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Competing Paths of Struggle: African American Resistance to White Oppression, 1863-1896

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Rationale

The history that this unit covers is extremely important to me. I am a black male, the great grand child of slaves, who managed to do well in school. Not a day goes by where I am not actively reminded of the struggles that my ancestors went through, or the barriers that they faced. When I was in university and presented with a challenge, be it academic or social, I would think of the opportunities that I was given that they never had. Every second I feel the pulls and pressures of history on my own life and see how it shapes everything we do today. My people's history and struggle gave me strength to push through difficult times and I am compelled to honor its legacy.

It is also, through my own experience learning this history and its transformative effects on my own life, that I feel compelled to teach it to my students. Once confronted with it, I could no longer see the world in the ways that I had once seen it. Once they are confronted with this history, hopefully they will not see the world in the same ways either. Knowing what my ancestors fought against, how merely surviving in a racist society was an act of defiance, and how noncooperation could, at times, be a revolutionary act, pushed me to not settle for a life divorced from the issues that face my community. These historical forces have moved me into education, for I believe that education is the first step in achieving true liberation. These historical forces have moved me to work with the most educationally marginalized communities in San Francisco in a continuing education setting at Downtown High School.

I teach in a city of incredible diversity and crippling segregation. Though, according to 2007 Census Bureau estimates, African Americans represent only 7.3 percent of the city's overall population, they represent roughly 35 percent of my school's population. Latinos, who comprise nearly 14 percent of the city's population, constitute roughly 40 percent of my school's population. Asians, who are 33 percent of the city's population, are only 10 percent of my school's population. Pacific Islanders, who are under 5 percent of the city's population, are roughly 12 percent of my school's population. Caucasians, who are 45 percent of the city's population, are less than 2 percent of my school's population. ¹

The city is also a city of incredible economic wealth and disparity. The median annual household income is 81,136 dollars for the entirety of the city. However, there are dramatic differences between the core demographics of my school and the city in terms of household income. Nearly 60 percent of the students

qualify for free or reduced lunch and their families are significantly and dramatically behind the rest of the city in terms of income and poverty. A dramatic number of the students at my school have parents who are currently or formerly involved in the criminal justice system. Many of the students themselves are currently or formerly involved in the criminal justice system as well. Drug usage among parents and students is common.

My students come from the most marginalized communities in the city, predominately the southeast side, and many live in subsidized housing or housing projects. They have histories of truancy, semi-literacy, sexual assault, gang membership or affiliation; few come from two parent homes and some are, themselves, parents. All of them have been failed, on some level, by the educational system and Downtown High is, for many of them, the end of the road. Either they make it at Downtown or they drop out.

Downtown's unique structure allows for students to take a semester long (eighteen-week) project organized around a central concept. The project I co-teach is called Physics Reflected In Social Movements (PRISM). I have total curricular freedom and can teach whatever I want. It is within this particular context that I am allowed to design a course that can cover a substantial period of time in significant depth.

Given all of this and the problems of violence and alienation that affect many of them, creating a rigorous, relevant and, above all else, liberatory educational experience is paramount for me. Teaching my students that people who have had similar, or even more difficult, life situations to theirs managed to resist and achieve a modicum of independence, is what will, hopefully, inspire them to change their own communities.

It is through an examination of the one hundred year African American struggle, beginning with Emancipation and ending with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that I want the students to reflect on their own lives and their own possibilities. I want them to have a historical foundation in the struggles of African Americans regardless of whether or not they themselves are African American, so that any future struggle they engage in based on a knowledge of what has worked and what has failed.

This unit is designed to run for an entire eighteen-week semester. Due to space constraints, I am forced to limit the scope of what is being published through the Yale National Initiative to the thirty-three years that encompass Emancipation and end with *Plessy vs. Ferguson*. There will be additional material, narrative and structure on my class Wikispace, which covers the final two sub-units.² Structurally, the course is composed of approximately four mini units that consist of one theoretical unit and three thirty-year time spans. All of the smaller units are arranged chronologically and thematically. More specifically, the first mini-unit will focus on rights and laws, what they are, where they come from. The second mini-unit will begin an exploration of historical content, focusing on the period from Emancipation to the decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1863-1896). The third mini-unit will focus on black struggle during the era of Jim Crow segregation to the beginning of World War II (1896-1941). The fourth and final unit will focus on the struggle for the meaning of black liberation (1941-1968), culminating in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The course is designed to allow other teachers to take snippets or individual case studies and teach them to their students. Each of the sub-units looks at the struggle in terms of oppression and resistance in four key areas: law, culture, economics and violence. The vast majority of it will be taught using a case-study method, and each case study will run roughly one to two days.

Objectives

An important goal of the overall unit will be to create within the students an understanding of government and provide them with historical examples of those who have struggled failed or succeeded to make government include them, change and respond to their demands. The students will be exposed to a variety of strategies that African Americans, and others, have used to exert pressure on the government of the United States. Specifically, the students will be asked to evaluate which path brings about the longest lasting and most dramatic social change. Is the best path that taken by those who rely on the very system that oppresses them to ultimately grant them liberation? Is the best path the path taken by those who altogether refuse to cooperate with a system that oppresses them? Or does the best path consist of some combination of sometimes seemingly conflicting strategies? Is it reform, revolution or both? ?

The students, through deep analysis and interaction with the historical content, will be able to make connections between the struggles of blacks and their own contemporary situations. I want the material to be relevant to issues that they face in their everyday lives so that they can directly apply the lessons they learn to problems in their communities. Upon completion of this course, the students should have a firm understanding of American political, legal and social histories that will allow them to better engage and understand the contemporary world around them. Ultimately, I would like for them to be as impacted by this struggle as I was when I was first exposed to it in its totality.³

Overarching Instructional Strategies

Many of the following instructional strategies are rooted in my own philosophy of teaching. The work of Paulo Freire, Bill Ayers, Stephen Biko, bell hooks, Ted Sizer and Lisa Delpit have all informed the strategies that I pursue. The classroom is, ideally, a space where hierarchy is minimized; power dynamics are actively challenged and ultimately exists as a proactively reflective environment. Diversity is a buzzword that is thrown around by many educators, but for diversity to mean anything, it must be fostered in an environment that demands critical reflection and engagement. I want my students to ask themselves if they are learning optimally, and to demand that I do things better and differently. If I am doing my job right, they will be constantly challenging their internal ideas, the ideas of their peers, the ideas that I present them, and the ways that I am presenting them.

Before any of the aforementioned things can begin, the students must feel safe in their environment. To accomplish this, students will do significant amounts of group work at the beginning of the school year in order to invest themselves in the structure of the class. They will be empowered to create shared rules and guidelines, including punishments through a classroom constitution writing process. However, there will be many non-negotiables especially in terms of oppressive language and behaviors. All of these implied concepts: democracy, oppression and liberation, will be reinforced through the specific content that will be covered later. I will challenge them on their own prejudices directly, not to humiliate them, but to create an awareness within them that will make them think about how their actions impact others. Without this awareness, they will not be able to access the curriculum easily. The curriculum is optimally accessed only after the students have looked inside themselves and begun to address their own prejudices, preconceptions

and actions towards themselves, their classmates and broader communities.

I believe that students learn best by having educational experiences. This can be done in a variety of ways, but memory is strongest when it is associated with specific acts of doing that are varied yet consistent. Though there is no strong empirical data that supports Howard Gardner's theories on multiple intelligences, I am a strong anecdotal believer in them. Given this, I will try my hardest to incorporate elements of movement, writing, speaking, and cooperation as much as possible. Below is a list of strategies that will be embedded throughout the unit. Each will have its specific rationale subsequently justified.

Direct Instruction/Discussion: though often frowned upon, lectures and PowerPoint presentations allow rather large amounts of material to be covered rather quickly. Note taking for my students is not a static process of copying. All lectures/presentations that I deliver require them to interact with the material that they are recording, by doing a reaction and connection segment in their notebooks. They will occasionally be asked to react to specific pieces of information in their notes or draw connections to their own lives or other current events. The notes will be collected and graded. This allows them to have greater ownership over the material and makes me accountable for checking their notes for more than just their abilities to copy information.

Graphic Organizers: Students will be given a wide variety of graphic organizers to help scaffold their learning. I have learned that a fatal assumption to make about students is to assume that they know how to easily access information. My work with Special Education students has forced me to break the information I am presenting them into more discrete units. Students who have auditory processing delays require a great deal of assistance in accessing lectures or even documentary film. In order to address this particular disability I design graphic organizers that require pair work, group response or space to revisit material that may be absorbed with greater difficulty. Also, having opportunities for students to move around the room and use graphic organizers to access content that is placed at a variety of locations throughout the room gives students who have problems staying in their seats a guide to access material without feeling confined.

Group work: For students to truly have a meaningful and liberatory classroom experience they must work with their peers, regardless of ability. I will try to incorporate as much peer interaction into the specific lessons for this unit as possible, ideally in every lesson. Education, as it is currently structured, is a very isolating experience. Students are not encouraged to show weakness, or admit not knowing. They are not rewarded for having empathy with their peers. I want all group work to foster a sense of empathy in my students. I want them to feel responsible for their and their peers' understanding. Structuring group work so that there is a rotation of responsibilities, all of equal weight and importance is the best way to achieve peer-to-peer empathy. A simple example of this playing out is having the students receive a teamwork grade and an individual grade. If a student is the timekeeper, s/he will be evaluated on how well, he or she does his or her particular job, but also how well he or she answers particular individual response questions. There will be group response questions that the group must reach a consensus about that would be recorded by a group scribe. This prevents some members of the group from cruising, and having rotating responsibilities makes sure that every member of the group, throughout the course, knows what it was like when their peer had that position prior to them.

Rubrics: I believe that giving students a heads up on how they are going to be evaluated before they are evaluated is essential to creating a classroom based on trust and fairness. Before the students do any major assignment I will give them rubrics so that they can best meet my expectations for them. I have found that students perform most optimally when they know what they must do to do well. Having clear expectations for major and minor assignments is essential for growth.

Art inclusion: Allowing students to express themselves artistically in relation to specific content is something that I think is seriously undervalued today. If a student can create an image, or expression through sound, that conveys the impact of material on each of them as individuals, that expression should be valued as much as written or oral expression. Offering opportunities for students to react to material artistically, with few, if any boundaries, allows students who do not excel in the traditionally valued realms of expression (oral and written) to have their work and contributions valued.

Oral Presentations/Performance: I believe having the students stand in front of their peers and deliver a poem, dramatic reading or their own oral position brings out the best and worst in them. However, if properly scaffolded and supported, oral presentations have the potential to unlock things in students that they never knew they had within themselves. This element is often times the most difficult to foster and develop, especially given the general fear that many people have of speaking in public, so it will be done relatively frequently so that the students can get increasingly comfortable with speaking in front of others. An oral component will be essential to any culminating project that comes of this unit.

Content

Sub Unit 1: Oppression, Resistance and Rights (Three Weeks)

Oppression: The "isms"

Oppression is a central concept for the larger unit. Starting with oppression is essential because it is the object that African American and other groups struggle against. It exists in a variety of forms, which the students will be exposed to. Though exposed to many different variants of oppression, the sub-unit will focus primarily on classism and racism through specific case studies. My goal will be to provide the students with a concise definition of each term in language that may, at times, lack academic formality.

Oppression is when a member of a powerful group uses his/her power and prejudice to limit or deny opportunities to others. Key to the definition of oppression is developing an understanding of power and prejudice. Power is the ability to control and influence social and economic choices and outcomes for one's self or others. Prejudice is the pre-existing hatred or mistrust of those who do not belong to one's own group. Another important understanding that students should have is that oppression can manifest itself in two important and distinct ways: on the individual level and on the institutional level. Conversations focused on these two concepts (individual vs. institutional) should emphasize that though individual acts of oppression are hurtful, they are less important than institutional acts of oppression because institutional oppression impacts millions of people and limits their opportunities in ways that individual acts cannot.

There are a variety of systems of oppression that could easily be discussed. However, we will focus on the following for the sake of brevity and relevance to coming content and particular behaviors found in the students:

Individual Oppression: The actions of single people, who are given power by society, against other individuals or groups from less powerful groups in order to limit the social and economic opportunities of the less powerful.

Institutional Oppression: When a body, like a government agency, an employer, a place of learning limits the opportunities of particular groups largely through inaction or values that discriminated groups cannot ever have. The police are often times seen as emblematic of institutional oppression due to their less than stellar history of abusing minority groups and protecting individual officers who do the abusing.

Race: An idea that is not a biological reality. Race was invented to easily categorize people based on somewhat specific physical traits most important being skin color and ancestry. .

Racism: When one group uses its race-based power to limit the social and economic opportunities of other racial groups.

Social Class: A ranked system where people are given privileges and advantages based on their values *and* wealth. Values are the customs, habits and beliefs of a particular individual or group. One can be wealthy and not considered upper class because s/he may or may not reflect the value systems of the upper class.

Classism: When one group uses its class-based power to limit the social and economic opportunities of those from classes beneath theirs.

Sex: Simply put, whether one is male or female.

Sexism: When one sex uses its sex-based power to limit the social and economic opportunities of the opposite sex.

Xenophobia: Literally, the fear of the outsider/other. When a group of citizens or long-term residents uses the power given by their citizenship status to limit the social and economic opportunities of those who are not citizens or long-term residents.

Heterosexism/Homophobia: When heterosexuals use the power that comes with their sexual identity to limit the social and economic opportunities of those who are something other than heterosexual.

Internalized Oppression: When an oppressed individual or group begins to believe the stereotypes and prejudices that an oppressor has about him/her/them. When a member of an oppressed group actively fights with or directly negatively competes with other members of the oppressed group to the benefit of the oppressor.

Caste: A rigid system of social organization that is set, unchangeable and passed down from one generation to the next.

Of these specific systems of oppression, we will do cases studies on two of them: racism and classism. We will focus on these systems of oppression because they are salient to the struggles of African Americans from 1863-1968. Of the two, race is the most important because it is the basis upon which African descended people were enslaved. As time progresses, class and race become inextricably linked so that race, in essence, becomes an economic caste. To best meet the students where they are at, the case studies will be contemporary, dealing with disparities in prison sentencing between rich defendants and poor defendants in California and the treatment and perceptions of undocumented Irish immigrants and Latino immigrants in New York City.^{4,5} Following the case studies, we will spend a day discussing the question, "Why do you think people oppress one another?" The majority of this class will be spent doing journaling, pair sharing and then end with student poetry based on a particular system of oppression that speaks to the students. Time will be allowed for readings of the poetry. This discussion and day will serve as a check for understanding of the

concepts as well as a time for reflection and will conclude the first week of the sub-unit.

Resistance: What is it and why do people engage in it?

Building upon the foundation of oppression, we will contrast it with resistance. The working definition we will use for resistance is: non-cooperation with the desires of one group. Resistance is central to the larger unit in that it is the essence of the African American experience in the United States. Africans have resisted from the first slave brought by the Spaniards to Santo Domingo, through Jamestown and continue to resist. Students must understand that people are not merely leaves in the stream of history, but rather are dynamic actors who constantly try to change their situations and improve their lives. As we move more closely to engaging in the content that deals with slavery and its after effects I want the students to have the language to discuss the ways that black people resisted oppression.

The key questions for this sub-section are: What exactly is resistance? Why do people resist oppression? What forms does resistance take? How have people resisted throughout history? How do you resist in your own life?

There are a variety of forms of resistance; this list covers many of them:

Individual: when a single person does not cooperate with or works against those who are more powerful.

Collective/Group: when a group does not cooperate with or works against those who are more powerful.

Active: when an individual or group either uses violence or the threat of violence in their non-cooperation with those who are more powerful. This can be pro-active or in self-defense.

Passive: when an individual or group refuses to use violence or the threat of violence in their non-cooperation with those who are more powerful.

Covert: when an individual or group does not cooperate with or works against those who are more powerful in a hidden or not obvious manner.

Overt: when an individual or group does not cooperate with or works against those who are more powerful in an open and obvious manner.

Symbolic: when an individual or group does not cooperate with or works against those who are more powerful to prove a point and not necessarily achieve a goal. Symbolic resistance is often done to prove the hypocrisy of the powerful or to inspire others to engage in resistance of their own. Symbolic resistance is often times very dramatic.

Pragmatic: when an individual or group does not cooperate with or works against those who are more powerful to achieve a very specific, oftentimes non-dramatic goal, or a step towards a larger goal.

Legal: when an individual or group uses the legal system of those who are more powerful to challenge their oppression or perceived injury.

Cultural: when an individual or group maintains its history, traditions and expressions in response to pressure to change or accept the culture of the oppressor.

Revolution: When a system of governance or a long-held set of customs and beliefs is overthrown and

replaced with a new form of governance or a new set of customs and beliefs.

Students will complete a guided worksheet that probes their understanding of these concepts in both contemporary and historical terms. Their responses will serve largely as a check for prior knowledge and their ability to make connections between the concepts and their own lives. Upon completion of the worksheet, they will do a group activity in which they are randomly assigned different types of resistance and must form a layout of how that resistance would manifest itself. When each group is done, they will present their plans to the entire class, who will evaluate them for their efficacy. After the activities of the prior activities, the students will do a case study on David Walker and will categorize his resistance.⁶

David Walker is an important figure in Antebellum America.⁷ He is the first truly radical abolitionist, a man who advocated violent self-defense and insurrection amongst slaves in the American South. He firmly opposed re-colonization of blacks and held the United States to an incredibly high moral standard, the one that its own founding documents set. He is a great example of the different ways that resistance can manifest itself. He uses passive, overt, individual and largely symbolic resistance to white supremacy and slavery on the chance that it will spark widespread rebellion amongst other enslaved black people. His appeal will serve as a general introduction to the conditions of slavery and how some black people resisted it.

Rights and Laws: The Big Rules

We will begin a discussion of rights and laws with first talking about rights. The key questions are as follows: What are rights? Why do we have them? Where do they come from? How do people get rights? How are rights protected? Are there limits to rights or can they or should they be perpetually expanded? Students have an intrinsic understanding of what rights are, however, very few of them have actually taken the time to think about what they actually mean and why they are respected. For my students they know about their rights because either they, or people very close to them, have been intimately involved with the American criminal justice system. My students also know about other rights like freedom of speech, but they often times invoke this right to justify inappropriate behavior. I would like the students to come away with answers to these questions that inspire more questions and deepen their understanding of exactly what rights are and how much trust is involved in creating and maintaining them.

We will examine the Constitution, in particular the Bill of Rights, and some competing ideas of where rights come from.⁸ Do rights come from a divine source? Do rights come from the Earth? Do rights come from the consent of the governed? The students should understand that rights are essentially communal agreements that everyone is willing to respect. They should understand that our rights are enshrined in the Constitution and that the Constitution can be amended and changed if the people so wish it. The students will wrangle with the concept of absolute rights, specifically, if there is anything that is, is not or should be an absolute right. Students will participate in a discussion about rights and whether or not there are absolute rights that can never be changed. They will also debate on whether rights, once granted can ever be taken away and the question of whether the Constitution or similar document can only grant rights. We will look at California's Proposition 8 and directly address the issue of the function of a Constitution. A specific guiding question to the issues in California's Proposition 8 is: Does the changeability of a constitution make it a document with promise or is it merely an instrument that can leave the door open to tyranny of the majority?

What is a law?

To properly address the issue of what a law is, we will do a thought exercise imagining what a world without

laws might be like. Would it be pure chaos, or could humanity create something different that does not rely on government to get people to come to mutual agreements? The students will get a brief overview of the history of laws, through a timeline a piece of which they will each be responsible for mastering and re-teaching to their classmates. To specifically tackle these issues, the students will create an art piece envisioning what they think a world without laws might look like. They will also create their own set of classroom laws. They will reflect on what they think just and unjust laws are and how laws are enforced. They will address if the process of creating classroom laws is one that they felt included in, or were they ignored for some reason?

What is the rule of law?

The students will next explore what the rule of law means. Examining this particular concept is important because much of the suffering and struggle of blacks in the United States has been colored by the idea of the rule of law. Students will be asked to address the following issues through an oral presentation: Is the rule of law used to protect people or can it be used to entrench the oppression of certain groups? How does the answer to this question change when we think about the histories of blacks and Native Americans? How has the rule of law been used to hinder and limit their demands for expanded rights? How has majority rule been used to dominate those unfortunate enough to not be represented in the majority?

Sub Unit 2: Emancipation, Reconstruction and Resistance 1863-1896 (Six Weeks)

Given the theoretical foundation laid in the previous sub-unit, the students should be ready to engage with the historical material that the remainder of the larger unit is built upon. Without the vocabulary and theoretical understanding, the students would most likely struggle to verbalize the underlying issues related to the black struggle for liberation and recognition in the United States. I base this statement on my previous work with my school's demographics. Many have missed large pieces of the American Master Narrative and few, if any, have a deeper understanding of the concepts addressed in the prior sub-unit. It would be a safe assumption that few have a strong understanding of American History and the structure of American government, and it is there that we shall begin to delve into the content. To supplement their lack of exposure to the general history of the Civil War, I will have them read from a lecture series by Stanley K. Schultz and William P. Tishler of the University of Wisconsin.⁹ I selected this resource because it is concise, thematic and accessible. Throughout the remainder of this sub-section, it is important to make explicit connections between the theoretical items we covered in the previous sub-unit and the coming historical content. Soliciting student ideas on connections is essential, as it will force them to tap into their prior knowledge and even venture a theory as to why it is important to understand the ideas of oppression, resistance, rights and laws.

The first day of this sub-unit will be spent going over the general structure of American government. Before we can actually start to really talk about government, in an abstract way, they must understand its constituent parts. The students will be given a handout that will outline the basic tri-partite division of government and what each branch's general responsibilities are. I am making a space for this, so that when we say words like "President" or "Congress" or "Courts" the students understand the basic responsibilities of each of those components. Conceptually, I want the students to understand that the government is by no means a monolith and that there are competing camps and factions within it that sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. I also want the students to understand, at a basic level, that government has not been open to everyone and that it is often times one of the biggest impediments to social change. Students will be asked, specifically, to ponder whether government is an instrument or impediment to change. Much of this will be review from the previous section on rights and laws.

The specific historical content will begin at the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.^{10,11} Though blacks resisted slavery in bold and dramatic ways, it is not until after the Civil War that dramatic changes in black life began to take shape. The question of what to do with blacks in America was an incredibly important one. Many favored re-colonization, while others, like David Walker were adamantly opposed to the resettlement of free, or slave, blacks. The most important question that students will be asked while exploring this document is: Is the Emancipation Proclamation a revolutionary document? Other questions include: Does it dramatically change anything for black people? Is it merely a symbol or something that has actual force? Should black people have waited to be told they were free in order to seek freedom or were they already taking steps towards their own liberation? Should people who are oppressed wait for formal announcements from their oppressors in order to take action or does their oppression demand that they do what is right for them regardless of what the oppressor group thinks? Does this document inspire resistance, and if so, what kind does it inspire or was the desire to resist pre-existing? There is a very romantic, indeed nostalgic, way of looking at the Emancipation Proclamation and I would like them to directly confront and challenge it.

I believe the best way to challenge the validity of the Emancipation Proclamation, aside from the students reading a historian's analysis, is to have them confront the hypocrisy of Abraham Lincoln and his position on black racial equality with whites. To complicate the student's understanding of the document, they will read Lincoln's *Address on Colonization to a Deputation of Colored Men (1862)*, in which Lincoln, quite frankly, tells black petitioners that the best that they can hope for is re-colonization to Africa because, in Lincoln's estimation, blacks were widely regarded as inherently inferior to whites and the differences between whites and blacks were irreconcilable. The key question that the students will be asked is: Does reading this speech change the way that you see or think about the Emancipation Proclamation? What does it say about the ways that black people were seen in the United States before, during and after the Civil War?

Upon completion of this section, we begin to study Reconstruction. To bridge the gap between the end of the Civil War and the impact of Reconstruction on blacks in America I will use PBS's *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, Episode One. I selected this film series because it encompasses almost the entirety of the period that the larger unit focuses on and gives many examples of resistance that blacks engaged in in the face of nearly unrelenting white supremacy. For homework and supplementation, the students will read a synopsis of Reconstruction out of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. I selected this resource because it is concise, thematic and written at a level that the students can readily access.¹²

Before the class can move towards an exploration of the forms of resistance that blacks engaged in, it must first have a deep understanding of the barriers that black people faced during this time. We will cover four specific venues of oppression that blacks faced: legal/governmental social/cultural, economic and violent through several case studies.

Case study one will focus on the legal barriers to black equality erected in the North. The most significant idea that the students should come away with is that White Supremacy was not something unique to the South, that, in fact, blacks faced significant legal and cultural barriers to equality in the North as well. To accomplish this, the class will be split into two halves. Students will examine the history of congressional school segregation by looking at congressional acts issued to separate black and white children in the District's schools in 1862, 1864, 1866, and 1874. They will be asked to think specifically about why they have been taught, traditionally, to think of legal segregation as something that was almost uniquely Southern and how does this new knowledge and rationale given by Congress during this time to oppose black integration change the way that they think and see American history. An essential element to this, and the subsequent case studies is to have the students imagine how blacks resisted or coped with federal discrimination in the North.

Case study two will focus largely on the legal barriers in the South. The class will examine Jim Crow laws and their attempts to limit black freedom in spite of federal legislation that offered equal protection under the law. We will look at many of the most egregious laws, like segregated schools for blind children, and how they were designed to buttress white supremacy while reinforcing black inferiority.¹³ I would like the students to compare and contrast many of the stereotypes inherent in these laws with those that currently exist about black and brown students today. Many of these laws are reflected in many of the images and understandings of black and brown people, especially the belief in criminality and pathological violence. I want students to ask how they thought blacks in the South were able to live under such a regime of exclusion and control? However, the most important question that I want the students to focus on is: why did whites feel the need to so thoroughly restrict black freedom? Why do you think they were so totally and completely threatened by the idea of black success/independence? We will also examine the pattern of disenfranchisement that began after 1877 and the end of Reconstruction, represented in ever-draconian legal measures to retard black political, economic and social growth while preventing the ever-present threat of race mixing.

After exploring a snapshot of the legal barriers blacks faced in both the north and the south, we will do short case studies on the cultural barriers that blacks faced, chief among them being White Supremacy. Using Ferris University's Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, the students will be exposed to five core stereotypes of blacks in the United States: the *Mammy*, the *Jezebel*, the *Coon*, the *Tom* and the *Brute*.¹⁴ The dehumanization of blacks was necessary to justify the horrific violence that was inflicted on them by white society. Reconstruction was not just about rebuilding the South, but re-imagining the way that blacks were seen, not only in the South but in all parts of the United States. Having black people popularly imagined as being one of three possible tropes: asexual servants (Mammies and Toms), sex-crazed predators (Jezebels and Brutes), or shiftless idiots (Coons) allowed white society to delegitimize black demands for freedom and equal rights. To end the examination of cultural barriers facing black people during and slightly after Jim Crow/Reconstruction, we will watch Marlon Riggs' film *Ethnic Notions*.¹⁵ Riggs brings to life, using primary sources and dramatic reenactments, the core of the cultural reconstruction that took place before, during and after the Civil War. It serves as a brilliant tool that covers the impact that stereotypes havenot only on those who they are aimed at, but on those who create them..

The third barrier to black equality is the economic barrier. The associated case study for this barrier will focus on the importance of the sharecropping system on maintaining black inferiority and white supremacy. Though there were a variety of forms that economic oppression took, we will focus on sharecropping because no other organized economic arrangement during, and after, Reconstruction retarded the economic development of blacks more than sharecropping. I want the students to ponder the importance of land during this time period and what it represented to not just black people, but whites as well. We will also explore the idea of 40 acres and a mule and how the practice of sharecropping thoroughly undermined the failure of the government to empower blacks during Reconstruction. Students will revisit their ideas of rights and justice from the first sub-unit and enumerate the reasons why they think economic justice was so utterly denied to blacks in the South through the sharecropping system.

The final barrier is the barrier of terror and violence as embodied by the Ku Klux Klan and lynch law. The guiding questions for this section are: What should blacks have done in the face of massive state terror and white backlash? Would blacks have been better off if forced reconstruction and the civil war would have never happened and slavery was solved through less-violent means? We will watch an excerpt from the History Channel's *Ku Klux Klan - A Secret History Part Two*. This video provides an excellent seven-minute synopsis of the history of the Klan from its founding through to its destruction by the United States Army. I want the students to reflect on the idea of terrorism and what it evokes when said in a contemporary context. To add

depth to this exploration, I want them to contemplate reasons why it is not widely understood that the first terrorist organization in American history was white and aimed at directly suppressing black attempts at equality and independence. I believe that forming a more complex understanding of what terrorism is and why groups engage in it will empower them to be more critical of contemporary usage of the term. Another issue that will be revisited is the question of whether an oppressed minority should rely on the governmental structures of its oppressor for protection and/or liberation. The federal government's response to the Klan, in the form of the Force Act of 1870 and the Civil Rights Act of 1871 show that there were elements amongst white America's power structure that were deeply committed to the pursuit of rights by blacks in the American South. However, this sentiment will be countered with the 1875 decision in *U.S. v. Cruickshank* and the Supreme Court's retreat from the defense of African American physical safety. Most black people were not safe and secure, so, the question remains, should they have relied on the government to protect them or should they have protected themselves? A natural follow up question is: what might the consequences of black defense or open, active resistance have been? I hope that the students will see that black people were, essentially, defenseless regardless of what path they took.

The second half of the examination of violence as a barrier to black equality is an examination of lynching and the role that public violence played in impeding black demands for equal treatment or independence. By looking at the variety of places lynching took place and the specific acts of barbarism committed by white participants, the students will imagine what the psychological impact of lynching was on blacks in both the North and the South. One of the pieces focuses on the lynching of a black man in Ohio.¹⁶ This should force students to confront the fact that lynching was not limited to the South and that black corporeal security was at risk in nearly all parts of the country.¹⁷ Students will write both a poem and a perspective piece that is divided into two halves. One half will force them to write from the perspective of a white person involved in a lynching. The second study will be on the New Orleans Riot of 1866 and the chilling effect it had on blacks who dared fight back against white mob rule. Upon completion of this section, the students will write from the perspective a white lyncher, white bystander or community member, or a black person either before they are lynched, a black bystander or a black person in the community who merely catches word of the lynching.

Violence is being studied last in this particular sequence because it, in many ways, is the end of the line in terms of oppression. White society created stereotypes and limited economic opportunity, but without the unrelenting race-based violence prevalent during and after Reconstruction the others would have their impacts minimized. It is violence that proves to be the glue that holds the entire system of white supremacy together. Ideally, the students will make connections between the violence that blacks in the South, and North, faced and the violence that they, currently, face in their own communities.

Armed with an understanding of the barriers that blacks faced in their struggle for freedom and independence, the students will examine the specific forms of resistance that blacks engaged in during this time period. The examination of resistance will mirror the abovementioned systems of oppression: legal resistance, cultural resistance, economic resistance and violent resistance. The core of this section is inspirational. I want students to see that in the face of unbelievable odds, odds not that different than those many of them face, blacks continued to press on for equal rights and greater independence.

Reconstruction and the two decades after its conclusion mark a dramatic sea change in the ways that blacks interfaced with American government. The story of black legal resistance is, in many ways, a story of burgeoning interracial solidarity and an important example of the ways in which demographic shifts can dramatically alter the political landscape. We will begin the examination of legal resistance to white supremacy with the Constitutional amendments that granted blacks, on paper, full citizenship rights. The

students must understand that, for many Northern politicians, they needed to make the war truly mean something. Without the granting of rights to newly-freed blacks, then the war would truly be pointless. This particular strand will trace the congressional battles for the 13th , 14th and 15th Amendments. Following this we will look at the first moves towards overt political organization by blacks in the form of voting and the election of black representatives to both state and federal congresses. Students will be asked to analyze the risks and benefits to participation and the meaning of electing black representatives to all levels of government so quickly after the death of slavery. We will then move to studying the Civil Rights Act of 1871 and how it represented an attempt, one might argue a final attempt, to protect black rights and the principle of equality by actually physically defending blacks from the terror wrought by the Ku Klux Klan.

We will also revisit the ideas that the students have regarding the rule of law. Are laws only meaningful if they are properly enforced? Does the attempt to reinforce the rule of law in the South and the subsequent abandonment of the rule of law as a universal principle in 1877 change that argument forever? Can the United States lay claim to being a nation of laws given its sordid history of using the rule of law to oppress or silence minority groups? Does the rule of law, in the context of the 13th , 14th and 15th amendments display cynicism or optimism amongst the lawmakers who enacted them? Does their passage represent an attempt to silence calls for black equality by merely passing something that can only be tentatively enforced or does it represent the very best that America has to offer?

These questions will ultimately lead to the decisions in the *Civil Rights Cases* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The decision in the case of the *Civil Rights Cases* and *Plessy* come very much as a response to black resistance to white supremacy, and it is under this lens that we will study it. The students will read a brief of the case, as well as a summary of the arguments made by the court, but most importantly they will study the dissenting opinion of John Marshall Harlan. The students will ponder the conclusions of the court but extend them to today. Given the segregation in today's residential patterns and schools, do we need to be integrated to have equality, or do we need equality before we can be integrated? The conditions of the students lives will hopefully yield some interesting responses, especially given the context of the new views that this unit has exposed them to. The students will write a short opinion piece that forces them to think about how they would deal with the decision of separate but equal if they were alive in 1896. Would they have accepted it and fight for enforcement of the equality provisions or would they have tackled the entire decision as a sham? Their answers to these questions are essential as they will be questions that the NAACP and others had to actively answer. I will also attempt to make these questions relevant to their lives today, by forcing them to examine the segregated conditions of the school system in San Francisco and asking them to think what the roots of the disparities between West Side and South East schools. What are their solutions? Is it merely a matter of racial integration, or are there other issues at work?

In the realm of social resistance, we will examine the role of education and its impact on the broader black community. Students will ponder the importance of education in their own lives and come to some sort of cohesive understanding of what education represents to oppressed groups. In terms of content, we will study the role of black colleges and explore the competing views of their aims. Contrasting the aims of different black institutions of higher learning very much reflects the larger debate within the black community about what course of resistance should be pursued. Should blacks seek only technical learning to gain economic independence or should they seek a full, liberal/classical education that would allow both economic and political independence? We will explore Booker T. Washington and his assimilationist approach to securing black economic security and independence at the expense of political equality. The students will examine his Atlanta Compromise speech, asking themselves if this is the work of a savvy politician attempting to garner white favor so as to secure some slice of independence, economic independence, for blacks or is he a sell out

who attempts to gain personal power at the expense of collective black power.

The students will also do case studies on the lives of Ida B. Wells and Benjamin "Pap" Singleton. Wells is a wonderful example of a black woman participating in a variety of forms of resistance, ultimately reaching the conclusion that the best thing for blacks to do would be to leave the South. Singleton made no pretense about getting along with the white power structure and actively and loudly advocated for blacks to move westward and settle (though he advocated for settlement on land that already belonged, or once belonged to indigenous peoples). Both of their lives serve as a stark contrast to views of Washington and his "cast down your bucket" philosophy. The students will imagine that they are a supporter of one of these three (Washington, Wells or Singleton) and do an oral presentation that advocates that person's position.

Again, mirroring the sequence in the barriers to black independence segment, we will move on to black economic resistance. Though many blacks were tied to the land by sharecropping, as a whole, they made relatively dramatic economic gains. It is essential to contrast the image of the sharecropper, which was the dominant image of this time period, with other images that represent black economic independence. To illustrate this independence the students will examine the program for the 1869 convention of the Colored National Labor Union and its demands for the protection and inclusion of black workers in the North and South.¹⁸ ,¹⁹ Lastly, we will examine the St. Louis general strike of 1877, as it offers a rare glimpse into black-white racial solidarity around issues of labor. Students should come away understanding that black people, though often presented with enormous economic barriers, were still willing and able to obtain a modicum of economic independence at various times throughout Reconstruction and post Reconstruction. A key lesson I would also like to see them pull from this material is an understanding of the importance of organization in resistance. In both of these examples, black workers united as collectives and realized that the best course of action was to fight white supremacy as a group rather than as individuals. I want the students to begin to think that the solution to many of the problems that they face in their own lives and in their own communities may rest not solely on individual action, but collective action. They will also explore the barriers and reactions to collective action, specifically the problem of collective violent reaction. This will lead us into a discussion of violent resistance and its ramifications for those blacks who dared engage in it post-Reconstruction.

The last segment that we will look at is violent resistance by blacks during the Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction eras. Though many blacks never fought, violently, with whites during this time period, there is the case of the Colfax Massacre, in Colfax Louisiana.²⁰ We will be studying this after the decision in *Cruickshank* to give broader context to the decision as well as to counter the narrative of black helplessness. *Cruickshank* is important because it is a legal decision that gave white mobs license to tyrannize law-abiding black people without fear of state reprisal. Though many black Unionists and militiamen were slaughtered in Colfax and their deaths essentially supported by the decision in *Cruickshank*, their sacrifice shows that not all black people were willing to be passive recipients of white violence and that some were willing to use violence to protect themselves and those that represented their political ideals. Students will be asked if what happened at Colfax was worthwhile? They will also explore the reaction of whites and how Colfax becomes very much an example to all blacks of the price that any violent resistance to white rule would cost. I want them to ask themselves what they would have done if placed in a similar situation, and if their probable bravado will stand in the face of the outcome of Colfax.

To end this entire sub-unit, the students will engage in a debate over voting. They will be asked whether the desire to vote and the belief in the validity of voting in the face of extreme, often times state sponsored terror, was a valid strategy at achieving safety, equality and independence for black during this time period? One side will defend the voting strategy, while the other will attack it and propose alternatives. The debate should

serve as a check for content understanding and allow the students a public forum to voice their opinions on an issue that is still very relevant today.

Assignments/Classroom Practice

Activity 1: Classroom Constitution

Timeframe:

Approximately two class periods

Rationale:

This activity is a conclusion to the first mini-unit on Rights and Laws. The students will write a binding Constitution for the classroom. The goal is to create a series of rules that is agreed upon by as many members of the classroom as possible; consensus would be ideal. Students will also be given a way to amend and change the constitution so as to allow them to adapt their document to situations that they cannot anticipate at the time of its writing. Specific issues that each group must address are: tyranny of the majority, minority rights, and the importance of compromise.

Procedure:

Students will be split into one of three areas (multiple groups covering one area is a possibility): behavior, responsibilities, and consequences. If there are any other areas that they feel are necessary, these can be added.

Each group will be responsible for creating a basic list of rules and rights for their given area. Every member of the group will be given a role: recorder, time-keeper, facilitator or presenter. These roles can be exchanged amongst group members. All of the items that they decide upon including for their group must be passed by a super majority of the group, if not outright consensus. This will, ideally, give them some insight into how laws and rules for the larger society are made, and how compromise is central to creating agreements that large numbers of people can live with. They will then present these to the class, who will then be responsible for amending, challenging or denying their proposals.

On the second day, after all groups have presented, they will then reconvene, delete redundancies, include classmate concerns and re-present their proposals. The class will then vote to ratify the document as a binding set of agreements for the remainder of the course. The remainder of the second day will be spent in reflection, with students responding to the following questions: 1. What was the most challenging part of this process? 2. How did you balance the need to protect minority groups in the classroom with the desires of the majority? 3. How did your group compromise? 4. Are you satisfied with the final document? Why or why not?

For homework, the students will write a short response to the following question: Having gone through the constitution process in the classroom, how does this change the way you think about the Constitution of the US and those who made it, as well as modern day lawmakers? If it does not change the way that you see them, explain why.

Activity 2: Guided Watching Questions for The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow, Episode One

Timeframe:

Two to three class periods before sub-unit two.

Rationale:

This is fairly simple; most of the following questions are basic, factual recall questions. The higher order questions will be handled in the post-film discussion session. This film series gives a great overview of what blacks in the United States faced after Emancipation. It is foundational work that will serve them for the remainder of the unit. Most of the items in this first episode will be re-visited in greater depth during the course of mini-unit two.

Procedure:

Students will watch episode one over two class periods. They will answer the following questions:

Part 1:

1. Who/What was Jim Crow? What was he created for?
2. When were slaves freed in the U.S.? How many were there?
3. What does Jim Crow come to represent?
4. What are two things that blacks began to fight for after the Civil War (after 1865)?
5. What did the 13th Amendment do?
6. Why was land so important after slavery? What did it offer?
7. What happened at Edisto Island? How did learning about it make you feel?
8. What did the 14th and 15th Amendments provide for?
9. What are some of the things that alarmed the white establishment after slavery?
10. What did Ulysses S. Grant do to combat groups like the KKK?
11. When federal troops left the South (in 1877), what began to happen?
12. What did many blacks believe would become the key to end white dominance? Who represented that belief?
13. What was Tuskegee? Why did it focus on trades and manual labor?
14. Why was Booker T. Washington such a success/godsend in the eyes of white people? What was he asking black people to do?
15. How was Lucy Laney's school different from Tuskegee?
16. Why was teaching so important in black communities? What were some of the barriers that black educators faced?

Part 2:

1. How were the children and grandchildren of former slaves different from their parents and grandparents?
2. How were laws used in place of social convention to maintain order in the south after emancipation (the freeing of the slaves)?
3. What did the Tennessee courts acknowledge about Ida B. Wells after she had been kicked off the train?
4. Why was speaking out in the South during the 1880s such a significant act? What did black people face

when they spoke out?

5. What did Ida B. Wells tell the black residents of Memphis to do? Why did she do this?
6. Who/what did Wells believe were the true targets of Lynchings in the South? Why were they targeted?
7. Why was Mound Bayou significant?
8. What was one of the reasons Mr. Montgomery, the only black representative at the Mississippi Constitutional Convention, compromised with racist whites when he supported their moves towards racial separation?
9. What did Booker T. Washington's Atlanta speech ask black people to do and to accept?
10. How did many in the black community respond to the speech? How did the white press react?
11. What was the result of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case?
12. What did black people rely on and resort to in order to survive after *Plessy*?

Homework/Extension:

Students will be asked to write a short response to the question, of the things you saw in episode one, which stood out to you the most and why? How does seeing this history change the way that you think about yourself, your classmates or the country you live in? If it does not change, explain why.

Activity 3: Socratic Seminar on Violence

Timeframe:

One class period.

Rationale:

Students will be asked to sit in a Socratic Circle and respond to the question: Should blacks have resorted to violence to secure their rights during early Reconstruction? Students will be assessed on the complexity of their responses, their willingness to engage/disengage and their ability to question themselves and other students on the central question. Having clear expectations that everyone is to participate is essential for the success of this workshop. Another option is to force students on the outside to enter the circle by tapping them, or allowing for someone on the inside of the circle to opt out and choose their replacement, but only after a threshold for participation has been met, like x number of questions asked, or x number of responses provided.

Procedure:

Students will sit in a circle of eight. The central question will be posed and conversation will begin. Students on the outside are to write down a minimum number of interesting points that their classmates make as well as keep track of how many boys and girls speak as well as which boys and girls speak. Students will cycle in and out, either through prompting or by their own desire to participate. Having the students write down the things that their classmates are saying while they are observing is a good way to ensure participation and relevance once they enter the circle. The conversation will run for approximately thirty minutes. If the central question does not engender sufficient student response, then other questions can be posed from outside of the circle. Upon completion of the seminar, time will be allotted to allow for reflection and to debrief the process and student responses.

Homework/Extension:

Students will write a short poem on violence and how it relates to struggle, particularly in the context of black life during and after Reconstruction. It should reflect their position in the seminar.

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End Notes

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco#Demographics

2. <http://prismdhs.wikispaces.com>

3. Throughout the sections that encompass sub-units two and three, African Americans are referred to as black, because they are not

completely American until the mid 1960s and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

4. Immigration: http://www.mercurynews.com/dependency/ci_8969599?nlick_check=1
5. <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-op-rodriguez8apr08,0,7661039.column?coll=la-opinion-rightrail>
6. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Walker_\(abolitionist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Walker_(abolitionist))
7. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2930.html>
8. <http://videos.howstuffworks.com/hsw/5347-the-american-revolution-article-one-video.htm> Several short videos focusing on articles 1-5 and the Bill of rights.
9. http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/weblect/lec01/01_02.htm
10. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_emancipate.html
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12. Zinn, Teacher's History pp.3-15; 16-28 and associated questions
13. <http://www.ferris.edu/JIMCROW/what.htm>
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