Teaching about Racism, Violence, Inequity and the Criminal Justice System

For the past several years, there have been incidents of police officers involved in the deaths of Black and Latinx people. In many of these cases, police officers were not indicted and not convicted when brought to trial. These cases have brought about a wide range of emotions, conversations, policy proposals, protests and actions. Because this is an important conversation that teachers, parents and family members want to have with young people, below are relevant lesson plans, related curricula and additional anti-bias resources and strategies to help you discuss this topic with young people in school and at home.

Curriculum Resources on Bias, Race and Injustice

LESSON PLAN

Thomas Altfather Good / CC BY-SA 2.5

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Curriculum Resources on Bias, Race and Injustice
Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to Movement

HIGH SCHOOL

Students learn about the history of Black Lives Matter, analyze the controversy about using the term “All lives matter” and express their point of view through opinion exercises.

LESSON PLAN

Exploring Solutions to Address Racial Disparity Concerns

HIGH SCHOOL

This high school lesson will help students reflect on some of the underlying problems and issues that have emerged from cases like those involving Eric Garner and Michael Brown, undertake research and present viable solutions.
Race and racism are topics that regularly come up in the news and populate our social media feeds. 5th-7th grade students explore race and racism using a range of young people’s first encounter stories.

Loavesofbread

LESSON PLAN

Experiences with Race and Racism

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MIDDLE SCHOOL

Race and racism are topics that regularly come up in the news and populate our social media feeds. 5th-7th grade students explore race and racism using a range of young people’s first encounter stories.

LESSON PLAN

Freddie Gray & Baltimore Unrest: Exploring the Case Using Op-Eds

iStock
This lesson provides an opportunity for high school students to discuss the case of Freddie Gray's death and the protests that took place in Baltimore and elsewhere. In the lesson, students will learn more about the case, read and analyze several op-eds about it and use what they learned to write their own argumentative essays with a specific point of view and evidence to support their positions.

In this lesson, high school students analyze race, privilege and power. They learn about racial disparities in the criminal justice system and reflect upon how whites and people of color have different experiences with law enforcement.
LESSON PLAN

Believe in Something: Nike, Kaepernick and Social Change
MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL

Students learn about Nike’s decision to feature N.F.L. player Colin Kaepernick in ad and explore and express what they strongly believe in through creative writing.

Colin Kaepernick, via Twitter

LESSON PLAN

Self-Defense and Racial Profiling
HIGH SCHOOL
This lesson provides an opportunity for students to discuss the homicide of Renisha McBride, who was shot to death while seeking help after being in a car accident. Students will analyze the role of self-defense and racial profiling.

LESSON PLAN

What is Happening in Ferguson, MO?

HIGH SCHOOL

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the killing of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, grapple with their thoughts and feelings about the case, analyze the militarization of the police and reflect on activism in order to effect change.
High school lesson plan to help students explore the role of implicit bias in perceptions of African-American boys and men.

The Alt Right and White Supremacy

High school lesson plan to help students explore the role of implicit bias in perceptions of African-American boys and men.
High school lesson plan to help students learn about the alt right and explore historical and current day examples of white supremacy.

Educator and Parent Resources for Discussing Issues of Race and Activism with Young People

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

George Floyd, Racism and Law Enforcement (in English and en Español)

Engage your family in a discussion about the killing of George Floyd, how bias and hate escalate and the larger context of systemic racism.
Talk with your family about the purpose, history and impact of protests.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**The Purpose and Power of Protest**

Talk with your family about the purpose, history and impact of protests.

**Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism**

As a society, public conversations about race and racism have increased in volume and intensity. Here are some suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about these issues.
When there are national news stories that involve incidents of bias and injustice, young people want to be part of the conversation.

**Tools and Strategies**

**Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate (In English and en Español)**

Tools, tips and strategies for what educators and family members can do to help young people discuss and deal with the aftermath of hate-inspired events.
Strategies for discussing race and racism in classrooms of predominately white students.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

How Should I Talk about Race in My Mostly White Classroom?

Strategies for discussing race and racism in classrooms of predominately white students.

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

Lead Beyond / CC BY 2.0
Our country has a long history of youth-led movements that brought about significant social change. Young people have advocated for child labor laws, voting rights, civil rights,…

In the wake of two grand jury decisions—in Ferguson, MO and Staten Island, NY—not to indict the police officers who were involved in the killing of black men, the time has come to…

Beyond Ferguson and Staten Island: Where Do We Go From Here?

In the wake of two grand jury decisions—in Ferguson, MO and Staten Island, NY—not to indict the police officers who were involved in the killing of black men, the time has come to…

When Injustice Goes Unchecked and Concealed, What Message Does This Send to Children?

Thirteen months after Laquan McDonald was shot and killed by Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke, the recorded incident was released to the public. The day before …
Now More Than Ever: Why We Need to Address Inequality and Justice in Schools

We live in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural and connected world. In order to prepare students to live, learn and eventually work successfully in society, w...

Fulfilling the Promise of Brown: School Discipline, Education Equity and the Achievement Gap

Free webinar provides a legal overview of the released guidance, trends in school discipline today and educational best practices for addressing bias related issues in schools.
Tools and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about mass shootings, violence, guns and gun laws.

**Gun Violence and Mass Shootings**

Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about mass shootings, violence, guns and gun laws.

**School Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

Behavior that once led to a trip to the principal's office and a detention, now often leads to suspension, expulsion and/or arrest. Use these tips for parent/family roundtable discussion with youth about incidents of harsh school discipline.
Children's and Young Adult Literature: Includes Discussion Guides for Teachers and Families Books

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The Hate U Give

The uneasy balance between two worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story about Racial Injustice
The story follows two families—one White and one Black—as they discuss a police shooting of a Black man in their community.

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

**All American Boys**

Two teens, one black, one white, grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension.
I Am Alfonso Jones

As Alfonso Jones is buying his first suit, an off-duty police officer mistakes a clothes hanger for a gun, and he shoots Alfonso. When Alfonso wakes up in the afterlife, he's on a ghost train guided by well-known victims of police shootings, who teach him what he needs to know about this subterranean spiritual world.

Children's Literature

The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice.