

Lesson Four: Integrating Higher Education in Mississippi

Objective:

Looking at civil rights through the lens of sports, students will use film documentaries to understand the integration of the University of Mississippi and other successful and unsuccessful attempts at integration around the state.

Materials: *Integrating Mississippi's Higher Education*; Internet access; *30 for 30 Teacher Discussion Guide*; *Game of Change Discussion Guide*; *Mississippi Civil Rights Map and Timeline*; *Journal Four: Ask Yourself*.

Procedures:

Activity One: Integrating Ole Miss

1. Distribute and read *Integrating Mississippi's Higher Education*.
2. Have the class view *ESPN's 30 for 30 Ghosts of Ole Miss*, a documentary that examines James Meredith's entry at the University of Mississippi, the ensuing riot on the night of September 30, 1962, and the championship football team that were eyewitnesses to this pivotal moment in civil rights history. Included are interviews with James Meredith, members of the 1962 Old Miss football team, reporter Dan Rather, and former Mississippi governor William Winter. 51 minutes. This film can be borrowed free of charge from the Mississippi History on Loan Collection. Go to <http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/learn/classroom-materials/mississippi-history-on-loan-film-collection/> or contact the Outreach Programs Coordinator at 601-576-6997.
3. Using the *30 for 30 Teacher Discussion Guide*, conduct a class discussion about the film.
4. If time allows, students may read William Thompson's article "Ghosts of Mississippi" online at <http://www.espn.com/espn/eticket/story?page=mississippi62> for additional information about the Ole Miss riot, its 1962 football team, and the lasting impact of the school's desegregation.

Activity Two: Game of Change

1. Have the class view *Game of Change*, a documentary looks at the events leading up to the basketball championship game between the all-white Mississippi State Bulldogs and the integrated Loyola basketball team in 1963. Included are interviews with players from both teams as well as reporters, family members, and scholars. 56 minutes. This film can be borrowed free of charge from the Mississippi History on Loan Collection. Go to <http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/learn/classroom-materials/lesson-plans-and-teaching-units/> or contact the Outreach Programs Coordinator at 601-576-6997.
2. Using the *Game of Change Discussion Guide*, conduct a class discussion about the film.
3. Give students the opportunity to label their *Mississippi Civil Rights Map and Timeline* with locations and events covered during the class activities and discussions.
4. Students will answer the questions in *Journal Four: Ask Yourself* individually before discussing them aloud.

Extension Activity: The U.S. Marshals Remember James Meredith

Read about the role the U.S. Marshals played in helping James Meredith attend college at the University of Mississippi in 1962. View images, read statements from the marshals who were deployed to Ole Miss, and learn the role this event has played in the history of the marshals at <http://www.usmarshals.gov/history/miss/02.htm>

Integrating Mississippi's Higher Education

Prior to 1962, African Americans had made multiple attempts to enroll in Mississippi's white colleges. For example, Medgar Evers had registered but was rejected by the University of Mississippi Law School in 1954. Four years later, Clennon Washington King, Jr., a history professor from the African American college Alcorn A&M, attempted to enroll at University of Mississippi; he was hoping to pursue a Ph.D. in history. Not only was King denied entry, he was arrested and committed to the State Mental Hospital. He was released twelve days later.

Another example included Hattiesburg native Clyde Kennard who tried on three occasions (1956, 1957, and 1959) to enroll at Mississippi Southern (now the University of Southern Mississippi). After publishing a letter about integrated education in the *Hattiesburg American* newspaper, the Sovereignty Commission had Kennard arrested for "reckless driving" and possession of liquor in a dry state. The Sovereignty Commission files released in 1998 revealed that state officials had even considered forcing him into an accident or bombing his car. Later, he was falsely arrested for paying a man named Johnny Lee Roberts to steal twenty-five dollars worth of chicken feed. Kennard received seven years at Parchman Penitentiary, while Roberts received five years of probation. Roberts later testified under oath that "Kennard did not ask me to do anything illegal." Roberts' crime had been ignored because he had blamed Kennard, a man under surveillance by the Sovereignty Commission.

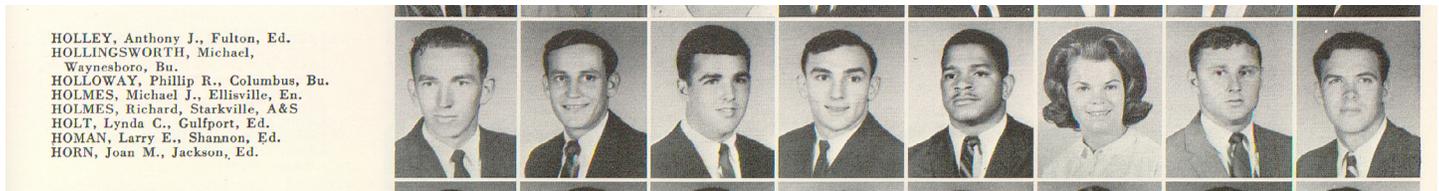
While in prison, Kennard was diagnosed with colon cancer. Despite the University of Mississippi Hospital in Jackson requesting that Kennard remain under their care, authorities sent him back to Parchman. He was finally released in 1963 after Hattiesburg civil rights activists drew national attention to the story. Governor Barnett declared an "indefinite suspended sentence," and Kennard would die five months later in Chicago while undergoing treatment for colon cancer. Although Roberts later recanted his testimony in 2006, Kennard was never granted a pardon.

James Meredith's entry to the University of Mississippi in 1962 was successful but with a cost. Over 30,000 federal soldiers from the U.S. Marshals, National Guard, and U.S. Army were sent by President John F. Kennedy to ensure that Meredith was admitted to the school. On September 30, riots broke out on the Oxford campus that left two dead and hundreds wounded. Meredith would graduate the following year with a degree in political science.



James Meredith flanked by protective Federal Marshals at the University of Mississippi. MDAH, Archives and Records Services.

Meanwhile, in 1963, the Mississippi State University basketball team won the Southeastern Conference championship and earned a spot in the NCAA tournament where they would play Loyola University of Chicago, an integrated team. Barnett ordered MSU to forfeit, but the all-white men's basketball team competed despite Barnett's mandate. In the summer of 1965, Richard E. Holmes became MSU's first African American student. By this point, many schools were accepting the inevitable, and Holmes' enrolling in the summer lessened the negative response. His first day included, "no racial slurs...quiet and serene. Nothing happened...just curiosity...many just ignored me." Shirley Antoinette Washington became the first African American student at Delta State University when they ended their segregation practices in 1967.



The Reveille Yearbook, *Mississippi State University, 1966.* MDAH, Archives and Records Services.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Integrating Mississippi's Higher Education

Match the following individuals with the appropriate university or college.

Medgar Evers
James Meredith
Clyde Kennard
Clennon Washington King, Jr.
Richard E. Holmes
Shirley Antoinette Washington

1. _____ University of Mississippi, 1958, failed to integrate and was admitted to a lunatic asylum
2. _____ Mississippi Southern, 1956, 1957, 1959, failed to integrate and was arrested on false charges
3. _____ Delta State University, 1967, succeeded to integrate
4. _____ University of Mississippi, 1962, succeeded to integrate amidst rioting
5. _____ University of Mississippi Law School, 1954, failed to integrate
6. _____ Mississippi State University, 1965, succeeded to integrate

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

*Integrating Mississippi's Higher Education **Answer Key***

Match the following individuals with the appropriate university or college.

Medgar Evers
James Meredith
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1. **Clennon Washington King, Jr.** University of Mississippi, 1958, failed to integrate and was admitted to a lunatic asylum
2. **Clyde Kennard** Mississippi Southern, 1956, 1957, 1959, failed to integrate and was arrested on false charges
3. **Shirley Antoinette Washington** Delta State University, 1967, succeeded to integrate
4. **James Meredith** University of Mississippi, 1962, succeeded to integrate amidst rioting
5. **Medgar Evers** University of Mississippi Law School, 1954, failed to integrate
6. **Richard E. Holmes** Mississippi State University, 1965, succeeded to integrate

30 for 30 Teacher Discussion Guide

1. Why would it be difficult for a person who lived through these times (white or African American) to relive them? Should people be allowed to leave that night in the past? Why or why not?
2. Why does the narrator choose not to question a family member's name/picture found in the archives?
3. How do the people who tell this story seem to feel about it over fifty years later?
4. Several of the interviewees state that they were raised in a segregated world and it never occurred to them to question it. Do you think this is possible? Why or why not?
5. What does it mean when the narrator says there are some questions Mississippians do not ask because they are not prepared to hear the answer?
6. Why is this an important story for Mississippians today to know and understand?
7. What does the saying, "Yes Mississippi was, but Mississippi is," mean?
8. During his Old Miss football speech, Governor Ross Barnett declared "I love and respect our heritage." The heritage he referred to could have included the Ole Miss students who joined the Confederate Army in 1862 and who were all killed or wounded one year later at the Battle of Gettysburg. It could also refer to the practice of segregation in Mississippi. What heritage should be loved and respected? How can you reconcile symbols, songs, and history that mean different things to different people?
9. Consider the source of this film: An Ole Miss fan who wanted to discuss the story and address the disgraceful actions of that night published the article that served as the basis of the documentary. What clues reveal that his interests were not to disgrace the modern University? How would it have been different if someone who was not fond of the University of Mississippi had written the article or made the film?

Game of Change Teacher Discussion Guide

1. How do the people who tell this story seem to feel about it over fifty years later?
2. Throughout the film, MSU players continue to stress that they had “earned the right to be there [at the championship]” and that they “just wanted to participate.” Loyola coach George Ireland was a pragmatist and didn’t care what race his players were as long as they won their games. What is it about sports that makes people want to leave differences and prejudices behind?
3. A poll revealed that 85% of Mississippians believed that the MSU basketball team should be allowed to play the integrated team. MSU students overwhelmingly agreed as did MSU’s board, which voted 8-3 in favor. With all of this support, why did certain lawmakers and politicians continue to insist that the game not take place?
4. MSU students staged a sit-in at President Dean W. Colvard’s home to show their support for the basketball team. What other examples are there of the use of sit-ins and non-violent protest during the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement?
5. One of the African American players from Loyola states that he was worried about possible confrontations initiated by his white Southern opponents. Why would this have been a valid concern?
6. What is the significance of the handshake between Loyola captain Jerry Harkness and MSU captain Joe Dan Gold before the start of the game?
7. MSU’s President Colvard and Coach Babe McCarthy were forced to flee the state to avoid being served legal papers that would have prevented the team from playing. What are the pros and cons of law and politics becoming involved in athletics?
8. Why is this an important story for Mississippians today to know and understand?
9. Consider the source of this film: The film was made by the son of one of the Loyola players. Does he exhibit any biases for or against either of the teams? Explain.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Journal Four: Ask Yourself:

1. Why was Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett afraid of the MSU basketball team playing an integrated team?
2. In recent decades, Ole Miss has replaced its southern colonel mascot with a bear. They've also erected a monument to James Meredith. While some condemn Ole Miss for the past, others criticize the removal of these symbols, calling them "pacifist" moves. Do you agree with Ole Miss changing their traditions? Why or why not?
3. Symbols have different meanings for different people. For example, the swastika has been used for centuries in both Hindu and Buddhist culture but since its 20th century appropriation by the Nazis it has been given a negative connotation. With this in mind, think of symbols such as Ole Miss' Colonel Reb or the Confederate flag. What makes these symbols positive or negative? Can they be both? Explain.