**A Lifetime on the Bus:**
Diane Nash & John Lewis

*Grades* 4 – 7 or 8 – 12 (differentiated below)

*Objective* Learners will explore the lives of student activists of the Civil Rights Movement and reflect on their own potential to be agents of change

*Materials* Access to technology for online research
Printer for images, butcher paper for timeline, markers for timeline and quotes

*Background*

At its center, *Get On The Bus* is about students of the past and present standing up for issues that are important to them. In this activity, students will explore the lives, motivations and accomplishments of two crucial leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, who also happened to be young people. Diana Nash, a student at Fisk University, was instrumental in the training of nonviolent protest, as well as the lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville and the Freedom Rides. John Lewis began his activism in his late teens and went on to take part in sit-ins, the Freedom Rides and the marches on Selma and Washington, D.C., later becoming a congressman.

You will choose whether students create a timeline with images and quotes or digital presentations.

*Lesson Procedure*

1.) Ask students to think of issues that are important to them and ask them who can make a difference on those issues. (It will be interesting to see if they point to political and civic leaders or also identify themselves)

Project early images of Diane Nash and John Lewis. Share that it was students in their late teens and early twenties that led the lunch counter sit-ins and Freedom Rides to end segregation.
For older students, you can also create a hook by using the extended trailer from John Lewis: Get In The Way https://www.pbs.org/video/john-lewis-get-way-extended-trailer/

Share with students that they will be tracing the lives of Diane Nash and John Lewis. (Choose whether the end goal will be a physical timeline on butcher paper with printed images, dates, captions and quotes, or whether the culminating work will be a digital presentation).

2.) Research: Students will work in small groups to research various aspects of Nash and Lewis’ lives, using resources at the school library or online. For older students, assign one of the video links* on the following pages to each group, asking them to note the events, time frame, motivations and accomplishments of Nash or Lewis. For younger students, consider using printed or online biography series.

*Some video links contain offensive language reflective of the segregation era.

Depending on how many students are in the small groups, they can choose roles like facilitator (to lead small group work), recorder, designer and presenter. The facilitator leads discussion of the assigned video or text. The recorder notes at least three items the group will want to share with other groups. The items can be images, important events, quotes, etc. they believe represent the milestones in the Nash and Lewis’ lives. Students should make sure they have a date and location for each item, so it can be placed on the timeline.

3.) Assemble: Have each group organize the information they feel is most important (at least three items) which can be shared in the larger culminating timeline or presentation. The designers take the lead in assembling their groups’ work, but all students can have input.

4.) Share: The presenters lead the verbal presentation of each group’s work so that the entire class can see the big picture of John Lewis and Diane Nash’s lives.

5.) Reflect: Lead a class discussion using some of the following prompts.
   - How were the early lives of John Lewis and Diane Nash similar and different?
   - Describe how they became student leaders
   - How did their involvement in social issues as young people shape their lives moving forward?
   - How did their participation in the Civil Rights Movement shape them and how did they shape the Movement?
   - How did gender impact their work? (See Diane Nash videos)
   - What did nonviolence, as a tactic for activism, help them accomplish?
   - Can students today become activist leaders in the same way as Nash and Lewis? How are challenges similar or different today?

“Maybe our foremothers and forefathers came to this land in different ships, but we’re all in the same boat now.”

- John Lewis
JOHN LEWIS VIDEO LINKS

John Lewis & the Civil Rights Movement
https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/2ba4c094-c7ab-4578-ba3e-39365a5071d5/john-lewis-the-civil-rights-movement/#.XheuuBd7I0s

The Most Important Instrument - John Lewis at the March on Selma

Only In America - John Lewis from cotton fields to joining the Big Six of civil rights, along MLK, Jr.  

Looking Back: John Lewis in conversation with student activist Jonathan Butler

John Lewis responds to the SCOTUS' ruling against the Voting Rights Act
https://www.pbs.org/video/john-lewis-get-way-right-vote/

The Nashville Sit-Ins and training as a nonviolent student activist

John Lewis at Families Belong Together rally in 2018

DIANE NASH VIDEO LINKS

Freedom Riders: The Student Leader

Civil Rights Activism Then & Now: Diane Nash & Bree Newsome in Conversation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cb0OYbxB7sM

Who the Hell is Diane Nash?
https://www.pbs.org/video/who-hell-is-diane-nash/

Diane Nash: "You didn't have to be a man to be courageous"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gi1TFDdUcA

Diane Nash and the Sit-Ins

Diane Nash: Managing Fear
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nk7lb5m_RSq