

Investigate This Document Further #5: Letter to Albion W. Tourgee from Children at Colored School #1 in Dallas, Texas (April, 1893, #6852): “Separate but Equal?”

Elementary Lesson: “Separate but Equal” From the Time of Albion Winegar Tourgee to the Time of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Background – Explain to students the reason why we celebrate Martin Luther King Day – who he was, what he believed, what he did, and what happened to him.

Describe context of his speech “I Have a Dream” and play audio excerpt portion that refers to children – what did he mean?

Explain that in American History people have not always been treated equally. King was referring to an inequality between white and black children with respect to education that had existed since Emancipation in 1863. King lived at a time when people were still separated in public transportation, hotels, restaurants and even schools, based on their race. The “separate but equal” laws were creating unhappiness as well as unfairness in education and other opportunities. They were also a contradiction to the principle of “equal protection under the law” for all citizens, as stated in the U.S. Constitution.

**For older students, expand background information to address the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.*

Lesson activity:

Look at the images of schools for black children and white children that existed from the 1870s to the 1950s. How are they the same? How are they different? Use Library of Congress [Library of Congress Analysis Tool for Photos and Prints](#)

Images from LOC:

Schools for black children:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000028166/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000028168/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000028169/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004004786/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998020301/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/owi2001027514/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1997017010/PP/> (child picking cotton)

Schools for white children:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1997003462/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998017934/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000014219/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/owi2001008917/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1997003301/PP/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000011954/PP/>

Extension: Use of Written Documents – Use Library of Congress [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)

Look at and analyze the letter sent by a woman to Albion Tourgee in the 1890s (#5747).

Do you think she was right in what she said? How would you find out?

Read the letter sent to Albion Tourgee from the children of Colored School #1 in Texas in 1893 (#6852)

Why are they writing to Albion Tourgee?

What contradictions do the students feel exists between the words in the song “America” and what was happening in their state at that time?

Read excerpts from the Dallas Public Schools record at: Colored School #1 in Dallas, TX

<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jwheat/schools.html>

How does the information in this excerpt relate to what the students wrote in the letter to Tourgee?

What is something you notice in the world today that does not seem fair? What would be your dream about it? What do you think you could do to help in making things fair for everyone?

Possible texts for secondary sources:

Marching for Freedom, by Elizabeth Partridge

<http://library2go.lib.overdrive.com/ContentDetails.htm?ID=FE36741E-F717-4D15-929A-690447EDDB82>

Remember, by Toni Morrison

http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/morrison_remember.shtml