

## YOUTH MOVEMENTS PRIMARY SOURCE SET

[mnhs.org/iium/sets/youth](http://mnhs.org/iium/sets/youth)

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At the turn of the 20th century, there were about 1.75 million child laborers in the United States. Children provided a cheap labor force for manufacturing in mills, selling newspapers on the streets, and working in mines. These children were not afforded the chance to go to school like the children of wealthy families. On July 7, 1903, Mary Harris “Mother” Jones organized a march made up of laborers, dozens of them being children, to raise money to support those workers that were striking and to bring attention to the injustices of child labor.

During World War I and World War II, children were encouraged to buy and save war savings stamps, also known as thrift stamps, to learn how to save and support the war effort. Schools were important participants in these efforts. Children were recruited through schools, and during WWII, the Treasury Department created teaching materials related to war savings stamps.

Many actions of the Civil Rights Movement involved children and young adults. School integration involved children as young as Ruby Bridges (first grade) to James Meredith (University of Mississippi). The sit-in campaigns of 1960 started on February 1 when four Black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat at the “whites only” Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, to protest legal racial segregation. John Lewis, and many other young adults, led protests, marches, and demonstrations, and organized groups such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Environmental activism draws significant youth involvement, as young people look toward the future of the planet. Xiuhtezcatl Martinez is an Indigenous climate activist and artist bringing awareness to climate change and educating youth on action they can take through speaking and music. The Keystone XL Pipeline, a pipeline proposed to move tar sands, drew protests and battles from indigenous communities across the country. The pipelines pose a significant risk of exposure to toxic chemicals to humans and animals. Indigenous leaders and activists Winona LaDuke and Faith Spotted Eagle have worked to fight against the Keystone XL and Dakota Access Pipeline. Oceti Sakowin Youth and Allies were integral in raising awareness and fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline.

## RESOURCES

The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom (online exhibition, Library of Congress): <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/>

The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship (online exhibition, Library of Congress): <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african-american-odyssey/>

Voices of Civil Rights (online exhibition, Library of Congress):  
<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civilrights/>

Youth in the Civil Rights Movement (essay, Library of Congress):  
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/youth-in-the-civil-rights-movement/>

Child Labor in America (lesson, Library of Congress):  
<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/child-labor-in-america/>

Child Labor in the United States (University of Iowa):  
<https://laborcenter.uiowa.edu/special-projects/child-labor-public-education-project/about-child-labor/child-labor-us-history>

Earth Day at 50 (blog, Library of Congress):  
<https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2020/04/earth-day-at-fifty-april-22/>

Celebrate Earth Day with Primary Sources (blog, Library of Congress):  
<https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2017/04/celebrating-earth-day-with-primary-sources/>