

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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CONSTITUTION DAY IS SEPTEMBER 17; SUPREME COURT LEARNING CENTER OFFERS WEBCASTS, OTHER EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES Lake Orion 4th graders to re-enact Constitution signing Court at Learning Center

LANSING, MI, September 12, 2012 – Educators looking for ways to observe Constitution Day with their students can turn to the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center for help.

Federal law requires that all schools that receive public funding must teach about the U.S. Constitution on or near September 17, the date the Constitution was signed in 1787.

Learning Center resources include ideas for Constitution Day activities, lesson plans about the justice system, mock trial scripts, a webcast “teen court” proceeding, and more. Resources are online at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/resources/curriculum.htm>.

Other resources include a webcast reenactment of the Ossian Sweet trial, a landmark case involving an African-American doctor and his wife who moved into an all-white Detroit neighborhood in 1925. Fearing violence, the couple and some friends armed themselves; when an angry mob gathered outside, someone from inside the Sweet home shot and killed one of the group. Famed Michigan lawyer Clarence Darrow successfully defended Dr. Sweet against murder charges by arguing that the killing was done in self-defense. The webcast and related materials are online at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/sweet/trial.html>.

Also available is a webcast discussion of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1896 ruling in *Plessy v Ferguson*, which established the “separate but equal” doctrine that was used to justify racial segregation; decades later, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled *Plessy* in *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954. Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr. analyzes how *Plessy v Ferguson* violated constitutional principles, and discusses the decision’s impact on American life. A study guide and link to the webcast are available at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/MGTVinterviewRPY/RPY.pdf>.

The Learning Center will also mark Constitution Day on September 19 with visits from 4th graders at Lake Orion’s Paint Creek Elementary. Starting at 10:30 a.m., groups of students will re-enact the signing of the Constitution, based on the famous 1940 painting by Howard Chandler Christy.

For more information about the Learning Center and its programs, visit <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/>.

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