



The Importance of Talking About Current Events in the Classroom

By Educator Barnes – August 29, 2020

The classroom is a microcosm of the outside community. The thoughts and feelings students have based on events that happen outside of the classroom are inside of students when they enter into the classroom. Educators can pretend as if the outside world does not exist, or

educators can lean in and embrace the reality and incorporate an opportunity for discussion and reflection during the school day.

On Friday, August 28, 2020, the world lost a young, gifted, and Black man, Chadwick Boseman. He lost his fight with colon cancer, a diagnosis the public did not learn about until after he passed away. The weight of his death was magnified as the public learned through a post on Chadwick Boseman's official [Twitter account](#), Facebook page, and Instagram account that he battled cancer while still working relentlessly to bring audiences stories of Black people.



 **Chadwick Boseman** 
@chadwickboseman 



It is with immeasurable grief that we confirm the passing of Chadwick Boseman.

Chadwick was diagnosed with stage III colon cancer in 2016, and battled with it these last 4 years as it progressed to stage IV.

A true fighter, Chadwick persevered through it all, and brought you many of the films you have come to love so much. From Marshall to Da 5 Bloods, August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black Bottom and several more, all were filmed during and between countless surgeries and chemotherapy.

It was the honor of his career to bring King T'Challa to life in Black Panther.

He died in his home, with his wife and family by his side.

The family thanks you for your love and

10:11 PM · Aug 28, 2020 

 7.7M  2.4M people are Tweeting about this

"A true fighter, Chadwick persevered through it all, and brought you many of the films you have come to love so much. From Marshall to Da 5 Bloods, August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black

Bottom and several more, all were filmed during and between countless surgeries and chemotherapy.”

From depicting Jackie Robinson in “42,” James Brown in “Get On Up,” and Thurgood Marshall in “Marshall,” he left a legacy films educators can use to teach children about remarkable Black men. Recently, audiences saw him in “Da 5 Bloods,” a Spike Lee film where a spotlight was put on the experiences of Black veterans who served their country and fought during the Vietnam War at a time when that same country treated Black people as second class citizens.

Boseman was mostly known for his role as T’Challa, The Black Panther. “Black Panther,” a movie with a Black director and mostly Black cast, allowed Black children and adults to see representation on the big screen. He not only brought a Marvel hero to life, he also spent time visiting children who were in the hospital at St. Jude, reminded young people to vote, and gave encouraging speeches.

His speeches can be used in the classroom as an entry point to discuss the sudden death of Chadwick Boseman and the issues he spoke about. It is important for students to have a safe place to process current events. School can be that place.

NowThis News shared Chadwick Boseman’s commencement speech at Howard University in 2018, and his SAG award acceptance speech from 2019. Students can watch these videos and discuss the following questions:

1. During Chadwick Boseman’s SAG award acceptance speech, while addressing if “Black Panther” had changed the film industry, he said, “We all know what it’s like to be told that there is not a place for you to be featured yet you are young, gifted, and Black.”

- What did Boseman mean by this statement?
- Have you found yourself in a situation where you did not feel there was a place for you despite knowing you were valuable?
- What can we learn from Boseman’s speech about how to respond to these situations?

2. During Chadwick Boseman’s commencement speech at Howard University, he mentioned he lost a high paying job after speaking up about how the character he was hired to play embodied stereotypes about Black people.

- What principles of our school did Boseman exemplify in this situation? (Remove “of our school” if students do not know the school’s principles or the school does not have principles identified that are promoted).
- Based on this speech, what does Boseman believe is more important than money?

3. What themes can you find in both speeches given by Chadwick Boseman?

4. Did “Black Panther” change the industry, or is there still more work to do?

5. Boseman acted in a series of films and participated in many events while fighting colon cancer.

- What thoughts do you have about this?
- Should he have taken more time to himself, or do you think acting was his way of living his life to the fullest regardless of his diagnosis?

6. Earlier this year, NBA star Kobe Bryant died tragically in a plane crash. The sadness shared and the outpouring of love is similar to what we are seeing now with Chadwick Boseman.

- Why are people impacted by celebrity death?
- What can we do to process and cope with the death of someone we don’t know well or a person we do know well?

7. Thinking about the protests over the summer after the death of George Floyd, there has been a cry for Black lives to matter. Based on what Boseman shared in his speeches about the challenges of the industry and the challenge he faced with the role he had briefly in the soap opera, what changes need to be made in society to make Black people believe their lives matter?

These questions can be modified. Some of the questions have more than one point of discussion. Teachers should let the conversation dictate what questions to ask during a discussion. It is always a good idea for teachers to have some points to talk about just in case students do not know where to start.

Depending on the community teachers have with their students, they may take a different approach to discuss the death of Chadwick Boseman. If a student brings up his death, teachers should be prepared to address it whether it is through a planned out lesson or an informal discussion.

School may be the only place students get to process events like this. Teachers may not be able to alleviate the sadness a student feels, but the teacher can model how to process and discuss heavy topics.

Thank you for all you gave us during your short time on this earth.

Rest in Power. Rest In Peace, Chadwick Boseman.