

# *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*

## **Educational Museum Activities**

The hands-on activities listed here are intended for use on-site to engage visitors in a creative exploration of the exhibits primary themes. These activities can also be adapted for use in off-site programming for more specialized audiences. Either way, they are best suited for a pre-scheduled activity in a museum classroom or non-gallery location. While the activities are geared primarily for older children, they are appealing to many ages.

## Educational Museum Activities

### Activity One: In Our Lives, we are...

**Age Appropriateness:** grades 4 and up

**Time Needed:** 1 – 2 hours, with some pre-visit preparation

**Introduction:** *For All The World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights* explores the notion that at its worst, media can narrowly define us. At its best, media can motivate, inspire, and produce social change. This activity may require pre-registration so that you can adequately prepare participants. Registered participants are invited to bring in 5 -10 photos (or photocopied pictures) that they feel “help tell the story of who I am.”

#### Required Materials:

- Several copies of recent magazines that represent a wide array of backgrounds. This might include AARP publications; fashion magazines like *Seventeen*, *Redbook*, *Glamour*, *Vogue*; parenting magazines; travel and leisure magazines; sports magazines like *ESPN* and *Sports Illustrated*; fitness magazines; pictorial and news magazines like *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *Essence*, *Ebony*; and business magazines like *Black Enterprise*, *Forbes*, *Business Week*, etc.
- Optional: internet access and printer for participants to download and print online images
- Scissors and glue sticks for each participant
- Heavy card stock paper, 8 1/2 x 11”
- If participants have brought in their own photographs, you may consider making photocopies of these before beginning the project.

#### Program Directions:

1. Ask participants their thoughts about the last section of the exhibit, entitled “In Our Lives We are Whole: Snapshots from Everyday Life: “ Ask them how they felt at the end of the exhibit. Did the conclusion offer a sense of optimism?
2. Contrast this section of the exhibit with other sections that focused on either negative or extremely narrow castings of an entire group of people. What do the photographs we keep at home, often considered that one item we would run back in to a burning house to retrieve, contribute to our lives and our identities?
3. In an era of media saturation, we continue to be bombarded with images that don’t give accurate representation of who we are at our most personal level. These images create expectations for both young and old, for people of all backgrounds – that we should strive, even as a complex and diverse group of people, to model our appearance, our finances, our politics, and our livelihoods after media subjects and representations.
4. In this activity, participants will have an opportunity to examine and graphically illustrate print media’s version of who they are or should be. The cover of this collage project represents exterior expectations placed on

individuals by the media world; the inside pages display the true richness of the individual through the incorporation of personal photographs and/or statements. Symbolic images and graphic statements cutout from print media could also be added to the collage.

5. To begin, participants should locate an image from a magazine or online source that perpetuates an “ideal” standard or extremely narrow interpretation of an individual or social group similar to the participant’s own. Instruct the participant to study the image and note their initial emotional reaction. Is this image, this personification of your social group achievable? Is it accurate and representative? What kind of message is the visual image trying to communicate to the public? What does it communicate to you, the participant?
6. Next, instruct participants to fold the sides of length-wise paper inwards, creasing as the edges meet in the middle-- in essence, they are creating a “double door.” Participants will then paste the “ideal” images on the outside. They can also use words or phrases that represent expectations or negative messages. The interior of the folded paper will contain images (from the participants own collection), words and phrases that give life to the richness of the true individual.
7. Consider displaying these collages in an adjacent gallery with the participant’s permission.

## Educational Museum Activities

### Activity Two: I AM

**Age Appropriateness:** grades 4 & up

**Time Needed:** 1-2 hours

**Introduction:** From curator Maurice Berger: *“The stark “I AM A MAN” poster was published shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. It stands as a tribute to the slain leader, a poignant reminder of the continued urgency of the struggle he died for. The design paid homage to the placards carried by black sanitation workers in the strike that brought Dr. King to Memphis on the day of his murder in April 1968, an event immortalized in a now iconic photograph by Ernest C. Withers.”*

This activity explores the messages that we express about ourselves and the character traits that enable change. Participants will recreate a history-based and personal version of the “I AM A MAN” placard with an accompanying creative piece.

#### Required Materials:

- 2 pieces of heavy card stock paper for each participant
- Pencils and markers
- Stencils of block letters (optional)
- Display mechanism

#### Program Directions:

1. Take program participants back through the exhibit to review section 3: “Let the World See What I’ve Seen”: Evidence and Persuasion. Target the Memphis sanitation workers photo by Ernest Withers. Begin a discussion about this photo by asking open-ended questions like: “What do you see in this photo?” “What do you see that makes you say that?”
2. Return participants to program room and inform them that they will be completing their own placard. Recount the history behind the original poster: *In February of 1968, two African American Sanitation Workers in Memphis, Tennessee were crushed to death by the compactor mechanism on their trash truck. In a separate incident occurring the same day, 22 African American sewer workers were sent home without pay because of inclement weather while their white supervisors remained at work. About 2 weeks later, over 1,000 black sanitation workers in Memphis began to strike for better pay, safer working conditions, and union recognition. They created signs displaying the message “I Am a Man” in hopes that their humanity and dignity would be recognized. You can read actual articles printed in the Memphis Commercial Appeal during this tumultuous time here: <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/mlk/>*
3. Have students pick one of the Civil Rights activists or legends featured in the exhibit whom they admire. Examples might include: a Memphis sanitation worker, Emmett Till, Malcolm X, Jackie Robinson, Gordon Parks, etc. Then, have participants select one character trait that this individual exemplifies. Examples

might include: brave, determined, loyal, patient, passionate, courageous, innocent, strong, etc.

4. On one side of the card stock paper, instruct participants to take 5-10 minutes to write about how this individual displayed this trait during the Civil Rights movement. Then on the opposite side, in the block letter style of the “I AM A MAN” placard, have participants write: “\_\_\_(insert civil rights activist’s name)\_\_\_ WAS \_\_\_(insert character trait)\_\_\_\_\_. Example: JACKIE ROBINSON WAS COURAGEOUS.
5. For the second half of this activity, ask participants to think of a time that they witnessed injustice, discrimination, or hatred. For younger participants, **injustice** defined is: *acts or conditions that cause people to suffer hardship or loss undeservedly. A violation of a person's rights; the term can also refer to unfair treatment of another or others: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (Martin Luther King, Jr.).* Writing prompts could include: Did you ever witness bullying in school, on the bus, or in your neighborhood? Have you ever seen someone being mistreated? When you look around your school or community, what seems unfair to you? On the second piece of card stock paper, have each participant take 5-10 minutes to write about their personal experiences with injustice.
6. Next, ask participants what they can do to **stop** this kind of injustice from occurring again. Encourage them to look for examples in the behavior and actions of individuals from the civil rights movement. What trait would they need to possess or practice to combat injustice or unfairness? Once they have determined this trait, have them turn the second piece of card stock paper over. On the back side (opposite their personal stories) have each participant write (again in the block letter style of the “I AM A MAN” placard): “I WILL BE \_\_\_(insert character trait they will try to adopt to stop injustice)\_\_\_\_\_.”
7. The result should be two graphically similar placards that can be displayed next to each other for a powerful reminder of the work we are called to do as members of a community. Example: JACKIE ROBINSON WAS COURAGEOUS. I WILL BE STRONG or EMMETT TILL WAS INNOCENT. I WILL BE WATCHFUL. Participants can choose to NOT have their pieces displayed.
8. Follow-up questions: How does it feel to make a statement on paper, “for all the world to see,” instead of verbally? What is the difference?

## Educational Museum Activities

### **Quick Craft: Mobile Messages**

**Age Appropriateness:** grades 4 & up

**Time Needed:** 1 hour

**Introduction:** From curator Maurice Berger: “*Civil rights activists often turned to portable images—buttons, decals, brochures, comic books, and other artifacts—to disseminate persuasive messages meant to incite action or enthusiasm for political causes. These objects represented a variety of political causes, and include the campaign materials of black politicians as well as the broadsides of civil rights organizations. Their need to attract attention and their disposable nature inspired adventurous, spirited, and creative use of graphic design.*”

During this activity, participants will create a graphic message on a button, bumper sticker, poster, or leaflet representing a cause they are passionate about.

**Materials** (for each participant):

- Button maker. To purchase, see: <http://www.hobbylinc.com/html/nsi/nsi33109.htm?source=froogle>
- Blank bumper stickers. To purchase see: <http://www.amazon.com/Glossy-White-Sheets-Bumper-Sticker/dp/B0043FWG7S>
- Scratch paper
- 8 ½ x 11” paper (for brochure)
- 11 x 17” card stock paper (for poster)
- Markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Stamps and stamp pads, stencils (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Invite your visitors to revisit the section of the exhibit that focuses on portable messages (Section 3), specifically those objects that were made specifically for the March on Washington. Ask participants, “What stands out about these objects? Why were they used? Why were they effective?” Ask if anyone has something similar to these at home that they have saved as souvenir from participation in a social or political movement. Why did they keep the object? What does it mean to him/her?
2. Ask each participant to *think* about a cause that is important to them. Ask stimulating questions like, “When you look at the world around you, what are you passionate about changing?” or “If you could change one thing about our community, what would it be?” Prior to designing their message, direct participants to create a word web. In a word web, they begin with placing a word or two describing their chosen cause in the middle of the paper. Outlying words circulate around the center words as new ideas, concepts, and descriptors emerge. It is similar to a flow-of-consciousness exercise.
3. On an additional piece of paper or on the back side of the word web paper, ask participants to begin sketching symbols that represent their word web concept.

4. Have participants choose a design format to convey their message. They can choose from a button, bumper sticker, poster, or leaflet.
5. Follow-up questions: “Where would you display your mobile message?” “How would you promote it?” “Who would you hope sees your mobile message?” and “How has social media changed our ability to get the message out?”