

The Newberry Lynchings: Incorporating local history into a unit on racial violence

How we got here



Truth & Reconciliation in the City of Newberry

- **The City of Newberry began engaging in the process of Truth & Reconciliation in 2017**
- **The goal was to create public spaces for sincere and truthful conversations about race in an effort to know how best to approach reconciliation**
- **Education and the classroom was a focus and a goal from the start**

Partnering with UF & Alachua County Schools

- In 2018, Dr. Catherine Atria offered to assist in Newberry's effort, and that offer was the first step in our journey towards bringing this history into the classroom.
- In 2019, Dr. Elizabeth Washington agreed to create the curriculum, and Alachua County Public Schools agreed to pilot the curriculum in their African-American History classrooms.
- In 2020/21 school year, the curriculum was piloted in four high schools across the School District.

“Racial Violence, Truth, and Reconciliation in U. S. History”

Students are asked to explore the legacy of lynching and racial violence that remains, to examine why certain stories are told as official history and why others are ignored, and to describe what “truth and reconciliation” means in the context of racial violence in the United States.

Curriculum Unit Conceptualization

- ***“Zooms out”*** to the big picture of how White supremacists used Jim Crow laws and terror tactics to systematically oppress Black people. It focuses on how historical data has been collected and disseminated to educate people about racial violence, to advocate for laws abolishing it, and to memorialize the victims and locations of racial violence.
- ***“Zooms in”*** on Newberry’s truth and reconciliation process.
- ***“Zooms out”*** again with lessons on systemic and individual racism, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the murders of numerous Black people by White law enforcement officers.

Students are asked to...

- Learn about the definition of lynching and its historical context
- Engage with “difficult knowledge” that may evoke strong emotions and discomfort
- Be involved in setting norms for class discussions in order to establish trust, respect, safety, and honest critical inquiry
- Focus on dialogue and analysis, not debate
- Be involved in a variety of opportunities to participate
- Share their interests and concerns

Guiding Questions for Unit Plan

- *What does it mean to say that something is a “difficult” topic in history and/or current events?*
- *Why has there been such silence around anti-Black racial violence?*
- *Why talk about it now?*
- *Why does it matter?*

Unit plan is organized into six parts, each with a different theme

Part One, “Understanding the History of Lynching and Racial Violence” (why, where, and how it happened)

Part Two, “Lynching and Racial Violence Close to Home,” (the history of lynching in Florida and Newberry)

Part Three, “Memorials, Truth, and Reconciliation” (the truth and reconciliation process in Newberry)

Part Four, “Current Events and Issues Around Racism” (Black Lives Matter, police brutality)

Part Five, “Contemplation” (song lyrics and quotes related to racism)

Part Six, “Do Something” (develop “5 point plans” to address aspects of racism in everyday life and consider how to be “anti-racist” - Kendi, 2019)

Key Features of Unit Plan

- Two weeks of instruction
- Detailed, step-by-step lesson plans
- Wide array of primary and secondary sources
- Multiple forms of text and images
- Numerous reading and writing activities
- Modified sources for struggling readers
- Student journaling prompts
- Final project ideas
- Includes all handouts/ancillary materials
- Includes teacher guide for organizing the unit and setting the stage
- Includes letters to parents and students to introduce the unit/explain rationale and goals
- Most documents are in MS Word so that they can be modified by teachers as needed

Introduction of the Participating Teachers

Christopher Pearl

Jordan Marlowe

Jessica Morey

- **Ask questions in the Q&A**

Future Plans

- Expand usage to other courses
- Encourage teachers to use the unit as a model for their own units on local history
- Work with SPOHP to assist teachers with primary sources for other related projects
- Share unit with other districts throughout the state

For additional
information or if
you have additional
questions

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