

Racism and Police Brutality in the United States: Context and Conversation

Rationale:

In the wake of the videotaped police murder of George Floyd and the protests that engulfed the nation, Rhonda Perry, an African American middle school principal with decades of educational leadership experience in New York City, sent the following e-mail to the Humanities teachers at her school. She called for teachers to speak to their students about these events, increase awareness around them, and, most importantly, engage young people in conversations about the impact of race and racism and their history in the United States. She wrote:

These days it's easier for me to write than to talk because every time I try to say something, my voice gets shaky and I feel like I'll burst into tears. At a Wellness meeting this morning, I got really overwhelmed because I shared that my daughter asked me last night if she now needs to be afraid when she's outside because she's black. Such is her sense-making of recent events... I'm so mad. As a mother, I try to spend every second encouraging my daughter to be brave so that she doesn't have to live continually exhausted and pained by racism. And that's what these protests are about. I'm also mad that when I talk to a lot of non-black and non-brown people, they keep mentioning property destruction to me. I don't condone violence or looting, but I didn't shop at some department stores because of painful experiences I've had of being followed around as though I would steal something. I have friends who don't care if cab companies go out of business because they couldn't catch one anyway--they didn't stop for folks who look like them. I have friends who have to teach their 13-year-old sons to be deferential to the police so that they don't end up like George Floyd.

So, in thinking about what lessons we need to share with our kids about this moment, here are a few:

That there has been a long legacy of racism and police brutality in this country and black and brown people are upset and tired because recent events just show how much work we have to do and we are just so tired by it because it's 2020 not 1620 or 1720, or 1820 or 1920.

That there are good people all around us, many committed anti-racists, who work hard every day to fight and we all should join them in whatever ways we can. How can we be anti-racist?

That when black people protest many folks see the rioting first and not the reasons why black people are protesting. There has been a long, long

history of injustice in this country and black people protesting. How can we thoughtfully critique the language used to discuss protesters vs. the language of the press when reporting on gun-toting white men in Michigan or even police/vigilante brutality?

Please let's seize the moment to help our children understand these things and how racism works. It's not a time for families who are insensitive, clueless and numb. It's not a time to be afraid of these conversations. I think we need to figure out how to teach into this and amplify the voices of the marginalized.

How to do this so that the clueless don't take up a ton of airtime? Quotes? Statistics? A discussion of a documentary? Comparisons of newspaper reports? Study an anti-racist leader (not just Martin Luther King)?

I know you do this in class, and we can do more of it now to honor the black lives today.

The goal of these resources is, therefore, to provide a brief history of individuals and groups that previously sought to address racism and police brutality in the United States; help students and teachers draw connections between the past and the present; and give students and teachers the context and information they need to have meaningful conversations about racism and how to address it in their classrooms and beyond.

Essential Questions:

- What is racism? What does it mean to be anti-racist?
- How has the United States' previous failure to address racism contributed to the current protests?
- How does racism affect Black people and communities?
- To what extent can widespread activism address the ways in which racism and police brutality impact Black lives?
- How can individuals participate in making Black lives matter in the United States?

Objectives: *Students will be able to...*

- Discuss Martin Luther King, Jr.'s concept of a "bad check" and the Black Panther Party's stance on police brutality.
- Identify the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Explain the connection between the Black Panther Party and Black Lives Matter.
- Engage their peers in a discussion of why people are protesting and what the protesters demand.
- Analyze the United States' race problems and consider how they can help to address them.

Resources

Racism Explained: A Graphic



Questions:

- Why might the designer have chosen to use an iceberg to represent the different types/examples of racism?
- What questions do you have about the information in this graphic?
- Is there anything listed here with which you are unfamiliar?
- What can you learn about racism from this graphic?

Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington

On August 28, 1963 nearly 250,000 listened as civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the crowd gathered for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The March, which took place just a few months after the world watched Birmingham police attack teenage protesters with dogs and fire hoses, intended to demonstrate the need for civil rights legislation and an end to discrimination and Jim Crow laws. At the end of his speech, now known as the "I Have a Dream" speech, King launched into his now famous refrain on the racial harmony he envisioned for the United States. Earlier parts of his speech are less often recited or remembered, but they reflect the points that King came to the March to make and address the trouble and trauma Black Americans faced in 1963.

More than a Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Speech at the March on Washington, 8.28.1963

...In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice....

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest -- quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed....

(Source: [American Rhetoric](#))

Questions:

- What did Martin Luther King, Jr. mean when he said "America has given the Negro people a bad check"?
- What message did King convey to civil rights activists and supporters with these sections of his speech?

Robert Cohen, “Re-thinking Martin Luther King, Jr.’s March on Washington Speech”

The George Floyd tragedy is the latest reminder that much of America has yet to come to grips with its history of police brutality and murder of Black people. A good place to begin rectifying this ignorance is in our nation’s classrooms, which need to offer a realistic approach to this history. The most glaring example of the way America’s racist history is sugar-coated is the evasiveness regularly practiced in the recounting of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s March on Washington speech. On TV, all over the web, and in too many classrooms this famed King speech from 1963 is truncated so that the focus is almost always on its lofty, aspirational, “I have a dream” ending, which envisions an America free of racism rather than on the speech’s earlier segments that offer a scathing indictment of America’s long history of racial slavery, discrimination, and violence.

In one of these hard hitting, realistic segments of the speech, King accuses the United States of giving Black America “a bad check,” pretending to offer the freedom and rights articulated so glowingly in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution while instead condemning Black Americans to slavery, Jim Crow, and centuries without those promised freedoms and rights. But, King argued that, “we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt... that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity in this nation. So we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.”

In addition to reflecting on why King would depict America as felonious in issuing its “bad check” to Black America, it is time for students, teachers, the American public – and especially the current occupant of the White House – to ponder King’s observation in this great speech that “we can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.” King warned that delay in eliminating such injustices would be fatal for the nation and the future of democracy, which is why he spoke of the need “to remind America of the fierce urgency of now.... Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.”

It is not accidental that the most famous phrase students learn from King’s great speech is “I have a dream” rather than “the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.” Why? Because in a nation reluctant to confront its racism, past and present, it is far easier to focus on King’s lofty dream of an America free of racism than King’s equally eloquent evocation of the grim reality of America’s police inflicting horrors upon African Americans. Similarly, it has been much more comfortable for detractors of the recent protests sparked by the Floyd tragedy to focus on the property damage some of them have done rather than on the racist police killing of Floyd that ignited those protests.

To help us move beyond such evasiveness – as America surely needs to do in these troubled times -- I’d suggest we begin by at least temporarily discarding dreaminess for realism in our reading and teaching of King’s speech and all of American history. Let’s focus more on King’s diagnosis of American racism than his dream, asking why he chose in his great speech to indict such racist violence in 1963 and why in 2020 we still confront the same tragic problem, unable to solve it or do justice even as we now have the technology – as Americans in King’s era did not -- to catch on our i-phone cameras “the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.” And let’s be sure to remember King as he was, a brilliant critic of such horrors as well as a prophetic thinker who envisioned an America free of them.

Questions:

- What is the main idea of this editorial? Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?

The Black Panther Party

By 1966 many Black Americans, especially young people, began to question the non-violent tactics that King and his colleagues supported, believing that civil disobedience accomplished all that it would. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, the founders of the Black Panther Party, likewise asserted that Black people had to take their and their communities' safety and prosperity into their own hands. The Black Panther Party (originally the Black Panther Party for Self Defense) was established in Oakland, CA based on this idea. The Black Panthers, who donned black leather jackets and legally carried automatic weapons, began by patrolling police in Black neighborhoods and when they pursued Black individuals in order to protect Black men and women from police harassment and brutality; this method of "policing the police"—observing, using force only if necessary-- proved successful. Later, the organization grew to advocate for Black people in several arenas and to provide services for Black communities, including the free breakfast program that fed school children on a daily basis.

Black Panthers' Ten Point Program, 1966 (excerpted)

7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against black people, other people of color and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in United States prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration.... We believe that when persons are brought to trial they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trial.

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY.

(Source: [Rethinking Schools](#))

Questions:

- What did the Black Panthers demand in these clauses of their Ten Point Program?
- Why do you think the Black Panthers focused on these demands to list in their founding document?
- To what extent do the Black Panthers' demands echo the demands King made at the March on Washington?

Huey Newton, Executive Mandate No. 1, California State Capitol, May 2, 1967

When the Black Panther Party was founded in 1966 it was legal to carry a loaded gun in California as long as it wasn't concealed or pointed at anyone. As the Black Panthers became more prominent, though, Republican lawmakers, specifically Oakland representative Don Mulford, moved to amend that law to ban Californians from publicly carrying firearms. On May 2, 1967, as the state legislature debated the bill, thirty Black Panther members marched on the state capitol. Though they were legally within their right to do so, even, at that point, with their guns, the police were called. The protesters eventually departed peacefully, but not without creating a stir in and around the capitol. Huey Newton, a Black Panther leader, delivered the following statement from the steps of the capitol.

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense calls upon the American people in general and black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California Legislature which is now considering legislation aimed to keep Black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of Black people....

Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned, demonstrated, and everything else to get the racist power structure of America to right the wrongs which have historically been perpetrated against black people. All of these efforts have been answered by more repression, deceit, and hypocrisy. As the aggression of the racist American government escalates in Vietnam, the police agencies of America escalate the repression of Black people throughout the ghettos of America. Vicious police dogs, cattle prods, and increased patrols have become familiar sights in Black communities. City Hall turns a deaf ear to the pleas of Black people for relief from this increasing terror.

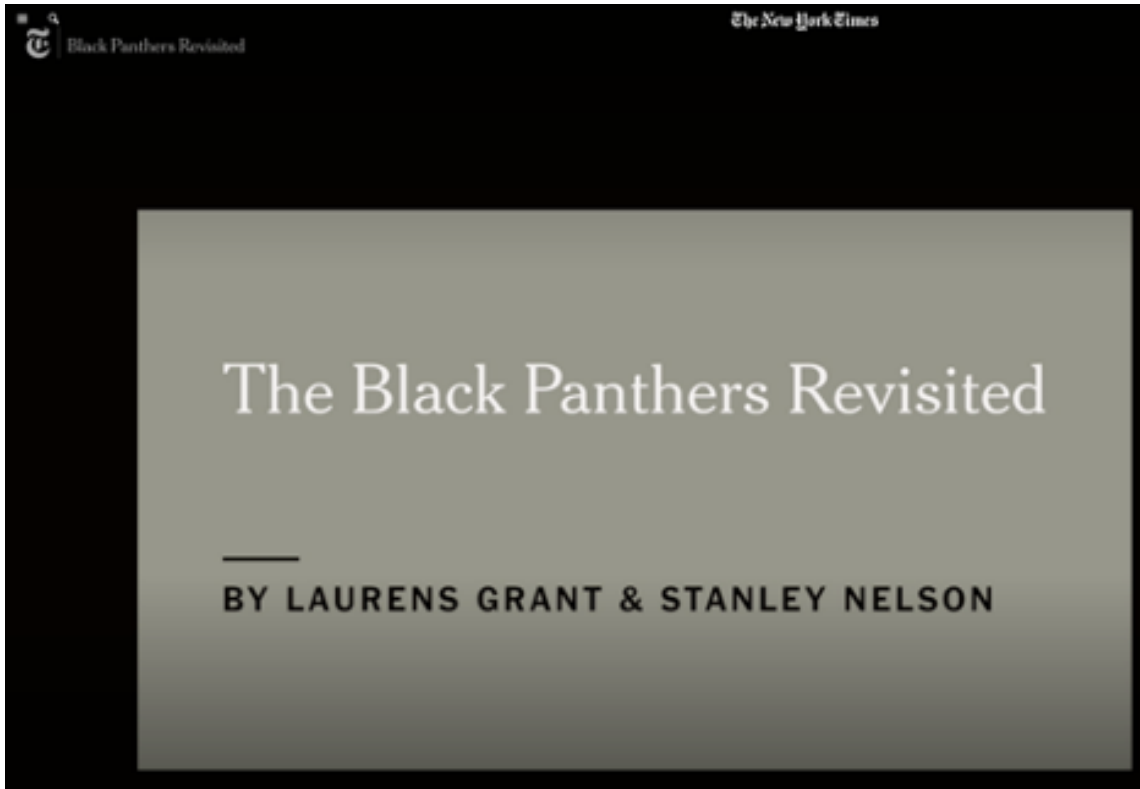
The Black Panther Party for Self Defense believes that the time has come for Black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late. The pending Mulford Act brings the hour of doom one step nearer. A people who have suffered so much for so long at the hands of a racist society, must draw the line somewhere. We believe that the Black Communities of America must rise up as one man to halt the progression of a trend that leads inevitably to their total destruction.

(Source: [United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations](#))

Questions:

- How does Huey Newton describe the circumstances Black people faced in the United States?
- Why did Newton believe that Black Americans should be allowed to carry guns?
- Why was it necessary for Black Americans to show that they could protect themselves in the 1960s?

From the Black Panthers to Black Lives Matter



Video: [New York Times](#)

Questions:

- Based on the video, what are the similarities and differences between the Black Panthers and the Black Lives Matter movement?
- Why is the government's reaction to and interaction with these groups important to their success?
- Why might the Black Lives Matter movement be able to accomplish the goals for which the Black Panthers advocated more than fifty years ago?

Peniel E. Joseph, “From the Black Panthers to Black Lives Matter, the ongoing fight to end police violence against black Americans,” *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2020

...Black Lives Matter combined civil rights-era disobedience with Black Power’s structural critique of white-supremacist America’s historic use of violence against black bodies. The movement turned white-supremacist logic on its head by proclaiming the humanity of black people, spawning repudiation from police unions who smeared the group as black terrorists and white liberals, and conservatives whose “all lives matter” retort only exposed the depth and breadth of their deep-seated racism, privilege and ignorance.

Black death at the hands of the police is not new. The Black Panther Party was founded in Oakland, Calif., in 1966, in part to combat police brutality witnessed and experienced by its founders, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. The BPP brandished legally owned weapons and law books in a quest to defend the black community and observe law enforcement from a legally permitted distance.

...In May [1967], the BPP famously sent a group of 30 armed Panthers to the Sacramento legislature to protest a gun-control bill, which eventually passed, designed expressly to prevent black people from lawfully carrying guns while observing the police. The Panthers’ expansive efforts to defend black lives included scores of community programs, health clinics, legal aid and breakfast for children, but their lasting image in popular culture remains linked to their courageous — critics labeled them reckless — efforts to end police violence.

Police brutality and killings of unarmed black men, women, girls and boys have continued in our era, long after the Panthers’ heyday. Instructively, the Panthers characterized America’s justice system as a boldface lie, one linked to the economic exploitation and racial impoverishment of black communities....

America’s criminal justice system is based on extraordinary and systemic lies about protecting white lives, property, the sanctity of white womanhood and the safety of white neighborhoods. Evidence of the profundity of these white lies surrounds us, from the exonerations of the Central Park Five, the teenage black and Latino boys wrongly accused [of assaulting a white female runner], to innocence projects that doggedly pursue justice for the few while hundreds of thousands more languish in prison....

Black frustration with police seemingly being granted immunity for an endless array of unjustified force, violence and death against defenseless African American communities has elicited spasms of grief, outrage and anger across the nation. Violence that has contoured protests in Minneapolis, Ferguson and Baltimore is the language of black communities racially and economically oppressed for decades.

Black punishment, trauma, dehumanization and death are not preordained. Contemporary movements to end mass incarceration often focus on the need for more education, jobs, social workers, drug rehabilitation and mental-health care, and fewer cops. Black communities too often remain overpoliced and under-resourced. In this way, George Floyd’s death is the culmination of thousands of policy choices this nation continues to make that result in premature black death....

(Source: [Washington Post](#))

Questions:

- According to this article, how are the Black Panthers and the Black Lives Matter movement related?
- What conclusions can you draw based on two organizations, founded fifty years apart, focusing on the same goals?

Police Brutality and Black Communities in the 21st Century

Black Americans Killed by Police

ERIC GARNER - JOHN CRAWFORD III - MICHAEL BROWN - EZELL FORD
DANTE PARKER - MICHELLE CUSSEAU - LAQUAN MCDONALD - GEORGE MANN
TANISHA ANDERSON - AKAI GURLEY - TAMIR RICE - RUMAIN BRISBON - JERAME REID
MATTHEW AJIBADE - FRANK SMART - NATASHA MCKENNA - TONY ROBINSON - ANTHONY HILL
MYA HALL - PHILLIP WHITE - ERIC HARRIS - WALTER SCOTT - WILLIAM CHAPMAN II
ALEXIA CHRISTIAN - BRENDON GLENN - VICTOR MANUEL LAROSA - JONATHAN SANDERS
FREDDIE BLUE - JOSEPH MANN - SALVADO ELLSWOOD - SANDRA BLAND
ALBERT JOSEPH DAVIS - DARRIUS STEWART - BILLY RAY DAVIS - SAMUEL DUBOSE
MICHAEL SABBIE - BRIAN KEITH DAY - CHRISTIAN TAYLOR - TROY ROBINSON
ASSHAMS PHARDAH MANLEY - FELIX KUMI - KEITH HARRISON MCLEOD - JUNIOR PROSPER
LAMONTEZ JONES - PATERSON BROWN - DOMINIC HUTCHINSON - ANTHONY ASHFORD
ALONZO SMITH - TYREE CRAWFORD - INDIA KAGER - LA'VANTE BIGGS
MICHAEL LEE MARSHALL - JAMAR CLARK - RICHARD PERKINS - NATHANIEL HARRIS PICKETT
BENNI LEE TIGNOR - MIGUEL ESPINAL - MICHAEL NOEL - KEVIN MATTHEWS - BETTIE JONES
QUINTONIO LEGRIER - KEITH CHILDRESS JR. - JANET WILSON - RANDY NELSON
ANTRONIE SCOTT - WENDELL CELESTINE - DAVID JOSEPH - CALIN ROQUEMORE - DYZHAWN
PERKINS - CHRISTOPHER DAVIS - MARCO LOUD - PETER GAINES - TORREY ROBINSON - DARIUS
ROBINSON - KEVIN HICKS - MARY TRUXILLO - DEMARCUS SEMER - WILLIE TILLMAN
TERRILL THOMAS - SYLVILLE SMITH - ALTON STERLING - PHILANDO CASTILE - TERENCE
CRUTCHER - PAUL O'NEAL - ALTERIA WOODS - JORDAN EDWARDS - AARON BAILEY
RONELL FOSTER - STEPHON CLARK - ANTWON ROSE II - BOTHAM JEAN
PAMELA TURNER - DOMINIQUE CLAYTON - ATATIANA JEFFERSON - CHRISTOPHER WHITFIELD
CHRISTOPHER MCCORVEY - ERIC REASON - MICHAEL LORENZO DEAN - BREONNA TAYLOR
G E O R G E F L O Y D

The rate at which black Americans are killed by police is more than twice as high as the rate for white Americans. This is a non-comprehensive list of deaths at the hands of police in the U.S. since Eric Garner's death in July 2014.

(Source: [NPR](#))

Robert Glasper, “I’m Dying of Thirst”

I am Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, John Crawford, Rekia Boyd, Aiyana Jones, Oscar Grant the Third, Timothy Stansbury Jr, Ramarley Graham. I am... Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Danroy Henry, Jonathan Ferrell, Shantel Davis, [Alanda Barlo], Tamir Rice, Akai Gurley, [Thickorus Deen], Kendrec McDade. I am... Jordan Davis, Wendell Allen, Ronald Madison. I am... Yvette Smith, Renisha McBride, Kimani Gray. I am...



I really enjoy that we're all different people that are really special. I feel proud to be brown every day. I enjoy being brown especially if my skin rips, I am thinking about brown. And I'm thinking about what color I am but I have to be myself. You have to be happy of who you are.

(Source: [YouTube](#))

Questions:

- What do you think about when you see/hear these names?
- Why do you think these murders spurred the creation of organizations like Black Lives Matter?

Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter started in 2016 in response to years of anti-Black racism and violence with no accountability or consequences. It began with local chapters working in their communities and coalesced into a global movement. As stated on their website, “Our intention from the very beginning was to connect Black people from all over the world who have a shared desire for justice to act together in their communities. The impetus for that commitment was, and still is, the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted on us by the state.” Since it began, Black Lives Matter has fought for justice for Black victims of violence and police brutality like Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown, worked to build better lives and communities for Black Americans, and advocated for anti-racist policies and education. The recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor compelled many Americans to join their fight.

(Source: [Black Lives Matter](#))

"A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom and Justice," The Movement for Black Lives, 2016

The six platform demands are:

1. End the war on black people.
2. Reparations for past and continuing harms.
3. Divestment from the institutions that criminalize, cage and harm black people; and investment in the education, health and safety of black people.
4. Economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure our communities have collective ownership, not merely access.
5. Community control of the laws, institutions and policies that most impact us.
6. Independent black political power and black self-determination in all areas of society.

(Source: [NBC News](#))

Black Lives Matter, “What We Believe,” Accessed 2020

We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate differences and commonalities.

We work vigorously for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.

We intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting.

We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a prerequisite for wanting the same for others.

We see ourselves as part of the global Black family, and we are aware of the different ways we are impacted or privileged as Black people who exist in different parts of the world.

We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or location.

We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead.

We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence.

We build a space that affirms Black women and is free from sexism, misogyny, and environments in which men are centered.

We practice empathy. We engage comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts.

We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work “double shifts” so that they can mother in private even as they participate in public justice work.

We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and “villages” that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable.

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).

We cultivate an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism. We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the capacity to lead and learn.

We embody and practice justice, liberation, and peace in our engagements with one another.

(Source: [Black Lives Matter](#))

Questions:

- Based on both of these platforms, what are Black Lives Matter’s goals?
- Why do you think that Black Lives Matter prioritizes the Black community’s needs and rights as well as inclusivity on a larger scale?
- How do Black Lives Matter’s goals reflect the problems the nation faces in 2020?

Statement from Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza, 2020

“We are asking police to be domestic violence counselors, we’re asking police to be therapists, we’re asking police to deal with people who are in crisis in terms of their mental health. And police are not trained to do that. And in fact, sure, we could spend a bunch of time training people with badges and guns to be able to respond differently to that, and maybe we should, but we also have people whose actual profession is to do that work.

And so if you actually limit what police do in our communities, and how they come into contact with our people, and for what—that is actually the key to saving more lives. As long as you also invest on the other side in making sure that there is a robust set of resources that people can access, that they won’t be criminalized for accessing, but also where you don’t have the option for a mistake of trying to deal with a mental health crisis and you shoot someone, right?”

Questions:

What does Alicia Garza believe is the problem with what we ask of the police?

What does she propose as the solution?

Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

Social Media Posts for Racial Justice

#8CANTWAIT

BAN CHOKERHOLDS & STRANGERSHOLDS REQUIRE DE-ESCALATION REQUIRE WARNING BEFORE SHOOTING EXHAUST ALL ALTERNATIVES BEFORE SHOOTING

TOGETHER, THESE 8 POLICIES CAN DECREASE POLICE VIOLENCE BY **72%**.

DUTY TO INTERVENE BAN SHOOTING AT MOVING VEHICLES ESTABLISH USE OF FORCE CONTINUUM REQUIRE ALL FORCE BE REPORTED

VISIT 8CANTWAIT.ORG TO FIND YOUR CITY, CALL YOUR MAYOR, AND DEMAND CHANGE RIGHT NOW.

CAMPAIGN ZERO



INCARCERATION VS EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CORRECTIONS FUNDING
\$75 BILLION SPENT PER YEAR ON INCARCERATION

COLLEGE FUNDING
\$66 BILLION

PRISON DEMOGRAPHICS
25% OF THE US PRISON POPULATION IS BLACK
1 IN 4 BLACK MALES WILL GO THROUGH CORRECTIONS IN THEIR LIFETIME

COLLEGE DEMOGRAPHICS
70% OF THE US COLLEGE POPULATION IS WHITE

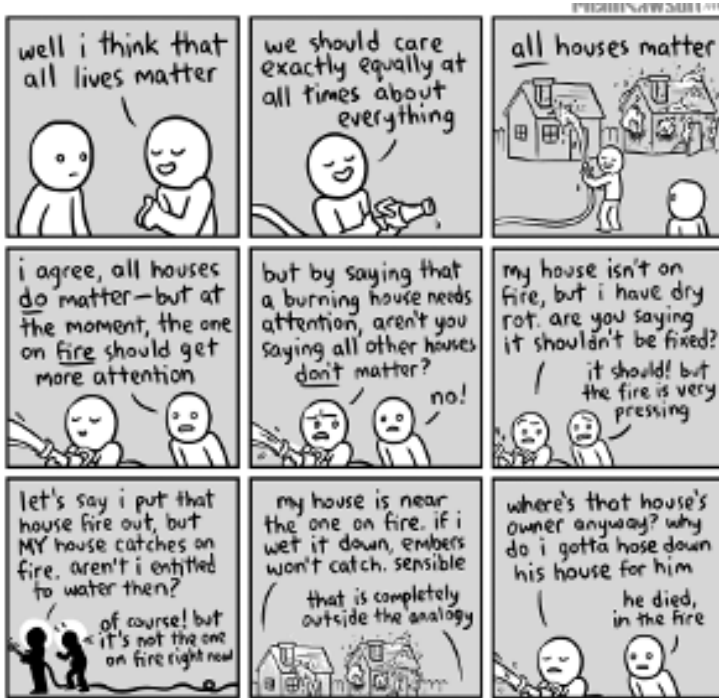
#1 HIGHEST PRISON POPULATION GLOBALLY

#65 GLOBAL COLLEGE POPULATION

Ten richest Americans	100% White
US Congress	96% White
US governors	96% White
Top military advisors	100% White
President and vice president	100% White
US House Freedom Caucus	95% White
Current US presidential cabinet	91% White
People who decide which TV shows we see	93% White
People who decide which books we read	90% White
People who decide which news is covered	85% White
People who decide which music is produced	95% White
People who directed the top 100 grossing films	95% White
Teachers	82% White
Full-time college professors	84% White
Owners of professional football teams	97% White

The most powerful groups in the country. This is white supremacy.

— See White Privilege by 100 in US Agents. Stats are taken from 2016-2017.

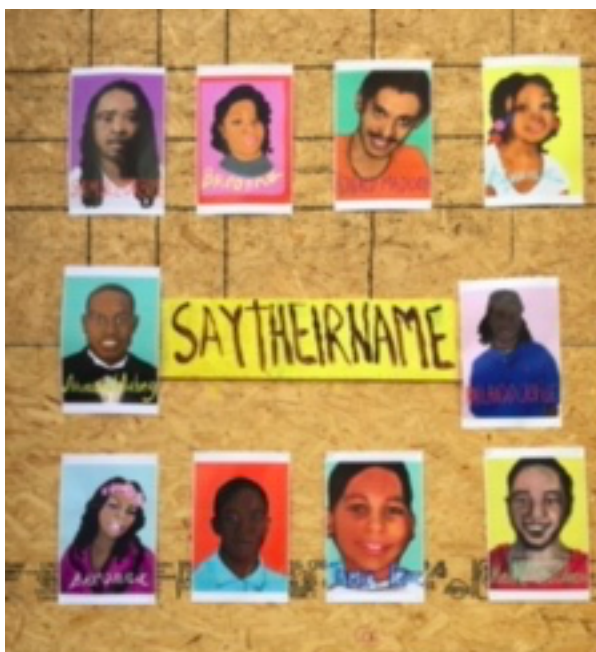
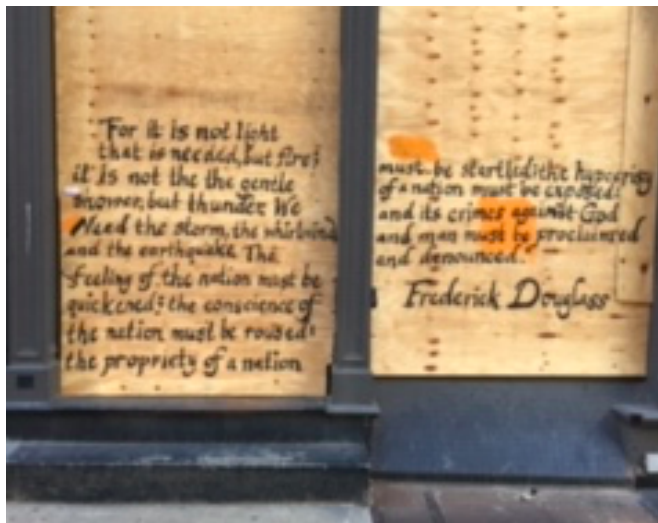


(Source: All images in this section found on Instagram)

Questions:

- What did you learn from these photos/graphics?
- Why do you think the Black Lives Matter protests dominated social media in the spring and summer of 2020?
- Why is it important for people to share these images with others?

Street Art Created During the Black Lives Matter Protests, New York City, 2020



Questions:

- Describe what you see in the artwork.
- Why do you think that people took the opportunity to artistically express their ideas amid the Black Lives Matter protests in the spring and summer of 2020?
- Why is artistic expression an important component of protest? Why is it a particularly important part of the Black Lives Matter protests?

Activities/Tasks

1) Journal Entry/Personal Reflection

Students express their feelings and ask questions about race, racism and the Black Lives Matter movement in a journal entry or personal reflection. Students can choose to share their feelings in narrative writing, poetry, an original song, an expository speech (in person or recorded), an image or drawing, or a pseudo-social media post including text and/or images. Students should consider the following questions as they complete their assignment:

- What have you learned about racism in the United States from recent events and/or the information here that you did not know before?
- How do the protests in 2020 and the immediate events that contributed to them make you feel?
- What do you think Black Lives Matter means?
- What can/should people do to create change? What can you do?
- What questions do you have about race, racism, Black Lives Matter, and the police?

2) Protest Signs

Students design signs that they would bring to a Black Lives Matter protest (*note: this is a class activity and not an assignment to attend a protest*). Their signs should reflect their understanding of the crisis the country faces and offer a way to address it. Students can look at the signs in this packet or do independent research online for examples. Protest signs must include:

- Text stating your ideas about racism and how to address it (you may include images but you are not required to)
- Two references to the information in this packet- one historical and one current

Students will share their signs with the class (if applicable) and explain the ideas behind their design.

3) Letter to An Elected Official

Students will write a letter (to be submitted to their teacher) to an elected official asking them to pay attention to and work to address racism and its impact in the United States. Students can choose to write to a specific official, or they can write a general letter. The letter should address the following questions:

- Why should the official be mindful of racism and its impact in their work and life?
- How is the Black Lives Matter movement related to past efforts to combat racism and police brutality?
- How does the existence of these past efforts demonstrate an even greater need to address racism and discrimination now?
- What should the official do to support Black Lives Matter, specifically, and Black communities, in general?
- Why is it important to you that an official who represents you joins this fight?

Students will submit their letters to their teacher. Teachers and/or students can decide if they would like to mail the letters to the elected officials students choose.

***Alternative assignment:* submit an audio or video recording of what you would say when you called your elected official; must fulfill the same requirements.

4) Class Discussion (if applicable)

Engage students in a discussion of racism in the United States in the past and present. This can be done in an open ended, full class discussion, in small groups with targeted questions (if applicable), or in a Socratic seminar. Teachers should first establish norms for the discussion, since students will enter the discussion with different educational and life experiences and knowledge about racism and its impact on Black Americans. After establishing norms, teachers can lead or facilitate a discussion using the following questions:

- What is racism? (Give students the opportunity to share answers beyond hatred of or discrimination against Black people.)
- How would you define systemic racism?
- Why do you think racism is such a significant part of the institutions in the United States?
- Why do you think past attempts to address and eliminate racism have failed to do so?
- President Obama recently said that the diversity he sees among the protesters all over the country is a sign of progress. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- Why is it important to persist in fighting racism and its impact on Black Americans?
- How can white Americans work towards creating a more just, fair, equitable society?

Teachers can also draw upon the Essential Questions during this discussion.

For the teacher:

Before teaching about the history of racism and its impact today, teachers should be clear about the many forms racism takes and how we define it. The following article by NYU Professor David Kirkland offers a penetrating look at the meaning and manifestations of racism. Kirkland is a professor of urban education at New York University. He serves as the executive director of The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. He can be reached at: davidekirkland@gmail.com.

What is Racism? Unpacking the Seven I's

by David E. Kirkland

The country, perhaps even the world, is currently engaged in an unprecedented moment of political upheaval, which has spurred a moment of long overdue social reflection. People are awakening to and acknowledging—some for the first time—the extent to which racism is real. They see the images of Black bodies lying prostrate on top of asphalt while [blue knees bear heavy upon Black necks](#). They see [Black women and girls being shot and murdered by police officers](#) while doing nothing more than sitting, standing, or sleeping in their own homes. They see [the tragic scenes of disparity](#) play out on every feasible stage of American life from jobs to housing, trends that pattern almost every aspect of American life from education to health care. Still for many, racism feels episodic and isolated—what one person does to another as opposed to something more pervasive and complex. Racism itself is often reduced in the global consciousness to an uncomfortable or inconvenient set of diminishing beliefs that fall prey too easily to guilt, refusal, apathy, and amnesia. As the world pauses, reflects upon, and comes to terms with the reality of racism, it's important, however, to struggle to understand what racism really is, how complex it is, and how it is far more pervasive than some may think.

There are at least seven different expressions of racism—what I call the seven “I's,” building on [the work of race scholars](#) who have sought to define racism in greater complexity to interrupt monolithic notions that predominate mainstream understandings of the concept. The point of pulling racism apart in this way is not to overly simplify it. Indeed, many if not all of the “I's” are constantly working together, flattening on top of and living fluidly within each other in ways that make it nearly impossible to distinguish one expression of racism from another. Still, it is important to name the differences, to operationalize the ways that racism as a complex system functions at multiple levels. So what is racism?

Interpersonal Racism

Racism is interpersonal. Interpersonal racism is racism's most recognizable expression. It is the acts of racism that we see between people. But so often when we think of racism, we think of interpersonal racism only. What is conjured is the lone racist individual who hurls their racial biases onto others, inflicting injury (e.g., racially motivated violent acts), insult (e.g., racial slurs), or other inclinations (e.g., racially motivated low expectations or doubts). Interpersonal racism occurs in typically obvious ways: individuals refusing to do business with, socialize with, or share resources with people of a certain race. It often involves violence (physical force and otherwise), which tends to be hyper visible and fairly evident.

Interpersonal racism also tends to be reduced or simplified using unhelpful, judgmental, and dichotomous terms—e.g., bad, evil, malicious—as [Robin DiAngelo](#) points out in her book [White Fragility](#). It is often the case that “good” people can and usually do commit interpersonally racist acts. As such, interpersonal racism isn’t an expression of extreme positions, as such extremes disregard human complexity and motivate people to conceal their racial biases instead of confronting them. Interpersonal racism is, thus, best understood not in terms of good or bad people but in terms of biased or unbiased acts that have devastating, immediate, and lasting societal and individual implications.

Institutionalized Racism

Racism isn’t limited to its interpersonal expression. Institutionalized racism is another expression of racism reflected in disparities regarding wealth, income, criminal justice, employment, housing, marriage, healthcare, political power, and education. It is racism that is [institutionalized](#)—that is, accepted as part of everyday life, everyday systems and structures, and our common habits, thoughts, and policies. It is also, if not more so, expressed through social entities that are designed upon foundations of [white supremacy](#) and [anti-Blackness](#). White supremacy is a system of valuation, the ways in which almost every aspect of society has been shaped by, for, and to further people who have positioned themselves as white (and generally with the support of others) to [affirm, value, maintain, and even glorify the myths of whiteness](#). Anti-Blackness, a partner to white supremacy, is a system that devalues all aspects of Blackness—Black bodies, Black lives, and Black life (which includes Black languages, Black rituals, Black spaces, Black time, Black foods, and so on.). When these systems become the stitching of our institutions, our institutions themselves become an acute mechanism for reinforcing racist ideas and outcomes. Racist ideas and outcomes both attend to the logics of white supremacy and anti-Blackness and yield to the social processes and practices that erect and maintain racial hierarchy. ([Racial hierarchy](#) is the stratification and valuation of things based solely on their proximity to whiteness—i.e., white supremacy—and distance from Blackness—i.e., anti-Blackness.) By understanding institutionalized racism, we acknowledge the ways that racism is historical, systemic, structural, and does not require interpersonal interactions or individual actors to exist.

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism speaks to the extent to which white supremacy and anti-Blackness are part of the schema that people use to see themselves, their positions in the world, and their abilities to act upon that world. Part of this “I” is what [W.E.B. DuBois](#) saw as seeing oneself and the world through the eyes of another “[who looks on in bemused pity and contempt](#).” Internalize racism is [the white gaze](#), peering inward. It is achieved through what [Antonio Gramsci](#) calls [cultural hegemony](#), the success of the dominant culture in projecting itself upon the masses whereby we the masses consent to and self-inflict our own racial oppression. Building upon these ideas, [Steve Biko](#) suggests that internalized racism is “[the most potent weapon of the oppressor](#)”—that is, “the minds of the oppressed.” In his book [The Miseducation of the Negro](#), [Carter G. Woodson](#) would put it this way (and I am paraphrasing): If you control a person’s thinking you don’t have to worry about that person’s actions. You don’t have to tell that person to go out the back door; they’ll go without being told. And if there is no back door, they will cut one out for their special benefit. Their education makes it necessary.

Internalized racism is, thus, a kind of social conditioning or mind control. It is the kind of mind control that tells people positioned as white that they are better (a form of internalized racism that stems from white supremacy) and Black people that they are worse (a form of internalized racism that stems from anti-Blackness). These messages can live beyond the mind and inhabit the body. They become lenses not just for seeing others similar to or different from [the Self](#), but lenses for seeing the Self, for valuing and loving or devaluing and despising the Self. When that self is white, internalized racism sends a message to over-value the white self. When the self is Black, internalized racism sends a message to undervalue—thus, devalue—the Black self. For non-white people, the concept often implies a practice of self-hatred. It also implies the ways that all groups come to (over) love whiteness and white ways of being above more intragroup expressions of life (which in turn are usually loathed, especially when those intragroup expressions emanate from Black life).

Ideological Racism

Ideological racism is an [ecological paradigm](#) concerned with the ways that racism is nested in our natural social environments. This expression of racism lives in our belief structures and is, thus, one of the most powerful expressions of racism because it informs and is informed by all the other expressions. Ideological racism exists in what [Pierre Bourdieu](#) calls “[habitus](#),” or our socially engrained skills, habits, and dispositions. For Bourdieu, habitus speaks to the way that individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it. Thus, ideological racism is not just a system of beliefs, it is also a pattern of practice that stem from belief systems—assumptions, interests, and other motivating drives/factors—that condition the ways individuals think, behave, and function in a given social environment.

Indifferent Racism

Indifferent racism is an expression of abstinence toward race and racism. [Ibram X. Kendi](#) explains that this abstinence is itself a racist act. For Kendi, one cannot be a non-racist. A non-racist is someone who doesn’t actively participate in racism but who also doesn’t actively participate in ending it—thus helping to reinforce it in their silence. Racism doesn’t have a neutral position. Either you are for or against it. Thus, silence on racism is racist, for according to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, “Wait on time.”

Since it is an expression of racism that is far more prevalent than more blatant expressions, indifferent racism is seen by some scholars such as [Michelle Alexander](#) as the fuel that allows racial oppression to persist. Such oppression, Alexander explains, lives in our denials, which are violent and extreme particularly for people whose racial victimization has been ignored or dismissed. To choose not to see race is to give racism unbridled permission to act.

Further, indifference erases, evades, denies, dismisses, declares premature victories, but never offers solutions. The impetus for indifferent racism is typically an impatience mixed with impotence grounded in guilt, arrogance, or other selfish drives that allow people to align their justifications for not acting or wanting to act with the excuses of impossibility, implausibility, or ignorance. Indifferent racism depends upon these fictions, mobilized out of a desire to move beyond an issue before it is dealt with or to reduce

the importance or meaning of an issue so long as that issue both/either presents benefits and/or prevents harm to people who see themselves as white. In his much celebrated novel [Invisible Man](#), [Ralph Ellison](#) puts indifferent racism this way:

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves or figments of their imagination, indeed, everything and anything except me.

Iconographical Racism

As suggested here, racism can be expressed in a number of ways, both legible and illegible. However, one of most virulent expressions of racism resides in racist symbols such as flags, signs, statutes, hand signals, body art, etc. These symbolic representations of racism give expression to the iconography of racism. Iconographical racism is an expression of racism that allows for subtlety, indirectness, and implication. According to [Smitherman and van djik](#), it may, paradoxically, be expressed by the unsaid, or conveyed by apparent “tolerance” and egalitarian liberalism. Iconographical racism is, thus, capable of veiling racist acts through image and emblem, through caricature or other symbolic representations that express the logics of white supremacy and anti-Blackness at once. For example, real sentiments are both expressed and felt through the confederate iconography that sweep through the U.S. (not just the U.S. south). The same intense emotions rise when seeing commemorated the physical edifices of chattel slavery—such as the actual [slave auction block in Fredericksburg, VA](#). These icons conjure scenes, as well, of Black people with exaggerated lips eating watermelon and other minstrel depictions that mock Black life, landscapes of cotton and other symbols that work as reminders of our nation’s dark past, reminders that decree that some lives are to be valued less, that Black lives do not matter or worst mattered only inasmuch as they were the property of another. Such icons are typically (re)traumatizing for people, but worse they help to normalize racists ideas for everyone.

Invisible Racism

Invisible racism is just that, racism that is unseen. The majority of racist acts in the U.S. if not the globe is invisible because so much of racism is lodged inside things that don’t easily or simply present themselves. Invisible racism is often coded, implicit, and engrained; it is the water floating around the fish—the very air we breathe. Because it is so ubiquitous, it is often taken as natural and is, thus, often difficult to see. It is a substructure of each of the other I’s presented above, as interpersonal, institutionalized, internalized, ideological, indifferent, and iconographical expressions of racism are often, themselves, invisible. Of course, there are also expressions of racism that are more explicitly designed to not be seen; these expressions of invisible racism are covert—disguised and subtle as oppose to being obvious. They work subliminally, at the level of the unconscious or politically as a form of manipulation. Regardless the function, invisible racism is filtered through a set of master narratives and social scripts maintained and only made manifest by the grand social portraits of a society and, indeed, a globe in peril.

So What is Racism?

Racism, ultimately, is an expression of power linked to a complex system of human subjugation that has a basis in a perverse and incendiary science, history, and politics of race. But racism itself is born from the illicit marriage between white supremacy and anti-Blackness. It is never just an expression of one of the I's. It is all of them together all the time, for the I's flatten on top of each other and move in directions, converging and diverging at moments, but always folding back to some center. That center is the core—a nucleus—where white supremacy and anti-Blackness meet.

Some ideas about introducing these concepts to your students:

- Ask your students what thoughts, actions, and policies they would characterize as racist. Connect their responses to the “I” with which they correspond. Use that opportunity to discuss what Kirkland’s “I”s and what they mean.
- Have students define each of the seven “I” terms and connect those definitions to racist thoughts and behaviors. Ask students to come up with examples for each term.
- Ask students why they think it’s been so difficult to overcome the United States’ racist past, policies, and sentiments. Connect their answers to one or more of the seven “I”s.
- Use this article in connection with the iceberg graphic in the resource packet. Have students categorize the examples on the graphic under the “I” term or terms where it belongs. Engage your students in a conversation of the ways in which racism pervades U.S. society and institutions.
- Ask students which type of racism they think might be the most difficult to undo. Have them explain their answers.
- After discussing the seven “I”s and relevant examples, ask students what they learned about racism from this exercise, and how they might explain what they learned to their families and friends.