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Chapter (Lesson) 9. Community Power

Lesson Nine Intentions:

- Students reflect on the power of community advocacy
- Students consider what it means to be a “citizen”
- Students examine actions that can be taken, at every age, and whether or not someone is able to vote
- Students think about themselves as activists/ advocates

Lesson Nine Overview:

What can citizens do to contribute to environmental justice and regeneration? This lesson dives deeper into community advocacy and collective power. It positions every person, no matter their age, as a powerful agent of change, and considers the power and purpose of narrative in advocacy.

This lesson explores the above themes largely through the examples provided in films included in The Redford Center 2020 Power the Vote campaign. Students are invited to even more deeply consider how they learn about and engage with their own “local community,” and how they can take meaningful action (and document that action so others can learn from what is being done).

Key Themes:

- Reflection, observation and dialogue
- Human impact on the natural world and human communities
- The qualities and conditions of effective/inspired advocacy
- Understanding diverse needs and priorities in community
- Participating in local issues and decision-making

Duration: This lesson is designed for 30 mins., but can be done in 15-20, or expanded to 45-80 mins.

Lesson Components:

- Slides (in Google slides format; adaptable for educator needs/preferences)
- VIDEO: “Power the Vote”; “Standing Above the Clouds”; “Razing Liberty Square”
- WRITING/REFLECTION: advocacy; (youth) activist bio
- Resources and extension ideas (see end of lesson)

Materials:

- Educators: Lesson PDF, access to online media (for video viewing), slide deck (customizable)
- Students: pencil/pen and paper

Connections (see extensions/resources and standards below; full standards for this project [here](#)):

Justice, Environment; Film, Reading/Writing; History; STEM

Mini-challenge (can be used as a way of assignment/assessment); Further Reading; Watching; Exercises

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Leadership, Inspiration and Changes

Slide 3

John B. Lewis and **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** were two lifelong activists who passed away in 2020. They worked for their entire lives to care for others and for equity. Ask students to read these two quotes. ***How do they make your students feel?***

“If not us, then who? If not now, then when?” – John E. Lewis

“Fight for the things you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

- In only a few short words, what invitation does John Lewis offer/pose/challenge to humanity?
 - What is the “call to action” embedded in his statement? To what might/can his words apply?
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg asks and encourages people to fight for things that they care about—but to do so in a way that will lead others to join.
 - What does she mean by this?
 - Can you think of someone who has fought for something in a way that inspires others to join?
 - What inspires you to want to participate in something?
 - If there a difference between telling someone to do something, and inspiring action?

John E. Lewis:

“John Lewis grew up in an era of racial segregation. Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr., he joined the burgeoning civil rights movement. Lewis was a Freedom Rider, spoke at 1963's March on Washington and led the demonstration that became known as ‘Bloody Sunday.’ He was elected to Congress in 1986 and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011” ([biography](#); biography.com).

Ruth Bader Ginsburg:

“Ruth Bader Ginsburg graduated from Columbia Law School, going on to become a staunch courtroom advocate for the fair treatment of women and working with the ACLU’s Women’s Rights Project. She was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the U.S. Court of Appeals in 1980 and appointed to the Supreme Court by President Bill Clinton in 1993.” ([biography](#); biography.com)



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Speaking for Community

Slide 4

How closely, and how often, do we consider the ripple (impact) of a word or action? And when a decision is made – whether for a family, neighborhood, city, county, state, country, or beyond – what is done to ensure that the needs, rights, concerns, priorities, and health and wellbeing of all people are understood and given fair voice and consideration?

Who gets to speak for a “community”, and for the interests of a community? What if there is a dispute?...How do people voice/enact their concerns?

Thirty Meter Telescope and Mauna Kea

Slide 5

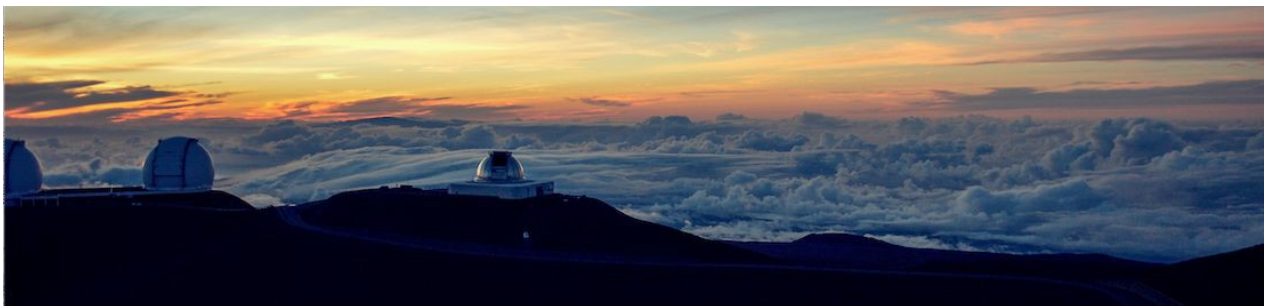
Native Hawaiian protesters have been blocking the construction of the **Thirty Meter Telescope** (TMT) on Maunakea (also spelled *Mauna Kea*), the highest mountain in Hawaii since the summer of 2019. Why? What different points of view have led to the dispute? What was considered/not considered in planning for the building of the telescope? **As the story was reported, were multiple points of view/voices included?**

Ask your students to read the following two articles, and research:

New York Times: [Why Are Native Hawaiians Protesting Against a Telescope?](#)

NPR: [Amid Protests In Hawaii Against Giant Telescope, Astronomers Look To 'Plan B'](#)

- Why do scientists want to build a telescope on Mauna Kea?
- What is special about this particular telescope? How could it expand scientific discovery?
- Why do native Hawaiians object to the building of a telescope on Mauna Kea?
- There are numerous telescopes on Mauna Kea – why are native Hawaiians protesting a new one?
- How have native Hawaiians gone about expressing their point of view?
 - Who is listening, reporting on this story?
 - Whose voices are being considered, or not included?
- What do those protesting hope to accomplish?
- What has happened since July 2019? How has the pandemic impacted protests?
- Are there similar stories/events that have arisen in other locations?
 - What connections can be made to this dispute?
- Can you imagine a peaceful resolution and solution to this dispute?
 - What would need to be understood/change/happen for a resolution?



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Standing Above the Clouds

(possible video)

Slide 6

Standing Above the Clouds follows Native Hawaiian mother-daughter activists as they stand to protect their sacred mountain Mauna Kea from the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope—the world’s largest telescope.

A few questions you might ask students to consider during/after viewing *Standing Above the Clouds*. This is a film clip longer ([15 minutes](#); pw: maunakea). (If a short clip is preferable, you might show the [trailer](#)).

During (things to look for):

- What relationship do native Hawaiians in the film feel to Mauna Kea?
 - What are some of the ways that they express, celebrate, uphold, deepen this relationship?
 - How do you think they came to experience this relationship?
- How does music/dance appear in the film/the activism of native Hawaiians protesting the telescope?
- How are different generations working together (children, parents, grandparents, elders)?
 - What do they hope to achieve? Why?

After:

- What stands out to you after watching this film?
- What ripples of action of were being addressed in the film? How?
- Were there particular moments, or details, that stood out to you? What are you left thinking about?

* What was different in researching/reading about the dispute over Mauna Kea and watching the film?

- If you were the filmmaker looking to tell the story of Mauna Kea and the Thirty Meter telescope, how might you tell it? Who would you interview? What film shots would you want to take? Why?

Environmental Justice

Slide 7

Native Hawaiians began to protest to protest Mauna Kea, not because they wish to protest science, but instead because “they are seeking **respect for sacred places, and our planet**” ([Smithsonian](#)).

In other communities, it is not an object or building that individuals and communities worry will obstruct their land and lives, but the waste and pollution impacting their water, air, land, food, and homes. For still others, environmental injustice is about displacement, or being forced to move. For example, [Razing Liberty Square](#) is about a historically Black community in Miami that’s being threatened with destruction in order to build housing for wealthy property owners who are pushing their properties inland due to rising sea levels.

The following is the definition of “environmental justice” given by the Environmental Protection Agency. **How might this justice be cultivated? What is not yet understood, felt, or prioritized that needs to be?**

environmental justice: The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

- What is/can be the role of citizens (no matter their age) in creating “systemic” change?
- What are some of the systems that need to be addressed in order to address environmental justice?
- What kinds of laws impact the environment and people?

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Advocacy and Narrative: Power the Vote (Videos - optional activity)

Slides 8, 9, 10

Exploring advocacy and narrative through **Power the Vote** short films.

In 2020, The Redford Center, in collaboration with [League of Conservation Voters Education Fund](#), [Pacific Islanders in Communications \(PIC\)](#), [Working Films](#), [Far Star Action Fund](#), and [Culture Surge](#), supported 10 impactful filmmakers in creating 1:30-4:00 minute short films in a **collective call for civic engagement**.

Each film covers at least one or more of **six inspirational storytelling threads** drawn from Culture Surge's recently launched [Storyteller's Guide to Changing the World](#) (as featured in the Power the Vote campaign):

1. "Together, we have power": Stories of personal & collective power
2. "There is abundance": Stories that show there's more than enough for everyone
3. "We lead by caring about each other": Stories of people collaboratively leading the way to make change, that show people caring about each other and their communities
4. "We deserve joy": Stories of joy and self-care
5. "We all belong": Stories of our common mission, that show we all belong and have value
6. "Curiosity is the path to our best future": Stories of curiosity about each other and society, stories of people asking bold questions about the future they want to build

The calls to action of each film include:

- Vote early, vote safely
- Organize your pod to vote
- Make your vote plan
- * What others do you notice/experience?

Have students explore Power the Vote website and select a film, or several films to view; or have groups watch one or a selection together.

You might have students consider things like:

- What stood out to you in this film (or these films)?
- How was the story told? From whose/what point of view?
- What do you think inspired this film? Is the inspiration made explicit - how?
- Which of the storytelling threads from Culture Surge did you recognize?
- If you were going to make a short film to encourage civic engagement, what would your film focus on? How would you tell the story you'd like to tell?

Advocacy, Activism and Originality

Slide 11

While advocacy and activism are often associated with community, and focused community engagement, the most effective advocacy and activism arising from and utilizes the unique gifts, talents, inspirations, experiences, and interests of each individual person. When those gifts are harmonized, collective power then can become even stronger.

To explore with students:

What do you/might you bring to your own advocacy/activism?

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★ Lesson Nine Challenge Prep: Using Video to Share Solutions

Slide 12

Introduction:

As we have experienced from this program, video can be a wonderful tool to teach people new skills or share solutions to problems. Whenever you are sharing something that you want others to learn from, it's important to demonstrate a clear example with steps and show supporting details that will help others recreate the process.

Challenge:

Make a how-to video, sharing the steps to something you've learned how to do that benefits your family and might help someone else. For example, you could walk people through how to cook something, how to use leftover food, how to plant a garden or a planter box, how to compost, how to make a reusable version of something, how to build something you've built before that's been useful to you; how to write a story; how to create a game; how to connect with community in creative ways; how to research local issues; how to write a letter to your local government...

Additional Video/Discussion: *Uniontown*

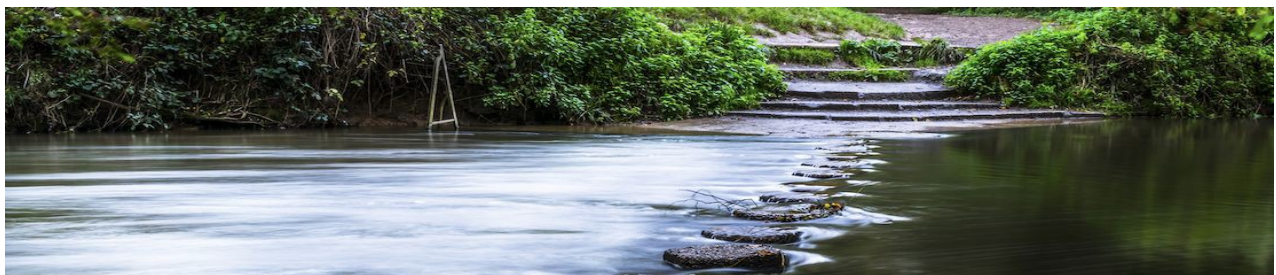
An additional film you might explore (15 minute version) – *Uniontown* – : [HERE](#)

In the midst of a high-stakes local election, a group of grassroots activists in rural Alabama band together to take on industrial polluters and complacent politicians. Winner of Best Short Film at EarthX Film Festival and The Reel South Award at Indie Grits Film Festival. Official Selection at Big Sky Documentary Film Festival and American Documentary Film Festival.

Additional Video/Discussion: *Environmental Legacy*

An additional film you might explore – *Robert Redford's Environmental Legacy* – : [HERE](#)

Actor and activist Robert Redford tells his personal story of what moves him to protect the environment, and his journey in doing so. "Art and nature combined, makes the world a better place."



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Suggested Standards: Language Arts and History/Social Studies

This lesson gives students multiple opportunities to engage with **language, images and text**, with particular focus on how point of view impacts the story one tells. Students also have a chance to reflect on their own experience and point of view in **conversation and writing**.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Suggested Standards: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)

Throughout this lesson students are encouraged to understand the primacy of **observation**, and the need to attend closely to **patterns and relationships**, and to be able to envision **the impact of actions**.

- Patterns and relationships
- Precision and depth in observation
- Inference and probability
- Ratios and proportional relationships

Suggested Connections: NGSS/Environment

Students are encouraged to make connections between the health of natural systems and the health of human beings and human communities. In addition, phenomena and change may be observable at one scale and not another, or may require a different way of inquiry and attention to detect and understand.

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- Health of human lives and health of natural systems
- Flow of energy and matter at the scale of the entire planet
- Exchange of matter between natural systems and human societies affects long-term functioning of both
- Phenomena that can be observed at one scale may not be noticed/observable at another scale
- Systems interact with other systems
- Stability might be disturbed either by sudden events or gradual changes that accumulate over time

Suggested Connections: Social Justice

The integration of perspectives and voices in this lesson is intended to encourage greater appreciation for the depth of **one's own identity**, and **respectful curiosity about others' lived experience**.

Diversity. Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.

Action. Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to... injustice.

Suggested Connections: Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Components of this lesson are meant to support students' sense of **confidence and agency**, as well as their social-awareness and sense for relationships; as well as how much relationships need tending, both with **respect** to our relationship with the natural world and each other.

- Self-awareness (confidence, self-efficacy)
- Social-awareness (perspective-taking, appreciating diversity, respect for others)
- Social skills (communication, relationship building)
- Responsible decision-making (evaluating, reflecting)

Suggested Connections: UN Sustainability Goals

(*Click the images to go to pages on the UN's website that detail the goals and intentions behind each.)

