

DISCUSSION GUIDE & LESSON PLANS

THE FIVE DEMANDS



A FILM BY GRETA SCHILLER AND ANDREA WEISS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER STANLEY NELSON

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About the Film

THE FIVE DEMANDS is a riveting story about the student strike that changed the face of higher education forever. In April 1969, a small group of Black and Puerto Rican students shut down the City College of New York, an elite public university located right in the heart of Harlem. Fueled by the revolutionary fervor sweeping the nation, the strike soon turned into an uprising, leading to the extended occupation of the campus, classes being canceled, students being arrested, and the resignation of the college president.

Through archival footage and modern-day interviews, we follow the students' struggle against the institutional racism that, for over a century, had shut out people of color from this and other public universities.

THE FIVE DEMANDS uncovers the untold story of this explosive student takeover, and proves that a handful of ordinary citizens can band together to take action and effect meaningful change.



How to Use this Guide

This discussion guide aims to support critical dialogues and tools for deconstructing, and creating from, concepts presented in the documentary **THE FIVE DEMANDS**. Flexible and adaptable, the guide is appropriate for use by middle, high school, and college educators to enhance and complement existing curricula and classroom study and/or to support students in developing youth-led campaigns. The lesson plans can be used to support and deepen content areas such as U.S. History, Ethnic Studies, Civics, Sociology, Psychology, and English Language Arts. Multigenerational activists, educators and leaders might also use this guide as a resource in school-based clubs and organizations, after-school and social justice/youth development programs, and after screenings of the film.

Opening with a contextualizing narrative that situates the film in the political climate of 1969, a series of discussion questions follow that invite viewers to grapple with, examine and converse with the following topics:

- **EQUITY VS. EQUALITY IN THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**
- **THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION**
- **SOCIAL CHANGE MOVEMENTS AND DISRUPTING THE SOCIAL ORDER**
- **THE POWER OF THE MEDIA: LITERACY AND LEVERAGE**

The guide further offers four customizable activities, flexible to fit various group settings, designed to lead viewers in personal, creative, research and advocacy exercises. These activities include:

- **What Are Your Five Demands?** Inspired by the organizing tactics utilized by City College students in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, viewers identify a social issue of meaning to themselves as an individual, group or community, and follow guided steps to match corresponding values with articulated demands and action steps based on those demands.
- **A Moment My Eyes Opened.** This storytelling exercise will invite viewers to share about impactful moments in history that awakened them to a social issue.
- **Training Our Consciousness Toolkit.** As a group, viewers build a “Training Our Consciousness Toolkit” that sources from the materials that have inspired and shaped them, creating their own supplementary “consciousness curriculum toolkit” to include the history, culture, and politics of women, people of color, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized and oppressed peoples.
- **Who Is Marketing the Message?** This activity introduces viewers to the basic tenets of media literacy, and invites a rewriting of problematic headlines shown in the film.

Two full-scale lesson plans for classroom use follow a series of online, book and film resources to continue the learning journey. The lesson plans, each capped with an optional extension for homework, explore the following:

In **Equity in the Classroom**, participants consider equitable measures, or lack thereof, in their own learning environments. Inspired by the organizing tactics utilized by City College students in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, and the contemporary activism of IntegrateNYC, participants use this line of inquiry to inform possible solutions, crafting their own series of demands.

In **Poetry As A Revolutionary Tool**, participants translate their identified values (from “Equity in the Classroom”) into poetic statements that can be used to create a group poem/poetic piece based on their Five Demands (or the film’s—an option for each, with option to connect to previous lesson).



THE FILM IN CONTEXT OF THE TIMES

The S.E.E.K. program at City College was created by a young African American professor named Allan Ballard (and funded by newly elected Black and Puerto Rican state legislators) as an effort to provide an equitable experience for students of color, largely from the Harlem community, to access the same success as the white peers who vastly outnumbered them. The program was staffed by a cadre of preeminent radical literary giants, most of them Black women, including Audre Lorde, Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, and the white lesbian feminist poet Adrienne Rich. These forward-thinking instructors reflected the changing values of the explosive cultural, political and social planes of the 1960s landscape. Popular music and art unflinchingly addressed the issues of the day. Movements, led largely by young people, included the anti-Vietnam war protests, the civil rights struggle, the women's movement, the Chicano movement, the Black Panthers and the Young Lords—all of which added fuel to the raging fire of a public fed up with the status quo.

Across the country students of color and their allies were bringing demands to colleges and universities, taking power into their own hands to fight for their rightful contributions, visibility and history to be reflected in the academic setting. The Black and Puerto Rican student takeover of City College burst forth in a cauldron of social unrest, particularly inspired by the Black Panther party and the Young Lords—grassroots activist groups taking on a stance of community organizers who not only fought against social ills, but created their own local solutions. But despite the historic wins and radical change that the Black and Puerto Rican student protests at the City College of New York brought about, this story has largely been forgotten. While predominantly white student-led protests against

the Vietnam war were being reported on around the globe, the City College student's homegrown Harlem protest was largely overlooked, even though it was arguably far more transformative in nature than what other student protests managed to accomplish. The takeover resulted in the groundbreaking 25-year policy of "Open Admissions", the most ambitious experiment to date to democratize higher education, but even that policy was deliberately buried by the institution when it was deemed to tarnish the college's long-standing reputation as "The Harvard of the Poor." Under Open Admissions, the culture of the City University of New York system



Discussion Questions

1

Equity Vs. Equality in the American Education System

Equity and equality are two systems that promote the concept of fairness. Equality means treating everyone the same; it assumes that a diverse group of people begins at the same level and has the same needs. Equity considers the specific needs of individuals, and what they require to succeed. Reading these definitions, what were the student protestors at City College asking for in their demands?

In the film, we witness archival footage of a Black elementary school where a white teacher is frustrated to the point of abuse—a scene that disturbingly illustrates how the least experienced teachers are assigned to the most poorly-equipped students, and how “ghetto children” were tracked into vocational programs rather than prepared for college. What do these scenes, and the testimonials from City College alumni of color, show about the education that Black students received?

The S.E.E.K. program is described in the film as providing academic support services for students who did not get a strong educational foundation from their public schools. Wealthy people usually get tutors for their kids. Why do you think one is stigmatized as “remedial” and the other not?

In **THE FIVE DEMANDS** former S.E.E.K. student Francee discusses being felt “one of the chosen,” then sharing an experience where SEEK students were asked to stand— that had never happened to her before. Have you experienced being singled out as someone who got in college due to “unfair” affirmative action or other forms of what some people see as “reverse racism”?

Consider the outcome of the student protests: Open Admissions at City College. In **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, Allan Ballard says he would have rather seen an expansion of and investment in the S.E.E.K. program as an alternative solution. What were the benefits of each approach? What were the obstacles each option presented? What outcome would you have argued for?



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION is “any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, adopted to correct or compensate for past or present discrimination or to prevent discrimination from recurring in the future.” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Statement on Affirmative Action, October 1977.)

According to the Legal Information Institute, “Affirmative action is defined as a set of procedures designed to: eliminate unlawful discrimination among applicants, remedy the results of such prior discrimination, and prevent such discrimination in the future. Applicants may be seeking admission to an educational program or looking for professional employment. In modern American jurisprudence, it typically imposes remedies against discrimination on the basis of (at the very least) race, creed, color, and national origin. While the concept of affirmative action has existed in America since the 19th century, it first appeared in its current form in President Kennedy’s Executive Order 10925 (1961): ‘The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.’”

For a history of Affirmative Action Policies through history, visit www.aaed.org/aaed/History_of_Affirmative_Action.asp

2



The Structure of Social Exclusion

In **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, testimonial quotes illustrate concepts of social exclusion:

James Small says, "You weren't left out of college because you were dumb or you couldn't learn. You were left out because of the way society is structured, and you weren't structured into that process."

How does the film explain this process of exclusion, as described by James Small? Does it still occur today? In what contexts do you witness social exclusion both in and beyond academic settings?

Henry Arce says, "I come from Harlem... educated in the public school system. I remember taking the test... for Stuyvesant high school... and when I took the test, I was astounded by the many things that were never covered in my education. I said, what? How could this be?"

What do you learn in school? What were you not taught in school? What is missing from

your curriculum? Whose voices and stories and histories? Is your cultural identity reflected in your learning materials?

Jeffrey Gurock, PhD. says, "they stopped us from coming into our campus—our campus, we didn't think in those terms, it was a white campus and now we're being turned away because we are white."

Gurock goes on to describe this as an eye-opening moment that invited him to question his relationship as a Jewish man to the struggles of his peers of color. What are moments in your own life that have opened your eyes to the privileges connected to your identity in relationship to others in your community?

Barbara Christian says, "There is sexism within our own communities as well as without. In the 1960s there was a tremendous emphasis on manhood in Black movements. Very often when we were talking about the term "race" in the 1960s, we all thought it meant women and men, and what we discovered to a large extent within the movements was that it meant maleness."

Intersectionality is "an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Intersectionality identifies multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage." Consider this in relationship to Christian's testimonial. What were Black women facing in social movements of the civil rights era? Now apply it to your own community: where are tensions of overlapping oppressions and privileges occurring?

3

Social Change Movements and Disrupting the Social Order

“At that point many more moderate students said, all bets are down. If you kill him, what about me? And so the death of MLK really marked a departure, especially in the North East, from non-violence and passive resistance to a much more radical, even defensive, arms defensive posture on the part of the students.”

—JAMES SMALL

“The basic purposes of all five of the demands were accepted by me more than three months ago. I was at work on two of them more than six months ago. And what has happened now is that the public demands and agitation have interfered with the process of achieving the goals we all want to achieve... I’m answering your question as to whether or not progress is made without disruptive activity, and I’m indicating that disruptive activity only slows down the process we already had underway.”

—DR. BUELL GALLAGHER (CCNY PRESIDENT)

When is it okay to “disrupt” the social order—at what point in a process, if ever, is it time to break the rules? What steps were taken before and even during the takeover that failed, and what did that failure lead to? Are there moments in your life when you’ve been faced with a choice to escalate an issue or back down? What did you choose and why? On what actions do you draw the line, and why?

“We will not deny white people their humanity, because this is one of the main grievances that the Black community has against the white community. For hundreds of years, they have denied Black people our humanity.”

— LUMUMBA ABDUL SHAKUR, FOUNDER, BLACK PANTHER PARTY- HARLEM BRANCH

Consider this quote from Shakur. Is this quote surprising to you in any way, based on how the Black Panthers have been painted in the media? What did you already know about The Young Lords and the Black Panthers before watching the film? Did your ideas about them change when you saw the film? If so, what shifted your perspective?

Apply this line of questioning to your own life. How has social pressure changed or influenced your life trajectory? Consider some critical moments when you chose to continue fighting for something you believed in, or decided to cede. Would you choose differently now? If so, why?

In the film, it was mentioned that City College’s security guards were all Black, and would not agree to carry out the order from the institution to clear student protestors. What motivated this decision? Discuss this as an example of solidarity, or unity between people coming together. What other examples of solidarity between people do you see in the film? How does the film address the solidarity between the Black and Puerto Rican students?

Where in the film did you witness moments of white people deciding to support the Black and Puerto Rican students? What moments were clear acts of solidarity, and which were less obvious, or perhaps not pushed as far as possible? Consider in light of today—Should white people become allies of diversity, and if yes, what can they do?

4

The Power of the Media: Literacy and Leverage

“The press has been ugly and dirty to us... we hoped that they would be sympathetic but they have not been.”

— WILFRED CARTEY, PH.D.

In **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, viewers witness how the media warped the narrative of the student protests, sometimes to extreme measures. An example given is that when Black women students were beaten by white students, the news coverage flipped the scenario. What is the responsibility of the media to truth? Who determines what truth is?

Newspaper headlines pepper the film. What makes a catchy headline? Where is bias baked into the language used to describe a scene? How does the media use sensationalism, and to what end? Who does this “catchy language” harm? For example, consider and deconstruct the language in this archival newspaper headline in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, paying special attention to the highlighted words:

**NEGROES HOLD HIT-RUN RAID AS CCNY OPENS
IO ATTACK CAMPUS BUILDING AS STUDENTS
RETURN**

In the film, student papers are shown on screen, simple xeroxed flyers, pamphlets and papers assembled on typewriters from the Black and Puerto Rican student organizations Onyx and PRISSA (Puerto Rican Students Involved in Student Action). What was the role of underground media in these movements? Why was it used as a tactic for political organizing? Consider the headlines in local and national newspapers in the United States at present. Is the media more aware and fairer in its reporting today than it was in 1969? If so, how? What role does social media play in the dissemination of news?

What are the benefits of social media for this use, and what are the dangers? How can activists of today get their message out?



ACTIVITY ONE:

WHAT ARE YOUR FIVE DEMANDS?

OVERVIEW:

Inspired by the organizing tactics utilized by City College students in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, viewers identify a social issue of meaning to themselves as an individual, group or community, and follow guided steps to match corresponding values with articulated demands and action steps based on those demands.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Creating Your Five Demands Worksheet, paper, writing utensils, **THE FIVE DEMANDS** print out

Step One: Identify Your Issue

Create a word bank on a piece of chart paper, the board, or, if working alone, in a notebook. Brainstorm issues that affect you, or those around you.

Consider the following headers to create your wordcloud under:

- **LOCAL** - Identify local struggles and triumphs in your community—any issue that affects a community you live in or have lived in. Be specific about how these struggles and triumphs play out in the context of your community.
- **NATIONAL** - Identify national struggles and triumphs – women’s reproductive rights, religious intolerance, hate crimes, sexism,

racism, homophobia, climate change, mass incarceration, poverty, etc.

Through open discussion and/or a group vote, narrow in on a single issue that impacts you as an individual, or the group at large. In one sentence, capture your issue. Add another sentence that further expresses the impacts of the issue.

For example, in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, the central issue is the lack of access to a predominantly white public college in a Black neighborhood. This creates a college experience for students of color (and white students) that does not account for the needs, history and identity of Black and Puerto Rican students in the University’s surrounding community and beyond.

Step Two: Identify Values

Examine **THE FIVE DEMANDS** document for language that expresses the values that underlie **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, using the paragraph explanations below each demand for context. Translate the values into your own words.

For example:

- **DEMAND 1: A SCHOOL OF BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN STUDIES**

Values: In the first demand we see values of Black and Puerto Rican history in the curriculum, leadership that reflects the local community and student body, and an understanding of oppression of people of color in the United States.

WE DEMAND

1. A SCHOOL OF BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN STUDIES.

This school will be controlled by the community, students and faculty. The courses and programs offered at this school will be totally geared to community needs. For the first time we will be able to study our true past history in relation to our present condition. We will know our heroes and our culture which has been denied us by the present racist society. The school will bring about an increased understanding of the political, social and economic forces which work to exploit us in this society.

2. A FRESHMAN ORIENTATION FOR BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS.

Since Black and Puerto Rican children are alienated and destroyed in the New York City School System, by the time that those few of us reach College we find that we suffer from many basic problems. For example, because of racist attitudes of the teachers throughout the City, our children turn out graduating from high school without being able to read, write or do simple mathematics. These racist teachers teach our children that they are inferior and not worth educating.

3. THAT THE SEEK STUDENTS HAVE A DETERMINING VOICE IN THE SETTING OF GUIDELINES FOR THE SEEK PROGRAM, INCLUDING THE HIRING AND FIRING OF SEEK PERSONNEL.

Seek is a program which recruits Black, Puerto Rican and other minority people who otherwise would be unable to afford a college education and the opportunities which are opened by such an education. Yet there is fault to be found in the program. The fault is that the teachers, counselors and tutors are not really accountable to the Seek students. What the students demand is that they have a determining voice in setting the guidelines for the Seek Program, including the hiring and firing of Seek Personnel. For up to now, Seek Personnel has not been accountable to anyone.

4. THAT THE RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS BE RACIALLY REFLECTIVE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL POPULATION.

This demand is the most important of our demands. At present, Blacks and Puerto Ricans comprise 40% of the high school population. Yet at City College (now renamed Harlem University) There are only 9% Blacks and Puerto Ricans and 91% whites (Day Session)--even though City College is located in Harlem which is 98% Black and Puerto Rican. Along with these shocking figures comes the fact that 95% of all Black and Puerto Rican people are working class people and pay for all schools including the colleges directly through their taxes. Beyond the fact that we pay for the college and are excluded from them is the abuse to which our children are subjected in the High Schools. At present the schools, with the aid of their racist teachers force our children to drop out at fantastic rates (84% of all Black and Puerto

5. THAT ALL EDUCATION MAJORS BE REQUIRED TO TAKE BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN HISTORY AND THE SPANISH LANGUAGE.

This demand is designed to deal with the attitudes of teachers toward Black and Puerto Rican children. City College produces 40% of the teachers in New York City. We find that a teacher will be better able to teach and relate to our students if he has some understanding of the social, economic and political oppression under which they live. The demand requires that he take a course in Black history and a course in Puerto Rican history. The demand also requires that teachers take Spanish in order that they be more effective when teaching Puerto Rican children.

Complete this deconstruction for each of THE FIVE DEMANDS:

- **DEMAND 2: A FRESHMAN ORIENTATION FOR BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS**
VALUES:

- **DEMAND 3: THAT THE SEEK STUDENTS HAVE A DETERMINING VOICE IN THE SETTING OF GUIDELINES FOR THE SEEK PROGRAM, INCLUDING THE HIRING AND FIRING OF SEEK PERSONNEL.**
VALUES:

- **DEMAND 4: THAT THE RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS BE RACIALLY REFLECTIVE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL POPULATION.**
VALUES:

- **DEMAND 5: THAT ALL EDUCATION MAJORS BE REQUIRED TO TAKE BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN HISTORY AND THE SPANISH LANGUAGE**
VALUES:

Step Three: Name Your Values and Reasons for Change?

Working backwards, what are the *values* you and/or the group holds towards your identified issue? In pairs, generate a list of key ideas, beliefs and values relating to the issue. Invite each pair to distill this down to a paragraph expressing their values to contribute to the group. If time permits, you might choose to stage a light debate to challenge, expand and/or add to the values offered.

Step Four: Translate Demands

Utilizing the Creating Your Five Demands worksheet, invite each pair or small group to translate their stated values into a demand that uses the present tense to claim the change they would like to see. Leveraging the power of the now, imagine your demand into reality.

For example, in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**:

VALUE	DEMAND
<p>Example from THE FIVE DEMANDS</p> <p>The history of students from the community surrounding City College is important, critical and should reflect the student body.</p>	<p>“The courses and programs offered at this school will be totally geared to community needs. For the first time we will be able to study our true past history in relation to our present condition.”</p>

Step Five: Take Action

Invite pairs or small groups to visualize and commit to paper their “big picture action.” What is the ultimate goal, and what needs to be created? For example, in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, the big picture action is a separate school of Black and Puerto Rican studies. Of course, there are smaller steps needed to achieve this much larger vision. Working backwards from the big future vision, what is one actionable step that can be taken now?

VALUE	DEMAND	BIG PICTURE ACTION	ACTIONABLE NEXT STEP
<p>Example from THE FIVE DEMANDS</p> <p>The history of students from the community surrounding City College is important, critical and should reflect the student body.</p>	<p>“The courses and programs offered at this school will be totally geared to community needs. For the first time we will be able to study our true past history in relation to our present condition.”</p>	<p>A separate school of Black and Puerto Rican studies.</p>	<p>Bring demands forward to the school President.</p>

Extend this activity by putting your actionable next step into motion!

Creating your Five Demands Worksheet

VALUE	DEMAND	BIG PICTURE ACTION	ACTIONABLE NEXT STEP
<p>Example from THE FIVE DEMANDS</p> <p>The history of students from the community surrounding City College is important, critical and should reflect the student body.</p>	<p>“The courses and programs offered at this school will be totally geared to community needs. For the first time we will be able to study our true past history in relation to our present condition.”</p>	<p>A separate school of Black and Puerto Rican studies.</p>	<p>Bring demands forward to the school President.</p>
ONE			
TWO			
THREE			
FOUR			
FIVE			

ACTIVITY TWO: A MOMENT MY EYES OPENED

OVERVIEW:

What events mobilize people to create change? In **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, viewers witness the impact of the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. This storytelling exercise will invite viewers to share about impactful moments in history that woke them up to a social issue.

TIME: 30-60 minutes

MATERIALS:

Step One: Where I Was When...

In **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, viewers witness the impact of the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Revisit the following quotes spoken in the film. Engage a brief discussion:

- What strikes you about these quotes?
- How is the picture of impact painted through words?

[Through tears] When I heard that he was shot, I just couldn't believe that they would kill this man. When I heard that this guy, who was like our daddy, got shot and killed? For me it was the end of the romance. Was the end of it for America."

—FELIPE LUCIANO

"All I could say was Martin Luther King Martin Luther King Martin Luther King and everybody started chanting Martin Luther King and we realized oh my God... and we marched down the street chanting Martin Luther King Martin Luther King. We got down to 126th street and there was a barricade of policemen standing there saying you can't go to 125th street because there's a riot going on there. And we went through and the sound of breaking plate glass was horrific. As we got to 125th street this white blond God rose from the subway. It was Mayor Lindsay. And he came in the middle of the riot to talk to us. We took our rage with us. We went home. That weekend people changed, and people came back to school that Monday with a different attitude."

—DOROTHY RANDALL GRAY

Over the years, when historically traumatic events have occurred, people often discuss where they were when receiving news that shook the world, opened their awareness and changed the

landscape of life around them. Parents may have their own stories about events such as JFK's assassination and 911. Ask students if they have heard stories like this from their own families.

Optional extension: Read a handful of accounts from bystanders on the Internet about these pivotal events that shook the fabric of America:

- [Where I Was When JFK Was Assassinated](#)
- [Where I Was When 911 Happened](#)

Step Two: Identify A Moment That Opened Your Eyes

Ask students to identify a moment that “shook” them when hearing the news. Perhaps it was Obama’s win, the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police, or a recent mass shooting. It does not necessarily have to be a traumatic event, but one that touched them in its largeness, and cracked open a new perspective on a social issue.

Invite them to take notes on the following, under the two categories, “zooming in” on the personal setting of receiving the news, and “zooming out” to examine the event’s impact beyond the self:

Zoom In:

- What media outlet did you hear the news from? TV, Internet, newspaper, a friend or parent.
- Who was with you when you found out?
- Describe the action you were performing when the news reached you.
- What was the weather like? The environment?
- What was your big realization?

Zoom Out:

- What was the setting of the event? Try to describe where this event occurred, to the best of your knowledge. What was the scene like?
- Who was most impacted by the event?
- How did the news or media describe this event?
- What were people around you saying about the event?

Step Three: Play Big Picture, Little Detail

Invite viewers to pair up to play Big Picture, Little Detail, sharing their moment either in pairs and/or with the larger group, one pair at a time.

Assign one person to be the storyteller, and the other “director.” As the storyteller shares their story, the director can stop the story at any time by yelling “zoom in” or “zoom out.” When the “camera lens” zooms in, the storyteller must add additional detail from their “zoom in” notes. When the camera zooms out, they share the larger scene, guided by their “zoom out” notes— what is taking place behind or around the individual?

Step Four: Reflect

Invite participants to reflect on the experience using the following questions:

- What were common threads in the stories we heard?
- What were impactful turning points in these stories that helped to open one’s eyes?
- How are shared cultural experiences catalysts for social change?

Extend this activity by assigning participants to interview their parents using the same questions and/or conduct a research project about how activists assembled in the aftermath of their big cultural moment.

ACTIVITY THREE:

TRAINING OUR CONSCIOUSNESS TOOLKIT

OVERVIEW:

The activists in **THE FIVE DEMANDS** read widely: books on political organizing, history, politics, theory. As a group, viewers build a “Training Our Consciousness Toolkit” that sources from the materials that have inspired and shaped them, creating their own supplementary “consciousness curriculum toolkit” to include the history, culture, and politics of women, people of color, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized and oppressed peoples.

TIME: 30-60 minutes

MATERIALS: Paper, writing utensils

Step One: Assess Your Personal Landscape

Invite participants to make a brain dump list of media and materials that shaped their sense of identity, political consciousness or social awareness beyond what they were taught in textbooks in the following categories. Offer some examples to get the lists started:

BOOKS

- *Assata: An Autobiography* by Assata Shakur
- *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* by Howard Zinn
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* by David Levithan and John Green
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison

MOVIES AND FILMS

- *Milk*
- *Crip Camp*
- *Hidden Figures*
- *Judas and the Black Messiah*
- *The Glorias*
- *The International Sweethearts of Rhythm*

TELEVISION SHOWS

- *When They See Us*
- *Atypical*
- *Lovecraft Country*
- *Orange is the New Black*
- *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*

SONGS

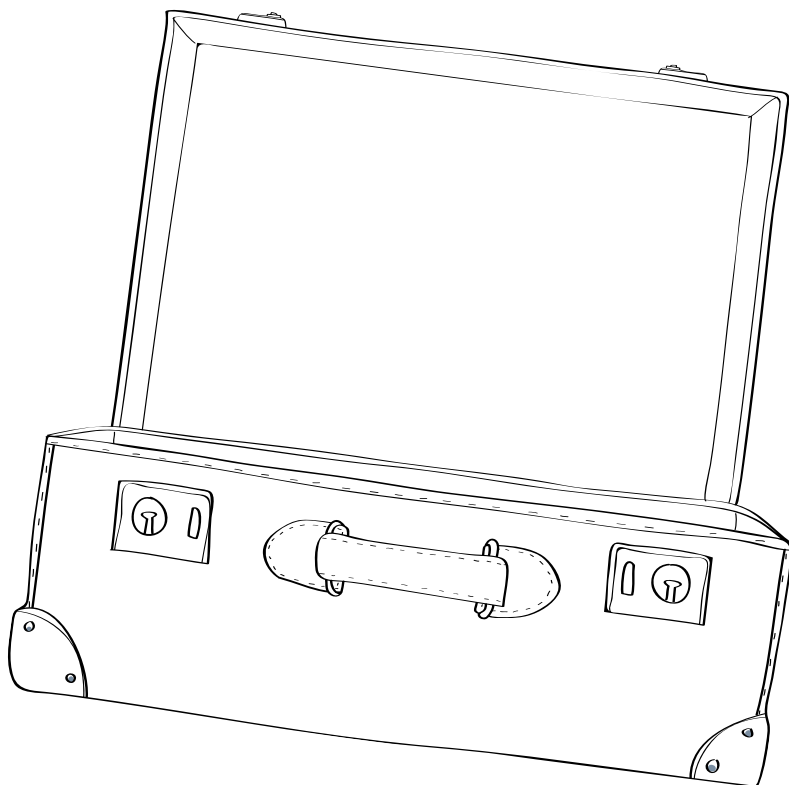
- *Strange Fruit* by Billie Holiday
- *This is America* by Childish Gambino
- *Killing in the Name* by Rage Against the Machine
- *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* by Gil Scott Heron
- *Born in the USA* by Bruce Springsteen

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Examples might include infographics, memes, Tweets, and influencers that had an impact in communicating a message about a social cause.

Step Two: Design Your Consciousness Toolkit

Invite participants to reflect on their lists. What were the five most impactful pieces of media from their brainstorm list? Graphically organize the materials into the blank toolkit print out by drawing, doodling, writing in fun lettering and/or collaging images from their lists.



Step Three: Swap and Discuss

In pairs, participants share their consciousness toolkits with a partner, explaining the significance of each choice. On another blank toolkit template, invite participants to take notes on what items they'd like to build into their toolkit, based on their partner's suggestions. If there is time, engage in a round robin version of this exercise, until each participant has met one on one to share and build their consciousness toolkits.

Extend this activity by assigning participants one new piece of consciousness raising media to engage and review.

ACTIVITY FOUR: WHO IS MARKETING THE MESSAGE?

OVERVIEW:

In **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, headlines from archival newspapers show how the media characterized the 1969 student protests. This activity introduces viewers to the basic tenets of media literacy, and invites a rewriting of problematic headlines shown in the film.

TIME: 30-60 minutes

MATERIALS: Print out or project images of the headlines included in this lesson

Step One: The Power of Media

Open the conversation with the question: Do you trust the media? Invite participants into an informal discussion, answering why or why not.

Share the following tenets of Media Literacy from the Center For Media Literacy:

- All media messages are 'constructed.'
- Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
- Different people experience the same media message differently.
- Media have embedded values and points of view.
- Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Step Two: Five Key Questions of Media Literacy

Continue the conversation with the question: What is important when viewing or reading media? How do you determine a trustworthy source? What lens do you employ while consuming media?

Share the following Five Key Questions of Media Literacy

- Who created this message?
- What techniques are used to attract my attention?
- How might people understand this message differently?
- What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
- Why was this message sent?

For a deeper dive on these key questions of media literacy, visit MediaLit.org.

Apply these questions to the following headlines shown in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**. Though the quotes are pulled out of context, do your best to make educated guesses in your line of questioning:



Step Three: Identifying Bias in Headlines

Continue the conversation with the question: What particular words stand out to you in the headlines? What bias is showing itself? What different word choices might have changed the messaging?

Step Four: Rewriting the Headlines

Consider this quote from **THE FIVE DEMANDS**:

“The press has been ugly and dirty to us... we hoped that they would be sympathetic but they have not been.”

— WILFRED CARTEY, PH.D.

If you were a reporter in 1969 covering the student protests, what angle would you have taken? Solo, in pairs, or small groups, invite participants to rewrite the headlines shown in **THE FIVE DEMANDS** film to offer a counternarrative to the ones presented, based on your knowledge from the film.

Extend this activity by applying this technique to contemporary news headlines and/or applying to social media messaging.



Resources

Online

- **The Civil Conversations Project** from “On Being” with Krista Tippett is a public forum providing ideas and tools for healing our fractured civic spaces.
- Looking for free resources on fighting fake news and developing your students’ media literacy skills? Here are some highlights from the Newseum’s activities, lessons, case studies and guest blog posts: <https://newseumed.org/medialiteracy>

Books

- ***All American Boys*** by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Keily: In an unforgettable novel from award-winning authors Reynolds and Keily, two teens, one Black and one white, grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and ultimately the country bitterly divided by racial tension.
- ***Cutting School: Privatization, Segregation, and the End of Public Education*** by Noliwe Rooks is a powerful analysis of racism, segregation, poverty, the history of Black education (and miseducation), and their relationship to the current movement to privatize public education.
- ***Between the World and Me*** by Ta-Nehisi Coates: In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation’s history and current crisis.
- ***The Black Revolution on Campus*** by Martha Biondi is the definitive account of an extraordinary but forgotten chapter of the black freedom struggle. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Black students organized hundreds of protests that sparked a period of crackdown, negotiation, and reform that profoundly transformed college life.



- ***The March Trilogy*** by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell: ***The March Trilogy*** is a black and white graphic novel trilogy about the Civil Rights Movement, told through the perspective of Lewis.
- ***So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*** by Charles M. Payne argues that we have failed to account fully for the weakness of the social infrastructure and the often dysfunctional organizational environments of urban schools and school systems.
- ***The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.*** by Peniel E. Joseph is a dual biography of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King that upends longstanding preconceptions to transform our understanding of the twentieth century's most iconic African American leaders.
- ***Upsetting the Apple Cart: Black-Latino Coalitions in New York City From Protest to Public Office*** by Frederick Douglass Opie surveys the history of black-Latino coalitions in New York City from 1959 to 1989. In those years, African American and Latino Progressives organized, mobilized, and transformed neighborhoods, workplaces, university campuses, and representative government in the nation's urban capital.

Films

- ***Freedom Riders: 1961*** Based on Raymond Arsenault's book ***Freedom Riders: 1961*** and the ***Struggle for Racial Justice***, this two-hour documentary tells the story of the summer of 1961 when more than 400 Black and White Americans risked their lives traveling together in the South to protest segregation.
- ***The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975: The Black Power Mixtape*** tells the story of the Black Power Movement through the eyes of Swedish journalists. Drawn to America in the late 1960s by stories of revolution and urban unrest, the journalists recorded interviews with activists like Stokely Carmichael, Bobby Steale, Angela Davis, and Eldridge Cleaver.
- ***Let The Little Light Shine*** is about a high-performing, top-ranked Black elementary school, The National Teachers Academy (NTA) which is threatened to be closed and transformed into a high school favoring the needs of the community's wealthier residents. Parents, students, and educators mobilize to fight for the elementary school's survival.

Part Two: Lesson Plans for High School / College and University

LESSON PLAN ONE: EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

OVERVIEW:

In this hour long lesson plan, participants consider equitable measures, or lack thereof, in their own learning environments. Inspired by the organizing tactics utilized by City College students in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**, and the contemporary activism of IntegrateNYC, participants use this line of inquiry to inform possible solutions, crafting their own series of demands.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Chart paper and/or board, writing utensils, Five Demands chart print out, ability to project or share website content

Step One: Defining Equity

Equity and equality are two systems that promote the concept of fairness. Equality means treating everyone the same; it assumes that a diverse group of people begins at the same level and experiences the same needs. Equity considers the specific needs of the individuals, and what they require to succeed.

Where do you see examples of equity being demanded and/or instituted in **THE FIVE DEMANDS**? Invite viewers to share a few examples and discuss.

- What makes these instances examples of equity and not equality?
- Why is that distinction important and/or useful?
- What does equity take into consideration that equality overlooks?

support, social (clubs/counseling/diverse visual representations on campus)?

- What representation is featured in the teaching body? Curriculum? Representative of the student body?
- Where are funds allocated? Are there robust extracurriculars?
- How are conflicts in the student body dealt with? Are student voices prioritized?
- Is there support available for students with disabilities to participate? Are different learning styles accommodated?

Review the notes and discuss:

- What is missing in our school?
- What could we do better with in regards to equity?
- What other areas of improvement in the realm of equity are needed for our particular student body?
- Would you say our learning environment scores high or low on a commitment to equity?

Step Two: Assess Your Learning Environment

Open a discussion with participants, inviting one to take notes on a board or chart paper in legible handwriting:

- What support is available for students: tutors, writing centers and academic support, financial

Step Three:

Engage a contemporary set of Five Demands, inspired by 1960s civil rights frameworks:

IntegrateNYC is an intergenerational organization whose mission is *to develop youth leaders who repair the harms of segregation and build authentic integration and equity. They envision a world where youth leaders build systems of liberation so that all people thrive in powerful communities. Their values center and support youth to forge an unprecedented journey ahead.*

View [Integrate NYC's Five Demands](#).

Briefly compare and contrast Integrate NYC's Five Demands with City College's Five Demands as a group. Where do you see inspiration from the 1969 group on the contemporary student movement? Do these demands reflect your own desires for equitable measures in the learning environment?

Step Four: Demand Equity

Use **THE FIVE DEMANDS** chart and activities from the discussion guide to apply to your own demands for equity in your school.

VALUE	DEMAND	BIG PICTURE ACTION	ACTIONABLE NEXT STEP
Example (*from IntegrateNYC): Representation	"Show us our communities at the front of the classroom!"	"All New York City public high schools must hire faculty that is inclusive and elevates the voices of communities of color, immigrant communities, and the LGBTQIA+ community so that student identities and experiences are reflected in the leadership."	"Set up a meeting with the school leadership to begin a dialogue about their hiring practices and commitments."

EXTEND THE LESSON

Creative: Design a visually compelling protest poster accompany your burgeoning movement with the following resources:

- [How to design a great protest sign by Matthew Price](#)
- [Research protest poster art with links curated by Cultural Politics](#)
- [Get inspired by Amplifier Art's visual campaigns](#)

Community-based: IntegrateNYC engaged the following process: "In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, we spent a year listening to New York City youth. Our Listening Tour was all about reaching out to students in public schools and listening about their experiences in school." Riffing off of the work of IntegrateNYC, lead students through a process of identifying who the stakeholders are in their identified issue, and develop a series of open-inquiry questions that can be used to activate their own "listening tour."

VALUE	DEMAND	BIG PICTURE ACTION	ACTIONABLE NEXT STEP
<p>Example from THE FIVE DEMANDS</p> <p>The history of students from the community surrounding City College is important, critical and should reflect the student body.</p>	<p>“The courses and programs offered at this school will be totally geared to community needs. For the first time we will be able to study our true past history in relation to our present condition.”</p>	<p>A separate school of Black and Puerto Rican studies.</p>	<p>Bring demands forward to the school President.</p>
ONE			
TWO			
THREE			
FOUR			
FIVE			

LESSON PLAN TWO:

POETRY AS A REVOLUTIONARY TOOL

OVERVIEW:

Drawing on the heavy connection in the film to the many instructors who were major figures in Black contemporary activism and poetry (June Jordan, Audre Lorde, The Last Poets), this exercise contextualizes the role of poets in the landscape of the film. It invites participants to translate their identified values (above) into poetic statements that can be used to create a group poem/poetic piece based on their Five Demands (or the film's—an option for each, with option to connect to previous lesson).

TIME: 1-2 60-minute periods

MATERIALS: Paper, pencils, access to the materials in this guide, printed, projected, or shared onscreen

Step One: The Black Arts Movement

What made the instructors in the S.E.E.K. program uniquely positioned was their commitment to living their political values through both their art and teaching. Many of these instructors belonged to, or worked in parallel to, The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 70s.

Share the following excerpt from The Poetry Foundation, framing The Black Arts Movement:

The Black Arts Movement began—symbolically, at least—the day after Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965. The poet LeRoi Jones (soon to rename himself Amiri Baraka) announced he would leave his integrated life on New York City's Lower East Side for Harlem. There he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre, home to workshops in poetry, playwriting, music, and painting.

The Black Arts, wrote poet Larry Neal, was “the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept.” As with that burgeoning political movement, the Black Arts Movement emphasized self-determination for Black people, a separate cultural existence for Black people on their own terms, and the beauty and goodness of being Black. Black Arts poets embodied these ideas in a defiantly Black poetic language that drew on Black musical forms, especially jazz; Black vernacular speech; African folklore; and radical experimentation with sound, spelling, and grammar. Black Arts Movement poet and publisher Haki Madhubuti wrote, “And the mission is how do we become a whole people, and how do we begin to essentially tell our narrative, while at the same time move toward a level of success in this country and in the world? And we can do that. I know we can do that.”

Engage in a discussion about the Black Arts Movement and the power of art:

- Where do you see the influence of the Black Arts Movement in the film **THE FIVE DEMANDS**
- Discuss the values expressed in the description of the Black Arts Movement, and their connection to **THE FIVE DEMANDS** made by students in the 1969 Black and Puerto Rican City College protests.
- Does this description sound like what you typically think of when you hear the word “poetry?” Why or why not?
- What are contemporary songs, poems, books and social media content that feature socially active and/or political messaging. Do you feel there is a legacy of The Black Arts Movement today? If so, where is it experienced?
- What is the power of art to make change? How have you seen it used effectively?

Assign each of the following quotes pulled from **THE FIVE DEMANDS** to students in pairs or small groups. Invite students to discuss the quote and draw comparisons to their own life and learning experiences. Are these typical quotes you imagine from educators? Why or why not?

“We felt if we could make democracy come to City College that we could have an impact on... public education throughout the country.”

—JUNE JORDAN

“In this discovery of a previously submerged culture we were learning from and with our students as rarely happens in a university.”

—ADRIENNE RICH

“The learning process is something you can incite, literally incite, like a riot...”

—AUDRE LORDE

“Teaching in the S.E.E.K. program means that you talk with Black and Puerto Rican students who have been taught to believe they will fail.”

—TONI CADE BAMBARA

“Power comes not from the barrel of a gun, but from one’s awareness of his or her own cultural strength.”

— ADDISON GAYLE

Step Two: The Manifesto Poem

Inspired by The Black Arts Movement and S.E.E.K. instructors, invite students to embark on creating a manifesto poem that states their educational values. This exercise is most effective when building on the previous lesson plan, Equity in the Classroom.

Start by introducing the concept of a manifesto through this definition from [Masterclass](#):

Though the definition of “manifesto” as a word is somewhat malleable—encompassing everything from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech to the Declaration of Independence—the intent of one of these documents is always to outline core beliefs and inspire sweeping change.

A manifesto is a written statement outlining what a person or group stands for and how they plan to effect change. These documents serve as long-form thesis statements—they put forth personal beliefs in the attempt to persuade others. It’s for this reason you might hear the words “creed” or “mission statement” as synonyms for manifesto.

Explain to students that poems can also operate as forms of manifestos. Invite students to choose a poem from one of The Black Arts Movement poets listed at the end of this article on Poetry Foundation (Note: many poems include inciting language to paint the picture of

troubling injustices. If language is a concern, you may decide to pre-select a group of poems in advance):

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/148936/an-introduction-to-the-black-arts-movement>

Working solo or in pairs, invite students to highlight words, phrases and meanings in the poem that illustrate the concept of a manifesto, where the poet “outlines core beliefs” and/or “inspires sweeping change.”

Note that many of these will appear in metaphorical language. Encourage students to “translate” the lines they choose into plain language as a study. Each student or pair of students should share one line that struck them as a manifesto statement, and their original translation.

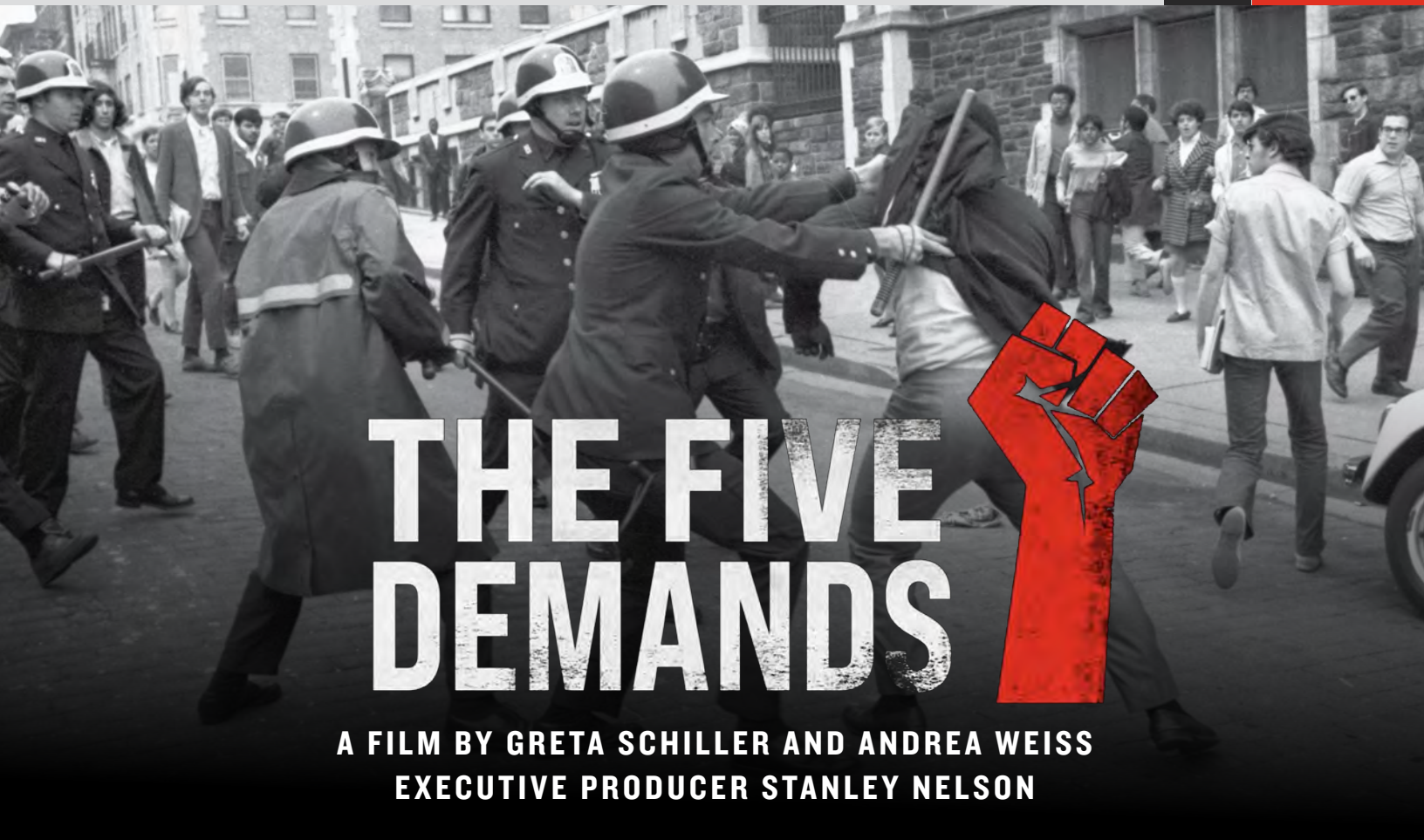
Step Three: Write A Community Manifesto Poem

Invite each student to translate one of their 5 demands into a poetic manifesto, a metaphoric approach to their values, core beliefs and an idea for sweeping change.

The demand’s translation to 1-5 lines of poetry (a “stanza”) should include at least one of the following poetic devices:

- Metaphor
- Similar
- Onomatopoeia
- Alliteration
- Imagery
- Symbolism
- Personification
- Sensory details
- Consonance

Finally, invite students to read their lines of poetry back to back aloud, creating a community manifesto in the air! Take it a step further, and invite a student or committee of students to type the lines into a full poem that can be edited, saved and even distributed as an advocacy effort.



THE FIVE DEMANDS

A FILM BY GRETA SCHILLER AND ANDREA WEISS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER STANLEY NELSON

Credits

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