



THE ALGEBRA PROJECT

"Math literacy is the key to 21st century citizenship."

Robert Moses
President & Founder

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Algebra Project,

Thank you! Your work and support kept the Algebra Project moving along in 2012.

Leaning Forward: a *Forward–Constitutional–Lean*

In 2011, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1961 McComb student walkout which followed the Liberty, Amite County murder of Herbert Lee. Little did we know that Lee's murder would set the stage for the 1964 Freedom Summer, whose 50th comes up in 2014.

We should ponder one empirical, undeniable, *forward–constitutional–lean* visible over time-stretches of roughly 75 years: roughly, every three-fourths of a century the nation has expanded, in real terms, its "We The People" reach.

The Nation's first constitutional three-quarters of a century:

From 1787 to 1863, a stretch of 76 years, the "We The People" class [white, male and propertied] found in the nation's constitution a right to confiscate Native American lands and enslave Africans, until, in 1857, the Supreme Court Dred Scott decision, brought on by insurgent runaway slaves, flew the nation asunder and mass destruction followed secession.

In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves and the Thirteenth Amendment followed: In 1865 the federal government reached around state "sovereignty" to contravene a *private* liberty, individuals' constitutional right to own slave property. Three years later, in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to freed slaves, dramatically expanding the nation's "We The People" reach.

White male property owners regrouped and the nation, unsure of its constitutional moorings, retreated on its citizenship promises. By 1890 it replaced slavery with a caste system driven by money-less–cotton–plantation–sharecropping and coal–mine– indentured–servitude.

The Nation's second constitutional three-quarters of a century:

From 1890 to 1965, a stretch of 74 years, African Americans, slaves no longer, functioned as second class "We The People", until the 1960s Civil Rights charge, challenged all manifestations of second class citizenship and expanded the nation's "We The People" reach to include Women, Native Americans, Gays and Lesbians, as well as African Americans, this time for keeps.

The Nation's third constitutional three-quarters of a century:

Reflect that 2013 which marks the 50th anniversaries of the assassination of Medgar Evers followed by President Kennedy, the March on Washington followed by the bombing of the four girls in Rev. Shuttleworth's church, also marks the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. We are two-thirds of the way through our third 75-year constitutional-unit-of-time, an era in which a certain class of White male property owners changed political parties:

After the 1960s, White male property owners of the 1787–1863 slave states, which became the 1890–1964 Jim Crow states, switched from the donkey to the elephant. For over two centuries, this class of “We The People”, no respecter of parties, have led the opposition to the *forward-constitutional-lean*, the expansion of the nation's “We The People” reach. Meanwhile, the nation, ever lurching around its constitutional moorings, continues to flip-flop on its citizenship promises (see *The United States vs. Morrison*, 2000).

In an article in *The Policy Review*, “The Court, the Constitution, and the Culture of Freedom,” August and September 2005, Peter Berkowitz of the Hoover Institute at Stanford remarks:

By design, the American Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It is a liberal constitution, one whose first purpose is to protect freedom by establishing authoritative limits. By proclaiming with the backing of the coercive power of the state, what is forbidden, what is permitted, what is required, it creates background conditions for and sets a tone that reverberates throughout all spheres of our lives. (p. 28)

In the 1960s the young student Mississippi SNCC field secretaries organized against background conditions infiltrated with permissive constitutional tones: terrorists were permitted to gun us down, Mississippi was permitted to lock us up, the Feds were permitted to set us free. Against all odds, Delta sharecroppers rose in August 1964 at LBJ's National Democratic Credentials Committee Hearing where Fannie Lou Hamer “Questioned America”:

Who are the nation's Constitutional People and what are their national rights and obligations?

That generation removed Jim Crow from public accommodations, the right to vote and the National Democratic Party structures, however, a national constitutional conundrum persists. We see it most clearly in the failure of practice to integrate the dispersed constitutional powers into a workable government to secure a quality public school education for all the nation's children.

In the previous two constitutional cycles, 1787–1863 and 1890–1964, mastery of post office arithmetic joined reading and writing as necessary citizenship literacies. In the first two-thirds of this third constitutional cycle, the information technologies have for all practical purposes shifted the quantitative literacy needed for citizenship from arithmetic to algebra.

The Algebra Project has worked for the past thirty years, 1982–2012, to turn the teaching and learning of algebra from an insurmountable obstacle to a highway, to establish algebra into a tool to help expand the nation's “We The People” reach to include its children.

Thanks again, for your work and support in 2013.

Bob Moses