

# Where Blooming Flowers Meet the Sky

## The Mountaintop

Adapted from Tacoma Arts Live's original curricula for the theatrical production, *Thurgood in Winter 2018*



**Grades** 7 - 12

**Objective** To identify a goal for social change then backwards plan a series of concrete steps to work toward that goal

**Materials** Mountaintop Worksheet (included)  
Internet access for research

### Background

It is easy to say you want justice, equality, or fairness. It is another thing to plan the steps to make these ideals happen. For example, we might call for the end to police brutality or racial profiling, but making those goals a reality takes more than angry social media posts or even turning out at demonstrations. The Civil Rights Movement began long before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus or Dr. King shared his dream. For decades, a legal team focused on dismantling the laws of segregation by addressing school segregation. To arrive at the moment of victory in the 1954 Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. the Board of Education* took both hard work and careful strategy. Activists had to decide how to challenge the Jim Crow laws that were the backbone of segregation: They had to decide whether to lobby for new laws in the legislative branch or advance court cases that would dismantle existing unjust laws, by showing how those laws violated constitutional rights. The activists had to consider state laws versus federal laws. They had to find real-life people and situations they could advance as promising court cases. If a case made it to court, what type of logic would be used in the courtroom and how did facts support those arguments? Once the law passed, a new generation of activists had to decide which tactics they would use to turn the court ruling into reality and utilized boycotts, marches, sit-ins, the media and the courts to advance their cause.

In this activity, you will identify a societal goal that is important to you – it could be ending police brutality, increasing school integration, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, immigration reform, an environmental reform, etc. Once you choose your social issue, you'll make a goal for positive change. Then you will create a "backwards plan" toward that goal using the Mountaintop Worksheet.

### Lesson Procedure

#### 1.) Investigate

Drawing on your own priorities and those of friends, create a list of urgent social issues on which youth are speaking up and acting out. Borrow from recent headlines to spark discussion or use the following testimonial of a young activist to initiate conversation.

- *Today's Civil Rights Activists: Bree Newsome* on PBS Learning Media.  
<https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/eotp16-soc-newsome/wgbh-world-channel-todays-civil-rights-activists-bree-newsome/?#.WnkM53IG2Uk>

## 2.) Explore

Based on the issues you identify, analyze and explore the societal conditions that underlie or contribute to the larger issue. For example, the larger issue might be “Black Lives Matter,” but the underlying condition affecting that issue might be equitable law enforcement or an end to racial profiling.

## 3.) Worksheet: Page 1

Using the Mountaintop Worksheet, you will reflect on the specifics of your issue:

First, you’ll name your issue and list three sources you’ve used to learn about your issue. *(When searching online, always consider the reliability of your sources. Just because a site sounds or looks official does not mean it is credible. Use the three sources to see if you can establish consistent information or reporting. Memes are not sources, but the articles, news photos and video they are based on are sources.)*

Share more about your issue:

- Is it an issue of federal, state, or local jurisdiction?
- Is it a law that needs to be created or changed?
- Is it a public health or environmental concern?
- Is it a question of rights denied or opportunities unevenly distributed?

Next, you’ll consider three concrete ways you can address this issue. There is a list of individual and collective actions on the worksheet you can consider.

## 4.) Worksheet: Page 2

You’ll start with your overarching social goal (this is the change you want to see on your social issue – for example “ending racial profiling”). From there you’ll work downward on your tactics for reaching your goal.

- Are there legislative (legal) changes (new laws, ending old laws, or court action) that will need to occur to reach your goal?
- What are the actions that individuals and communities can take toward your goal?

## 5.) Reflect

- How does it feel to have concrete steps to address your issue?
- Does it feel different from just being aware or frustrated by the issue?
- How does your plan contrast with simply being aware of an issue or doing no more than acting/reacting on social media?

## 6.) Dig Deeper (optional)

Consider surveying others on the issue you’ve identified.

- What do others see as a solution?
- What are the tactics (legal, individual, collective) that others suggest be taken to reach this goal?

## The Mountaintop Worksheet

Through discussion with your peers, identify a social issue you want to address or a societal goal you would like to help bring about. It could be ending police brutality, increasing school integration, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, immigration reform, an environmental reform, etc.

**My issue:** \_\_\_\_\_

Is my issue under:

- Federal Jurisdiction
- State Jurisdiction
- Local Jurisdiction (City/County)

Is my issue:

- A law that needs to be created?
- A law that needs to be removed?
- A violation of rights?
- Public Safety concern/Environmental Hazard?

**What questions do I need to ask to better understand my issue?**

**Three sources I can use to educate myself on this issue**

1.)

2.)

3.)

**Three simple actions I can take individually or as part of a group to address my issue**

1.)

2.)

3.)

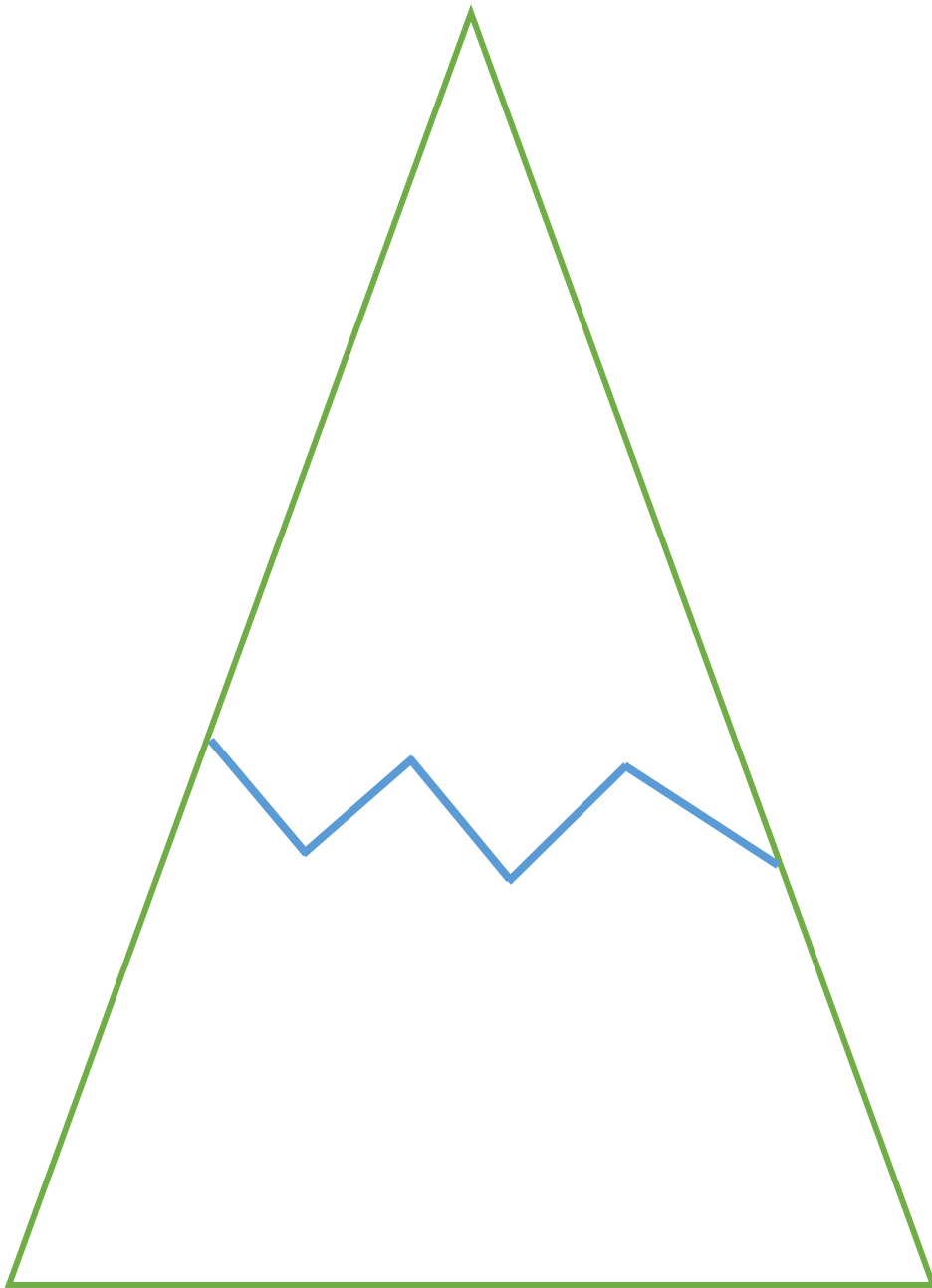
### Types of Civic Action

- Court challenge
- Legislative lobbying (Congress, State Legislature, City Council, School Board)
- Negotiation
- Nonviolent protest
- Civil disobedience
- Rally or demonstration
- Boycott
- Community organizing
- Voter Registration
- Awareness campaign
- Artistic Response (Murals, comedy, music, etc.)
- Research
- Social media campaign
- Fundraising
- Training self or others
- Volunteer with an organization
- Voting

*\*Strategies of violence and intimidation are not listed here as they do not lead to sustainable change, rather create cyclical loops of themselves.*

## The Mountaintop: Planning for Change

Start with your societal goal at the top. Work down from your goal, to the legal changes that need to occur, to the group actions to put those changes in place, to the individual actions to spur group change.



My Societal Goal:

Necessary legal changes

Actions by Groups

Actions by individuals (including me)