CIVIC SPIRIT

# AMERICAN CIVIC HOLIDAY RESOURCES

## June 2025

## Reclaiming Summer for Civic Learning

**Developed by Audi Hecht, Director of Education and Innovation**

The school year is winding down, and summer is approaching faster than when a class period ends, just as your students are really diving in. Summer offers educators and students a sacred pause—a time to rejuvenate, decompress, and reconnect.

The magic of summer offers a replenishing cocktail of warm weather, relaxed time tables, and the delectable treat of free time to be filled as one wishes. This presents an opportunity for students to read, play, and learn on their own. Some students have used their summers to champion causes they care deeply about, such as Freedom Summer in 1964, to advance Civil Rights. As your mind has more time to think freely and not fulfill endless tasks and checklists that encompass the year, summer can be a time to identify just what excites your passions and interests.

The first part of this month's resource is a compilation of civic education activities to explore with your students as they prepare for summer. This month also features Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, marking the emancipation of African Americans in Galveston, Texas, and the end of Slavery in the United States. These lessons align with civic milestones - including Independence Day in July - and bring deeper meaning to our national celebrations. They also provide ideas to bring these historical moments to life with your students, to make meaning, and to draw inspiration from them.

## Source 1: Patrick Henry. "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention." March 23, 1775. Excerpt.

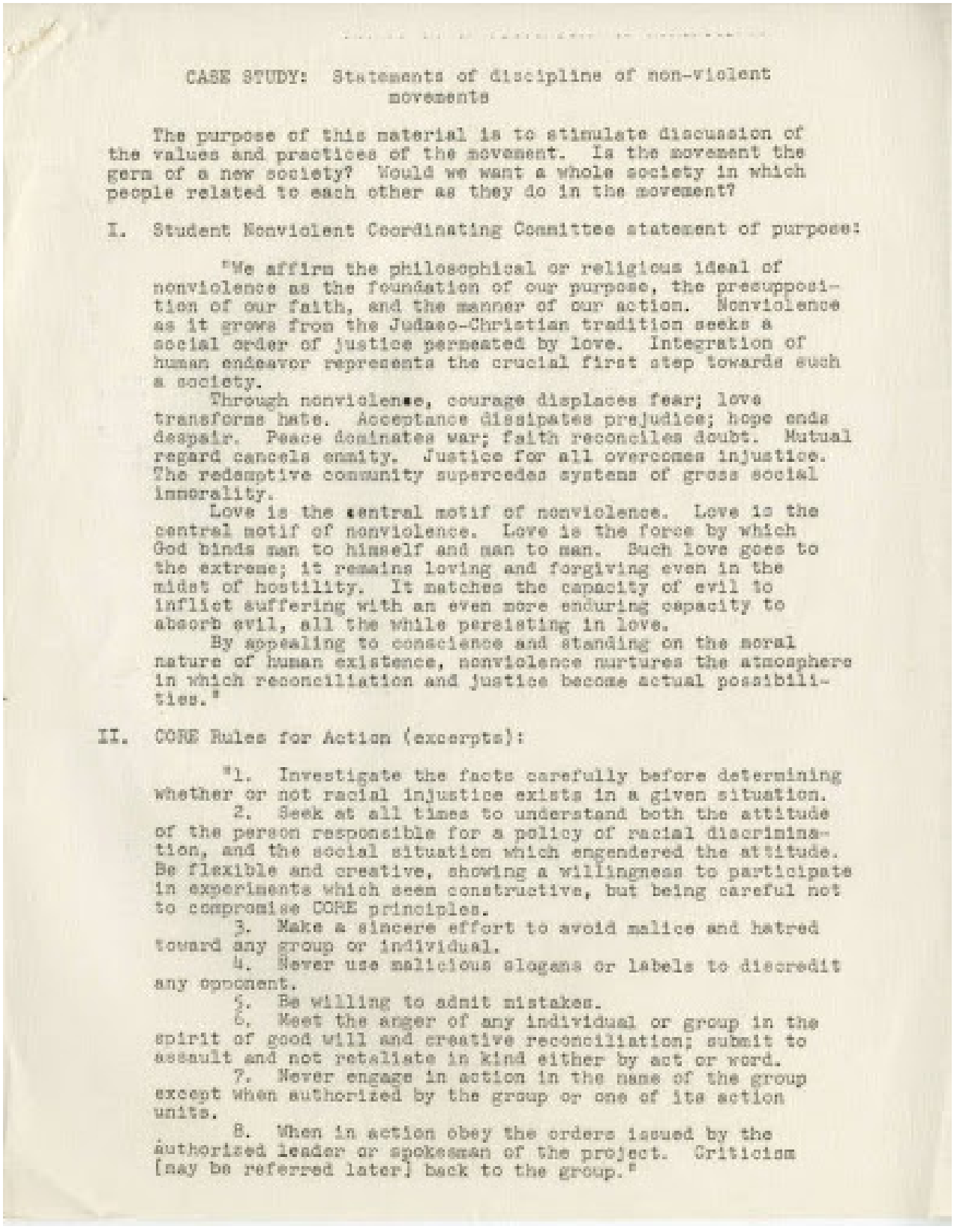
It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

## Exercise 1: Considering July 4th and its meaning

### Big Idea: ***What does it mean to fight for freedom, and how have Americans defined what's worth that sacrifice?***

1. In groups, read Patrick Henry's speech excerpt aloud.
2. Discuss: What emotions or convictions is Henry expressing? Do you agree with his view?
3. Brainstorm a list of values or causes you believe are worth defending, even at great cost.
4. Connect your list to moments in U.S. history where people made similar sacrifices. Were these causes just? Would you have supported them?
5. Groups share their lists and historical moments. Where do you agree? Where is there a difference of opinion?
6. Debate one argument that the other group defended.
7. A third party can evaluate the merits of the groups' arguments and weigh in.

# Source 2: Pamela P. Allen Papers, 1967–1974. Archives Main Stacks, M85-013, Folder 1.



CASE STUDY: Statements of discipline of non-violent movements

The purpose of this material is to stimulate discussion of the values and practices of the movement. Is the movement the germ of a new society? Would we want a whole society in which people related to each other as they do in the movement?

I. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee statement of purpose:

"We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from the Judaeo-Christian tradition seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.

Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overcomes injustice. The redemptive community supercedes systems of gross social immorality.

Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the force by which God binds man to himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil, all the while persisting in love.

By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities."

II. CORE Rules for Action (excerpts):

"1. Investigate the facts carefully before determining whether or not racial injustice exists in a given situation.

2. Seek at all times to understand both the attitude of the person responsible for a policy of racial discrimination, and the social situation which engendered the attitude. Be flexible and creative, showing a willingness to participate in experiments which seem constructive, but being careful not to compromise CORE principles.

3. Make a sincere effort to avoid malice and hatred toward any group or individual.

4. Never use malicious slogans or labels to discredit any opponent.

5. Be willing to admit mistakes.

6. Meet the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation; submit to assault and not retaliate in kind either by act or word.

7. Never engage in action in the name of the group except when authorized by the group or one of its action units.

8. When in action obey the orders issued by the authorized leader or spokesman of the project. Criticism [may be referred later] back to the group."

# Exercise 2: Freedom Summer

Freedom Summer was a civil rights campaign that took place during the summer of 1964 that aimed to help register disenfranchised African Americans to vote in southern states. Civil Rights groups like SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) were pivotal players in this campaign. Hundreds of students from across the United States spent their summer passionately trying to make a difference by volunteering to help register black voters and overcome racial barriers.

## Big Idea: *What principles and rules should guide civic action?*

In groups, students identify the guiding values of SNCC and CORE during the civil rights movement and discuss the following:

- Read SNCC's Statement of Purpose and discuss the following:
  - What is "non-violence?
  - Which civil rights leaders championed this approach?
  - How does SNCC relate nonviolence to Judeo-Christian values?
- Review CORE's Rules for Action and discuss the following:
  - Which of the rules do you think is most important when working with others? Why did this rule particularly resonate with you?
  - Rank the rules from most to least important.
  - Compare your group's ranking with others. Where do you differ? Why?
  - Which rule or value from CORE or SNCC would be most important to a cause you care about in 2025?

## Source 3: Allen Guelzo. "Allen Guelzo on the Emancipation Proclamation." YouTube, uploaded by The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. April 17, 2009.

## Source 4: "General Order No. 3." Granger. June 19, 1865.

The people are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them, become that between employer and hired labor. The freed are advised to remain at their present homes, and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.

# Exercise 3: Juneteenth and Emancipation

## Big Idea: *How can we understand the emancipation process and how it was connected with power divisions in the United States?*

1. In groups, watch Prof. Allen Guezlo explain Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and read General Granger's Order No. 3.
2. Compare and contrast the differences between President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and General Gordon Granger's Order No. 3, including:

- Who was emancipated by each respective order?
- Under which Constitutional authority did each of these fall?
- How did these emancipatory orders fall short? How could they have been strengthened?
- Where are instances of Federalism reflected in these orders?
- Why do we celebrate Juneteenth and not January 1, 1863, when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation?

## Postscript for Educators:

As you look toward the summer, which civic themes or historical events are you most drawn to explore, either with your students or for your own learning? Which of these moments might you want to highlight more deeply in your teaching moving forward?