

**Teacher Tool 249: The Cassius Project—
Character Education/Discussion of Social Justice Issues
Activity Ideas**

This teacher tool provides activity ideas in the area of Character Education that are related to videos in the “Cassius Project” series of videos available on the Educate.Today website. The “Cassius Project” is an initiative created by Metro Theater Company surrounding its 2016 production of “And In This Corner...Cassius Clay.” Educate.Today is proud and honored to be a collaborative partner in this endeavor through the production of a series of videos and related educational materials. Originally developed to “offer a series of community programs, wrap-around tools and resources related to the production to educate audiences and then engage and empower them to find ways to get personally involved in making St. Louis a stronger community,” these videos and materials are designed to take the project to an even wider audience of students, educators, theater lovers, and community change agents across the country.

Through the story of young Cassius Clay growing up in Louisville, Kentucky, playwright Idris Goodwin explores powerful and compelling issues and themes and invites us to participate in important conversations about bullying, identity, racism, community, and the capacity for empowerment and difference making in all of us. Videos and educational materials in the project are designed for students and teachers in grades 5 through 12 to be used for cross-curricular exploration and building wide conversation as well as within the specific curriculum areas of Language Arts, Theater/Drama, Social Studies/History, and Character Education.

Video resources in this series are:

Theater 41: Meet the Playwright—A Conversation with Idris Goodwin
<https://educate.today/videos/4514>

Theater 42: Meet the Players—A Conversation with the Director and Actors of Metro Theater Company’s Production of “And In This Corner...Cassius Clay”
<https://educate.today/videos/4516>

Theater 43: Scene 1—Cassius Meets Officer Joe Martin
<https://educate.today/videos/4519>

Theater 44: Scene 2—Learning the News of Emmett Till’s Death
<https://educate.today/videos/4522>

Theater 45: Scene 3—Eddie and Cassius Go to a Whites Only Diner
<https://educate.today/videos/4524>

Theater 46: On Boxing and Fight Choreography
<https://educate.today/videos/4526>

**Activity Ideas related to Character Education and Discussion of Social Justice Issues
begin on the next page of this document**

Activity Idea 1: Responding to Themes and Issues Explored in the Play

This activity can be done by individual students, students in small groups, or an entire class.

Activity Process: After viewing the three scenes from the play that are included in the Cassius Project videos on the Educate.Today website, have students to choose one or more of the following questions to think about and respond to, either in written form or via class or small group discussion.

1. What you don't see in the play you just watched, is that Cassius went on to become Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest boxers of all time and a champion for religious freedom and racial justice. Now that you've seen how Muhammad Ali began his incredible journey, were there moments that stood out to you that led him on his path? What does that make you think about how choices you make now may affect your life later?
2. Do you think the events depicted in the play are similar to today? How are they similar? How are they different?
3. Cassius eventually takes Eddie's advice to become the kind of fighter that fights for others. Even as a young person, what are ways you can help others in your community? Is there someone you admire as a fighter for others? Who is that person? Why do you admire them?
4. Were there moments in the scenes that made you uncomfortable? Why? Why do you think the playwright included moments that would make you uncomfortable? How might those moments help people understand the issues and themes explored in the play?
5. Were there situations in the scenes that you recognized from your own life - at home, in school, in the community? What were those? In what way were they similar to your experience? In what way were they different?
6. A key relationship in the play is between Cassius Clay and Joe Martin, the police officer, who trains him to be a boxer. Did you think it was odd or unusual for a police officer to help a young man? How do you think these kind of relationships between police officers and members of the community they serve could be helpful to both the police and the community?

Activity Variations:

1. Based on any of the discussion questions above or ones of your own, have students create a short video answering the question (60 seconds max) that would be appropriate for publication on our Educate.Today website. As part of the interactive nature of Educate.Today, we welcome submissions from teachers and students to publish on the website and extend the conversation to more teachers and students as they visit the website. If you are interested in potentially having one of your student videos published on the website, contact us at info@educate.today and put "Publishing Cassius Character Video" in the title line.

Activity 2: Additional Character Education and Social Justice Activities from Metro Theater Company

For additional activities designed to get your students thinking about, and responding to, the issues and themes explored in the play, Metro Theater Company has created excellent teacher resources for you to use. You can find them at <http://cassiusproject.com>.

Activity 3: Explore Other Educate.Today Video Resources Regarding Civil Rights and Social Justice Issues

To learn more about important events in America’s civil rights movement and to hear the stories of individuals involved in that movement and other areas of social justice, explore any of the video resources below available on our Educate.Today website. Depending on the age of your students, we recommend the teacher viewing the videos in advance to select the videos or segments in the videos that are most appropriate and beneficial for your students.

Civil Rights 9: History in the First Person: Stories of the Civil Rights Movement—Sister Mary Antona Ebo Program 1

<https://educate.today/videos/3205>

Civil Rights 10: History in the First Person: Stories of the Civil Rights Movement—Sister Mary Antona Ebo Program 2

<https://educate.today/videos/3195>

For many years, Sister Mary Antona Ebo has been hailed for her contributions to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The Franciscan Sister of Mary, who was among those who went to Selma, Ala., in March of 1965 to march for voting rights for African Americans, shares her story with students and viewers.

Civil Rights 11: History in the First Person: Stories of the Civil Rights Movement—Percy Green and Bernice Thompson Program 1

<https://educate.today/videos/3196>

Civil Rights 12: History in the First Person: Stories of the Civil Rights Movement—Percy Green and Bernice Thompson Program 2

<https://educate.today/videos/3197>

Meet St. Louis individuals who changed history for their generation and all future generations and learn how they sacrificed, struggled, and ultimately triumphed while seeking Civil Rights for all.

Civil Rights 8: History in the First Person: Living Under Jim Crow Laws

<https://educate.today/videos/3204>

What was it like to grow up in a segregated America? What did it mean when words like “equality” and “justice” seemed to have a different meaning for different people in American society? How were all people affected when treatment under the law could be so different? Learn the answers to these questions and more from persons who lived under Jim Crow Laws.

Civil Rights 3: History in the First Person: Race and Civil Rights—Where is Jim Crow Now?

<https://educate.today/videos/3199>

One hundred years ago Jim Crow laws were commonplace. Today America's laws are different, but headlines still remind us of continuing struggles in the movement for equal legal treatment. View this archived program for a conversation on the status of the civil rights movement. Hear from individuals who experienced racial segregation and discrimination first hand and documentarians and activists learning from the past and seeking change today.

Civil Rights 6: Constitution Day 2014: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Its Current Implications Program 1

<https://educate.today/videos/3202>

Civil Rights 7: Constitution Day 2014: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Its Current Implications Program 2

<https://educate.today/videos/3203>

HEC-TV, in partnership with The Missouri Bar, celebrated Constitution Day 2014 by taking an in depth look into what it took to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Constitutional concepts behind the Act, the Act's major provisions, and its on-going impacts. Panelists for the program include: Rigel Oliveri—Associate Dean, University of Missouri School Of Law; Mark Updegrove—Executive Director, LBJ Presidential Library; Pam Meanes—President, National Bar Association; and Reuben Shelton—President, Missouri Bar Association.

Civil Rights 4: Constitution Day 2015: The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Its Current Implications Program 2

<https://educate.today/videos/3200>

Civil Rights 5: Constitution Day 2015: The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Its Current Implications Program 1

<https://educate.today/videos/3201>

HEC-TV, in partnership with the Missouri Bar, celebrated Constitution Day by taking an in depth look into what it took to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Act's on-going impacts, and voting rights issues of today. Panelists for the program include: Honorable Catherine D. Perry—Chief Judge, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri; Jason Kander—Secretary of State, Missouri; Mark Updegrove—Executive Director, LBJ Presidential Library; Stephen Davis—Attorney with Arent Fox LLP and adjunct professor of law at Saint Louis University; Denise Lieberman—Senior Attorney, Advancement Project.

Civil Rights 14: Constitution Day 2017: The Fair Housing Act Program 1

<https://educate.today/videos/3233>

Civil Rights 15: Constitution Day 2017: The Fair Housing Act Program 2

<https://educate.today/videos/3242>

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act, the third major piece of civil rights legislation to be instituted under the administration of President Lyndon Johnson. To commemorate that anniversary and celebrate the historic importance of the Act and its impact on American life, we invite you to view Constitution Day 2017: The Fair Housing Act.

Civil Rights 27: St. Louis and Housing Discrimination

<https://educate.today/videos/2769>

Learn about St. Louis events in the movement to end housing discrimination.

Civil Rights 28: Constitutionality and Enforcement of the Fair Housing Act

<https://educate.today/videos/2770>

What court cases affirmed the constitutionality of the Fair Housing Act? How is the Act enforced today if someone pursues a claim of discrimination? View this video and find out.

Language Arts 1: Jackie and Me: Issues and Themes

<https://educate.today/videos/311>

Dan Gutman's novel *Jackie and Me* continues to be read and loved by thousands of young people each year. In this exciting program students had the unique opportunity to participate in a national videoconference book club discussion of issues and themes raised in the story, see a scene from Metro Theater Company stage production of *Jackie and Me*, talk with the actors and director of the play, learn about the history and legacy of Jackie Robinson's life, and also interact with Dr. Ray Doswell, curator of the Negro Leagues Museum.

US History 44: Seeking Freedom

<https://educate.today/videos/4023>

Court documents found in St. Louis tell the inspiring story of courage when slaves from around the area fought for their freedom by challenging their owners in court.

Biography 4: Josephine Baker: More than a Banana Skirt

<https://educate.today/videos/3025>

Learn about the life, loves and civil rights causes that impacted Josephine Baker's life from surviving family members and others who have been touched by this multi-faceted entertainer.