



YANKEE POST



Summer 2025 Edition



Presidents Message: Building What Endures

When I stood before you at the Old State House this spring, I spoke about how we've been quietly building the infrastructure and leadership needed to sustain our work for the long haul. That might have sounded surprising coming from me, someone not often described as "quiet."

But that quiet work, the kind that happens in committee meetings, curriculum workshops, and hallway conversations is what allows us to lead boldly when it matters most.

The pause in federal funding for social studies was a setback, but not a stop sign. It reminded us that our strength has never come from any single grant or initiative. It comes from the people who show up, year after year, to do the work.

That's why we're investing in programs like the Emerging Educator Fellowship, launching the Connecticut C3 Hub, and forming a 5-Year Task Force on Elementary Social Studies. These initiatives are about more than just new projects; they're about living out our mission to advocate for and strengthen social studies education and moving closer to our vision: a Connecticut where all students are educated and inspired for lifelong inquiry and informed civic action.

We're also excited to share that we'll be rolling out a refreshed CCSS logo and updating our website before the start of the next academic year. These changes reflect not only our growth as an organization but our commitment to staying relevant, accessible, and future-facing. Be on the lookout for a new look that is coming soon.

Additionally, we hope to see that momentum in full force at our Annual Conference, which will be held on October 17, 2025, at Central Connecticut State University. This full-day event is a chance for educators, administrators, and community partners to come together for hands-on workshops, professional networking, and fresh ideas that can transform practice. If you're looking to recharge your thinking and connect with colleagues who care about this work this is the place to be.

As I conclude my term as President at the end of June, I want to say thank you. Leading CCSS over the past five years has been the honor of a lifetime. Together, we've weathered change, confronted challenges, and built something that lasts.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished and even more proud of where we're headed next.

With gratitude,

Tony Roy

President, Connecticut Council for the Social Studies



FROM THE EDITORS' DESKS



Stephen Armstrong

LéAnn Murphy Cassidy

The State of Politics in the United States Today

The current state of politics in the United States is marked by deep polarization, declining trust in public institutions, and rising tensions between citizens and the state. As the country contends with the aftershocks of the 2024 presidential election, intensifying global challenges, and internal unrest, political discourse has grown more confrontational, and concerns over democracy and civil liberties are increasingly urgent.

One of the most defining characteristics of U.S. politics today is the deep and persistent polarization between the two major political parties: Democrats and Republicans. Disagreements that were once primarily policy-based have evolved into broader cultural and existential conflicts about identity, truth, and the future of the nation. Partisan media, algorithmic content delivery, and disinformation campaigns have deepened the chasm, fostering mistrust, anger, and even violence. Dialogue across political lines has become rare, while mistrust of opponents has grown into suspicion of their legitimacy and motives.

Public confidence in traditional institutions: Congress, the courts, law enforcement, and the media, has fallen dramatically. Many Americans now view the federal government not as a neutral actor, but as a political weapon wielded by opposing forces. From voting rights battles to controversial Supreme Court rulings and perceived partisanship in federal agencies, trust has eroded even in the foundational processes of democracy. Efforts to challenge or overturn electoral outcomes have further weakened confidence in the rule of law.

In 2025, the U.S. has seen a concerning rise in the deployment of federal power, especially through militarized law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), against its own citizens and residents. Following intensified protest movements over civil rights, economic justice, and immigration policy, the federal government has taken increasingly aggressive actions to suppress unrest.

In several major cities, National Guard troops and militarized police units have been used not just to maintain order during demonstrations, but to forcibly disperse protestors, block organizing efforts, and detain individuals without clear charges. In some instances, citizens were arrested for social media posts interpreted as incitement or disloyalty. Videos of clashes between armored law enforcement units and unarmed protestors have sparked national outrage and renewed calls for restraint and oversight.

Additionally, ICE has expanded its authority and reach under new directives. In 2025, ICE actions have increasingly targeted not only undocumented immigrants but also naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, and even U.S. born citizens in mixed-status households. Raids have occurred in sanctuary cities, at schools, workplaces, and at immigration hearings in courthouses with limited transparency or public accountability. Civil rights groups have documented cases of U.S. citizens being mistakenly detained or intimidated during ICE operations, raising concerns about racial profiling and constitutional violations.

These developments reflect a growing willingness by federal and state authorities to use forceful and often unaccountable tools against segments of the population deemed "threats," not just for criminal behavior, but for political dissent or association. For many, these tactics have signaled a dangerous erosion of democratic norms and civil liberties.

Other major issues continue to dominate U.S. politics:

- **Democracy and Electoral Integrity:** The debate over voting access, gerrymandering, and state control of election outcomes continues. New laws in several states have made it harder to vote, particularly for marginalized communities, leading to accusations of voter suppression.
- **Reproductive Rights:** Post-*Roe*, a deeply divided landscape persists, with some states banning abortion entirely and others expanding access. Federal attempts to legislate either side have so far failed, deepening regional inequality in reproductive healthcare.
- **Gun Violence and Safety:** Frequent mass shootings have kept the gun control debate alive, but federal legislation remains stalled. States continue to take diverging approaches, further fracturing national consensus.
- **Climate Policy:** Climate-related disasters have made the issue more urgent, yet partisan gridlock and industry lobbying hinder sweeping federal action. Youth-led climate activism remains a strong counterforce.
- **Economic Inequality:** Rising costs of living, housing crises, and student debt have fueled social frustration, especially among younger Americans, as wealth continues to concentrate at the top.

Millennials and Gen Z are becoming the dominant political voice, especially on social justice, equity, and environmental issues. Their diverse backgrounds and values differ sharply from previous generations in positions of power, setting the stage for generational clashes in values and priorities. Youth-led organizing has become a powerful force, challenging traditional political structures and demanding systemic change. At the same time, older generations maintain significant influence through higher voter turnout and political leadership roles.

Disinformation, misinformation, and AI-generated content are complicating efforts to maintain an informed electorate. While technology enables more people to engage with politics, it also amplifies extremist voices and conspiracy theories. The growing use of deepfakes, targeted ads, and AI-written propaganda raises concerns about the future of truth and transparency in political discourse.

Despite the challenges, there are signs of civic resilience. Voter turnout remains relatively high during major elections. Grassroots organizing continues to thrive, especially among young people and marginalized communities. Efforts to reform voting systems, promote civic education, and strengthen democratic institutions are underway in many states.

The United States is in a politically fraught moment, wrestling with foundational questions about governance, justice, and national identity. The growing use of military and federal force against its own people reflects not only political desperation but also a fundamental test of the country's democratic resilience. Whether the nation can reclaim a sense of shared purpose, rebuild trust in institutions, and protect the rights of all its residents will shape its political and moral future for generations to come.

Message by the Former Connecticut Social Studies Department Consultant



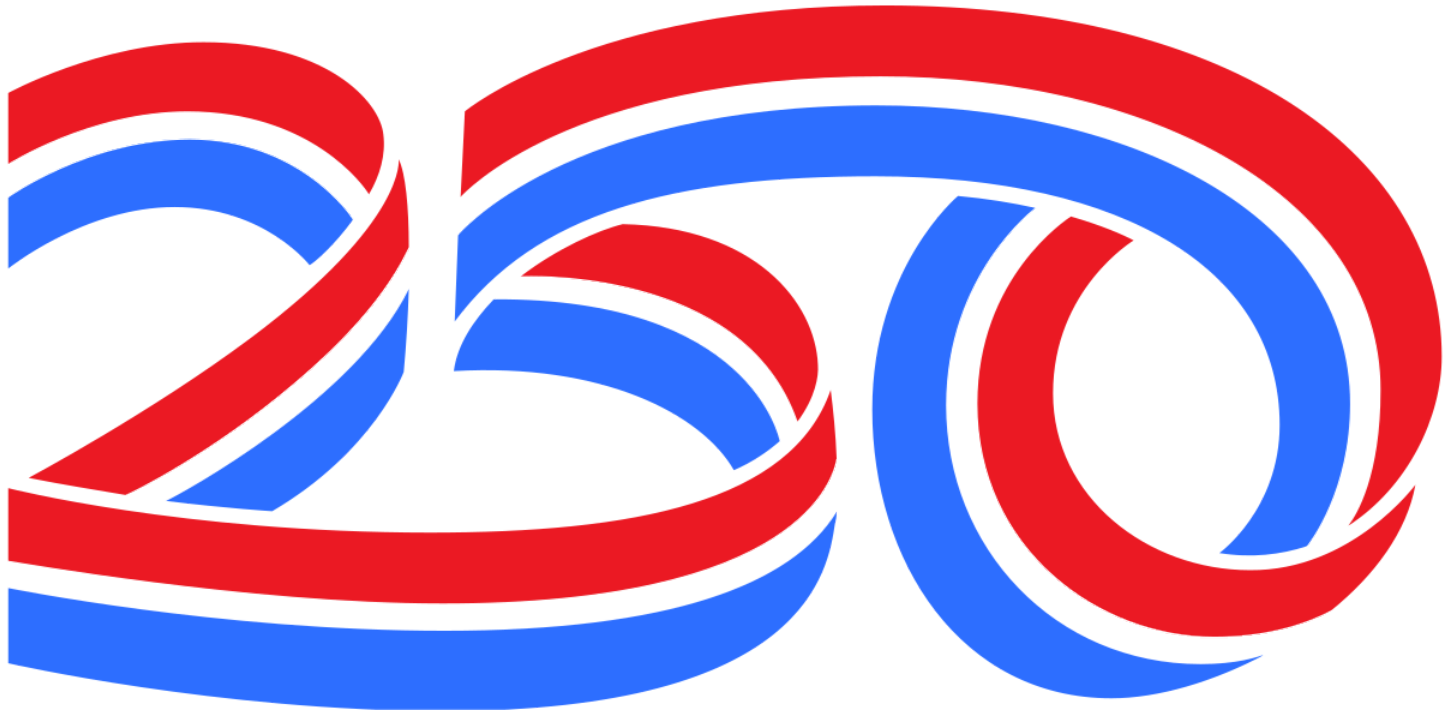
Stephen Armstrong

I have been teaching American history and politics for a while, and I have never found teaching contemporary history and government so difficult. How do we teach contemporary events and trends without appearing to be political? Observers note that the traditional system of checks and balances has been severely altered. Is it “fair game” to discuss this in a classroom? Is it possible to have a measured discussion on presidential policies without getting politics involved? These are all questions that I have been asked in the last few months. Quite honestly, the way that some teachers approach these topics is not to teach them at all. Fear of administrative and community disapproval can be a very strong thing.

I can assure you that if you are asking some of these questions you are NOT alone. I think that we all should agree on this: the major purpose of teaching civics in public school is an understanding and appreciation of the system of democracy. On this we should not waver.

If these are topics that you are interested in, a regular podcast/webinar will start in August that will help you wade through these difficult problems. The focus of this podcast/webinar series will be teaching social studies/history at all levels and ways to navigate connections between social studies and politics. This series will be co-hosted by Allsion Norrie, a teacher at Andrew Warde High School in Fairfield and the president of the Association for the Study of Connecticut History and Stephen Armstrong, former social studies consultant at the State Department of Education and past president of National Council for the Social Studies. If you are interested in getting involved in this podcast series, including appearing as a guest or as a co-host, please contact me at stevearmstrong512@gmail.com.

AMERICA



Greetings! As you all know July 4, 2026 will be the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States. There is an America250 Commission in Connecticut that is planning statewide events; many communities in Connecticut have local commissions that are planning events for their cities and towns. The statewide America250 Commission has an education subcommittee; I have the honor of serving as the chairperson of that group.

If you go to the Connecticut America250 website (<https://ct250.org/>) you will find many resources that will assist you in the teaching of this important topic. We have determined that four major themes can guide schools and towns as they approach July 4, 2026:

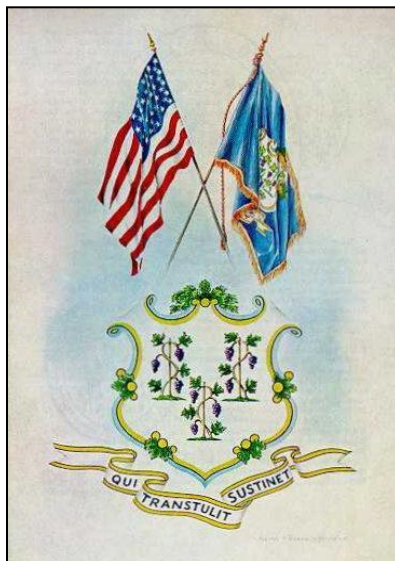
- Tell Inclusive Stories
- The Power of Place
- Doing History
- For the Common Good

The statewide commission has also spent much time on how to approach this topic: should this be a “celebration” or a “commemoration” of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Revolutionary War. The answer is both! We should celebrate the founding of our nation and the ideas in our founding documents. At the same time, students and teachers should analyze how the

concepts emerging from our founding documents have developed over time and how, in fact, during certain periods of our history these ideas have been challenged.

What can districts, schools, teachers and teachers do regarding the study of July 4, 2026:

- Study the events and the impact of these events in classrooms. What was the role of Connecticut and your own community in this revolutionary era? In all probability, your community was involved, in some way, in the American Revolution. We are developing a way that research that classes and students do can be published so that Connecticut residents can see the work that students have done.
- Reach out and have students work with local historical societies and local America250 commissions. Many of these organizations would love to collaborate with local students; many would welcome the input of students in planning community events.
- For teachers: we are planning a number of podcasts and webinars that are related to America250: these will be publicized in various ways. We will also be producing curriculum materials that will be distributed to all districts.
- For teachers and students: note that the new Ken Burns series on the Revolutionary War will be televised starting in mid-November. Get engaged in this series!
We are greatly looking forward to having students and teachers involved in these important topics. If you want more information, contact me at Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov





Capitol Chatter

This is a listing of active bills, acts, and proclamations of significant social studies importance from Connecticut and the U.S. Capitol.

As of June 2025, several active bills and legislative initiatives in Connecticut and at the federal level hold significant implications for social studies education and related civic themes. Here's an overview:

Connecticut Legislative Highlights

[SB 38 – Task Force on Social Studies Curriculum](#)

Introduced by Sen. Robert Sampson (R), this bill proposes establishing a task force to review Connecticut's social studies curriculum standards. It has been referred to the Joint Committee on Education.

[SB 585 – Curriculum Transparency and Political Neutrality](#)

This bill aims to grant parents access to public school curricula and prohibits the teaching of biased political ideologies in schools. It is currently under consideration by the Joint Committee on Education.

[HB 5896 – Local Control Over Curriculum](#)

HB 5896 seeks to authorize local boards of education to develop and modify their own standards and curricula, potentially increasing local autonomy over educational content.

[Special Education Funding Reforms](#)

Connecticut is addressing rising special education costs through proposed legislation that would regulate private provider rates and establish an in-house funding model. While aiming for equity and sustainability, these proposals have faced criticism regarding potential service limitations.

[Implementation of AAPI Curriculum](#)

Starting in 2025, Connecticut mandates the teaching of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) history in public schools. This initiative, supported by state funding, positions Connecticut as a leader in inclusive education.

Federal Legislative Developments

[H.R. 5349- Crucial Communism Teaching Act](#)

Passed by the House in December 2024, this act mandates the development of a high school curriculum to educate students on the history and dangers of communism. Critics argue it may oversimplify complex historical narratives.

[H.R. 369- States' Education Reclamation Act of 2025](#)

Introduced in January 2025, this bill proposes shifting educational control from the federal government to states, potentially impacting national education standards and funding.

[S. 278- Kids Off Social Media Act](#)

This bipartisan bill aims to prohibit social media access for children under 13 and restrict algorithmic recommendations for users under 17, addressing concerns about youth exposure to online content.

[H.R. 10208- DIPLOMA Act](#)

Introduced in November 2024, the DIPLOMA Act focuses on enhancing student achievement and graduation rates through comprehensive partnerships addressing students' holistic needs.

[H.R. 266- Educational Opportunity and Success Act of 2025](#)

This bill seeks to modify Federal TRIO programs, which support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in pursuing higher education.

These legislative efforts reflect ongoing debates and priorities in education policy, particularly concerning curriculum content, educational equity, and the role of government at various levels.



Museum Moments: What's New in History Halls?

June-August Focus: The Amistad Center for Art & Culture



-"The Amistad Trial" by Hale Woodruff from a mural at Talladega College called The Amistad Mutiny, 1939.

The Amistad Center for Art & Culture was established to celebrate and preserve the rich heritage and cultural contributions of people of African descent. Housed at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the center was inspired by the historical Amistad Ship, whose African captives famously revolted for their freedom. The founding of the Amistad Center was driven by a commitment to education, cultural understanding, and social justice. The foundation supports exhibitions, programs, and collections that highlight African American art, history, and culture.

Key Offerings at the Amistad Center

- ❖ **Exhibitions-** The center hosts innovative exhibitions that highlight artifacts, art objects, and ephemera from its collection. These exhibitions often feature loans from African American collectors and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) collections, celebrating their rich cultural heritage. Current exhibitions include:

Freedomways: From Jubilee to Juneteenth

This exhibition examines contemporary art and archival material to explore the trajectory of Black freedom celebrations, from Jubilee commemorations honoring Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln to Juneteenth, a federal holiday marking the complete abolishment of slavery.

- ❖ **Educational Programs-** The Amistad Center offers a range of educational programs aimed at engaging and inspiring diverse audiences:

School Tours and Virtual Experiences

Tailored tours and virtual experiences are available for students, providing an interactive learning environment that aligns with educational curricula.

Workshops and Lectures

Engaging workshops and lectures are organized to deepen understanding of African American

art, history, and culture, fostering dialogue and learning.

- ❖ **Community Events**-The center hosts a variety of community events that celebrate African American culture and heritage:

Juneteenth Gala

An annual event commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, featuring performances, speeches, and community gatherings.

First Thursdays and Second Saturdays

Monthly events that include live music, hands-on art projects, tours, and performances, providing opportunities for families and individuals to engage with art and culture.

For more information on current exhibitions, upcoming events, and educational programs, please visit the [Amistad Center's official website](#).



Connecticut History Day 2025

“Connecticut History Day is an affiliate program of National History Day (NHD). CHD annually engages thousands of middle- and high-school students in historical research, interpretation, and creative expression through project based learning. The program seeks to bring students, teachers, museums, and scholars together to support young people as they engage in history. Led by the Connecticut Democracy Center, CHD is presented with major funding and partnership support from CT Humanities.”

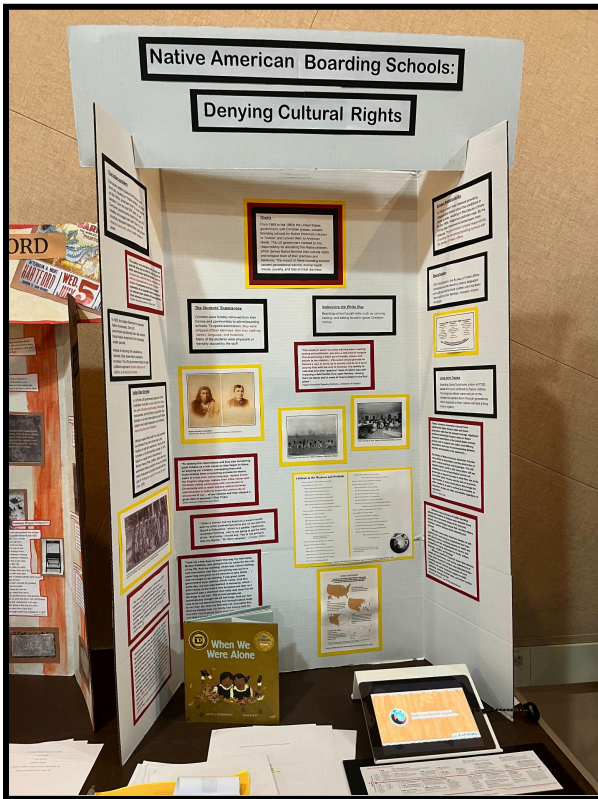
CHD engages thousands of middle and high school students statewide in historical research, interpretation, and presentation, supported by CT Humanities and the Connecticut Democracy Center.

After numerous regional competitions around the state, top students came together at Central Connecticut State University to compete in the state competition. Held on May 3, 2025 it was a wonderful day of engaging with and presentation of historical research done by students in grades 6-12. Nearly 400 students from around 69 schools convened to compete, present their projects, and receive expert feedback. The event was not only academic but festive, with food trucks, music, and community engagement on the CCSU campus.

Educators from 34 schools participated in workshops throughout 2024–2025 at institutions like the New Haven Museum and Yale’s Beinecke Library, preparing students to address historical themes thoughtfully. Connecticut History Day is valued for fostering critical thinking, public speaking, and research skills. However, its future faces uncertainty: recent federal budget cuts to National

Endowment for the Humanities funding redirected toward the National Garden of American Heroes threaten financial support.

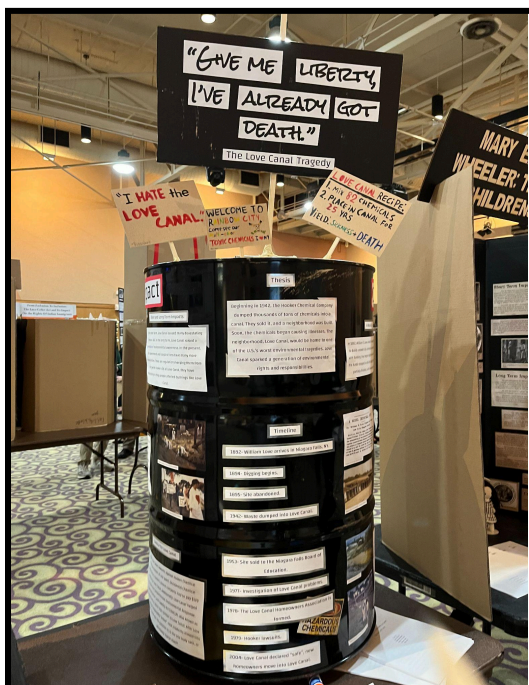
Connecticut History Day 2025 exemplified how young people can engage deeply with history, linking scholarly inquiry to civic life. The contest underscores the urgent need for continuing investment, both public and private, to sustain this formative program. In doing so, it ensures that the next generation is equipped to understand their rights and responsibilities, not just in knowledge, but in practice.



Current Events Response by NCSS: On National History Day

“National Council for the Social Studies is deeply disappointed in the recent decision to eliminate funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for the National History Day (NHD) program. This decision is not only shortsighted, but it also undermines a vital educational initiative that, for over 50 years, has enriched the lives of millions of students across the United States.

National History Day is far more than just a competition. It is an immersive educational experience that empowers students to become historians themselves. Through in-depth research, analysis, and creative presentation of historical topics, students develop crucial skills in research methodology, source evaluation, argumentation, and communication. These are not just historical skills; they are essential life skills that prepare students for success in college, careers, and active citizenship.



Canceling this funding sends a damaging message about the value placed on humanities education and the importance of historical understanding in our society. At a time when informed civic engagement is more critical than ever, diminishing support for programs that cultivate historical literacy and critical thinking is a step in the wrong direction.

NCSS urges policymakers to recognize the profound educational value of National History Day and the critical role the NEH plays in its success. We stand in solidarity with the National History Day organization, the countless teachers and students who benefit from this program, and all those who recognize the enduring importance of historical study. NCSS will continue to advocate for the vital role of social studies education and the programs that empower students to become thoughtful and engaged members of our society.”

[NCSS](#)



Scholarships for Civic Engagement by Young People

VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Youth Scholarship Programs

The VFW is dedicated to promoting patriotism and investing in our future generation. If you are a democracy-loving high school student interested in a \$35,000 college scholarship or a patriotic middle school student interested in winning \$5,000, these scholarships may be for you.

Voice of Democracy

Established in 1947, the **Voice of Democracy**® audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves in regards to a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. Each year, more than 26,400 ninth through 12th grade students from across the country enter to win their share of more than \$1.4 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the program.

The national first place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school. A complete list of other national scholarships range from \$1,000-\$21,000, and the first place winner from each VFW Department (state) wins at least a scholarship of \$1,000. Students interested in participating must submit their audio essay prepared on this year's theme, with a [completed 2025-2026 entry form](#), to their local participating VFW Post. Read the Voice of Democracy rules [here](#). Find your sponsoring [local VFW Post](#) as essays must be turned in by **midnight, Oct. 31**.

The 2025-26 theme is: "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

Patriot's Pen

Each year, more than 60,600 students in sixth through eighth grades enter the VFW's **Patriot's Pen**® annual youth essay contest for a chance to win their share of nearly \$1 million in state and national awards. Each first place state winner receives a minimum of \$500 at the national level, and the national first place winner wins \$5,000!

The essay contest encourages young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society, by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay, expressing their views based on a patriotic theme chosen by the VFW Commander-in-Chief. Students interested in participating must submit their essay prepared on this year's theme, with a [completed 2025-2026 entry form](#), to their local participating VFW Post. Read the Patriot's Pen rules [here](#). Find your sponsoring [local VFW Post](#) as applications must be turned in by **midnight, Oct. 31**.

Lesson Lens: Teaching Social Studies in the Modern Age

Cultivating Critical Thinkers for a Changing World

In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, the role of social studies has never been more vital or more complex. Once primarily associated with names, dates, and maps, social studies education in the modern age has evolved into a dynamic field focused on critical thinking, civic engagement, global awareness, and media literacy. Teachers now face both tremendous opportunities and unique challenges as they guide students through an ever-changing landscape of historical context, social justice, digital influence, and cultural identity.

Shifting From Content to Concepts

The traditional model of social studies education emphasized memorization of historical facts, geographical locations, and political systems. While content knowledge remains extremely important, today's classrooms combine this with enduring concepts such as justice, power, identity, and citizenship over rote learning. This shift allows students to analyze the past and present with a critical lens, asking not just what happened, but why it matters and how it connects to their lives.

Modern social studies instruction encourages inquiry-based learning, where students explore essential questions like:

- How does history shape our present and our future?
- What does it mean to be an informed citizen?
- How do different cultures approach governance, rights, and responsibilities?

By centering instruction around essential questions as well as content, teachers empower students to become thinkers, not just test-takers.

Technology and Media Literacy

With the internet at their fingertips, today's students are inundated with information: some accurate, some misleading, and some deliberately false. Teaching social studies in the digital age requires more than just integrating technology into the classroom; it demands an intentional focus on media literacy. Students must learn how to:

- Evaluate sources for bias, credibility, and perspective
- Understand how algorithms shape their news consumption
- Navigate and counteract misinformation and disinformation

Digital tools like interactive maps, virtual reality experiences, primary sources, and simulation platforms allow for deeper engagement, but they also require teachers to guide students through responsible use.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A modern social studies curriculum must reflect the diversity of the world and the classroom. That means going beyond Eurocentric narratives and integrating multiple voices, perspectives, and experiences, particularly those of historically marginalized communities. Teaching inclusive history helps students see themselves in the curriculum and fosters empathy, respect, and a more nuanced understanding of societal structures.

Topics like immigration, systemic racism, Indigenous histories, gender equity, and resistance movements are no longer fringe units, they are central to understanding the American and global experience. Educators must be prepared to facilitate courageous conversations that may challenge long-held beliefs but ultimately deepen understanding and civic awareness.

Civic Education and Student Voice

One of the core purposes of social studies is to prepare students for active participation in democratic society. In an era marked by political polarization and global uncertainty, civics education must go beyond learning how a bill becomes a law. It must include:

- Understanding constitutional rights and responsibilities
- Practicing respectful discourse and civil debate
- Engaging in service learning and community involvement
- Using student voice to advocate for change

Modern social studies classrooms are spaces where students not only learn about democracy but also practice it.

Teaching in the Age of Polarization

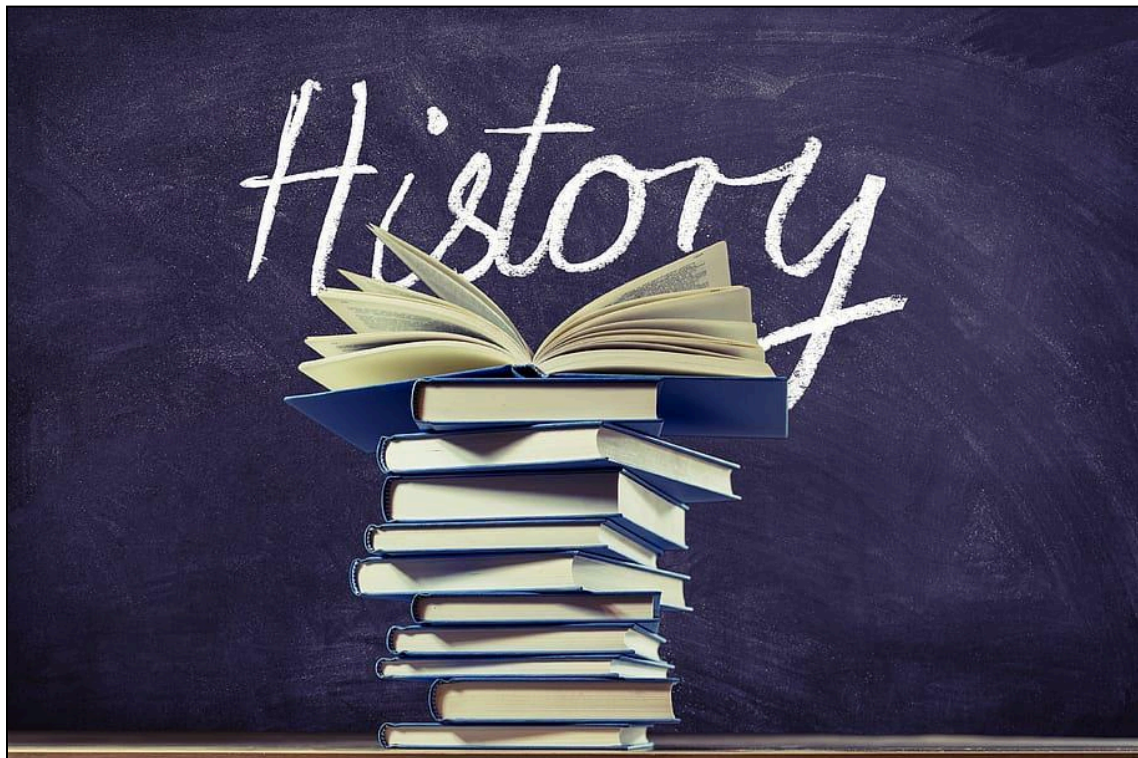
Perhaps the greatest challenge in teaching social studies today is navigating the politicization of the subject itself. Educators often face scrutiny for addressing controversial topics or for adopting inclusive practices. Yet, shielding students from complex realities does them a disservice. The goal is not to teach students what to think, but how to think critically, compassionately, and independently.

Teachers must foster a classroom culture where inquiry, dialogue, and respectful disagreement are the norm. They need support, professional development, and the trust of their communities to do this important work.

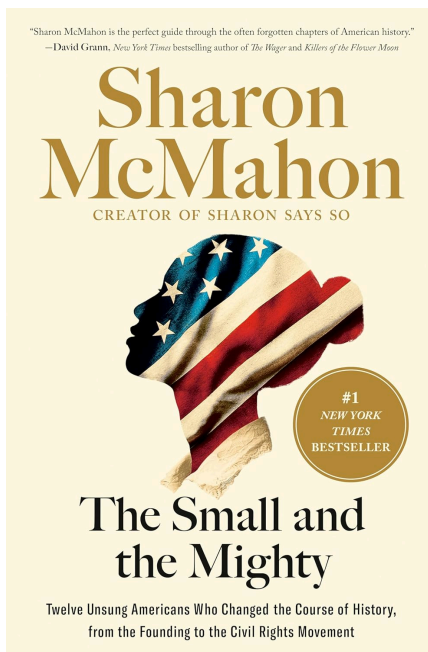
Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, teaching social studies in the modern age is about equipping young people with the tools to navigate a world defined by complexity, change, and interdependence. It is about raising citizens who are informed, thoughtful, and engaged so that they are ready to shape the future, not just inherit it.

The modern social studies teacher is a facilitator, a guide, and a mentor helping students build bridges between past and present, between diverse communities, and between the classroom and the wider world. In doing so, they are not just teaching content, they are nurturing the civic heart of democracy.



Great Reads in Social Studies:



Sharon McMahon's *The Small and the Mighty* is a heartwarming and insightful exploration of the power of small actions and seemingly insignificant moments. Through a blend of personal anecdotes, historical examples, and contemporary reflections, McMahon highlights how the small things we do, whether in our personal lives, workplaces, or communities, can create ripples of impact that far outweigh their initial appearance.

The author does a fantastic job of making the reader feel empowered, reminding us that greatness doesn't always come from grand gestures or monumental achievements. Instead, it can often emerge from the quiet, steady efforts of individuals committed to making a difference, no matter how small that difference may seem at first. McMahon's voice is both relatable and inspiring, and her storytelling abilities shine as she weaves together diverse narratives to illustrate her points.

One of the most impactful aspects of the book is McMahon's focus on empathy, kindness, and the everyday choices that collectively shape our world. She encourages readers to embrace their own smallness and use it as a source of strength, embracing the idea that true power often comes from within, nurtured by compassion and intention.

The pacing of the book is engaging, and the chapters flow seamlessly, offering nuggets of wisdom while also remaining lighthearted and accessible. McMahon's ability to balance deeper reflections with an optimistic, almost joyful tone makes the book enjoyable to read while still offering plenty of food for thought.

Overall, *The Small and the Mighty* is a delightful read that encourages personal growth, social awareness, and a greater appreciation for the seemingly insignificant things that can have lasting effects. Whether you're seeking motivation or simply looking for a book that will remind you of the importance of small moments, this is a read worth picking up.

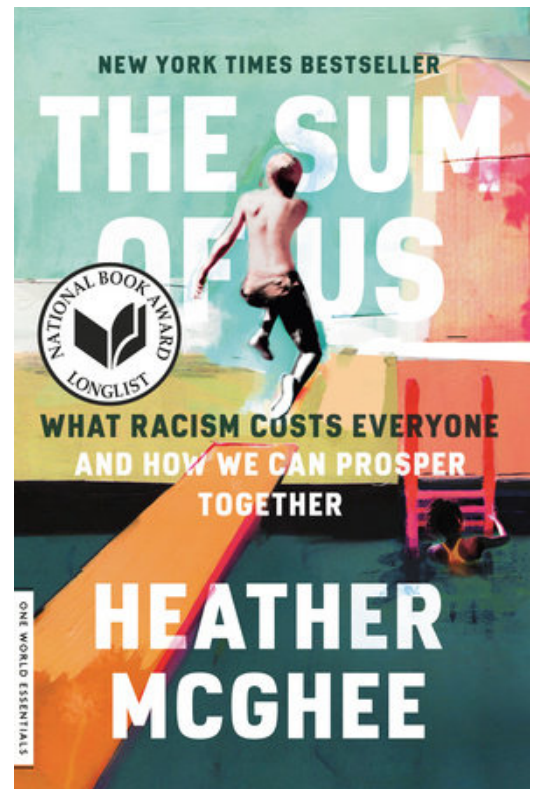
Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* is a powerful, thought-provoking examination of the deep and pervasive costs of racism, not only to marginalized communities but to society as a whole. McGhee, a leading expert on economic inequality, presents a compelling argument that racism is not just a moral or ethical issue but an economic one that has harmed all Americans, regardless of race.

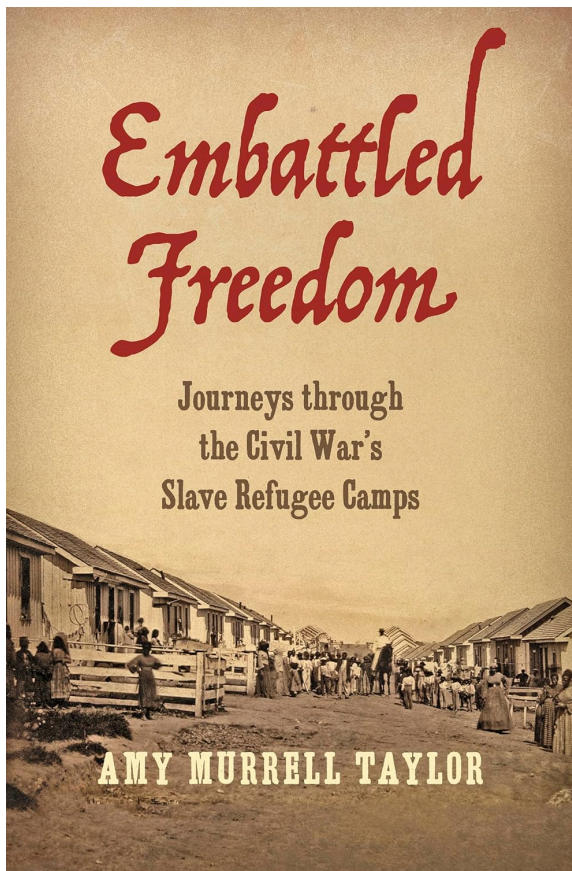
The central thesis of *The Sum of Us* is that the false belief in a “zero-sum game,” that one group’s progress must come at the expense of another, has led to policies and cultural practices that have hurt everyone. McGhee deftly uses historical examples and contemporary data to illustrate how racist policies, such as segregation, the War on Drugs, and voter suppression, have stifled economic progress for both Black and White Americans. She argues that when we allow systemic racism to flourish, we are all deprived of the benefits of a more equitable society, including better healthcare, education, and economic opportunity.

McGhee’s writing is clear, accessible, and engaging, with a storytelling approach that makes complex economic and political ideas relatable. She brings in personal narratives, interviews with affected communities, and research that connects the dots between historical injustices and modern-day disparities. Her ability to weave these elements together keeps the reader engaged and invested in the larger message of the book.

What makes *The Sum of Us* particularly powerful is McGhee’s focus on the solutions. She emphasizes that, by working together and embracing a collective vision for the future, we can dismantle the systems that perpetuate racial inequality and build a more prosperous and inclusive society. McGhee provides a hopeful message, offering concrete examples of communities and policies that have successfully bridged racial divides and benefited everyone.

Ultimately, *The Sum of Us* is a clarion call for collective action and a reminder that we all have a stake in combating racism. McGhee challenges readers to recognize the interconnectedness of our fates and encourages us to fight for a society where everyone can thrive, not just a select few. This is a timely, essential read for anyone interested in understanding the true cost of racism and how we can create a more just and prosperous world for all.





Amy Murrell Taylor's *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* is a deeply researched and powerfully written account that brings to light a rarely explored chapter of the Civil War era: the lives and struggles of the thousands of enslaved African Americans who fled bondage and sought refuge behind Union lines.

Taylor, a historian at the University of Kentucky, shifts the lens of Civil War historiography from battlefields and political leaders to the chaotic, dangerous, yet hopeful world of refugee camps known as "contraband camps." These spaces, often makeshift and hastily organized, were where formerly enslaved people lived in limbo, no longer property, but not yet guaranteed full freedom.

Drawing from letters, military records, camp registers, and personal accounts, Taylor reconstructs the lives of individuals and families who navigated immense uncertainty and hardship. She gives voice to people like Harriet and Dred Scott (not to be confused with the more famous Dred Scott of the Supreme Court case), whose story illustrates the endurance and agency of refugee

families. These narratives personalize a massive humanitarian crisis and reveal the everyday negotiations of freedom, loyalty, survival, and dignity.

One of the book's most significant contributions is its illumination of how freedom was not a singular event tied to emancipation proclamations or Union victories, but a prolonged and contested journey. Taylor convincingly argues that the Civil War refugee camps were "frontlines of freedom," where the future of emancipation was tested in practice.

Her writing is both scholarly and accessible, making the book suitable for academic audiences as well as general readers interested in American history, African American studies, and the Civil War. She avoids romanticizing the past while also honoring the courage and resilience of those who passed through these camps.

Embattled Freedom is a vital addition to Civil War literature. It expands our understanding of what freedom meant in the 1860s and how it was actively forged by the formerly enslaved themselves. Taylor's work challenges traditional narratives and urges readers to recognize the refugee camps not as peripheral spaces, but as central arenas in the fight for liberation.

CCSS Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet

The annual spring meeting of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies took place on May 22, 2025 at the Old State House in Hartford. The evening blended professional networking, thoughtful conversation, and civic engagement, all set against the rich backdrop of Connecticut's constitutional and cultural heritage. It is always an ideal occasion for educators, policymakers, and community advocates to connect, recharge, and shape the future of social studies in our state. We had the opportunity to also recognize folks making a difference in the field of social studies as this year's award winners. Congratulations to our esteemed awardees! A wonderful evening was had by all.



CCSS 2025 Awardees

Front Row (Left to right): Tiffany Reynolds, Susan Clark, Jainat Akther

Back Row (Left to Right): Rebecca Gomez, Anthony Roy, Lauren Francese

Excellence in Social Studies Education (K-8): Tiffany Reynolds, Tolland Middle School

Excellence in Social Studies Education (9-12): Susan Clark, Masuk High School

Pamela Bellmore Gardner Leadership Award: Lauren Francese, Westport Public Schools

Pre-Service Excellence in Social Studies: Jainat Akther, University of Connecticut

John Stedman Passion for the Social Studies: Elizabeth Paoli, Sherman School

Bruce Fraser Friend of the Social Studies: Rebecca Gomez, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Louis Addazio Lifetime Achievement Award: Anthony Roy, Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts

Civic Engagement Opportunities Around Connecticut

Human Rights Close to Home Fellowship (UConn)

High school students can apply for a year-long, stipend-supported program focused on civic action and human rights education.

Connecticut Forest & Park Association Opportunities:

- Learn to Build CFPA's Bridge Abutment Gabions: July 1, 2025
- Sessions Woods Bridge Workparty: July 10, 2025
- Education Volunteer Orientation: July 26, 2025
- Flexible opportunities: Becoming an Advocacy Team Member, Trails Volunteer, or Environmental Education Volunteer are options with flexible schedules.

Connecticut Office of the Secretary of the State Internships:

- Outreach and Engagement Intern: June 2025 - May 2026, or a shorter period.
- Outreach Events Intern: June 2025 - October 2025.

Peace Corps Connect 2025: July 19 - 21, 2025 in Washington, D.C.: This conference focuses on national service, advocating for the Peace Corps, and building bridges at home and abroad.

Connecticut Council for Philanthropy: July 24, 2025: Program & Grantmakers Network Meeting focusing on equitable grantmaking practices.

Ongoing and Flexible Civic Engagement:

- Connecticut Democracy Center: Offers volunteer opportunities and civics education programs.
- United Way of Greater New Haven: Offers various volunteer opportunities.
- United Way of Southeastern Connecticut: Offers warehouse volunteering and Mobile Food Pantry programs.

Below are links to help **educate and empower your engagement with your government.**

- [Register to Vote](#)
- [Find Your Polling Place, Upcoming Elections, Voter Registration Deadlines, Ballot Drop Box Locations, and more](#)
- [Absentee Ballot Information](#)
- [Guide to Voter Rights](#)
- [Disability Voting Rights Information](#)
- [Military and Overseas Citizen Voting Guidelines](#)
- [CT General Assembly Citizen's Guide](#)
- [How to Find Your Representatives](#)
- [CT General Assembly Bulletin](#): Informs you of legislative events including public hearings and committee meetings
- [CT Network](#): Broadcasts meetings and events happening at the State Capitol
- [Be A Poll Worker](#)
- [Information on how to get on the ballot to run for office in Connecticut](#)
- [Links to Major and Minor Political Parties in Connecticut](#)

NCSS: Advocacy at the State/Local Level

- **Date:** online any time
- **Location:** online through NCSS website

The National Council for the Social Studies offers opportunities for people to become advocates for Civic Education at both the State and Local levels through their online resources and ongoing opportunities for learning.

Civics in the Community

- [Civics 101: Educational Resources and Materials](#)
- [Civically Engaged Organization \(CEO\) Pledge](#)
- [The Power of Civics](#)
- [Next Gen Elections](#)
- [Connecticut Civic Health Index](#)
- [League of Women Voters Connecticut](#)
- [Everyday Democracy](#)

Civics in the Classroom

- [Red, White, and Blue Schools](#)
- [Connecticut's Kid Governor®](#)
- [Voting Rights Unit \(High School\)](#)
- [Internship Opportunities](#)
- [My Election My Vote](#) (formally known as the Connecticut Election Project)



Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference

Join the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies on October 17, 2025, for our Annual Conference at Central Connecticut State University. This full-day event invites educators, administrators, and community partners to engage in meaningful workshops, network with peers, and explore innovative practices that strengthen social studies instruction across all grade levels. Don't miss this opportunity to collaborate, learn, and lead the way forward in social studies education.



Register Now

Connecticut Chronicles (State History & Geography)

Notable historical events that occurred in Connecticut in June:

- **June 1, 1781 – Benedict Arnold** was given command of British forces for an attack on New London, Connecticut (which later happens in September). His betrayal was one of the most famous in American history.
- **June 15, 1877 – Hartford Circus Fire** (rehearsals began) for what would become the **deadly fire** in July 1944. June is often noted for the final preparations before the tragedy.
- **June 18, 1983 – Sally Ride** became the first American woman in space and she had Connecticut connections through her education and training (Yale ties).
- **June 21, 1637 – Pequot War's pivotal battle:** The Battle of Mystic Fort concluded, where English settlers allied with Mohegan and Narragansett tribes to defeat the Pequot.
- **June 3, 1639 – The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut** (one of the world's first written constitutions) were adopted earlier in January, but June marks the solidifying of the governance that would become Connecticut's model.
- **June 9, 1947 – Charter Oak Bridge** construction began in Hartford, a major infrastructure project connecting the city to East Hartford.
- **June 19, 1865 – While Juneteenth** marks emancipation nationally, Connecticut had already abolished slavery officially much earlier (1848), and June 19 is celebrated in CT today with events highlighting its Black history.

June was also a popular month for settlers to establish towns because of good weather.

Notable ones:

- Milford (settled in June 1639)
- Wethersfield, one of the state's oldest towns, was officially recognized in June after its 1634 founding.
- Stratford was fully organized in June 1639, led by Puritan leader Adam Blakeman.
- Fairfield was settled in June 1639 by people from the New Haven Colony led by Roger Ludlow.

These events highlight Connecticut's rich history and its contributions to significant national developments.

Black History in Connecticut

The history of African Americans in Connecticut is deeply intertwined with the state's early history, encompassing struggles for freedom, social justice, and contributions to the state's development. From the colonial era to the modern civil rights movement, Black people in Connecticut have played a significant role in shaping its history. Here are key aspects of that history that I have learned about and taught about over my many years as a History teacher:

Early Slavery in Connecticut (1600s-1800s)

- **Colonial Era:** African slavery in Connecticut began in the early 17th century, with enslaved people brought to the colony from Africa, the Caribbean, and other regions. Connecticut was part of the northern colonies where slavery was less prominent than in the South, but it was still an integral part of the economy, particularly in agriculture and domestic labor.
- **Percentage of Population:** By the time of the American Revolution, African Americans made up a significant portion of the population in cities like New Haven and Hartford, though they were fewer in number compared to Southern states.
- **Slavery's Gradual Decline:** Connecticut passed gradual emancipation laws beginning in 1784, which allowed for the eventual freedom of children born to enslaved women after that year, though full abolition was not achieved until the Civil War.

Abolitionist Movement and the Underground Railroad

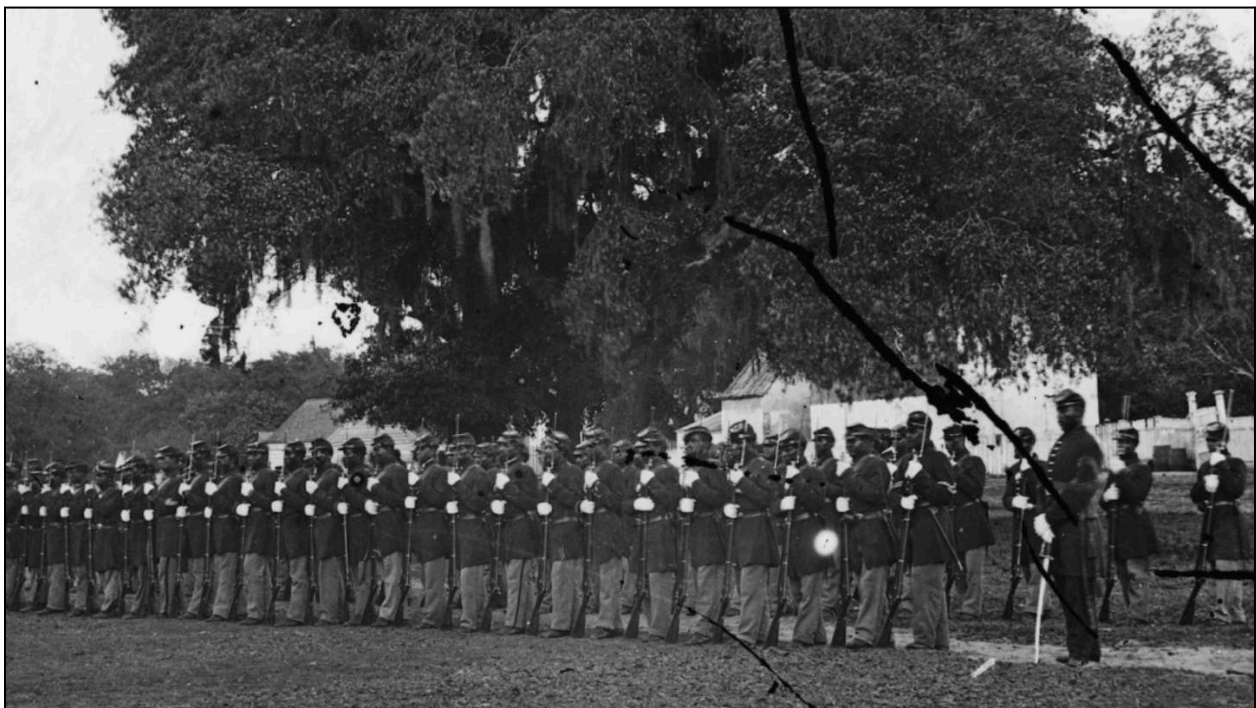
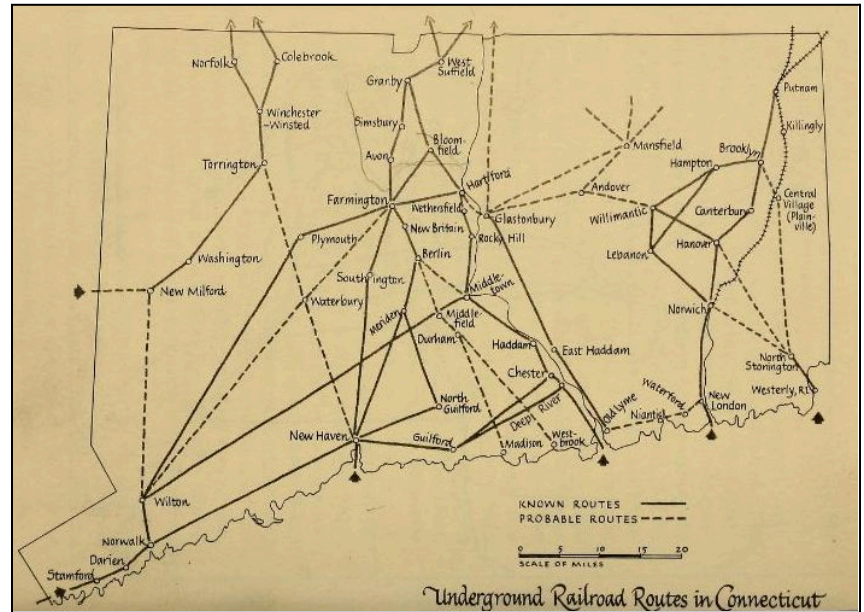


- **Abolitionists in Connecticut:** The state played a key role in the abolitionist movement. Several notable abolitionists, including **Rev. James W.C. Pennington** (a former slave and a leader in the abolition movement), were active in Connecticut. Many residents of the state became outspoken advocates for the end of slavery, including figures like **Harriet Beecher Stowe**, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who lived in Hartford and wrote the novel in part to raise awareness of the horrors of slavery.

- **Underground Railroad:** Connecticut was a significant part of the [Underground Railroad](#), with many Black and white abolitionists helping runaway slaves escape to freedom. Cities like New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport were key stations along the route. The map is from the *Underground Railroad in Connecticut* by Horatio Strother, 1962.

Civil War Era

- **Black Soldiers:** During the Civil War, Connecticut's Black population was heavily involved in the war effort. Thousands of Black men from the state enlisted in the Union army, including those who were formerly enslaved. The most famous regiment was the **29th Connecticut Infantry**, which was composed of African American soldiers.



[Connecticut's 29th Colored Regiment](#)

- **Freed Slaves:** After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in 1865, many African Americans from the South moved to Connecticut in search of better economic opportunities, as industrial work in cities like Hartford and Bridgeport grew.

Early 20th Century and the [Harlem Renaissance](#)

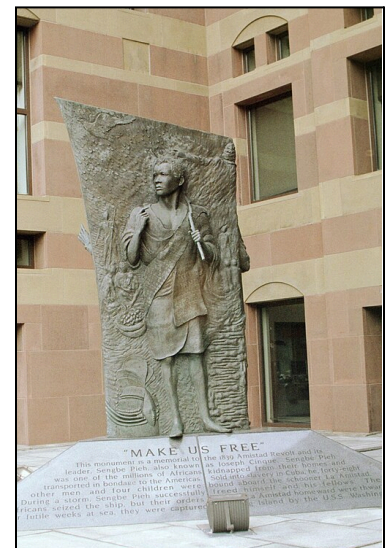
- **Migration:** During the Great Migration, a significant number of African Americans moved from the rural South to northern cities, including Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven, in search of better economic opportunities and less racial discrimination. This migration helped shape the culture and demographics of Connecticut's urban centers.
- **Cultural Impact:** While not as prominent as places like Harlem in New York, Connecticut saw a growing cultural influence from African Americans, especially in music, theater, and the arts. The state contributed to the broader cultural movements, such as jazz and the Harlem Renaissance.

[Civil Rights Era](#)

- **1940s-1960s:** Connecticut became an important battleground in the civil rights movement. African Americans in the state fought for equal rights, particularly in housing, education, and employment. Many protests, boycotts, and legal battles occurred in cities like Hartford and Bridgeport.
- **Notable Figures:** Individuals like **Gloria Brown Marshall**, a civil rights attorney, played a role in challenging racial inequality. The **Connecticut Freedom of Information Act**, which was passed in 1975, helped open up the political process, ensuring greater transparency in matters of racial justice.

Modern Day

- **Cultural Contributions:** African Americans in Connecticut continue to make significant contributions to arts, politics, education, and business. The state's African American history is celebrated through museums, events, and historical sites. The [Amistad Memorial](#) in New Haven, dedicated to the 1839 revolt of African captives aboard the ship *La Amistad*, stands as a symbol of the fight for freedom.
- **Current Issues:** Despite progress, racial inequality persists in Connecticut. Issues such as disparities in education,



employment, and housing still affect Black communities in the state, leading to ongoing activism and efforts for systemic change.

Connecticut's Black history is a story of struggle, resilience, and contributions to the state's and nation's growth, reminding us of the important role African Americans have played in shaping the past and the present.

Notable Black voices in Connecticut history:

As a high school student I was made aware of a book *Tapestry: A Living History of the Black Family in Southeastern Connecticut* and it got me interested in the history in my own state not talked about in classrooms. I took trips to graveyards, even dragging family members along, visited museums as well as archives in a quest to improve my own knowledge so that I could give voice in my own teaching to those whose voices were stifled by prejudice. Over the years, as first a student of history and then a teacher of history, I have learned so much about these notable black voices in Connecticut's history:

Prince (The Black Revolutionary War Soldier) was an enslaved African who fought in the American Revolution. His owner, John Marsh, had him enlisted in the Continental Army, and he fought in several key battles, including the Battle of Yorktown. Prince is often recognized as a symbol of the contributions of African Americans to the American Revolution.

Rev. James W.C. Pennington (1807-1870) was born into slavery in Maryland. Pennington escaped and settled in Connecticut, where he became a prominent abolitionist, minister, and writer. He played a pivotal role in promoting Black education and equality. Pennington founded the First Colored Congregational Church in Hartford, and his autobiography, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, highlighted the struggles of enslaved African Americans and called for social change.

Joseph Cinqué (c. 1814-1879) was a leader of the 1839 Amistad revolt, Cinqué was one of the African captives who managed to seize control of the Spanish slave ship *La Amistad*. The ship eventually was brought to Connecticut, where Cinqué and his fellow rebels were tried for mutiny. The case became a major cause célèbre, leading to a legal battle and eventual freedom for Cinqué and the others. It was a landmark moment in the struggle for abolition.

Alice F. Jackson (1912-2004) was a pioneering educator in Hartford who worked to improve the lives of African Americans, particularly in the field of education. She also founded the first Black woman-owned insurance agency in Connecticut. She was an advocate for racial equality and contributed significantly to the growth of the local Black community in Hartford.

The Hartford Black Panthers had a significant chapter in Hartford. This chapter focused on addressing police brutality, social inequality, and systemic racism in the urban environment of the city. The Hartford chapter of the Black Panthers was instrumental in advocating for the rights of the Black community and against police violence in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Dr. Mildred Jefferson (1926-2019) moved to Connecticut and became the first African American woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School. She became an outspoken advocate for civil rights

and health care access, especially for African Americans. Jefferson's contributions to medicine and her advocacy for equality are an important part of Connecticut's Black history.

These are just a few examples of the powerful voices from Connecticut's Black history. There are many more individuals and communities whose contributions helped shape the state and the nation's understanding of race, justice, and equality. Visit your local historical society, university, or museum to learn more.

World Watch: A Glimpse into the Changing Tides of Global Affairs

In an era defined by interconnectedness, rapid technological advancements, and shifting political landscapes, the world is in a constant state of flux. Understanding these changes, especially in the context of history and civics, is crucial for fostering informed global citizens. As we witness these shifts unfold, let's explore some of the key trends and events that are shaping our world today.

In recent years, geopolitical tensions have intensified across several regions. From the ongoing conflicts in Eastern Europe to the power struggles in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East, nations are increasingly asserting their influence over disputed territories and resources. These tensions remind us of the importance of diplomacy, negotiation, and understanding the historical context behind these rivalries.

The war in Ukraine, for example, has not only tested international alliances but has also sparked debates over sovereignty, nationalism, and global security. Meanwhile, in Asia, rising tensions between China and Taiwan are raising questions about the future of democracy and authoritarianism. In both cases, historical grievances and territorial claims are playing a central role in these disputes, emphasizing the enduring relevance of history in shaping the present.

While globalization has led to remarkable technological progress and increased cultural exchange, it has also sparked significant challenges. The global economy is more interconnected than ever, with supply chains stretching across continents and businesses relying on international markets. However, this interconnectedness has made nations vulnerable to economic disruptions, such as the supply chain crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation in many parts of the world.

Moreover, globalization has raised concerns about cultural homogenization, with some fearing the erosion of local traditions and identities. These issues have led to a resurgence of populist movements in several countries, as people demand a return to "national sovereignty" and protection from the perceived dangers of a globalized world.

As environmental challenges continue to mount, climate change has become one of the most pressing issues of our time. From rising sea levels to extreme weather events, the effects of climate change are already being felt across the globe. What makes this issue particularly daunting is its global nature: while its impacts are universal, the solutions require cooperation among nations with differing priorities and capabilities.

The historical roots of industrialization and unsustainable resource exploitation are key to understanding the current climate crisis. Efforts to mitigate climate change, such as the Paris

Agreement, are examples of global attempts to address a problem that transcends national borders. However, these efforts are often hindered by political disagreements, economic interests, and the urgency of addressing immediate concerns over long-term environmental sustainability.

In the digital age, the way we interact with our governments and exercise our rights has drastically changed. Social media platforms have revolutionized political discourse, empowering citizens to mobilize and advocate for their causes. However, the rise of digital surveillance and authoritarian regimes that exploit technology to suppress dissent highlights the dual nature of the digital revolution.

The historical evolution of democratic principles and human rights is being challenged by the emergence of new technologies that can either enhance or undermine freedom. Governments are grappling with the complexities of regulating digital spaces while ensuring that the rights to privacy, freedom of speech, and assembly are not compromised.

As the world continues to change, it's more important than ever to equip future generations with the tools to understand and navigate these shifts. History and civics education play a crucial role in fostering informed citizens who can critically engage with the world around them. By learning from the past, understanding the complexities of the present, and imagining the future, students are empowered to be active participants in shaping the world they will inherit.

The global stage is evolving, and so too must our understanding of the forces at play. By keeping a watchful eye on current events through the lens of history and civics, we can better appreciate the interconnectedness of our world and the importance of informed, thoughtful engagement in global affairs.

Civic Sparks: History's Hot Topics Around the World

Global Economic Challenges

- **Trade Wars and Tariffs**: The reintroduction of sweeping tariffs by the U.S. under President Trump has disrupted global trade, leading to a projected slowdown in global economic growth in 2025. These tariffs have particularly impacted emerging markets, exacerbating debt issues and hindering development efforts.
- **Emerging Market Debt Crisis**: Over half of 150 developing countries are at risk of, or already unable to meet, debt service obligations. High interest rates and reduced foreign investment are straining budgets, affecting essential services like education and healthcare.

Climate and Energy

- **Clean Energy Transition**: In 2024, 93% of new U.S. energy capacity came from low-emission sources. However, the clean energy sector faces challenges, including increased costs due to tariffs, regulatory hurdles, and an aging power grid ill-equipped for renewable integration.

- **[Climate Action Financing](#)**: Global efforts are underway to reform international financing mechanisms to support sustainable development and climate initiatives, building momentum toward the upcoming 4th International Conference on Financing for Development.

Political Unrest and Social Movements

- **["Hands Off" Protests](#)** and **[No Kings](#)** Protests: Massive demonstrations have erupted across the U.S. and internationally in response to policies enacted by President Trump and Elon Musk. Protesters are advocating for the protection of social programs, minority rights, and democratic institutions.
- **[Global Conflicts](#)**: Concerns over military conflicts have risen. France, in particular, has seen a significant increase in public concern regarding military conflicts.

Social and Human Rights Issues

- **[Mental Health and Infrastructure](#)**: The U.S. faces challenges with aging infrastructure, including water systems and the electrical grid, which have implications for public health and safety. Mental health and well-being remain critical concerns, especially in the wake of the pandemic's long-term effects.
- **[Human Rights](#)**: Human Rights Watch's 2025 report highlights ongoing issues in the U.S., such as structural racism, challenges in the criminal legal system, and the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers.

Technology and Innovation

- **[Artificial Intelligence](#)**: AI continues to be a focal point in discussions about innovation, with applications ranging from code assistance to creative tools. The rapid advancement of AI technologies raises questions about ethics, employment, and regulation.

These topics reflect the dynamic interplay between historical understanding and current societal developments in 2025.

Get Civically Involved:

Join the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Today! Help us to promote the study of social studies across the state. This [link](#) will take you to the membership page where you have the option of joining online, or printing out a hardcopy form to complete and mail in.

For those of you who are looking for resources and information you can use in your classrooms, check out the [CCSS Website!](#)

