

If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Why does this matter?

Poll Everywhere



If We Live in the Present, Why Should We Care About the Past?

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Presentation goals:

- Address three historical struggles for voting rights
- Connect those struggles to the current discussion on voting rights
- Create an avenue for civic engagement for students



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Pinned Tweet



Rep Ayanna Pressley  @RepPressley · Mar 6

I am honored & excited to be introducing my very 1st amendment on the House floor, an amendment to [#HR1](#), the [#ForthePeopleAct](#). My amendment will lower the voting age from 18 to 16, allowing our youth to have a seat at the table of democracy. [#16toVote](#)



 962  1.6K  7.3K 

If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Challenge the Narrative

- Don't replace. Add.
- When teaching about a people, find voices from those people.
- Present historical humans as complicated.
- Be purposeful. Share that purpose with students.
- Give students space to [take action](#).

If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should [insert group here] vote?

- How did groups agitate for suffrage when they didn't hold the power?
 - African Americans
 - Women
 - 18-20 year olds
- How do we see that taking place today?
 - Youth movements

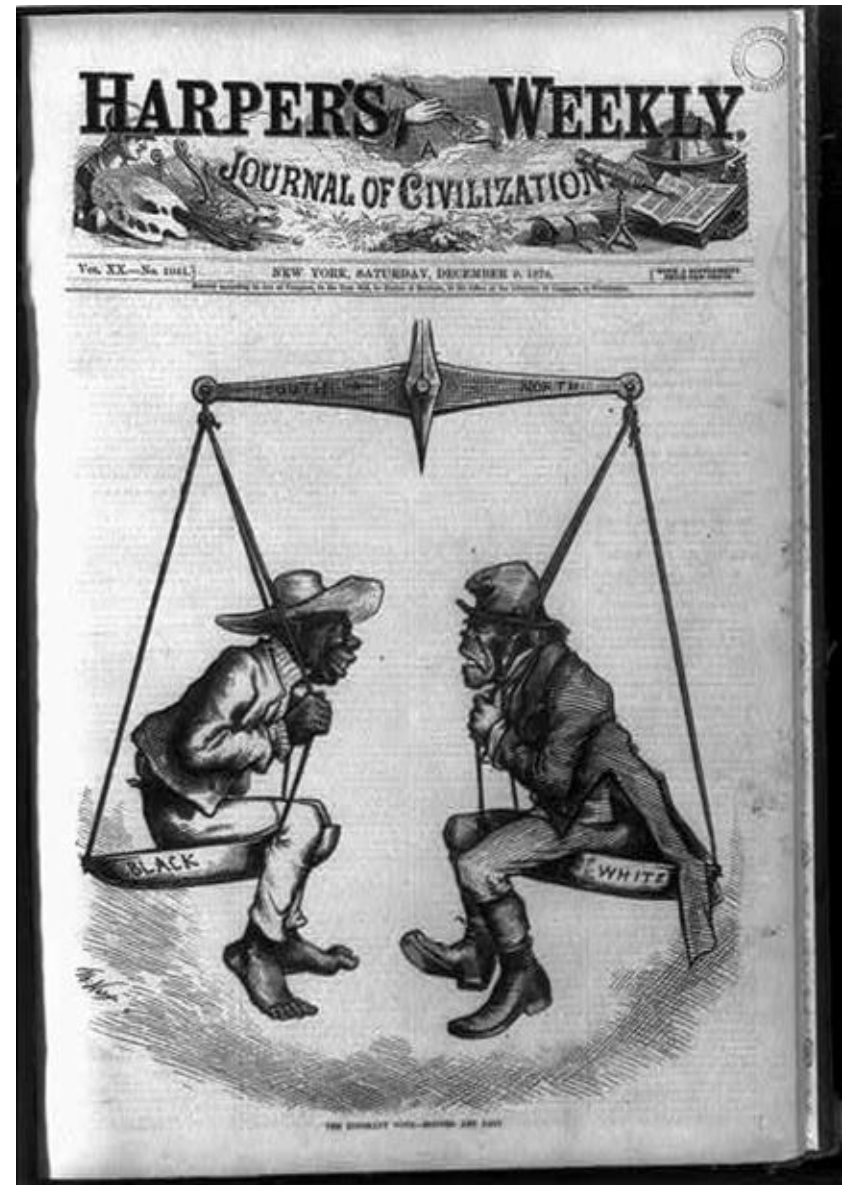


If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should black men vote?

The struggle for black suffrage

- Some free blacks could vote before the Dred Scott decision
- Citizenship (14th amendment) didn't guarantee suffrage
- After the 15th amendment, states passed laws to limit black voting

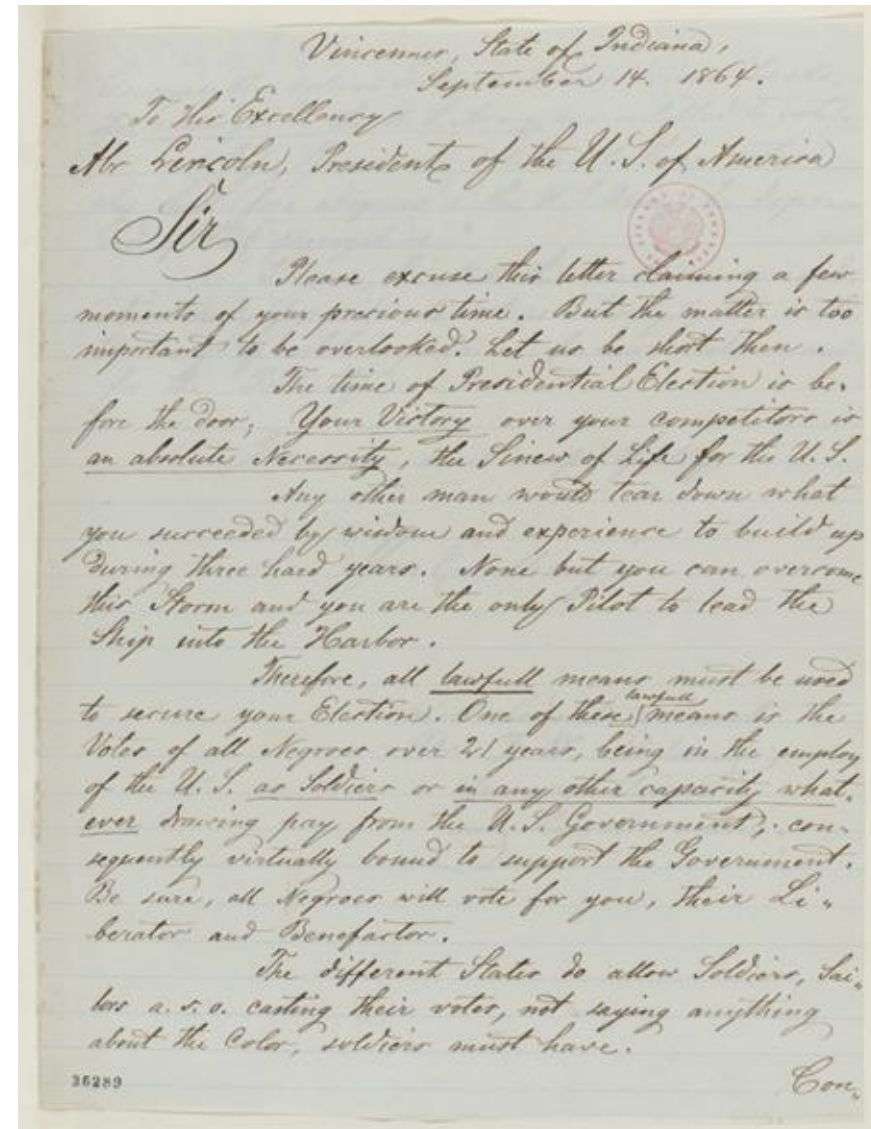


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The struggle for black suffrage

- The reasons people supported:
 - African Americans were citizens
 - Many had served in the Civil War
 - They were capable
 - They deserved to be part of the decision-making
- The reasons people opposed:
 - Whites feared black power
 - African Americans didn't have the mental capacity
 - Voting would lead to race-mixing



If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should black men vote?

The struggle for black suffrage

- What happened next
 - When Reconstruction ended, Southern states enacted laws to limit black voting
 - Poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, threats
 - Voting Rights Act of 1965 finally ensured black voting rights

For Collection Period Beginning Oct. 1, 1956 and Ending on Feb. 1, 1957

POLL TAX RECEIPT

COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, ALA., 1-21- 1957 No 2425

RECEIVED OF Rose Louise Parks Male Female

Dollars (\$ 1.50)

For Poll Taxes at \$1.50 per year for the following years: 1956 () 1957 ()

District No. _____ Precinct No. This Year 27 Precinct No. Last Year _____ Color Che

Countersigned By John D. Draves State Comptroller. _____ Tax Collector

If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should women vote?

The struggle for woman suffrage

- The reasons supported:
 - Women contributed to the economy
 - Decisions impacting them were made without their input
 - Women should not be limited to the home
 - They wanted to vote
- The reasons people opposed:
 - Women will vote like their husbands
 - Men will be forced into domesticity
 - Women already have enough influence over home and family
 - Women are not political creatures



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Should women vote?

The struggle for woman suffrage

- What happened next
 - White women could vote in 1920 in all elections
 - Native women were not citizens until 1924
 - Asian women could vote in 1952
 - Black women's vote was guaranteed in 1965
 - ERA introduced in 1923, still not ratified

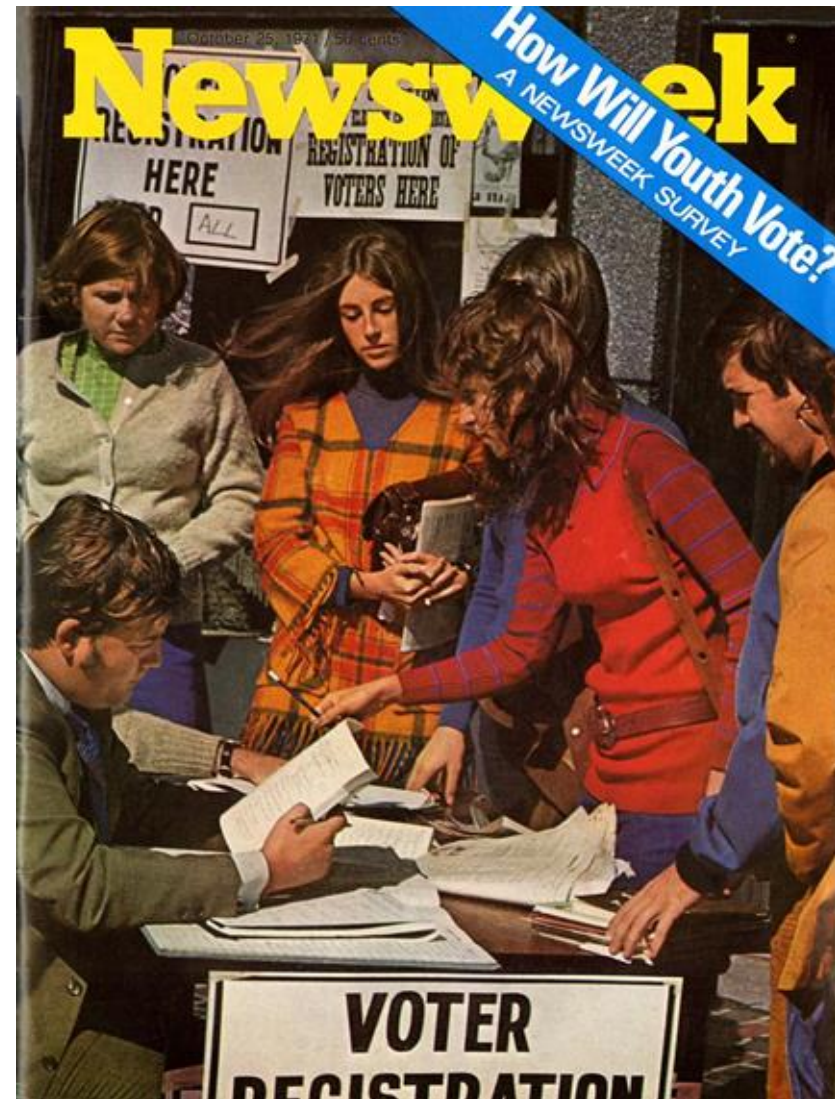


If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should 18-20-year-olds vote?

The struggle for youth suffrage

- WWII-era congressman suggested voting for 18-20
- During Vietnam War, young people said: “Old Enough to Fight, Old Enough to Vote”
- 26th amendment was fastest to ratify



If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should 18-20-year-olds vote?

The struggle for youth suffrage

- The reasons people supported:
 - Youth voting would start early voting habits
 - 18-20 were adults
 - They were fighting in Vietnam
 - Many youth were living on their own and had adult responsibilities
- The reasons people opposed:
 - Youth would vote like their parents
 - 18-20 weren't mature enough to vote
 - Youth had fewer responsibilities than in the past
 - Constitutionality of the extension of the youth vote in Voting Rights Act



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Should youth vote?

The struggle for youth suffrage

- What happened next
 - Half of the newly enfranchised voters voted in the 1972 presidential election
 - 18-20 rates have decreased every year since
 - Two exceptions: 1992 and 2008
 - Struggles to define where college students could vote



If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

What actions did they take?

Black men

- Speeches, local and national organization, newspapers

Women

- Petitions, speeches, local and national organization, picketing, hunger strikes

18-20 year olds

- Protests



If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should 16/17-year-olds vote?

The struggle for youth suffrage

- Some municipalities allow for limited 16/17 voting
- Few attempts to lower the voting age nationally
- Discussion has increased in the last two years, especially with youth movements related to gun violence and environment
- Encouraged discussion about civics instruction in schools



If we live the present, why should we care about the past?

Should 16 and 17-year-olds vote?

The struggle for youth suffrage

- The reasons people support:
 - Some 16/17 year olds are charged as adults
 - 16/17 year olds are impacted by gun violence, climate change, and other issues
 - 16/17 year olds often pay taxes, drive and contribute to the community
 - Youth voting will create good voting habits
 - Youth want to have a voice
- The reasons people oppose:
 - 16/17 don't have the interest or education
 - 16/17 year olds not mature enough to vote
 - Youth will vote just like their parents
 - Youth don't have the mental capacity



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Activity

In groups of two or three

- Analyze your sources and determine if they are for or against. What clues led you to that analysis?
- Identify the arguments used by the creators, and which ones you find most convincing.

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Activity

In groups of two or three

- Read the arguments for/against 16/17 voters. What parallels do you see?

For

They want to vote.
enough.

They participate in their community.
parents do.

They are impacted by climate change and guns.

They are taxed without representation.

They have jobs, drive cars, and support families.

They are intelligent enough to vote.

They need to have a voice.

overwhelmingly “liberal” voters.

Against

They are not mature

They will vote the way their

They don't know enough about civics.

They don't want to vote.

Their voice is already represented by adults.

They are not political.

They will be

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Activity

In groups of two or three

- Create propaganda for or against lowering the voting age, based on one or more of these reasons
- Which method do you think is most effective for sharing your perspective?
 - Editorial, petition, speech, protest
- Role, Audience, Format, Topic

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Should [insert group here] [insert action here]?

How have people fought for similar rights in the past?

What can we learn from their methods, opposition and outcomes?

What does my community/state/nation need from me?

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Resources

Google Slides: <https://bit.ly/2NZa8HO>

Primary Sources: <https://bit.ly/2FoquHq>

Jessica Ellison: jessica.ellison@mnhs.org, @jessellison