

# Preface

The following lessons have been developed by the New Jersey Center for Civic and Law-Related Education under a subcontract with the Center for Civic Education in Calabasas, California, under Grant Award Number Q304A030004, from the United States Department of Education, under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress. The grant supports *Civitas*, an international civic education exchange program between the United States and emerging and established democracies begun in 1995.

The Africa Lessons focus on West Africa, and might be expanded in the future to include all of Africa. They represent a humanistic, interdisciplinary approach to teaching history, civics and current events. The goal of this approach is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be informed, competent, deliberative, engaged citizens in a representative democracy and pluralistic society in a world that is growing ever more interconnected and interdependent. The suggested lessons will involve students in historical and geographical understanding, independent research, comparative analysis, critical thinking, and simulations of political and legal processes. The aim is to promote reasoned judgment about human affairs and deliberations about what is fair or just for the common good. Poems, nonfiction writing and African literature are included for teachers and students to gain multiple perspectives and a richer understanding of the human condition.

The lessons are merely suggestive of how teachers might supplement their textbooks on World History or World Cultures or Global Learning or Current Events. In addition to learning about the history, geography, economics, government and politics in West Africa, we believe that these lessons also can help students in the United States to see that there are certain universal values that all democracies should seek to attain. And, by comparison, students may come to appreciate both the similarities and differences between the struggles in these far away countries and their own nation. As we learn about other civilizations, other time periods and other places around the globe, we also learn about ourselves.

I would like to thank Becky McFarlane, Program Manager, and Richard Nuccio, Director of International Programs, at the Center for Civic Education, for providing us with the opportunity to explore the development of the countries in West Africa and what they need to have and to do to become full democracies and have robust economies in a world that is growing smaller each year. I also would like to thank Boubacar Tall, head of the Curriculum Office at INEADE at the Ministry of Education in Senegal, who has been my international partner in this exciting international exchange program and has taught me how much we have to learn from Africa by introducing me to his country and his countrymen.

The lessons reflect the efforts of many people, but primarily Lynnette Poag, retired social studies teacher from Memorial Middle School in Vineland, New Jersey, who created a uniform format for the lessons, developed many of the ideas and refined and extended the activities to meet my high standards. I would also like to thank the following individuals for the ideas and materials that they contributed to the lessons: Cole Kleitsch, teacher in the Newark Public Schools; Steve Missal, social studies supervisor for the Plainfield Public Schools, Brenda Noble, teacher at Maxson Middle School in Plainfield and Nancy Shakir, retired social studies supervisor for the Orange Public Schools.

Arlene L. Gardner, Executive Director  
New Jersey Center for Civic and Law-Related Education  
Piscataway, New Jersey  
January 2007