



National Alliance of
Faith and Justice



**We must have our freedom now.
We must have the right to vote.
We must have equal protection of the law.**
Martin L. King

...
traumatic
learning
perience of
learning
gaining
learning

Historically Aligned Service Learning

THE B.U.S. BOYCOTT

The B.U.S. Boycott, a highly unique service learning and crime prevention strategy, is a teaching method for integrating service projects into the PEN OR PENCIL curriculum. The approach offers young people a powerful way to become informed about intricate details of history and its applicability to their lives, a way to engage in making a difference like their ancestors, and a way to become responsible members of society. When we help students create high-quality service-learning experiences, we provide them with apprenticeships in the every-day demands, dilemmas, and decisions of democratic citizenship.

The B.U.S. Boycott is a highly educational service learning method poised to realize its considerable potential. Over the past two decades, educators have come to understand that when students undertake service projects integrated into their academic studies, the combination opens the door to the multifaceted education we Americans want for all young people, equipping them for their roles as learners,

citizens, and workforce members.¹ An emerging body of research suggests that service-learning experiences can strengthen students' mastery of important learning in a number of ways.²

¹ Roger Starch Worldwide. *Public Attitudes toward Education and Service Learning*. Prepared for the Academy for Educational Development and the Learning In Deed Initiative, sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. New York, NY. November, 2000.

² Shelley H. Billig. *The Impacts of Service-Learning on Youth, Schools and Communities; Research on K-12 School Based Service Learning*.
<http://www.learningindeed.org/research/slrsrchsy.html>. See also <http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/Research.asp>.

"... Americans have often witnessed the extraordinary commitment and courage of young people advancing democracy through service and civic action. In the 1960's, young civil rights workers risked their lives to end segregation. Today, youth volunteers do millions of hours of work through schools, youth groups, faith communities, and publicly supported programs. . . "

Marian Wright Edelman, President
Children's Defense Fund



WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW

REFUSING TO GIVE UP SEATS

TO DO
OR NOT TO DO
THAT IS
THE QUESTION.
THE QUEST

During the mid-1950's – 1960's, students and others were heavily engaged in boycotting and sit-ins across the country; however, of those and others who refused to relinquish their seats, the December 1, 1955 act of Mrs. Rosa Parks provided just *the right variables* to launch the most visible and successful campaign for change.

For PEN OR PENCIL, although there have been many courageous stories which have proceeded and followed the Carters' of Drew, Mississippi, their story provided *the right set of variables* to represent the day to day difficulties many youth will encounter along life's journey to productivity or positive changes: (1) Courage to face retaliation, (2) Family experiencing severe financial challenges and heavy debt, (3) Family facing eviction, (4) Children having to work to support the family's needs, (5) Cramped living environment, (6) Never enough to make ends meet, and (7) They chose not to agree just to be like everyone else.

In the PEN OR PENCIL Initiative, the acronym, **B.U.S.** stands for **building unbalanced systems and behavior** (which) **underscores stereotypes**. In epidemic proportions, public safety, education, and the seats gained in the front of classrooms, on school buses, on other modes of transportation and public accommodation are at risk, tremendously threatened by the cradle to jailhouse trek.

● Per the American Heritage Dictionary, the term means:

— **TRANSITIVE VERB:**

boyꝫottꝫed , boyꝫottꝫing , boyꝫotts

- To **abstain from** or **act together in abstaining from** using, buying, or dealing with as an expression of protest or disfavor or as a means of coercion.


The success of the Montgomery bus boycott, the Carters, and acts of men and women who were well-known and others less mentioned will be used as cases to spark curiosity for participants to go beyond the pages of textbooks to apply and not just read history. For example, criminal behavior and materialism are now drivers which demand the seats of students from their classrooms. These two drivers are responsible for driving many youth and their future to a slow death down a dead-end road to incarceration. Analyzing the case of the Carters and the Montgomery bus boycott now becomes the challenge to youth to declare their unwillingness to give up their freedom and seats in class and to instead engage in civic leadership, responsibility, and community service to help tackle the adverse strongholds of this present age.

Although clear in our opportunities, for many who barely reflect upon these advantages, participants have a new way to answer, "What does what happened then have to do with me now?" Attaching today's problems, they learn to collectively abstain from counterproductive activities which could interrupt their learning and growth potential or prompt a ride on a bus to a jail or prison.

In recreating the historic boycott, students must identify the adverse behavior they will collectively boycott, the duration of the boycott, and they must identify peers who will serve as Dr. King, Mrs. Parks, and others who were strategic to the historic movement. Their leaders must possess characteristics which best exemplify the qualities recorded in history about each person.

A NEW CAUSE

HOW ARE OUR CIVIL RIGHTS IN JEOPARDY?



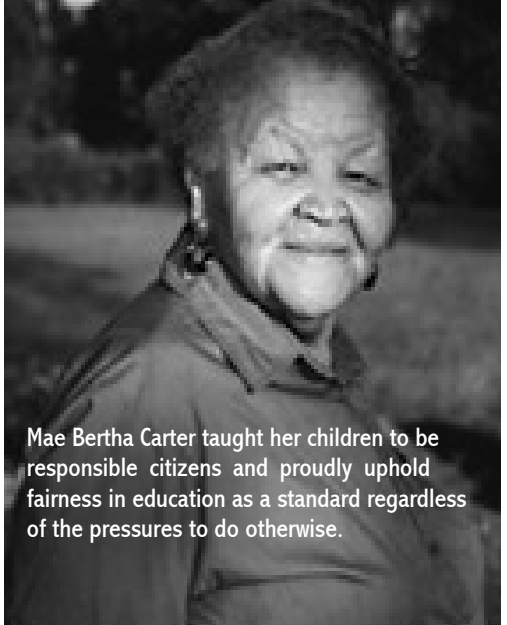
With strong leadership + selfless service + individual and collective commitment + hard work + determination, an immeasurable difference can be made and resolutions can begin for real community problems, bit by bit, to include unraveling unbalanced systems and beliefs. By motivating youth to better understand legislative barriers, disparities which specifically target their freedom, and the economic commodity they have become by participating in potentially incriminating behavior, we hope to create a national synergy through boycotts to make a noticeable reduction in counter-productive acts.

Although the deliberate signs of racial isolation have been removed, a more silent threat to civil rights exists and with it comes a lull in recognizing the need for action. Youth are particularly vulnerable because they did not participate in the original quest for freedom and have no frame of reference to even consider the possibility of exploitation.

The current inequities of the criminal justice system pose the most serious threat to reversing the gains of the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s. The more prisons required, the less money there is for education; the perceived need for zero tolerance laws to enforce proper behavior breeds subjective sanctions which grant the license to abuse and over-apply options which

leave no alternative for youth except arrest and detention. A mistake or single error in judgment, association with the wrong person all can yield incarceration which inevitably translates into a different discrimination: denial of employment, inability to live in federally subsidized housing, and loss of voting rights.

Across the country, and particularly in communities throughout the south, history recorded bus and other boycotts staged to oppose unfair conditions to which only some were subjected. Many wanted change but were intimidated, complacent, or understandably paralyzed by fear. Others, like Mae Bertha Carter and her family, realized that freedom of choice was costly but well worth the price which they would have to pay whether others around them did or not.



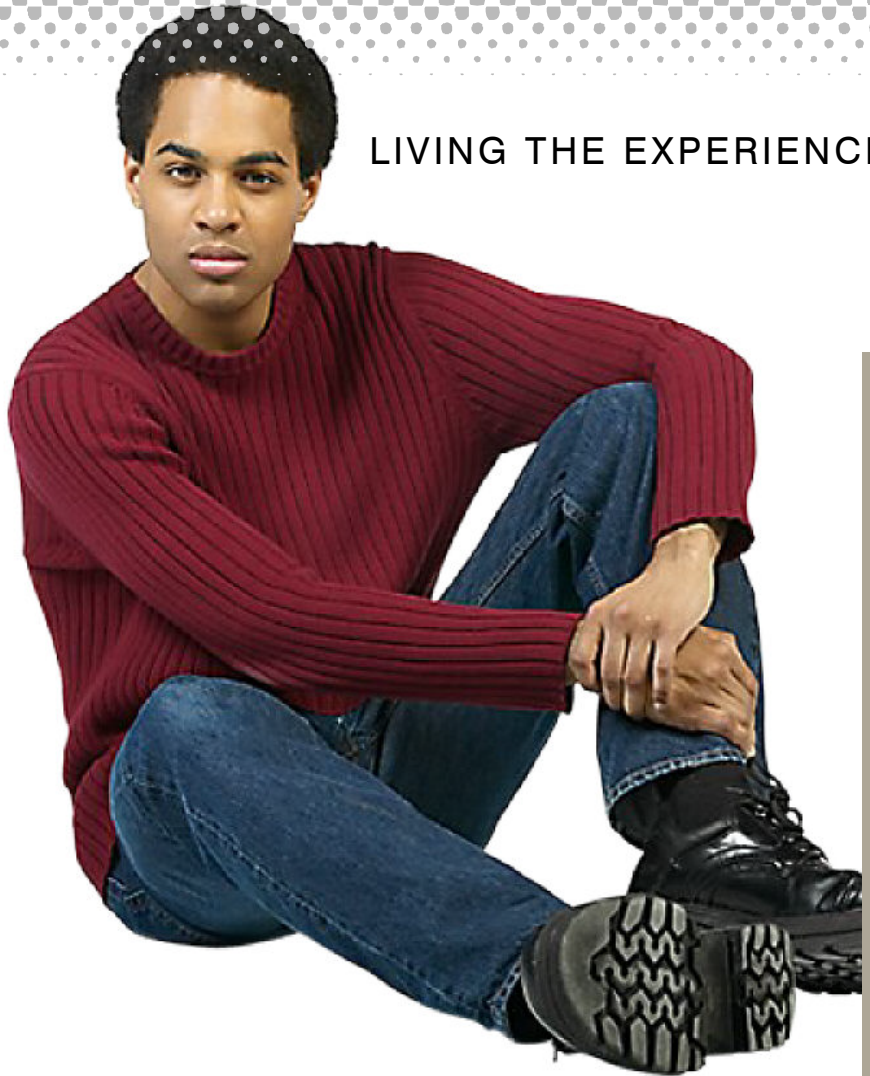
Mae Bertha Carter taught her children to be responsible citizens and proudly uphold fairness in education as a standard regardless of the pressures to do otherwise.

COMBATING CRIME WITH NON-VIOLENT SOCIAL JUSTICE

The refusal to ride on Montgomery city buses resulted in an economic catastrophe for the company, and through legislative change and financial pressure, buses were integrated. The sacrifices were unimaginable and courageous. This service learning project offers youth the opportunity to engage in direct action, a campaign of withdrawal of their support (through individual change) for the building of more jails and prisons. This can be accomplished in part by making a personal commitment to change their behavior and participate in nonviolent actions to eliminate the injustice.

Perhaps the most difficult element of this service learning process will be the fulfillment of non-cooperation and pacifism, each part of the social change strategy used by Dr. King. Readers and participants will find that Mae Bertha and Matthew Carter as well as their children adopted this philosophy in the way

LIVING THE EXPERIENCE:



they handled bullying, intimidation, retaliation, and the unfair treatment they experienced.

To participate in the PEN OR PENCIL B.U.S. Boycott, youth must ask themselves, "Can I stand up to peer pressure?" "Will I and my fellow students be able to withstand redemptive suffering in order to reduce criminal and disruptive behavior?" "Are we strong enough to unite across racial discontent in our school, an extremely tough adversary, to sustain an agape environment?" "Will we be able to demonstrate to the media, our teachers, our families, and our community that we are tough enough to police ourselves and have the fortitude for true discipline?"

**TO OBTAIN COPIES OF THE PEN
OR PENCIL Activities Booklet,
contact:**

National Alliance of Faith and Justice
P.O. Box 77075
Washington, DC 20013

Ph: (703) 765-4459 Fax: (703) 765-9761

Office@nafj.org
www.nafj.org

Each participating youth must have a copy of The PEN OR PENCIL Activity book to guide them through the project.

