

Subject: US History and/or Staff Professional Development

Unit: Civil Rights Movement

Lesson Plan Title: When Will We Be Paid? : Debating the Merits of Restorative Justice in the Mississippi Delta

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Overview: The week has been emotional and introspective for me and I feel that a justification of my lesson plan is therefore necessary. Please feel free to cut this portion of my plan before you post it to the website if you so wish.

During my time here, as I confront images and hear the stories of those directly affected by the blatant racism of Jim Crow laws and de facto apartheid in Mississippi's past, I have not been able to help but feel a renewed disbelief at the capacity for human cruelty. Studying this content is difficult for me on many levels. Most obviously, it is heart wrenching to see human beings treat each other with such horrific disdain. Beneath the surface however, as I try to reconcile the sadness, it becomes increasingly more complicated. After all, it is impossible not to view the content of this workshop through a racial lens. In doing so, I become acutely aware that the heinous crimes perpetrated here and throughout the country were done by those with the color of my own skin. In this space, I am forced to reflect on just how much I have benefited, and continue to benefit, from both my race and gender in our society, and how connected this privilege is to the suffering of so many in the past. Ultimately, I cannot help but to feel guilty.

That being said, I do understand that guilt is necessary. That it is the product of a history that has produced inequities in society that bestow benefits and penalties on certain ethnic and racial groups. If there is any hope of addressing these inequities and creating a more just society, guilt, the most tangible and fundamental indicator of injustice, is necessary in order to spark change. In other words, it is not so much the guilt, as what one does with it that matters.

I understand that it is easy, in the face of discomfort and awkwardness and guilt, to shy away from difficult discussions. However, it has been particularly difficult for me this week to confront this emotionally trying material with virtually no discourse about the powerful affects institutionalized racism continues to have in our country. It is not the same to be black as it is to be white in today's America, but no one seems to want or be able to talk about it when both races are in the same room. There have been several times this week when I have felt uncomfortable tension surrounding the topic of race, and the need to speak out, but have remained silent. I am regretful for this. The lack of dialogue surrounding both race and white privilege in the workshop this week is endemic of American society as a whole. One needs only to examine the way we *teach* slavery and the Civil Rights Movement to discover evidence of this claim. Slavery, while horrifying, is taught largely as something that happened in the distant past and is accompanied by virtually no discussion as to the origins and purpose of racism. With no discussion about the origins of racist thought our students are left to assume that it is natural for humans to enslave each other based on these ideals, while even a brief examination of history, however, proves otherwise.

The Civil Rights Movement is taught as an event that started and ended in the distant past as well, a problem we have solved and moved on from. One needs only to see the surprise that members of our group expressed at meeting so many people who "picked cotton" when they were young to find evidence for this. Matt Ferrence refers to the conscious or unconscious tactics employed by white people to stifle meaningful dialogue surrounding institutionalized racism when discussing the Civil Rights Movement as the "filibuster of race," and I have seen it

at work at every school I have ever worked at. In his essay, *Breaking the Filibuster of Race: the Literary Resonance of the Emmett Till Murder*, he notes that the Civil Rights Movement is currently addressed in classrooms in a manner that:

“suggests that the conversation has somehow ended, that conclusions have been found and that any lingering unrest remains because of the recalcitrance of individuals who refuse to ‘let it go’...it tells us that these things have already been dealt with, that race is a matter of history, that we cannot move forward until we move on.” (Ferrenc 46)

The problem, of course, is that race is not a matter of history. One needs only to read Larry Griffin’s excellent paper, *Race, Memory and Historical Responsibility: What do Southerners Do With a Difficult Past*”, to see the profound impact that the Jim Crow period has had on income, infant mortality, and unemployment for African Americans living in the Delta today.

As educators, we must find the courage and the conviction to begin racial discourse in our classrooms. After all, as Ferrence points out, “seen, the tensions of past racial injustice can lead to a better future. Unseen, the loss and subjugation of millions become worse than meaningless.” (Ferrenc 53) If we ever hope to have our children engage in authentic discussions surrounding race then we, as adults, surely must have the capacity to model these discussions for them. And yet, as an educational collective, there is little to no effort on our part to do this.

This lesson is intended to address the “Filibuster of Race” by encouraging a discourse surrounding restorative justice, institutionalized racism, and white privilege in contemporary American society. It is intended for use with colleagues or with 11th or 12th grade students. If used in the classroom the lesson is intended to follow a unit on either slavery or the Civil Rights movement.

As I progress in my career and continue to have open and honest dialogue with more and more people of color, the discourse surrounding issues of race takes on an increasingly central role in my curriculum. And, as I prepare to leave the Delta, I find this quote, from the book *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, to be particularly haunting:

“As socioeconomic disparity and indifference to human suffering become increasingly prominent features of American life, it seems reasonable to inquire whether the same economic, political, and emotional forces that helped to forge and sustain the Delta’s image as the South writ small may one day transform an entire nation into the Delta writ large.” (Most Southern Place on Earth 333)

Educating students about political, emotional and economic forces like those that formed the Delta is a responsibility I do not take lightly. Being here, while difficult, has renewed my commitment to this responsibility. I think that you are both (Lee and Luther) wonderful people and I consider myself incredibly lucky to have met you. This place needs you! Thank you so much for this opportunity, I honestly feel that I have grown as a person as a result of my participation in this workshop.

Standards Addressed:

SS.HS.CG.06.02 Understand the causes, course, and impact of the civil rights/equal rights movements.

SS.HS.HS.01.02 Interpret the relationship of events occurring over time.

SS.HS.HS.02 Compare and contrast institutions and ideas in history, noting cause and effect relationships.

SS.HS.HS.04 Understand how contemporary perspectives affect historical interpretation.

SS.HS.SA.01 Define, research, and explain an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon and its significance to society.

General Goal(s): This lesson is intended to address the “Filibuster of Race” by introducing the topics of restorative justice, institutionalized racism, and white privilege in contemporary American society to your colleagues or with 11th or 12th grade students. If used in the classroom the lesson is intended to follow a unit on either slavery or the Civil Rights movement. The lesson is a work in progress and contains a lot of material. It should be augmented, or edited to fit the needs of the educator and can be taught as a whole or as 3 separate lessons.

Specific Objectives:

SWBAT explain the ways in which the legacy of slavery and cotton farming has affected (and continues to affect) the African American population currently living in the Mississippi Delta.

SWBAT identify and explain the four forms of restorative justice.

SWBAT defend his/her position regarding the need for restorative justice in America.

SWBAT explain the definition of racism.

SWBAT analyze and explain white privilege.

SWBAT identify and explain “detours”

Anticipatory Set (Lead-In): Distribute copies of the *Costs of Racism to White People Check List (Appendix 1)* and have students fill it out quietly. When they are done have them discuss their answers with a partner and then share out with the class.

OR

Distribute lyrics of and play the Song “*When will we be paid,*” by the Staples Sisters. Conduct a class discussion about the meaning of these lyrics, and how their thoughts on the meaning of the song are affected by what they have learned about the Civil Rights Movement and the Mississippi Delta.

Step-By-Step Procedures:

1. Distribute copies of *Race, Memory and Historical Responsibility: What do Southerners Do With a Difficult Past* by Larry J. Griffin.
 - a. Option #1: Conduct a class read aloud and pause to answer the questions below.
 - b. Option #2: Select excerpts from the text pertaining to restorative justice and data relating to the African American population of the Delta today. Have students read the excerpt and examine the statistics on pgs 5-6 and answer these questions.
 - i. Identify and explain the four forms of restorative justice and the conditions under which they occur.
 - ii. Why, according to the author, did restorative justice not happen in the South?
 - iii. Why do some people think it is better to just “let go of the past”?

- iv. In what ways does Larry Griffin say the past lives “in the lives and deaths of those in today’s South.”
 - v. In your opinion would a process of restorative justice help people move forward? Why? Why not?
 - vi. Since the writing of the article the US Congress and Senate have both passed resolutions apologizing for slavery. Why, in your opinion, did it take the US Congress so long to act on this issue? Do you think such resolutions make a difference? Why/Why not?
2. Conduct a Socratic seminar in which students discuss whether or not there should be a process of restorative justice in Mississippi today. Have students
 3. Next, as a class, generate a definition for racism.
 4. Show students the official definition of racism and explain the concept of institutional power. Walk student’s through the attached ppt on White Privilege (*Appendix 2*) adapted from the work of Peggy McIntosh and Amy Edgington.
 5. Distribute the detour article and cards. (*Appendix 3+4*)
 6. In Pairs have students:
 - a. Discuss whether or not they have heard the detour before.
 - b. Rewrite the detour in their own words.
 - c. Come up with a skit in which they interrupt the detour when they hear it being used.

Required Materials:

1. **Appendix 1:** *Costs of Racism to White People Check List. Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*, 2002, Paul Kivel, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada.
2. Copies of/access to: *Race, Memory and Historical Responsibility: What do Southerners Do With a Difficult Past* by Larry J. Griffin distributed during the workshop
3. **Appendix 2: NAME-White Privilege PPT.** adapted from *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* by Peggy McIntosh and *Moving Beyond White Guilt* by Amy Edgington.
4. **Appendix 3: Detour Spotting For White Anti Racists**, by Joann Olson
5. **Appendix 4: Detour Cards**
6. **Appendix 5: *Being a Strong White Ally*, by Paul Kivel; “Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice”; New Society Publishers-Canada, 2002; page 96**
7. **Appendix 6: The Components of White Culture: Values and Beliefs** by Judy H. Katz.
8. **Black Doll/White Doll:**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybDa0gSuAcg&feature=related>

9. Obama Race Speech: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrp-v2tHaDo>

NOTE: I have included several other resources to be used as you see fit for follow up or evaluation purposes.