

Editor's Notebook

This is a time of extraordinary polarization and lack of civility in our national political discourse. As social studies educators, it is part of our mission to teach students how to evaluate different perspectives on important issues and how to discuss them with civility and respect. In 2016, a survey of NCSS members ranked teaching about controversial issues first among the special topics that they would like to see covered in *Social Education*. This issue includes a special section on that subject whose guest editor, Diana E. Hess, is an expert on the discussion of controversies in the classroom.

The special section is described in detail in the introduction by Dr. Hess on the next page. Here, I would like to emphasize the value of its articles in addressing several distinctive problems that arise when teachers deal with controversial issues in class. One of these is the difficulty of dealing sensitively and rigorously with issues that directly affect students who are present in the classroom. Dafney Blanca Dabach, Natasha Hakimali Merchant, and Aliza K. Fones offer recommendations for teachers of classes studying immigration. LaGarrett J. King, Amanda E. Vickery, and Genevieve Caffrey present a framework that can promote racial literacy and guide teachers in the discussion of issues involving race.

The repercussions of discussing controversial issues in school extend beyond the four walls of the classroom. Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg and Rey Junco emphasize how important it is for teachers to reach out to parents to explain that a proper civic education requires that students learn how to discuss contentious issues respectfully in a context in which they examine different opinions. It is also important for teachers to obtain the support of principals for making their schools an active site for rigorous discussions that allow students to break out of the partisan “echo chambers” that currently influence their thinking on important issues.

Getting students to understand and respect opinions that are different from theirs can be challenging. Jane C. Lo recommends the right kinds of simulations and role playing as a means of broadening students' perspectives. Cathy Ruffing and Lee Arbetman emphasize the value of studying Supreme Court cases, and offer teaching strategies that develop the analytical skills of students as they study the arguments presented in these cases.

In a yearlong research study of four secondary school classes in three schools, Avner Segall, Margaret S. Crocco, Anne-Lise Halvorsen, and Rebecca Jacobsen examined the challenges of conducting classroom discussions. They present suggestions for managing these discussions, and point out how gender and other identity markers of students influence their participation.

Outside the special section, our contributors deal with a wide range of contemporary and historical issues. William McCorkle, Mikel W. Cole, and Mindy Spearman examine historical patterns of prejudice against immigrants, and identify three “false narratives” that have

recurred in past and present accusations made by critics of immigration. The authors present historical cartoons and charts that offer students an interesting and valuable context in which they can explore contemporary issues such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Steven D. Schwinn's Lessons on the Law column offers a “primer on constitutional impeachment.” He examines the historical reasons why the Framers of the Constitution empowered Congress with the right to impeach public officials and remove them from office. Because a successful impeachment requires both a vote in the House of Representatives and a majority of two thirds of the Senate, it has been a rare procedure that is structured so that Congress cannot “abuse impeachment to remove officials for mere political reasons.”(356) The author points out that “Congress has used impeachment only 18 times in our history to check federal officials.” (360)

Although thousands of persons were lynched in the period between the end of the Civil War and the 1920s, Congress repeatedly failed to pass an anti-lynching law. In our Sources and Strategies column, Stephen Wesson investigates the difficulties faced by advocates of anti-lynching legislation by examining a bill that was introduced by Representative Leonidas C. Dyer. The bill was passed by the House in January 1922 but then failed in the Senate because of a filibuster. Wesson offers suggestions for teaching about this topic in the classroom using documents from the Library of Congress collection.

In its landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, the Supreme Court declared state laws segregating public schools by race to be unconstitutional. However, even in areas of the country where there was no legislation requiring segregation, schools were still often segregated. In the North, for example, neighborhood schools reflected the residential segregation that was widespread. Christopher Zarr's Teaching with Documents column examines a case in which the parents of Leslie Taylor, an African American elementary school student, successfully sued the school district of New Rochelle, New York, on the ground that their daughter was receiving an inferior education because of the segregation of schools in the district.

In our Teaching the C3 Framework column, Jongwoo Han and Joseph Karb ask the compelling question, “Why was the Korean War ‘Forgotten?’”, and offer an Inquiry Design Model blueprint and teaching suggestions that will familiarize students with the history and consequences of that war. The authors also introduce readers to the wide range of primary historical resources and first-hand interviews with Korean War veterans that are freely available from the Korean War Legacy Foundation and the World History Digital Education Foundation.

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