

WE, THE PEOPLE, SHAPE DEMOCRACY

I, TOO, CAN SHAPE DEMOCRACY

**THOSE WHO HAVE STRUGGLED FOR
FREEDOM AND EQUALITY HAVE EXTENDED
DEMOCRACY'S REACH FOR ALL**

Dilemmas + Decisions presents real-life issues related to democracy and freedom as experienced and conceived by high school-aged media groups from across the nation. Together, these young people reflect America's rich geographic, ethnic, cultural, and political diversity as they exercise their first amendment right to freedom of expression.

Sometimes young people don't think that their ideas count. Dilemmas + Decisions was created to show that youth can and do participate and contribute meaningfully to the conversations, debates, and discussions necessary for democratic processes and institutions.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND DEMOCRACY

Freedom of expression—the right to express one's beliefs openly without fear of government censorship or persecution—is central to our understanding of democracy in America. This form of government is complex and often messy as it allows different people to have and share varying opinions about the things that matter in their world.

Different people don't always agree.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After you see these video essays, we encourage you to engage others in a discussion using one or more of the following questions—or create questions of your own!

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE PRESERVATION OF DEMOCRACY

The National Center for the Preservation of Democracy is an educational institution that provides tools for living democratically in a diverse American society. Partnering with educators and community-based mentors, the National Center works to inspire youth to be active, informed participants in shaping democracy in America.

Dilemmas + Decisions was produced by Karen L. Ishizuka.
This Viewers Guide was written by Eftihia Danellis.

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You are about to view four video essays created by young people,
each exploring subjects of concern to them ...

DILEMMAS + DECISIONS

A Viewer's Guide

**NATIONAL CENTER
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF
DEMOCRACY**

“HIP-HOP AND VIOLENCE”



CONSIDER

- ✦ What are some of the positive aspects of hip-hop music? What are some of the main criticisms of hip-hop music? What factors might have shaped the speakers' opinions?
- ✦ Based on your experience, is hip-hop largely a force for good or something that is harmful? Why do you think what you do?
- ✦ In our society, artists are guaranteed freedom of speech under the Constitution. Do artists have any responsibilities to the public in exchange for this freedom?
- ✦ Does the government have the right to censor language that might be offensive or discriminatory against others?

DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY TELEVISION CENTER: NEW YORK, NY



“A NATION WITHIN A NATION”

According to the American Heritage dictionary, “sovereignty” has several definitions: “complete independence and self-government;” “a territory existing as an independent state;” and “the right and power to command, rule or judge.”

Many tribal groups in the U.S. and the Santa Fe Indian School itself have been granted the right to sovereignty, to be a “nation within a nation.”

CONSIDER

- ✦ Given their history, why might it be important to native groups to have sovereignty over their own American Indian nations?
- ✦ What were some of the opinions voiced by people in the film about the issue of sovereignty?
- ✦ How is it an expression of democracy for the United States to have nations within its own borders? What are the advantages of such an arrangement? The challenges?
- ✦ As you consider the issue of sovereignty, it might be helpful to think of an analogy. For example, within your home, your parents are responsible for you and you to them until you are 18. They are sovereign, but you as a teenager are negotiating certain personal freedoms and responsibilities. What tensions exist as you try to establish your independence from your parents while still a part of their household? How do you manage to co-exist peaceably?

SANTA FE INDIAN SCHOOL GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM: SANTA FE, NM

“CURFEW LAWS: PROTECTING OUR YOUTH OR PREVENTING CRIME?”



CONSIDER

- ✦ In the film, what reasons are given for implementing curfew laws? What criticism of curfews did you hear in the film? What has been your own personal experience with curfew laws?
- ✦ Do you believe youth are being unfairly targeted/demonized? If so, how and why?
- ✦ The filmmakers explore competing tensions—wanting to keep young people safe and wanting to keep communities where youth congregate free from crime. What other options beside curfews could be implemented to address these concerns?
- ✦ To what extent should the government, state or local authorities, have the right to restrict personal freedom in exchange for greater safety?

EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH FOR SOCIAL ACTION: EVANSTON, IL

“FREEDOM ON THE BLOCK?”



CONSIDER

- ✦ The student producers asked the question, “What does freedom mean to you?” What is your response to the question above? What were some of the definitions of ‘freedom’ you heard in the film?
- ✦ One person interviewed says, “Freedom is a state of mind.” What might that mean?
- ✦ Several of those interviewed suggest that one can live in America, a ‘free society,’ and not be free? How is that possible? What limits exist on personal freedom in this country? Why? Do you agree with those limits?
- ✦ Is freedom free? If not, what does it cost? Who pays the price?
- ✦ Do we as members of American society have any responsibilities or obligations in exchange for our freedom?

VIETNAMESE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER: SAN FRANCISCO, CA

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

After you have watched and discussed the four video essays, consider them as a whole by asking:

- ✦ What factors might have shaped the student filmmakers opinions? What makes the video essays different from each other? Similar?
- ✦ What types of ideas and issues are raised in several or all of the videos? Are these ideas and issues of importance to the young people you know? Generate a list of concerns that are of significance to you, your family and friends, your community.
- ✦ Do you think it is important for us, the audience, to see and hear from diverse young people from different parts of the country? Why or why not?

✦ Do you think it is important to have diversity of thought and opinion expressed in a democracy?

✦ Why or why not?

I, TOO, CAN SHAPE DEMOCRACY: SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

- ✦ Identify an issue of concern for your community. Explore the dilemmas around it and research options for making informed decisions to improve it.
- ✦ Provide an opportunity for others to engage in dialogue about the chosen dilemma as well as to suggest remedies.
- ✦ Learn what other youth and their mentors are thinking about the issues that affect them by visiting our website: www.ncdemocracy.org.

ABOUT THE YOUTH MEDIA GROUPS

DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY TELEVISION CENTER: NEW YORK, NY

Founded in 1972, Downtown Community Television Center believes that expanding public access to the electronic media arts invigorates our democracy and helps to create a more open society. DCTV pursues its mission by offering hundreds of free or low-cost production courses and by making broadcast-quality production equipment affordable to community producers. For more information: www.dctvny.org

EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL'S YOUTH FOR SOCIAL ACTION: EVANSTON, IL

In 1999, Youth for Social Action is a student-run, anti-racism group that was formed in response to concerns about the lack of racial integration among students. The Media Group of YSA believes that effective use of electronic and digital media is an important way that youth can insert their voices and perspectives into decision-making policies and programs at Evanston Township High School as well as within the larger world. For more information: www.pbs.org/merrow/listenup/network/organizations/eths/

SANTA FE INDIAN SCHOOL GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM: SANTA FE, NM

The Gifted and Talented Program at Santa Fe Indian School has approximately 60 students from over 20 regional tribes, of which a small group is committed to producing video. In 1889, Santa Fe Indian School was founded as a Federal boarding school for Indian children. Through the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975, the school was transferred to the American Indian Pueblo Council and is considered a sovereign nation. For more information: www.sfis.k12nm.us

VIETNAMESE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER: SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Developed in 1979, the Vietnamese Youth Development Center was created to address the lack of services for Southeast Asian refugee youths. Based in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, the VYDC has grown to serve an increasingly diverse group of refugees and immigrant populations. Since 1989, it has offered video workshops that focus on visual storytelling based on the youths' personal memories and experiences. For more information: www.vydc.org

WWW.NCDEMOCRACY.ORG