

Blow the Roof Off: The History of Black America & The Quest for Civil Rights

Objective: According to research, knowledge is stored in two forms: linguistic and sensory. Use of nonlinguistic representation or sensory representation has proven to not only stimulate but also increase brain activity. In this activity students will use physical actions combined with words to review and reinforce their knowledge of Black America and the Civil Rights Movement. This activity can be replicated with other curriculum, however the text and words would have to be changed to support the curriculum.

Time Required: Time will vary, initially plan 15-20 minutes; however if used throughout a unit as an anticipatory set or concluding activity students should be able to complete it within 5 minutes, or less. Encourage students to improve their time daily.

Materials Needed:

1. Background Readings and/or lecture/ discussion related to the history of Black America and the Civil Rights Movement
2. A class set of instructions for "Blow the Roof Off" each student should receive one activity. Copy and cut student instructions into strips.

Description:

1. Give each student one of the numbered pieces of paper.
2. Instruct each student that the goal is to complete the activity as quickly as possible. Students must do and say everything on their paper strip.
3. Run through the activity one time to show students how to complete the activity. Encourage them to have fun with the activity and read their parts loudly in a clear voice.
4. Time the students as they complete the activity.

The Civil Rights Movement is one of the most beautiful and most painful events in the history of the United States. On the one hand, the ugliness of human nature in terms of violence and hatred was exposed, on the other hand, thousands of people came together under leaders like Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, and even the president John F. Kennedy to fight for the rights of people they had never met. Ordinary people like William Lloyd Garrison and James Meredith put their lives on the line to fight for rights for everyone. Below are many of the significant events in the Civil Rights movement.

1. 1619 Stand and say: “**1619: The first African American indentured servants arrive in the American colonies**”. Physical Representation: Use both arms, as if beckoning others to arrive. When finished sit down.
2. 1690 Stand and say: “**Black Indentured Servitude gave way to racial slavery. By 1690 all thirteen American colony have slaves**” Physical Representation: Draw both arms into a circle until your wrists meet together as if chained. When finished sit down.
3. 1776 Stand and say “**In the year 1776 the United States declared it’s independence from Great Britain with the words ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’**” Physical Representation Make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph. When finished sit down 
4. 1793 Stand and say: “**1793, Eli Whitney’s cotton gin increases the need for slaves.**” Physical Representation: Act as if you are digging and working the ground.” When finished sit down.
5. 1808 Stand and say: “**In 1808 Congress bans further importation of slaves.**” Physical Representation: Raise your finger in the air and wiggle it back and forth as if to say NO. When finished make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph. When finished sit down. 
6. 1831 Physical Representation stand hold your hand to your mouth and the yell the following: “**In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison becomes a leading voice in the Abolitionist movement.**” When finished sit down. 
7. 1831-61 Stand and say: “**Approximately 75,000 slaves escape to the North using the Underground Railroad.**” Physical Representation: Use your arms to “chug” as if riding on an imaginary railroad. When finished make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph. When finished sit down. 
8. 1849 Stand and say: “**In 1849 Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery and becomes an instrumental leader on the Underground Railroad.**” Physical Representation: Flex your biceps as if to show your strength. When finished sit down. 

9. 1850 Stand and say: **“In 1850 Congress passes a Fugitive Slave Act, government agencies must help capture escaped slaves.** Physical Representation: *Grab your right wrist with your left hand as if capturing your arm.* When finished sit down.
10. 1857 Stand and say: **“In 1857 the US Supreme Court rules in The Dred Scott decision that slaves are not citizens.”** Physical Representation: *Raise both arms to your shoulders and shrug, as if to say What?!?* When finished sit down. 
11. 1860 Turn to your neighbor and say excitedly **“In 1860 Abraham Lincoln is elected president of the United States- that’s Awesome!”** Physical Representation: *Make a thumbs up sign.* 
12. 1861-65 Run to the door, yell: **“In 1861 the fight for rights explodes in the American Civil War.”** Physical Representation *Use both hands to make an explosive movement. When finished make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph.* When finished return to your seat and sit down. 
13. 1863 Turn to your neighbor and whisper **“In 1863 Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, he freed the slaves in the rebellious States.”** Physical Representation: *Write in the air as if writing your signature.*
14. 1865 Run to the board and write: **“620,000 deaths = 9,500,000 slaves”** Stay at the board and point to the information until told to sit down.
15. 1865 Jump up and and yell: **“Hallelujah the war ends”** . Return to your seat when finished yelling.
16. 1865 Run to the board write: **“1865, North wins”** Stay at the board and point to the information until told to sit down.
17. 1865 Go to the board, turn to the three people standing there and say: **“620,000 Americans die in the American Civil war, each death represents 15 African Americans held in Slavery since 1619.”** When finished tell those at the board they may **“Return to your seats”**. When finished return to your seat.
18. 1865 Run to the window, yell outside: **“Congress passses the 13th Amendment. Slavery is illegal.”** Physical Representation: *Hold your hands in the air and break them apart as if being freed from or breaking chains.*

19. 1868 Run to the window, yell outside: **“The 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection under the law.”** Physical Representation: *When finished make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph.*
When finished return to your seat and sit down.



20. 1870 Stand up and say **“The 15th Amendment is passed. Rights of citizens cannot be denied: Black Americans can vote”** Physical Representation: *Hold your index finger in the air and waggle it back and forth, as if to say no. When finished make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph.* When finished return to your seat and sit down.



21. 1877 Physical Representation: *Stand up and wave, and wipe your eyes as if to illustrate a sad goodbye, say: “ In 1877 the era of Reconstruction ends, federal troops withdraw from the South, the troops no longer protect the rights of Black Americans.”* When finished return to your seat and sit down.

22. 1879 Physical Representation: *Go to the front of the room, point South and say: “Thousands of African Americans migrate out of the South to escape oppression”.* When finished return to your seat and sit down.

23. 1881 Physical Representation: *Stand up and make a ‘crazy sign’ bring your index finger to your temple and circle it around say: “Southern States pass ‘Jim Crow’ segregation laws, segregating state railroads. Similar laws are passed throughout all Southern states.”* When finished return to your seat and sit down.



24. 1896 Go to the front of the room, say: **“The Supreme Court rules “separate but equal” laws are legal in 1896 in the Plessy v Ferguson decision”.** Physical Representation: *Make a ‘crazy sign’ bring your index finger to your temple and circle it around. When finished return to your seat and sit down.*



25. 1915 Physical Representation: *Act as if walking with a cane, when finished with your text throw your cane away as if healed. Say “US Supreme Court rules grandfather clauses restricting black voting is unconstitutional in 1915.”* When finished make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air as if to indicate triumph. When finished return to your seat and sit down.



26. 1941 Physical Representation: *Stand up and salute the class, say: “The Tuskegee Airmen, African American pilots, become the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group of the United States Army Air Forces.”* When finished sit down.



27. 1948: Physical Representation: *Stand up and salute the class, say: “President Truman signs Executive Order 9981 in 1948 abolishing racial discrimination in the United States Armed Forces.” When finished sit down.*
28. 1954: Stay sitting, turn to your neighbor and whisper: “**In 1954 the Supreme Court bans segregation in all public schools in Brown v. Board of Education.**” Physical Representation: *Once finished with your reading make the victory sign by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. Put your hand down when finished.*
29. 1955: Go to front of the room, write “Emmett Till” say disgustedly: “**Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy, is murdered for whistling at a white woman.**” Physical Representation: *Cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #29.*
30. 1955 Stand on your chair, yell: “**Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat for a white man, causing a bus boycott by the Black community.**” Physical Representation: *Vigorously move your head back and forth as if to say NO. Make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. When finished return to your seat, and put your hand down.*
31. 1956 Run to the light switch, turn the light off and on and say: “**The Montgomery bus system desegregates in 1956.**” Physical Representation: *Make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. When finished, lower your hand and return to your seat.*
32. 1957 Say in your seat. Physical Representation: *Act as if you’re taking a book down from the shelf, open and read it . “**Little Rock Central High school is integrated.**” Make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. When finished lower your hand.*
33. 1960 Say in your seat, say out loud: “**Black students stage a sit-in at a lunch counter where they are refused service**”. Physical Representation: *Place your hand palm side out in front of your face as if to indicate you are being shut out. When finished lower your hand.*
34. 1961 Stand at your seat and say: “**Student volunteers ‘freedom riders’ fight segregation on buses and railways stations.**” Physical Representation: *Raise your fist in the air When finished lower your fist, and return to your seat.*



35. 1962 Stand and say: **“James Meredith enrolls at the University of Mississippi”**.
Physical Representation: Use your hand as if to move an imaginary tassel from one side of a graduation cap (mortar board) to another side of the mortar board. When finished, make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. Sit down and lower your arm. 
36. 1963 Physical Representation: Stand. Hold your fist in the air as if in a sign of defiance, and say: **“Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed!-Martin Luther King ”**Sit down and lower your arm. 
37. 1963 Physical Representation: While still in our seat hold your hands together and act as if spraying a fire house, say: **“Bull Connor uses police dogs and fire hoses on black protesters during protests in Alabama.”** When finished lower your hands.
38. 1963 Go to the front of the room, write “murder”, say: **“The head of the Mississippi NAACP is murdered outside his house”**. Physical Representation: Cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #38 
39. 1963: Physical Representation: Stand, Hold your fist in the air as if in a sign of defiance and say loudly and clearly: **“‘I Have a Dream’ ... We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.- Martin Luther King ”**When finished lower your hands and sit down 
40. 1963: Go to the front of the room, write “4 Girls”, say: **“A Birmingham black church is bombed, resulting in the deaths of 4 black girls.”** Physical Representation: Hold four fingers in the air, then use both hand to indicate an explosion lastly cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #40 
41. 1964 Stand at your seat and say: **“The 24th Amendment out laws poll taxes used to prevent blacks from voting.”** Physical Representation: When finished, make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. When finished lower your hand and sit down. 
42. 1964 Go to the front of the room, write: **“3 killed”**, say: **“The Mississippi Summer Freedom Project begins; 3 are killed and many black churches and homes are burned in retaliation.”** Physical Representation: Hold three fingers up in the air, run your finger across your neck and then cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #42 

43. 1964 Stand and say: **“The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is passed, it forbids racial discrimination”**. Physical Representation: *When finished, make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. When finished lower your hand and sit down.* 
44. 1964 Go to the front of the room, write: **“3 dead KKK”** then say: **Civil rights workers James E. Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman are murdered by the Ku Klux Klan.** Physical Representation: *Hold three fingers up in the air, run your finger across your neck and then cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #44* 
45. 1965 Go to the front of the room write: **“MX dead”**, then say: **“Malcolm X splits off from the Black Muslims; he is assassinated in retaliation.** Physical Representation: *Hold your hands together palm to palm, then pull them apart turning them palm side out as if to show the separation, then run your finger across your neck, lastly cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #45* 
46. 1965 Physical Representation: *Stand, march in place, hold your hand in the air as if making a check mark . Say: “Martin Luther King Jr. leads a 54-mile march to support black voter registration. from Selma to Montgomery.”* When finished return to your seat.
47. 1965 Stand and say: **“Congress passes the 1965 Voting Rights Act.”** Physical Representation: *When finished, make the victory sign, by holding two fingers in the air to indicate triumph. When finished lower your hand and sit down.* 
48. 1965: Go to the front of the room, write: **“Watts: 34”**, say: **“In 1965 the Watts Riots occur in Los Angeles resulting in 34 Black American deaths”**. Physical Representation: *Hold up three fingers on one hand, four on the other hand, then run your finger across your neck, lastly cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down. *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #47* 
49. 1965: Stand and say: **“In 1965 President Johnson issues an Executive Order to enforce affirmative action”**. Physical Representation: *Hold your hand in the air to indicate a two finger victory. When finished lower your arm and return to your seat.* 

50. 1966: Stand on your chair, Physical Representation: *Raise your fist in the air and say: “In 1966 the Black Panthers are founded to patrol African American neighbourhoods and protect residents from acts of police brutality.”* When finished lower your arm and return to your seat.



51. 1967 Stand, Physical Representation: *Hold both hands in front of you as if holding a bouquet of flowers, when finished, hold your hand in the air to indicate a two finger victory. Say: “In 1967 the Supreme Court rules that Stopping Interracial marriage is unconstitutional by 2016 ½ of all marriages in the US are interracial relationships.”* When finished lower your hand and return to your seat.



52. 1967: Go to the front of the room, write: “**Riots 43 dead**” then say: “**In 1967 the worst race riots in US history occur in Detroit and New York; 43 people die**”. Physical Response: *Hold up four fingers on one hand, three on the other hand, then run your finger across your neck, lastly cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down.* *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #52



53. 1968 Go to the front of the room, write: “**MLK dead**” then say: “**Martin Luther King Jr. is murdered; riots broke out in 125 cities.**”. Physical Response: *Hit your chest with your fist, hold you fist in the air lastly cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down.* *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #53



54. 1968 Stand and say: “**Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968**”. Physical Response: *Hold your hand in the air to indicate a two finger victory. When finished lower your arm and sit down.*



55. 1977 Stand Physical Response: *Use your hands to simulate the making of a motion picture, then say: “ In 1977, the mini-series ‘Roots’ becomes the most watched mini-series of all time. It tells the story of a Slave family.”* When finished return to your seat.



56. 1992 Turn and tell your neighbor: “**In 1992 Rodney King is arrested and beaten by Police. Race riots occur after the police are acquitted.**”

57. 2008 Run to the window and yell: “**In 2008 Barack Obama, is elected the 44th President of the United States**”. When finished return to your seat.

58. 2013 Go to the front of the room, write **“Trayvon Martin”**. Say: **“Black Lives Matter movement born in 2013 when George Zimmerman is found not guilty of murdering Trayvon Martin”** Physical Representation: *Cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down.* *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #58
59. 2014 Go to the front of the room write, **“Ferguson”**. Say: **“Riots break out in Ferguson Missouri when Michael Brown is shot and killed by the police. The Governor summons the National Guard to restore calm.”** Physical Representation: *Cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down.* *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #59
60. 2015 Go to front of the room write, **“9 dead SC** Say: **“21-year-old white supremacist, murders nine African Americans during a prayer service in Charleston, South Carolina”** Physical Representation: *Cross your arms across your body, and bow your head respectfully. Stay standing in the front of the room, holding this position until told to sit down.* *Note: you will be unable to take a numbered reading after #60
61. 2016 Physical Representation: *Raise your fist in the air and say: “NFL player Colin Kaepernick takes a knee during national anthem to protest Black deaths.”* When finished lower your arm and return to your seat.
62. 2018 Go to the front of the room and address the class, say: **“In 2017, Oprah Winfrey, was identified as one of the most influential American. Black CEO’S lead American Express, Xerox and McDonalds. Black Americans have left their mark in American Music, film and culture. Conversely Black Americans are more likely to die violently and the poverty rate of Black Americans is 22% above that of the National Average”** Return to your seat.
63. 2018 Go to the window, yell **“Remember!”**, turn and address the class. **“We remember the sacrifices of those who have fought for Civil and Racial equality, In the words of Jesse Jackson we must ‘Keep hope alive!’** point to those at the front of the room, and tell those standing **“You may be seated”**. When all are seated, say **“The fight for Racial Equality continues.”** *Hold your hand in the air to indicate a two finger victory. When finished lower your arm and return to your seat.*

