

SPEAK UP

SPEAK OUT



GRADE

11

LESSON PLANS

ROBERT F. KENNEDY  
*Champion of Social Justice*

**nysut**  
A Union of Professionals



ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL

PHOTO CREDIT: STANLEY TRETICK

“Laws can embody standards; governments can enforce laws; but the final task is not a task for government. It is a task for each and every one of us. Every time we turn our heads the other way when we see the law flouted; when we tolerate what we know to be wrong; when we close our eyes and ears to the corrupt because we are too busy, or too frightened; when we fail to speak up and speak out – we strike a blow against freedom and decency and justice.”

*Robert F. Kennedy (1925-1968) on June 21, 1961, in remarks before the Joint Defense Appeal of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, Chicago.*



Photo by Bill Eppridge/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

“SPEAK UP, SPEAK OUT: ROBERT F. KENNEDY, CHAMPION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE,” IS THE PRODUCT OF A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL, DEDICATED TO ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS BY PROVIDING INNOVATIVE SUPPORT TO COURAGEOUS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AROUND THE WORLD; AND NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS, A STATEWIDE UNION OF MORE THAN 600,000 PROFESSIONALS DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE AND ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE.

THIS PROJECT WAS DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE OFFICE OF NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR DAVID PATERSON AND THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND UNDERWRITTEN IN PART BY A GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION FROM THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION.



**ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL**

PHOTO CREDIT: STANLEY TRETICK

THE  
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## *Dear Educators:*

How do you measure someone's legacy? How does a legacy exist long after a historical figure has passed on? Over the years, I've heard thousands of people tell stories about how they were touched by my father, Robert F. Kennedy.

I met a man from the Oglala Sioux Tribe at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota who told me about Robert Kennedy visiting his school and asking the librarian why there weren't any books on Indian history, culture and language.

I met a grape picker at a worker camp in Delano, Calif., founded by labor leader Cesar Chavez, who told me about watching Robert Kennedy break bread with Chavez to end a fast. He said, "We felt alone and abandoned until Bobby Kennedy took up our cause." After Robert Kennedy supported the pickers in their boycott of California grapes, conditions improved.

I met a journalist in New York who described following Robert Kennedy to the Mississippi Delta. Shocked by the misery and starvation, he was deeply moved by a politician who sought to expose the difficulties we face as a society.

When I was living in Washington, I heard congressmen, senators and the president of the United States speak about how their political careers had been inspired by my father.

Such different stories, and no single message of what Robert Kennedy's legacy is. The lesson plans in this guide, developed in a partnership between New York State United Teachers and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial, focus on his passionate commitment to social justice. That passion and commitment inspired millions. Take a look at the images of his 1968 campaign for the U.S. presidency of people reaching up, eager to touch him. I remember when he came home from those campaign stops, his hands would be bright red and so swollen he couldn't grasp a glass, because of all those hands reaching out.

They loved him. They loved him not only because of his policies or because he spoke eloquently, but really because he touched something deep in the soul of his audiences. What he touched was the nobility in each person. He spoke to the best in us, the part that believes in change, in possibility, in the capacity to overcome even the most enduring and difficult problems we face as a society.

He said, "We can ensure the vote to every American," despite the abuses faced by African-Americans seeking to exercise their rights as citizens. His commitment to voting rights meant that, for the first time in our history, the United States became a true democracy, one where every citizen had a vote that counted.

*"There was no group of Americans who Robert Kennedy admired more or held in higher esteem than those who were willing to risk their lives for basic civil rights."*

He said, "We can stop a war," despite a president's support of it. And there was eventually peace in Vietnam.

He said, "We can rebuild our cities despite poverty, gangs and violence." And he brought together neighborhood leaders with large companies and the power of the government to work together to transform some of the most devastated parts of our country.

These were all apparently insurmountable problems, but he believed in the ability of an individual to make a difference.

There was no group of Americans who Robert Kennedy admired more or held in higher esteem than those who were willing to risk their lives for basic civil rights. And, as our nation's lead prosecutor facing organized crime, Robert Kennedy was determined to use the law to bring criminals who threatened our country to justice.

But that eagerness was always tempered by his commitment to protect civil rights and civil liberties, even when it meant letting the accused sometimes go free. As attorney general at the height of the civil rights movement, Robert Kennedy was keenly aware of the capacity for overzealous or corrupt law enforcement officials to abuse the awesome power of the law. He upheld that conviction on his travels around the world and criticized governments which invoked national security to suspend civil liberties.

Opposing undue attacks on civil liberties is central to the ongoing legacy of Robert Kennedy. Today, organizations like the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial bring the power of the international legal rights to bear on governments that fail to comport with rights enumerated under the International Declaration of Human Rights and other covenants.

Just as the American civil rights movement gave birth to tremendous heroes, like Martin Luther King, today we are blessed by people of tremendous courage and noble spirit who have sacrificed themselves for human rights the world over — people like Nelson Mandela, Elie Wiesel, the Dalai Lama and lesser-known but equally relevant people like Lucas Benitez, who represents the migrant farmworkers in Florida.

They personify Robert Kennedy's faith in the noble spirit and firm belief in the ability of the individual to overcome apparently insurmountable problems. Each has faced giant forces with little more than the slingshot of their heart and nerve and sinew. Each has suffered the consequences of their challenge. They do so by supporting courageous individuals who are making democratic change.

We don't laud them because they've been targeted for repression, but because, in the face of the most brutal repression and with full knowledge of the consequences, they have stood their ground in the fight for justice and human rights.

I asked Abubacar Sultan, who works with child soldiers in Africa, why he continued to risk his life for total strangers, and this is what he said: "It is something strong within yourself. You feel you are a human being and there are other human beings there suffering. You are better off, so you need to sacrifice. It's hard to explain. It's perhaps a kind of a gift that you have inside yourself."

People like Abubacar and so many others walk where Robert Kennedy walked. They show us; they help us find the way.

As teachers share the lessons in this guide, students across New York state will be inspired to recognize that gift of courage in themselves. Robert F. Kennedy's legacy lives on in countless individuals who fight for justice around the world — and in every child who is inspired by his legacy to "speak up, speak out."



Kerry Kennedy

*Founder, RFK Center for Human Rights  
and Speak Truth to Power*

# Introduction

## *Grade 11 Unit on Social Justice*

### *Background*

Robert F. Kennedy was committed to the principles of freedom and social justice. He carried a message of hope and an unflagging conviction that courage would bring change. His central belief in the civic and moral responsibility of each individual and the community to take action against injustice, poverty and prejudice underlined his public life. He urged each person not to turn a blind eye, but instead to tackle the issues that challenge freedom and justice.

The Robert F. Kennedy project presents a unique opportunity to link his social justice agenda to the New York state learning standards in social studies and English language arts. In grade 11, students focus on the history of the United States and New York state, touching on issues concerning civil rights, voting rights, workers' rights, equal education, equal opportunity programs, how the United States government works and people who have made significant contributions to American life.

### *Biography of RFK*

#### **The Early Years:**

Robert Francis Kennedy was born on Nov. 20, 1925, in Brookline, Mass., the seventh child of Rose and Joseph P. Kennedy. "I was the seventh of nine children," he later recalled, "and when you come from that far down you have to struggle to survive."

He soon moved to Riverdale, N.Y. and lived in the state until 6th grade.

After high school, he served in the Navy during World War II, and attended Harvard University where he played varsity football. Athletics were a lifelong passion and he was known for his legendary touch football games with friends, family and daring for other exploits, including climbing the highest peak in North America, Mt. Kennedy, named for his brother, President John F. Kennedy. He then attended University of Virginia Law School.

Perhaps more important for his education was the Kennedy family dinner table, where his parents involved their children in discussions of history and current affairs. "I can hardly remember a meal-time," Robert Kennedy said, "when the conversation was not dominated by ... what was happening in the world."

In 1950, Robert Kennedy married Ethel Skakel and later had 11 children.

#### **Dedicated Public Servant:**

In 1952, Kennedy managed his older brother John's successful campaign for the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts. Later, he worked in the U.S. Senate, winning attention as the Senate's lead lawyer investigating Teamsters' Union leader Jimmy Hoffa for corruption.

In 1960, he managed John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign. After the election, he was appointed attorney general in President

### *Essential Question of the Unit*

After completing the lessons in this unit, students will be able to answer: What is social justice? How do individuals participate in social change? What can we learn from Robert F. Kennedy's message of social justice ideals and actions?



Kennedy's cabinet. As attorney general, he won respect for his effective administration of the Department of Justice, fighting organized crime and helping African-Americans exercise their right to vote, to attend integrated schools and to use public accommodations. In 1961 he helped protect students taking part in the Freedom Ride, protesters traveling by bus across the U.S. South to highlight illegal segregation, such as a prohibition against African-Americans using facilities in bus terminals. In September 1962, Attorney General Kennedy sent U.S. marshals and troops to defend the first African-American student (James Meredith) at the University of Mississippi from rioting protesters. Robert Kennedy also helped President Kennedy propose the most far-reaching civil rights law since Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which passed eight months after President Kennedy's death.

### New York's Senator:

Soon after President Kennedy's death, Robert Kennedy resigned as attorney general and, in 1964, ran successfully for the United States Senate in New York. As New York's senator, he initiated a number of projects in the state, including assistance to underprivileged children and students with disabilities and the establishment of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation to improve living conditions and employment opportunities in areas of Brooklyn. Today, that program is a model for communities across the nation.

### A Champion for Human Rights and Peace:

Senator Kennedy was also committed to the advancement of human rights at home and abroad. In addition to supporting the civil rights movement in the U.S., he sought to confront the American people with the facts of poverty, journeying into urban ghettos, Appalachia, Native American reservations, the Mississippi Delta and migrant workers' camps. He proposed legislation to encourage businesses to locate in these poverty-stricken areas to create dignified work for the unemployed so they could support their families.

He traveled to Eastern Europe, Latin America and South Africa to share his belief that all people have a basic human right to participate in the political decisions that affect their lives. He also believed that those who challenge institutional wrongs show the highest form of courage. "Each time a man stands up for an ideal," he said in a 1966 speech to South African students, "or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and . . . those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Though Kennedy had initially supported President Johnson's policies in the Vietnam War, as a senator, Kennedy worked to end the war. Kennedy urged President Johnson to cease the bombing of North Vietnam and reduce, rather than enlarge, the war effort. In his final Senate speech on Vietnam, Kennedy said, "[C]an [we] decide, in Washington, D.C., what cities, what towns, what hamlets in Vietnam are going to be destroyed? . . . Do we have to accept that? . . . I think we can do something about it."

## Additional Resources

Edelman, Peter B. *Searching for America's Heart: RFK and the Renewal of Hope*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.

Grubin, David. *RFK*. Produced by David Grubin for American Experience in association with the BBC. 93 Min. Paramount. Videocassette; DVD.

Halberstam, David. *The Children*. New York: Random House, 1998.

Schlesinger, Arthur M. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

vanden Heuvel, William and Gwizman, Milton. *On His Own: Robert F. Kennedy 1964-1968*. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970.

Robert F. Kennedy Memorial  
[www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction](http://www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction)

*RFK - American Experience* –  
PBS with Cesar Chavez  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/peopleevents/p\\_chavez.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/peopleevents/p_chavez.html)

Teacher's Guide  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/tguide/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/tguide/index.html)

Speak Truth to Power  
[www.speaktruth.org](http://www.speaktruth.org)

 Visit [www.nysut.org/RFK](http://www.nysut.org/RFK)  
for additional resources

**Historic Bid for the Presidency:**

On March 18, 1968, Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. He challenged the complacency in American society and sought to bridge the great divides in American life — between the races, between the poor and the affluent, between young and old. His 1968 campaign brought hope to an American people troubled by discontent and violence at home and war in Vietnam. He won critical primaries in Indiana and Nebraska and spoke to enthusiastic crowds across the nation.

Robert Francis Kennedy was fatally shot on June 5, 1968, at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif., shortly after claiming victory in that state's crucial Democratic primary. He was 42 years old. Although his life was cut short, Robert Kennedy's vision and ideals live on today through the human rights work of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial in Washington, D.C.

## Overview

The unit consists of five lessons that are interdisciplinary and integrate the New York state learning standards for social studies, English language arts, the arts and health. Each lesson has multiple activities that may be taught over several class periods. A suggested number of minutes is given at the beginning of each lesson. As the lessons are reviewed, keep in mind that activities may be adapted to fit into the class time frame. It is suggested that instruction on the introductory lesson be completed prior to the naming of the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge in November of 2008. The remaining lessons may be integrated throughout the school year as appropriate.

Through the sessions and activities in this project, students will have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of justice; learn facts and details about events in our history that shaped the 1960s; explore a broad spectrum of ideas and concepts about social justice, social responsibility and leadership. Lesson 1 provides the foundation and Lesson 5 is designed to be the culminating activity; however, each lesson can stand alone if time does not permit teaching all five.

## Additional Resources

Center for Applied Special Technology  
<http://www.cast.org/index.html>

National Dissemination Center for  
Children with Disabilities  
<http://nichcy.org/index.html>

NYSUT Educator's Voice  
[http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/educatorsvoice\\_10032.htm](http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/educatorsvoice_10032.htm)

National Clearinghouse for English  
Language Acquisition and Language  
Instruction Educational Programs  
[http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/spotlight/4\\_whatworks.html](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/spotlight/4_whatworks.html)

Center for Instruction: ELL grades  
K – 12 English language learners  
<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=ell>

AFT Colorin Colorado  
<http://www.aft.org/teachers/colorado.htm>

## Relevance to Current Issues

Many of the social issues Robert F. Kennedy fought against still exist in our society, and there are new challenges that require individual commitment to social change and civic action. Local, state and national elections and issues such as the war in Iraq, gun control, affordable housing, energy crisis, illegal immigration, global warming, equal pay and opportunity for jobs, unemployment and affordable health care are just some of these issues. Social causes that our students have become involved in include, but are not limited to, protecting the environment, healthy school lunches and safety in school and on the Internet.

## *Differentiating Instruction*

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Teachers should consider the following strategies when adapting instruction for diverse learners:

### **Students with Disabilities**

- When beginning the lesson, ask frequent questions and provide clarifying statements.
- Use concept maps, graphics. Consider how these can be modified or if the information can be used.
- Assign students to work in heterogeneous groups, using cooperative learning when appropriate.
- The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) will provide information on the need for specific modifications.
- Create scaffold reading with supports for decoding and vocabulary.
- Provide alternate means of presenting information, such as written, oral and visual.
- Evaluate the accessibility of electronic devices (computer, LCD panels) and/or other alternate means for note-taking.
- Break down instructional units into smaller steps.
- Teach students learning strategies, tools and techniques used to understand and learn new materials — simple learning strategies such as note-taking, making a chart, asking questions, making an outline, re-reading and highlighting key words or concepts.

### **English Language Learners**

- Identify vocabulary words that may be difficult for students and pre-teach new vocabulary in context. Write simple, brief definitions.
- Use visuals and graphic organizers to visually represent the main idea.
- Summarize text using controlled vocabulary and simplified sentence structures.
- Provide the opportunity for students to partner with English-proficient speakers. Arrange the classroom for small-group and paired learning.
- Use think-alouds to help students understand the step-by-step thinking process in finding solutions.

## *Vocabulary*

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Each lesson has a list of vocabulary words pertaining to the lesson. Create a word wall and ensure that the vocabulary words are used during class discussions and in student writing activities.



### Lesson 1 – What is Social Justice?

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the terms *social justice*, *human rights* and *individual liberties*.
- Describe the purpose of the Declaration of Human Rights, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence.
- Identify examples of social justice now and then.
- Recognize the importance of artistic expression as a means of cultural and societal documentation in the 1960s and today.
- Identify Robert F. Kennedy's involvement in addressing social injustices during the 1960s.

### Lesson 2 – Robert F. Kennedy – A Champion of Social Justice

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify various groups in our nation facing social injustices.
- Describe the injustice(s) that each group faced.
- Describe the actions of Robert F. Kennedy to address these social justice issue(s).
- Produce a journal entry from the point of view of one group.
- Present journal entries to the class.

### Lesson 3 – The Civil Rights Movement

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify Robert F. Kennedy's vision and his action plan.
- Identify and discuss the social justice issues today that are similar to those in the 1960s.
- Understand the changes, if any, that have taken place since the 1960s.

### Lesson 4 – Champion for People Living in Poverty

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Compare the issue of poverty in Eastern Kentucky in 1968 to those living in poverty in 2008.
- Understand how the federal government attempted to assist the rural poor in 1968 and today.
- Understand how one person can make a change in a community.

### Lesson 5 – How Can Students' Action Make a Difference in Social Justice Issues?

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the positive social changes possible through participating in politics/public service.
- Develop a plan of action that addresses one of Robert F. Kennedy's social justice issues.
- Explain the connection between citizenship and active participation in addressing social justice issues.
- Assess how their knowledge, ideas, understandings and beliefs about social justice has changed as a result of this unit.



Photo by Bill Eppridge/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

*Senator Robert F. Kennedy (also known as Bobby Kennedy, and RFK) talks with a young boy as he meets with supporters on an unidentified airfield during a cross-country campaign tour, 1966.*

# Lesson Plan 1

**Title:** What is Social Justice?

**Grade:** 11

**Time Requirement:** 120 Minutes



Photo by Bill Eppridge/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define the terms social justice, human rights, individual liberties.
- Describe the purpose of the Declaration of Human Rights, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence.
- Identify examples of social justice now and then.
- Recognize the importance of artistic expression as a means of cultural and societal documentation in the 1960s and today.
- Identify Robert F. Kennedy's involvement in addressing social injustices learned through the materials listed during the 1960s.

## Materials:

- [www.speaktruth.org/](http://www.speaktruth.org/)  
(Explore definition of human rights; see Human Rights nav. button, then Dec. of Human Rights in nav. bar below)
- [www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html)  
(Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights)
- Handouts of song lyrics (The songs a teacher selects will depend on the interests of his or her student population)  
Song lyrics may be accessed at:  
[www.lyricsfreak.com/g/grandmaster-flash/62225.html](http://www.lyricsfreak.com/g/grandmaster-flash/62225.html)  
[www.lyricsfreak.com/e/elvis+presley/in+the+ghetto\\_20048735.html](http://www.lyricsfreak.com/e/elvis+presley/in+the+ghetto_20048735.html)  
For additional songs go to [www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com) and enter "songs of social justice" in the search box.
- Handouts to song lyrics of "To Bobby" performed by Joan Baez  
[www.completealbumlyrics.com/lyric/60783/Joan+Baez+-+TO+BOBBY.html](http://www.completealbumlyrics.com/lyric/60783/Joan+Baez+-+TO+BOBBY.html)
- Video (3:03) Robert F. Kennedy Remembered  
[http://blog.washingtonpost.com/the-trail/2008/06/05/robert\\_f\\_kennedy\\_remembered.html](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/the-trail/2008/06/05/robert_f_kennedy_remembered.html)



Visit [www.nysut.org/RFK](http://www.nysut.org/RFK) for additional resources

## New York State Learning Standards and Performance Indicators

**Social Studies Standard 1:** History of the United States and New York state KI 1, PI 2

**Social Studies Standard 5:** Civics, Citizenship and Government KI 4, PI 3

**English Language Arts Standard 1:** Information and Understanding Grade 11 Reading, PI 3, 5; Grade 11 Writing, PI 1, 2; Grade 11 Listening, PI 1; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 5

**English Language Arts Standard 3:** Critical Analysis and Evaluation Grade 11 Listening, PI 1, 5; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 3

**English Language Arts Standard 4:** Social Interaction Grade 11 Reading, PI 1; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 1

**The Arts Standard 3:** Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art Music KI 4

## SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

Grade 11: United States History and Government

Unit Seven: World in Uncertain Times: 1950 – Present

III. Decade of Change: 1960s (pp. 149-151)

### SKILLS

**Thinking skills** — comparing and contrasting ideas; drawing inferences and making conclusions; evaluating

**Research and writing skills** — interpreting information; analyzing information; synthesizing information

**Interpersonal and group relation skills** — defining terms; participating in group planning and discussion; cooperating to accomplish goals

### CONCEPTS

Change

Civic values

Human rights

Justice

Power

### Vocabulary

- human rights
- individual liberties
- social justice
- advocate
- activist

## Technology Requirement

- Internet access
- CD player or other audio player
- Projection unit DVD player or video player, SMARTboard (if available)

## Background

Learning about Robert F. Kennedy's ideals and role in championing the causes of social justice requires students first to have an understanding of what social justice means and what social injustices existed and continue to exist today.

## Relevance to Current Issues

This lesson provides background knowledge to help students understand social justice issues in the 1960s and today.

## Student Activities

### Anticipatory Set

The teacher asks students to take three minutes to think about the following questions and write a response:

- Describe a time when you or others were treated unfairly or unjustly.
- How did you know that the situation was unjust?
- How was the situation handled?
- After students write their responses, the teacher facilitates a class discussion by asking:  
How do you know that something is just vs. unjust?

**Activity 1** — What does social justice mean?

The teacher should use student responses to derive a definition of “social justice.”  
Suggested definitions of social justice:

- A situation in which all individuals and groups in a society are treated fairly and equally, regardless of race, gender or any other factor that could be used to create situations of injustice.

([www.fast-times.com/politicaldictionary.html](http://www.fast-times.com/politicaldictionary.html)) 

- Equitable access to resources and the benefits derived from them; a system that recognizes inalienable rights and adheres to what is fair, honest and moral.

([www.mhhe.com/biosci/pae/glossarys.html](http://www.mhhe.com/biosci/pae/glossarys.html)) 

The teacher concludes this activity by asking students the following questions:

- Where are an individual’s rights to social justice defined?
- The teacher provides copies of human rights and individual liberties as defined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. Working in small groups, the students develop a graphic organizer that shows the relationship among generally accepted human rights and those identified in each of the three aforementioned documents. In a large-group discussion, the teacher should ask students to identify specific human rights they believe are most important for all people and to give a rationale for their selection.

**Activity 2** — Social Justice Portrayed in Music

The teacher asks students to find a partner for this activity and distributes lyrics to a song about social justice. The song will be dependent on the interests of his/her students. Some suggested titles are:

“In the Ghetto” performed by Elvis Presley 


“The Message” performed by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five 

- With a partner, students will read the lyrics and answer the questions provided to the students. (See song lyric worksheet.) If possible, play the original version of the song.

The teacher facilitates a class discussion focusing on the following questions:


- What is the purpose of the song(s)?
- What are some of the current social injustice issues that are addressed in the song(s)?

**“To Bobby”**

- The teacher introduces “To Bobby” by informing students that they will be listening to a song from an earlier time period. Ask students to listen for answers to the same questions listed in the student handout.
- Distribute the lyrics to the Joan Baez  song titled “To Bobby.”
- If possible, play the original version of the song.





- The teacher facilitates a class discussion focusing on the following questions:
  - How does the song make you feel?
  - Who/What is the song about?
  - What are some of the issues that Bobby wrestled with in the song?
  - Who do you think Bobby was? What kind of person do you think he was?
  - Why do you think a song was written about him?
- Video, “Robert F. Kennedy Remembered”   
Provide students with a brief biography of Robert F. Kennedy.
  - Explain that Robert F. Kennedy’s vision and actions regarding social justice issues will be the focus for this unit about social justice. The teacher should show the video above providing an overview of Robert F. Kennedy’s impact and passion for social equality.

## Culminating Activity

The teacher asks each student to create an artistic expression relating to a social justice issue Robert F. Kennedy was involved in and that the student feels strongly about today. Ask students to choose one of the menu options below:


- Song lyrics
- Using technology
- Poem
- PowerPoint presentation

## Extension Activities

As an alternative to the activity described in Section 3 (Social Justice Portrayed in Music) of this lesson, the teacher could divide the class into groups and provide each group with different lyrics of songs to analyze using the same questions in student handout #1. Students will gain a greater understanding of the fact that, although the songs are of different genres and/or different time periods, similar social injustices exist.

- What is the subject of the song? Cite specific lyrics.
- What audience is the song trying to address? Describe the social class of the audience and how it is relevant to the message of the song.
- What is the purpose of the song? What does it try to accomplish? On what issue(s) is awareness raised? Do you identify with the songs?
- How are the songs relevant to students?
- Are songs an effective means of raising awareness about social justice issues? Why or why not?

## Additional Resources

- Video clips suggested from YouTube as cross-referenced from [www.bobby-kennedy.com/](http://www.bobby-kennedy.com/)  
Student Handout #1: What is social justice? Questions for Song Lyrics (*Document 1e*) 

# Lesson Plan 2

**Title:** Robert F. Kennedy — a Champion of Social Justice

**Grade:** 11

**Time Requirement:** 80 minutes



## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify various groups of our nation facing social injustices.
- Describe the injustice(s) that each group faced.
- Describe the actions taken by Robert F. Kennedy to address these social justice issue(s).
- Produce a journal entry from the point of view of one group.
- Present journal entries to the class.

## New York State Learning Standards

**Social Studies Standard 1:** History of the United States and New York state KI 2, PI 3; KI 4, PI 2

**Social Studies Standard 5:** Civics, Citizenship and Government KI 4, PI 5

**English Language Arts Standard 1:** Information and Understanding Grade 11 Reading, PI 2, 5; Grade 11 Writing, PI 1, 2

**English Language Arts Standard 3:** Critical Analysis and Evaluation Grade 11 Writing, PI 2; Grade 11 Listening, PI 1; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 1

**English Language Arts Standard 4:** Social Interaction Grade 11 Reading, PI 1; Grade 11 Writing, PI 1; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 1

### SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

Grade 11: United States History and Government

Unit Seven: World in Uncertain Times: 1950 – present

III. Decade of Change: 1960s (pp. 149-151)

IV. The Limits of Power: Turmoil at Home and Abroad, 1965–1972 (pp. 151-152)

### SKILLS

**Thinking skills** — comparing and contrasting ideas; drawing inferences and making conclusions; evaluating

**Research and writing skills** — getting information; organizing information; interpreting information; analyzing information; synthesizing information; supporting a position

**Interpersonal and group relation skills** — recognizing that others may have a different point of view; participating in group planning and discussion; cooperating to accomplish goals; assuming responsibility for carrying out tasks

### Vocabulary

- social justice
- champion
- migrant
- demographic
- rural
- urban

**CONCEPTS**

Change	Civic values	Citizenship	Diversity
Human rights	Justice	Power	

**Technology Requirement**

Laptops or computer lab (If this is not accessible, teachers should distribute a copy of the documents indicated for each group listed under the materials section of this lesson.)

**Background**

Numerous issues of social injustice touched the lives of many different groups, demographically, ethnically and economically. Robert F. Kennedy made it his personal mission to understand firsthand the problems facing any groups suffering from injustice. Through his investigations, he experienced what he considered completely unacceptable conditions that he sought to ameliorate through legislation and grassroots community efforts. This lesson examines his vision and actions for initiating change and improvements in the lives of people affected by social injustices.

**Materials:**

The following Web sites include primary source documents to investigate the social injustices of groups influenced by the actions of Robert F. Kennedy.

**GROUP 1 Resources – Migrant Farm Workers**

- Cesar Chavez  
[www.reuther.wayne.edu/ufw.html](http://www.reuther.wayne.edu/ufw.html)
- News Article, “From the RFK Memorial Poverty Tour: Fields Ripe with Injustice” Posted May 6, 2006  
[www.huffingtonpost.com/todd-howland/from-the-rfk-memorial-pov\\_b\\_20497.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/todd-howland/from-the-rfk-memorial-pov_b_20497.html)
- PBS reading, “People & Events: Cesar Chavez”  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/peopleevents/p\\_chavez.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/peopleevents/p_chavez.html)
- Reading, Pgs. 790 – 792  
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

**GROUP 2 Resources – American Indians**

- Reading, Page 793  
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Excerpt from *Journal of American Indian Education*, January 1972  
<http://jaie.asu.edu/v11/V11S2con.html>
- Reading, Pgs. 154 – 161  
Clarke, Thurston. *The Last Campaign*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2008.

**GROUP 3 Resources – Rural Poor**

- Reading, Pgs. 794 – 795  
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- RFK’s trip through eastern Kentucky  
[www.rfkineky.org/project/opening-press.htm](http://www.rfkineky.org/project/opening-press.htm)
- Excerpt from “Bobby: My Moral Beacon,” written by Gordon Brown  
[www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/04/robert-kennedy-poverty](http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/04/robert-kennedy-poverty)

**GROUP 4 Resources – Urban Poor**

- Reading, Pgs. 782 – 785  
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Excerpt from “Bobby: My Moral Beacon,” written by Gordon Brown  
[www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/04/robert-kennedy-poverty](http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/04/robert-kennedy-poverty)  
Excerpt titled “The Bedford-Stuyvesant Experiment”  
Kennedy, Robert F. *To Seek a Newer World*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1967.



Visit [www.nysut.org/RFK](http://www.nysut.org/RFK) for additional resources

## *Relevance to Current Issues*

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While certain advances were made as a result of Robert F. Kennedy's efforts, the groups Robert F. Kennedy visited continue to be victims of social injustice today. Some of the current issues include, but are not limited to, educational inequity, legal inequity, poverty, segregation, (economically driven) and discrimination/racial intolerance.

## *Student Activities*

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### **Anticipatory Set:**

- The teacher asks students to take about three minutes to write a response to the following questions:
- What are the characteristics of a champion?
- Who would you consider a champion?
- Why did you select this person?

## *Class Discussion:*

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After students complete these responses, the teacher should facilitate a class discussion, using these student responses, to derive a definition of a champion. The teacher concludes this activity by asking:

- Why are champions important? What are characteristics of a champion?
- How do they inspire hope?
- Do you feel you have any of the characteristics that the class identified as the characteristics of a champion of social justice?
- How might you help others to develop the qualities of a champion?

### **Activity 1 - Group Activity:**

The teacher introduces the group activity and distributes materials as follows:

- The teacher explains that the class will be divided into four groups. Each group will be assigned a different social group (migrant farm workers, American Indians, rural poor and urban poor) and will receive documents revealing the social injustices relating to that group and how Robert F. Kennedy addressed these injustices. (See "materials" for a selection of primary source documents. Teachers should use their discretion in selecting documents that are the appropriate length and level of difficulty for each of their students.)
- The teacher indicates that each group will write one journal entry from the point of view of an individual from their assigned social group. The entries should include a description of the socio-economic conditions, the issues or social injustices that the group faced. The teacher emphasizes that their description should be written from the point of view of an individual from the assigned group (be descriptive, exhibit emotion), describe how the individual was personally affected by Robert F. Kennedy and how Robert F. Kennedy worked toward addressing the injustice(s) faced.
- Each group of students should also receive a copy of the rubric (see Page 17) so they are aware of what criteria to include and how they will be graded.
- The teacher informs the students that each member of the group shall be prepared to share a part of the journal entry.

- Small group presentations to class - The teachers ask that each group shares its journal entry with the class. Groups will be evaluated based on the attached rubric (See student handout 1).
- The teacher concludes this activity by facilitating a class discussion focusing on the following questions:
  - What similarities and differences existed between the groups?
  - What were some of the social injustices that each group faced?
  - How were the groups affected by the injustices?
  - What was Robert F. Kennedy's relationship with each group?
  - How were they affected by Robert F. Kennedy?
  - Do you think that each group considered Robert F. Kennedy a hero? Why or why not?

## *Culminating Activity*

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Students will choose an individual who they believe is an advocate of social justice and complete the activity below. Student creations should be a minimum of one typed page. Suggest using [www.speaktruth.org](http://www.speaktruth.org) as a resource.


### **Interview/Dialogue**

Pretend that you have an opportunity to have dinner with your chosen advocate of social justice. Write a dialogue (questions that you would ask, and responses). In your dialogue, the responses should be based on information you have gathered from at least two reliable resources. Be sure to discuss the social issues and any policies addressing the treatment of that issue, their reason(s) for interest in the issue, their vision and the actions of the advocate. Briefly compare your advocate's actions with those of Robert F. Kennedy.

## *Extension Activities*

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### **Nomination for National Award**

Each student should pretend that he or she has the opportunity to nominate his or her chosen advocate for the award "RFK Social Justice Advocate of the Year." The student's job is to write an essay that endorses a candidate for this prestigious award. Make sure that you include the issue(s) and group for which they advocate, what they hope to accomplish and their actions and methods for addressing the issue(s). The essay should also describe how their work reflects Robert F. Kennedy's legacy. Suggest using [www.speaktruth.org](http://www.speaktruth.org) as a resource. 

## *Additional Resources*

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- Video clips suggested from YouTube as cross-referenced from [www.bobby-kennedy.com/](http://www.bobby-kennedy.com/)   
(multi-media button on nav. bar)



## Oral Presentation Rubric: Journal Entry Presentation

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Content</b>	Shows a full understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well.
<b>Collaboration with Peers</b>	Almost always listens to, shares with and supports the efforts of others in the group. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with and supports the efforts of others in the group. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with and supports the efforts of others in the group, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with and supports the efforts of others in the group. Often is not a good team member.
<b>Posture and Eye Contact</b>	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
<b>Speaks Clearly</b>	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) of the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) of the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or cannot be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
<b>Volume</b>	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The entry fully presents a description of the socio-economic conditions, the issues or social injustices that the group faced, maintains the point of view of an individual from assigned group (is descriptive, exhibits emotion), describes how the individual was personally affected by RFK and how RFK worked toward addressing the injustice(s) faced.	The entry somewhat presents a description of the socio-economic conditions, the issues or social injustices that the group faced, maintains the point of view of an individual from assigned group (is descriptive, exhibits emotion), describes how the individual was personally affected by RFK and how RFK worked toward addressing the injustice(s) faced.	The entry marginally presents a description of the socio-economic conditions, the issues or social injustices that the group faced, maintains the point of view of an individual from assigned group (is descriptive, exhibits emotion), describes how the individual was personally affected by RFK and how RFK worked toward addressing the injustice(s) faced.	The entry rarely presents a description of the socio-economic conditions, the issues or social injustices that the group faced, maintains the point of view of an individual from assigned group (is descriptive, exhibits emotion), describes how the individual was personally affected by RFK and how RFK worked toward addressing the injustice(s) faced.



Photo by Michael Rougier/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

*Robert F. Kennedy sitting next to Mexican-American migrant worker activist Cesar Chavez (looking very weak after prolonged hunger strike), during a rally in support of the United Farm Workers Union.*

# Lesson Plan 3

**Title:** The Civil Rights Movement

**Grade:** 11

**Time Requirement:** 80 – 120 minutes

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify Robert F. Kennedy's vision and his action plan.
- Identify and discuss the social justice issues today that are similar to those in the 1960s.
- Understand the changes, if any, that have taken place since the 1960s.



AP Photo

## Materials:

The teacher will need the following materials for this lesson.

- Copy of “Dream Deferred” by Langston Hughes.  
<http://members.aol.com/olatou/hughes.htm>
- Copy of a summary of Kerner Commission's 1968 report for the entire class. The 1968 Kerner Report: “Our Nation is Moving Toward Two Societies, One Black, One White – Separate and Unequal.” <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6545/>
- Copy of the quotes listed under Activity 3 for the entire class.  
[www.bobby-kennedy.com/](http://www.bobby-kennedy.com/)
- The video clip of CNN's 2008 “Black in America.”
- Links to CNN's July 2008 series: Black in America. [www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2008/black.in.america/](http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2008/black.in.america/)



Visit [www.nysut.org/RFK](http://www.nysut.org/RFK) for additional resources

## Background

The 1968 Kerner Report describes causes of black despair, and hopelessness and describes one consequence — riots that ravaged the United States in the mid-1960s. The causes of black anger were many and include prejudice, police practices, unemployment and underemployment, inadequate housing, inadequate education, poor recreation facilities and programs, ineffectiveness of the political structure and grievance mechanisms, disrespectful white attitudes, discriminatory administration of justice, inadequacy of federal programs and inadequate municipal services.

From these just grievances came the civil rights movement, which originated not from a single source, but from the actions of many individuals and groups. Some groups like the Black Panthers advocated using violence if necessary. Others, like the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) discouraged violence and achieved some tangible successes. The career of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was crystallized by his use of civil disobedience. Robert Kennedy's belief in social justice led him to recognize that until social, economic and political problems were addressed, many Americans would continue to feel as if they had nothing to gain by adhering to the status quo. Kennedy was shocked to see firsthand the conditions facing many African-Americans. This lesson links those conditions with the actions of Kennedy, as well reflecting on conditions that exist today and what current activists can do to help.

## Relevance to Current Issues

The core issues facing African-Americans today, four decades after the Civil Rights Bill, are very similar to those that they faced in the 1960s.

## Additional Resources

Clearly demonstrate widely different impressions on race relations among blacks, whites and Latinos in the United States today.

## New York State Learning Standards

**Social Studies Standard 1:** History of the United States and New York state  
KI 2, PI 2; KI 3, PI 4; KI 4, PI 1

**Social Studies Standard 5:** Civics, Citizenship and Government  
KI 2, PI 2; KI 4, PI 5

**English Language Arts Standard 1:** Information and Understanding  
Grade 11 Reading, PI 2, 5; Grade 11 Writing, PI 2; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 5

**English Language Arts Standard 3:** Critical Analysis and Evaluation  
Grade 11 Listening, PI 1, 5; Grade 11 Writing, PI 3; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 3

**English Language Arts Standard 4:** Social Interaction  
Grade 11 Reading, PI 1; Grade 11 Listening, PI 1; Grade 11 Speaking, PI 1

### SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

Grade 11: United States History and Government

Unit Seven: World in Uncertain Times: 1950 – Present

II. Containment and Consensus: 1945 – 1960 (p. 148)

III. Decade of Change: 1960s (pp. 149-151)

IV. The Limits of Power: Turmoil at Home and Abroad, 1965 – 1972  
(pp. 151-152)

### SKILLS

**Thinking skills** — comparing and contrasting ideas; drawing inferences and making conclusions; evaluating

**Research and writing skills** — getting information; organizing information; looking for patterns; interpreting information; applying information; analyzing information; synthesizing information; supporting a position

**Interpersonal and group relation skills** — recognizing that others may have a different point of view; participating in group planning and discussion; cooperating to accomplish goals

**Graph and image analysis skills** — drawing conclusions

## Vocabulary

- sit-in
- freedom riders
- boycott
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- New Frontier
- Great Society
- civil disobedience
- integration
- segregation
- apartheid
- oppression


**CONCEPT**

Change	Civic values	Citizenship	Conflict	Diversity
Empathy	Human rights	Justice	Power	

***Technology Requirement:***

A computer attached to a projector will be needed to show a clip from Robert F. Kennedy's South Africa speech and the video clip from CNN's "Black in America."

***Student Activities*****Anticipatory Set**

The teachers ask students to divide into groups of three or four students. The teacher asks a student to read the 1951 poem by Langston Hughes titled "Dream Deferred." The poem is available at the Web site listed in the materials section of this lesson. A photograph and biography of Langston Hughes is available at <http://members.aol.com/olatou/hughes.htm>. 

The teacher then asks the students to discuss the following questions in their small groups:

- What does Hughes' symbolism and imagery really mean? How does the poem predict riots of the 1960s? How might African-Americans have dealt with their unfulfilled dreams? How does this poem predict the civil rights movement?
- The teacher then asks students to share their responses to the questions in a large group discussion.

**Activity 1** — The 1968 Kerner Commission Report

Students will continue in their small groups.

The teacher asks each group to read a summary of the 1968 Kerner Commission Report focusing on the urban conditions that caused the 1966-67 riots. (The summary is available at the Web address provided in the materials section of this lesson.) Each group should respond to the following questions.

- Why was there so much black despair?
- Did people feel they had a stake in society?
- What options did they have?
- Which, if any, of their civil rights are still being violated today?

The teacher asks students to share their responses during a large group discussion.



### Activity 2 — Quotes and Statements from Robert F. Kennedy regarding civil rights.

The teacher asks students to divide into groups of three to four students. The teacher shares a copy of Robert Kennedy's quotes regarding civil rights. (See student handout 1).

The teacher asks students to individually read the quotes and to discuss them in their small groups, focusing on the following questions:

- Why didn't Robert F. Kennedy simply follow the status quo of previous leaders?
- How were the causes of discrimination in the United States and apartheid in South Africa similar?
- What similarities did the struggles of the civil rights movement and the movement to end apartheid share?
- What risks do people take in fighting the beliefs of the majority?
- Why did Kennedy care about what was going on in South Africa?

The teacher then facilitates a large group discussion focusing on the responses to the questions.

### Culminating Activity

- 2008 CNN Special: *Black in America*.
- Students are asked to remain in their small groups as they view a clip of the CNN special.
- Students are asked to discuss the following questions in their small group; each focuses on the conditions that caused the 1966-67 riots and compares them with conditions of today.
- To what extent have civil rights improved in America? Have you ever been discriminated against due to race, age, sex, ethnicity, clothing or religion? Have you ever witnessed a civil rights violation against someone else? How did you react? What might you have done differently? What can you do to prevent such an incident from occurring again?
- The teacher facilitates a brief large group discussion, asking students to share their responses to the questions.

### Extension Lesson:

The teacher could ask students to:

- Write a persuasive letter to the new president expressing their views on current social justice issues and suggesting actions to address them.
- Write a report comparing the ideals of the presidential candidates on social justice issues with those of Robert F. Kennedy.
- Develop a plan of action to address a social justice issue in the student's community.
- Research a civil rights issue in a foreign country, such as women's rights in China or enfranchisement in Arab countries, and describe strategies Robert F. Kennedy used that could be applied to address that civil rights issue.

### Additional Resources:

- Kennedy's speech in South Africa on race, hope.  
[www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/rfkcapetown.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/rfkcapetown.htm)
- A series of clips and speeches by Kennedy.  
<http://features.csmonitor.com/books/2008/05/26/rfk-as-orator-and-candidate/>
- Copy of Kennedy's speech following the assassination of M.L. King Jr.  
[www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/RFK/Statement+of+the+Assassination+of+Martin+Luther+King.htm](http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/RFK/Statement+of+the+Assassination+of+Martin+Luther+King.htm)
- Link to USA Today, July 24, 2008, survey on race relations in America.  
[www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-07-23-Race-poll\\_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-07-23-Race-poll_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip)
- Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Web site.  
[www.rfkmemorial.org/home/](http://www.rfkmemorial.org/home/)

## Student Handout 1

### Quotes and Statements from Robert F. Kennedy regarding civil rights

*“He described what he’s seen there — the shacks, the vermin, the catatonic children with hollowed cheeks and bloated bellies, the ancient grandmother whose body had wasted away, the starving pig with a half-eaten rat hanging out of its snout.”*

– Robert F. Kennedy in Mississippi

*“We must recognize the full human equality of all our people — before God, before the law, and in the councils of government. We must do this not because it is economically advantageous — although it is; not because the laws of God and man command it — although they do command it; not because people in other lands wish it so. We must do it for the single and fundamental reason that it is the right thing to do.”*

– Robert F. Kennedy, May 6, 1961, at the University of Georgia Law School.

### Also from the same speech:

*“We will not stand by or be aloof. We will move. I happen to believe that the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision was right. But my belief does not matter. It is the law. Some of you may believe the decision was wrong. That does not matter. It is the law.”*

– Robert F. Kennedy, May 6, 1961, at the University of Georgia Law School.

*“At the University of Natal in Durban, I was told the church to which most of the white population belongs teaches apartheid as a moral necessity. A questioner declared that few churches allow black Africans to pray with the white because the Bible says that is the way it should be, because God created Negroes to serve. ‘But suppose God is black,’ I replied. ‘What if we go to heaven and we, all our lives, have treated the Negro as an inferior, and God is there, and we look up and He is not white? What then is our response?’ There was no answer. Only silence.”*

– Robert F. Kennedy, June 7, 1966, Durban, South Africa.



Photo by Bill Eppridge/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

*Presidential contender Bobby Kennedy stops during campaigning to shake hands with delighted young African-American child.*

# Lesson Plan 4

**Title:** Champion for People Living in Poverty

**Grade:** 11

**Time Requirement:** 80 minutes



Photo by Michael Mauney/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Compare the issue of poverty in eastern Kentucky in 1968 to those living in poverty in 2008.
- Contrast how the federal government assisted the rural poor in 1968 — and today.
- Understand how one person can make a change in a community.

## New York State Learning Standards

**Social Studies Standard 1:** History of the United States and New York KI 2, PI 2-3; KI 3, PI 1-2, 4

**Social Studies Standard 4:** Economics KI 1, PI 3, 6-7

**Social Studies Standard 5:** Civics, Citizenship and Government KI 2, PI 2, KI 3, PI 1-4; KI 4, PI 2, 6

**English Language Arts Standard 1 Grade 11** - information and understanding Reading PI 1-5, Writing PI 1-4, Listening PI 1, 3, Speaking PI 3, 5

**English Language Arts Standard 3 Grade 11** - critical analysis and evaluation Reading PI 1-3, Writing PI 2, Listening PI 2-3, Speaking PI 1-3

**English Language Arts Standard 4 Grade 11** - social interaction Reading PI 4, Writing PI 1-2, Listening PI 1-3, 5 Speaking PI 1-4

## Materials:

Family Income 1947-1997  
US Census Bureau,  
[www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p60-203.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p60-203.pdf), Table C-16, Page 104



Visit [www.nysut.org/RFK](http://www.nysut.org/RFK)  
for additional resources

## SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

United States History and Government

Unit 7: World in Uncertain Times: 1950 - Present

III. Decade of Change: 1960s; IV The Limits of Power: Turmoil At Home and Abroad, 1965-1972; V The Trend Toward Conservatism, 1972-1985; VI Approaching the Next Century, 1986-1999

## SKILLS

**Thinking skills** — Comparing and contrasting ideas, identifying cause and effect, drawing inferences and making conclusions, evaluating, handling diversity of interpretations

**Research and writing skills** — Getting information, analyzing information, synthesizing information

**Interpersonal and group relations skills** — Defining terms, identifying basic assumptions, recognizing and avoiding stereotypes, participating in group planning and discussion, assuming responsibility for carrying out tasks

**Sequencing and chronology skills** — Understanding the concepts of time, continuity and change

**Graph and image analysis skills** — Interpreting graphs and other images, drawing conclusions, making predictions

## CONCEPTS

Change

Civic values

Decision-making

Diversity

Justice

Needs and wants

Scarcity

## Technology Requirement

No special technology is required for this lesson.

## Background:

The purpose of this lesson is twofold: to examine poverty in the United States in two time frames, 1968 and 2008, and to examine actions taken by Robert F. Kennedy, who brought the issue to the forefront of American politics in 1968. In 1968, the United States was addressing the question of poverty through President Johnson's War on Poverty program. This was the largest expenditure of monies by any administration up to that time. Many of the programs have been discontinued; some have survived today. Robert F. Kennedy was a champion for the poor during his tenure as attorney general and later as the junior senator from New York. The poor were the displaced and powerless groups of the 1960s — blacks, American Indians, migrant workers, people from Appalachia and especially the children of America. Cesar Chavez remarked that, "Kennedy could see things through the eyes of the poor." In his three-and-a-half years as a senator, he would seek out America's disadvantaged, moving from ghetto to barrio, from shantytown to work camp.

## Vocabulary

- gross national product
- per-capita income
- income distribution
- poverty
- economic equity
- living wage
- minimum wage
- welfare
- great society
- war on poverty





## Relevance to Current Issues:

Poverty is still a major social and economic problem in the United States. One out of four children lives in poverty. Poverty statistics are based on family income, which varies depending on family size and composition. Family income is defined as the wages, salaries, rent from property, interest, dividends, profits and fees from businesses, pensions and help from relatives. There is an inequality in the United States between those at the poverty level and those at the upper-income levels.

## Student Activities

### Anticipatory Set:

- The teacher asks students to listen to an NPR clip of Dee Davis recalling Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 visit to Hazard, Ky.  
[www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12017456](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12017456) 
- Students could also view stills taken of the visit. These can be downloaded and copied from the NPR site or from Robert Kennedy visits Hazard, Ky.  
<http://hazardkentucky.com/more/kennedy.htm> 
- After listening to Dee Davis and viewing the stills, the teacher initiates a class discussion focusing on the following questions:
  - What realization did Dee Davis have when he looked into the home of his friends?
  - What factors influenced changes in Hazard after Robert F. Kennedy's visit?
  - Can you identify any similar activities in our community or state?

### Activity 1 — Family Income


The teacher provides students a chart (See student handout 1) that depicts family income in 1968, 1978, 1988, 1998 and 2008. The chart shows the distribution of income for the United States for each of these years. The teacher divides the class into small groups and asks the students to respond in writing to the following questions. Students should remain in small groups as they complete the three quotes that follow.

- What was the difference in the income received by the bottom 20 percent and the top 20 percent?
- Did the difference between the bottom and top percentiles for each year change at the same rate during the past 40 years?
- Explain why you think these changes occurred.
- What are the implications of the uneven distributions of wealth in the United States?

## Activity 2 — The Great Society

**Quote 1** — The teacher asks students to read the following quote from a description of The Great Society.


*“Perhaps driven by his own humble beginnings, (President) Johnson declared a “War on Poverty” as central to building the Great Society. In 1960, despite the prosperity of the times, almost one-quarter of all American families were living below the poverty line, and entire regions of the country, like central Appalachia, were bypassed by the economic growth of the postwar years. Moreover, technological advances in industry were also changing job requirements for American workers. The good-paying, unskilled jobs of the past were disappearing, and those without education and skills were being left behind.”*

- [www.pbs.org/johngardner/chapters/4c.html](http://www.pbs.org/johngardner/chapters/4c.html)  download and copy the entire explanation for the students to read.
- After reading this quote, students should respond in writing to the following question:  
What was President Johnson’s primary purpose for engaging in “The War on Poverty”?

### Quote 2:


*“He saw the predicament that black people, that poor people were faced with. And he made a commitment to do something about it, not just as the attorney general. Not just as Senator Kennedy for the presidency. But as a human being. He went to the Mississippi Delta, where blacks were literally going hungry; to eastern Kentucky, where white people had been without jobs for years; and to the migrant labor camps of California. He was always about empowering people at the bottom and building from the bottom up; that was the key to it,” said Peter Edelman. “It was about hope. It was about people having a ticket to belonging in American society.”*

– From CBS News Web site

- [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/01/sunday/main4142910.shtml?source=RSS&attr=\\_4142910](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/01/sunday/main4142910.shtml?source=RSS&attr=_4142910)  download and copy the entire article.  
After reading this quote, students should respond in writing to the following question:
- Given the information in the reading and your knowledge of social studies and governmental action, do you agree that change should come from the bottom up?

### Quote 3:

Read the article from the *New York Times* – In Kentucky’s Teeth a Toll of Poverty and Neglect

- [www.nytimes.com/2007/12/24/us/24kentucky.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/24/us/24kentucky.html)  download and copy the entire article  
After reading this quote, the student should respond in writing to the following question:
- Based on the article and your knowledge of social studies, create a list of reasons why poverty is still a problem in eastern Kentucky.

The teacher facilitates a large group discussion focusing on the small group responses to the questions. Based on the time available, the teacher could assign a separate activity to each small group.

## Culminating Activity


The teacher should assign the following activity to be completed as homework within a five-day time frame.

- Create a chart comparing the following economic program initiatives designed to fight poverty:  
War on Poverty, Robert F. Kennedy’s actions in the Senate and current programs to fight poverty.

## Extending the lesson

Research the positions of the current president or candidates for president on the issue of poverty and other economic problems facing the United States today, such as gasoline prices, rising food prices and unemployment. Create a chart comparing John McCain's and Barack Obama's solutions to current economic problems with Robert F. Kennedy's positions and actions.

## Additional Resources

- RFK in EKY: Maximum Feasible Participation  
[www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2004/11/rfk\\_in\\_eky\\_maxi.php](http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2004/11/rfk_in_eky_maxi.php) 
- Robert F. Kennedy in Eastern Kentucky  
<http://southernstudies.org/facingsouth/2008/06/rfk-and-value-of-hope-in-appalachia.asp> 
- Student Worksheet, Family Income (*Document 4a*)   
<http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p60-203.pdf>

The Aggregate Income Received by the Bottom and Top 5 Percent of Families: 1968-2008		
	BOTTOM	TOP
1968	3,323	12,688
1978	6,318	26,288
1988	11,382	50,593
1998	16,116	75,000
2008	20,035	97,032

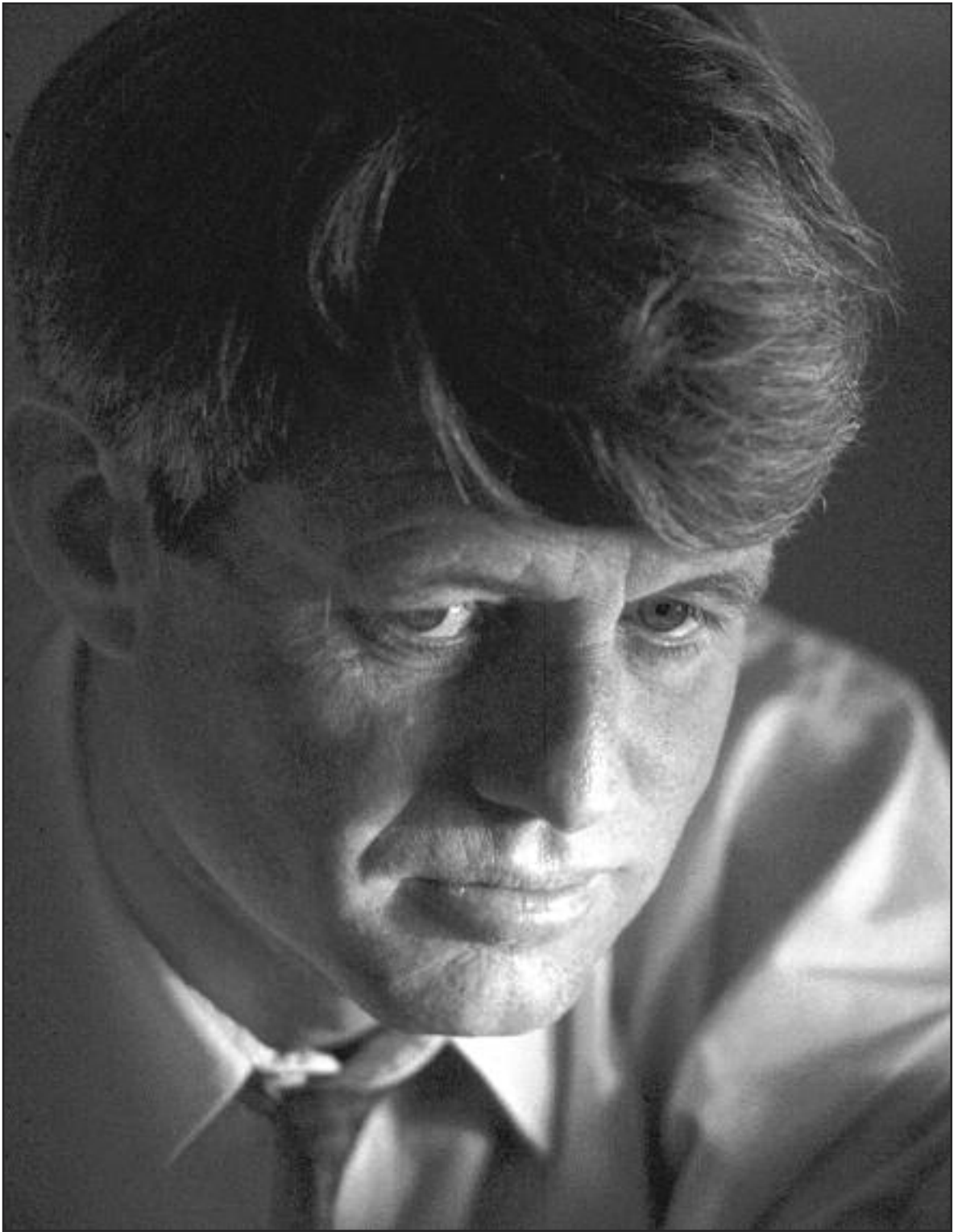


Photo by Bill Eppridge/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

*Robert Kennedy believed that everyone had the power to make a difference in the world.*

# Lesson Plan 5

**Title:** How Can Students' Actions Make a Difference in Social Justice Issues?

**Grade:** 11

**Time Requirement:**

80 – 120 minutes



*This lesson could also serve as a service learning project for the class or school.*

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Understand the positive social changes possible through participating in politics/public service.
- Develop a plan of action that addresses one of Robert F. Kennedy's social justice issues.
- Explain the connection between citizenship and active participation in addressing social justice issues.
- Assess how their knowledge, ideas, understandings and beliefs about social justice have changed as a result of this unit.

## Materials:

- Quotes from Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, May 27, 2008, on politics as the most noble profession. "To Seek a Newer World: The Life and Legacy of Robert F. Kennedy." Newseum, Washington, D.C., May 27, 2008  
[www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction/KKT\\_Remarks\\_Newseum](http://www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction/KKT_Remarks_Newseum)
- Examples of service learning projects: The Hidden Faces of Hunger, Lincoln Junior High, Fort Collins, Colo., Meagan Baker, pp. 38-43 from *Community Action Rooted in History, the CiviConnections Model of Service Learning*, edited by Rahima C. Wade, NCSS Bulletin 106, 2007.



Visit [www.nysut.org/RFK](http://www.nysut.org/RFK) for additional resources

## New York State Learning Standards

**Social Studies Standard 5:** Civics, Citizenship, and Government KI 4, PI 1-7

**English Language Arts Standard 1 Grade 11 -** Information and Understanding Reading PI 1-5, Writing pi 1-4, Listening PI 1, 3, Speaking PI 2, 6

**English Language Arts Standard 3 Grade 11 -** Critical Analysis and Evaluation Reading PI 1-3, Writing PI 2, Listening PI 2-3, Speaking PI 1-3

**English Language Arts Standard 4 Grade 11 -** Social Interaction Reading PI 4, Writing PI 1-2, Listening PI 1-3, Speaking PI 1-4



## SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

United States History and Government

Unit 7: World in Uncertain Times: 1950–Present

VI. Approaching the Next Century, 1986–1999

Participation in Government

Unit G: Selecting a Culminating Question

### SKILLS

**Thinking skills** — Comparing and contrasting ideas, identifying cause and effect, drawing inferences and making conclusions, evaluating, handling diversity of interpretations

**Research and writing skills** — Getting information, analyzing information, synthesizing information

**Interpersonal and group relations skills** — Defining terms, identifying basic assumptions, recognizing and avoiding stereotypes, participating in group planning and discussion, assuming responsibility for carrying out tasks

**Sequencing and chronology skills** — Using sequence and order to plan and accomplish tasks

### CONCEPTS

Change  
Diversity

Civic values  
Justice

Decision-making

## Technology Requirement

This lesson does not require any specific technology beyond access to the Internet for responses and lesson materials.

## Background

This lesson serves as a culminating lesson of the unit. The lesson is intended to help students explore and plan how they as students can become actively engaged in activities to end social injustice. The lesson could also be used independently. It is based on the National Council for the Social Studies CiviConnection Program (Wade 2006).

## Relevance to Current Issues

Robert F. Kennedy was committed to a number of social justice issues, including voting rights, civil rights, fighting rural and urban poverty, the rights of farm workers and desegregation in education. These issues were addressed by activism in the 1960s and are similar to the issues being tackled by activists and government leaders in this century.

### Vocabulary

- civics
- citizenship
- voting rights
- civil rights
- rural and urban poverty
- farm workers
- desegregation
- social injustice

## Student Activities

### Anticipatory Set

Why Robert F. Kennedy believed that politics could have a positive influence.

The teacher asks students to independently read an excerpt of a speech by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (See student handout 1) and respond to the following questions:

- What are your attitudes toward politics and the influence it has on social justice changes?
- What do you think about the claim that politics is an “honorable” profession?
- If this is a stand-alone lesson, the teacher should refer to the introduction of this unit, which summarizes Robert F. Kennedy’s social justice philosophy and actions.
- What would you say in response to statements such as: “My vote does not count; politicians are corrupt”?



Photo by Bill Eppridge/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

### Activity 1 — Developing a Plan of Action:

The teacher presents New York state Learning Standards 5, Civics, Citizenship, Government, on a poster or chalkboard and asks students: “Since being a good citizen includes the responsibility for us as citizens to be actively engaged, what actions and things could you as an individual, our class or community do about one of these social justice issues?”

### Activity 2 — Types of Social Actions:

The teacher provides a handout (page 35-36) that addresses three different types of actions that students could take to bring about social justice (see student handout 2). This is adapted from the work of Rahima Wade. (See the materials section for a citation of this work.)

- The teacher divides students into pairs or groups of three to four and asks each group to choose several actions to address a social justice issue. Their choices and the reasons for them should be recorded on newsprint, that will be displayed around the classroom.
- Each group shares its recommendation and the reasons for it during a large group session.

## Culminating Activity

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The teacher asks students to answer one of the following questions on a 3x5 card and return it to the teacher prior to exiting the classroom:

- How has your attitude toward Robert F. Kennedy's claim that "politics is an honorable profession" changed?
- What have you learned about Robert F. Kennedy's legacy of social justice and present-day issues of social justice?
- How has your attitude and understanding about politics and citizenship changed?

## Extension Lessons

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- The teacher asks students to implement one activity in their plan of action. The student would be required to write a brief paper describing the activity, its impact on the social justice issue and a reflection on what the student learned about social justice and citizenship.
- The teacher could ask students to reflect on the degree to which their attitudes about social justice and citizenship issues have changed by answering one or more of the following questions adapted from the 2008 article "Community Service – Learning for Democratic Citizenship" by Rahima Wade.

### A. Social Justice Issues

- On which current social justice issue(s) do you believe Robert F. Kennedy would be most committed to taking action? Why?
- What new knowledge have you learned about this issue?
- What human needs or problems are created by this issue?
- What historical events have been connected with this issue?

### B. Citizenship

- What is a good citizen?
- What are the ways that citizens help their communities?
- What should you do to help your community?
- What would happen in our democracy if everyone participated in public life?
- What would happen in our democracy if only a few individuals participated in public life? (Wade, 2008, page 17)

## Additional Resources

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"To Seek a Newer World: The Life and Legacy of Robert F. Kennedy" Newseum, Washington, D.C., May 27, 2008

[www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction/KKT\\_Remarks\\_Newseum](http://www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction/KKT_Remarks_Newseum) 

*Community Action Rooted in History, the CiviConnections Model of Service-Learning.*

Edited by Rahima C. Wade, NCSS Bulletin 106, National Council for Social Studies, 2007.

## *Student Handout 1*

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### **Excerpt from speech by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend**

#### **To Seek a Newer World: The Life and Legacy of Robert F. Kennedy**

My father loved politics passionately. Politics was central to who he was. He often cited John Buchanan's claim that politics is the most honorable profession. The book of remembrances written by our family and friends is entitled "An Honorable Profession." He loved Pericles' funeral oration praising those who give their lives, whose discussion leads to action, whose virtues are greatest, whose nobility serves the country.

Yet, I suspect that the reason that my father's political nature is neglected has less to do with my father and more to do with the cynical temper of our times. To our 21st century ears, "honorable" and "politics" seems an oxymoron, incongruous. It is not just that the word "honorable" is a virtue more associated with a patrician past, but that politics today is depicted as just the opposite of noble. It is seen as dirty, debased, tainted, unworthy and perverse.

But my father loved the honorable profession of politics and he admired those whose courage shines brightly. One example stands with us today. In 1961, the Freedom Riders risked their lives in the Deep South to show that blacks and whites should be able to travel together peacefully. My father, wanting to stop the violence, asked his assistant John Siegenthaler to go to Montgomery, to go to the bus station and to stand as a representative of the attorney general of the United States so that the protesters could feel protected and the police closely watched.

Many years later, as lieutenant governor of my state, I worked to make Maryland the first state in the country to require community service as a condition of high school graduation. I had seen the great good that comes from believing that one can make a difference and that everyone should try.

What I heard over and over again: While volunteerism is good, politics is dirty.

One high school teacher invited me to his school and his program of student service, which was renowned as one of the best in the state. The students took turns telling me of the good works they had done. They served in a soup kitchen, tutored younger students, participated in peer counseling. One young man described how he had served meals on wheels to an elderly woman, but that at one point he stopped because she had a problem with Social Security. As I listened to [what] the other students were doing, I kept wondering why he had not helped her with the Social Security. So, at the end of the presentations, I asked.

His response: "Well, that would be getting involved in politics," as if that was an obvious explanation as to why he must not get involved. I know my father would have strongly disagreed.

## *Student Handout 2*

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### **Actions Leading To Change**

**Direct Service** — Working directly in the community with people. Examples: bagging groceries at a crisis center, reading to homebound senior citizens or preparing and serving a meal at the local soup kitchen.

**Indirect Service** — Holding a fundraiser or collecting various materials. Examples: canned food drive, movies and popcorn fundraiser, clothing drive, bake sale, adopt-a-needy-child activities.

**Advocacy** — Writing letters, petitions or mounting campaigns to influence people's views on an issue. Examples: letters to the editor, proposals to the local city council, petitions for a new local policy or law or writing to government officials.

Service learning allows students to engage in community service to meet the needs of their community. It prepares students to become knowledgeable and informed citizens while engaging them in working for the common good within the political system of their community. Through service, students participate in creative problem-solving in a collaborative setting that brings about a positive change in the community.

### **Directions:**

Choose several social justice issues. Using the definitions of the three actions leading to social change, choose an action for each social justice issue and record the reasons for your choice on the newsprint made available from your teacher.





Photo by Paul Schutzer/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

*Sen. John F. Kennedy (L) and committee counsel Robert F. Kennedy talking to each other at a hearing of a Senate select committee.*



Photo by Francis Miller/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

*Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (R) with Walter Wetzel, president of the National Congress of American Indians, and unidentified woman.*

*In honor of Robert F. Kennedy's legacy  
of service and social justice,  
New York City's Triborough Bridge  
is being renamed the  
Robert F. Kennedy Bridge  
in November 2008.*



Courtesy MTA Bridges and Tunnels Special Archive

NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi looks on as Ambassador William vanden Heuvel (who was special assistant to Robert Kennedy while he served as attorney general) recounts his experiences. ▶

NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi, Ambassador William vanden Heuvel and the NYSUT lesson plan development team take a photo break during the July lesson-writing conference at NYSUT headquarters. ▼



◀ Ambassador William vanden Heuvel captivated the NYSUT lesson plan development team with his reminiscences of working with Robert Kennedy.



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To access the lesson plans online, along with primary source interviews and other materials, visit [www.nysut.org/rfk](http://www.nysut.org/rfk). Share your feedback at [rfk@nysutmail.org](mailto:rfk@nysutmail.org).

For additional biographical material and resources about Robert F. Kennedy and social justice, or to obtain a copy of the film *RFK Remembered*, visit [www.rfkmemorial.org](http://www.rfkmemorial.org) and [www.speaktruth.org](http://www.speaktruth.org).



**ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL**

PHOTO CREDIT: STANLEY TRETICK