



# ***Signature in the Schools: The Voices on Blackwell Island***

## **Exercise: Mothers of the Movement**

**Subject(s):** Social Studies, English and Theatre

**Goals:** Students will be able to:

- Evaluate critically the quality, accuracy, and validity of information to determine misconceptions, fact and opinion, and bias.
- Compare and contrast historical, cultural, economic, and political perspectives in United States history.
- Analyze how music, visual art, and dance arts enhance performances.
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work.

### **Show Connection:**

There are several figures from history whose voices and stories serve as inspiration to *The Voices of Blackwell Island*. In this exercise, students will unpack the lives lived by some of the women who inspired the piece. In exploring their lives, students will better understand what these heroes had to overcome, the work they did and the impact they have had.

### **Materials:**

- *Mothers of the Movement* Resource Sheets
- Mothers Criteria Sheet
- Arts and Craft Supplies

### **Set-Up:**

Divide the class into three groups, each group distanced from the others.

### **Description:**

- As you will see in *The Voices on Blackwell Island*, the playwright takes several historical female figures and combines their stories into one tale of historical fiction, creating a theatrical collage of lives impacted by undeserved hardship and condemnation.
- In this exercise, each group will be given information on one of the main figures that either appear in the story or influenced the circumstances in the story. They must theatrically stage their assigned person's life story.
- Each group must dramatically stage their assigned person's life story. The presentation of the life story must engage

with the audience / rest of the class. The piece must be at least two minutes long in performance length. Everyone in the group is present in the piece and “performs” in some capacity. Performers are allowed to, with consent, touch audience members, and music or sound (amplified or self generated) must be featured in some capacity. In addition to this, a piece of destructible visual art must be created and utilized in the piece as well. (This could be a prop, a costume piece, a consumable, etc.) The piece should be destroyed while the audience is interacting with the piece and ideally, by the audience in some manner.

- Movement and bodies must be active and used in space during the staging of this individual’s life story. Groups should not just read through their figure’s biography, but look to the biography as a guideline of content to cover, and as inspiration for emotions, movements, sounds, experiences, etc, for this theatrical journey of a piece. Groups will present one at a time. Groups are welcome and encouraged to use the entirety of the classroom for this piece and can have the audience start wherever they would like, outside the room inside, etc.
- The instructor should hand out copies of the criteria sheet as well as copies of Mothers of the Movement Resource Sheets. (Each group should only get one of the figures to focus on. Not all three.)
- Student groups are given sufficient time to work on their pieces.
- Present each group’s work to the rest of the class, taking time after each presentation for clarifying questions on that figure’s life.

**Discussion:**

- These women left their mark on history. What present day female leaders and fighters can you think of that are making a difference and leaving an impact with their voices and actions?
- What qualities would you use to describe these women? Is there one in particular you think made them better able to enact change? Would there be a way to make change without that attribute as well?
- What do you hope to leave behind as your impact or legacy on the world?