



## Barbara Johns Powell

### Objectives:

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Describe how segregation originated in America.
2. Explain how school segregation was carried out.
3. Discover methods to resolve unfair treatment and conflict
4. Evaluate whether various methods to resolve unfair treatment are effective or ineffective.

### Materials Needed:

1. Space to effectively separate students
2. Art supplies
3. Technology for students to create visual presentations

### Vocabulary

- Black Codes
- Jim Crow Laws
- School Segregation
- Strike

Bloom Taxonomy	Affective Domain	Gardner's Multiple Intelligences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Understanding</li> <li>• Application</li> <li>• Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving</li> <li>• Responding</li> <li>• Valuing</li> <li>• Organizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio</li> <li>• Linguistic</li> <li>• Interpersonal</li> <li>• Bodily Kinesthetic</li> </ul>

### **Introduction/Motivation:**

In class setting:

- Choose a *trivial* way to divide your students.
- Try common interests such as various kinds of music, food, type of social media they use or by where they live.
- Have students sit in their **divided groups**, if possible. If not, section students in a designated space.
- Once students are **divided**, tell them that one group will be rewarded over the other.
- Ask students how they feel. Let each group share.
- Ask students what would they do if the unequal treatment was repeated for a month?
- Have students, including the group that was rewarded, list ways to resolve the unfair treatment.
- Have each group share.

Online Learning:

- Choose a *trivial* way to divide your students online. For example, keep track of all the students that arrived in class early.
- Once class starts, reward those students openly. Make a big deal of it!
- Ask the other students how they feel.
- Tell students you are going to randomly pick ways to reward them for about a week.
- Tell them you will not give them any criteria and that you are simply going to reward any behavior you want.
- Ask them what would they do? How would they feel?

Highschool/College Students in class or online:

- Share statement with them, “Colleges are giving out more aid based on students’ accomplishments, **not their financial need**” (abcnews,2020).
- Ask students to respond to the statement.
- Ask students specifically if it is equal or unequal treatment.
- Ask students how they would respond if they were denied a scholarship because of excessive financial need?
- Say to students, “Because of today’s activities and discussion, we all have an idea of what being treated unequally and being divided unfairly feels like.
- Say in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans were segregated, meaning divided, from whites.
- Say **Today’s we are going to learn about School Segregation in America and how Barbara Johns Powell helped abolish it.**

## **Background of Segregation**

- Segregation first originated in the form of Black Codes in 1865. These Black Codes controlled where African Americans could work and live. Thus, it allowed African Americans to earn very little and work only certain types of jobs.
- Once segregation became official policy, legislators separated African Americans and whites from all public spaces like public parks, theaters, pool areas, cemeteries, and jails. Public transportation such as buses, trains and taxis were segregated. These prohibitions were called Jim Crow Laws approved by the Separated But Equal doctrine.
- School Segregation required that African Americans and white people be prohibited from attending the same schools. Although public spaces and schools were separated, they were often not equal.

## **Body**

- Introduce **Barbara Johns**. Barbara John was a student at Roberts Russa Morton high school during School Segregation in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Roberts Russa Morton high school had poor facilities and was overcrowded. There was no gym, no laboratories, and no cafeteria. The school was only supposed to have 150 students but there were over 400.
- Instead of improving the school, the all-white school board built 3 tar paper buildings on the school grounds. These buildings were called chicken shacks.
- Share with students that on **April 23, 1951** Barbara Johns and her friends gathered students in the crowded auditorium to persuade them to strike against the school board to convince them to improve the school's conditions. The students agreed with Barbara and participated in a strike which was the first of its kind. Conducting strikes and protests were a common tactic used by civil rights leaders to bring awareness to the cause.
- Define **strike** with students. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, a strike occurs when people stop working to force an employer or an organization to comply with demands.
- Instead of going to school, Barbara and her classmates made signs and marches in their communities to gain the attention of the school board. The school board threatened to punish Barbara and her classmates if the strike did not end.

- Barbara contacted the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, for help. The NAACP agreed to take on Barbara's case and recommend that Barbara focus on defying school segregation instead of just a new school building.
- Barbara agreed and her case became a part of the landmark Civil Right case **Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka** which ended school segregation.

### **Activities:**

#### 1. Discussion

Ask students, "If you were Barbara Johns, and lived during the time of segregation, what would you do? Based upon the answers, remind students of how segregation limited ability to improve the school.

#### 2. Collaborative Learning

If possible, group students together and have them discuss what they would do if they were Barbara Johns. Have students identify action items to address the poor school facilities and overcrowding. Have students present ideas through visual aid such as posters, PowerPoint, Prezi or have student make a video.

#### 3. Group Art Assignment

Groups students together to discuss what they would do if they were Barbara Johns. Students will present their ideas in an artistic method such as a drama/play, song, spoken word activity, dance.

#### 4. Individual Writing Assignment

Give students the writing prompt, "If I was a student like Barbara Johns, what would I do to change the poor school facilities and overcrowding?"

#### 5. Community Project

Students will pick something to improve or change at school or in their community. Students will present ideas through visual aids, video, or an artistic expression.

### **Links:**

- <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/powell-barbara-rose-johns-1935-1991/>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/segregation-united-states>
- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strike>
- <https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/rich-students-financial-aid-poor-69932892>