



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2018 Volume I: Race, Class and Punishment

The American Dream, "Members Only": A Look at Educational, Economic and Social Systems of Oppression and the Founding Fathers who Engineered It

Guide for Curriculum Unit 18.01.04, published September 2018
by Sean Means

This unit examines the educational, economic, and judicial systems within American society that have systematically and intentionally oppressed people of color since the founding of the nation. Using both a social justice and a historical lens, the unit examines how the founding documents and the economic, educational, and judicial systems all work together to create a system that segregates opportunity based on color and class. The unit opens with an examination of the founding fathers and the documents that serve as America's promise to its people. It then explores how the American educational system has and continues to underserve children of color. These roadblocks are intentionally placed to prevent common-sense reform and perpetuate the inequitable allocation of resources. Next, the unit studies how the economic system has historically prevented the African American community from developing and building generational wealth. Lastly, the unit uncovers the truth behind the judicial system and examines the motivations of the politicians that manage and manipulate it. It explores how the current judicial system, much like slavery, has been used as a source of economic gain for some while disenfranchising others.

(Developed for African American History, Social Justice, and U.S. History, grades 11-12; recommended for African American History, Social Justice, and U.S. History, grades 11-12)

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