

Editor's Notebook

This year has an exciting social studies calendar. The first day of April is National Census Day, the 50th anniversary of Earth Day occurs three weeks later, the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage will take place in August, and there will be a crucial presidential election in November. A month after that, our association will be proud to host its own special anniversary, the 100th annual NCSS conference from December 4 to 6 in Washington, D.C.

During March, all households across the country will receive a census questionnaire that they are asked to complete. This issue of *Social Education* includes a special section prepared by Census Bureau staff that provides information about the census and its contemporary and historical importance that teachers can use in lessons and class activities.

In two opening articles in the special section, Victoria Glasier and Aundrea Wilkins emphasize the significant role that teachers can play in spreading the message of the need for a complete and accurate population count. They identify key census concepts and definitions, and recommend interesting resources and activities that will enable students to understand the importance of the census.

Two fundamental census statistics are the age and sex composition of the population, which can be used to identify important historical trends. In the U.S. census of 1800, the recorded median age was 16; 200 years later it was 35.3. The ratio of males to females has also changed over time. Nicholas Birnbaum shows how these data offer a great window into our history.

As a springboard for studying the vast array of census information, Jason G. Gauthier shows how the data can provide a valuable context for investigating major events. He cites the moon landing, the rise of Elvis Presley to stardom, the Montgomery bus boycott, the battle of Gettysburg, and the first Super Bowl, among other milestones.

The Census Bureau has employed a large work force of census takers to obtain information about all members of the population, wherever they live and whatever language they speak. Christopher Martin describes how the Census Bureau has become a leader among government departments in employing a diverse staff by emphasizing the "hiring of a diverse workforce representative of the local communities." (55)

In the final article of the special section, a creative approach to the history of the census is recommended by a team of Census Bureau historians—Sharon Tosi Lacey, Christopher Martin, Jason G. Gauthier, Nicholas Birnbaum, and Andrew Babin. Their article presents an object symbolizing each of the 23 census years from 1790 to 2010 as a starting point for examining census history.

Outside the special section on the U.S. census, Allan Lichtman looks ahead to this year's presidential election using the "Keys to the White House" predictive system, which has had a successful track record in forecasting the outcome of presidential

elections. At present, the Keys suggest that the 2020 election is too close to call.

This year, we will mark the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22. In our Lessons on the Law column, Denis Hayes and Daniel Magraw point out that the occasion will "involve tens of thousands of events in the weeks surrounding that day and hundreds of millions of people on every continent." (18) They examine the impact of Earth Day and emphasize the huge challenge of global climate change that today's young people will have to confront.

A thread running through many of the articles in this issue is the powerful impact that people can have once they decide to be agents of change. In our Teaching with Documents column, Charles H. Withers explores the role of agents of change in the historic struggle against racial segregation during the nineteenth century. His article examines a court case brought by four African American sisters who sued a steamboat company after being refused first-class accommodations for which they had paid.

In this issue's Sources and Strategies column, Cheryl Lederle and Stacie Moats show how the different core social studies disciplines can be combined to make a powerful ethnographic study of a community. Using Paterson, New Jersey, as an example, they present the development of the town through the lens of history, geography, economics, and civics.

The spread of fake news and prevalence of echo chambers make it more important than ever for students to learn how to check the facts that are used to support political arguments. Chris Sperry and Sox Sperry point out that it is also important for students to know how to check fact-checking sites such as Factcheck.org, Snopes.com, and Politifact.com for possible biases, and offer guidelines for doing so.

Christopher T. Hague's column on Teaching the C3 Framework addresses the perennial challenge of how to motivate students. He emphasizes the importance of addressing students' desires for a sense of control, mastery of their environment, and a need to belong, and shows how the use of the C3 Inquiry Design Model can meet those needs.

Social studies education continues to be under pressure in schools. NCSS President Tina Heafner opens this issue with an article examining the major challenges we face. She describes the current ecology of social studies, urges the promotion of a culture of equity and inclusion, and emphasizes the cutting-edge role that social studies educators need to play in encouraging civic engagement among youth. Her article expands her presidential address at the NCSS Annual Conference in Austin, Texas, on November 22, 2019.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org