
Sample Lesson 9: #BlackLivesMatter and Social Change

Theme: Social Movements and Equity

Disciplinary Area: African American Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 2, 4, 6

Standards Alignment:

CA HSS Analysis Skills (9–12): Chronological and Spatial Thinking 4; Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View 1, 2

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RH.9–10.1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9; WHST.9–10.2, 4, 5, 6, 7

CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.9–10.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10

LESSON PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW:

Students will be exposed to contemporary discussions around policing in the US, specifically police brutality cases when unarmed African Americans have been killed. They will conduct research on various incidents, deciphering between reputable and scholarly sources versus those with particular political bents. Students will also begin to think about how they would respond if an incident took place in their community. Students will have the opportunity, via the social change projects, to describe what tools or tactics of resistance they would use. With regard to skills, students will learn how to develop their own informational videos, conduct research, and work collaboratively.

Key Terms and Concepts: racial profiling, oppression, police brutality, social movements, resistance

Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to ...):

- Develop an understanding and analyze the effectiveness of #BlackLivesMatter and the broader Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), specifically delving into the movement's structure, key organizations, and tactics or actions used to respond to incidents of police brutality
- Identify how African Americans have historically been disproportionately impacted by racial profiling and police brutality in the US

Essential Questions:

1. Why, how, and when did #BlackLivesMatter and the Movement for Black Lives emerge?
2. What can be done to help those impacted by police brutality and racial profiling?

Lesson Steps/Activities:

1. Begin the lesson by discussing a recent incident in your community when an African American has been subjected to racial profiling or police brutality. If you are unable to find a specific incident that took place in your community, highlight a national incident.
2. Link this incident to the broader Movement for Black Lives. Be sure to provide some context on the movement, including its history, organizations associated with the movement, key activists and leaders, the Movement for Black Lives policy platform, tactics, and key incidents the movement has responded to.
3. After completing the reading and discussion, provide an overview of the Movement for Black Lives for students, detailing key shootings, defining and framing terms (e.g., riot vs. rebellion, anti-Blackness, state-sanctioned violence, etc.), highlighting the narratives of Black women and LGBTQIA, identifying people that have been impacted by police brutality, and providing various examples of the tactics of resistance used by activists and organizers within the movement.
4. In groups of four, students select an issue relating to the justice system that has been a focal point within the Black movement. Each group is responsible for researching the following:
 - a. Describe the issue and the surrounding details.
 - b. What are the arguments? Present all sides.
 - c. Investigate the underlying context: research the root causes of the issue.
 - d. What is the legal context surrounding the issue (e.g., stand your ground, stop and frisk, noise ordinance, Police Officers Bill of Rights, cash bail system, three strikes laws, prison abolition, the death penalty, etc.)?
 - e. What was/has been the community's response? Were there any protests or direct actions? If so, what types of tactics did activists employ?
 - f. What organizations are working to address this issue?
 - g. What social changes, political changes, or policy changes occurred or are being proposed to address the underlying issue?
5. Students are encouraged to identify sources online (including looking at social media posts or hashtags that feature the name of the person they are studying), examine scholarly books and articles, and even contact nonprofits or grassroots organizations that may be organizing around the case that they were assigned. Stress the importance of students being able to identify credible first-person sources.

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6. As a second component of this lesson, each student (individually) is tasked with responding to the last question required for their project: “What can you do to help support those impacted by police brutality?” In response, students must come up with an idea or plan of how they would help advocate for change in their communities if an issue around police brutality were to arise. Please note that this exercise is to explore the possible actions of advocacy for social justice and social change. Students should not be encouraged to place themselves or others in a situation that could lead to physical conflict.
 7. Students should be provided an additional week to produce their individual social change projects, whether it be drawing a protest poster or drafting a plan to organize a direct action.

Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:

- Students will research issues surrounding the impact of the justice system on African American communities and respond to key questions.
- Students will complete an action-oriented social change assignment in which they are expected to consider how they would respond if an incident of police brutality occurred in their community.

Materials and Resources:

- Teaching Tolerance “Bringing Black Lives Matter into the Classroom: Part II”: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link94>