



History

The Freedom Summer story altered the course of the Civil Rights Movement and transformed a nation, offering a relevant, powerful teacher for future generations. During this present time of social unrest and protest, it is important to teach the next generation about the history, roles, responsibilities and social-emotional capacities undergirding civil rights and social justice.

Originally known as the Mississippi Summer Project, Freedom Summer took place on Oxford, Ohio’s, Western College campus in June 1964. Its participants, about 800 northern college students, learned about history and politics in the South while preparing to register African Americans to vote and to encourage a new political party. At the time, Black Mississippians were barred from [Democratic party](#) primaries and caucuses, and the movement sought to challenge the party’s all-white delegation at the [Democratic National Convention](#) that August.

Three of those trainees, Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman would be murdered by the Ku Klux Klan after beginning their work in Mississippi. These murders focused national and international attention on the efforts of Freedom Summer, serving as a turning point for the civil rights movement.



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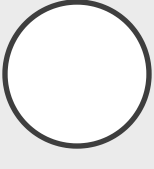
About the Exhibit

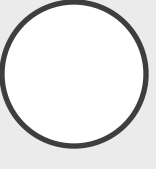
The Freedom Summer Traveling exhibit connects a powerful chapter of U.S. civil rights history to current day challenges, “Finding Freedom Summer” offers timely reminders of our nation’s troubled history, emphasizes the social-emotional attributes of those who stand to make a difference, and challenges youth to find and understand the power of their voices.

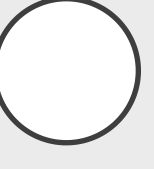
Designed for students in the fourth grade level, the exhibit focuses on the summer of 1964 and the Freedom Summer training that took place on Oxford, Ohio’s, Western College for Women, this deep learning project, rooted in art integration but versatile in its applications, challenges students to apply four active learning capacities:

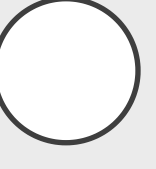
There are 12 themes designed to engage students to learn more.

1. Volunteers
2. History of the Freedom SUMmer Project
3. Voting Rights
4. Freedom Schools and Community Centers
5. 1964
6. Why Mississippi?
7. John Lewis
8. Fannie Lou Hamer
9. Robert Moses
10. James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner
11. Freedom Summer Memorial
12. Lessons of Freedom Summer Bow to be an Upstander and Ally

**Recognize**
connections between Freedom Summer’s people, places and topics through visual communication and scaffolded reflection.

**Synthesize**
historical content with personal experiences to increase empathy for others and advocacy for human rights and social justice.

**Create**
a visual representation communicating new understanding of Freedom Summer, relating a big idea connecting the past, present and personal experience.

**Reflect**
on meaning through artwork, individually and collectively, privately and in public spaces educating others in the community.

Through engagement with powerful visual imagery and storytelling, the curiosity and enthusiasm stimulated by the arrival of a traveling exhibit, and immersive lesson plans connecting the past with themes relevant and important to today’s students, the project aims to draw students from across Ohio deeply into a multi-faceted learning experience stimulating critical thinking, social emotional learning, and creative expression.

Academically, the experience encompasses elements of state and national history, social studies, language arts and visual arts. Socially, it traces the roots of the social strife and protest gripping the nation today.

The interdisciplinary Miami project team encompasses an impressive range of skills and backgrounds, from archivists and art museum directors to art education and communication design faculty. Team members already have committed the necessary time and expertise to planning and implementing the program and its core academic components.

The “Finding Freedom Summer” team respectfully requests a grant from the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation to support the design and production of the traveling panel exhibit as a focal point for the deep learning experience. Limited additional funding supports lesson plan facilitation and logistical support bringing the exhibit to Ohio schools.

Topics related to civil rights and social justice are difficult to explore via textbook and classroom learning, and can be particularly difficult to grasp for students whose communities may be insulated against the reality and ramifications of racism. We are again at a time in our nation’s history when our next generation must be challenged to understand our nation’s troubled past, reflect and think critically about the world around them, and productively channel their thoughts and feelings into personal expression.

The Finding Freedom Summer Traveling Exhibit project offers valuable background in history and social studies while stimulating social emotional learning, meaningful reflection and creative expression through language arts, the social visual arts and more. It reminds us all that the efforts of a handful of young people can sway a nation.

Using the visual power of a traveling panel exhibit to tell the story of a crucial time in history, Finding Freedom Summer confronts a timely and critical need by presenting 4th-5th grade teachers with a series of adaptable lesson plans, a range of discussion-stimulating topics and a variety of activities channeling creative expression. The project connects the past with the present while immersing students deeply in timeless human themes and challenging them to find their voices.

Miami University faculty, staff and the Western College Alumnae Association have leveraged the expertise of undergraduate student talent to develop and refine the lesson plans, activities and essential supporting resources.

“Finding Freedom Summer” focuses on achieving a core set of educational outcomes through deep-learning practices. While its lesson plans can be seamlessly adapted for other grade levels, the project focuses initially on growth in the intellectual and social capacities of fourth and fifth graders. The Deep Learning section offers specific details on outcomes and deep-learning applications. Miami University Libraries is deeply committed to providing users with an educational experience that promotes the core values of Freedom Summer and the American civil rights movement.



Related Resources

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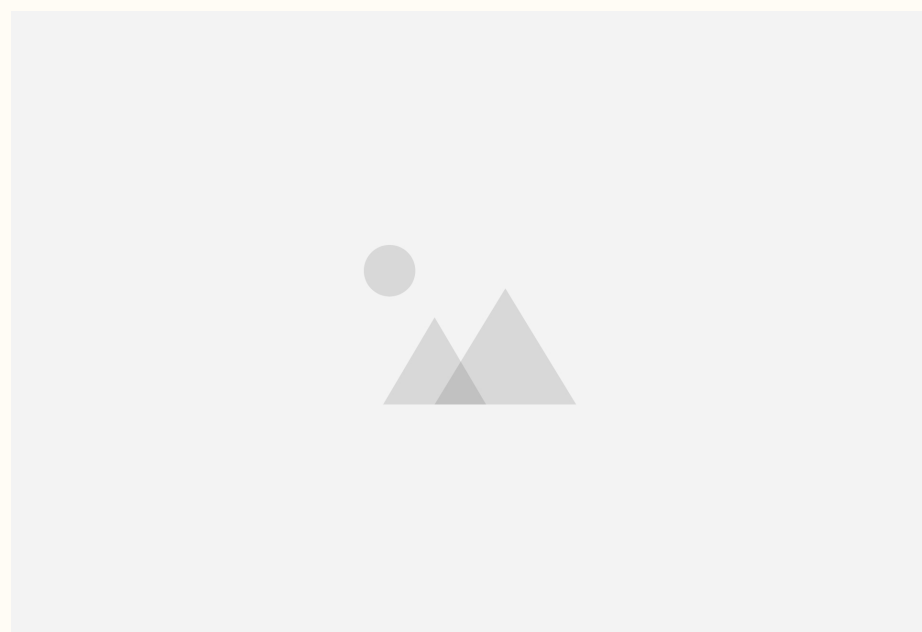
Freedom Summer Activities at Miami University

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National Civil Rights Organizations and Archives

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Books

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Documentaries

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