



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume I: The Kids are not the Threat

Changemakers in New Haven: Examining the Past, Empowering the Present

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Introduction and Rationale

This is an 8th-grade curriculum unit built around a single conviction: young people are not a threat to democracy. They are, and have always been, among its most vital defenders. The unit connects the youth rebellions and student movements of the 1950s-70s to present-day civic engagement in New Haven, asking students to see themselves not as passive recipients of history but as active participants in an ongoing democratic tradition.

Three questions drive the unit: What does it mean to be a young person who works to improve the place you live? How do young people identify the problems and inequities that exist in their communities? And how have young people effectively advocated for change - and how can students today do the same? Students investigate these questions through history, geographic inquiry, and civic design, culminating in their own proposals for change in New Haven.

A central thread runs through every case: institutional response. Governments, schools, and other institutions have alternately suppressed and co-opted youth movements, and young activists have adapted in turn: pushing back directly, building structures outside existing institutions, or, at times, being silenced. This includes an honest reckoning with the fact that advocacy does not always succeed, and that understanding suppression and co-optation is itself a form of preparation for civic life.

New Haven is a fitting place to teach this unit, and not simply as a convenient backdrop. Its history offers an unusually rich, well-documented record of youth organizing spanning decades, concentrated in neighborhoods students can visit and along roads that many of them travel. Its neighborhoods also carry the marks of decisions made without residents' consent, from urban renewal to highway construction to institutional expansion, and its young people have organized and demanded better, again and again. That combination is what makes the city more than a setting: it lets students study democratic participation as something concrete and local rather than abstract and distant. It lets them recognize that history in the streets they walk every day, and find their own place within it.

Content Objectives/Background Essay for Teachers

Youth activism in the mid-twentieth century did not emerge in isolation, and New Haven's own history of youth organizing did not develop apart from the national movements surrounding it. This essay follows the same structure as the unit itself: first the national wave of youth organizing from the 1950s through the 1970s, then New Haven's own history within that wave, and finally the geographic lens connecting historical decisions to the city's present form.

Part I - Setting the Stage: Youth Movements in Postwar America

The Quiet Buildup: America in the 1950s

While it is tempting to begin the story of 1960s youth activism with the sit-ins, the conditions that produced them were already forming in the previous decade. Four developments matter most. Legal segregation remained in force across much of the country even after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) declared segregated schooling unconstitutional, illustrating how slowly law translated into daily practice. The Housing Act of 1949 set in motion large-scale federal funding for urban renewal, and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 did the same thing for interstate highway construction, forces that would soon reshape New Haven itself.¹ Cold War-era politics rewarded conformity and treated dissent with suspicion, contributing to how startling the confrontational tactics of the 1960s appeared when they emerged. And the postwar decade produced "teenager" as a distinct cultural identity for the first time, with its own music, its own economic power, and, in time, its own politics.²

From Sit-Ins to the Freedom Movement

The sit-in movement began in February 1960, when four Black college freshmen from North Carolina A&T sat down at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and refused to leave. Although the sit-in is often remembered as the spontaneous work of these four men alone, it was in fact planned and strategized on the campus of Bennett College, an all-women's institution, whose students were central to that planning before the four men carried out the first sit-in itself. Bennett women joined the sit-ins in large numbers in the days that followed, ultimately accounting for hundreds of the arrests made between 1960 and 1963.³ The tactic spread with remarkable speed, and by the end of the same year it had produced the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), founded explicitly as a youth-led organization distinct from the older, more hierarchical civil rights groups around it. Over the next several years, that same youth-led energy carried into the Freedom Rides and Freedom Summer, both of which asked very young organizers, many of them still teenagers, to accept real physical risk. The Freedom Rides (1961) sent small, deliberately integrated groups on interstate buses through the Deep South to test whether recent Supreme Court rulings desegregating bus terminals were actually being enforced.⁴ In May 1963, the Birmingham Children's Crusade pushed this youth-led strategy to its furthest point yet: with adult participation in the Birmingham campaign stalling under the threat of job loss, organizer James Bevel turned to schoolchildren and teenagers instead. More than a thousand Black schoolchildren and teenagers walked out of school and across the city to gather at the 16th Street Baptist Church to march against segregation. Birmingham Police Commissioner Bull Connor's response was to turn fire hoses and police dogs on the young marchers, producing images that shocked the nation and helped pressure the Kennedy administration to propose the civil rights legislation that would become the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁵ Freedom Summer (1964) sent hundreds of student volunteers to

Mississippi to register Black voters and create Freedom Schools, aiming to build lasting political power in the state rather than win a single symbolic victory.⁶ The age of these organizers, often only a few years older than the students studying them, is a parallel the unit draws out explicitly.

Expanding Fronts: Black Power, Vietnam, and Campus Revolt

By the middle of the decade, a single, unified civil rights movement had splintered into several overlapping and sometimes competing movements, each responding to a different frustration. Beginning around 1966, a growing number of organizers, including younger SNCC members under Stokely Carmichael, broke from a strictly nonviolent, integrationist strategy toward Black Power, which emphasized community self-determination and, in some cases, armed self-defense.⁷ The Black Panther Party, founded that same year, combined this political stance with direct community programs like breakfast and medical clinics.⁸ At the same time, the escalating draft for the Vietnam War fueled rapid growth in campus-based anti-war organizing, led by groups like Students for a Democratic Society, and tactics escalated from teach-ins toward direct disruption, including the widely covered 1968 Columbia University building takeover.⁹ That same escalation reached its longest and most consequential expression at San Francisco State College, where the Black Student Union and a multiracial coalition called the Third World Liberation Front launched a 134-day strike in November 1968 (still the longest student strike in U.S. history) demanding an ethnic studies curriculum and greater access for students of color; the strike ended in a settlement establishing the nation's first College of Ethnic Studies.¹⁰ This radicalization was not only a story of younger activists breaking from older leadership; it was also unfolding within that leadership itself. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1967 Massey Lectures, later published as *Trumpet of Conscience*, show King directly confronting Vietnam and engaging openly with the appeal of more radical tactics among young activists, evidence that the era's shift toward confrontation was less a clean break from earlier civil rights leadership than a live, ongoing argument within it.¹¹

Several parallel movements emerged in these same years. Women's liberation activists made this same turn toward direct, confrontational tactics. In September 1968, a group called New York Radical Women organized a protest outside the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City: they crowned a sheep "Miss America" and filled a "Freedom Trash Can" with girdles, bras, and other symbols of enforced femininity, a stunt that, despite persistent myths, involved no actual bra-burning but nonetheless announced the arrival of a new, more militant women's movement to a national television audience.¹² Chicano youth organizing reached a highly visible peak in the 1968 East Los Angeles walkouts ("blowouts"), in which thousands of high school students walked out of class to protest discriminatory treatment and inadequate school resources.¹³ A similar shift was underway in Chicago's Puerto Rican community, where the Young Lords transformed from a street gang into a political organization in 1968, modeled explicitly on the Black Panther Party. Organizing initially against urban renewal-driven displacement, the group released a Thirteen-Point Program in 1969 demanding Puerto Rican self-determination alongside direct community programs, including free breakfast initiatives and health clinics.¹⁴ And the June 1969 Stonewall uprising in New York, a spontaneous rebellion following a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, marked gay liberation's decisive turn from the cautious "homophile" organizing of the 1950s toward the same confrontational, youth-led model showing up across every other movement of this moment, crystallized within months in the founding of the Gay Liberation Front.¹⁵

How Institutions Responded: Suppression and Co-optation

Every movement mentioned so far eventually collided with an institution that had to decide how to respond, and the unit asks students to sort each case as "Shut It Down" (suppression), "Water It Down" (co-optation),

both, or neither. Direct suppression is starkly illustrated by two cases. FBI surveillance and raids against the Black Panther Party culminated in the December 1969 Chicago police raid, coordinated with the FBI's COINTELPRO program, that killed Illinois Party chairman Fred Hampton and fellow Panther Mark Clark in their sleep.¹⁶ And in May 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen killed four Kent State University students during a protest against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia.¹⁷ In contrast, the school district's slow, limited response to the East L.A. walkouts, acknowledging complaints without meaningfully reforming the schools for years, is a clean example of co-optation, or watering it down.¹⁸ Stonewall resists that clean division: police suppression is what triggered the uprising in the first place, yet the years that followed brought only partial, often symbolic policy change in many cities, making it a genuine case of both responses layered on top of each other.¹⁹ San Francisco State resists it too, for a different reason: the strike was met with real police violence, yet it also produced one of the era's most substantive concessions, an outcome neither purely suppressed nor merely symbolic.²⁰ This same vocabulary applies just as directly to New Haven's own history, which offers versions of nearly every one of these dynamics, often within a few blocks of one another.

Part II - New Haven's Own History of Youth Activism

New Haven offers an unusually rich case study of these same dynamics: youth-led organizing colliding with entrenched institutions, and the suppression or co-optation that follows, concentrated in a single, well-documented, geographically compact way. That collision played out not only through organizations and protests but through the city's own physical form. Institutions used land itself, where highways were built, which neighborhoods were demolished, what property could be taxed, as a tool of power, making New Haven's streets and buildings as much a part of this history as any single organization or event. Its history moves from the 1950s urban renewal program that created the conditions for organizing, through the most intense years of local activism around 1969-1970, and into the more institutionalized organizing strategies of the 1980s to the present.

Building a "Model City": Urban Renewal Comes to New Haven

Before there was a youth movement in New Haven to respond to, the city's own government made a decision that created the conditions for one. Beginning in 1954 and continuing through 1969, Mayor Richard C. Lee pursued one of the most ambitious urban renewal programs in the country, using federal redevelopment money to demolish and rebuild large sections of the city; a program celebrated nationally, at the time, as a model for what an ambitious American city could do.²¹ Lee later described the encounter that convinced him renewal was necessary: after visiting a home on Oak Street lit only by kerosene lamps, he recalled, "I sat on the curb and I was just sick as a puppy...it was just awful."²² The word "model" warrants scrutiny. Beginning in 1959, the city demolished the Oak Street neighborhood, then one of New Haven's most racially and ethnically diverse communities, a single block alone home to Black, white, Cuban, Indian, Greek, Italian, Russian, Polish, Jewish, and Verdean families, along with parts of the Hill, to build new housing and the Route 34 Connector, a limited-access expressway intended to link Interstates 91 and 95 through downtown and westward toward the Naugatuck Valley. The project displaced almost 900 households and 350 businesses, part of a broader relocation that ultimately uprooted some 3,000 Oak Street residents and neighborhood opposition, together with the eventual collapse of federal urban renewal funding, halted Route 34's construction after just over a mile, permanently abandoning its westward extension and earning it the enduring nickname "the road to nowhere." Together with Interstates 91 and 95, Route 34 concentrated the lasting burdens of highway infrastructure (noise, pollution, and physical severance) on neighborhoods that were already home to the city's most vulnerable residents. The Hill neighborhood, just south of the new expressway, absorbed much of

that severance directly: Route 34 formed a hard physical boundary between the Hill and downtown New Haven, cutting off a connection the neighborhood had relied on and leaving residents there to organize under conditions of both displacement and increasing isolation.²³ Scholars have since been considerably more skeptical than Lee's contemporaries were about who this program actually served. New Haven's local government, in fact, had far less real power in this process than it appeared to; federal funding priorities and Yale University's own institutional interests shaped outcomes as much as City Hall did.²⁴ In a less obvious wrinkle, some of the earliest and most effective opposition to urban renewal ideology came not from the street but from inside Yale's own School of Art and Architecture, whose students and faculty broke publicly with renewal orthodoxy by the late 1960s.²⁵ Black Panther Warren Kimbro, who had lived in Oak Street before its demolition, later described the highway construction in a 1970 Party pamphlet as one stage in the "encirclement of Yale," framing the city's redevelopment as part of the same expansion that displaced Black and Latino residents throughout the urban renewal era.²⁶

The pattern extended well beyond any single decade: New Haven's history of racial exclusion in land use predates urban renewal by centuries, and organized resistance to the program continued for years after Lee left office.²⁷ The decades-long effort to convert Route 34 back into an ordinary city street continues today, with the city's Downtown Crossing initiative reconnecting intersections such as Orange Street that had been severed for more than sixty years.²⁸

Fighting Back: The Hill Parents Association and *Ram and Sheep*

Residents of the Hill neighborhood did not accept urban renewal passively. The Hill Parents Association organized directly to challenge City Hall's power over the neighborhood's future, and official "citizen participation" structures placed real limits on residents even when the city nominally invited their input.²⁹ Children in the neighborhood organized too, not just alongside adults but on their own initiative. In the summer of 1965, young people connected to the Hill Parents Association circulated a petition demanding repairs, new playground equipment, and a working water fountain for their neighborhood park, marching through the Hill and gathering signatures to press their case. When they presented their demands directly to the city's park commissioner, one child's request was disarmingly specific: "We need trees because it's too hot," followed by another, "And sand." The city responded within a day, sending Parks Department crews to install new swings and repaint the basketball court.³⁰ Fred Harris, who moved to the Hill in the 1950s, became one of the association's most visible voices and went on to publish *Ram and Sheep*, a youth-led community newspaper that directly and unapologetically criticized white city leaders for the neighborhood's destruction.³¹ Harris later paired his own account of that organizing with documentary photographs of the Hill, describing in his own words what it meant to confront City Hall from inside a neighborhood being dismantled.³²

The Northern Student Movement Begins in New Haven

Founded at Yale in 1961 to support the Southern civil rights movement, the Northern Student Movement began in New Haven, and from that starting point of fundraising and material support grew into local initiatives of its own: most notably a tutoring program pairing Yale and local college students with children in New Haven's public schools. The organization expanded rapidly into a network of chapters across the Northeast and Midwest, eventually enlisting more than two thousand student volunteers nationally by 1963. That same year, as the organization's national headquarters relocated to New York City, New Haven's own chapter took on an identity distinct from the organization it had founded. Rather than continuing merely as a community tutoring program, its local college and high school students increasingly turned toward direct

organizing around predatory housing, unequal schools, and economic discrimination, eventually embracing Black Power as an explicit political stance. This local shift mirrored a broader national one, as civil rights organizing across the country moved from integrationist strategies toward more direct, confrontational tactics, a change that would soon put New Haven's organizers on a collision course with Yale and city institutions.³³

Rebellion at Hillhouse High School: The Black Student Union

A series of student uprisings unfolded at Hillhouse High School across the 1967-68 school year, sparked in December when a Black student, Elise Browne, was shoved by a white classmate for refusing to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and the school failed to discipline the aggressor. A walkout later that week erupted into a rebellion that led students to formally organize as the Black Student Union, demanding an accredited course in Black history, an end to discriminatory disciplinary practices, the recruitment of Black teachers, and the removal of police from schools. Later that December, a group of about a dozen parents led by a local activist threatened to boycott the school unless police were stationed there. When a promised district response stalled, a second student uprising in February prompted a different escalation: the teachers' union itself voted for police occupation of the school. Police Chief James Ahern declared what he called "martial law," resulting in dozens of arrests and reports of police brutality towards Black students, particularly Black girls. One teacher resigned in protest, equating the occupied school to a "prison camp." Tensions peaked in May, when a confrontation with police triggered a wave of arrests and a small group of students, frustrated with institutional channels, firebombed three Yale-owned buildings. The rebellion's most lasting effects were ultimately structural and unintended rather than a matter of clear suppression or concession. The faculty split that emerged during that school year fueled a progressive takeover of the teachers' union under its first Black president in 1969, and separately gave rise to High School in the Community, a radical alternative public school directly credited to the vision of BSU spokesperson Ronald Barnes. Even as these constructive changes took hold, the students' central demand, an end to police presence in schools, remains unmet today, even as the specific form that presence takes has changed.³⁴ Two later generations of New Haven youth organizers have taken up the same fight in more recent years: the Citywide Youth Coalition, a youth advocacy organization active in the city since its founding in 1976, and Students for Educational Justice, a youth-led group founded in 2017, have each organized against the presence of school resource officers, working in recent years with a statewide Community First Coalition on what it calls the SOS Campaign.³⁵

The Panthers, the New Haven Nine, and May Day 1970

New Haven's most nationally visible moment of youth organizing happened in 1969-70. The Black Panther Party ran community programs in New Haven, including breakfast and medical clinics, and in 1969 nine Party members, including national co-founder Bobby Seale, were arrested and tried in New Haven in connection with the killing of a suspected police informant. Another of the nine was Warren Kimbro, the same former Oak Street resident who later wrote about Route 34's construction. Many local organizers viewed the prosecution as a targeted attempt to dismantle the Panthers' community infrastructure rather than a straightforward criminal matter.³⁶ Yale President Kingman Brewster went even further: during an April 1970 faculty meeting, he said he was "appalled and ashamed" and admitted that he was "skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States." These remarks leaked to the press and drew a public call from Vice President Spiro Agnew for Brewster's resignation. A very large crowd of students and young people gathered on the New Haven Green on May 1, 1970, demanding the Panthers' release and an end to Yale's expansion into surrounding neighborhoods. Yale's response was unusual: rather than treating the rally purely as a security threat, the university's administration supported Yale students on strike and opened campus facilities to feed and shelter demonstrators. This approach was a deliberate reversal of

Harvard's, which two weeks earlier had locked its own gates and trapped protestors in the streets, turning a similar Panther-trial demonstration violent. Yale's own administration later confirmed the decision was calculated rather than improvised, made only after officials studied what had gone wrong at Harvard.³⁷ Were Yale's choices solidarity, self-protection, or co-optation? Brewster's public risk-taking suggests one answer; the administration's calculated strategy suggests another.

From Radical Protest to Institutional Organizing

As the era of large national protest movements quieted nationally, New Haven youth organizing shifted toward more sustained, tactical, coalition-based strategies. In the 1980s, young Black organizers formed the Kiddie Korner coalition in response to rising anti-gang violence. The relationships that coalition built ultimately helped mobilize the electorate that elected John Daniels, New Haven's first Black mayor, in 1989.³⁸ The Citywide Youth Coalition, founded in 1976 by a group of youth service providers responding to New Haven's post-urban-renewal economic distress, later institutionalized youth political education in New Haven over decades, training high schoolers in organizing and advocating for greater public school investment.³⁹ New Haven Rising, founded in 2011 as a citywide, dues-based organization built to hold institutions like Yale accountable on jobs and investment between election cycles rather than only during them, grew directly out of this same organizing lineage as an adult counterpart to it, part of a broader national pattern in which university expansion has displaced residents and strained public resources in college towns across the country, not just in New Haven.⁴⁰ The scale of the disparity in New Haven specifically is stark: as of 2026, roughly 56 percent of New Haven's real estate sits tax-exempt, the large majority of it Yale property assessed above \$4.5 billion, even as the university's endowment exceeds \$40 billion. Residents have organized repeatedly against this gap, from a 2020 "Respect Caravan" of 600 vehicles demanding Yale "pay its fair share" to New Haven Rising's own ongoing accountability campaigns.⁴¹ In 2021, facing sustained public pressure, Yale agreed to nearly double its voluntary annual payment to the city, a deal city and university leaders both called historic, though critics note the sum remains a small fraction of that endowment.⁴²

Groups like Ice the Beef, founded in 2011, have organized New Haven teens around gun-violence intervention through mentorship and direct programming.⁴³ Following George Floyd's murder in May 2020, New Haven saw a wave of local protests, including one march that had roughly 1,000 people occupy and shut down I-95. A week later, a larger march of about 5,000 shut down part of Route 34, residents symbolically rallying to the very road built by displacing Black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods in the 1950s and '60s. Organizers from Citywide Youth Coalition used the larger march to demand that the city reallocate resources toward schools, youth programming, and mental-health services.⁴⁴ The New Haven Climate Movement's Youth Action Team, a BIPOC-led group of high school and college students, currently organizes around local climate policy through tactics like die-in protests at City Hall, and successfully pressured the Board of Alders to declare a Climate Emergency, an outcome that invites debate over whether it constitutes meaningful reform, a largely symbolic instance of co-optation, or some combination of both.⁴⁵

The Citywide Youth Coalition and the New Haven Climate Movement both remain active today. The Citywide Youth Coalition fought successfully for two student positions on the New Haven Board of Education in 2013 and launched its ongoing "We Vote Next" campaign in 2019, pushing to lower Connecticut's voting age to 16.⁴⁶ The New Haven Climate Movement, for its part, secured a Board of Alders vote in fall 2025 on a Transportation Transformation Resolution aimed at reducing the city's reliance on cars, continuing the same strategy of youth-authored policy proposals that produced the 2019 Climate Emergency Resolution.⁴⁷ New Haven Rising remains active as well, joining roughly 2,000 union members and allies in a September 2025

march to the Yale School of Medicine as UNITE HERE Local 34 and Local 35's contract negotiations with Yale began, pressing the same argument it has made for over a decade: that an institution with a \$40 billion endowment can afford to do more for the city around it.⁴⁸

Bringing It Together for Students

Looking across seven decades of this history, few of New Haven's institutional responses sort cleanly into "Shut It Down" or "Water It Down" alone. Urban renewal ruled out any real process for resident input before organizing even began. The Hill Parents Association ran up against the city's own "citizen participation" programs, structures that invited residents to speak but gave them no real power to change what the city actually did. Hillhouse's rebellion produced neither a clear victory nor a clear defeat. Instead, it reshaped a teachers' union and gave rise to a new school that no one involved had originally set out to create. Yale's decision not to suppress May Day sat somewhere between genuine risk-taking and careful self-preservation. And the city's more recent concessions, the Climate Emergency Resolution and a modest increase in Yale's voluntary payments, have drawn real disagreement over whether they represent lasting change or a quieter form of containment.⁴⁹ That ambiguity is not a weakness in the record; it is closer to the ordinary texture of institutional response than the clean binary of shutting down or watering down a movement suggests, and New Haven's history offers seven decades of material for weighing where any given case actually falls.

Every case study above, national and local, is ultimately in service of the unit's central conviction: young people are not a threat to democracy. They are, and have always been, among its most vital defenders. New Haven's history offers an unusually rich, well-documented, and geographically walkable way to make that case concrete for 8th graders, precisely because so much of it happened in neighborhoods they can visit and along roads they may travel every week. The goal of the unit is not for students to memorize a list of organizations and dates, but to develop two durable habits of mind: the instinct to ask why a given condition exists and who has the power to change it, and the recognition that they themselves belong to an unbroken, still-unfolding tradition of people their own age doing exactly that.

Teaching Strategies

The unit relies on a small set of recurring instructional strategies rather than a different method for each lesson. Repetition of method, applied to changing content, allows students to spend their attention on the substance of each new case study rather than on relearning how a given activity works. There are six main strategies that recur throughout the unit, which I have described below, along with my reasoning for using each.

Cumulative Structure - Callback Openers and Exit Tickets: Every lesson opens with a callback activity linking that lesson's material to the previous lesson, and closes with an exit ticket that checks the lesson's specific objective. This pairing matters because this unit spans four decades and dozens of organizations; without a structure that keeps reactivating prior knowledge, students risk treating each case study as an isolated story

rather than part of a connected argument. The callback also does real work against the class's every-other-day meeting schedule: with at least two days between sessions, students are more likely to lose the thread of the previous lesson than they would be in a daily class, so a deliberate retrieval routine is important in this unit. Exit tickets, meanwhile, are designed to extend the day's discussion rather than repeat it, often asking students to predict, judge, or apply a framework. Several are written to double as the next lesson's callback (Lesson 8's exit ticket, for instance, asks students to predict where the Panthers and May Day story will unfold based on the map they built that day, which becomes Lesson 9's opening question). The result is a chain where each lesson's ending sets up the next lesson's beginning, reinforcing for students that the unit builds a single argument rather than a series of disconnected lessons.

Building Knowledge Incrementally: Rather than introducing each national movement in Part Two as a self-contained lesson, the unit builds a single class chart across Lessons 3 through 5, adding new rows as new movements are studied and a new column once institutional response becomes a focus. This does two things: it lets students hold multiple movements in view at once and notice patterns across them; and it gives later lessons a shared reference point to build on, so class time is spent on analysis instead of review. Part Three's class map works the same way: a single shared artifact that grows in complexity across the unit rather than a new visual for each lesson.

Shared Analytical Vocabulary - "Shut It Down" and "Water It Down": Lesson 5 introduces suppression and co-optation through concrete, relatable examples, reframed for an 8th-grade audience as "Shut It Down" and "Water It Down." Rather than teaching a new framework for every historical example, the unit teaches this one thoroughly and then has students apply it with increasing sophistication to the New Haven Nine trial to Yale's response to May Day, the city's Climate Emergency declaration, and more. Some of these cases resist easy classification (the teachers' union formed after the Hillhouse rebellion, for instance, fits neither category cleanly), which is what turns the vocabulary from a rote label into a real tool for evidence-based debate.

Comparative Analysis as an Historical Thinking Method: Several core activities ask students to build a comparison chart across multiple case studies rather than study each on its own; the four-way Synthesis Chart comparing urban renewal's displacement, the Hill Parents Association, the Northern Student Movement, and the Black Student Union in Lesson 8, for example. This supports the unit's central question of how young people have effectively advocated for change: comparing organizations side by side pushes students to name the specific factors that distinguish one case from another, rather than treating each case as a standalone fact to remember. These charts also become the evidence base for the discussions and exit tickets that follow, so students' conclusions are grounded in work they did themselves.

Geographic Inquiry as a Bridge Between Past and Present: Mapping work begins in Lesson 2, before any historical content is introduced, so students first use the essential-versus-desirable-resource framework to read their own city before applying it historically. Then in Lesson 8, the class begins building out a map together, first plotting historical sites tied to New Haven case studies; by Lesson 12, they layer in present-day resource data from students' own neighborhood research. The goal is to let students discover a pattern rather than be told it: that the neighborhoods shaped by mid-century decisions about urban renewal, highways, and institutional expansion are often the same ones facing resource gaps today. Keeping this as one cumulative map, instead of separate historical and present-day versions, is what makes that pattern visible through students' own work.

Culminating Civic Design as Authentic Assessment: The unit closes with a student-designed proposal for change in New Haven, rather than a traditional test, because questions like how young people identify

problems and advocate for change can't be fully assessed through recall. The project draws on three things students have built across the unit: the Shut It Down vs. Water It Down framework, the class map's evidence of disparity, and the strategic thinking modeled through case studies. Because students root their proposals in real disparities from their own mapping work, rather than a hypothetical scenario, the project asks them to act on the unit's core conviction: that young people are legitimate agents of civic change.

Classroom Activities

Part One - Setting the Stage: National Youth Movements (Lessons 1-5)

Essential Questions: What does it mean to be a “changemaker”? What conditions have pushed young people throughout American history to organize? How do institutions typically respond?

Lesson 1 - Kids Are Not the Threat

Essential Questions: What do we already believe about young people and civic power? Where did those beliefs come from?

Objectives: Students will be able to articulate the unit's central questions in their own words and generate an initial list of what they already associate with the term “youth activism.”

Hook: Project the phrase, “The Kids Are Not the Threat” with no context and ask students to free-write for 3-5 minutes on what they think it means and why someone might say it. Then share out free-writes while charting recurring ideas on the board without editorializing.

Introduce the unit's driving questions:

- What does it mean to be a young person who works to improve the place you live?
- How do young people identify the problems and inequities that exist in their communities?
- How have young people effectively advocated for change, historically and currently?

Mini-Lecture: Give a brief overview of what the unit will cover: national youth movements, New Haven's own history of youth organizing, past and present, and a geographic inquiry into New Haven's neighborhoods that accompanies a culminating civic design project.

Vocabulary: Introduce key vocabulary and have students record definitions in a running unit glossary: Activism, Institution, Advocacy, Disparity

Partner Activity: Have students interview each other for 5 minutes, answering one or both of these prompts:

- Have you or someone you know ever tried to change something in your neighborhood or school? Describe what happened?
- Can you think of anything you would like to change in your neighborhood or school? What would you want to change and how might you go about making such changes?

Exit Ticket: In two or three sentences, what do you think it means to be a “changemaker”? Name one thing

about New Haven that you would want to change if you could.

Lesson 2 - Reading a City: Essential versus Desirable Resources

Essential Questions: How can we tell whether a city is meeting its residents' needs? Who gets to decide what counts as a "need"?

Objectives: Students will be able to define and distinguish between "essential resources" and "desirable resources"; begin seeing the built environment as shaped by decisions, not by accident.

Callback: Read 3-4 anonymized responses to last class's exit tickets aloud and ask, "What do these things have in common? Are they needs for survival, or are they things that make it a nicer place to live?"

Introduce the Essential vs. Desirable framework to the class:

- Essential = infrastructure needed for baseline survival and functioning (water, electricity, sanitation, internet, healthcare, transit, emergency services, affordable housing)
- Desirable = amenities that make a neighborhood vibrant (parks, gardens, libraries, museums, quality schools, grocery stores, gathering spaces)

Sorting Activity: Project a list of 20 mixed items on the board and have students sort them into essential vs. desirable categories in pairs/groups of three. They should discuss/debate the items as they sort. Debate any contested items as a class (e.g., Is a grocery store essential or desirable? Is a good school essential or desirable? There is no single right answer for some; the debate is the point.).

Photo Analysis: Project 5 or so photos of different areas in New Haven and have students identify which resources are present and absent.

Mapping Project: Introduce the map students will build together across the entire unit. Starting in Part Two, they will plot historical sites tied to New Haven's youth organizing; later, in Part Three, they will layer in present-day essential and desirable resource data. Over the course of the unit, students will research and plot both essential and desirable resources across New Haven neighborhoods to build a map together.

Exit Ticket: Choose one essential and one desirable resource. Write one sentence for each to explain why it belongs in that category.

Lesson 3 - From Sit-Ins to the Freedom Movement

Essential Question: What did it mean for the Civil Rights Movement to be led, in large part, by young people?

Objectives: Students will be able to describe the 1950s conditions that set the stage for 1960s activism; describe the sit-in movement (including the Bennett College Belles' role in planning it), the founding of SNCC, the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham Children's Crusade, and Freedom Summer as youth-led organizing; explain why young people took the biggest risks.

Homework (assigned for completion before this lesson): Students complete an EdPuzzle video lesson with embedded comprehension questions about the social and political conditions of the 1950s (legal segregation and *Brown v. Board*; the start of the urban renewal/highway building era; Cold War-era pressure toward conformity and suppression of dissent; the postwar "baby boom" and the emergence of "teenager" as a new,

distinct cultural identity with its own music, fashion, and money to spend) that set the stage for the youth movements of the next two decades.

Callback: “You watched a video on the conditions of the 1950s. Today we watch one of these conditions, legal segregation, get challenged directly, by people only slightly older than you.” Review/discuss a couple questions as a quick check of understanding.

Mini-Lecture with Video Clips: Cover the February 1960 Greensboro sit-ins and the rapid spread of the sit-in movement, including the Bennett College Belles’ central role in planning the campaign carried out by the four A&T students; the founding of SNCC, explicitly as a youth-led organization distinct from older civil rights groups; the Freedom Rides of 1961; the May 1963 Birmingham Children’s Crusade, when over a thousand Black schoolchildren marched against segregation and were met with fire hoses and police dogs; and the Freedom Summer of 1964, with emphasis on the age of the participants and the real risks they took.

Class Chart: Build a “Movements & Tactics” chart together as a class with three columns: Movement or Group, Issue, Tactics. Model filling in the chart for the sit-in movement and SNCC, have students work in pairs or groups of three to identify what information belongs in each column in the chart for Freedom Rides, the Birmingham Children’s Crusade, and Freedom Summer. Build the class chart together from their suggestions.

Turn & Talk: Have students consider and share responses to the following prompt before writing their response down on an Exit Ticket.

Exit Ticket: Why might young people specifically have been willing to take these risks?

Lesson 4 - Expanding Fronts: Black Power, Vietnam, and Campus Revolt

Essential Question: Why did the movement diversify and radicalize as the decade went on?

Objectives: Students will be able to explain the turn toward Black Power and the Panthers’ founding; explain campus anti-war organizing and its escalation, including SDS, the Columbia occupation, and the San Francisco State strike; and describe parallel movements, including women’s liberation (New York Radical Women), Latino youth organizing (the East L.A. walkouts and the Young Lords), and gay liberation (Stonewall).

Callback: “We watched the sit-in movement begin with non-violent, integrated action. By the mid-1960s, that one movement had multiplied into many different movements. Today we find out why.”

Mini-Lecture: Cover the turn toward Black Power (1966 on) as some organizers grew frustrated with the pace of nonviolent strategy; the escalating Vietnam draft and growth of campus anti-war organizing, including the 1968 Columbia occupation and the 134-day San Francisco State strike.

Jigsaw Reading Activity: Have students work in small groups, with each group reading a short profile of one of the following movements to report back on: Black Power organizing, anti-war/draft resistance and campus takeovers, women’s liberation, Latino youth organizing (covering both the East L.A. walkouts and the Young Lords as related but distinct examples), and gay liberation.

Class Chart: Add new rows to the Movements & Tactics chart started in Lesson 3, and have students share out from their jigsaw learning to add these new movements/groups to it.

Discussion: Using the chart as evidence, think about what has changed: Does more radical action mean a

movement is failing, succeeding, or something else?

Exit Ticket: Name one new movement or tactic from today's lesson that didn't exist in 1960. Why do you think it emerged when it did?

Lesson 5 - Institutional Response: "Shut It Down" vs. "Water It Down"

Essential Questions: What's the real difference between an institution that shuts a movement down and one that waters it down? And which is harder for organizers to fight?

Objectives: Students will be able to define two institutional strategies, "shutting a movement down" (suppression) and "watering a movement down" (co-optation), and analyze how institutions used these strategies in response to 1960s-70s youth organizing.

Callback: In reference to the Movements & Tactics chart, "You've spent two lessons filling this chart with the movements and their tactics. Today we are adding another column - Responses - because for every movement up here, someone in power had to decide how to respond."

Vocabulary: Introduce the two new vocabulary terms with concrete definitions and examples and have students add them to their unit glossary:

- "Shut It Down" (suppression): Direct, forceful action to stop or shut a movement down.

Examples: An administrator responds to a student walkout by suspending the organizers and threatening the same punishment for anyone who joins future protests; a company facing a labor organizing drive fires the employees leading it, then tells the rest of the staff that unionizing puts their jobs at risk; a city facing repeated protests over a policy sends police to break up the demonstrations and arrest organizers, rather than respond to what they're asking for.

- "Water It Down" (co-optation): Giving a movement just enough to calm it down or defuse it, without giving up real power or making the change that's actually asked for.

Examples: An administration responds to a student walkout by creating a "student advisory committee" that hardly ever meets and has no actual power; a company facing a boycott runs ads about how much it "cares" about the cause without changing its practices; a city facing protests about a run-down park promises to "look into it," forms a committee, and nothing changes for years.

Case Study Stations: Pulling directly from the charted examples, students rotate through stations built around the strongest illustrative cases: the assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, and the Kent State shootings (both clear examples of suppression), the school district's slow non-response to the East L.A. walkouts (a clear example of co-optation), and Stonewall or the San Francisco State strike (cases that resist the framework, resulting in both a real concession and real suppression at once). At each station, students will discuss and decide whether the institutional response was Shut It Down, Water It Down, both, or neither, and justify their reasoning with evidence from the source.

Class Chart: Add a "Response" column to the chart and fill in that column for each movement already listed as a class, rendering a verdict on whether institutions responded by shutting down the movement, watering down the movement, or a combination of both.

Discussion: Why might an institution choose to “water it down” instead of “shut it down”? What does each strategy cost an institution? What does each cost the movement? Preview Part Two of the unit directly: “Every movement we’ve studied so far has been national. Starting next class, we will focus on New Haven, and study the organizing and activism in our own community.”

Exit Ticket: In your own words, explain the difference between “shutting down a movement” and “watering down a movement.” Which do you think would be harder for a movement to fight back against, and why?

Part Two - New Haven’s Own History of Youth Activism (Lessons 6-10)

Essential Questions: How has activism unfolded in New Haven from the 1950s to today? How have institutions there responded to it?

Lesson 6 - Urban Renewal and Fighting Back Against the “Model City”

Essential Questions: Who was New Haven’s urban renewal actually a model for? What can young people do when the existing media won’t tell their story?

Objectives: Students will be able to explain Mayor Lee’s urban renewal program and Route 34’s construction and displacement; describe the Hill Parents Association’s organizing, including the youth-led park petition; describe Fred Harris’s *Ram and Sheep* as a tool of advocacy.

Callback: Have students review the Movements & Tactics & Responses Chart, “Every movement on this chart was already organized before an institution responded to it. Today’s story is different; it’s about a decision that created a reason to organize in the first place. As we start to focus on New Haven’s own history, listen for what that decision was, and who it was made without.”

Mini-Lecture: Cover Mayor Richard C. Lee’s 1954-1969 urban renewal program, and New Haven’s “Model City” reputation, then the demolition of Oak Street and the Hill to build Route 34, displacing large numbers of poor minority residents. Move directly into the response: how Hill residents formed the Hill Parents Association to challenge City Hall’s power over their neighborhood’s future, including the youth-led 1965 park petition. Introduce Fred Harris and *Ram and Sheep*, the youth-led community newspaper that directly criticized white city leaders for the neighborhood’s destruction.

Map/Photo Study: Using the Digital Atlas slider showing the difference between aerial photos from 1934 and the present, show students the Oak Street neighborhood from before and after demolition. Discuss what’s visible in “before” that’s gone in “after.”

Small-Group Discussion: What does it mean for young people to build their own media instead of asking existing newspapers to cover their concerns? Is starting your own newspaper a way of working around suppression, controlling your own story before an institution gets the chance to shut it down or water it down?

Exit Ticket: In 2-3 sentences, explain for whom was New Haven’s “Model City” reputation actually a model, and how did the Hill Parents Association respond to being left out of that vision?

Lesson 7 - Rebellion at Hillhouse High: The Black Student Union

Essential Question: What does it mean when a school calls the police on its own students?

Objectives: Students will be able to describe the conditions that resulted in the Hillhouse High School uprisings, explain the district's decision to bring police into the school, and evaluate the formation of a teachers' union as an institutional response to student organizing.

Callback: "Last class, we met the Hill Parents Association, which was actually adults and young people organizing together against City Hall. Today's story is different: it happened inside a New Haven public school, organized entirely by students themselves."

Mini-Lecture: Cover how during the 1967-68 school year, students at Hillhouse High School organized a series of uprisings in protest of conditions inside the school: overcrowding, disrespect from staff, and the exclusion of Black history and student voice in the curriculum.

Guided Reading: Using excerpts drawn from contemporary news reports, flyers, newsletters, and other such student-created materials, and correspondence with the mayor, students will trace three things in sequence: what students were demanding, how the school and city responded (including the decision to occupy the school with police), and what changed in the following months. This should include the rebellion's role in the formation of a progressive teachers' union in New Haven. Students annotate for all three as they read.

Discussion: Discuss the district's response: was calling the police in to occupy the school a suppression (shutting it down) response or a co-optation (watering it down) response? What made administrators choose that response? What other responses could they have chosen? Discuss the formation of the teacher's union: does that response fit "Shut It Down," "Water It Down," or neither? Push students to notice that this case resists that framework; sometimes an institutional response reshapes an entire institution (in this case the relationship between teachers and the district) in ways that no one involved initially intended.

Small Group Work: Have students compare the Black Student Union's use of student-created materials and the underground press to the Hill Parents Association's *Ram and Sheep* publication or Richard Balzer and Fred Harris's *Street Time* (1972).

Exit Ticket: Today we saw two different responses to the Hillhouse rebellion: the police occupation, and the teachers' union that formed afterward. Which one do you think mattered more to the students who organized the uprising in the first place, and why?

Lesson 8 - The First Wave: Synthesis and Mapping Workshop

Essential Question: Why do so many different stories of organizing cluster in the same New Haven neighborhoods?

Objectives: Students will explain how the Northern Student Movement began in New Haven as a Northern support network for SNCC and shifted toward direct organizing in New Haven; synthesize the 1950s-1960s New Haven organizations studied so far; begin plotting related locations on a unit-long New Haven map.

Homework (assigned for completion before this lesson): Students watch a teacher-recorded EdPuzzle video tracing the Northern Student Movement's arc, from a student support arm for SNCC's Southern organizing to a direct-action organization confronting housing discrimination, unequal schools, and economic exclusion in New Haven itself, with embedded questions checking what NSM's focus was in 1961 versus 1963.

Callback: Call on students to briefly summarize one of the four organizations/movements studied in New Haven so far (urban renewal's Oak Street neighborhood displacement, the Hill Parents Association, the

Northern Student Movement, and Hillhouse's Black Student Union), including at least one student summarizing the homework video, before today's work begins.

Synthesis Chart: In small groups, students complete a comparison chart across all four case studies, organized by the same recurring questions: Who organized? What was the issue? What tactics were used? How did institutions respond?

Mapping Workshop: Give students time to work in groups to define the boundaries for one of the groups/movements to create a map overlay for the New Haven wall map. Each group will use provided historical data/addresses to plot one of the following sites: the Oak Street neighborhood renewal area; the Hill neighborhood where the Hill Parents Association was located, the confines of Yale University in 1961, and the neighborhood that drew students to Hillhouse High School in 1968 onto their New Haven map. This will be the first layer of an on-going mapping project.

Discussion: What does it mean that all four movements cluster and have overlap in the same part of the city? What does that tell us about where institutional power was being exercised, and where residents pushed back?

Exit Ticket: Next class we will study the Black Panthers in New Haven and the May Day protests. Based on the pattern you found on the map you created today, make a prediction about where you think these stories will unfold in the city, and explain your thinking.

Lesson 9 - The Black Panthers, the New Haven Nine, and May Day 1970

Essential Question: Is a criminal trial ever "just" a criminal trial? When an institution opens its doors to a protest against itself, is that solidarity, self-protection, or something else?

Objectives: Students will explain the Black Panther Party's community programs in New Haven and describe the circumstances of the New Haven Nine trials; describe the May Day 1970 rally and Yale's institutional response to it; evaluate whether the response was solidarity, self-protection, or co-optation; add May Day-related sites to the class map.

Callback: "Last class, you predicted where you thought this story would unfold based on the pattern you found on the map. Let's find out if you were right." Have 2-3 students share their predictions before revealing today's key locations.

Mini-Lecture (20 min): Cover the Black Panther Party's New Haven community programs, including breakfast and medical clinics, and the 1969 arrest of nine Party members, including national co-founder Bobby Seale and Warren Kimbro (the same former Oak Street resident from Lesson 6), in connection with the killing of a suspected police informant. Cover why many local organizers viewed the prosecution as a targeted attempt to dismantle the Panthers' community infrastructure rather than a straightforward criminal matter. Mention Yale President Kingman Brewster's April 1970 leaked statement calling himself "skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States." Close with the May Day rally itself: the May 1 gathering on the New Haven Green demanding the Panthers' release and an end to Yale's expansion, and Yale's decision to support the student strike and open its facilities to demonstrators rather than treat the rally as a security threat, a deliberate reversal of Harvard's failed approach two weeks earlier.

Discussion (12-15 min): Yale's response doesn't cleanly sort into "Shut It Down" or "Water It Down." Was this

“Water It Down,” a way of neutralizing the protest by absorbing it rather than confronting it? Or does it resist the framework entirely, the way Hillhouse’s teachers’ union did? Push students to notice that Yale’s decision was calculated (informed by watching Harvard’s approach fail) rather than either a simple concession or a real transfer of power, which is exactly what makes it hard to sort.

Mapping Addition (10-12 min): Add the New Haven Green, the courthouse, and relevant Yale campus sites to the ongoing class map. Compare this new layer to the sites plotted in Lesson 8; do these locations fall inside or outside the pattern students identified and predicted?

Exit Ticket: Does Yale’s response to May Day fit “Water It Down,” or does it resist the framework entirely? Defend your choice in 2-3 sentences using specific evidence from today’s lesson.

Lesson 10 - From Radical Protest to Institutional Organizing

Essential Question: How does the work of “changemaking” change once the era of mass protest ends?

Objectives: Students will be able to trace the shift from Kiddie Korner through the Citywide Youth Coalition, New Haven Rising, the 2020 marches, and the Climate Movement; evaluate whether recent institutional concessions (the Climate Emergency Resolution, Yale’s 2021 payment increase) represent real change or containment.

Homework (assigned for completion before this lesson): Students watch a teacher-recorded EdPuzzle video covering New Haven youth organizing from the 1980s to the present: the Kiddie Korner coalition and its role in electing John Daniels; the Citywide Youth Coalition’s 1976 founding and its “We Vote Next” campaign; New Haven Rising and the disparity between Yale’s tax-exempt property and its \$40 billion endowment; the 2020 I-95 and Route 34 marches; the New Haven Climate Movement’s Climate Emergency Resolution; and each organization’s present-day activity (CWYC’s Board of Education seats, NHCM’s 2025 Transportation Transformation Resolution, New Haven Rising’s 2025 UNITE HERE march). Embedded questions check basic comprehension of each organization’s founding and goals.

Callback: “In the last class, Yale’s response to May Day was hard to sort into ‘Shut It Down’ or ‘Water It Down.’ Today’s homework video covered six decades of New Haven organizing, from the 1980s all the way to now. As you think back on it, did any of these stories get ‘Shut It Down’? Which felt like a clean ‘Water It Down’? And which felt genuinely unresolved, the way May Day did?”

Timeline-Building Synthesis: In small groups, students build a shared timeline of the organizations and events covered in the video (Kiddie Korner, CWYC, New Haven Rising, the 2020 marches, the Climate Movement, each organization’s present-day activity), noting for each entry: what did they organize around, and what tactics did they use? Groups then compare timelines as a class, identifying the throughline: a shift from single dramatic protests toward sustained, coalition-based strategy.

Discussion: Focus on the two clearest present-day test cases: the Climate Emergency Resolution and Yale’s 2021 payment increase. For each, ask: does this represent real, lasting change, or a quieter form of containment? What evidence would change your mind either way? Push students to notice that both cases remain genuinely contested, even by the people who fought for them.

Exit Ticket: Choose one organization from today’s timeline. In your own words, explain how its strategy differs from the organizations we studied earlier in the unit (Hill Parents Association, the Northern Student

Movement, the Black Student Union, or the Panthers). What changed, and why do you think it changed?

Part Three - Geography as History and Civic Design (Lessons 11-17)

Essential Questions: How does New Haven's built environment reveal decisions about power? How can students use that understanding to advocate for change themselves?

Lesson 11 - Institutions and the Built Environment: Highways and Yale's Expansion

Essential Questions: Who benefits when a highway cuts through a neighborhood, and who pays the cost? What responsibility does an institution have to the community around it?

Objectives: Students will be able to explain how I-91, I-95, and Route 34 physically divided New Haven's neighborhoods; analyze Yale's ongoing expansion and tax-exempt footprint as a related form of institutional power over land.

Callback: "Last class you compared a present-day organization's strategy to one we studied earlier in the unit. Today we look at something different: not a strategy, but the physical shape of the city itself. Roads and land use can exercise power the same way police, courts, and city councils have throughout this unit, just more quietly."

Mini-Lecture: Review Route 34's construction (already covered in Lesson 6), then go deeper: the road's role as "the road to nowhere," its physical severance of the Hill from downtown, and Warren Kimbro's framing of it as part of the "encirclement of Yale." Note that this severance is only now being undone: the city's Downtown Crossing initiative is currently reconnecting intersections that have been cut off for more than sixty years, converting the connector back into an ordinary city street. Then turn to Yale specifically: its ongoing physical and institutional expansion as part of a national pattern of "eds and meds" institutions reshaping their host cities. In New Haven, roughly 56% of the city's real estate is tax-exempt, the large majority of it is Yale property assessed above \$4.5 billion even as Yale's endowment exceeds \$40 billion, a disparity that fueled the 2020 "Respect Caravan" of 600 vehicles demanding Yale "pay its fair share" and led to a 2021 agreement to nearly double Yale's voluntary payment to the city.

Discussion: Is Yale's relationship to New Haven closer to the urban renewal-era City Hall we studied in Lesson 6, or closer to the more recent, contested concessions we saw in Lesson 10 (the Climate Emergency Resolution)? Push students to notice that this is the same "older, longer-running story" framing the unit has used before: urban renewal and May Day are just the most dramatic chapters of a much longer relationship between Yale and the land around it.

Exit Ticket: Choose one: the construction of Route 34, or Yale's tax-exempt footprint. In 2-3 sentences, explain how that decision used land itself as a tool of institutional power.

Lesson 12 - Mapping Workday: Plotting Essential and Desirable Resources

Essential Question: What does a neighborhood's mix of resources, and its gaps, reveal about the choices that have shaped it?

Objectives: Students will be able to research and plot the distribution of essential and desirable resources across two or more New Haven neighborhoods.

Callback: “Back in Lesson 2, before we’d studied any of this history, you sorted essential and desirable resources in the abstract. Today, you’re going to find out what that framework actually reveals about real New Haven neighborhoods.”

Research Workday: In pairs or small groups, students are assigned a section of New Haven and use provided data sources (city open-data resources, neighborhood profiles, or teacher-curated packets) to identify what essential and desirable resources are present or missing. Students plot their findings onto the class’s ongoing map, using a color-coded key distinguishing essential from desirable resources.

Mid-Workday Check-In: Pairs briefly share surprising findings with a neighboring group.

Exit Ticket: Name one essential or desirable resource missing from the neighborhood you researched today. What effect might that gap have on residents’ daily lives?

Lesson 13 - What the Map Tells Us: Whole-City Synthesis

Essential Question: Does today’s map of New Haven still reflect decisions made decades ago?

Objectives: Students will be able to synthesize their small-group research into a whole-class map and identify citywide patterns of disparity.

Callback: Ask two or three pairs to briefly restate the resource gap they found last class before combining their work with the rest of the class.

Assembly Activity: Each pair adds their findings to the single, shared class map, creating a citywide view of essential and desirable resource distribution for the first time, layered directly on top of the historical sites plotted in Lessons 8 and 9.

Gallery Walk: Students circulate the completed map with a note-catcher, recording patterns: clusters of missing resources, and any overlap with the historical sites already on the map (Oak Street, the Hill, Hillhouse, the Green, etc.).

Discussion: Do the neighborhoods with the biggest resource gaps today overlap with the neighborhoods most affected by urban renewal, highway construction, or Yale’s expansion? What does that overlap suggest about the relationship between history and present-day inequity?

Exit Ticket: What is the single clearest pattern you noticed on the completed class map? Why do you think that pattern exists?

Lesson 14 - From Inquiry to Action: Choosing a Disparity and Planning Strategy

Essential Questions: What makes a problem specific enough to actually solve? Who has the power to grant the change I’m asking for, and how do I reach them?

Objectives: Students will be able to select a specific, evidence-based disparity or unmet need in New Haven to address in their civic design project; apply lessons about institutional response to anticipate obstacles their proposal might face.

Callback: “Last class you found a pattern on our finished map. Today, that pattern becomes the starting point

for your own project.”

Brainstorm: Using the class map and unit notes, students draft a shortlist of 2-3 possible disparities to address, each backed by specific evidence from the map or earlier research.

Strategy Planning: For their top choice, students complete a strategy organizer: Who has the power to grant the change needed? What might make them resistant? Which case study from this unit is most similar to my situation (Hill Parents Association, Hillhouse, May Day, the Climate Movement), and what can I learn from how it played out?

Peer Feedback: In small groups, students pitch their disparity and strategy in 90 seconds each, receiving feedback from peers: identify a strength and ask a helpful question.

Exit Ticket: State the disparity you plan to focus on, the evidence that supports it as a need, and which historical case study you’re drawing strategic lessons from.

Lesson 15 - Proposal Workshop: Drafting

Essential Question: What separates a proposal from a complaint?

Objectives: Students will be able to produce a complete first draft of their civic design proposal.

Callback: Ask 2-3 students to state the historical lesson they’re applying to their draft today, from last class’s exit ticket.

Mini-Lesson: Review required proposal components: the specific disparity and its evidence; the proposed solution; the intended audience/decision-maker; anticipated obstacles; an explicit connection to a case study from the unit.

Extended Work Time: Students draft independently or in teams, using a provided template. Teacher circulates to support students who are stuck and press students whose drafts lack specific evidence/focus/audience.

Exit Ticket: What part of your proposal is strongest so far? What part are you still unsure about?

Lesson 16 - Proposal Workshop: Feedback and Revision

Essential Question: How do I know if my proposal makes sense to someone who wasn’t in the room when I wrote it?

Objectives: Students will be able to give and receive structured peer feedback and revise their proposals.

Callback: Reference last class’s exit tickets: “Many of you told me exactly what you were unsure about. Today’s feedback protocol is built to help with precisely that.”

Structured Peer Review: In small groups, each student presents their draft while peers use a feedback form focused on: Is the disparity backed by real evidence? Is the historical connection genuine? Has the student seriously considered obstacles?

Revision Time: Students revise using peer feedback; teacher conferences prioritize students with the weakest evidence base or historical connection.

Exit Ticket: What is one specific change you made to your proposal today based on peer feedback?

Lesson 17 - Showcase: Presenting Proposals for Change

Essential Question: What do I believe now about young people and change that I didn't believe before?

Objectives: Students will be able to present their civic design proposals to an audience and reflect on the unit's central questions in light of their own project.

Callback: Project the unit's very first prompt from Lesson 1, "The Kids Are Not the Threat," and ask students to reflect for one minute on how their understanding of that phrase has changed.

Showcase Presentations: Students present proposals (2-3 minutes each plus questions) to classmates, another class, or invited guests. Audience members use a feedback form noting at least one strength and at least one question per presenter.

Closing Discussion: Return to the unit's driving questions from Lesson 1. Have students' answers changed since day one?

Final Reflection (assigned as homework or a final exit ticket): "Young people are not a threat to democracy. They are, and have always been, among its most vital defenders." Using at least two specific examples from New Haven's history and one detail from your own project, explain whether or not you agree with this statement and why.

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Appendix on Implementing District Standards

Although Connecticut's Grade 8 course, *United States History II: Colonial America-Reconstruction*, does not formally extend into the twentieth century, my district encourages an eighth-grade civil rights unit as a bridge between Reconstruction and the modern era. "Changemakers in New Haven" fulfills that expectation directly: its national section traces the throughline from the end of Reconstruction's promise through the twentieth-century movements that fought to realize it, while its New Haven section grounds that history in a place students can visit.

The unit's strongest and most direct alignment is with Connecticut's Grade 8 Inquiry Standards, which are skills-based rather than era-specific and apply fully regardless of historical period. Every lesson asks students to gather and evaluate evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources, a routine built into the unit's recurring guided readings, comparison charts, and case-study stations (8.Inq.3.a-c). Students construct and critique arguments using that evidence throughout, most visibly in the "Shut It Down" versus "Water It Down" framework, which asks them to defend a position on contested historical cases with specific textual support (8.Inq.4.a-c). The unit's structure, moving from national conditions to local case studies and citywide synthesis, models a call to analyze how a specific problem manifests at local, regional, and national levels over time (8.Inq.4.e). And the culminating civic design project directly enacts this standard, asking students to apply democratic procedures to take real civic action beyond the classroom (8.Inq.4.f).

For content specifically, this unit's subject matter aligns most precisely with United States History III, Topic 6, "Cold War and Civil Rights," which names the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party explicitly and calls for evaluating the effectiveness of individuals and institutions in addressing civil rights and justice in the postwar era, precisely the analytical work this unit's institutional-response framework performs (US.His.15.a, US.Civ.5.b). The unit's attention to highway construction and housing policy and its use of flyers, correspondence, and other student-created materials to reconstruct student movements mirrors standards for that course (US.His.16.e, US.His.11.a). Lessons on present-day organizing, the Climate Movement, contemporary media tactics, and ongoing advocacy, extend into Topic 7, "Foreign Policy, Global Conflicts, and Cultural Shifts," and Topic 8, "National Identity in the Digital Age" (US.Civ.13.b, US.Geo.12.a, US.Civ.14.b).

In practice, this means eighth graders are engaging with high school-level content through grade-appropriate inquiry methods, gathering and weighing evidence, constructing defensible arguments, and taking civic action; exactly the skills Connecticut expects at this grade level, applied to material that gives those skills real stakes. Students who complete this unit will be prepared to revisit this same period in greater depth when they reach U.S. History III.

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