

Lesson 1 - What are reparations?

Lesson Summary

Students will engage with the issue of reparations sparked by the personal experiences and views in the documentary “The Cost of Inheritance.” Students will access additional scholarly sources to explore, express, and then discuss their views on reparations. This lesson is centered on the enslavement, segregation and other injustices experienced by Black Americans.

Objective

Students will explain, analyze and assess reparations in the U.S. context.

Standards

8.3.12.B. Evaluate the impact of historical documents, artifacts, and places in U.S. history which are critical to world history.
8.3.U.A. Compare the role groups and individuals played in the social, political, cultural, and economic development of the U.S.
8.3.12.D. Evaluate how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations in the U.S. have influenced the growth and development of the world. • Ethnicity and race • Working conditions • Immigration • Military conflict • Economic stability

Vocabulary

Reparations: 1- a repairing or keeping in repair. 2- the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury or something done or given as amends or satisfaction 3- the payment of damages, specifically: compensation in money or materials payable by a defeated nation for damages to or expenditures sustained by another nation as a result of hostilities with the defeated nation —usually used in plural

Justice: the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments

Enslavement: to force into or as if into slavery

Segregation: the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means

Reconstruction: the period from 1865 to 1877 in which the southern states that had seceded during the American Civil War rejoined the United States

Jim Crow: racial segregation and discrimination enforced by laws, customs, and practices in especially the southern states of the U.S. from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 until the mid-20th century

Definitions sourced from Merriam Webster

Episode Information

The Cost of Inheritance: Video Extras <https://www.wqed.org/the-cost-of-inheritance/>

- a. Ties To The Land – features Patt Gunn, Sarah Eisner and Randy Quarterman.
- b. Working to Pass HR 40: Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee

Materials

1. An Historical Timeline of Reparations Payments Made From 1783 through 2023 by the United States Government, States, Cities, Religious Institutions, Universities, Corporations, and Communities <https://guides.library.umass.edu/reparations>
2. Primary Document – General William T. Sherman’s Special Field Order N. 15, 1865 www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/special-field-orders-no-15/
3. The Black Manifesto, 1969, James Forman. It demanded \$500 million in reparations from white churches and synagogues. <https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/specialgc/item/202> or <https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/specialgc/black-manifesto>
4. Ta-Nehisi Coates Opening Statement on Reparations at House Hearing www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcCnQ3iRkys
5. Congress passes a resolution apologizing for enslavement, segregation. S. Con. Res. 26-111th Congress 1st Session www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/senate-concurrent-resolution/26
6. Ta- Nehisi Coates makes the case for reparations in the Atlantic 2014. www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361
7. MLK Jr. Speaks on the topic of Reparations www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNvzVCVhIM OR search “Martin Luther King Explains 'Reparations'” on YouTube. It is the 1:18 minute long video of MLK Jr. Speaking.
8. MLK Jr. On Obstacles Black Americans face www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xD8vWQJEok&t=1s OR search “MLK-“It’s a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps”- it is the 2:04 minute video of MLK Jr. speaking in a church.
9. NAACP Website on Reparations <https://naacp.org/resources/reparations>
10. Malcolm X presents the Nation of Islam call for reparations. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. 23 January 1963. Transcribed text from audio excerpt. SOURCE: X, Malcolm. "The Race Problem." African Students Association and NAACP Campus Chapter. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. 23 January 1963. <https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/mxp/speeches/mxt24.html>

Teacher may set up learning stations with the materials and a checklist that includes instructions and a note-taking organizer such as 3 big ideas, 1 surprise, 1 questions worksheet.

Lesson Activity

Teacher Prep

- Preview video clips.
- View and read listed sources.
- Post materials 1-10 on a class accessible website or if students do not have access to technology: print out text sources (1-3, 5-6, 9-10) and be prepared to screen cast videos (4, 7, and 8).

Lesson Tips

Present PowerPoint slides: "A Brief Modern History of Reparations" to offer historical context for reparations.

Background Information

Crash Course Philosophy #40: What is Justice?

This episode is invaluable for both the instructor and students. It asks you to consider all the ways people talk about justice and what we really mean when we use that word. The episode explains various theories of justice, just distribution, and different approaches to punishment.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0CTHVCkm90

Introduction

1. Share that today you will learn about what reparations are
2. Review the definition of "**(key vocabulary words)**", reparations, enslavement, Reconstruction, justice, segregation, Jim Crow.
3. Introduce the PBS program, "Storytellers" and "Policy" -- THE COST OF INHERITANCE, an America ReFramed special, explores the complex issue of reparations in the U.S. using a thoughtful approach to history, historical injustices, systemic inequities, and critical dialogue on racial conciliation. Through personal narratives, community inquiries, and scholarly insights, it aims to inspire understanding of the scope and rationale of the reparations debate. www.pbs.org/video/the-cost-of-inheritance-bdzmlq/

Instructions

1. KWL chart on reparations. Ask students to take five minutes to add everything in the K column they can think of. Tell students to add any things they want to know about reparations as well, and ask them to add to the W column while reviewing all of the documents and videos. The L will be done during discussion.
2. Play Policy Clip
3. Ask for general reactions, understandings, and questions
4. Ask discussion questions:
 - Why does Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee call H.R.40 a "reckoning"?
 - What is the significance of owning land as John Trotter talked about?
 - Why did John Boyd name his Mule "40 Acres"?
5. Repeat with Storytellers video clip, ask for general reactions, understandings, and questions then ask discussion questions:
 - Why do you think Savannah doesn't have one marker or recognition of slavery in its city?
 - Why does Patt Gunn, a Gullah Geechee storyteller, believe it is important for there to be some sort of marker in Savannah about the history of slavery?
 - What sparked Sarah Eisner's mission to reach out to Randy Quarterman?
 - How do you feel about Sarah Eisner's decision to reach out to Randy Quarterman?
 - What is the significance of the 10 acre land?

6. Introduce resources from materials sections (numbers 1-10) and read in small groups, individually, or as a class depending on class need.
7. Students should fill out guided notes for each source (or the amount of sources chosen to be included, depending on time). Explain “three big ideas, one surprise, and one question.” This can be used as assessment for evidence of learning as well as materials to cite during discussion. Students can back up their responses during discussions using their guided notes as well as use their questions to drive further discussion.
8. Following discussion questions can be as a whole group or in small groups (in addition to student questions):
 - What are reparations?
 - What is the historical context for reparations in the United States?
 - Should the government issue reparations? Should other institutions?
 - What should reparations look like? Should they be financial? Should they take some other form?
 - Who should receive these reparations? All Black people? People who could prove ties to enslavement? People with ancestors who have been in the country since 1865 or earlier.
 - Who should pay for these reparations? General tax funding? Specific groups? How will this be enacted and enforced?
 - Would reparations ever be enough to create justice in these circumstances?
9. Response slam. Students write a question, assertion or connection to the materials studied.
10. Students can fill out the L section of the KWL during discussion and if time allows, there can be time allotted at the end of class to finish this column.

Guiding Student Inquiry

Before Activity

- Asking students what they know already about the subject (on KWL chart)

During Activity

- Whole class (or small group) discussion

After Activity

- Students can leave their remaining questions on the stickie note parking lot

Check for Understanding

Exit ticket – Sticky note parking lot (poster paper for students to put stickie notes on): What did you think about reparations before this class? What do you think now? What questions remain?

Extension Activity Ideas

Note that Lessons 2-6 are lesson extension activities from which instructors can choose based on curricular needs and student interest.

Suggested Reading

Race, Racism and Reparations, 2018 J. Angelo Corlett

Corlett places special emphasis on the broad questions of whether reparations for ethnic groups are desirable and what forms those reparations should take: land, money, social programs? He addresses the need for differential affirmative action programs and reparations policies—the experiences (and oppressors) of different ethnic groups vary greatly. Arguments for reparations to Native and African Americans are considered in light of a variety of objections that are or might be raised against them. <https://sceneonradio.org/episode-32-how-race-was-made-seeing-white-part-2/>

For much of human history, people viewed themselves as members of tribes or nations but had no notion of “race.” Today, science deems race biologically meaningless. Who invented race as we know it, and why?

Lesson plan created by Erin Breault and Jules Jacques

Three Big Ideas, One Surprise, One Question Worksheet

Source	Three big ideas, one surprise, one question