

“I just thought that you couldn’t get people to register and vote until you teach them to read and write.”



Septima Poinsette Clark, educator and civil rights activist, from her 1986 book, “Ready from Within”

Photo credit: Avery Institute

Septima Clark graduated from high school in 1916 and worked as a teacher while making her way through college. She ultimately earned her bachelor’s degree in 1942 and master’s degree in 1946. A longtime member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), she was fired from her teaching job in 1956 for refusing to end her affiliation with the civil rights group.

Clark then went to work for the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee and developed “citizen education” workshops to teach African Americans necessary skills to not only help them register, but to prepare them to pass the literacy tests used to keep African Americans from exercising their right to vote.

Septima Clark used her knowledge and skills as a teacher to assist others in voting.

Look for news and information about individuals or groups of people using their expertise to help others. Did you find any who are helping others to register or to better understand the voting process?

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