



LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE

A FILM BY KEVIN SHAW



DISCUSSION GUIDE



TABLE OF CONTENTS



01 ABOUT THE FILM

02 LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER

03 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

04 For Reference

05 DISCUSSION TOPICS

07 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

08 Activity One: Human Timeline: A History of Discrimination Against Black Students

13 Activity Two: What Makes A Thriving School Community?

14 Activity Three: What the Rhetoric? Deconstructing Racist "Dog Whistle" Language

18 Activity Four: Gentrification and Historical Displacement of Black Communities

22 ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

24 CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



ABOUT THE FILM

LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE is about a high-performing, top-ranked Black elementary school, The National Teachers Academy (NTA) which is threatened to be closed and transformed into a high school favoring the needs of the community's wealthier residents. Parents, students, and educators mobilize to fight for the elementary school's survival.

The story follows everyday parents-turned-organizers alongside NTA students and staff as they advocate to keep their elementary school, which is a safe haven for children and a community bedrock in Chicago's fastest growing neighborhood - The South Loop.

The film also posits the point-of-view of residents in favor of changing NTA into a high school that is sorely needed for its neighborhood. The theme of gentrification is rarely viewed through this lens of education, where "well-intentions" are critically seen as privileged desires, creating a disconnect dividing and reshaping communities across the country.

Under-resourced schools across the United States have been closed due to underperformance, but **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** tells a unique story of a high performing school potentially being shuttered for the benefit of a higher social strata.



HOW TO WATCH

LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE makes its national broadcast premiere on POV Monday, December 12, 2022 (check local listings) and will be available to stream free with no PBS Passport membership necessary until March 10, 2023.

Visit [PBS.ORG/POV/FILMS/LETTHELITTLELIGHTSHINE/](https://www.pbs.org/pov/films/letthelittlelightshine/) for more information.





LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER



Thank you for watching **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**. I made this film to understand why there was a movement in a booming Chicago neighborhood to close a high-performing, top-ranked elementary school that serviced a majority Black student population and transform that institution into a high school, potentially causing more harm than good to neighborhood families. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," the adage goes.

Race, obviously and unfortunately, figured into the equation, but there were other factors at play—class, which is intertwined with race, gentrification, power, privilege, and politics all had a hand in creating discord amongst a community that wanted the same thing—the best possible education for their children. The ways to achieve that goal were different for each set of residents, reminding us of harsh inequities and bias existing in our country.

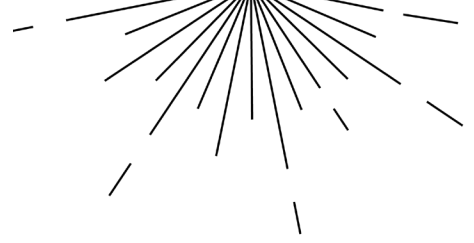
This story is not unique to Chicago; it is reflective of our American experience, one where Black and Brown communities still must fight for not only a seat at the table, but in this instance, an equitable place to learn.

KEVIN SHAW

Director/Producer, **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



This discussion guide aims to support critical dialogues about concepts presented in the documentary **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**. A series of discussion questions invite viewers to grapple with, examine and converse with the following topics: gentrification of Historically Black neighborhoods; the power of youth activism and advocacy; racism in the American education system; and building thriving educational communities. The guide further offers four customizable activities, mutable to fit various group settings, designed to lead viewers in personal, creative, research and advocacy exercises.

1.

In Activity One: Human Timeline: A History of Discrimination Against Black Students, participants learn the depth and scope of racial discrimination in American education through an interactive timeline building activity that centers key Supreme Court rulings throughout history. Integrating this timeline with understanding of public sentiment and activism, participants reflect on where the National Teachers Academy fight is situated within a much larger and broader context.

2.

In Activity Two: What Makes A Thriving School Community? Participants discuss and identify the elements that illustrate National Teacher Academy's unique school community as portrayed in **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** as the context and inspiration for assessing the health of their own community.

3.

In Activity Three: What the Rhetoric? Deconstructing Racist "Dog Whistle" Language, participants use examples from the film **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** to decode and deconstruct rhetorical "dog whistle" language that implies discriminatory, stereotypical and racist messaging below the surface. Jumping off from the film as a starting point, participants identify where they see veiled racist rhetoric in the news, and within their own community.

4.

In Activity Four: Gentrification and Historical Displacement of Black Communities, participants examine gentrification's impact on and destabilization of Chicago's Black South Loop community in **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** through a debate format. By taking on various perspectives in the film, participants identify mitigating factors of real estate movement and school closures, and grapple with the insidious nature of gentrification on local communities.

This guide can be used by middle, high school, and college educators to enhance and complement existing curricula and classroom study and/or to support students in developing youth-led campaigns. The lesson plans can be used to support and deepen content areas such as U.S. History, Ethnic Studies, Civics, Sociology, Psychology, and English Language Arts. Multigenerational activists, educators and leaders might also use this guide as a resource in school-based clubs and organizations, after-school and social justice/youth development programs, and after screenings of the film.





FOR REFERENCE

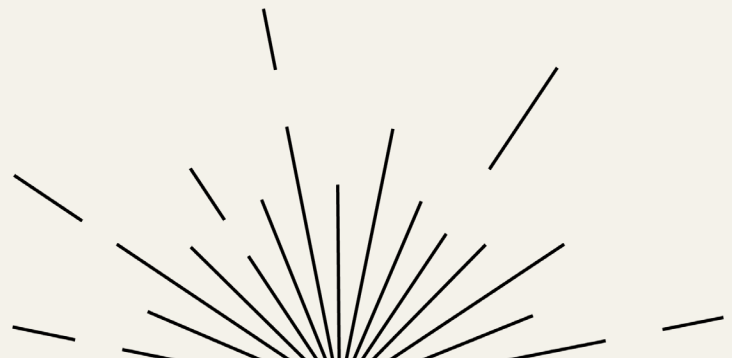
Chicago Public Schools: The context in which **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** is set, Chicago Public Schools is the fourth-largest school district in the United States, after New York, Los Angeles and Houston. The film opens with the following quote: “In 2013, 49 elementary schools were closed in Chicago, the largest mass school closing in America. The majority of those closings occurred in Black and Latinx neighborhoods.”

Harold L. Ickes Homes: A Chicago Housing Authority public housing project on the Near South Side of Chicago, Illinois. This predominantly Black community served as a form of cultural backdrop in **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**, where many of the families and employees of NTA were raised. The building was demolished in 2011. Instead of funds being used to rebuild a public housing project, as promised, residents were told taxpayer money was being used towards building public transit and a new mixed income housing development.

National Teachers Academy (NTA): A K-8th grade public school in Chicago’s South Loop that serves a predominantly Black student body. After a long fight to keep the school from closing under the auspices of a “transformation” to a high school, a successful lawsuit on the basis of racial discrimination saved the school’s future in current form. Though many lawsuits erupted when Chicago Public Schools were closed in 2013, none were successful. The argument that the schools were underutilized or underperforming was unable to be leveraged against NTA, a high performing, well resourced and thriving school community.

Prairie District Neighborhood Alliance: This organization self-describes as a nonprofit, South Loop community organization founded in 2006. “Since then, our organization has grown into a dynamic and active community group serving thousands of residents and neighbors in the South Loop.” In **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**, this local group, mostly composed of more recent residents of South Loop, advocates for a neighborhood high school that will predominantly serve the needs of the wealthier residents.

South Loop: A centralized neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois that promotes easy access to downtown, cultural institutions and other areas of the city.



DISCUSSION TOPICS

Gentrification of Historically Black Communities

In **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**, viewers see gentrification's impact on and destabilization of Chicago's South Loop community. What is the central argument of each "side" of the debate? Who are the various players in the film and what do they stand for? Who stands to win in this fight? Who stands to lose?

Audrey Johnson's description of growing up in Chicago's South Loop community is a rich tapestry of a life well-lived. Her father was a janitor and worked on the railroad; her mother, at the post office. The family had generations in the community. "We had our problems," Audrey says, "but our good days outweigh our bad days down in the projects." How does this description differ from the perspectives of the Prairie District Neighborhood Alliance?

At a city council meeting, Chance the Rapper says, "money (is) nowhere to be found to fund classrooms, but then they needed 95 million dollars to build a nice cop academy across from one of the high schools that we're raising money for, that money comes together (quickly)." What message does this send to the local community? Who is being protected? Who is being left behind?



Youth Rights and Advocacy

In **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**, students are positioned as the main voices of the movement against school closings in Chicago. Where do we see student leadership at work in the film? How and why is it important to include students in every aspect of the fight?

The United States holds a rich history of student activism. Where else in history have we seen student movements take center stage and create change? You might consider student protests of the 1960s, the Parkland students, and more. What shared tactics are used in the various fights for change?

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Discuss the famous Margaret Mead quote in the context of **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**. What tactics were used to organize, fight and ultimately win the case against the shut down of NTA?

Graduation at National Teachers Academy served as both a celebratory moment and a strategic event to announce the discrimination lawsuit. Why do you think this choice was made? What does it symbolize? What does it accomplish?





Building Thriving Educational Communities

As Isaac meets one-on-one with students, he tells the camera:

"I worry that if this transition comes to pass, those children may have a principal or teachers who settle for just them graduating from high school, or just them coming to school... Those things are good but not sufficient."

What does NTA provide students beyond the bare minimum that Principal Isaac refers to in the above quote?

What is the difference between surviving and thriving? What makes NTA not just a school, as one student says, but a community?

Who are the key players at NTA? Who makes up the school community? Whose voice is valued? What are they saying in the film that illustrates their investment in the health of the school's community?

What were some of the lessons both Principals of NTA had to learn in order to contribute positively to the community?



Race and the American Education System

In what ways does the fight for NTA to retain its community, and more broadly, Chicago Public Schools excessive shutdown of schools, mirror other moments of discrimination against Black students in American history?

When Principal Isaac Castelaz went to a meeting with Chicago Public Schools, he was reprimanded for wearing a Black Students Matter shirt. Issac said, "I don't see the shirt as an opposition to CPS, I see it as something CPS ought to advocate for and support." Why did CPS find Isaac's presentation threatening? What is the message being sent about where their commitments lie?

Greer, Everette, Jones, Matthew's and Chicago United for Equity vs Board of Education of the City of Chicago was the first time in U.S. history an injunction was granted in a school closing case based on a racial discrimination claim. Using evidence from the film, why and how did the lawsuit work?

What is the role of allyship in a fight that is central to Black students? How and where do adults support as allies to students in the film? How do they let students lead? In what ways are white allies showing up for their Black neighbors? What do the allies each need to learn in order to better serve their counterparts?





ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1.

**Activity One: Human
Timeline: A History
of Discrimination
Against Black
Students**

2.

**Activity Two: What
Makes A Thriving
School Community?**

3.

**Activity Three:
What the Rhetoric?
Deconstructing
Racist "Dog Whistle"
Language**

4.

**Activity Four:
Gentrification
and Historical
Displacement of Black
Communities**



ACTIVITY ONE

HUMAN TIMELINE: A HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACK STUDENTS

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

Participants learn the depth and scope of racial discrimination in American education through an interactive timeline building activity that centers key Supreme Court rulings throughout history. Integrating this timeline with understanding of public sentiment and activism, participants reflect on where the National Teachers Academy fight is situated within a much larger and broader context.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Timeline card printouts, scissors

STEP ONE: INTRODUCE AND CONNECT

While organizing against the shutdown of National Teachers Academy in **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**, Elisabeth Greer shares her own family history. Both of Elisabeth's parents, Black college professors, went to Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs), educational institutions where the student body is predominately Black.

In contrast to this valued aspect of her family story, where a mostly-Black student body is upheld as a rigorous learning community, Elisabeth names the conversation about NTA as holding an "ugly undercurrent... that an all-Black classroom cannot be smart, it is not an educationally viable classroom. It can only be good if it's integrated." Elisabeth's father compares the threat of NTA's closure to the Jim Crow South, placing NTA's struggle in a historic discrimination against Black American students.

Share with participants the following exercise that will help contextualize NTA's fight in a broader arc of historical education discrimination, through the lens of two timelines, culled from Learning For Justice.

TIMELINE ONE: KEY SUPREME COURT RULINGS ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACK STUDENTS

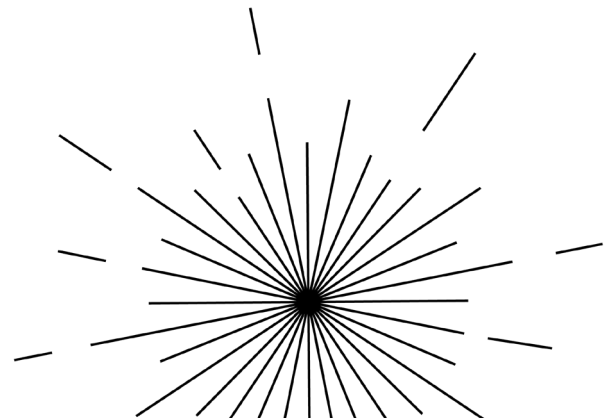
The timeline of racial discrimination in the United States is layered and detailed. Participants will look at key moments in educational discrimination through the lens of the most powerful court in the American judicial system: The Supreme Court. This governing body has the power to decide appeals on all cases brought in federal court or those brought in state court but dealing with federal law.

TIMELINE TWO: KEY MOMENTS IN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROTESTS AND PUBLIC OPINION REGARDING EDUCATION

To offer a sense of public opinion, sentiment and pushback occurring in response to the Supreme Court rulings throughout history. Timeline two offers additional context.

STEP TWO: ASSEMBLE THE TIMELINES

Print and cut the attached cards from each timeline and distribute one to each student (adjust as needed for size of the group, you might choose only a handful from each, or use them all, depending on size). Invite students to self assemble into a physical timeline based on the year on each card, integrating timeline one and two into a single line. Once the group has assembled, each reads the text from their card, creating the historical arc. This can also be adapted for online learning by simply asking participants to read the content on their card by year.



TIMELINE ONE:

KEY SUPREME COURT RULINGS ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACK STUDENTS

1849

The Massachusetts Supreme Court rules segregated schools are permissible under the state's constitution. (*Roberts v. City of Boston*) The U.S. Supreme Court will later use this case to support the "separate but equal" doctrine.

1896

The Supreme Court authorizes segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, finding Louisiana's "separate but equal" law constitutional. The ruling, built on notions of white supremacy and Black inferiority, provides legal justification for Jim Crow laws in southern states.

1899

The Supreme Court allows a state to levy taxes on Black and white citizens alike while providing a public school for white children only. (*Cumming v. Richmond (Ga.) County Board of Education*)

1908

The Supreme Court upholds a state's authority to require a private college to operate on a segregated basis despite the wishes of the school. (*Berea College v. Kentucky*)

1948

The Supreme Court holds the policy of isolating a Black student from his peers within a white law school is unconstitutional. (*McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*)

1954

In a unanimous opinion, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* overturns *Plessy* and declares separate schools are "inherently unequal." The Court delays deciding on how to implement the decision and asks for another round of arguments.

1955

In *Brown II*, the Supreme Court orders the lower federal courts to require desegregation "with all deliberate speed." However, between 1955 and 1960, federal judges will uphold more than 200 school desegregation hearings.

1958

The Supreme Court rules fear of social unrest or violence, whether real or constructed by those wishing to oppose integration, does not excuse state governments from complying with *Brown*. (*Cooper v. Aaron*)

1959

Prince Edward County, Va., officials close their public schools rather than integrate them. White students attend private academies; Black students do not head back to class until 1963, when the Ford Foundation funds private Black schools. The Supreme Court orders the county to reopen its schools on a desegregated basis in 1964.



1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is adopted. Title IV of the Act authorizes the federal government to file school desegregation cases. Title VI of the Act prohibits discrimination in programs and activities, including schools, receiving federal financial assistance.

1968

The Supreme Court orders states to dismantle segregated school systems "root and branch." The Court identifies five factors – facilities, staff, faculty, extracurricular activities and transportation – to be used to gauge a school system's compliance with the mandate of *Brown*. (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*)

1969

The Supreme Court declares the "all deliberate speed" standard is no longer constitutionally permissible and orders the immediate desegregation of Mississippi schools. (*Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*)

1971

The Court approves busing, magnet schools, compensatory education and other tools as appropriate remedies to overcome the role of residential segregation in perpetuating racially segregated schools. (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*)

1972

The Supreme Court refuses to allow public school systems to avoid desegregation by creating new, mostly or all-white "splinter districts." (*Wright v. Council of the City of Emporia; United States v. Scotland Neck City Board of Education*)

1973

The Supreme Court rules states cannot provide textbooks to racially segregated private schools to avoid integration mandates. (*Norwood v. Harrison*). The Supreme Court rules that education is not a "fundamental right" and that the Constitution does not require equal education expenditures within a state. (*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*) The ruling has the effect of locking minority and poor children who live in low-income areas into inferior schools.

1974

The Supreme Court blocks metropolitan-wide desegregation plans as a means to desegregate urban schools with high minority populations. (*Milliken v. Bradley*) As a result, *Brown* will not have a substantial impact on many racially isolated urban districts.

1978

A fractured Supreme Court declares the affirmative action admissions program for the University of California Davis Medical School unconstitutional because it set aside a specific number of seats for black and Latino students. The Court rules that race can be a factor in university admissions, but it cannot be the deciding factor. (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*)

1991

Emphasizing court orders are not intended "to operate in perpetuity," the Supreme Court makes it easier for formerly segregated school systems to fulfill their obligations under desegregation decrees. (*Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*) After being released from a court order, the Oklahoma City school system abandons its desegregation efforts and returns to neighborhood schools.

1992

The Supreme Court further speeds the end of desegregation cases, ruling school systems can fulfill their obligations in an incremental fashion. (*Freeman v. Pitts*). The Supreme Court rules that the adoption of race-neutral measures does not, by itself, fulfill the Constitutional obligation to desegregate colleges and universities that were segregated by law. (*United States v. Fordice*)

1995

The Supreme Court sets a new goal for desegregation plans: the return of schools to local control. It emphasizes again that judicial remedies were intended to be "limited in time and extent." (*Missouri v. Jenkins*)

2003

The Supreme Court upholds diversity as a rationale for affirmative action programs in higher education admissions, but concludes point systems are not appropriate. (*Grutter v. Bollinger; Gratz v. Bollinger*)



2007

In *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, the Supreme Court finds voluntary school integration plans unconstitutional, paving the way for contemporary school segregation to escalate.



TIMELINE TWO:

KEY MOMENTS IN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROTESTS AND PUBLIC OPINION REGARDING EDUCATION

1861

Southern states secede from the Union. The Civil War begins.

1940

30% of Americans—40% of Northerners and 2% of Southerners—believe that Whites and Blacks should attend the same schools.

1956

49% of Americans—61% of Northerners and 15% of Southerners—believe that Whites and Blacks should attend the same schools.

1956

Under court order, the University of Alabama admits Autherine Lucy, its first African American student. White students and residents riot. Lucy is suspended and later expelled for criticizing the university.

1957

More than 1,000 paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division and a federalized Arkansas National Guard protect nine Black students integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

1958

10,000 young people march in Washington, D.C., in support of integration.



1959

25,000 young people march in Washington, D.C., in support of integration.

1960

In New Orleans, federal marshals shielded Ruby Bridges, Gail St. Etienne, Leona Tate and Tessie Prevost from angry crowds as they enrolled in school.

1961

A federal district court orders the University of Georgia to admit African American students Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter. After a riot on campus, the two are suspended. A court later reinstates them.

1962

A federal appeals court orders the University of Mississippi to admit James Meredith, an African American student. Upon his arrival, a mob of more than 2,000 white people riots.

1963

62% of Americans—73% of Northerners and 31% of Southerners—believe Blacks and Whites should attend the same schools.

1964

The Rev. Bruce Klunder is killed protesting the construction of a new segregated school in Cleveland, Ohio.

1988

School integration reaches its all-time high; almost 45% of Black students in the United States are attending majority-white schools.

2001

White parents in Charlotte, N.C. schools successfully seek an end to the desegregation process and a bar to the use of race in making student assignments.



STEP THREE: DISCUSS & CONNECT

Close with a discussion that links back to NTA's struggle in the film, and discuss how historical discrimination influences the present:

- What did and did not surprise you in this timeline?
- What did you or did you not learn in school about the history of discrimination against Black students?
- What eras or moments were there momentum in anti-discrimination? What patterns do you notice? What cultural influences were happening in those times?
- How does NTA's struggle mirror this timeline? What message does it send in a modern era about discrimination practices that are still happening? Do you see it in your community? In the news?

ACTIVITY TWO

WHAT MAKES A THRIVING SCHOOL COMMUNITY?

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

What creates a thriving school community? Participants discuss and identify the elements that illustrate National Teacher Academy's unique school community as portrayed in **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** as the context and inspiration for assessing the health of their own community.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Chart paper, markers

"We're not just a **SCHOOL**, **WE'RE A COMMUNITY.**"

STEP ONE: INTRODUCE AND CONNECT

In advance of gathering, write each pillar from the **100 DAYS OF CONVERSATIONS** "What Makes a Thriving Community" framework listed below onto 7 pieces of chart paper:

- Access to Resources
- Safety And Trust
- Unity
- Diversity
- Democratic Voice
- Cultivation of Empathy and Kindness
- Freedom

Invite participants to gather impromptu into 7 pairs or small groups, and assign each one a term to define in their own words in the center, listing examples from the film that illustrate the definition. Engage a brief share out where each group shares their definition and examples from the film.

STEP TWO: APPLY THE FRAMEWORK

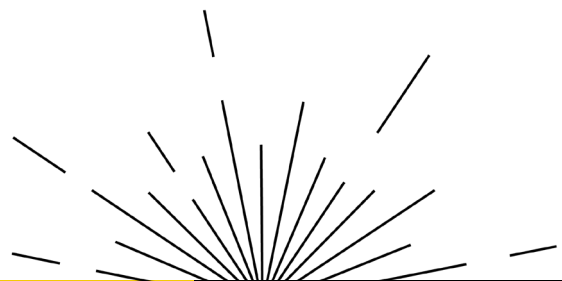
Invite each group to post their pillar around the room, with ample space for participants to walk between each. Next to their pillar, post two pieces of blank chart paper, and write at the top of one: WE THRIVE, and on the top of the other: WE STRIVE.

With markers in hand, invite each participant to consider their own shared community as they walk the gallery. Under "We Thrive," participants should add notes about what their community already does well in relation to the thriving communities pillar. Under "We Strive," participants add details about what changes they'd like to see to help their community become healthier.

Walk the gallery as a group, and invite an open conversation about the results of the exercise.

STEP THREE: OPTIONAL EXTENSION

Create a bill of rights for your community. What do we need to thrive? Name your own pillars, and write your own definition for each, providing examples. Extend the activity further by listing barriers to resources. What don't we have? Why don't we have them? What do we need to do to get them? Use the companion organizing toolkit to take action!



ACTIVITY THREE

WHAT THE RHETORIC?

DECONSTRUCTING RACIST “DOG WHISTLE” LANGUAGE

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

Participants use examples from the film **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** to decode and deconstruct rhetorical “dog whistle” language that implies discriminatory, stereotypical and racist messaging below the surface. Jumping off from the film as a starting point, participants identify where they see veiled racist rhetoric in the news, and within their own community.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Print out of Deconstructing “Dog Whistle” Language chart, writing utensils

STEP ONE: CONTEXTUALIZE AND DISCUSS

What is rhetoric? [MASTERCLASS.COM](https://www.masterclass.com) offers a definition with contextual examples:

“The art of persuasion through communication... Politicians deliver rallying cries to inspire people to act. Advertisers create catchy slogans to get people to buy products. Lawyers present emotional arguments to sway a jury. These are all examples of rhetoric—language designed to motivate, persuade, or inform.”

Where in the film **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** do we see rhetoric being used?

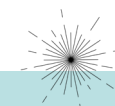
If participants do not find their way to this example, raise it to the group: We see rhetoric in the context of “dog whistle” language activist Niketa Brar brings up at the council meeting. She defines it as, “when we talk about race without ever saying the word race.”

Further define dog whistle language:

“The phrase ‘dog whistle’, writes Vox.com, “has been around for years. It’s political shorthand for a phrase that may sound innocuous to some people, but which also communicates something more insidious either to a subset of the audience or outside of the audience’s conscious awareness – a covert appeal to some noxious set of views.”

STEP TWO: INTRODUCE AND CONNECT

Using phrases from the film, invite participants to map and chart language used in the film that could be considered dog whistle language, starting with the examples Niketa raises, and then identifying and decoding their own examples.



LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE

makes its national broadcast premiere on the PBS series POV December 12, 2022 (check local listings) and will be available to stream free with no PBS Passport membership necessary until March 10, 2023.

Visit [PBS.ORG/POV/FILMS/LETHELITTLELIGHTSHINE/](https://www.pbs.org/pov/films/letthelittlelightshine/) for more information.



DOG-WHISTLE LANGUAGE	SAID BY WHO?	ASSOCIATIONS AND QUESTIONS	IMPLICATIONS/HIDDEN MEANING
"Gang-Infested"	White man testifying at city council	Roaches, mice	Subhuman
"Good tax paying families"	White man testifying at city council	Who is not good? Who is not tax paying?	Immigrants are not good, people are paid "under the table" or in a tip culture are not good
"Very good family values"	White man testifying at city council	What are good family values? Does this refer to white American values?	Assumes can't have a high quality school with too many Black students
"Proper decorum, behavior and expectations"	John Jacoby		
Families in the South Loop called themselves "pioneers"	Families in the South Loop		
There is a "liquor store nearby"	Families in the South Loop		
YOUR EXAMPLE:			
YOUR EXAMPLE:			
YOUR EXAMPLE:			

STEP THREE: DISCUSS FINDINGS

Engage participants in a discussion about the process they just engaged:

- How did you determine what the dog-whistle language is? Share out answers and compare/contrast.
- How did you arrive at the hidden assumption or meaning behind the dog whistle language? What associations or questions led the way to a more layered interpretation of the statement?
- Why does it matter who spoke the words? What position do they hold in the community?

STEP FOUR: APPLY THE FRAMEWORK

What are other examples of “dog whistle language” that we hear in daily life?

Offer participants a few examples from [EVERYDAYFEMINISM.COM](https://www.everydayfeminism.com) below. Before revealing what the dog whistle message is, ask participants for their ideas. What does the phrase mean on the surface? What is the hidden message?

1. **'Law and Order':** *On the surface, the phrase “law and order” seems pretty non-threatening. Politicians who use it seem to be saying that their policies will focus on making sure the law will be upheld, and that any lawbreakers will be held accountable. What could be so bad about that?*

The Dog Whistle: *“Law and order” is often used to police low-income communities, particularly Black and Latinx people.*

2. **The 'Welfare Queen':** *Devoid of context, “welfare queen” is a strange phrase. Without any context, it seems to be talking about a woman who receives government assistance. On its own, why would that be bad?*

The Dog Whistle: *Historically, the term “welfare queen” has been a commonly used stereotype against Black women.*

3. **'Tough on Crime':** *Saying “tough on crime” is pretty similar to saying “law and order.” Politicians who use it promise that they'll enact policies that make the United States safer to live in. In theory, this should work for everyone –who wants to live somewhere that lets bad criminals go?*

The Dog Whistle: *“Tough on crime” is primarily used as a code for “tough on Black and Latinx people, who are dangerous!” Tough-on-crime politicians are generally always in support of increased police presence and harsh punitive measures for “non-violent” crimes, which have historically not only put people of color in jails, but in many cases, have caused their murders at the hands of the police. ***

4. **'War on Terror':** *This phrase evokes an image of the US military (and the nation) banding together to fight against all evils that threaten our liberty and justice. And who wouldn't want to fight terror and defend our freedom?*

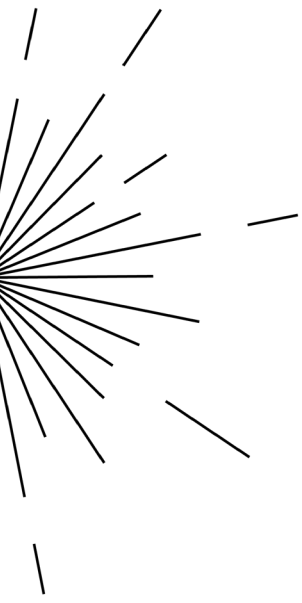
The Dog Whistle: *What isn't explicit is that the “terror” that many politicians want us to go to war against are actually people of Arab and Muslim descent, who “for no reason at all,” hate everything the US stands for (like freedom and women's rights). Proponents of fighting the “war on terror” often push for more military funding, invasions into other countries, and stricter immigration laws – all in the name of keeping (white) Americans safe from evil Arab and Muslim people.*



STEP FOUR: OPTIONAL EXTENSION

Where do we see dog whistle language in our own community? As a group, build a bank of words and phrases that they now know, and can educate others on, as holding hidden messages of stereotyping, discrimination and/or racism.

NOTES:



ACTIVITY FOUR

GENTRIFICATION AND HISTORICAL DISPLACEMENT OF BLACK COMMUNITIES

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

Participants examine gentrification's impact on and destabilization of Chicago's South Loop community in **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** through a debate format. By taking on various perspectives in the film, participants identify mitigating factors of real estate movement and school closures, and grapple with the insidious nature of gentrification on local communities.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Position A and B print outs, Debate Worksheet print out

STEP ONE: DEFINE

Offer the Merriam-Webster definition of gentrification to participants:

A process in which a poor area (as of a city) experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses and which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents.

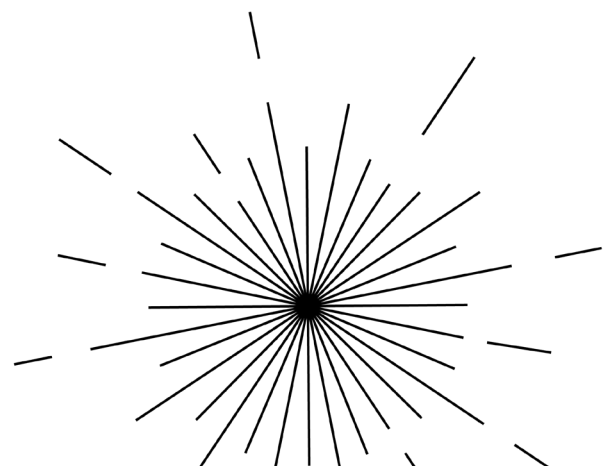
Invite students to share aloud how and when they've experienced gentrification. This might be in their own communities or in the media. What signs in a community point to gentrification?

STEP TWO: ASSIGN

Break participants into 2-4 groups, depending on group size. Assign 1-2 of the groups POSITION A, and 1-2 groups with POSITION B. Pose the central question of the film:

IS NTA'S HIGH SCHOOL PROPOSAL DISCRIMINATORY?

Though the question is answered within the film, invite students to get inside the issue for themselves by debating, using evidence from the film, whether the proposal to turn NTA into a high school is discriminatory towards Black students.



POSITION A:

YES IT IS DISCRIMINATORY

Sample quotes from film to use:

Former NTA Principal Amy Rome says, "Every measure they could take for their kids to not be mixed with NTA kids, separate entry and dismissal times, separate main office, lunch and eating situations, no music or art or recess or gym with NTA."

Veronica Schmitt, an NTA parent says, "What kids? To me, this whole thing is about race, 100%. That school is overcrowded because people were afraid to send their kids here and no one wants to say it – now they are going to take our building for their kids to have a high school."

POSITION B:

NO IT IS NOT DISCRIMINATORY

Sample quotes from film to use:

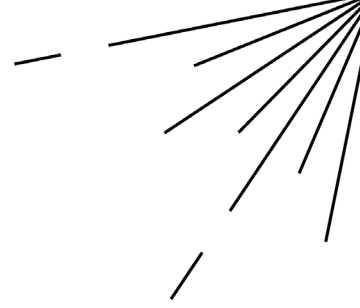
South Loop's Prairie District Neighborhood Alliance (PDNA) President Tina Feldstein says, education was key to long term development of this community, "otherwise people would move away." PDNA's position was to do what kept families in the neighborhood so the "quality of life could be improved." "We were forced to take a stand," Tina says. PDNA had been calling for a high school in the South Loop for years. NTA Principal Isaac Castelaz says South Loop residents in the PDNA made threats to City Hall, "...we will leave Chicago and we are your base."

STEP THREE: PLAN YOUR ARGUMENT

Task participants with planning their argument by both examining the quotes offered, and gathering evidence from the film, using the debate worksheet. Each group should pick a representative to argue their position, using notes from the group dialogue.



DEBATE



TEAM MEMBER NAMES:

What is your team's position?

What are the facts that support this position, without any meaning assigned to them? As plainly as possible, using evidence from the film, outline the facts that support your position.

What assumptions can be made to debate the validity of the position? What hidden messages and meanings are behind various talking points? Who benefits from your position, how and why?

Who backs up your position? Which characters in the film will back up and stand by your claim? What will they testify if put on the stand? What personal stories can be used to support your position?

What other questions do you have that might help support your position?

What might your opponents argue? How will you argue against those points?





STEP FOUR: DEBATE

Arrange the space to mimic a courtroom, with one person (peer or facilitator) serving as “judge” and the rest of class as the jury. Carry out the debate in class using the following Lincoln-Douglas format, a one-on-one debate practiced mainly in the United States at the high school level that places a heavy emphasis on logic, ethical values, and philosophy. Begin with a statement of purpose/policy: here, the argument is whether the proposal to transition NTA into a highschool is discriminatory.

The debate is structured as followed:

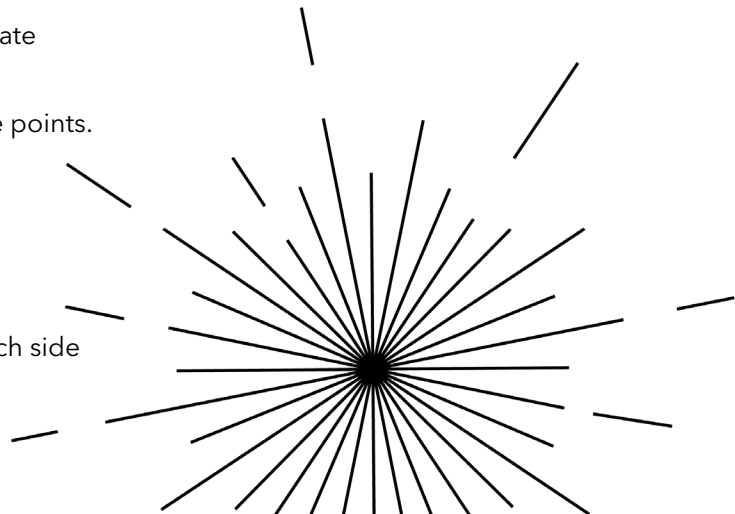
- Affirmative position debater presents constructive debate points.
- Negative position debater cross-examines affirmative points.
- Negative position presents constructive debate points.
- Affirmative position cross-examines negative points.
- Affirmative position offers first rebuttal.
- Negative position offers first rebuttal.
- Affirmative position offers a second rebuttal.

Ultimately, the class decides by a quick vote which side wins.

STEP FIVE: DISCUSS

Reflect on the process as a group:

- How did it feel to debate your position? Did you agree or disagree? What did you have to put aside and ignore to fight for your position? What were you unsure about?
- In each position, what community of people is valued? Who is not valued, why and how?
- How does gentrification interrupt historically Black communities? What tactics are used to displace people? What is lost when communities are integrated by outsiders?



ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE



POV's **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE**: DiveDeeper Reading List, view here [PBS.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2022/11/LET-THE-LITTLE-LIGHT-SHINE-DELVE-DEEPER-1.PDF](https://www.pbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/let-the-little-light-shine-delve-deeper-1.pdf)

THE UPROOTED PROJECT is a joint initiative of faculty with The University of Texas School of Law and the Community and Regional Planning Program at the University of Texas at Austin. The Project aims to support more equitable and inclusive development in Texas cities by increasing awareness of what gentrification is, where it's occurring, and the best policy interventions available in Texas.

THE UNITED NEIGHBORS IN DEFENSE AGAINST DISPLACEMENT is a coalition of community collaboration formed to prevent the displacement of residents in South Central Los Angeles and to improve the health and economic well-being of low-income communities of color through responsible development.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION seeks to advance the global Black community by developing leaders, informing policy and educating the public. We bring together subject experts, industry leaders, elected officials, students and concerned citizens to engage in meaningful dialogue and incite positive change.

DIVERSITY WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT: Lessons from Gentrification for Integration in a Changing Racial/Ethnic Contact. Research by Diana Cordova-Covo examines the experiences of Black and Latinx families across New York City to explore routes to prevention of cultural displacement as City schools undergo seismic demographic shifts as a result of gentrification.

UNIDOS US: Latino Housing Policy Priorities fact sheet illustrates the priorities of Latinos in the housing market including barriers to homeownership and gentrification induced displacement. It is intended to serve as a resource to policymakers and stakeholders.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR A JUST ECONOMY (SAJE): Since 1996, SAJE has been a force for economic justice in Los Angeles focused on tenant rights, healthy housing, and equitable development.

CHICAGO HOUSING INITIATIVE is a coalition of eleven community organizations working directly with low-income renters in the city of Chicago who came together to forge a citywide organizing vehicle for low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities to increase our social, economic, and political power.





THE NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

is dedicated to achieving racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes have quality homes that are accessible and affordable in communities of their choice.

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE - For 110 years, NUL has been collaborating with community leaders, policymakers and corporate partners to elevate the standard of living for African Americans and other historically underserved communities.

THE ALLIANCE TO RECLAIM OUR SCHOOLS (AROS) is an unprecedented alliance of parent, youth, community and labor organizations that together represent over 7 million people nationwide. We are fighting to reclaim the promise of public education as our nation's gateway to a strong democracy and racial and economic justice.

EMPOWER DC has been advancing racial, economic and environmental justice by investing in the leadership and organized political power of DC's lowest income residents and communities.

COMMUNITY MOVEMENT BUILDERS (CMB) is a Black member-based collective of community residents and activists serving Black working-class and poor Black communities. CMB emerged out of a need to respond to encroaching gentrification, displacement and over-policing. CMB organizes in Atlanta, Detroit, and Dallas to bring power to Black communities by challenging existing institutions and creating new ones that our people control.

THE OAKLAND REACH hits the streets in the most underserved communities to organize and mobilize parents of children attending our lowest performing schools and so much more.

THE CONGRESS OF COMMUNITIES improves the quality of life for Southwest Detroit residents by working to improve multi-organization collaboration so that individual organizations can be more effective.

MILE HIGH CONNECTS is a broad partnership of foundations, community nonprofits, and businesses in the Denver region focused on preventing gentrification and displacement while supporting thoughtfully-designed, transit-rich neighborhoods.

RIGHT TO THE CITY is a national alliance of more than 90 community-based racial, economic, gender & environmental justice organizations growing grassroots power to halt gentrification and displacement, and build democratic, just, and sustainable communities.

JANE PLACE NEIGHBORHOOD SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE is a Community Land Trust and housing rights organization committed whose mission is to transform unjust housing policies, discriminatory practices, and inequitable development schemes by engaging in strategies that create permanently affordable housing, advance tenant rights, expand housing security, and uphold equitable housing patterns and land use planning.





CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For more information about **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** and to download educational materials, including the Organizing Toolkit visit LIGHTSHINEFILM.COM.

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