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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2023 Volume IV: Environmental Justice

Environmental Injustice- A Motive for Social Change in the Americas

Guide for Curriculum Unit 23.04.07, published September 2023

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A discussion about environmental justice is a perfect opportunity to introduce interdisciplinary learning into the history classroom. This unit focuses on the interconnections between environmental pollution and the discrimination of historically marginalized groups across the Americas. It explores environmental justice as a catalyst for grassroots protest, social movements, and policy change, as well as influences from the 1960s Civil Rights movement in the US. This unit was written to take place over five, approximately 90-minute class periods culminating in a Socratic seminar. Students will read through specific case studies explaining connections between racial segregation and higher levels of human exposure to pollution in the US, Mexico, and Brazil, analyze historical images and scientific data in connection to air pollution and inequity, compare and contrast different resistance movements to environmental injustice, and gather evidence from these sources in order to answer the question: how do we solve the issue of environmental injustice? This unit connects to the following California Common Core Standards: CCSS RH 11-12 1, CCSS RH 11-12 7, and CCSS RH 11-12 9.

(Developed for IB History of the Americas, grade 11; recommended for U. S. History and IB History of the Americas, grade 11; World History, grades 10 and 12; and Environmental Science, grades 10-12)

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