



American Intersections: How Race, Class, and Gender Shape our History and Lives

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Rationale

This unit seeks to explore the intersection of social and political identities, and specifically how they have impacted--and have been impacted--throughout various periods in American history. The unit will incorporate a number of readings and case studies that exemplify each of the topics of study. Some of these topics include colonization and early American history, African slavery in North America, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and its ultimate failure, the women's suffrage movement, the civil rights movement, and more. It is no secret that there is much inequality across the country, and it can usually be traced back to some combination of the aforementioned periods in history, and the interconnectedness of people's social and political identities. My students have detailed the inequality and persecution they have faced across these political and ideological lines in the past, and I believe that this curriculum unit will present an opportunity for them to not only understand the historical, societal, and political roots behind "the origins of our discontents," but will better prepare them to navigate and overcome them.

While the core areas of the unit will be identified in the following sections, how students will grapple with them is an important area of emphasis as well. Given that these topics affect all Americans, this unit is of particular relevance to my students' lives. Indeed, they have described as much to me in casual conversations, as well as in anecdotal examples during class discussions. One of the principal aims of this unit is to provide students with the tools to navigate the intersectionality of social strata such as race, class, and gender. Besides giving them the content knowledge and vocabulary necessary to make sense of the realities they often face, the activities in this unit will be community-facing and will provide students with tangible strategies and tools to tackle the myriad issues that they often describe, as well as what history has already shown.

School Context

I teach at a neighborhood high school located in North Philadelphia. The School District of Philadelphia lists the demographics of the school as 59% Hispanic, 30% African American, 8% White, 2% Asian and 1% Other. 100% of the student body qualifies for free breakfast and lunch. Many of my students have a limited understanding of intersectionality; while the district curriculum mentions it briefly in an early “Race and Identity” unit, it does not prescribe adequate historical data and anecdotes that show how these intertwined factors play out in the real world. One of the primary goals of this unit is to examine the complexities of race, class, and gender, and how they intersect. It is important for students to make sense of the world around them, especially in the case of the sometimes invisible forces that take the shape of social strata. By examining key figures and periods in American history, students will understand the “why” of intersectionality, and the important work that has been done to progress the cause of civil rights in the United States.

Content Objectives

Introduction; Race, Class, and Gender

Race, class, and gender shape the experiences of everyone in the United States. People’s lives are impacted significantly, both individually and collectively, along these lines on a daily basis. Social strata are intertwined in such complex ways that it is often essential to talk about the different forms in which they converge, although there are myriad examples throughout history in which one factor might have played a larger role than another, such as the women’s suffrage movement. As mentioned in the introduction, this unit seeks to explore periods in history where the convergence of these social strata were particularly prominent.

Scholars such as Isabel Wilkerson have detailed the numerous ways in which the United States has historically divided the population among different castes, most recently raising prominent issues of tribalism, isolationism, wealth consolidation, and a burgeoning climate crisis.

We cannot fully understand the current upheavals or most any turning point in American history, without accounting for the human pyramid encrypted into us all. The caste system, and the attempts to defend, uphold, or abolish the hierarchy, underlay the American Civil War and the civil rights movement a century later and pervade the politics of twenty-first century America. Just as DNA is the code of instructions for cell development, caste is the operating system of economic, political, and social interaction in the United States from the time of its gestation. (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 24)

The American caste system can be divided into several different domains, with the most prominent being race, class, and gender. The purpose of this unit is to explore key moments in which their confluences played a major role in the course of history.

Another way to describe these social strata is through the lens of intersectionality. The term was first coined by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to “...describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics “intersect” with one another and overlap” (Coaston, 2019). Intersectionality is often used to

describe the ways in which people from different backgrounds navigate the world. It can also describe how discrimination affects various groups of people, both tangibly and intangibly. Intersectionality and scholarship on an American caste system can both be used to describe various periods in American history and their impact on the modern day. As will be presented throughout this unit, there have been periods of immense gains in the areas such as civil rights, voting rights, education, and the economy for people of historically marginalized groups, but the struggle for true equality is ongoing. In order to understand how history has been shaped by caste and intersectionality, it is important to understand some of the most significant periods in history where these ideas played a critical role.

Race and Racism

In August of 1619, a Dutch ship brought 20 captive Africans to the English colonies. This was to be the start of slavery in what would later become the United States of America. Early settler John Rolfe described this event in the oldest surviving reference to Africans in the English colonies. The letter described them as people who looked different from the colonists. These differences, while not yet based in racial hierarchy, would later form the basis of a system of social constructs and laws that would become the American caste system (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 40).

Ibram X. Kendi argues in *Stamped from the Beginning* that racism in American history has been an ongoing battle between segregationists, abolitionists, and anti-racists. Kendi argues “Frankly speaking, for generations of Americans, racist ideas have been their common sense” (2016, p. 4). The history laid out in the remainder of the book describes the theological roots of American racism, the growth and spread of slavery from the American revolution up to the civil war, various integrationist efforts during the antebellum period, and the ways in which figures such as Angela Davis devoted their lives and work to fighting against more covert racist policies and dogwhistle politics. Kendi acknowledges the impact of intersectionality in every period from colonization to present day, and skillfully argues that key players in each major era of American history have either contributed to or combatted these issues along segregationist, abolitionist, or anti-racist lines.

In looking more deeply at the ways in which notions of race and racism have shaped American history, one needs look no further than the “America’s original sin” slavery. In *How the Word is Passed*, author Clint Smith visits a number of monuments, landmarks, and other historic sites that offer up a compelling story of how slavery has been a driving force in shaping American history and memory. In the first chapter of the book, Smith visits Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s Virginia plantation.

He recalls an apt description of the system of slavery--as well as its impact--on behalf of his tour guide. “Slavery’s an institution. In Jefferson’s lifetime it becomes a system,” he begins. “So what is this slave system? It is a system of exploitation, a system of inequality and exclusion, a system where people are owned as property and held down by physical and psychological force, a system being justified even by people who know slavery is morally wrong.” He concludes with an incredibly important point: “By doing what? Denying the very humanity of those who are enslaved solely on the basis of the color of their skin” (Smith, 2021, p.11). While slavery may have ended officially in December 1865 with the passage of the 13th Amendment, the denial of humanity based on the color of a person’s skin persisted. In other words, slavery may have ended, but racial oppression and caste certainly have not.

Military service has long been one of the strongest pillars of patriotism and national identity. Despite this, there has been a long history of racial exclusion and discrimination in the military. While many see military service as a way to serve their country and better themselves through the skills and training it provides, these opportunities were not present for everyone until around the Cold War era, and not without great difficulty.

Despite the fact that black soldiers had served in the American Revolution and the War of 1812, many were turned away after attempting to enlist during the Civil War. A federal law dating back to 1792 barring African Americans from serving was cited in many of the denials. Lincoln's administration was worried about the possible secession of border states in response to the widespread recruitment of black troops. But by 1862, there was a decline in the number of white soldiers enlisting and an increase in contrabands, or former slaves, and in personnel needs, prompting the administration to reconsider the ban. Congress would pass the Second Confiscation and Militia Act, freeing soldiers who had masters in the Confederate Army. Days later, slavery was abolished in U.S. territories, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued shortly after, and the recruitment of black troops was more actively pursued. Around 10% of the Union army, or 179,000 troops, consisted of black soldiers by the end of the Civil War.

Many black soldiers faced extreme prejudice throughout many periods in American history. David Blight notes as much in *Race and Reunion*. He writes, "Black veterans too had many divided emotions to work through in their memories." There were many positive memories, although some negative as well. Blight cites the writings of a black soldier in Chapel Point, Maryland, who recalled watching a Private of the Twenty-second U.S. Colored Troops released from the hospital, having been beaten by his own company commander (Blight, p. 145). This experience was not outside of the norm during the Civil War, and racial prejudice took on more subtle and nefarious forms later on. Perhaps in spite of this, many black veterans were also overcome with pride at the revolution they helped contribute to in 1865. While many black soldiers were forced to tolerate racial epithets, violence, and discrimination at the hands of their fellow soldiers and superior officers, eventually segregation in the military would be ended.

Racism in the military can be more easily understood as a reflection of pervasive racist attitudes in the United States. Before becoming a Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall fought against discrimination and segregation in the military during the Korean War. With the assistance of the NAACP, Marshall was able to move within the atmosphere of Cold War America to eventually secure desegregation in the armed forces (Dudziak, 1988, p. 66). Dudziak goes on to explain that these efforts assisted in the broader civil rights movement domestically, arguing that the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* was due to the convergence of global and domestic developments, rather than the assured legal progression that some scholars posit.

During the first weeks of the Korean war, black soldiers were on the front lines, dealing with an enemy that was aggressive and well-armed. Military high command willfully allowed segregation and discrimination to continue in the armed forces, while black GIs were fighting to preserve democracy. "If properly led by white men, it was conceded, blacks could become efficient combat soldiers. But as a race, they were followers, not leaders" (Whitfield, 1996, p. 176). There was a tradition of denying leadership roles to black soldiers from WWII onward, and the Cold War was no different. Following the second world war, black soldiers enjoyed an elevated racial position in comparison to the defeated Japanese; in some senses things were better for black American GIs abroad than at home. This was short-lived, however, especially in the case of 39 black GIs who were charged with grave breaches of military discipline, harshly prosecuted, and heavily sentenced.

With the support of the NAACP, Thurgood Marshall flew to Tokyo to investigate the possibility of racial discrimination in the court martials. Marshall was the chief civil rights lawyer for the NAACP in 1950, and after conducting a thorough investigation with a coinciding media circus, it was found that the heroic men of the 24th Infantry had indeed been discriminated against in their wholesale court martialing. Marshall found that the majority of the convicted black GIs were not provided suitable legal counsel for court-martial defense. Beyond that, he was also shocked by the unpreparedness and haste of the trial of the cases. After MacArthur's

dismissal as commander-in-chief in the Far East, President Truman's policies for racial integration in the army could finally be carried out. By October 1953, the army was 95% racially integrated (Pittsburgh Courier, 1953, p. 4). While the racial integration in the military eventually paved the way for *Brown v. Board of education* and the broader civil rights movement, the intersection of race and gender in American history is equally--and sometimes even more so--complicated.

Gender

An important figure in the campaigns to end lynching and gain women's suffrage, Ida B. Wells -Barnett is the embodiment of intersectionality in the domains of race and gender. While Wells-Barnett's contributions to the aforementioned causes cannot and should not be downplayed, there was a concerted effort, often among those with similar goals and interests, to attack her character and downplay her accomplishments. Following her passing in 1931, there was also a concerted effort to erase her contributions to civil rights and women's suffrage in popular literature and historiography.

Hollie Pich discusses the storied life of wells in her 2015 article, "Various, Beautiful, and Terrible: The Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells." Pich begins, "Today, Wells-Barnett's mythological status is dependent upon the fact that she flagrantly challenged racial, sexual, and social norms..." (Pich, 2015, p. 1). An incendiary figure during her time, Wells-Barnett fought aggressively against lynchings in the United States. Using her voice as a journalist, she pursued her agendas with tenacity and was met with fierce opposition, even among those who had common interests. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was easy for her opponents to attack her along the lines of gender, but what is perhaps most ironic is that other members of the African American community at large and other suffragettes flagrantly opposed her as well.

Robert Dahl famously asked, "How Democratic is the American Constitution?" in his titular work, and ultimately found it to be severely lacking in that regard. One of the foremost findings of his work was that American democracy had fallen behind many other nations in important areas such as economic equality, racial integration, and women's rights. "...the constitution failed to guarantee the right of suffrage, leaving the qualifications to the states. It implicitly left in place the exclusion of half the population--women--as well as African Americans and Native Americans" (Dahl, 2003, p. 16). Wells-Barnett lived in a world that would eventually see enfranchisement for African American men and later women, but the divide amongst these two groups along racial and gendered lines cannot be ignored.

Ida frequently butted heads with advocates of civil rights and the women's suffrage movement. Frederick Douglass played a key role in advocating for a woman's right to vote. Douglass's own words show his commitment to the movement, especially at a time when gender roles were very clearly defined in American society. "Man has been so long the king and woman the subject—man has been so long accustomed to command and woman to obey—that both parties to the relation have been hardened into their respective places, and thus has been piled up a mountain of iron against woman's enfranchisement" (Blackpast, 2007). After Douglass's death in 1895, Wells-Barnett was, for all intents and purposes, Douglass's "logical heir apparent," but she faced a great struggle in competing with other black leaders.

Whether it be in the spheres of women's suffrage or civil rights, "...[the public] seemed to baulk at the idea of a woman launching political challenges and attacks" (Pich, 2015, p. 63). There would be great antagonism between Ida and other notable black leaders and intellectuals such as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, with the latter making it crystal clear that leadership in black activism should be reserved for educated and elite males. Pich's thorough analysis concludes with the oft-stated comparison of Rosa Parks and Ida Wells-Barnett. Both have been held up as the poster children of the struggle for freedom in America, but Pich

skillfully argues that “this memorialisation is problematic as it suppresses the systematic racial and sexual oppression facing both women” (Ibid, p. 69). While great strides have been made across a number of the causes that Wells-Barnett and others fought for, in many ways the intersection of race and gender are still present in the fabric of American life today.

Class, Wealth, and Economic Insecurity

The final intersectional dimension that falls within the scope of this curriculum unit is that of class. As Michael J. Graetz and Ian Shapiro discuss in *The Wolf at The Door: The Menace of Economic Security and How to Fight it*, the rich have been growing steadily richer since the 1970s, while working- and middle-class incomes have remained largely the same. “...in 2018 the wealthiest 10 percent of US households owned 70 percent of the country's wealth and nearly two-thirds of its assets” (Graetz and Shapiro, 2020, p. 1). The disparity becomes even more glaring when broken down along racial lines. “...the median wealth of white families sits north of \$100,000, while black median wealth hovers around \$10,000, and for many families in poverty might even be negative” (Newkirk, 2019). This has had enormous ramifications when looking at traditional means of wealth-building and economic security, such as homeownership.

In *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein (2017) describes how redlining has shaped the racial demographics of many city neighborhoods. The federal government began separating residential areas by race beginning in 1877, following the suppression of Reconstruction. Despite the Supreme Court’s banning of racial segregation by zoning ordinances in 1917, the government began to recommend ways that cities could circumvent the ruling. In the 1920s, the Harding administration promoted zoning ordinances that differentiated between single-family and multifamily districts. There was a concurrent propaganda campaign to persuade white middle-class families to move out of apartments and into single-family homes.

During the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration created maps of every metropolitan area, dividing up zones based on estimates of foreclosure risk--the estimates were based partly on the race of the zone’s occupants. “The Race of families were often the reason for a low-grade classification. The neighborhood where I grew up in Central Berkeley was red due to the “infiltration of Orientals and Negroes” (Madrigal, 2014). The administration would insure the mortgage’s of white homeowners if they lived in racially homogenous neighborhoods. In the postwar era the federal government spurred the suburbanization of metropolitan areas by guaranteeing bank loans to builders who mass-produced the all-white subdivisions that created further inequities across U.S. communities (Rothstein, 2017, p. 74-75).

Another more recent example of racial disparities in economic security is the 2008 foreclosure crisis. The foreclosure crisis was a period of heightened property seizures in the housing market between 2007 and 2010. This was just one element of the larger financial crisis and Great Recession that developed during this period. Factors such as widespread, imprudent extensions of mortgage credit, intricate plans of mortgage debt securitization, and rapid increases in the number of foreclosures all contributed to the crisis. The industry was largely unprepared to process all of these factors simultaneously. Seeking quick profits, mortgage companies processing large numbers of loans did not adequately review the qualifying information, sometimes leading to banks foreclosing the wrong property and miscalculating home values and leading eager home buyers into undertaking mortgages that they could not sustain or pay off.

In particular, low-income communities of color were hit especially hard, leaving neighborhoods ripe for investors who were looking to flip properties. From 2007-2019, 2.5 million foreclosures were completed. These foreclosures disproportionately affected black and latinx homeowners, with around 8% losing their homes compared to 4.5% of white homeowners (Bocian, Li, and Ernst, 2010, pp. 2-3). While the economic impacts of

the aforementioned phenomena were far reaching, it is clear that poor communities of color were hit hardest. "Wealth provides individuals and families with financial agency and choice; it provides economic security to take risks and shields against the risk of economic loss. Basically, wealth is cumulative. It provides people with the necessary capital to secure finance and purchase an appreciating asset, which in turn, will generate more and more wealth" (Hamilton, 2017). The question of how to begin tackling these deeply entrenched issues is a difficult one, but one that requires a thorough analysis.

Solutions

Clearly there is a great need in the United States to recognize "the origins of our discontents" as Isabel Wilkerson so aptly puts it, and to also work towards solving these intersectional issues. Much has been done on the part of academics, politicians, and community organizers in an effort to come to terms with the issues at hand and work towards a resolution. Isabel Wilkerson draws parallels to the end of Nazi Germany as a means to eliminate the American caste system, showing that if it can happen elsewhere in the world, it can happen here, too.

Once awakened, we then have a choice. We can be born into the dominant caste but choose not to dominate. We can be born to a subordinated caste but resist the box others force upon us. And all of us can sharpen our powers of discernment to see past the external and to value the character of a person rather than demean those who are already marginalized or worship those born to false pedestals (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 380).

Ibram Kendi offers several affirmations in *How to be Antiracist* which are helpful in achieving what Wilkerson describes. He suggests several successive steps in antiracist habits of mind, including ceasing the "I'm not racist" or "I can't be racist" defense of denial, admitting the definition of racist, confessing and acknowledging to benefitting from and propagating racist systems and ideology, and working towards changing these habits (Kendi, 2019, p. 226). Thurgood Marshall made it his mission in the 1950s to break down racial barriers in the military, and proved that it could be done.

Just as Ida Wells-Barnett navigated a repressive and difficult political climate, other great strides have been made in the decades that followed. Many patriarchal societies exist across the world, but America is particularly cantankerous with its added dimension of race. Despite these challenges, there are a number of women throughout history who have transcended these barriers and proven that issues of gender do not have to be the great inhibitor that some expect. Earlier this year, journalist and author of the 1619 Project Nikole Hannah-Jones was denied a tenured position at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This instance was particularly strange because she had the full support of other faculty members during the tenure review process, and there appeared to be a few wealthy and influential donors and trustees who were spearheading her denial.

Eventually, after a long public scandal, Hannah-Jones was offered a tenured position but refused it, deciding instead to take a position at Howard University. "I've spent my entire life proving that I belong in elite white spaces that were not built for Black people," Hannah-Jones said. "I decided I didn't want to do that anymore. That Black professionals should feel free, and actually perhaps an obligation, to go to our own institutions and bring our talents and resources to our own institutions and help to build them up as well" (Wamsley, 2021). A key piece in this equation lies in Nikole's own comments about the partnership between allied institutions and the constituents they serve. There are many parallels between the struggles that Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Nikole Hannah-Jones both faced; issues of racism and sexism plagued both of them. But if there is a lesson to be learned from both of them, it is that self-advocacy and determination can break through barriers, despite

whatever opposition might exist. While Ida may have met more flagrant opposition during her time, it is reassuring to see that the resistance Nikole Hannah-Jones encountered was of a much smaller scale, indicating progress.

Inequalities across income and wealth have been persistent issues since the dawn of American society. A nation built upon the backs of slaves, with a de jure system of caste and second-class citizenship has propagated inequality to a prodigious extent. Graetz and Shapiro recognize the essential role of business in attempting to rectify economic insecurity. “Continued prosperity depends on a thriving business sector...” (Graetz and Shapiro, 2019, p. 81). They go on to say that business interests change over time, however, these should be taken into account in public policy due to the huge influence businesses have in Congressional and legislative matters. To that end, grassroots organizations that are community-facing could influence prominent businesses to lobby for more equitable economic solutions.

Rothstein acknowledges that “as a nation, we have paid an enormous price for avoiding an obligation to remedy the constitutional segregation we have allowed to fester” (Rothstein, 2017 p.195). He goes on to suggest several solutions for fixing housing segregation, which would in turn provide solutions to many other issues of intersectionality. The myth of de facto segregation must first be dismantled, so that the pump can be primed for desegregation policies. Rothstein also calls for the overturning of policies such as Mitt Romney’s Open Communities, which would pave the way for more low-income housing to be built for the most vulnerable communities. He also recommends targeting segregation not among lower class communities, but of middle-class African American communities, some of which are still 85% segregated, showing that racial divides can transcend economic and class lines as well (Ibid, pp. 195-200).

While “the origin of our discontents” have been laid out and sampled in this curriculum unit, it is by no means exhaustive. Contained herein are sample case studies, or periods in history that best exemplify the intersectionality of the United States. Similarly, the solutions presented are not meant to be a panacea, but rather a framework--a set of habits of mind and suggestions from accomplished scholars in an effort to create a more equitable society. History has shown that these issues are deeply entrenched into American life, but in beginning with the history and education of these issues, and proposed solutions, hopefully significant progress can be made in transcending these American intersections.

Unit Objectives

1. Read, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and discuss the influence of race and racism throughout American history.
2. Read, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and discuss the influence of gender inequality throughout American history, especially during the women’s suffrage movement.
3. Read, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and discuss the influence of economic and wealth disparities, especially among people of color in the United States.
4. Analyze and understand a number of case studies on seminal periods and influential figures in U.S. history, such as Thurgood Marshall and Ida B. Wells-Barnett
5. Complete a community-facing project in which students envision a more equitable American society.

Teaching Strategies

The goal of this unit is to provide students with an understanding of the various ways in which social strata intersect and influence our history and daily lives. The intersection of race, class, and gender have shaped American history in various ways since the outset. Many of the activities in this unit will challenge students to understand their own role in this ever-changing history, as well as how these factors have influenced their lives up to this point. Critical thinking will be emphasized throughout, as well as historical thinking skills. Students will examine multiple case studies over the course of the unit such as Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP's fight against discrimination in the military, Ida B. Wells-Barnett's anti-lynching campaigns and the resistance she met as a black woman, especially among her contemporaries, and the racist housing policies that have contributed to major disparities in home ownership, wealth distribution and economic insecurity.

Students will be provided with the necessary background information covered in this unit through a variety of pedagogical techniques. These include, but are not limited to, direct instruction via lecture, close-reading, whole-class and small group discussions, multimedia analysis, rhetorical analysis, thought experiments, and activities simulating democratic processes.

The culminating activity for this unit tasks students with interviewing a leader in their community and creating a profile and case study of them similar to what was reviewed in previous lessons throughout the unit. The format of the presentation will vary based on students' choices, just as the variety of information presented in prior lessons will take different forms.

Sample Lesson Plans

How Race and Gender Intersect: A Case Study

Objective: Evaluate and discuss the intersection of race and gender during key periods in civil rights history and women's suffrage.

Materials:

- "Various, beautiful and Terrible: The Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells-Barnett" by Hollie Pich
- Chart paper or poster board
- Markers, pens, highlighters

Procedure: This activity will take place in the early or middle portion of the unit. It will be necessary to have defined the essential terminology and social strata that form the basis of the unit before beginning a thorough examination of the intersection of race and gender. The goal of this lesson is to show that at various points in history, despite the fact that there were growing coalitions for expanded civil rights for African Americans and women's suffrage, traditional notions of gender norms at the time inhibited progress in significant ways. Particularly in the case of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the added racial dimension complicated her work and its legacy, especially by her contemporaries who also advocated for the same causes.

Distribute the text of the Pich article to the class. Given that the article is lengthy, it may be beneficial to divide the article into 3-5 page chunks and have students read them in small groups. Explain to students that their task is to extract key points from the reading to show how race and gender played a role in Ida B. Wells-Barnett's work and legacy. Have students underline, highlight, and annotate their respective sections of the reading to capture their thoughts and supporting evidence.

After providing time for the students to work in their reading groups, have each group member rotate to another group, so that the new groups have one member from each of the first round reading groups. Distributed the chart paper and markers to each group. Students will then share their findings from the first round, recording them on the chart paper. After each group finishes their synthesis, post the chart paper around the room, either at students' desks or on the wall. Students will then complete a gallery walk around the classroom to analyze each group's findings.

After the gallery walk ends, have students return to their seats. Students will end by writing a reflection on the activity, including what surprised them about Ida B. Wells-Barnett's life and work, and how strata such as race and gender played a role in her successes, hardships, and ultimately her legacy.

Community Leader Spotlight Project

Objective: To synthesize knowledge gained from this curriculum unit by creating a case study of a local community leader, weaving in unit content and terminology throughout. Students will choose someone in their community who they look to as a leader and create a spotlight profile of them which will serve as a sort of case study for the rest of the class. The individuals students select do not have to be people in traditional leadership roles, but could include mothers, fathers, community organizers, local business owners, and others.

Materials:

- Recording device such as a cellphone, camera or camcorder
- A computer with word processing and presentation capabilities
- Student-selected materials based on the format of their project (posters, slides, etc.)

Procedure: The culminating project for this unit will be a community leader spotlight project. Students will select someone in their neighborhood or community that has displayed leadership qualities of some sort. They will then interview that community leader, drafting a set of questions that attempt to unearth the ways in which the social strata described in this unit have impacted them, and how they have transcended them.

Students should spend two to three days in class identifying their participant, getting their permission for the interview, and drafting their interview questions. It is important that during the interview students explain the terms they will be referencing during the interview and afterwards as they build their subsequent case study. The terms include, but are not limited to, intersectionality, race, class, gender, social strata, and others. The questions that students draft should incorporate these terms, while also delving into the life experience and accomplishments of their participant. Students will have to schedule a date and time to conduct their interview outside of school.

After students complete their interview, time should be provided for students to distill their interview data into a presentation format of their choice. Students may choose to create a series of slides, a poster or large graphic with accompanying text, a written article, a video, or other formats, with teacher approval. Students will present their findings in class as a presentation. While each student presents, their peers will complete an

analysis of their case study, connecting it with content learned throughout the unit. Students should show the ways in which each case study parallels with other important periods and figures in American history, such as the push to end racial discrimination in the military, the struggles of the women's suffrage movement, or how economic insecurity has a disproportionate impact on people of color. Ultimately, each project should identify the issues of intersectionality, but emphasize the positive work their participant has done.

Bibliography

"Army Termed 95 Per Cent 'Mixed,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1953. A 1953 article from the *Pittsburgh Courier* that describes the degree to which the armed forces were racially mixed by that year. A great resource to share with students to exemplify the results that Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP produced during their investigation in Japan and Korea.

BlackPast. (1888) Frederick Douglass On Woman Suffrage, 2007. A hugely important resource in elucidating the dynamics of African liberation and women's suffrage movement. Douglass was an outspoken advocate of women's suffrage and this article provides a wealth of detail on his involvement. The speech can be used in class as part of the lessons on race and gender.

Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001. Blight's book delves into the collective consciousness of America following the Civil War. He weaves in narratives of former Union soldiers, Confederates, Black soldiers, and more, and shows the differences between their perceptions. This book was very helpful in drafting the section on racial discrimination in the military, and is a bountiful source for classroom activities as well.

Bocian, Debbie, et al. "Race, Ethnicity and Subprime Home Loan Pricing" *Journal of Economics and Business*, vol. 60, no. 1, 110-124, 2008. This article details the racial dynamics of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis. Bocian, et al. synthesize personal accounts of the crisis with a quantitative analysis.

Coaston, Jane. "The Intersectionality Wars." *Vox*, 2019. Useful as a primer for intersectionality, this article also describes the ideological conflict and debates surrounding the concept in academic and political circles. While this article was used in the narrative portion of the unit, it is well suited for classroom use as well.

Dahl, Robert A. *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003. Robert Dahl famously asked, "How democratic is the American constitution?" and ultimately found it to be lacking. His book serves as a great resource to show the ways in which the government has forsaken or ignored various groups throughout U.S. history.

Dudziak, Mary L. "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative," *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1988. This article was enormously helpful in understanding the ways in which desegregation became an essential element in the fight against communist propaganda during the Cold War. Dudziak describes the various ways in which the U.S. was prone to ideological and cultural attacks due to the low-hanging fruit of segregation and racial discrimination in the armed forces.

Graetz, Michael J., and Ian Shapiro. *The Wolf At the Door: The Menace of Economic Insecurity and How to Fight It*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. *The Wolf at the Door* provides useful context for how

different social strata can intertwine and have a number of economic effects. Cited in sections on economic insecurity as well as proposed solutions, this book could also be used in daily lessons for each section.

Hamilton, Darrick. "The Moral Burden on Economist: National Economic Association

Presidential Address" *Institute of New Economic Thinking Blog*, 2017. Darrick Hamilton's piece provided useful information on the importance of building wealth, and the long term effects that those who have been historically unable to suffer.

Kendi, Ibram X. *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. Bold Type Books, 2016. Kendi's massive tome on the history of racist ideas in America is a wealth of information. Following five principal "actors" throughout the history and development of racist ideas in the U.S. there are myriad sections of this book that could be utilized in classroom activities beyond what was cited in the narrative portion of this unit.

Madrigal, Alexis. "The Racist Housing Policy that Made Your Neighborhood," *The Atlantic*, 2014. This article details various policies that have shaped racially segregated neighborhoods. Published in the Atlantic in 2014, this article is engrossing and readable, making it a wonderful resource for classroom use as well.

Newkirk II, Vann R. "The Racial Wealth Gap Could Become a 2020 Litmus Test," *The Atlantic*, 2020. Newkirk's article details the far-reaching effects of racial inequality in median wealth and income. The article is cited directly in the unit, however, it frames an interesting debate for what was predicted versus what has since happened, and could be used in class activities.

Pich, Hollie. "Various, beautiful and Terrible: The Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells-Barnett," *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2015. A hugely foundational article for the section on gender. Hollie Pich's work on Ida B. Wells-Barnett is a perfect example of intersectionality during common causes such as antilynching, black liberation, and women's suffrage. Wells-Barnett faced prodigious scrutiny and verbal and ideological attacks from other women and African Americans, and Pich's article catalogues some of the most important moments in great detail.

Smith, Clint. *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*. Little, Brown and Company, 2021. Clint Smith's 2021 book details his journey across several major landmarks related to the history of slavery in the United States. There are several chapters that could be used as classroom resources, either by using chapters in full or selected excerpts to exemplify the history of racial subjugation and segregation in America.

Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York; London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017. Rothstein's work argues that segregation in housing is not *de facto* segregation, but rather *de jure* segregation that has been created and furthered by government policies since the postwar era. *The Color of Law* served as an important resource in shaping the historical narrative surrounding wealth and income inequality.

Whitfield, Stephen J. *The Culture of The Cold War*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press; 2nd edition, 1996. Whitfield's book provided useful anecdotes regarding the treatment of soldiers in the armed forces during the Cold War. Particularly useful was his descriptions of the perception of black soldiers by white soldiers and officers.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House, 2020. One of the main inspirations for this unit. Wilkerson describes “the origin of our discontents” and the hidden caste system in the United States. She makes comparison to India’s caste system, and fully lays out the various intersecting forms of inequality that Americans face daily.

Student Reading List

Andersen, Margaret L., and Patricia Hill Collins. *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1998. A great primer on the social strata that this unit describes. There are a myriad of essays in this anthology to select for classroom use.

Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. Baptist’s book profoundly lays out the ways in which the American economy was built on the backs of enslaved people. Excerpts from this book can be used when building background on race, racism, and the roots of wealth inequality and economic insecurity.

Dahl, Robert A. *On Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020. Robert Dahl was one of Yale’s foremost political scientists. *On Democracy* serves as a manual on how to govern democratically. This book would be well utilized in the “Solutions” portion of the unit in proposing ideas for a more equitable United States.

Gates, Henry Louis. *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*. New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2019. Gates’ book is not quoted in the narrative section, however, there are a number of chapters and excerpts that can be used in the “Race and Racism” section when teaching the unit. It would be particularly helpful to establish the various ways that segregation and racial discrimination continued in the wake of the Civil War.

Klarman, Michael J. *Unfinished Business: Racial Equality in American History*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2007. Michael Klarman is one of the leading authorities on civil rights in the United States. *Unfinished Business* served as a sort of spiritual influence when drafting some of the core ideas for this unit, but would best be utilized in the classroom. There are a number of chapters that align with each major section of the curriculum.

Klarman, Michael J. *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004. Klarman’s book on the Supreme Court includes a wealth of resources for classroom use. There are a number of historic cases that can be utilized in each section of the curriculum unit.

Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Invention of Wings*. New York, NY: Viking, 2014. *The Invention of Wings* details the lives of Sarah Grimke, a white abolitionist, widely regarded as the mother of the women’s suffrage movement, and Hetty Grimke, one of the family’s enslaved servants charged to be Sarah’s handmade. The novel is historical fiction, but it serves as an excellent resource in showing the disparities between white abolitionists and suffragettes alongside African Americans who held the same goals.

McGhee, Heather C. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. First

edition. New York, NY: One World, 2021. A hopeful book that is best utilized in the “Solutions” section of the unit. McGhee skillfully describes the perils of racist thinking and actions and offers a number of methods for reparations and unity.

Appendix On Implementing District Standards

Common Core Standards addressed in this unit:

Key Ideas and Details

RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Craft and Structure

RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

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