

# The Courage to Act: Forming a Chain of Resistance



## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define Resistance.
- Analyze stories of resistance from the past and the lessons they hold.
- Reflect on examples when individuals or groups have felt the need to resist injustice.

## Pre-VFT Activity

Students will prepare for *The Courage to Act: Forming a Chain of Resistance Virtual Field Trip* by exploring the many ways in which people resist injustice. After they are introduced to the concept of resistance, students will explore examples of how individuals, groups, and large-scale movements from the past have organized and acted to resist unjust acts or systems. Finally, before viewing the Virtual Field Trip, a class discussion will help students consider the power that stories of resistance have in inspiring us to advocate for change.

## Target Audience

Grades 6–12

## Procedure

**Preparation:** Before class begins, be prepared to post *Handout #2 Examples of Resistance* around the room in stations, enough to have 3–4 people per station. For additional context and background knowledge, please visit the units on [Jewish Resistance](#) and [Ghettos](#) from *Echoes & Reflections*.

1. As class begins, ensure that each student has a sticky-note or notecard on their desk. Ask students to take a moment and quietly write down their own definition of what it means to “resist” something. Encourage students to also consider adding one to two examples of resistance from their knowledge or experience.
2. As students are writing, have them post their answers on the board or in a designated space around the room. If students have access to a computer, this can also be done digitally.
3. Encourage students to share out their definitions and examples to build consensus on a class definition. Compare the class definition with the following, “*the refusal to accept or comply with something.*” When complete, prepare to share [Freida Aaron’s testimony clip \(2:55\)](#) with

## Materials

- Sticky Notes/Note Cards
- Freida Aaron Testimony Clip (2:55)
- *Handout #1: 3 Cs*
- *Handout #2: Examples of Resistance*
- *The Courage to Act: Forming a Chain of Resistance Virtual Field Trip*

the class. Explain that Freida is a Holocaust survivor and that her testimony reflects her experience with resistance during her time in the Warsaw Ghetto. Before starting, ask students to consider the following questions:

- What forms or types of resistance did Freida speak about?
  - How did this resistance strengthen her, and others', sense of dignity and humanity?
4. After viewing the testimony, revisit the sticky notes and help students make connections between various types of resistance and the ways in which these forms of resistance help to uphold a person's dignity and humanity.
  5. Share with the class that today they will be building their understanding of what it means to resist injustice and oppression by viewing *The Courage to Act: Forming a Chain of Resistance Virtual Field Trip*. To help prepare, they will be exploring the driving question for the lesson "In what ways does resistance uphold a person's humanity?"
  6. To start, distribute the 3 Cs handout to each student and review the directions and answer any questions students may have. Around the room, create multiple stations that have the *Handout #2 Examples of Resistance* available for students to read and discuss.
  7. Instruct students that they will be working together to better understand past examples of resistance and analyze how these examples can help us better understand the driving question. Encourage students to work as a team to read through the short summaries of the two events and discuss the 3 C questions to help each other dig deeper into the topic and the connection to resistance. **Note:** *The three examples include information on female couriers during the Holocaust, the 1968 Summer Olympics, and the advocacy of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Links for more information are included at the bottom.*
  8. When students are finished, allow time for a class discussion on what they read and learned. Also, encourage students to bring questions to the group about the events or resistance in general. Some discussion questions for the class might include:

- In what ways did the people and groups you read about resist? What were they resisting?
  - Did you find anything surprising about who was resisting or the methods of resistance they used?
  - What events, actions, or conditions motivated them to resist? What was the result of their resistance? What impact did it have on the issue or themselves?
  - Why do you think young people are often at the forefront of resistance efforts?
  - Have you ever felt compelled to resist something you felt was wrong?
9. As the discussion comes to an end, ask students to compose a few notes to help answer the driving question *“In what ways does resistance uphold a person’s humanity?”* Remind students that they can use examples from their own background knowledge and what they learned today, but they will also be adding to their response after the Virtual Field Trip.
10. Finally, instruct students that they are about to view the Virtual Field Trip. As they watch, instruct students to take notes about what they see because they will be using that information to inform the next activity. Helpful points to consider include:
- How did this person take action to resist? Were they alone, in a group, or part of a larger movement?
  - What methods did they use? Was their resistance physical, symbolic, artistic, etc.?

## Additional Research:

Female Couriers During the Holocaust

- <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/couriers.html>

1968 Summer Olympics

- [These Images From 1968 Capture an America in Violent Flux | At the Smithsonian | Smithsonian Magazine](#)

The Fight for the Americans for Disabilities Act:

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Consider the perspectives of others to build empathy and understanding.
- Reflect on the ways in which resistance upholds a person's humanity.
- Research examples of resistance movements today and the impact they are making.

## Materials

- Handout #3: Viewpoints
- Handout #4: Resistance Today
- Internet Access

- [Disability History: The Disability Rights Movement \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

## Post-VFT Activity

After viewing *The Courage to Act: Forming a Chain of Resistance Virtual Field Trip*, students will continue to build on their understanding of how resistance upholds a person's humanity by using a perspective-taking exercise to better understand issues and events impacting others. As a culminating activity, students will research examples of resistance movements taking place today and share out with the class.

## Procedure

1. After the video is complete, provide students with a few minutes to reflect on their notes from the video. Ask students to consider the different types and forms of resistance that people have led in the past and today.
2. Next, bring students attention back to the driving question "*In what ways does resistance uphold a person's humanity?*" Explain that another way to help answer the question is to consider issues or injustices from the perspective of someone else. By empathizing with someone else, you can begin to better understand how the issue or injustice impacts their life.
3. *Pass out Handout #3: Viewpoints* to each student. Explain that each student will select a story from the Virtual Field Trip or from the previous activity to better understand the issue using the viewpoints strategy.
4. Review the activity steps with the class to ensure each student understands the questions. When complete, create space in the class for students to move around to share and discuss.
5. Instruct students that they will have fifteen minutes to move around the room and chat with a different partner by sharing their perspective, questions, and thoughts about the driving question. At five-minute intervals, the alarm will sound, and you can prompt them to move to another partner. Encourage students to actively listen to one another and ask clarifying questions to deepen the conversation.

6. When the meetings are complete, give students a few minutes to compose a final response to the driving question using the notes they have made during the activities and Virtual Field Trip. You can also encourage students to share their responses as a class.
7. Finally, students can extend their learning by further connecting themes of resistance to events taking place today.
8. As a class, invite students to take a few moments to consider events, issues, policies, or systems that individuals are resisting today. Encourage students to share out examples of things they are thinking. These might include environmental justice topics, human rights abuses, and oppressive or unjust policies in both state and federal government.
9. Distribute copies of *Handout #4: Resistance Today* to each student. Provide students a few moments to read the directions and answer any questions that arise.
10. Using the list created as inspiration, explain that that each student is going to be researching how individuals or groups are resisting, and will document how and why the movement is taking place.
11. When complete, students can share out their research with other members of the class or you can extend the lesson by having students create print or digital resources that inform others of the issues and how they can help.

## National Standards and Frameworks

### Educating For American Democracy Roadmap: Institutional and Social Transformation

- Explore the extent to which the U.S. has made progress in expanding rights and legal statuses for various groups over time, including changes to the Constitution and other charters.
- Examine the historic and current relationships between formal politics and social movements, including the relationships between political, economic, and civil rights.

### The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards:

- D2.Civ.10.6-8: Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society. D.4.7.6-8: Assess their individual and collective capabilities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.
- D2.Civ.14.6-8: Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies and promoting the common good.
- D2.Civ.10.9-12: Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interest and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
- D2.Civ.14.9-12: Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

### Common Core English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

## The 3 Cs



## STUDENT HANDOUT

**Directions:** Using the articles assigned, write your responses to the 3 C questions in the first column.

	1968 Summer Olympics	Capital Crawl	Female Couriers During the Holocaust
<b>Connections</b> What connections can you draw between the event and your own lived experiences or prior learning?			
<b>Concept</b> What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the text?			
<b>Change</b> How might the reading change your attitude, thinking, or actions?			

How are the three events similar?

How do the three examples connect resistance to human dignity?

# Examples of Resistance

## Example #1: The Capitol Crawl



The “Capitol Crawl” protest for disability rights on March 12, 1990, might have been the single most important catalyst for the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 25 years ago. The law aimed to end segregation of physically and mentally disabled persons and promised them equal opportunity to participate in society, live independently and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

More than 1,000 protesters came to Washington that day to urge Congress to approve the measure, which had been stalled for several months. Calling for immediate action, they chanted “What do we want?” “ADA!” “When do we want it?” “NOW!”

King Jordan, the first deaf president of Gallaudet University, said, “We’re not asking for any favors. ... We’re simply asking the same rights and equality any other American has.”

Then, to symbolize the barriers confronting disabled people, more than 60 activists abandoned their crutches, wheelchairs, powerchairs and other mobility-assistance devices and began crawling up the 83 stone steps that lead to the Capitol. News media recorded Jennifer Keelan, an 8-year-old with cerebral palsy, declaring “I’ll take all night if I have to” as she pulled herself up on hands and arms. Close behind her was Michael Winter, who had been born with a genetic disorder that made his bones brittle and required him to use a wheelchair.

Winter began that day reflecting on how his disability had made him subject to discrimination, like “being forced to go to a ‘special’ segregated school instead of integrated ones, not being allowed on a Continental Trailways bus because of my disability and being told in a restaurant that ‘We don’t serve disabled people,’” he later said.

“I felt that it was necessary to show the country what kinds of things people with disabilities have to face on a day-to-day basis,” Winter said. “We had to be willing to fight for what we believed in.” The added attention and political pressure caused by the Capitol Crawl worked. Within four months, Congress passed the ADA. Then-President George H.W. Bush signed it into law July 26, 1990.

The act outlawed discrimination based on physical or mental disability in employment and ensured access to buildings and public and private transportation. “Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down,” Bush said at the signing ceremony.

**Source:** Crawling up steps to demand their rights | ShareAmerica



*Figure 1: Jennifer Keelan, an 8-year-old with cerebral palsy makes her way up the Capitol steps in protest.*



# Examples of Resistance

## Example #2: The 1968 Summer Olympics



Tommie Smith and John Carlos were both track and field stars at San Jose State in the 1960s as protests during the Civil Rights Movement were gaining the nation's attention.

Already active in raising awareness towards the injustices and human rights abuses facing African Americans in the United States and around the world, both Smith and Carlos had planned their symbolic protest if they were on the podium at the 1968 Summer Olympics.

In Mexico City, Smith finished first in the 200-meter dash, which became a new world record, and Carlos finished third. While on the podium to receive their medals, they decided to each wear one black glove and, while the American National Anthem played, they each raised a gloved fist over their head in the black power salute. Additionally, they wore no shoes, just black socks, to symbolize the poverty in black America.

After the protest was over, the International Olympic Committee kicked them out of the Olympic Village and when they returned home, many Americans were upset with them as well; their families even received death threats. Both Smith and Carlos continued in athletics.

Smith later played football with the Cincinnati Bengals before becoming an assistant professor at Oberlin and a U.S. National Team coach. Carlos played football for the Philadelphia Eagles before working as a community ambassador for the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics.

They are still remembered though for one of the most overt political statements in the 100-year-plus history of the modern Olympic Games.

**Adapted from:** Tommie Smith and John Carlos | Arthur Ashe Legacy (ucla.edu)

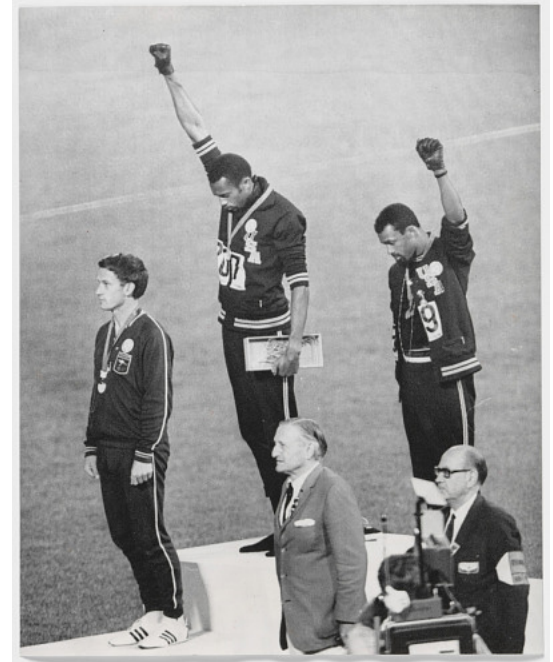


Figure 2: John Carlos and Tommie Smith with their fists raised in the black power salute.

## Examples of Resistance

### Example #3: Female Couriers During the Holocaust



The story of the female couriers of Nazi-occupied Europe is a story of resistance that has largely remained in the shadows, or perhaps been overshadowed by the stories of armed resistance in the ghettos of Europe.

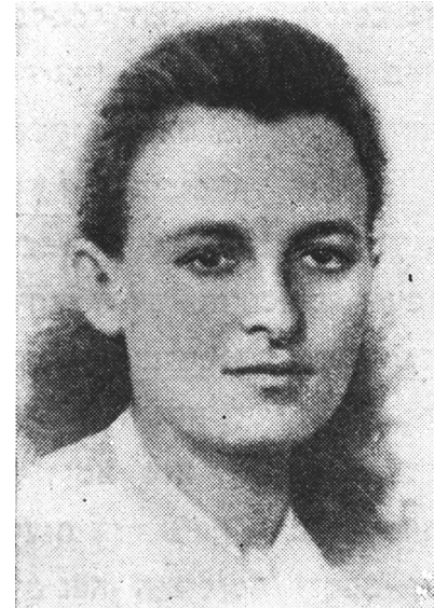
Yet it is a story of incredible bravery exhibited by a group of Jewish girls – some as young as fifteen years old – and women in their late teens and early twenties. These girls braved danger and death in order to serve as the lifeline between Jewish communities throughout war-torn Europe.

Disguised as non-Jews, they transported documents, papers, money and ultimately also ammunition and weapons across borders and into ghettos. The word “courier” does not do these women justice. They were much more than messengers. True, they carried mail and information back and forth from place to place. True, also, they smuggled forged identity cards, documents, underground newspapers and money into the sealed-off ghettos of Nazi Europe.

However, they were also the first to smuggle guns, grenades, ammunition and other weapons into many of the ghettos. And in addition to the strictly “messenger” part of their job, these girls who risked their lives to move from ghetto to ghetto also served a very human purpose – they inspired and brought hope, along with information, to Jews who would otherwise have been cut off from the entire world, as if to reassure them that they had not been forgotten.

In the dark days of Europe during the Holocaust, they were lifelines that connected Jewish communities and isolated ghettos to each other and to the outside world.

**Source:** <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/couriers.html>



*Figure 3: Image of Frumka Plotnicka, one of the pioneer underground leaders in Poland*



## Step One: Perspectives

- Brainstorm a list of different perspectives that you have read about or saw in the Virtual Field Trip
- As you review the examples of resistance from the VFT, think about how each of the stories of resistance is unique. As you reflect, consider how time, place, background, and circumstances made an impact on how and why the person or group chose to resist.
- Choose one of the perspectives to explore using the steps below

## Step Two: Creating Connections

- I am thinking about the perspective of \_\_\_\_\_
- The issue or injustice they are resisting is \_\_\_\_\_
- Describe the topic from your person's viewpoint (*be sure to consider how this issue impacts their life, rights, and human dignity*)
- A question I have from this viewpoint is \_\_\_\_\_
- Consider how this perspective helps you understand the question "*In what ways does resistance uphold a person's humanity?*"

# Resistance Today



## STUDENT HANDOUT 4

**Directions:** Using the list of issues created by the class, select one and consider how the issue is being addressed already.

### Causes that are interesting to you:

- What issue are you interested in? Does it impact you or your community? If not, why is the issue important to you?
  
- What is some of the current work being done to address that issue?
  
- What organizers or changemakers have you found that are already making an impact on the issue that you are interested in?

Ways the resistance is happening:

- What specific work is being done to advocate for their cause?
  
- What evidence is there for how they are organizing others or helping to educate others about their cause?
  
- What challenges do they face or anticipate facing?
  
- What does success look like for the person or group?

**Reflection:** What does resistance mean to you? What ways can you advocate for yourself and others when faced with unjust actions or policies?