


4. Opposing Viewpoints

Time: 60 minutes 

Introduction

Dream of a Nation explores critical issues facing the United States, many of these issues are considered hot-button topics in the current political and social landscape. Invariably, viewpoints outside of those expressed in *Dream of a Nation* exist and must also be explored. In order to do this, students can use the list of websites below to explore alternate viewpoints that contribute to democratic values of debate and compromise.

Procedure

Start this activity by choosing a single issue to focus on as a class, or different issues can be assigned to students or groups of students. The class should already be familiar with assigned issue(s). Once issue(s) are assigned have students create Venn diagrams; on one side ask students to write arguments in support of an issue using the *Dream of a Nation* essays. On the opposite side students will write new arguments they have learned in an article from an opposing viewpoint source.

Opposing Viewpoint Sources

- www.cato.org
- www.aei.org
- www.foxnews.com
- www.nytimes.com/opinion
- www.washingtonpost.com/opinions
- www.bostonglobe.com/opinion
- www.guardian.co.uk/comment
- www.latimes.com/opinion
- www.wallstreetjournal.com/opinion

Once students have filled in both sides of their Venn diagrams, challenge them to find any common ground the two sources share and record it in the middle of their diagrams. From their Venn diagrams students will then create two statements that summarize the beliefs of each viewpoint. These statements will be used in the following debate activity.

Example: from Chapter 1 Essay “Getting Money out of Politics: Putting the Public First”:

“Money should be removed from politics because private financing of campaigns magnifies the power of large donors, it limits opportunities for qualified yet unconventional candidates, and it forces elected officials to spend too much time on fundraising and not enough on their constituents.”

Opposing Viewpoint

“Money should not be removed from politics because a cap on spending by incumbents or challengers would produce a less informed electorate, spending produces a more competitive election, and it advances the quality of democracy and leads to a vibrant political community.”

Source: “Benefits of Campaign Spending” by John J. Coleman from www.cato.org.

Lesson Timeline

Assign Issues	5 minutes
Locate and read opposing viewpoint sources 	30 minutes
Fill out Venn diagrams	15 minutes
Create statements for both viewpoints	10 minutes