



Part 3: Asbury Park from the 1970s to Today

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What social issues continue to confront Asbury Park today, and how are activists tackling them?

OVERVIEW

*In this 3-part lesson collection, students watch clips from the film *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll* and examine documents in order to gain a deeper understanding of segregation in the Northern United States. Students also consider the role music has played in segregated Asbury Park. In Part 3, students discover the history of Asbury Park from 1970 to today. They then hear from contemporary activists on the current issues Asbury Park faces, and compare the issues to those articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he gave a speech at Monmouth University. To conclude the collection, students discuss how the current issues affecting Asbury Park may be informed by the history of the city, and brainstorm ways to overcome these challenges with music and the performing arts.*



The decades following the Asbury Park riots or rebellions in 1970s is characterized in most historical accounts as a period of “downfall.” On the West Side, Springwood Avenue—once the center of music and nightlife on the West Side—remained decimated for decades following the uprisings. Additionally, a series of misfortunes and instances of political corruption led the once thriving East Side to a period of neglect. Facing lowering tourist revenue, city planners in the 1970s contracted with the State of New Jersey to build housing in Asbury Park for de-institutionalized psychiatric patients, which for the better or worse further stigmatized a town once considered a tourist destination.

In the 1980s and 1990s, attempts to revitalize the town into a resort destination and residential city floundered. In the mid-1980s, brothers Henry and Sebastian Vaccaro invested heavily into the Asbury Park waterfront area, restoring the Berkeley-Carteret hotel and signing a contract to build 2,400 residential units in the area. In 1989, however, Carabetta Enterprises—the company the Vaccaro brothers contracted to construct the residential units—filed bankruptcy, leaving a series of deserted and half-finished condominiums through the waterfront. Other contractors, upon facing similar dilemmas, purposely burned down buildings to collect insurance money.

Redevelopment plans on the West Side failed to materialize as well. In 1976, the A.M.E. Zion Church developed a plan to revitalize the West side of town, going so far as securing \$5.5 million in federal and state funding before the city council vetoed the project.

The sharp decline of real estate values in Asbury Park during this time was beneficial to one community of people: artists and other creatives. Here, musicians such as Bruce Springsteen, Steven Van Zandt, Davey Sancious, and Southside Johnny were able to live cheaply as they honed their craft playing in clubs such as The Upstage and The Stone Pony. The release and celebrated reception of Bruce Springsteen’s *Greetings from Asbury Park* at this time helped contribute to the image of Asbury Park as a gritty “party town.”

Promise of cheap rent and little oversight also appealed to the LGBTQ+ community, who saw the potential Asbury Park had as a welcoming place for a group of people who continued to be marginalized in the 1970s and 1980s. Soon, bars, clubs, and venues serving LGBTQ+ clientele proliferated throughout Asbury Park.

After many years, the presence of musicians, entrepreneurs, and impresarios within the LGBTQ+ and artistic community created fertile ground for the “redevelopment” or “revitalization” of the area. One of the first figures to perceive the potential of Asbury Park were Luke Magliaro and Howard Raczkiwicz, owners of the Moonstruck restaurant in nearby Ocean Grove. Paying little heed to warnings of financial ruin, the partners moved Moonstruck to Asbury Park, paving the way for more boutique establishments along the waterfront. Slowly, the East Side of Asbury Park became revitalized—old abandoned buildings were bought and reopened, new luxury housing has been built, and people began flocking to the beaches once again.

The West Side residents of Asbury Park who had lived and raised families through the 1980s and 1990s, however, saw little change as the East Side redeveloped. The Asbury Park city council, seeing the potential for tourist income, spent the majority of their efforts revitalizing the waterfront to attract new business and vacationers. Funding for education, infrastructure, and development on the West Side remained low.

To compound matters for West Side residents, the “revitalization” of Asbury Park has led to a process of gentrification: as the city becomes more popular, rents increase, which threaten to push out some of the city’s longest residents. In such a way, history threatens to repeat itself in Asbury Park today: without investment into the West Side, the mostly Black residents of the area may continue to feel ignored, disenfranchised, and unwelcome in the East Side, which caters to visitors more than residents. But history-minded scholars, activists, and musicians continue to illuminate the complications of gentrification and advocate for those living the Asbury Park’s West Side—some of the longest residents in the city.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The history of Asbury Park from the 1970s to today
- The practice and effects of gentrification
- Contemporary activists in Asbury Park

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to outline a brief history of Asbury Park since the 1970s, and articulate the issues the city continues to confront, by watching clips from the film *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll*, reading secondary sources and hearing directly from activists and musicians who grew up in Asbury Park.

ACTIVITIES

ENTRY TICKET ACTIVITY

1. Before beginning this lesson, be sure to have taught Part 1 and Part 2 of the collection, and remind students to keep all their handouts, notes and projects from Parts 1 and 2 readily available for this lesson.
2. If necessary, review what was covered in the previous parts of this lesson by asking students:
 - What is “*de facto*” segregation? How does it differ from “*de jure*” segregation?
 - What are some examples of practices associated with “*de facto*” segregation?
 - In what ways did the city of Asbury Park enact de facto segregation?
 - How did segregation contribute to the uprisings in Asbury Park in 1970?
 - What was the city government’s response to the uprisings in 1970?
 - What role did music play in Asbury Park in relation to the city’s practices of segregation?

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

1. Tell students that in this lesson they will continue to be using the city of Asbury Park as a case study to examine practices of segregation in the United States.
2. Pass out **Handout - Youth Voices on Asbury Park**. Read the handout individually, in groups, or aloud as a class. Then ask students:
 - When did the interviews listed on the handout take place?
 - How would you describe some of the issues the people interviewed expressed?
 - How are the issues expressed in the handout similar or different than the issues that confronted Asbury Park in the past? (*Encourage students to draw upon their notes from parts 1 and 2 of the Asbury Park lesson collection.*)

PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that in this class they will be looking at the history of Asbury Park from the 1970s to today.
2. Play **Clip 1, Asbury Park After 1970**. After watching the clip, ask students:
 - According to the clip, did Asbury Park recover effectively after the uprisings in 1970? Why or why not?
 - According to the clip, what contributed to Asbury Park’s “downward spiral”?
 - According to former Mayor of Asbury Park, Ed Johnson, what factors “kept Asbury Park down”?
 - What specific examples does the clip give for the corruption that occurred in Asbury Park after 1970?
 - What might have Ed Johnson meant when he said “people dismantled this town and put it in their pockets at the expense of other people?”
3. Pass out **Handout - Excerpts from Asbury Park: A Brief History**. Ask students to read Excerpt 1 from the handout individually, in groups, or aloud as a class. Then ask students:
 - According to the excerpt, what happened in Asbury Park in the 1980s and 1990s?
 - What attempts were there to revitalize the boardwalk area? What happened with these attempts?
 - How might the events described in the handout align with Ed Johnson’s assertion that “people dismantled this town and put it in their pockets at the expense of other people?”
4. Ask students to read Excerpt 2 from the handout individually, in groups, or aloud as a class. Then ask students:
 - By the 2000s, what was occurring on the Asbury Park boardwalk area?
 - List some of the businesses that began opening in this area, according to the excerpt. What types of people were these businesses seeking to attract? (*Hint: consider the make of cars in the Moonstruck Parking lot in paragraph 2, and the description of Jodie and Philippe Lepine in paragraph 4*).
 - In your own words, how would you describe the “revitalization” of Asbury Park in the 2000s. What happened?
 - Consider both excerpts you read. What areas of Asbury Park are being neglected in this narrative? Who in Asbury Park is being represented in these excerpts, and who isn’t?
5. Play **Clip 2, Asbury Park Today**. Then ask students:
 - How is the West Side of Asbury Park described in this clip, in comparison to the East Side?
 - In the clip, Bruce Springsteen states that the West Side isn’t receiving a share of the “prosperity that comes into the city.” Based on what you read in the handout, where might the “prosperity” that is arriving in Asbury Park be coming from?
 - How does Bruce Springsteen and Pastor Warren Hall describe Springwood avenue in the past? What occurred there?
 - According to Pastor Warren Hall, how could the West Side be revitalized?

6. Tell students they will now be split into groups, to investigate how contemporary activists and scholars describe the issues that continue to confront the Asbury Park today, and possible solutions to those issues.
7. Pass out to each student group **Handout - Asbury Park Activist Profile Sheet**. Tell students that each group will be watching an interview with a specific person working in Asbury Park today, while taking notes on the interview in the handout provided.
8. Split the class into groups, and assign each group a station (*if there is time, students may switch between stations and fill out multiple Activist Profile Sheets*):
 - **Station 1: Rev. Nicolle D. Harris**
 - **Station 2: Diane Shelton**
 - **Station 3: Dr. Alicia Raia-Hawrylak**
9. Reconvene the class, and have each student group share what they wrote down on the Activist Profile Sheet. After every group has shared, ask students:
 - Based on all the people profiled, what can you say are some of the major issues confronting Asbury Park today- especially for the people living on the West Side?
 - How are the people profiled in the interviews addressing these issues? Are they doing it in similar or different ways? If different, do you find one method to be more potentially effective than another? Why?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to retrieve their handouts and notes from the previous Asbury Park lessons. Using these notes, combined with what they learned in class, ask them to write an essay examining how the issues affecting Asbury Park today are influenced by issues that have affected the city historically. Make sure students cite and discuss in their papers the speech Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered at Monmouth University.
2. Show **Image 1, Townhall Activity**. Split students into groups, have them follow the activity listed in the image, and report their three campaign promises to the rest of the class.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Peruse some recent articles on the issue of gentrification from *The Guardian* from here (<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gentrification>). Then, write a short summary outlining the contemporary issues surrounding gentrification.
2. Do research on Asbury Park's Lakehouse Music Academy (<https://www.lakehousemusicacademy.com/>), and write a short essay considering how the academy is seeking to improve the quality of life for people in Asbury Park.

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS*College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for English Language Arts*

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Craft and Structure 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Craft and Structure 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Craft and Structure 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing for Grades 6-12

Text Types and Purposes 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Text Types and Purposes 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Production and Distribution of Writing 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Production and Distribution of Writing 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 6-12

Comprehension & Collaboration 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Comprehension & Collaboration 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language for Grades 6-12

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION (NAFME)

Core Music Standard: Responding

Select: Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose or context.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music.

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Responding

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.



Core Music Standard: Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standards 11: Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll-Asbury Park After 1970*
- *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll-Asbury Park Today*
- Interview with Rev. Nicolle D. Harris
- Interview with Diane Shelton
- Interview with Dr. Alicia Raia-Hawrylak

HANDOUTS

- Handout – Excerpts from *Asbury Park: A Brief History*
- Handout – Asbury Park Activist Profile Sheet