

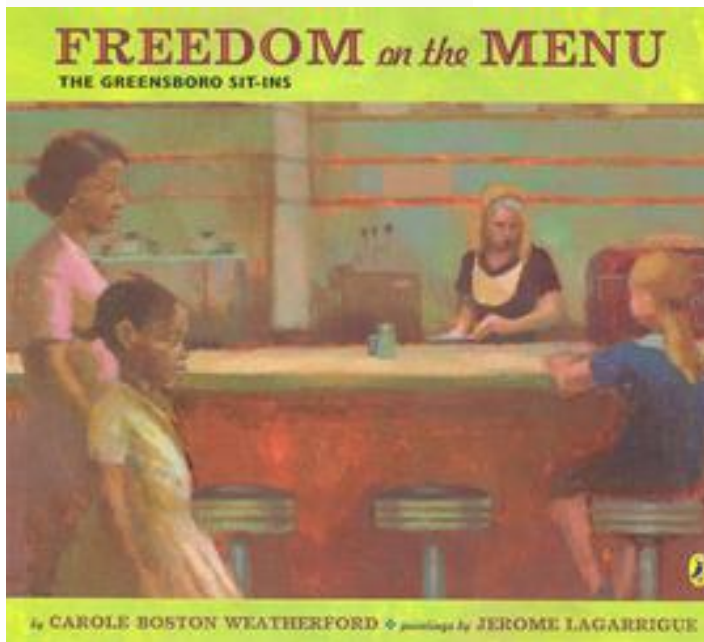
## **Lesson Plan: Teaching Nonviolent Direct Action through Children's Literature**

### **Introduction**

The philosophy of nonviolence is a central theme in the African American Freedom Struggle. In an article for *Ebony* magazine in March of 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, "World peace through nonviolent means is neither absurd nor unattainable. All other methods have failed."

The following children's literature and lesson plans explore the philosophy of nonviolence in action. Each story illustrates historic examples of nonviolent direct action, for example, the Greensboro sit-ins and the Montgomery bus boycott. The corresponding classroom activities include recommendations for primary source documents and secondary resources.

Teachers are encouraged to identify with their students more recent nonviolent direct action focused on issues in their school and community. Using the events of the storybook as a model, students may formulate a plan for addressing current injustice. We hope these books and suggested resources are useful not only for the King holiday, but throughout your school year.



*Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins*  
written by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue

**Author:**

Andrea McEvoy Spero

**Subject:**

Art, English Language, U.S. History

**Grades:**

K-2, 3-5

## Lesson Activities

[Part One: A Sweet Smell of Roses](#)

[Part Two: Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins](#)

[Part Three: Rosa](#)

[Part Four: Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement](#)

[Part Five: Delivering Justice: Westley Wallace Law and the Fight for Civil Rights](#)

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## Part One: A Sweet Smell of Roses

### Instructions

Based upon accounts of children who participated in various marches, *A Sweet Smell of Roses*, tells the story of two sisters who join Dr. King in demonstrating for freedom and justice. Many of the illustrations depict actual marches and other nonviolent direct action campaigns including the *March on Washington*, the *Children's Crusade in Birmingham*, and the *Selma to Montgomery March*. As part of the lesson, we suggest asking students to examine photographs from the period or creating a gallery wall in your classroom where students can identify elements of the principles of nonviolence in each photo. As an extension, share photos of more recent marches and demonstrations and lead a discussion.



*A Sweet Smell of Roses*, written by Angela Johnson, illustrated by Eric Velasquez

## Materials

*[A Sweet Smell of Roses](#)*, read aloud (3 min)

### King Encyclopedia Entries:

- [Birmingham Campaign](#)
- [Selma to Montgomery March](#)
- [March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](#)

### Additional Resources:

- [Six Steps for Nonviolent Direct Action](#)
- [Six Principles of the Philosophy of Nonviolence](#)

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## Part Two: Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins

### Instructions

*Freedom on the Menu* offers a child's-eye view of how ordinary citizens' actions caused a revolution, both close to home and far beyond. In this beautiful account, eight-year old Connie observes the start of the Greensboro lunch counter **sit-ins** and becomes involved in the swirl of activity surrounding the historic event. As part of reading the book with students, we suggest pairing the lesson with photos of the lunch counter sit-ins, first-person **Oral History narratives** from those who participated and excerpts from the documentary film *Eyes on the Prize*.

## Materials

*[Freedom on the Menu](#)*, read aloud (9 min)

### King Encyclopedia Entry:

- [Greensboro Sit-Ins](#)

### Suggested Primary and Secondary Sources:

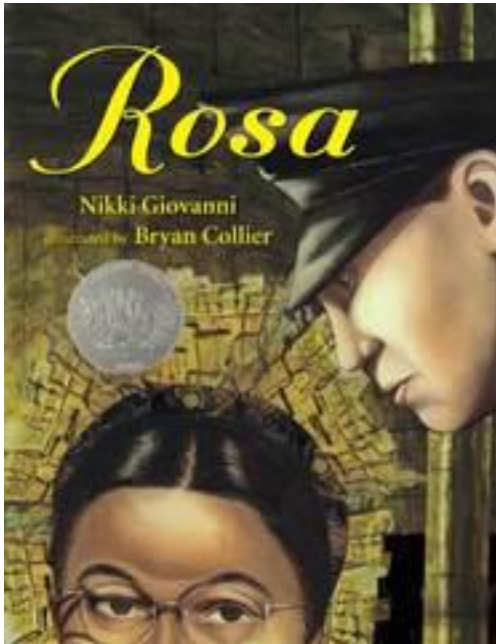
- [Six Steps for Nonviolent Direct Action](#)
- [Principles of the Philosophy of Nonviolence](#)
- [Library of Congress, Youth in the Civil Rights Movement](#)
- [A Force More Powerful](#)

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## Part Three: Rosa

### Instructions

*Rosa*, written by Nikki Giovanni and illustrated by Bryan Collier, tells the iconic story of Mrs. Rosa Parks and the start of the **Montgomery bus boycott**. The text and images provide a powerful yet personal account of one of the most important events of the 20th century. In contrast to many children's books which depict Mrs. Parks as a "tired, elderly seamstress," Giovanni and Collier carefully present an accurate portrayal of Mrs. Parks as well as other actors in the boycott, such as **Jo Ann Robinson**. We recommend teachers pair the reading with first-person narratives and primary source documents and ask students to investigate some of the myths surrounding the iconic event.



[Rosa](#)  
written by Nikki Giovanni, illustrated by Bryan Collier

### Materials

*Rosa*, written by Nikki Giovanni, read aloud (9 min.)

Nonviolent Direct Action in *Rosa*:

- [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#)

Suggested Primary Sources and Secondary Sources:

- [Letter from Jo Ann Robinson to Mayor Gayle](#)

- [Rosa Parks' arrest record](#)
- [Photo of Parks' Arrest](#)
- [Announcement to boycott buses](#)

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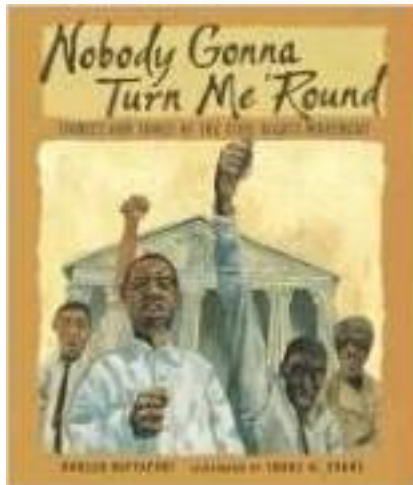
## Part Four: Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement

### Instructions

*"You can cage the singer, but not the song."* Harry Belafonte

*"It was the music that gave us the courage, the will, the drive to go on in spite of it all."* Congressman John Lewis

In Doreen Rappaport and Shane W. Evans' *Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement* students are introduced to the nonviolent protests of the civil rights movement through music. Events and people of the movement are accompanied by freedom song lyrics and provide an opportunity for youth to connect art and protest. Teachers are encouraged to work with students in writing lyrics and music to contemporary issues.



*Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement*  
written by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by Shane W. Evans

## Materials

### Nonviolent Direct Action and People in *Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round*:

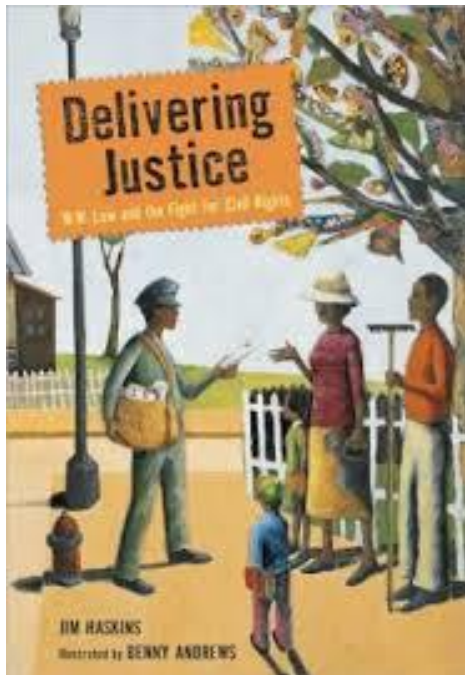
- Freedom songs from [\*Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs\*](#) 1960-1966 from Smithsonian Folkways
- [\*Soundtrack for a Revolution\*](#) a documentary film and soundtrack by Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman

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## Part Five: Delivering Justice: Westley Wallace Law and the Fight for Civil Rights

### Instructions

As the postal carrier in Savannah, Georgia, [\*Westley Wallace Law\*](#) often asked, "If you don't know where you have been, how do you know where you're going?" His family history was important to Westley and his grandmother often prayed that he "would grow up to be a leader of our people." The young Westley grew up to join the [\*National Association for the Advancement of Colored People \(NAACP\)\*](#), established voter registration schools, and assisted in voter registration efforts. In 1961, Westley led the famous Great Savannah Boycott, which led to that city's becoming the first southern city in the United States to declare all its citizens equal, three years before the federal Civil Rights Act. In this beautifully illustrated book, students are introduced to various forms of nonviolent direct action. Using the Six Steps to Nonviolent Direct Action, encourage students to trace the various steps through the pages of *Delivering Justice: W. W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights*.



### [\*Delivering Justice: W.W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights\*](#)

Written by Jim Haskins and illustrated by Benny Andrews

## Materials

### Nonviolent Direct Action in *Delivering Justice: W. W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights*:

- Boycott
- Voter Schools
- Sit-Ins
- Marching
- Negotiation

### Suggested Primary and Secondary Sources:

- [W.W. Law](#) in the [New Georgia Encyclopedia](#)
- [Six Principles of the Philosophy of Nonviolence](#)
- [Six Steps for Nonviolent Direct Action](#)