

EDUCATION
WORKSHOP

RAISING THE VOLUME

with **Lonnie Hamilton III**

Raising the
Volume

Episode XXI

*Lonnie Hamilton
III describes his
experience as a
Charleston educator
and a politician.*

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Sixth Grade and Up



CORE SUBJECTS AND 21ST CENTURY THEMES

Mastery of core subjects and twenty-first century themes is essential for all students in the twenty-first century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts; world languages; arts; mathematics; economics; science; geography; history; and government and civics. In addition to these subjects, schools must move forward to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving twenty-first century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects.

Global Awareness

1. Use twenty-first century skills to understand and address global issues.
2. Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.

Civic Literacy

1. Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
2. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
3. Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

Work Creatively with Others

1. Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
2. Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
3. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
4. View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
5. Implement innovations.
6. Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.

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OVERVIEW

Everyone has a story. It's our place to take a moment to listen. Once you listen, your eyes open. You can put yourself in someone else's shoes and try to comprehend their experiences. You may be inspired, you may come away with more knowledge, or you may find a bit of yourself in someone else.

"Raising the Volume" is a series of Black stories. These are stories about Black entrepreneurs, judges, authors, artists, and leaders in our community. These are stories that need to be heard. Led by the Gaillard's Artists-in-Residence Charlton Singleton and Marcus Amaker, "Raising the Volume" gives a platform to Black community members whose lives matter.

As you introduce this series to your students, follow the bullet points below for discussion. Your students will find that they are challenged to think about uncomfortable things. Those conversations are what will help us change our world. In the words of Judge McFarland, "To break down racial barriers, start where you are." So, let's start where we are and see what change we can bring to our community.

For each lesson, split your class into small groups for discussion or discuss as a whole. Choose the model that is the most comfortable for your students so they feel free to discuss opinions openly.

Teachers, if you are interested in scheduling a cross-school discussion on Raising the Volume Episode XXI, please email Sterling deVries at sdevries@gaillardcenter.org. Through cross-school Zoom calls, we can offer students from one school a different perspective on the video with students from a second school. We will schedule class-to-class meetings where whole groups can discuss various topics covered in Episode XXI.

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EPISODE XXI

CONTENT WARNING: This video and lesson plan include a racial slur that can be triggering.



(CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH EPISODE XXI)

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LESSONS

Born in 1927, Mr. Hamilton grew up in Silver Hill (upper peninsula), Union Heights, and Six Mile (Mt. Pleasant). He attended Four Mile Elementary and Burke High School. In the early 1940s, Burke was the only high school in Charleston beyond the seventh grade for Black students, but it was for city residents only. In order for Mr. Hamilton to attend, he had to pretend to reside in the city of Charleston. He had to lie on his school forms in order to get an education past the seventh grade. **What are your thoughts about having to lie to go to school because it was not offered to you? What would you have done? Why were there no schools for Black students after seventh grade? (You will learn more about this later in the lesson). [Learn more about Union Heights.](#)**

Mr. Hamilton wanted to be a saxophone player; his grandfather bought him one as a Christmas gift, and he has played ever since. He was given the chance to play with the Jenkins Orphanage Band as a student at Burke. He traveled with the Jenkins Orphanage Band playing music and raising money for the orphanage. [Learn more about the Jenkins Orphanage Band.](#) **Write down two details in regards to the Jenkins Orphanage Band and discuss with your group. Why do you think the band is considered legendary?**

Mr. Hamilton went to South Carolina State University on a scholarship to study music education and graduated in 1951. Following college, he served two years in the military as

part of the draft. When he returned from his service, he wanted to go on the road and play in a band. The registrar from his alma mater requested he try teaching for two years first. He moved to Union, South Carolina, and taught at Simms High School where he fell in love with teaching. After several years in Union, the principal at Bonds Wilson High School (formerly located on the grounds of the CCSD School of the Arts campus) offered him a position back home in Charleston. He accepted. He had to work with a budget of \$1300 to start a music program at Bonds Wilson. Mr. Hamilton said, "They didn't have money; Black people did not have money in those days." **In the 1950s, funding for public school was different for Black and white children. According to the National Park Service's article, "Separate but Equal? South Carolina's Fight Over School Segregation:"**

During the era of segregation, South Carolina school districts viewed the education of African American students as unimportant. It was illegal for black and white children to attend school together and the state provided little education for African Americans past the tenth grade.

A survey of South Carolina's schools in the late 1940s showed that the state's school facility investment for white students totaled approximately \$221 per pupil. The school plans for African American students reflected an investment of \$45 per pupil.¹ [Read the NPS article here.](#)

1. "Separate But Equal? South Carolina's Fight Over School Segregation (Teaching With Historic Places)," National Parks Service, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/separate-but-equal-south-carolina-s-fight-over-school-segregation-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>.

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LESSONS

As you read through the article, note the three most shocking facts you learned and discuss with your group. In what year did South Carolina truly make education equal? Do you currently believe education is equal throughout the state?

Mr. Hamilton found his way into politics because the kids in his band complained they were in a community with sewer running through an open ditch. His students asked him to go to a community meeting and stand up for them. The students raised \$23 for campaign money, and they supported and rallied behind Mr. Hamilton. In 1970, he was elected Charleston County Councilman.

Mr. Hamilton faced some issues when he ran for the Charleston County Council; the school board voted that he would lose his job if he ran for election. He shared it with an attorney who responded to the letter from the school board stating that they were infringing upon his civil rights. The school board then decided he could run. **Do you think it is a conflict of interest for a classroom teacher to be a political figure? Why or why not? Explain.**

In 1970, when Mr. Hamilton ran for election, 68% of those in Charleston were white, and he had to beat two white opponents. He

contributes his win to his white and Black school students; they supported him and told their parents to vote for him. He won and became the first African American elected as a County Councilman. He served for 24 years.

Mr. Hamilton recalls one interaction with a parent of a student: “‘Hamilton,’ he says, ‘I don’t like niggers, but I have never lied to my daughter, and I promised my daughter I’d vote for you.’” **Mr. Hamilton’s students respected him so deeply that they helped him gain a seat on the County Council despite the challenges of race. It is hard to imagine a student’s parent speaking to their child’s teacher the way the man above did to Mr. Hamilton. When it comes to derogatory comments and people viewing one another differently, do you feel the world has changed since this event in the 1970s?**

There is so much more to Mr. Hamilton’s story. He truly made a difference in our community and inspired the 3,400 students he taught as a music educator. From classroom teacher, to band director, to the star of Lonnie Hamilton and the Diplomats Band, our community has changed because of him.

[Read the Charleston City Paper article here.](#)

[Click here to view the Lonnie Hamilton III papers.](#)

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ABOUT LONNIE HAMILTON III



For more than fifty years, Mr. Lonnie Hamilton, III has dedicated his time and efforts to making Charleston a better place. Former educator, politician and professional musician, he is an alto saxophonist and clarinetist. After touring with the Jenkins Orphanage Bands (he was never a resident) during the mid-1940s, he played with his own band, Lonnie Hamilton and the Diplomats, the signature jazz band in Charleston for decades. Hamilton has been called a legend and the embodiment of Charleston's rich jazz legacy.

Before he went on to achieve distinction as an educator, celebrated public official and professional musician, Mr. Lonnie Hamilton, III faced humble beginnings. He attended Burke High School, which was the only high school in the area for African American students. Inspired by watching the Jenkins Orphanage Band parade down Spring Street to Broad Street on Saturday afternoons, Mr. Hamilton saw music as the key to his future success. After high school, Mr. Hamilton was offered a music scholarship to attend South Carolina State College in Orangeburg.

He played music throughout his time in College and went on to serve as the Band Director at Sims High School for two years before being invited to serve as Band Director at Bonds-Wilson High School – a position he held for 20 years.

Mr. Hamilton's Diplomats was the house band for a very popular jazz nightclub he owned on Charleston's North Market Street (it later moved to the 2nd floor of Henry's Restaurant) in the 1970's through the early 1990's. Mr. Hamilton performed in 2010 with the Charleston Jazz Initiative Legends Band and is also featured on its first CD recording.

His commitment to serving the Charleston community didn't stop with his music students. Mr. Hamilton served for more than 20 years as a Charleston County Council Member – elected in 1970 as the first African American in the County's history to hold such office, and serving twice as Charleston County Council Chair. "Poor people had few ways to get anything they needed and I was able to serve them," he said, noting his efforts to bring recycling to Charleston and a Triage Unit to the County Hospital during his tenure as some of his proudest achievements.

Today, the interchange of Interstate I-526 and I-26 bears his name, as does the Charleston County office building – Lonnie Hamilton, III Public Services Building. In 2003, his former students from Bonds-Wilson High School formed the charitable Lonnie Hamilton, III Foundation, which focuses on educational achievement.²

2. "Lonnie Hamilton III," Jenkins Institute, accessed February 3, 2022, <http://www.jenkinsinstitute.org/index.php/11-band-articles/24-lonnie-hamilton-iii>.

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ABOUT CHARLTON SINGLETON



A native of Awendaw, SC, Charlton Singleton began his musical studies at the age of three on the piano. He would then go on to study the organ, violin, cello, and the trumpet throughout elementary, middle, and high school. In 1994, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance from South Carolina State University. Since that time, he has taught music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as being an adjunct faculty member at the College of Charleston. In 2008 he co-founded and became the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Charleston Jazz Orchestra; an 18-piece jazz ensemble of some of the finest professional musicians in the Southeast and the resident big band in Charleston, SC. Mr. Singleton is also the organist and choir director at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Charleston, SC. In November of 2016 he was named the inaugural Artist in Residence at the recently renovated Gaillard Center in downtown Charleston. He remained in this position until July 2019; at that point he was named Artist in Residence Emeritus. In this position he continues to lead the Summer Youth Jazz Orchestra Camp as well as lead the "Jazz Through the Ages" assembly, which attracts a capacity crowd of students at the Gaillard Center.

As a performer, Charlton leads his own ensembles that vary in size and style. He has performed in France, Great Britain, Scotland, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, The Netherlands, as well as many great cities throughout the United States. He is a founding member of an ensemble called Ranky Tanky. The group is a quintet that interprets the sounds of Gullah from the Southeast Coast of the United States. In 2017, Ranky Tanky reached the top of the Billboard, iTunes, and Amazon Contemporary Jazz charts with their self-titled debut recording. In 2019, they accomplished the same feat with the release of their sophomore effort, "Good Time", which recently won the 2019 Grammy Award for "Best Regional Roots Album". Ranky Tanky was also recognized and honored with a resolution by the South Carolina House of Representatives for their achievements in the music industry. In 2021, Charlton was the recipient of the SC Governor's Award, which honors arts organizations, patrons, artists, members of the business community, and government entities who maximize their roles as innovators, supporters, and advocates for the arts. It is the highest individual honor for the arts in the state of South Carolina.

In addition to performing, he is in demand as a speaker, clinician, composer, and arranger. He has also shared the stage with and/or worked with some of the most talented entertainers in the world, including Bobby McFerrin, Ruby Dee, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, Houston Person, Darius Rucker, Fred Wesley, and Cyrus Chestnut to name a few. Outside of music and entertainment, he, and his wife, MaryJo, are the proud parents of Shalamar, D'Marcus, and K'Leb, as well as their pets...Sassy, Jango, Mojo, Pumpkin, and Ginger.

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Funding for this program provided in part by:



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"Lonnie Hamilton III," Jenkins Institute, accessed February 3, 2022, <http://www.jenkinsinstitute.org/index.php/11-band-articles/24-lonnie-hamilton-iii>.

"Separate But Equal? South Carolina's Fight Over School Segregation (Teaching With Historic Places)," National Parks Service, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/separate-but-equal-south-carolina-s-fight-over-school->

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