

A CONCERNED CITIZEN: CIVICS IN ACTION

What I know • What I learned • What I want to know more about

ACTIVIST & SOCIAL CHANGE (see vocab)

What I know:

What I learned:

What I want to know more about:

OIL SPILLS

What I know:

What I learned:

What I want to know more about:

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What I know • What I learned • What I want to know more about

PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE (see vocab)

What I know:

What I learned:

What I want to know more about:

YOUTH CLIMATE ACTIONS

What I know:

What I learned:

What I want to know more about:

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INTRO

Purpose for watching film: Relate to your classroom activities. This film is about social change and civics; it's about actions that transform society, changing the way people think and act. It shows how ordinary people can make a difference and the ripple effects of our individual actions. And it might change the way you think about—and act on—issues that you care about.

We are going to pause the film in places to think and write about what we are learning.

ACTIVATE PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Write: Fill out “What I know” sections in activity sheet.

DISCUSSION GUIDE (with suggested pauses)

Pause 2:40

Think: Who takes care of our democracy? Public health? Is it only the elected officials, government, or medical community?

FILM: Falls to all of us. Sometimes the government policies cause harmful effects to public health and environment. It's up to people to make government change the harmful policies.

Why did Riki's father work to ban DDT? What were his concerns?

FILM: Concerned about sick wildlife, sick people—if DDT was killing robins, it might also cause harm to his children. He stepped up to fix things by suing the state of Wisconsin to ban DDT.

Write: “What I learned” section of activity sheet for “Activists & Social Change.”

Pause 5:17

Think: How might degrees in marine biology and toxicology have prepared Riki to deal with effects of oil spills?

VOCAB: a marine toxicologist deals with the fate and effects of pollution in the sea; Riki's specialty is marine oil pollution

Why did the *Exxon Valdez* spill inspire Riki to work towards social change instead of science?

FILM: Riki cared about her community and she was concerned that the spill would harm wildlife and people's health, and the local economy. She realized that oil spills could happen anywhere we drill for oil and that other communities and people would be in harm's way. So, she decided to use her knowledge to work “upstream of oil spills” towards transition to a healthy energy future. She realized that the transition would be driven by ordinary people in America demanding change.

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What event or issue inspires you to action? **Look for ideas** from the film that you can use to develop actions for your issue of concern.

Write: "What I learned" section of activity sheet for "Oil Spills."

Pause 8:30

Think: Scientific studies have found that oil and dispersants combined were more toxic to oil spill workers and wildlife than oil alone. Why might this be so? (See vocab: dispersant and solvent.)

FILM: Dispersants are toxic by nature. These industrial products contain solvents that facilitate the movement of oil across cell membranes and cause or contribute to chemical illnesses from oil exposures.

What are chemical illnesses and how are they different from other illnesses? (See vocab.)

FILM: Chemical illnesses are caused by exposure to man-made chemicals; they are not caused by biological agents like bacteria, viruses, or natural substances like pollen.

Pause 10:30

Think: What were likely symptoms of chemical illnesses?

FILM: Examples include trouble breathing, internal hemorrhaging, swelling, skin rash. These are the same symptoms for illnesses caused by biological agents.

Why did medical doctors diagnose these symptoms for illnesses caused by biological agents instead of chemical illness?

FILM: Many of the initial symptoms for biological and chemical illnesses are identical. Medical doctors treated for biological agents which did not relief symptoms for chemical illnesses. Public health care professionals are usually not trained to recognize, diagnosis, or treat chemical illnesses.

Pause 14:40

Think: What surprised you to learn about the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster?

FILM (some ideas):

- Toxicity of dispersants used in oil spill response.
- Wide-spread effects of harm from AIR and water pollution to wildlife and humans (sick wildlife, sick people).
- Long-term harm and chronic illnesses from oil spill exposure.
- EPA and Coast Guard are not in control of oil spill response ("sock puppets" for industry).
- Government agencies were part of "cover up" to make public believe beaches and seafood were safe.

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- Government allows human health risk tradeoffs to “benefit” the overall economy like tourism and seafood sales.
- Fishermen thought seafood was not safe to eat!

Write: “What I learned” section of activity sheet for “Oil Spills.”

Pause 16:34

Think: Why was the oil spill in the Kalamazoo River different than the other two oil disasters?

FILM: This spill was caused by a pipeline rupture, not a tanker wreck or a deep sea well blowout. This spill was tar sands oil that sinks, not conventional oil that floats. This spill was a freshwater spill, not a spill into the ocean.

In what ways was this spill the same as the other two oil disasters?

FILM: Sick wildlife, sick people. Harmful effects continued for years after spill. Industry and government were not prepared and did not know how to clean it up. Government and industry covered up harm to human health and wildlife.

Why was it the most expensive oil spill cleanup on record?

FILM: Oil spill response is designed for conventional oil that floats. Tar sands oil sinks when spilled. The nation’s emergency oil spill response plan has not been updated in over 25 years and does not consider oil that sinks (or explodes like frack gas).

Write: “What I learned” section of activity sheet for “Oil Spills.”

Pause 20:47

Think: Why do civics and oil spills/energy go “hand in hand”? Does this apply to other issues?

FILM: Transition from fossil fuels will take citizens who understand the human cost of our oil dependency and who understand how to take effective action to make government change.

Why is it critical to include the South in movement building? And “red and rural”?

FILM: It’s going to take all of us, working together, to transition off fossil fuels. These areas typically support the fossil fuel industry. Changing the way people think and behave in these areas is critical to success. (Also, these communities have been historically oppressed and have cultivated strong leadership critical for a diverse movement.)

What is the democracy crisis?

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FILM: Big oil is in our government, making laws or weakening laws that protect the environment, making sure rules are weak on environmental protection (e.g., regulatory takings), and minimizing fines for damages in courts. We can't get to a sustainable future without an authentic democracy in which human persons rule, not money and artificial persons.

How does corporate money in government affect our ability to control big corporations? Transition off fossil fuels? Protect our air, water, and land from chemical pollution?

FILM: Elected officials need big money to run campaigns. They are more responsive to those who give them big donations, not the voting public. These big corporations are primarily concerned with making money, not public health and wellbeing or the environmental health or worker health and safety.

What is *Citizens United* and why is it important?

FILM: This 2010 Supreme Court ruling gave artificial persons a protected 1st Amendment right to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence political campaigns (see vocab). This was the last straw to dismantling free and fair elections, a central pillar of democracy. Courts have been empowering corporations with human rights since 1886!

Write: "What I learned" section of activity sheet for "Activists & Social Change."

Pause 24:18

Think: What is MoveToAmend?

FILM: A national grassroots campaign to amend the U.S. Constitution to affirm that only natural persons have natural rights and that money is not protected speech. An amendment overrules judge-made law like corporate personhood.

How did *Citizens United* and MoveToAmend cause Daniel Lee to be more strategic about his actions?

FILM: *Citizens United* made Daniel mad (and 83% of other Americans). He realized that a lot of issues he was concerned about were connected with corporate power in government. He realized the root of this power is corporate personhood and that it would be more strategic to go after the source of corporate power rather than fight one corporation at a time.

What is a current example of people writing their own legislation to transition off fossil fuels and movement-building towards this end?

CURRENT EVENTS: The Green New Deal and the Sunrise Movement.

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What actions did Daniel take?

FILM: Daniel started a MTA chapter in his “home town” and his “home town” of Los Angeles was the first major city to pass a resolution to endorse the MTA campaign. The process of doing this would educate other people about the problem of *Citizens United* and well as showing people they have the power to fix this. He also ran for public office.

Pause 28:30

Think: What is the “heart of democracy and civics”—doing effective social change?

FILM: Get people in community together, find common ground, identify the problem, identify possible solutions, identify/create an action plan to fix the problem, and do it.

What is the gap between the ideal and real democracy?

FILM: Ideal is the traditional teaching about the three branches of government and the system of checks and balances; ideal gives illusion that we have an authentic democracy. Real is how democracy has been disabled by money in government and court rulings that gave human rights to artificial persons. Gap is the difference between the two and it defines the work needed to move us back towards the ideal democracy where people rule.

What inspired Riki to create civics lessons for youth?

FILM: Middle schools students asked what was the most important thing to work on if she was their age. The students didn’t know that youth their age were suing the federal government and they wanted to learn more. However, there were no lessons for educators to teach youth about these important cases. So she wrote a curriculum!

What is #youthvgov about? Why are the youth suing the federal government?

FILM: Youth are suing the federal government over not taking care of the atmosphere and climate. Lawyers are working with youth to elevate their voices and bring attention to the fact that we all need to reclaim and take back (and strengthen) our democracy. Youth are claiming harm to 5th Amendment constitutional rights of due process and equal protection; they are claiming a new constitutional right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate system to secure their 5th Amendment rights to life, liberty, and property.

Write: “What I learned” sections of activity sheet for “Activists & Social Change.”

Pause 28:30

What are artificial persons and why do they exist?

FILM: See vocab. They are business models. One type is a corporation, which exists to make money. The courts made artificial persons equal to human persons in 1886. This set

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the stage for the courts to give human rights to artificial persons. Armed with human rights, corporations have steadily gained power over the people through over 100 years of judge-made law.

What is the Public Trust Doctrine? What does this have to do with the youth case?

FILM: See vocab. The Public Trust Doctrine is key to intergenerational equity, justice and sovereignty; i.e., sustainability. It's about taking care of our air, water, and land so that future generations will be able to survive and prosper. Governments have a duty of care for certain natural and cultural resources that are critical to survival. Courts have defined these resources through judge-made law (common law). The youth are asking the court to recognize a healthy atmosphere and stable climate system as critical resources under the Public Trust Doctrine; and they are claiming harm as beneficiaries under the Public Trust Doctrine.

Why is civics education important?

FILM: Because scientist bring information but it's up to citizens to understand the information and how it applies to the problem, and then push elected officials for solutions, based on the science, not the money. Citizens have a right and a duty to hold public officials accountable to the laws and the people. This is civics.

What is that Timeline about?

FILM: Timeline is an interactive tool for students to explore to understand our democracy journey as a power struggle between natural and artificial persons and between those "left out" of the founding documents to gain recognition of their rights under law. Blue cards are laws that strengthen democracy and human rights; yellow and orange cards are laws that weaken democracy, based on internal threats from fear of other and love of power.

Write: "What I learned" sections of activity sheet for "Activists & Social Change" and "Public Trust Doctrine."

Pause 32:10

Think: Solutions—What are people doing to transform society?

FILM: • Riki co-founded MoveToAmend and wrote civics lessons to teach basic democracy operating instructions to empower youth to make a difference from a young age.

- Daniel stepped up and ran for city office. He is now a Culver City Council member and he is holding oil industry accountable to laws. He wants to see more young people run for public office in local, state, and federal government.
- Ella is part of a Youth Climate Council that is pushing Portland, Oregon, on a path towards a cleaner, greener economy. Youth care and youth matter.

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- Jamie co-founded Zero Hour to drive public action on climate justice and transition off fossil fuels.
- Kiran is a community organizer and one of the youth suing the federal government over not protecting the climate. "Ideal democracy" is irrelevant once one realizes about corporate influence in government. He is working to bring people together as a global community to challenge corporate rule.

Write: "What I learned" sections of activity sheet for "Activists & Social Change."

END

Think: Has this film changed the way you think about activists?

Has it changed how you think about some of these issues? Or how you might move your own ideas into action?

Write: "What I would like to learn more about" sections of activity sheet.

Share: What students would like to learn more about. Determine if any issues could be pursued as a classroom or independent study project.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT...

Civics & Social Change

Activating My Democracy, Lesson 1: How to Move Ideas Into Action, 2019 edition

grades 9–12: <https://ultimatecivics.org/high-school-lessons/>

grades 6–8: <https://ultimatecivics.org/middle-school-lessons/>

Activating My Democracy, Lesson 2: Understanding Values, Wealth & Rights, 2019 edition

grades 9–12: <https://ultimatecivics.org/high-school-lessons/>

grades 6–8: <https://ultimatecivics.org/middle-school-lessons/>

Activating My Democracy, Lessons 3–4: Who Rules, 2019 edition

grades 9–12: <https://ultimatecivics.org/high-school-lessons/>

grades 6–8: coming soon (June 2019)

Ultimate Civics Timeline of Rights, Power, & Oppression (also in Lessons 3–4)

interactive Timeline: <https://ultimatecivics.org/timeline/>

intro film and files: <https://ultimatecivics.org/timeline/>

Activating My Democracy, Lessons 5: Real People to the Rescue! 2019 edition

grades 9–12: <https://ultimatecivics.org/high-school-lessons/>

grades 6–8: coming soon (June 2019)

Toxic Chemical Exposures

Little Things Matter: The Impact of Toxins on the Developing Brain (Fraser Simon University)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6KoMAbz1Bw

Toxic Trespass—Environmental Links to Children’s Health: National Film Board of Canada

http://toxictrespass.com/film_trailer.php

Youth Activists & Climate Actions

Activating My Democracy, Lesson 6: Our Future is a Constitutional Right, 2019 edition

grades 9–12: <https://ultimatecivics.org/high-school-lessons/>

grades 6–8: <https://ultimatecivics.org/middle-school-lessons/>

In the news

Greta Thunberg—Teenage climate warrior, school strike for climate on May 24, 2019:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q- KLGRQh_w

CBS News 2019: www.cbsnews.com/news/juliana-versus-united-states-the-climate-change-lawsuit-that-could-stop-the-u-s-government-from-supporting-fossil-fuels-60-minutes/

National Geographic 2017: news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/03/kids-sue-us-government-climate-change/

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Our Children’s Trust: Climate case updates and resources

federal case: www.ourchildrenstrust.org/juliana-v-us

state cases: www.ourchildrenstrust.org/pending-state-actions

global cases: www.ourchildrenstrust.org/global-legal-actions

Short films of youth game changers

Brower Youth Awards, high school: <http://www.broweryouthawards.org/awardees/>

Young Voices for the Planet, middle school: www.youngvoicesfortheplanet.com/youth-climate-videos/

Youth activists & organizations for climate justice

Ella’s story: <https://ultimatecivics.org/ellas-story/>

Jamie’s story: <https://ultimatecivics.org/jamie-margolin-story/>

Ta’Kaiya Blaney, Earth Revolution: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqtTdy4OnQs

Xiuhtezcatl: www.xiuhtezcatl.com/projects/

Earth Guardians: www.earthguardians.org/

Green Schools: greenschoolsnationalnetwork.org/

iMatter: www.imatter.org/

This is Zero Hour: thisiszerohour.org/

Schools Under 2 C: www.schoolsunder2c.org/

Sunrise Movement: www.sunrisemovement.org/

YouCAN Campaign: www.ourchildrenstrust.org/learn-how-to-start-a-youcan-chapter

YouthvGov: www.youthvgov.org

Public Trust Doctrine

Activating My Democracy, Lesson 6: Our Future is a Constitutional Right, part 2, 2019 edition
with resources for youth and educators

grades 9–12: <https://ultimatecivics.org/high-school-lessons/>

grades 6–8: <https://ultimatecivics.org/middle-school-lessons/>

Public Trust Doctrine: A Primer, Univ. of Oregon School of Law, 2016

https://law.uoregon.edu/images/uploads/entries/PTD_primer_7-27-15_EK_revision.pdf

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VOCABULARY

activist: a person who works to bring about social or political change

ballot initiative: a type of ballot measure that allows citizens to propose a statute or constitutional amendment

Cancer Alley: a name for an 82-mile stretch of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans that contains numerous chemical and industrial plants and numerous clusters of cancer patients

campaign finance regulation: rules on giving and spending money during election activities and on reporting donor names

chemical illness: a disease caused by exposure to man-made chemicals (e.g., cancer, asbestosis, chemical pneumonia) as distinct from a disease caused by *allergies* to natural substances in the environment (e.g., hay fever, allergic asthma, certain food allergies, anaphylaxis), *bacteria* (e.g., pneumonia, Staph infections, food poisoning from *Salmonella*) or a *virus* (e.g., common cold, flu, HIV/AIDS, smallpox)

Citizens United: a 2010 judge-made law that recognized the right of artificial persons (i.e., corporations and unions) to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence political campaigns as a protected 1st Amendment right

corporate personhood: a body of judge-made laws that recognize constitutional rights for artificial persons

corporation: a business model; a group of people with a license to do business as a type of artificial person

democracy: rule by the people as in direct democracy and indirect or representational democracy (i.e., a democratic republic as in the U.S.)

dispersant: an oil-based chemical product used in oil spill response to break up surface slicks and facilitate movement of oil into the water column and to the bottom of a water body; a blend of industrial solvents and surfactants that are toxic to wildlife and humans

hemorrhage: a free and forceful escape of blood; symptoms of internal bleeding include shortness of breath, chest pain, bruising, blood in urine, and more

ordinance: a law passed by a city government

person, artificial: in law, an entity with a distinct identity, duties, and privileges

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person, natural: in law, an individual human being

public trust doctrine: a body of judge-made laws that require government to take care of certain natural and cultural resources for the survival and benefit of present and future generations

public property: property owned or held in trust by the government for the people

resolution: in law, a formal expression of opinion voted on by a group of people

risk-benefit tradeoff: in oil spills, an analysis to determine acceptable levels of potential harm from product use when weighed against anticipated benefits relative to economic, social, and environmental factors; a sacrifice that must be made to get an expected result

rights, constitutional: fundamental rights derived from natural rights and recognized by the Supreme Court as protected from government interference

rights, natural: inalienable rights; universal human rights that cannot be transferred, sold, or denied because a person is born with them

rights, charter: contract rights; special privileges granted in writing by a government usually for a business; privileges that may be transferred, sold, or removed

social change: changes in the way humans think or behave that transform society

solvent: a substance (usually liquid) that dissolves another substance, resulting in a solution; common example, water; oil-based solvents are often considered hazardous to humans as they make it easier for oil to move across cell membranes and cause harm

taking: under the 5th Amendment, a seizure of private property for which just compensation (payment) must be given to the owner

taking, regulatory: judge-made law that requires courts to consider loss of future profits to a corporation as 'just compensation' under 5th Amendment for costs of controlling pollution to obey laws protecting public health and the environment

tar sands oil: unconventional oil that sinks instead of floats like conventional oil; a mixture of mostly sand, clay, water, and bitumen (a thick molasses-like substance of liquid oil)

toxicity/toxicology: poisonous; the quality or state of being poisonous; the branch of science concerned with the nature, effects, and detection of poisons

trust relationship: a legal plan in which a person (or group of persons) has a fiduciary duty to take care of property for the benefit of another person (or persons)