The Greensboro Four: Their WHY

A Lesson in Student Protest in Civics

Grades 6 to 12 | Five Day Interdisciplinary RST

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

Essential Question

Why did the Greensboro Four decide that they could no longer accept segregation, and how did that purpose shape their decision to act?

NJSLS and CCLS Connections

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.3.8.CivicsPI.4, 6.3.8.CivicsPD.3 and 6.3.8.CivicsPR.3. NJSLS ELA Grade 6 pathway: RI.CR.6.1, RI.AA.6.7, RI.MF.6.6 and W.AW.6.1. CCLS: RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.7 and WHST.6–8.1. Grades 9 to 12 extension: RH.9–10.1, RH.11–12.1 and WHST.9–12.1. Mathematics and science activities apply quantitative reasoning and controlled comparisons; they do not claim complete disciplinary standards coverage.

Social Studies, ELA, Mathematics and Science

Investigate student agency, nonviolent protest, economic claims and the limits of evidence. Read Sources 1 to 4. Complete daily responses and the assessment. Use at least two sources in the final argument. Historical readings below are original instructional summaries, not primary source transcripts.

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Day 1 | Why Accept Humiliation Any Longer?

Do Now

Why would a demand for lunch counter service become a demand for dignity?

Source 1: Why Accept Humiliation Any Longer?

On February 1, 1960, four first year students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College entered the Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina. They were Ezell Blair Jr., later known as Jibreel Khazan, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil and David Richmond. They sat at a lunch counter reserved for white customers and requested service. Staff refused to serve them. The students remained seated until the store closed. Their purpose was equal treatment and dignity. The immediate request for service challenged a system that assigned unequal status according to race. Nonviolent action did not mean acceptance of injustice. Remaining at the counter made exclusion visible in an ordinary commercial space. The university archives preserves photographs and records about the students and their legacy. These sources help historians identify people and actions. A later Smithsonian remembrance reports that McCain associated protesting with extraordinary power and confidence. This recollection helps us study personal meaning, while reminding us that one person's later memory is not the private voice of all four students.

Source note: North Carolina A&T University Archives and Smithsonian. Original instructional synthesis.

Quick Write

Why did remaining seated express a refusal to accept unequal status? Use two details from Source 1.

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