) lesson plans integrate civics into math, science, English, and social studies. Each [lesson](#) uses primary sources from the Library of Congress and inquiry to drive learning that engages students in civics action.



These dynamic lessons were created by Barat Education Foundation, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and DePaul University through a grant from the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources TPS program.

[Free lesson plans](#) are available for elementary, middle school, and high school teachers who are ready to ignite student civic mindedness.

[Download](#) lessons and teacher guides to join the movement and make a difference!

