

# Revealing Racist Roots:



<http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/jena-6/>

## The 3 R's for Teaching About the Jena 6

**Network of Teacher Activist Groups (TAG)**

*Edited by Ariana Mangual and Bree Picower*

September 20, 2007

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>1. The Network of Teacher Activist Groups (TAG)</b>  | <b>p. 3</b>  |
| <b>2. Statement from TAG in English by Pauline Lipman</b>   | <b>p. 4</b>  |
| <b>3. Statement from TAG in Spanish by Pauline Lipman</b>   | <b>p. 5</b>  |
| <b>4. How to Use This Guide</b>   | <b>p. 6</b>  |
| <b>5. The Historical Context of American Racism</b>   | <b>p. 6</b>  |
| a. Placing Jena in a Historical Context by Bree Picower   | p. 6         |
| b. Examining Racial Progress by Mary E. Kussmann  | p. 7         |
| c. Social Causes Behind Racism by Harvey Lichtman   | p. 7         |
| d. Individual and Institutional Racism by Ariana Mangual  | p. 7         |
| e. History of Lynching in America by John Lynch   | p. 8         |
| f. Privilege and Symbols by Fabienne Doucet   | p. 10        |
| <b>6. Linking to Literature</b>   | <b>p. 11</b> |
| a. Two Americas by Rita Kohli   | p. 11        |
| b. The Jena 6 Through James Baldwin’s Eyes by Seth Rader  | p. 11        |
| c. Defining Discrimination by Joeleen Corrales  | p. 12        |
| d. Hate and Violence on Campus by Rita Kohli and Mona Chitkara  | p. 13        |
| e. To Kill Anotha Mockingbird by David Kirkland   | p. 14        |
| <b>7. Media Literacy</b>  | <b>p. 15</b> |
| a. Analyzing Mainstream Coverage by Joeleen Corrales  | p. 15        |
| b. Media “Black-out” by David Stovall   | p. 15        |
| <b>8. Artivism: Responding Through the Arts</b>   | <b>p. 16</b> |
| a. Hip-Hop Response by Marcella Runell-Hall   | p. 16        |
| b. Jena 6 Political Postcard Making by Albert Stabler   | p. 16        |
| c. Create a Jena 6 Soundtrack by Keisha Greene and Vera Stenhouse                                     | p. 16        |
| d. Empowerment, Self-Worth, and Self-Esteem by Dyon Rozier  | p. 17        |
| <b>9. Social Action</b>   | <b>p. 18</b> |
| a. Youth Activism & Movement Building through the Arts and Media<br>by Keisha Greene & Vera Stenhouse | p. 18        |
| b. Write it Up! by Edwin Mayorga  | p. 18        |
| c. Grassroots, Online Organizing by Rosa Rivera-McCutchen and Alprentice<br>McCutchen                 | p. 19        |
| d. The Role of Organizing on the Road to Justice by Ariana Mangual                                    | p. 19        |
| e. Social Action Links compiled by Edwin Mayorga  | p. 20        |
| <b>10. Detailed Mathematics Unit by Rico Gutstein and Joyce Sia</b>                                   | <b>p. 21</b> |
| <b>11. Links to organizations &amp; more information compiled by Edwin Mayorga</b>                    | <b>p. 26</b> |

**Editors:** Ariana Mangual and Bree Picower

**Image finder:** Sandra Gutstein

**Contributors:** Emily Eller, Tene A. Howard

**Copy-Editing:** Keith Catone

**Publicity:** Chela Delgado, Alanna Howe, Karen Zapata

**Translation:** Ariana Mangual and Irenka D. Pareto

**TAG would like to thank all the classroom teachers, graduate students and  
teacher educators that contributed to and supported this guide.**

**The Network of Teacher Activist Groups (TAG)** is a national coalition of grassroots teacher organizing groups that are working for educational justice in their local communities. The creation of this curriculum marks the first collaboration of the TAG network. Currently, TAG consists of the following groups:

The New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) <http://www.nycore.org>

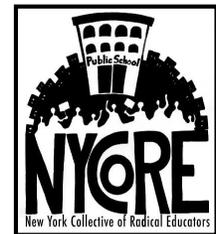
Teachers for Social Justice- Chicago <http://www.teachersforjustice.org/>

Teachers 4 Social Justice- San Francisco <http://www.t4sj.org>

Questions or comments about the curriculum? Contact [info@NYCoRE.org](mailto:info@NYCoRE.org)

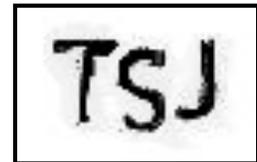
**NEW YORK COLLECTIVE OF RADICAL EDUCATORS:** <http://www.NYCoRE.org>

The New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) is a group of public school educators committed to fighting for social justice in our school system and society at large, by organizing and mobilizing teachers, developing curriculum, and working with community, parent, and student organizations. We are educators who believe that education is an integral part of social change and that we must work both inside and outside the classroom because the struggle for justice does not end when the school bell rings.



**TEACHERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CHICAGO)** <http://www.teachersforjustice.org/>

Teachers for Social Justice (TSJ) was formed in 1999 to provide a space for progressive teachers to organize and impact education policy. The knowledge of teachers, students, and parents is generally excluded from public discourse and decision making about education, and TSJ's initial goals included working to change that. Since that time, TSJ has worked with parents, students, and community members and organizations to fight for education that is pro-justice, anti-racist, multicultural, participatory, and active. From developing social justice curriculum, to studying and analyzing policy documents (e.g., NCLB), to engaging in demonstrations and pickets with youth and community advocates, TSJ has been a voice for teachers to work together for social justice education.



**TEACHERS 4 SOCIAL JUSTICE (SAN FRANCISCO)** <http://www.t4sj.org>

Teachers 4 Social Justice (T4SJ) is a grassroots non-profit teacher support and development organization. Our mission is to provide opportunities for self-transformation, leadership, and community building to educators in order to affect meaningful change in the classroom, school, community and society. T4SJ organizes teachers and community-based educators and implements programs and projects that develop empowering learning environments, more equitable access to resources and power, and realizing a just and caring culture.



**REVEALING RACIST ROOTS: The 3 R's for Teaching about the Jena 6**  
A Modern Day Lynching and Struggle for Justice

The history of almost 400 years of racist violence and legal repression against African Americans is alive today in Jena, Louisiana. The case of the Jena 6 is a modern-day lynching. Six black students at Jena High School in Central Louisiana were arrested last December after a school fight in which a white student was beaten after taunting a black student with racial slurs. The six black students were charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder and faced up to 100 years in prison without parole. Mychal Bell, one of the Jena 6, was convicted in July and potentially faced up to 22 years in prison. The school fight was the culmination of a series of racist attacks that began when black students sat under the “white tree” in the schoolyard. The next day three nooses were hanging from the tree. The school superintendent dismissed the nooses as a “prank,” Black students protested, and the local District Attorney came to the school and told them, “I can take away your lives with a stroke of my pen.” Now he is leading the charge to convict these young men.

But the Jena 6 case shows that the legacy of the Civil Rights movement is alive in our youth, communities, and schools. The courage of the six students in Jena, their families, and community members who refuse to be cowed by racist attacks has been uplifted nationally through petitions, demonstrations, legal support, and alternative media. As we write this on September 14, 2007, the outpouring of national support for the Jena 6 has pushed the court to vacate the conviction of Mychal Bell and reduce charges against the other students. But they are still not free and justice has not been done.

The Jena 6 is much bigger than Jim Crow being found alive and well in the South. It crystallizes the pervasive racist police violence, everyday discrimination, and criminalization faced by African American and other youth of color – on the streets and in their schools. The Jena 6 are high school students, youth like the youth in our classrooms with experiences that are all too similar. Even the youngest students can reflect on the unfairness in this case: two systems of justice—one white, one black—and the importance of fighting back.

Last April several teacher activist groups across the country came together to form a network, Teacher Activist Groups (TAG), to challenge injustice through teaching and participation in social movements. We developed this resource guide because we believe the Jena 6 case is a critical one about which teachers can make a difference. How can the Jena 6 engage our students in an examination of the history and current reality of racism? How can this case open up space for students to examine their own experiences with racism and to build solidarity? The Jena 6 might have gone unnoticed nationally, ignored by corporate media, if activists had not used alternative media to get the word out. This could be a starting point to develop students’ critical media literacy and to explore how media can be used to challenge injustice. The national outpouring to defend the Jena 6 has already had an impact. How can teachers help students find their own ways to act? We offer this guide as a resource, and we call on educators to seize on this critical case to teach and act to make a difference.

Pauline Lipman  
September 14, 2007

## Los Jena 6 – Un Linchamiento Moderno y la Lucha por la Justicia.

La historia de casi 400 años de violencia racista y represión legal contra la población afro americana sigue viva hoy en Jena, Lousiana. El caso, conocido por “Jena 6,” es un linchamiento moderno. Seis estudiantes afro americanos fueron arrestados el pasado diciembre, tras una pelea en la cual un estudiante blanco recibió una paliza después de haberse mofado de un estudiante afro americano con insultos racistas. Los estudiantes afro americanos fueron acusados de conspiración e intento de asesinato. Mychal Bell, uno de los Jena 6, fue condenado a 22 años de cárcel. La pelea escolar fue la culminación de diversos ataques racistas que empezaron cuando estudiantes afro americanos se sentaron bajo el denominado “árbol blanco” de la escuela. Al día siguiente tres horcas fueron colgadas del árbol. El superintendente de la escuela restó importancia al incidente tachándolo de "broma". El fiscal del distrito local, quien amenazó a los Jena 6 con un “les puedo quitar la vida de un plumazo,” es ahora el encargado de dirigir los esfuerzos para condenar a estos jóvenes.

El caso de los Jena 6 muestra que la herencia del Movimiento por los Derechos Civiles está viva en nuestra juventud, en las comunidades y en las escuelas. El coraje de los seis estudiantes de Jena, y sus familias, que no se acobardaron por los ataques racistas, ha sido reconocido nacionalmente a través de peticiones, apoyo legal, y medios alternativos. Mientras escribimos esto, a 14 de Septiembre de 2007, el número creciente de reacciones de apoyo nacional para los Jena 6 ha provocado que la Corte invalide la condena de Mychal Bell. Pero los Jena 6 aún no están libres y la justicia aún no se ha llevado a cabo.

Este caso plasma con claridad la omnipresente violencia racista policial, la discriminación y la criminalización que cada día deben afrontar los afro americanos y otra juventud de color en las calles y en sus escuelas. Los Jena 6 son estudiantes de secundaria, como los jóvenes en nuestras clases, compartiendo experiencias que son demasiado similares. Pero incluso los estudiantes más jóvenes pueden reflexionar sobre la injusticia en este caso: dos sistemas de justicia - uno blanco, el otro negro, y la importancia de defender nuestros derechos.

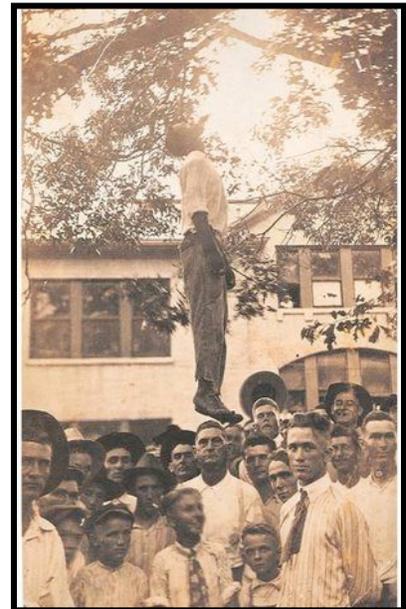
El pasado mes de abril varios grupos de maestros activistas de todo el país nos unimos para formar una red, TAG (en inglés Teacher Activist Groups) con el objetivo de apoyarse los unos a los otros, mientras trabajamos para desafiar la injusticia mediante la enseñanza y la participación en movimientos sociales. Así, hemos desarrollado esta guía de recursos porque creemos que el caso de los Jena 6 es una situación donde los profesores podemos marcar la diferencia. ¿Cómo puede este caso motivar a nuestros estudiantes a hacer un examen crítico de la historia y de la realidad actual del racismo? ¿Cómo podemos facilitar que los estudiantes examinen sus propias experiencias con el racismo y construyan solidaridad? El Jena 6 pudo haber sido ignorado a nivel nacional por los medios corporativos, si los grupos activistas no hubieran utilizado medios alternativos para sacar el caso a la luz pública. Este podría ser un punto de partida para que los estudiantes desarrollen una lectura crítica de los medios de comunicación y exploren cómo dichos medios se pueden utilizar para desafiar la injusticia. El empeño nacional para defender los Jena 6 ya ha tenido un impacto. ¿Cómo pueden los profesores facilitar que sus estudiantes encuentren sus propias maneras de involucrarse? Ofrecemos este guía como recurso, e invitamos a que los educadores aprovechen este caso para enseñar y actuar con el fin de lograr un cambio.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

**This guide is most useful when used online, as opposed to a paper copy.** Most of the resources in this guide are web-based links, so when viewed online, one can just click the links. **It is best viewed with Adobe Reader:** <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. If you need a PDF or Word version of this resource, please visit <http://www.nycore.org>, <http://www.t4sj.org>, or <http://www.teachersforjustice.org> where you can download a free copy. Whether you plan on using this guide immediately or sometime in the future, it is recommended that you visit the links **NOW** and **print out** any relevant articles immediately because these links may expire at any point.

## 5. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF AMERICAN RACISM

**PLACING JENA IN AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT:** In order for students to see the Jena incident within a broader social context, it is important to explore various incidents in U.S. history in which Black men's rights have been violated due to individual and institutional racism. Before introducing the Jena situation print out summaries found through the links below of the Scottsboro Trial, the Emmitt Till murder, the Rodney King incident and the Amadou Diallo case, along with a description of the Jena situation. Cross out any references to dates or timelines in the articles. Have students work in groups to figure out when they believe the incident happened, and what clues they are finding to make that decision. Facilitate group discussion about when these events occurred, the social contexts that led to these events, and the actual historical dates. This inquiry helps students to understand Jena as not an isolated incident, but rather representative of a history of American racism that is still very much alive today.



Lynching of Lige Daniels,  
<http://www.ngbiwm.com/Exhibits/lynching.htm>

**Scottsboro:** <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr114.html>

**Rodney King:** [http://www.bookrags.com/Rodney\\_King](http://www.bookrags.com/Rodney_King)

**Emmitt Till:** [http://www.africanaonline.com/emmett\\_till\\_the\\_boy.htm](http://www.africanaonline.com/emmett_till_the_boy.htm)

**Amadou Diallo:**

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C01E7D61639F935A15751C0A9669C8B63&n=Top%2fReference%2fTimes%20Topics%2fPeople%2fD%2fDiallo%2c%20Amadou>

**Jena 6:** <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/07/10/1413220>

**EXAMINING RACIAL PROGRESS:** Just how far have we come since slavery, Jim Crow, Black Codes, and Reconstruction? Have students research, in triads, various Reconstruction topics. Students should study both pro and anti-reconstruction topics. Possible ideas are Jim Crow Laws and the origin of "Jim Crow," Black Codes, the KKK, Radical Republicans, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments. Then give students information on the Jena situation. Have students use the information to write a comparative analysis on what the country was like during Reconstruction with regard to racial equality, versus today in light of the Jena 6 situation.

<http://howard.edu/library/reference/guides/reconstructionera/default.htm>

[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories\\_events\\_reconstruct.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_reconstruct.html) - 27k

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/blackcodes.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction>



**SOCIAL CAUSES BEHIND RACISM:** What is the social environment in rural Louisiana that helped create the racist frame-up of the Jena 6? Learning about the local social context of the attack on Black students in Jena can raise questions about broader problems and possible solutions. For example, how do the conditions of jobs, poverty, and housing help build racial tensions? With the article linked to below from *the World Socialist Web Site*, students can explore the following questions: What changes does the article imply are needed to establish social justice in Jena? What problems are there for securing social equality in jobs and housing, as well as in education? Do these problems apply to society as whole outside Jena? Students could also investigate what socialism is and why socialists consider this background information important to an understanding of the Jena 6 case. <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/jul2007/jena-j31.shtml>.

**INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM:** In this exercise, students will learn about the difference and connection between institutional and individual racism and will identify examples of each throughout the Jena 6 events. The goal is for students to understand that individual racist behavior is steeped in systemic processes of institutional structures that support and protect those in power. After providing definitions:

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Individual+Racism> and

[http://civilliberty.about.com/od/raceequalopportunity/g/inst\\_racism.htm](http://civilliberty.about.com/od/raceequalopportunity/g/inst_racism.htm), students work in pairs

to compare the definitions and make a Venn diagram with the two terms. Then distribute the Jena 6 timeline [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jena\\_Six](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jena_Six) and ask student pairs to diagram examples of institutional and individual racism throughout the case. After discussing the students' responses, pose the following question: What connections do you see between the fact the D.A. said that he could "take away student's lives with the stroke of a pen" and existence of a judicial system that allowed Mychal Bell to be tried in front of an all White jury (see detailed math lesson starting on pg. 21)? Students can examine other instances of individual and institutional racism and discuss or write about how the Jena community is working to or could work to combat both forms of racism (see the social action section for examples on pg. 18-20). It is also important for students to examine institutional and individual examples of racism in their local context and discuss ways to combat these examples. [\*Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice\* by Maurianne Adams, Pat Griffin, Lee Anne Bell](#) provides more support in teaching about racism and other issues of social justice.

## HISTORY OF LYNCHING IN AMERICA:

A noose hanging from a tree in Jena, Louisiana symbolizes much more than an individual act of racial intolerance. Rather than understanding this event as mischief on the part of the white teens, students must be able to see the noose connected to a history of racial genocide in



<http://www.withoutsanctuary.org>

America. Nooses, and lynching, have been tools of violence against People of Color in America during the last two centuries. Lynching was an institutionalized and accepted form of violence in the United States, going on for more than 150 years without government intervention. Almost 5,000 people have been lynched during the post-Civil War era, with more than 3/4 of the victims being African American and more than 85% of lynchings occurring in the South. To truly understand the gravity of the incident in Jena, examine the history of lynching in the United States and see the gruesome brutality that contextualizes the injustice of this case. Leading students through an introduction and history of lynching in the US, will better inform any discussion of the nooses hung on the tree in Jena. The links below are a starting point for teachers and students to critically engage in the underlying issues of racism and violence entangled in the Jena case.

### Those Who Used Lynching as a Tool of Genocide

One group that used lynching as a tool of genocide was the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Born out of the South in the late 1800's, and dressed in white hoods to hide their identities, the KKK is often the first image that comes to mind when pondering the issue of violence imposed on People of Color. Using cross burning, lynching, and other forms of violence and intimidation, the KKK opposes almost all ethnic and social minorities, while focusing most of their hate-based attention on African Americans.

**Ku Klux Klan (KKK):** a starting point for research [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku\\_Klux\\_Klan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan)

**Arkansas racial extermination:** [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/tools\\_riot.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/tools_riot.html)

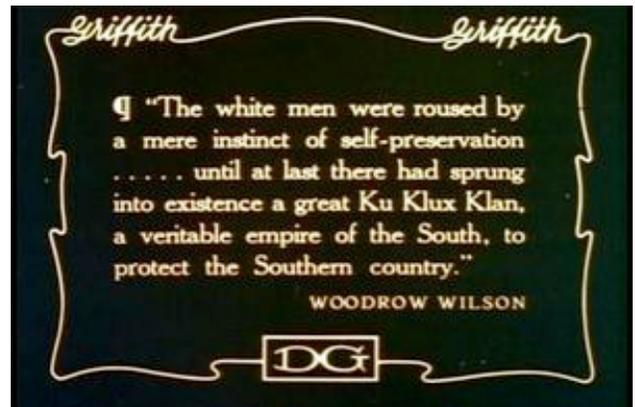
**Birth of a Nation film information** [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories\\_events\\_birth.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_birth.html)

### Photos of Lynchings

Seeing photographs of the victims of lynching is a powerful and important experience. Almost never dealt with in public education, violence perpetrated against People of Color often seems so distant that it doesn't truly impact us when discussed in the abstract. The photos and video found on the Without Sanctuary website are hard to look at, but they provide students with a historical context that leads to Jena.

<http://www.withoutsanctuary.org> to view photos or a movie

<http://www.ngbiwm.com/Exhibits/lynching.htm>



[Woodrow Wilson Quote in Birth of a Nation](#)



[http://www.thebody.com/visualaids/web\\_gallery/2005/blake/06.html?m84o](http://www.thebody.com/visualaids/web_gallery/2005/blake/06.html?m84o)

### *Billy Holiday's "Strange Fruit"*

By listening, watching, and reading the lyrics of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," students hear a song steeped in a climate of racial tension and racial violence in America during the early 20th century. Break down the lines of the song, looking for imagery and metaphors that Holiday uses to paint a picture of Southern brutality.

**Lyrics:** <http://www.strangefruit.org>

**Audio:** <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/film.html>

**Video clip:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4ZyuULy9zs>

### *Those That Spoke Out Against Lynching*

Many individuals and institutions spoke out courageously against lynching. Researching these people will shed light on the work that must be done by each generation to fight against injustices. To demonstrate learning, students can use information gathered from the sites below to write letters or create flyers/pamphlets that inform others about anti-lynching campaigns.

**Ida B. Wells:** [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/chicago/peopleevents/p\\_wells.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/chicago/peopleevents/p_wells.html)

**Tuskegee Institute:** <http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Base/8507/NLists.htm>

**Paul Robeson:** [http://socialjustice.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/index.php/Paul\\_Robeson](http://socialjustice.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/index.php/Paul_Robeson)

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):**

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohhtml/exhibit/aopart6b.html>

[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories\\_org\\_naacp.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_org_naacp.html)

[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/education\\_lesson7.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/education_lesson7.html) (multi-day lesson plan)

### *What Should They Do?*

The school superintendent has had the "hanging tree" in Jena cut down. The following article claims: "Some say it will provide a clean slate, a new beginning. Others say it will solve nothing." Have students read the article and discuss where they stand on this action.

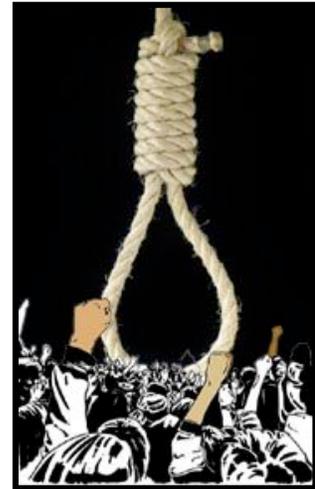


<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070731/NEWS01/707310334/1060/NEWS01A>

### *What Can We Do?*

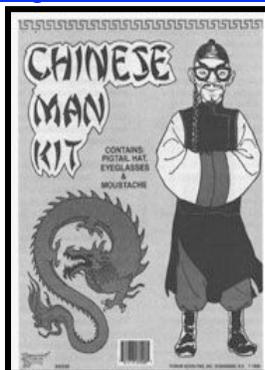
After students have explored the history of racial violence inflicted on African Americans in the United States, students should be introduced to the Jena 6. By this point, they may also be ready to take action related to the case. Visit <http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/> where students and teachers can sign a Jena 6 Petition, write a letter of your own to Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco, fundraise in support of the Jena 6 defense fund, and/or make plans to travel to Jena.

**PRIVILEGE AND SYMBOLS:** One of the most striking aspects of the Jena incident is White townspeople and students' seeming lack of awareness of the symbolism held by the nooses hanging from the tree. By calling the hanging of the nooses a "prank," these observers trivialized a painful symbol for African Americans who saw a blatant and intentional invocation of the widespread and long-standing lynching tradition among the KKK and other White Supremacist hate groups. This example is a springboard for discussing White privilege—even broadening the conversation to discuss other forms of privilege (i.e., male privilege, heterosexual privilege, class privilege, and able-bodied privilege)—and to engage students in thinking about the power of symbols and images, particularly those that hold historical significance for some groups but not for others. Symbols and images can also change in meaning over time—for example, images of Che Guevara have become popular adornments for t-shirts and postcards, but direct survivors of Stalin and their family members (for example) might find the celebration of Communism offensive or painful. Print out symbols and images from the links below (without accompanying explanations) and have students try to identify what they represent, what groups of people might feel angry, threatened, or hurt by seeing them displayed, and what the parameters should be in a democracy for freedom of expression through wearing, posting, or otherwise publicly displaying these and similar symbols and images.



<http://houston.indymedia.org/images/noose2.jpg>

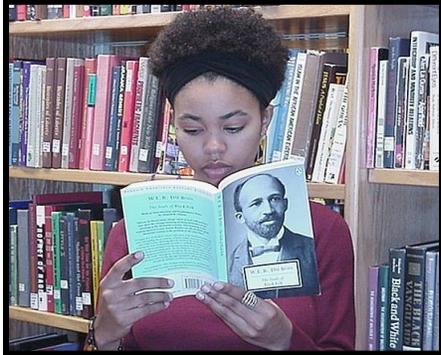
- Symbols of Hate (White Supremacy):** [http://www.tolerance.org/rthas/section4\\_1\\_1.jsp](http://www.tolerance.org/rthas/section4_1_1.jsp)  
**Rebel Flag:** [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june00/flag\\_5-29.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june00/flag_5-29.html)  
**Native American imagery:** [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/26/fluffandfeathers.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/26/fluffandfeathers.shtml)  
**Blackface:** <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackface>  
**Controversy over cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands-Posten\\_Muhammad\\_cartoons\\_controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands-Posten_Muhammad_cartoons_controversy)  
**Abercrombie & Fitch controversy over racist Asian-themed t-shirts:**  
<http://www.snopes.com/racial/business/tshirts.asp>  
**Abercrombie & Fitch controversy over sexist t-shirts:**  
<http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1513153/20051107/index.jhtml?headlines=true>



- Halloween costumes**  
**Terry Schiavo:** <http://www.tsl.pomona.edu/index.php?article=1059>  
**Chinese Man Kit:**  
[http://www.tolerance.org/images/teach/pt/ia/PT\\_IMA\\_Chinese\\_Reg.jpg](http://www.tolerance.org/images/teach/pt/ia/PT_IMA_Chinese_Reg.jpg)  
**“Kung Fool”:**  
[http://yellowworld.org/images/articles/specific/10\\_02/disguise.gif](http://yellowworld.org/images/articles/specific/10_02/disguise.gif)  
**Prince Harry’s Nazi Costume:**  
<http://www.talkleft.com/story/2005/01/13/908/62611>  
Other relevant costumes: “Arab” masks, “Gypsy” costumes, “homeless person”, “battered woman,” “dumb blonde,” etc.

## 6. LINKING TO LITERATURE

**TWO AMERICAS:** The Jena 6 is a case where Black and White young men have been judged and sentenced differently for campus fighting, through different lenses, as if in different



<http://www.purdue.edu/bcc/library/books.h>

countries with different laws. Using an excerpt from DuBois' *Souls of Black Folk* and a video clip of **Cornell West and Mos Def on the Bill Maher show**, students will explore the concepts of a double consciousness and a dual America. Read the excerpt from DuBois accessed at <http://www.bartleby.com/114/1.html> (Paragraph 3-4) with students, and discuss what DuBois feels it means to have a double consciousness being Black and American. Highlight the quote, "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face."

Discuss with students what DuBois says the Black man in America wishes for. What about America might cause a Black (wo)man to wish this? Do you feel that this wish is/could be a reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Then introduce the story of the Jena 6 using an oral summary or news articles. Finally, watch the first 3:30 minutes of a clip from The Bill Maher Show featuring Mos Def and Cornell West available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Glf1-53tAds>. Maher says that White America is not aware of the story of the Jena 6, what do you think he means, why is that possible? What does Mos Def mean when he talks about "two Americas?" How do you think the Jena 6, or Black men in general, are "falsely characterized" in this country? How does this discussion reference/echo DuBois' concept of double consciousness? (Warning: Clip contains explicit language).

**THE JENA 6 THROUGH JAMES BALDWIN'S EYES:** Use Baldwin's essay, "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation" from *The Fire Next Time*, 1963 <http://www.valdosta.edu/~cawalker/baldwin.htm>. First published in *The Progressive* in 1961, then again on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1963, addressed to his 15 year old nephew James, the essay provides a scathing look at American racism. Baldwin's letter is at once a warning of the perils facing his nephew as a young Black man in American and a message of hope for his liberation and the end of white supremacy. It is a deeply personal letter



<http://jonkeegan.com/illo.php?id=107>

on one hand and an open letter to the entire nation on the other. Today, the essay presents a frightening point of reference for how little some things have changed. In reading it, students can be empowered by a deeper understanding of what is happening in Jena and the rest of America today, and at the same time revive Baldwin's hope and call for justice. Consider using these guiding questions: This letter written in 1961 is a bitter indictment of American racism. How much of what James Baldwin said about America is still true today? In what ways have we progressed since then toward the freedom he says was being celebrated "100 years to soon"?

**DEFINING DISCRIMINATION:** To introduce the topic of discrimination with elementary aged children, students can define discrimination by writing words or short phrases that describe a time they felt they were treated unfairly because of their age, gender, race, grade, school, home, clothing etc. Turn these words into a collaborative literary project that includes class poetry,

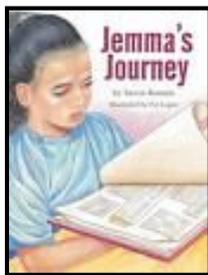


[http://static.flickr.com/1188/682845540\\_7988ef5b4](http://static.flickr.com/1188/682845540_7988ef5b4)

nonfiction stories, essays, or any mode the students would like to use. By beginning with their own experiences, students can examine further discrimination against others. After introducing this topic, students can look at historical examples of discrimination. Some sample books are listed below. The topic of the Jena 6 can be used as a modern day example of discrimination/racism. Describe the events that took place, and ask the students (in groups) if they notice any similarities and differences between what was read in the historic accounts, the Jena 6 example, and the projects they created describing discrimination.

### **Picture Books:**

*Jemma's Journey* by Trevor Romain



Jemma and her African American Grandma share a tragic story from the past. Grandma tells of a horrific incident in Ocoee, FL, in 1920, when two African American men tried to vote and violence erupted. Many of the disturbing details have stayed with her, "Specially the dead man who was hanging from that tree. I'll never forget that." After a restless night spent tossing and turning, young Jemma decides to take action. She rides her bike into town, buys a small oak tree as a memorial to replace the felled hanging tree, and then takes a bus to the appropriate spot to plant it. Along the way, various people offer insight and analogies between the tree and life.

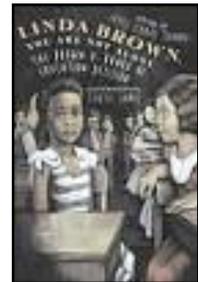
*Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco

This story of interracial friendship during the Civil War between two 15-year-old Union soldiers. tells how Say, who is white and poor, is rescued by African American, Pinkus (Pink). Pink carries Say back to the Georgia where Pink's family were slaves. Pink's family nurses Say back to health and teaches him to read; but before they can leave, intruders drag the boys to prison. Pink is hanged, but Say survives to tell the story and pass it on across generations.

### **Non-Fiction:**

*Linda Brown, You are Not Alone: The Brown vs. Board of Education Decision*  
edited by Joyce Carol Thomas

A collection of personal reflections, stories, and poems from well-known children's authors, who were young people in 1954 when the Supreme Court handed down the decision to desegregate public schools.

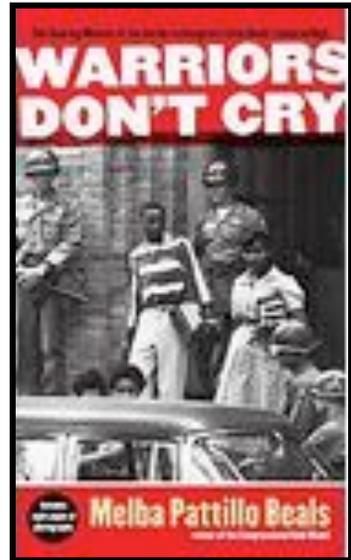


*Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges recounts the story of her involvement, as a six-year-old, in the integration of her school in New Orleans in 1960.

## HATE AND VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS: Little Rock Nine

Using examples of the Little Rock Nine and the Jena 6, this activity will facilitate student understanding about the fear and reality of violence associated with the integration of Black students into historically “white only” school spaces. In this lesson, students can make connections between the book *Warriors Don't Cry* and the Jena 6 story as reported on *Democracy Now*. *Warriors Don't Cry*, is a diary written by 15-year old Melba Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine. It is a story of her desegregation efforts in Little Rock, Arkansas and is edited for young adults. Chapter 7, set in 1957, highlights the extreme hatred that Black students faced when trying to enter this historically white only school. In accessible language, this engaging narrative paints a picture of the intensity of racial hatred that Black youth endured only 50 years ago by both their white peers and adults in the town.



### Activity:

Read chapter 7 with/to (depending on age or reading level) the class, and ask students for their initial reactions, emotions, and thoughts. As a class re-read page 80 (if they have the whole chapter, you can start at the bottom of page 79), which is a discussion of white administrators deciding if they should let the mob of protesters hang one of the Black students, in order to get the rest out to safety. Probe for understanding around lynching, and ask students what they think the author must have been feeling at the time. Discuss the reality and fear associated with white people hanging (killing) Black people, particularly in the context of integrating a white only space.



After reading, show the first seven minutes of *Democracy Now's* documentary of the Jena 6 case, found in the link below. (If the video stream is not accessible, have your students read the first few pages of the transcript of this documentary) and as a class, discuss their thoughts around the incidents of hate and violence on this campus. Compare the Jena 6 case to that of the Little Rock Nine. What are the similarities and differences in the acts of terror and the intent behind them? Compare the perspectives of the school administration in both cases – which students have they supported and what have they said and done to show this support?

<http://play.rbn.com/?url=demnow/demnow/demand/2007/july/video/dnB20070710a.rm&proto=rtp&start=9:23>

**Transcript:** <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/07/10/1413220>

## **TO KILL ANOTHA MOCKINGBIRD:**

### **Jena 6, American Literature, and the “Trials” of Black Men**

The shrill imagery of Jena 6 emits an episodic rerun too often cast in American Literature. In classic works such as Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, Black males are put on trial sadly if only to comment on the failure of human dignity that divides so many Americans. Thus, the common place for a Black man in this American tradition is the courtroom, which serves ironically as a site of heated social and political injustice. Moreover, reading the stories of Tom Robinson and Bigger Thomas on a page is heartbreaking. However, witnessing their stories in popular culture and in real life is a shocking eye-opener of classical complexities played out in contemporary society, linking literature to life in ways that are not only painful, but disturbing. By linking literature to life, teachers can use the various “trial” scenarios endemic in American Literature to comment on and challenge pervasive assumptions that characterize Black men in literature and in life as either guilty until proven innocent or by nature criminal unless made civil. By drawing these comparisons between literature and life, teachers can help students reevaluate the social, judicial, and political violence that many Black men endure and question the continuity of the repellent images of Black men in courtrooms, which reproduce themselves not only in literary texts but also in people’s imaginations. By linking literature and life, teachers can help students talk back to institutions of power using critical textual analysis of “the word and the world” as a tool for reclaiming their lives.

### **Literary texts addressing “trials” of Black men:**

Ernest Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying*  
Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird*  
William Shakespeare’s *Othello*  
Richard Wright’s *Native Son*  
Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*

### **Songs dealing with the “trials” of Black men:**

Snoop Dogg’s “Murder Was the Case”  
Tupac’s “Changes”  
Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power”  
N.W.A.’s “Fuck tha Police”



[http://www.imdb.com/gallery/mptv/1310/Mptv/1310/5344\\_0002.jpg.html?path=gallery&path\\_key=0056592](http://www.imdb.com/gallery/mptv/1310/Mptv/1310/5344_0002.jpg.html?path=gallery&path_key=0056592)

### **Real life “trials” of Black men:**

The Scottsboro Boys case: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/scottsboro/>  
Michael Vick case: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,290061,00.html>  
Kobe Bryant case: <http://www.courttv.com/trials/bryant/>  
Genarlow Wilson case: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16862643/>  
O.J. Simpson case: <http://www.courttv.com/casefiles/simpson/>

## 7. MEDIA LITERACY

**ANALYZING MAINSTREAM COVERAGE:** In order for students to see the multiple ways in which the Jena 6 incident has been reported in the media, they can review newspaper articles and television clips. Students can work in small groups to watch clips and analyze reports critically. Questions can include: Who was interviewed? What perspective was represented? How was the incident described in each report? Did the article or clip compare the incident to previous historical instances? Were some articles or clips shorter than others? Was the report informative or full of opinions? What was left out? How do the mainstream reports compare to independent reports available on <http://www.freethejena6.org/> or the report written for younger readers at [http://www.indykids.net/issues/pdf/indykids\\_iss11.pdf](http://www.indykids.net/issues/pdf/indykids_iss11.pdf). Students should be encouraged to include their own questions and thoughts. A discussion can take place where students share their findings with one another. In culmination, students can create a class newscast of the situation using the information they have gathered while acting as interviewers and the people being interviewed.

### **Newspaper Clippings:**

**Chicago SunTimes** <http://www.suntimes.com/news/mitchell/538124,CST-NWS-mitch02.article>

**Fox News:** <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2007Sep04/0,4670,SchoolFight,00.html>

**USA Today:** [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-09-06-jena\\_N.htm?POE=click-refer](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-09-06-jena_N.htm?POE=click-refer)

### **Television Clips:**

**NBC News:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeFkIj8HbZw>

**CNN:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ws8IEfqIQI>

**Democracy Now:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbQf5GW1WM0>

**MEDIA “BLACK-OUT”:** Why has the Jena 6 trial has been absent from mainstream media?



The last chapter of *Black Power* by Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Toure) and Charles Hamilton is helpful for this discussion.

Appropriately titled "Dynamite in the Ghetto," it speaks to the fear of local and federal authorities of a Black uprising. On pages 155-157 of the 1992 edition, there is a section that begins with "the core problem of the Black ghetto." Here they discuss problems within education. Questions to address: Why do you think the story of the Jena 6 is not in popular media outlets? Break students into groups to discuss why they think the story has been excluded. Teachers and students could then develop a plan to request coverage by mainstream media outlets through letter writing campaigns or bringing a local print or broadcast reporter to class. Additionally, in a chapter in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* by Alfred Memmi, titled "Situations of the colonized," discusses why the colonized are removed from history. Questions to raise: What is a colony? Who is referred to as the colonized? Are there any current situations where people are colonized? Are the Jena 6 being treated like the colonized people in Memmi's book? Why are the colonized removed from history? This allows the use of historical and contemporary examples of resistance to colonization. Another exercise would be a comparative analysis of historical and contemporary colonization. Students could write about how colonized people have been treated historically and compare the treatment of the Jena 6. Comparison groups: Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, the Mau Mau of Kenya, and the Black Power Movement in South Africa (with a focus on Steve Biko).

## 8. ARTIVISM: RESPONDING THROUGH THE ART

**HIP-HOP RESPONSE:** How have various Hip-Hop leaders responded to the Jena 6 case? Have students compare and contrast various strategic interventions and overall effectiveness of responses to the Jena 6 case through internet research. Encourage students to make Venn Diagrams illustrating what different regional activist communities are doing in response including protests, t-shirts, blogging, art/songs, benefit concerts, podcasts, etc.



Artist Mos Def

**A Rapper's video response to Sharpton's critique of Hip-Hop's**

**involvement.** <http://www.prohiphop.com/2007/09/jena-6-rich-rap.html>

**Mos Def stands behind Jena 6:** <http://www.sohh.com/articles/article.php/12522>

**Info about 7/07 rally:** <http://www.prohiphop.com/2007/09/jena-6-septembe.html>

**Students banned from school for wearing JENA 6 t-shirts:**

<http://www.hiphopdx.com/index/news/id.5659/title.school-superintendent-bans-jena-6-tees>

**Web Activism & Benefit Concert for JENA 6:** <http://www.rawkus.com/content/?p=1166>

**Podcast & More Response to JENA 6:** <http://mixtapeshow.net/0907/the-jena-6/>

**JENA 6 POLITICAL POSTCARD MAKING:** In this unit, students will make postcards expressing their responses to the Jena situation to send to officials, organizations, and media outlets. Teachers can begin by providing background information about the Jena 6 through video coverage and interviews.

**Democracy Now! Part 1:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbQf5GW1WM0>

**Part 2:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Emk9yv2YkZo&mode=related&search>

**Parents of Jena 6 speak out:** <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/07/10/1413228>

The class can discuss the reactions and opinions expressed by the Jena 6 parents and two students, Theodore Shaw and Robert Bailey, who were recently released from jail. Students write down quotes from the interviews that they can include in their postcards. Students then work in groups to come up with a common phrase (you win some, you lose some) or advertising slogan (can you hear me now?) and change and/or illustrate them to give them new meanings, relating it to a part of the interview that they think is important. Students will design a postcard that clearly expresses (1) the opinion expressed in the interview (2) a slogan or visual that depicts the situation in Jena, Louisiana. Teachers can demonstrate political postcard art that students can use as a model. Students can work together, online, to find addresses for officials, organizations, and media outlets to send their postcards to. The class can hang the postcards around the school, the neighborhood, and share their work with other classes in the school, or other schools in the community to talk about the political artwork they've been working on.

**CREATE A JENA 6 SOUNDTRACK:** Students may select music like Nina Simone's (this song was used in a Jena 6 commentary online) to convey the angst, mood, or any other feelings about the Jena 6 story. During the production, ask students to talk or write about why and how they selected tracks for the soundtrack (they may use beats or instrumentals too). Play the soundtrack during a class/community showcase (see "Youth Activism" lesson on pg. 18).

**Nina Simone songs, videos, and lyrics:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCodBBnUYRE&mode=related&search>

<http://www.musicsonglyrics.com/N/ninasimone/lyrics/ninasimoneiwishiknewhowitwouldfeeltobe/lyrics.htm>

## **EMPOWERMENT, SELF-WORTH, AND SELF-ESTEEM:**

### **Young Men of Color: From the Valley Low to the Mountain Top...**

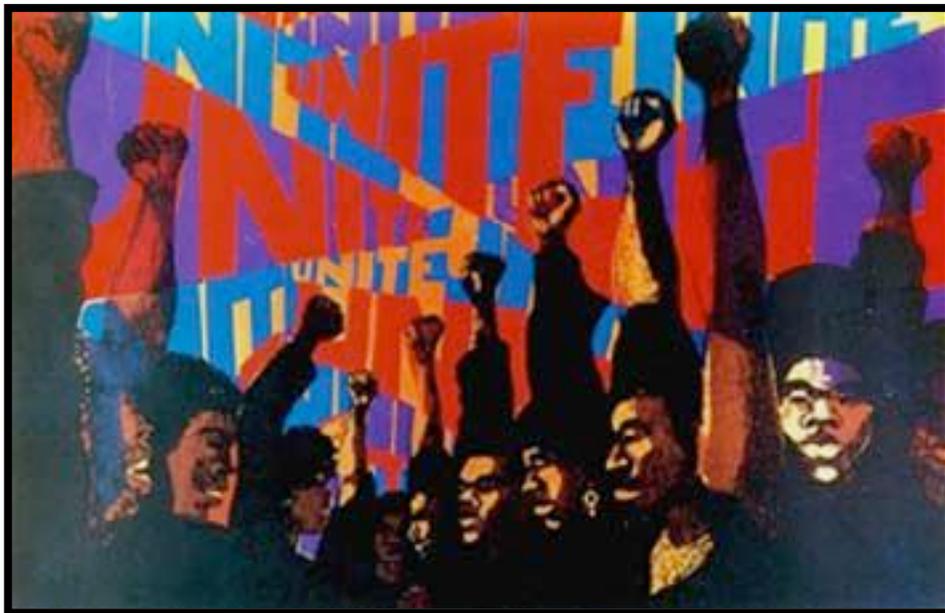
Use this activity to provide a creative outlet for students to identify the negative societal views that the media projects. Students can counter these views by expressing positive ways that they feel about themselves. Start by countering negative messages by focusing on students' strengths and what's promising for students. Have them design a self-portrait including their talents, abilities, skills, and strengths. This allows the teacher to have a frame of reference and information to empower and enhance their students' self-worth.

Another great activity is body mapping. First students draw an outline of their figure onto a large sheet of paper. Next, have students focus on what's great, amazing, and special around them in their community, at home, and within their relationships (drawing them outside the body outline), and special qualities, traits, and attributes that they possess (drawing these inside the outline). It is important that they focus on their strengths and not their deficits. This activity allows the students to see how rich, meaningful, and productive their lives really are.

The body mapping activity can help make connections between the ways that students feel about themselves and the way that members of the Jena 6 feel as well. Students can first watch the interviews that Democracy Now conducted with Robert Bailey and Theodore Shaw. Then they can draw their body map so that the inside includes images of the student and the outside depicts how the two Jena students feel about themselves and the situation. Ask students what connections, if any, do students feel between what they drew in their map and what they drew about the Jena 6, for example: What goals do you have for yourself? What personal goals did the Jena 6 students state? Students and teachers then discuss the term solidarity and think about actions that they could do to demonstrate solidarity with the youth in Jena.

**Democracy Now! Part 1:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbQf5GW1WM0>

**Part 2:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Emk9yv2YkZo&mode=related&search>



Unite, 1971 Barbara Jones-Hogu

[http://www.tcnj.edu/~fisherc/black\\_arts\\_movement.html](http://www.tcnj.edu/~fisherc/black_arts_movement.html)

## 9. SOCIAL ACTION

### **YOUTH ACTIVISM & MOVEMENT BUILDING THROUGH THE ARTS AND MEDIA:**

Culture and the Arts are powerful mediums for exchanging information, raising awareness, and transforming lives. Even with growing momentum, many folks still don't know about the Jena 6 story. Youth can educate their peers about the details surrounding the story by producing and participating in a showcase featuring art and cultural expression about the Jena 6 case. For instance, students may write speeches or poems, prepare spoken word pieces or dramatic presentations, and choreograph interpretative dances or display visual artwork. Teachers, students, and community members may collaborate on mural projects or class collages that speak to the Jena 6 issues. During the showcase, student hosts can share information about the details of the Jena 6 story (consider circulating the Jena 6 petition; draft handouts, bookmarks or newsletters for audience members to take away). After the showcase, students may consider hosting a dialogue or post show discussion to explore the issues and talk about ways the community can work to end future Jena 6 incidents. By hosting regular showcases, poetry slams, or teach-ins, youth can become activists and help build a movement to not only end racism, but also to empower young people to be community organizers.



March in Jena 7/31/07

<http://houston.indymedia.org/news/2007/08/60163.php>

### **Resources for Community Organizing; Youth Development; Artists and Cultural Workers**

<http://www.blackoutartscollective.com/>

<http://www.urbanwordnyc.org/>

<http://www.youthspeaks.org/>

<http://www.youthec.org/soul/>

<http://www.projectsouth.org/>

<http://www.mtv.com/thinkmtv/>

<http://www.tolerance.org/teens/youthact.jsp>

[http://www.tolerance.org/maps/social\\_justice/index.html](http://www.tolerance.org/maps/social_justice/index.html)

**WRITE IT UP!:** Students can explore opinions of people involved in the case and then prepare their own interviews and reports to inform their local communities about Jena and U.S. racism. This opinion piece <http://blackstarnews.com/?c=135&a=3672> by Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund, provides an example of analytic, persuasive writing. Students can use this to learn how to take a stand through writing. This brief interview with Robert Bailey Jr., <http://www.katc.com/Global/story.asp?S=7044461> of the Jena 6, can be used as an example as students prepare their own interviews. Finally, this interview with Tina Jones, mother of Bryant Purvis of the Jena 6, provides an example of writing up an interview of people involved. [http://www.browardtimes.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=432&Itemid=1](http://www.browardtimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=432&Itemid=1)



[http://www.neverbetter.com/catalog/images/sticker\\_circ](http://www.neverbetter.com/catalog/images/sticker_circ)

**GRASSROOTS ONLINE ORGANIZING:** Until recently, mainstream media has been largely absent from the discussion of the Jena 6. While this has certainly been a failure on the part of the mainstream media, the impact of grassroots organizing, particularly through the use of the Internet, has been far-reaching. Through the use of websites, emails, blogs, and other electronic media, the events surrounding the arrest of the Jena 6 have garnered national attention, and forced some mainstream media outlets to finally broadcast the story. To develop a better understanding of these organizing efforts, students can be (re)introduced to the Jena 6 case using these internet resources. Students can compare and contrast this case with organizing around other human and civil rights campaigns throughout history. After developing a better understanding of the organizing context, groups of students can develop their own plans of action in response using the Internet as an outlet (You Tube, MySpace, Facebook, etc.). Students should consider the following questions: Who is their audience? What message do they want to communicate? What media outlet can best convey their message? What logistical issues (resources, time, etc.) need to be addressed to generate their response? Students' plans of action can be completely original or be modeled after the efforts of other organizations.

<http://www.freethejena6.org/>

<http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/jena-6/>

<http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/blog/>

<http://www.myspace.com/midwestcommitteejena6>

<http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/main.html>

<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/07/10/1413220&mode=thread&tid=25>

<http://verystrangeissues.blogspot.com/2007/07/strange-fruit-jena-texas.html>

<http://afrospear.wordpress.com/2007/05/22/jena-louisiana-and-the-united-states/>

<http://www.rwor.org/a/095/free-jena-six-en.html>

**A HUGE WIN, BUT THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER:** Help students to see that grassroots organizing has made a difference. Mychal Bell's sentencing was scheduled for September 20<sup>th</sup>, after he was convicted of aggravated battery in adult court. The conviction was dismissed on September 14<sup>th</sup> in Louisiana Appellate Court because Bell was 16 when the incident occurred, and he should not have been tried as an adult. While this means that he will not be sentenced on Thursday the 20<sup>th</sup>, the District Attorney is still deciding whether to try Bell in juvenile court, and the remaining Jena 6 are still awaiting trial. Listen as Louis Scott, one of Bell's attorneys, Al Sharpton, and Jesse Jackson speak about the overturned conviction, the role of social movements in achieving this goal, and the ongoing need for addressing racist judicial policies in Jena, LA.

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/09/14/jena.six/index.html?iref=newssearch#cn-STCOther1>

Pose the following questions to students: What changes for Mychal Bell now that his conviction has been thrown out? (Will he be released from prison? Will he be able to go back to school? What does this news mean for the rest of the Jena 6? What role did lawyers, social justice groups, etc. play in advocating for this overturned conviction? What issues still need to be addressed in the Jena 6 case? How can we work with others to combat racism and racist policies in Jena, LA and nationally? <http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/2007/09/14/breaking-news-mychel-bells-conviction-vacated/>

[http://www.chicagotribune.com/services/newspaper/printedition/saturday/chi-jena\\_satsep15.0.5258271.story](http://www.chicagotribune.com/services/newspaper/printedition/saturday/chi-jena_satsep15.0.5258271.story)

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/09/14/jena.six/index.html?iref=newssearch>

## **SOCIAL ACTION LINKS:**

The **COLOR OF CHANGE** site has put together a petition and letter that can be sent to Gov. Blanco and D.A. Walters. Students can craft their own letters and personal statements, sharing what they have learned. Students can investigate the use of petitions and other forms of activism in order to combat institutionalized racism. <http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/>

**FRIENDS OF JUSTICE** provides information about local activism, provides updates, and suggests possible actions. <http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/jena-6/>

This **ZMAG** report documents some of the initial grassroots work performed by the Jena community, showing a history of activism in small towns that connects students to other social movements. [http://www.zmag.org/content/print\\_article.cfm?itemID=12783&sectionID=30](http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=12783&sectionID=30)

**THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER** has joined to struggle to free the Jena 6, as this article describes. [http://www.splcenter.org/legal/news/article.jsp?aid=278&site\\_area=1](http://www.splcenter.org/legal/news/article.jsp?aid=278&site_area=1)

**NOLA.COM** provides a description of how other communities, in this case New Orleans, are responding to the situation in Jena. This report can give educators and students a look into ways they might be able to do similar consciousness raising work in their own communities. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base/news-23/118932276662670.xml&coll=1>



[http://static.flickr.com/1296/640620999\\_eb759bc232.jpg](http://static.flickr.com/1296/640620999_eb759bc232.jpg)

Order your own Jena 6 shirt at: <http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/shirts/>  
Proceeds support Color of Change's campaign focused on the Jena 6.

## 10. Detailed Mathematics Unit

By Joyce Sia and Rico Gutstein  
Greater Lawndale/Little Village School for Social Justice, Chicago, IL

*This is the teachers' edition. All italicized text is for teachers. We include some issues we encountered while teaching the project. We spent about 8 class periods on it. We are just finishing the project with our five 11<sup>th</sup>-grade classes, with the two of us co-teaching it. Each class was different, of course, so our comments do not necessarily apply to all classes or all students. At the time of this writing, the project was about 75% completed, so we do not know all the issues that emerged, nor have we analyzed whether students met our goals.*

*The central mathematical task: **find the probability of randomly selecting an all-white jury in Jena, which is 85.6% white (1,844 people  $\geq$  18) and 14.4% people of color (310 people  $\geq$  18).** Mychal Bell, the first of the Jena 6 to be tried, was convicted by an all-white jury. Before looking at the answer below, we ask the reader to guesstimate. Our anecdotal evidence is that few adults, "schooled" or otherwise, have a clue of the answer. And we realize that juries are selected from voter registration lists, but using adults is a valid approximation.*

*This project has both social justice and mathematics objectives.*

### Social Justice objectives:

- *Grow in being able to "read the world with mathematics," that is, develop deeper sociopolitical consciousness of reality using mathematics.*
- *Provide some concrete support to the Jena 6, i.e., take some action;*
- *Raise awareness about the Jena 6;*
- *Inform students about how juries are selected;*
- *Have students answer: "Was the jury for Mychal Bell selected randomly and without bias?"*
- *Connect the Jena 6 situation to students' own lives and communities.*

### Mathematics objectives:

- *Determine the probability of randomly selecting a 12-person, all-white jury from a town that is 85.6% white, 14.4% people of color (mainly African American), of 2,154 adults (2000 census).*
- *Generalize the formula for combinatorics, that is,  $n C r$ .*
- *Develop a better understanding of the mathematical concept of "randomness."*
- *Gain experience in "thinking like a mathematician."*
- *Understand the role mathematics has in understanding a key social justice issue—and that without relatively sophisticated mathematics, one cannot know the answer.*

*We started off by showing a short video from alternative media that summarizes key issues. We then had students read a section of transcript from Democracy Now! and we "jigsawed" it, that is, each group of 3-4 students read a section and summarized it aloud for the class. We then had students read the background section, and, as a whole class, talked through the key issues, both social and mathematical.*

## BACKGROUND:

“Six black students at Jena High School in Central Louisiana were arrested last December after a school fight in which a white student was beaten and suffered a concussion and multiple bruises. The six black students were charged with attempted murder and conspiracy. They face up to 100 years in prison without parole. The fight took place amid mounting racial tension after a black student sat under a tree in the schoolyard where only white students sat. The next day three nooses were hanging from the tree.”\*

Above is just a summary of the controversial events in Jena, Louisiana since September 2006. After seeing the video from [mefedia.com](http://mefedia.com) and reading the Rush Transcript (*from Democracy Now!*) detailing the events in Jena, we are going to analyze the mathematics of jury selection and see whether we believe that Mychal Bell, one of the Jena 6, had a jury for his trial that was “fair.” According to the 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the US Constitution:

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.\*\*

The procedure of selecting an *impartial* jury is outlined below:

1. **Jury Pool:** People are *randomly* selected from a government computer database and receive a *jury summons*, upon which they are to report to the courthouse and be part of a *jury pool*.
2. **Voir Dire:** Attorneys from both sides are to question everyone in the jury pool; this questioning is called *voir dire*. The purpose of this questioning is to determine who shows no bias towards one side or the other and to truly have an impartial jury.
3. **Jury Panel:** The attorneys are to agree on all twelve people to be selected to be on a jury panel. If one attorney does not want a person on the jury, that person will not be selected to be on the jury.\*\*\*

## YOUR TASK:

For Mychal Bell’s trial, in which he was charged with second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit second-degree battery, an all-white jury was selected. You are to **find the probability of this happening in a town that is 85.6% white (1,844 people  $\geq$  18) and 14.4% people of color (310 people  $\geq$  18)**, which is the demographic make-up of Jena, Louisiana.

*We used a modified version of a “problem of the week” format from the Interactive Mathematics Program.*

You will have to complete a write-up for this project containing the following sections:

**Problem Statement:** (1-2 paragraphs) State the issue and your task in your own words. Include all necessary background information regarding the Jena 6, as if you were explaining this to someone who knows nothing about the Jena 6.

**Process:** (0.5 – 2 pages) Answer the following questions, showing all work and including diagrams, if necessary:

1. If the selection of the jury was truly random and was in accordance with the demographics of Jena, Louisiana, how many of the jurors should have been white? How many of the jurors should have been black? Show all your work.

*We situated the next problem by explaining that when mathematicians solve large, complicated problems, one way they do so is to break the problem into a smaller one, study it and analyze what they can from the smaller one, and then build back up to the main problem. We made it clear that they would be learning to think like a mathematician on this project.*

2. Let's say we have six students, three male and three female. *We had six students come to the front of class as we did this and talked it through with them as models.* How many 2-person combinations are there from these six students? What is the probability of picking an all-female pair from all the possible pairs? Show all your work.

*Students solved this problem in several ways. Some listed all pairs (using letters, numbers, or student names for the people). Others drew arcs between the names, and some reasoned that each of the six people could pair up with five others but each pair was duplicated, so they divided the total by two. At least one group drew a tree diagram with six letters across the top, and five lines coming down from each letter for a total of 30 and then divided in two.*

*One conceptual difficulty emerged when some students found that there were 3 female pairs, and 15 total pairs, but did not know how to turn that into a probability. We reviewed, as a whole class, how to quantify probabilities in most of the classes.*

*Questions #3 and #4 below were basically put together. Another (and major) conceptual difficulty was establishing the relationship between the smaller problem and the main problem. We intended students to understand the mapping (parallel structure) between the two. That meant that they had to construct the relationship that:*

$$\text{Prob(choosing all female pair from three males, three females)} = \frac{\# \text{ female pairs}}{\text{Total \# pairs}}$$

*was the same problem as:*

$$\text{Prob (choosing all white jury in Jena for Mychal Bell's trial)} = \frac{\# \text{ all-white Jena juries}}{\text{Total \# juries in Jena}}$$

*This proved to be difficult for many students, even though some students grasped it and explained at the board to others. But this understanding is necessary to motivate that students need to a) find the # all-white possible juries, and total # possible juries,*

and b) find out how to solve the impossible task of listing/counting all possible white or total juries—otherwise, there is no reason to generalize the process and derive  $n C r$ .

We began the generalization process by asking students to extend from  $6 C 2$  to  $7 C 2$ , then to  $8 C 2$  and larger. The students who reasoned more abstractly that each person paired with one less than her/him-self, and that the number had to be halved, were most able to generalize this. We drew on them to share their strategies and also introduced tree diagrams at the board as a model for students to use. We moved toward the abstract representation of the generalization and variableized the formula to  $n(n-1) \div 2$ . Most students appeared to have little trouble understanding this with some work. A key idea was that we pushed was why did we divide by two? Although some students incorrectly answered because there were two students in a pair, we settled on the understanding that two was the number of “repeats” and thus we had to divide by that number. Once students generalized the formula, we introduced the vocabulary of a “mathematical generalization” and of “ $n$  Choose 2” and the symbols, “ $n C 2$ ,” explaining that what they had just done had specific mathematical names and symbols—that is, we did not introduce terminology/symbols until students had done the conceptual work.

We then asked students how they thought we could move from the small problem to the big one. Eventually, students realized that we should explore the number of “triples” or “3-person-combinations.” We put students to work, in their groups, on investigating  $6 C 3$  and seeing what they could learn. We made the point that having made the big problem into a small one, we would study the small one, see what we could learn, analyze patterns, and gradually work back to the big problem.

As students started to generalize toward  $n C 3$ , we asked them to explore  $n C 4$  and  $n C 5$ . Students started realizing the pattern, that is,  $n C 3$  is  $n(n-1)(n-2)$  divided by the number of “repeats” (permutations), etc. Students figured out (and shared) how to find the number of “repeats.” By the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> period, some students developed the formula for  $n C 12$ , and one student produced the answer, albeit with help from another of our math teachers who dropped by class and worked with her.

The figure for the # of all-white juries in Jena is approximately  $3.1132748233E30$ ; the total # juries is  $2.0196708865E31$  (thus, we also had to deal with scientific notation). Dividing these two gives about **15.4%**—the probability of randomly selecting an all-white jury in Jena! We found this astoundingly low (as did other adults we shared this with), given that the town is 86% white. Mathematically, this can be attributed to “combinatorial explosion.” Some challenging questions for math teachers or more experienced students: If you hold the demographic percentages constant, does it matter how many people are in Jena? If so, how so and why? If you graph probability ( $Y$  axis) vs. total population ( $X$  axis), with fixed racial ratios (i.e., 85% white), what does the graph look like? Explain why. What is the relationship of the racial ratios to the probability? Explain.

3. Given the info you know about Jena’s population, how many 12-person combinations of white people (all 12 people are white) are there? Show your work.
4. How many 12-person combinations of ALL people eligible for jury duty in Jena are there? Show all your work.

**Solution** (1-2 paragraphs) State your solution to the task, and explain how you know any other solution is incorrect. If you believe the solution you reached is incorrect, explain how you know it is incorrect.

**Evaluation:** (at least 2 paragraphs) Answer the following questions:

1. After completing your task, are you surprised that Mychal's jury was all-white? Explain your feelings regarding the Jena 6 and the mathematical issues involved in his trial.
2. Was this project an issue of social justice? Explain.

*Possible Reflection Questions, to be written out in class, i.e., journaling:*

1. If you were one of the Jena 6, how would you want people to support you?
2. How did you use mathematics to answer this question? Explain in detail!
3. If someone told you that the Mychal Bell's guilty verdict has nothing to do with mathematics, what would you say? If you think it does have to do with mathematics, how would you, in **detail**, convince them that you were right?
4. Did this project interest you? Why or why not? *For us, we would ask this differently, because we both have observed that this project more engaged any mathematics work we've done with these students, over the past 2 years we've been with them (since they were ninth graders). We want to know why this particular project was so engaging.*
5. Did this project help you read the world with mathematics? Why or why not? *(our students know what this means, but it can be asked differently. Also, it's a settled question, as we have much evidence, in our school that almost all students in this class (the new school's first) believe there is value in using mathematics to read the world and to do projects like this—but in other settings, that would be an important question to ask).*

**Extra:** Individually or with a group, create a video for, or write a letter to, any or all of the Jena 6 stating your view of the situation and explaining the work you've done in your math class around the Jena 6. If you wish, this can actually be sent to Jena, Louisiana in time for protesting Mychal Bell's sentencing on Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### Works Cited

\*Democracy Now!. Tuesday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Democracy Now!. Wednesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007.  
<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/07/10/1413220>

\*\*FindLawUS Constitution: Sixth Amendment. 1994-2007. FindLaw. Wednesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007.  
<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment06/>

\*\*\*CRFCIVoir Dire: Creating the Jury. 2007. CRFC. Wednesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007.  
[http://www.crfc.org/americanjury/voir\\_dire.html](http://www.crfc.org/americanjury/voir_dire.html)

## 11. LINKS TO ORGANIZATIONS & MORE INFORMATION

**FREE THE JENA 6** is a comprehensive site that continues to round up most of the independent and mainstream press on the situation in Jena. It includes print, radio, and television resources as well as ways to get involved. <http://www.freethejena6.org/>

**LEFT TURN JOURNAL** features news reports by Jordan Flaherty which provide connections to other recent instances of overt forms of racism. Flaherty also points out the growing resistance movement. <http://www.leftturn.org/>

**INDYKIDS** is a progressive newspaper for students between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade has an article discussing the Jena 6 in its October issue. This newspaper is great way to get students to begin understanding and discussing these issues. <http://www.indykids.net/>

**DEMOCRACY NOW!'S** transcript of a July 10, 2007 broadcast presents a report by Jacquie Soohen, which will be a part of an upcoming documentary by Big Noise Films. This provides a local community perspective and an example of interviewing for students. <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/07/10/1413220>  
To view the documentary when released, visit Big Noise Films: <http://www.bignoisefilms.com/>

**COLLATERAL NEWS'** independent report breaks down the events of the Jena situation in a clear fashion. It also provides a great model for students who want to create their own news reports about this or other social issues. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuoiZnr4jLY>

**RADAR**, an online newscast, is available on GNN.tv at <http://radar.gnn.tv/>. This video succinctly covers the initial conflict over sitting under the "white tree," the events that led up to charges against the Jena 6, and Mychal Bell's trial. It introduces key players like: District Attorney Walters, Robert Bailey, and the Color of Change organization.

**TIMES ONLINE** report provides a summary of events in Jena. It also provides demographic statistics about black students in U.S. schools that students can analyze and discuss. Specifically students can look at how segregation has played out post *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1955. [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us\\_and\\_americas/article2388360.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article2388360.ece)

**ABC NEWS** documents another recent example of a hate crime being committed against African Americans. This can help students see these crimes not as isolated events, but as part of institutional forms of racism. <http://www.abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=3580350&page=1>

**NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO** reports provide examples that students can use to create their own news recordings. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14295788>

**THE FREEDOM ARCHIVES** offers audio and video recordings documenting social justice movements including speeches, lectures and poetry <http://freedomarchives.org>



<http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/jena-6/>