

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Christopher (Chris) Johnson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key – Civics Education Oral History project

Interview # ECE-A-L-2020-032

Christopher (Chris) Johnson, a high school history and civics teacher at ROWVA High School, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key – Civics Education* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jul 7, 2020 Location: Telephone interview conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:37 / 1.62 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 10, 2020.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Christopher Johnson, *Education is Key – Civics*, ECE-A-L-2020-032

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Chris Johnson was born in Evanston, Illinois in February 1982. He grew up in Arlington Heights, Illinois and graduated from Rolling Meadows High School in 2000. He graduated with a BA degree in history and secondary education from Knox College, in Galesburg, Illinois in 2004. Chris student taught at ROWVA High School (Rio, Oneida, Wataga, Victoria and Altona) and then spent a year as a substitute teacher before being hired at ROWVA to teach junior high social studies. Chris has taught grades 7-12 in areas of world history, U.S. history, civics (11-12), AP government, digital productions, and AP European history. Chris also has coached girls' varsity track, cross country, and the E-Sports team. Chris also serves on the Professional Development Committee, the Reopening of School Committee, and the School Handbook/Discipline Committee. He serves as a civics mentor for ROE 33 under the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. In 2002, Chris was a Congressional Intern for Congressman Mel Watt. In 2009, Chris earned his MA in Educational Leadership from Olivet Nazarene University.

Johnson examines the role of civics education at a smaller rural school district, with a high school enrollment of approximately 200 students. High school civics is taught in grades 11-12. He talked about the civics topics being covered, the types of controversial subjects (confederate monuments, abortion, structured debate) discussed, and service learning projects (census, voter registration), and media literacy activities. Chris talks about how he adjusted to remote learning in March 2020 and the plans for fall 2020 schooling due to the impact of the pandemic. In addition, he discussed the changes in the district's social studies curriculum due to the new (2017) social studies standards and the implementation of the new civics mandate for middle schools. Finally, Johnson discussed the important role that field trips play to civics education, (canceled in spring 2020) and the training provided to social studies teachers through the McCormick Foundation and the Regional Office of Education.

Subject Headings/Key Words: ROWVA High School (Rio, Oneida, Wataga, Victoria and Altona); civics education in high school; civics education in middle schools; teaching controversial subjects; changes in 2017 in Illinois civics education; field trips in support of civics education

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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