



The Little Rock Nine & the Congressional Gold Medal

Objectives

1. Students will understand what the Congressional Gold Medal is and why different people receive the award
2. Students will understand who the Little Rock Nine are and what they did in order to receive the Congressional Gold Medal.
3. Students will use primary sources to analyze how the Little Rock Nine inspired President Clinton and others around the world.
4. Students will understand ways in which they and others can help make the world a better place.

What is the Congressional Gold Medal?

Overview

A Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian award given by Congress to any individual who performs an outstanding deed or act of service to the security, prosperity, and national interest of the United States. Since the American Revolution, Congress has awarded gold medals to express national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions. Although the first recipients were citizens who served in the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, Congress now gives the medal to actors, authors, entertainers, musicians, explorers, lifesavers, athletes, humanitarians, public servants, pioneers in aeronautics and space, science and medicine and even foreign recipients.

Legislation giving a Congressional Gold Medal to someone must be co-sponsored by two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate before their committees will consider it. Each medal is unique, created by the United States Mint to specifically commemorate the person, institution, event or achievement for which the medal is awarded.

Activities

Upper Elementary
<p>Conduct a web search for pictures of various congressional gold medals from the U.S. Mint.</p> <p>For whom were they made? How does the image relate to them? Why was the medal designed that way?</p>

Resources

1. Information on several Congressional Gold Medal Recipients and images of their medals:
http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/medals/
2. A list of prior recipients from the Office of the Clerk for the U.S. House of Representatives can be found here:
http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/goldMedal.html
3. Information on military medals, congressional gold medals, and Olympic medals
<http://www.2020site.org/medals/military-medals-chart.html>

Why did the Little Rock Nine Receive the Congressional Gold Medal?

Overview

The Little Rock Nine were the nine African-American students involved in the desegregation of Little Rock's Central High School. Their names were Carlotta Walls, Jefferson Thomas, Gloria Ray, Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Thelma Mothershed, Terrence Roberts, Minnijean Brown, and Melba Pattillo. Their entrance into the school in 1957 sparked a nationwide crisis when Arkansas governor Orval Faubus, in defiance of a federal court order, called out the Arkansas National Guard to prevent them from entering. President Dwight Eisenhower responded by mobilizing the National Guard and sending in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division to escort the Nine into the school on September 25, 1957. The military presence remained for the duration of the school year. On May 27, 1958, Ernest Green became Central's first black graduate and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. attended his graduation ceremony. The Little Rock Nine were presented the Congressional Gold Medal in 1999 by President Clinton, the nation's highest civilian honor for their courageous efforts.

Activities

Upper Elementary
<p>View & discuss photos from the Central High Crisis.</p> <p>Could you have responded in the same manner? What do you think about the sacrifices of the Nine?</p>

Resources

1. Pictures of the desegregation crisis at Central High School:
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=central%20high%20school&st=gallery>
2. Photo analysis worksheet:
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>
3. Interviews w/ Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green can be searched at the address below:
http://www.digital.butlercenter.org/cdm-p1532coll1/toc_p1532coll1_creato.php
4. Interviews of seven of the Little Rock Nine can be found here:
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2007/10/01/us/20071001_LITTLEROCK_GRAPHIC.html#
5. Quotes from the Little Rock Nine:
<http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=723>

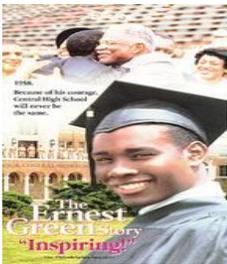
Primary Sources

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=central%20high%20school&st=gallery>

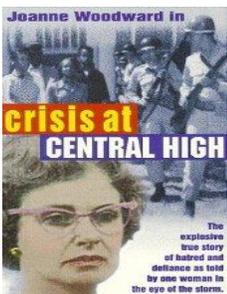


Resources

Movies



The Ernest Green Story (1993) NR, 101 mins. This movie follows the true story of Ernest Green and eight other African American high school students (the "Little Rock Nine") as they embark on their historic journey to integrate Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. Much of the movie was filmed on location at Central High School.



Crisis at Central High (1981) NR, 125 mins. The story of the federally-ordered integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. With threats of violence mounting (and some carried out), it becomes necessary for the government to send in Federal troops to escort the nine black teenagers who have been chosen to break the color barriers, based on the journals of Elizabeth Huckaby, an administrator at Central High.

Links

- History of the Little Rock Nine and desegregation of Little Rock Central High School-
 - <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=723>
- Central High School National Historic Site
 - <http://www.nps.gov/chsc/index.htm>
- C-Span coverage of the Little Rock Nine receiving the Congressional Gold Medal
 - <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/GoldMedalC>

Books

Bridges, Ruby. *Through My Eyes*. Scholastic Press, 1999.

King, Casey and Linda Barrett Osborne, *Oh, Freedom!*, Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1997.

The Connection to Clinton

Overview

"I was just 11 years old when this happened and living 50 miles away. For reasons, and I have no idea why, both my grandparents were passionate supporters of civil rights and passionate supporters of the Supreme Court decision, and they ardently believed that it was a great thing that Little Rock Central High School was integrated."

-President Bill Clinton, speech at the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the crisis at Central High

<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/news/news-media/092507-sp-cf-gn-sp-50th-anniversary-commemoration-of-central-high-school>

"I am thankful for what happened 10 years ago, when, as President, I could speak to that great crowd and hold the doors with the governor open for them to go through. And eight years ago, when they came to the South Lawn of the White House, thanks to Senator Bumpers and our other congressional delegation members, to get the Congressional Gold Medal. These people have enriched my life."

- President Bill Clinton, speech at the Little Rock Nine Gala September 24, 2007, in Little Rock, Arkansas

<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/news/news-media/092407-sp-cf-rr-sp-little-rock-nine-gala>

Activities

Upper Elementary

Look at photos of President Clinton with the Little Rock Nine.
<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/html/exhibits.php?id=12>

Review pgs.37-38 from *My Life*. How did the courageous acts of the Little Rock Nine affect the President as a young boy?

Resources

Speech: 50th Anniversary Commemoration of Central High School, Little Rock, Arkansas
<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/news/news-media/092507-sp-cf-gn-sp-50th-anniversary-commemoration-of-central-high-school>

Speech: Little Rock Nine Gala September 24, 2007 | Little Rock, Arkansas
<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/news/news-media/092407-sp-cf-rr-sp-little-rock-nine-gala>

Timeline of the 1957-1958 school year, history of Little Rock Public School Desegregation
<http://www.centralhigh57.org/1957-58.htm>

Files of various laws and objects from the Civil Rights Era, including the Central High Crisis
http://scipio.uark.edu/cdm4/index_Civilrights.php?CISOROOT=/Civilrights

Brown v. Board of Education: Syllabus & Supreme Court opinion
<http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html>

www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net

Definitions: World War II Through Faubus Era, Segregation/Desegregation, Little Rock Central High Crisis, Little Rock Nine, Daisy Bates, Aaron v. Cooper:

<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/html/exhibits.php?id=12>
President Clinton, Civil Rights and the Little Rock Nine, photos and descriptions of bill being signed.

<http://ftp.resource.org/gpo.gov/laws/105/publ356.105.txt>
Bill to establish the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Nov. 6, 1998 site

<http://www.digital.butlercenter.org/cdm-p1532coll1/results.php?CISOOP1=all&CISOBOX1=Central%20High%20School%20Desegregation%20Crisis&CISOFIELD1=subject&CISOROOT=/p1532coll1>
Central High School Video Footage

What Can I Do to Make the World a Better Place?

Overview

"What do you wish the story of the next 50 years to be? If we were to act on our convictions and our obligation to the sacrifice and the courage and the effort that all those we have celebrated today have made, what would the story of the first half of the 21st century be?"

"Just think, what if those nine kids 50 years ago had sat home with their parents and talked about how wonderful *Brown v. Board of Education* was, and wouldn't it be nice if someone went to Central High? That's a conversation anybody can have: "Wouldn't it be nice if someone would go and integrate Central High School? I mean, it's the best high school you could ever imagine, and if someone could get an education there, wouldn't it be nice?"...And don't think it was free. Remember them. Say "Send me."

-President Clinton, speaking at the Central High Crisis 50th Anniversary Commemoration

"You want to do something to honor the Little Rock Nine? Spend the rest of your life hammering this home to every single soul: what these people did for us 50 years ago was to say that not only did the Constitution mean what it says, but the Framers were right. We have to form a more perfect Union, because what we have in common is so profoundly more important than our interesting differences."

- President Clinton, speaking at the Little Rock Nine Gala, September 24, 2007

Special Tour

Orientation-video

Cabinet Room

Building One America

Building a Global Community

Congressional Gold Medal

Return to Classroom

Extension activities

Post-Visit Activities

Upper Elementary
Decorate your own medal for someone that inspired you.

Group Discussion

1. What did the Little Rock Nine do? Why is it important?
2. What did President Clinton do during his presidency that reflected the impact they had on him?
3. What were the effects of the actions of the Little Rock Nine on the nation?
4. Why did Congress allow President Clinton to present the award to the Little Rock Nine?
5. Why did the Little Rock Nine return the Congressional Gold Medal to President Clinton?
6. How do the actions of the Little Rock Nine continue to inspire people today?
7. What can others do to make the world a better place?

Sample Lesson Plans

How to be more tolerant

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp294-02.shtml

Central High School lesson plans

<http://www.nps.gov/chsc/forteachers/lessonplansandteacherguides.htm>

Walk in My Shoes

[http://www.digital.butlercenter.org/cgi-](http://www.digital.butlercenter.org/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/lessonplans&CISOPTR=133&filename=134.pdf)

[bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/lessonplans&CISOPTR=133&filename=134.pdf](http://www.digital.butlercenter.org/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/lessonplans&CISOPTR=133&filename=134.pdf)

Links

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

www.butlercenter.org

www.naacp.com

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

<http://www.littlerock9.com>

Eyes on the Prize, PBS website

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/Will the circle be unbroken](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/Will%20the%20circle%20be%20unbroken)

www.civilrightsmuseum.org

National Civil Rights Museum

Fourteenth Amendment provisions:

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment14/>

www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=old&doc=97

Civil Rights Act of 1964