

Teen Changemakers: Claudette Calvin

About This Module

Overview	<p>For generations, young people have been leading the charge for justice and positive change in their communities. Dive into the rich history of youth advocacy through a historical case study of Civil Rights teen leader Claudette Colvin, showcasing the power of youth voice. Through engaging discussions and hands-on activities, we're not just reading about the past; we're connecting it to our present and future, learning how to support teens as they become the next guardians of a more fair and just world.</p> <p>This module is inspired by the historical case study highlighted in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History's National Youth Summit program in 2020.</p>
Guiding Questions*	<p>How can teens create a more equitable nation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was Claudette Colvin? • What were her values? • Who were her role models? • What community issues are most important to you? • What might your roadmap to advocacy look like? <p>*Guiding questions are not specifically asked in the activities themselves but are meant to guide your preparation and facilitation of the module. Keep these questions top of mind so you can help youth make connections and capture key takeaways relating to the topic.</p>
Session 1	<p>Building Community</p> <p>Teens will use art to connect as a community and build Group Agreements to create a shared understanding for how they want to act and feel in this space.</p>
Session 2	<p>I Know My Value(s)!</p> <p>Through their study and reflection on the historical case study featuring Claudette Colvin, teens will discover how their values impact their decisions.</p>
Session 3	<p>Not Alone: Support and Inspiration</p> <p>Teens will learn about Claudette Colvin's role models and consider how their own support systems help them navigate the world.</p>
Session 4	<p>The Change I Wish to See</p> <p>Teens will consider the types of actions they could take to create change in their community. Then they will fill in a Community Issues and Advocacy Chart to address issues they care about.</p>

About This Module (cont'd.)

Session 5

Creating the Future We Imagine Together

Teens will create T-shirt designs to raise awareness of a community issue of their choosing. Next, they will share their work with the group and receive recognition.

Key Terms

“Four Freedoms” Speech	During this speech, delivered on Jan. 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt described his vision for extending American ideals throughout the world. The four freedoms are outlined below.
Freedom From fear	No one should live in fear for their personal safety.
Freedom From want	Every person can make ends meet, and feel secure and content.
Freedom of worship	Every person can worship in their own way, and differences in belief are accepted.
Freedom of speech	Every person can express their thoughts and opinions freely.
Boycott	To refuse to buy or use goods or services, or go to businesses, to bring about a change.
Equity	Ensuring everyone has what they need to thrive; fair, but not necessarily equal, treatment.
Segregation	The action of separating people, historically based on race and/or gender. Segregation implies the physical separation of people in everyday activities, in professional life, and in the exercise of civil rights.
Value	An idea you carry with you that impacts how you treat others and how you act in the world.
Consensus	General agreement among people.
Celebrate	To honor or remember; to hold up for public notice, elevate.
Inform	To provide facts or information; to communicate knowledge or to call to action.
Protest	A gesture of disapproval or call to action.

Supplies

Session 1: Building Community	Handouts	
	1 set per pair of teens	“Four Freedoms” by Normal Rockwell
	Supplies Needed	
		Computer and projector screen
		Flipchart paper and markers
		Wall-safe tape
	1 per teen	4x6-inch index cards
	1 per teen	Blank name tags
	1 set per pair of teens	Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils
	1 sheet per teen	Blank paper
	1 per teen	Pens or pencils
Session 2: I Know My Value(s)!	Handouts	
	1 set	Session 2 Images
	1	Vibe Check Poster
	Supplies Needed	
		Computer and projector screen
		Flipchart paper and markers
	1 row of stickers per teen	Dot stickers (optional)
	2 per teen	4x6-inch index cards
	1 per teen	Pens or pencils
	2 pieces per teen	Tape
	1 sheet per teen	Blank paper
	1 per teen	Sticky notes

Supplies

Session 3: Not Alone: Support and Inspiration	Handouts	
	1 per teen plus facilitator	Group Chat Organizer
	3	Emoji Matchups
	1	Emoji Bracket Worksheet
	Supplies Needed	
		Computer and projector screen
		Flipchart paper and markers
		List of values saved from Session 2
	1 per teen	Pens or pencils
	1 per teen	4x6-inch index cards
Session 4: The Change I Wish to See	Handouts	
	8 selected images per small group	Session 4 Images
	1 set per small group	Category Cards
	1 per teen	Coloring Sheet (optional)
	1 per teen	Community Issues and Advocacy Chart
	Supplies Needed	
		Computer and projector screen
		Flipchart paper and markers
		Wall-safe tape
		Small bag, box, or bin for holding affirmations
	1 sheet per teen	Blank paper
	Assortment per teen	Crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils (optional)
	1 per small group	Scissors
	1 per teen	Pens or pencils
	3 per teen	4x6-inch index cards
	1 per teen	Sticky notes

Supplies

Session 5: Creating the Future We Imagine Together	Handouts	
	1 per teen	T-Shirt Template
	Supplies Needed	
		Computer and projector screen
		Device and speakers to play music (optional)
		Flipchart paper and markers
		Community Issues and Advocacy Charts saved from Session 4
		Wall-safe tape
	1 per teen	Pens or pencils
	Assortment per teen	Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils

Background Information

For information on the people, movements, and historical events referenced in this module, read on!

Facilitator Note: Due to the charges unjustly levelled against him, Jeremiah Reeves' biography (included in Session 3) includes material of a sensitive nature. The curriculum writers use the word "rape" because it was the accusation levelled against Reeves. While it has an important legal distinction from sexual assault, and consequently a different impact for Reeves, either word may be retraumatizing.

Bill of Rights

The Constitution of the United States brought the various states in the newly created United States together. The Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments, or changes, to the Constitution. It was ratified in 1791 and protects American citizens' basic freedoms and rights. For example, the First Amendment guarantees the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. Visit [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs) (archives.gov/founding-docs) to learn more.

Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin was a 15-year-old Black student in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. Colvin refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus and testified in the legal case that brought an end to segregated busing in Montgomery.

Read more here:

- Hoose, P. (2009) *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*. New York: Melanie Kroupa Books/Farrar Straus Giroux.
- National Museum of American History's National Youth Summit Case Study and Conversation Kit: **Claudette Colvin and the fight for civil rights**. (2020) americanhistory.si.edu/sites/default/files/file-uploader/NYS%20Case%20Study-Student%20Kit%20FINAL4.pdf

Civil Rights Movement

The early Civil Rights Movement began well before World War II. Early activists wanted the U.S. government to follow up on its promise of equality. Whether in the Jim Crow South or in the North, segregation was the law. In 1955, Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin each famously refused to give up their seats on buses in Montgomery, Alabama, launching both the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the ongoing advocacy of Martin Luther King Jr. That same year, a young Black boy, Emmett Till, was tortured, mutilated, and murdered for "talking fresh" to a White woman in the Mississippi Delta.

In the early 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement swept across America, bringing about massive changes in laws. Many people used nonviolent actions like boycotts, protests, awareness raising, activist journalism, and more.

In 1961, more than 400 Black and White people deliberately broke Jim Crow laws (and put their lives on the line) to protest segregation on interstate buses. The Montgomery Improvement Association organized carpools and held weekly mass meetings with sermons and music. This united the Black community as it boycotted the bus system.¹ Fisk University student Diane Nash was inspired by their actions and carried on their work. She was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to promote the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.²

Norman Rockwell

Norman Rockwell created over 300 covers for magazines and illustrated calendars, books, posters, and advertisements. His work immortalized American family values. He created "Four Freedoms" (1943), based on President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1941 speech, to support the World War II effort.³

World War II

Axis: In 1937, Japan attacked China to gain power. Two years later, Germany's Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party invaded Poland and other European countries, also to gain power. Eventually Italy joined forces with Japan and Germany. Together, they invaded other countries, established laws that targeted segments of the population, enslaved civilians, and even killed millions of everyday people, including 6 million Jewish people. They wanted to establish a new order in the world.⁴

Allies: United Kingdom, France, Soviet Union, China, and the United States fought back against the Axis. China, United Kingdom, and France fought back first.

The United States joined the war in 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Soviet Union joined the Allies in 1941 when Germany attacked them.⁵

Ultimately, the Allies won. Germany surrendered in May of 1945. The United States dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan in August 1945 and Japan formally surrendered the next month.⁶ Over 64 million people (about twice the population of California) died during WWII⁷, and 60 million people (about twice the population of Texas) had to leave their homes to stay safe.⁸

Harriet Tubman

Born into slavery in Maryland as Araminta Ross, Harriet Tubman rebelled against slavery from her earliest years, running away as early as age seven. At 15, she defied an overseer and was nearly killed when he gave her a "stunning blow to the head." Although the effects of the blow stayed with her throughout her life, Tubman was unwavering. In 1844, she married a free Black man, John Tubman, and in 1849, she escaped to Philadelphia, discarding her slave name for her mother's name, Harriet. Tubman became an active "conductor" on the Underground Railroad and guided slaves to freedom. She made 19 recorded trips out of the South and was reputed never to have lost a soul.⁹

Jeremiah Reeves

Facilitator Note: Please proceed with care: This section includes sensitive subject matter. For those who have experienced sexual assault or rape, the effects and long-lasting impact are on the same spectrum of harm.

Here the curriculum writers use the word "rape" because it was the accusation levelled against Reeves. While rape has an important legal distinction from sexual assault, and consequently a different impact for Reeves, either word may be retraumatizing.

Jeremiah Reeves was a popular and talented young jazz musician in Montgomery, Alabama, and he was a neighbor of Claudette Colvin. Reeves was in a consensual relationship with a White woman, and he was accused of rape. Police arrested Reeves when he was 16 years old. He confessed to the crime under duress and was sentenced to death. He later withdrew his confession and maintained his innocence, saying police pressured him to plead guilty.

Jeremiah Reeves (cont'd.)

Black leaders in Montgomery believed Reeves was innocent and wrongfully accused. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited Reeves in jail and said, "One of the authorities had led him to the death chamber, threatening that if he did not confess at once he would burn there later." The U.S. Supreme Court tossed out Reeves's conviction in 1954. Yet, a new, all-White jury condemned him to death in only 34 minutes. He died at age 22 on March 28, 1958.¹⁰

Sojourner Truth

Born into slavery in New York, Isabella Baumfree was freed in 1827 through a change in New York state law. In 1843, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth and began speaking publicly against slavery. She supported her antislavery campaign through sales of her book and by selling copies of her photograph. Truth continued to call for slavery's abolition during the Civil War. Eager to assist the many refugees from enslavement who were flocking to Washington, D.C., she traveled there in 1864. In Freedmen's Village — the camp established by the federal government at Arlington Heights, Virginia — Truth earned praise for her "great service rendered to the Freedmen and their families."¹¹

Resources

SLU Microlearnings

This module includes four microlearning videos to support facilitation. Visit **Think, Talk, Act! Facilitation Strategies Playlist** (youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFGZwzyPnxTtp4BczZcW88-UTpbnPRUf_) to view these videos.

- 1. Big Idea: Turning Knowledge Into Action**
What has inspired young changemakers in the past? How can history inspire action among youth today?
- 2. Skill 1: Building Historical Thinking Toolkit**
What strategies can you use to help teens consider multiple perspectives?
- 3. Skill 2: Cultivating Critical Thinking**
What is an open-ended question? How can you facilitate powerful, teen-driven discussions through questions?
- 4. Skill 3: Developing Visual Literacy**
How can you use a variety of images (including portraits, murals, paintings, and infographics) to connect history to issues of concern for teens today?

Resources From the Smithsonian Institution

The National Museum of African American History and Culture provides a suite of information to support educators as they explore more about racism and racial identity: nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/race-and-racial-identity

Resources (cont'd)	
Learning Strategies Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timed-Pair-Share (kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning)• Round Robin (kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning)• Jigsaw (cultofpedagogy.com/jigsaw-teaching-strategy/)• See-Think-Wonder (pz.harvard.edu/resources/see-think-wonder)• Color-Symbol-Image (pz.harvard.edu/resources/color-symbol-image)• What Makes You Say That? (pz.harvard.edu/resources/what-makes-you-say-that)
Books, Videos, Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try Phillip Hoose's books for young adults:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ "Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice" (search.worldcat.org/title/1096307483)◦ "We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History" (search.worldcat.org/title/43167969)• View National Museum of African American History and Culture's video "Why We March" (youtube.com/watch?v=8eq8QjqNKbQ). It visualizes nearly 60 years of community activism and protest movements for racial and social justice in the United States.• Read Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III's 2024 article "Opinion: The Freedom Embedded in My Family's Dreams Became Real 60 Years Ago" (amp.cnn.com/cnn/2024/07/20/opinions/civil-rights-act-1964-anniversary-racism-bunch).• Learn how Emmett Till inspired Rosa Parks to stay seated in "Emmett Till's Death Inspired a Movement" (nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/emmett-tills-death-inspired-movement).

Footnotes

1. **National Museum of American History's National Youth Summit Conversation Kit: Freedom Summer** (amhistory.si.edu/docs/NYS_FreedomSummer_ConversationKit.pdf)
2. Cheng, L. (2022, July 7). **Meet Diane Nash, the Civil Rights icon awarded the U.S.' highest civilian honor. *Smithsonian Magazine*.** (smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/diane-nash-presidential-medal-freedom-civil-rights-180980380/)
3. Tucker, A. (2018, March) **A 21st century reimagining of Norman Rockwell's "Four Freedoms." *Smithsonian Magazine*.** (smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/21st-century-reimagining-norman-rockwells-four-freedoms-180968086/)
4. **Axis Powers and the Holocaust.** (2022, April 11). *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/axis-powers-and-the-holocaust)

A quick guide to Japan's role in the second world war. (2018) Imperial War Museums. (iwm.org.uk/history/a-quick-guide-to-japans-role-in-the-second-world-war)
5. **10 Facts About World War 2.** (2018, November 7). *National Geographic Kids*. (natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/general-history/world-war-two/)
6. Vergun, D. (2020, August 14). **Significant Events of World War II.** U.S. Department of Defense. (defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/Story/Article/2293108/)
7. Halloran, N. (n.d.). **The Fallen of World War II - Data-driven documentary about war & peace.** (www.fallen.io/ww2/)
8. Zampano, G., Moloney, L., & Juan, J. (2015, September 22). **Migrant Crisis: A History of Displacement.** (graphics.wsj.com/migrant-crisis-a-history-of-displacement/)
9. **Harriet Tubman. Smithsonian Institution.** (si.edu/search?edan_q=harriet%20tubman&)
10. National Museum of American History's National Youth Summit Case Study and Conversation Kit: **Claudette Colvin and the fight for civil rights.** (2020). (americanhistory.si.edu/sites/default/files/file-uploader/NYS%20Case%20Study%E2%80%9393Student%20Kit%20FINAL4.pdf)
11. **Sojourner Truth. Smithsonian Institution.** (si.edu/search?edan_q=Sojourner%20Truth.&)

Social-Emotional Skills

Collaboration	Identifying and Solving Problems
Compassion	Responsible Decision Making
Communication	Self-Awareness
Empathy	Social Awareness
Ethical Responsibility	Social Engagement

Extension Activities

Keystone Club	Charter a Keystone Club. If your Club or Youth Center already participates in Keystone, use this module to help inform and drive your national project.
Bring the culminating project to life	This module concludes with teen presentations highlighting issues that matter most to them. Support participants as they continue to develop their ideas and projects, and find ways to help them advocate for self and their community. Consider making an exhibition that you add after each session. Not only will this make teens' learning visible, but it will also provide a source of inspiration as you progress through the sessions and teens mark the space as their own.

Career Connections

Consider featuring these aligned careers:

Artist	Legislator
Attorney	Lobbyist
Communications Specialist	Journalist
Community Organizer	Social Worker
Educator	

Family and Caregiver Engagement	
On-Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The culminating event (Session 5) provides an excellent opportunity to invite community members, neighborhood stakeholders, or others who can act as a supportive and authentic audience. If you invite audience members, please let the group know in advance. Additionally, consider giving visitors clear guidance about how to engage with teens. For example: “Teens will be excited to talk to you about their work. Go have a seat with them and ask individuals about their projects.”• Encourage teens to plan a showcase, presenting their projects to family, friends, and community members.
At Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage families to use their local libraries to research youth activists throughout history and today. For support, consider watching the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street’s video “How to Conduct Research” (youtube.com/watch?v=307Yc1iW8x4).• Become involved in community events.