



Ethnic Studies Lesson 4T: African Americans' Road to Success

TOPIC:

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Themes:

4. Social Movements and Equity

Values and Principles:

6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):
Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. (RI.11-12.2)

Evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. (RI.11-12.7)

Speaking and Listening—(SL.11-12)

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions. (SL.11-12.1)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):
History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)

Analyze the origins, goals, leadership, and tactics of various civil rights movements, including those of Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. (11.10)

Evaluate the impact of social movements and reforms on changing societal norms and policies. (11.11)

Analyze the impact of landmark Supreme Court cases and legislation, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, on the advancement of civil rights and liberties. (12.5)

Lesson Purpose

Students will review the role of government interventions in African Americans' upward mobility over the last 175 years and question what government's role is in future African American roads to success.

Essential Questions

What are some ways that government intervention has helped African American upward mobility in the last 175 years, and in what ways has it failed to help?

In what ways has government intervention impeded upward mobility?

What should be the government's role in future African American success?

How has life changed for African Americans over the last 250 years?

Materials

[Pew Charitable Trusts: Economic Mobility and the American Dream](#)

[U.S. News & World Report: The Logic of Bad Policies](#)

[CATO Institute: War on Poverty at 50—Despite Trillions Spent, Poverty Won](#)

[ACLU: How Can Smart, Ethical Individuals Form Dumb, Amoral Government Agencies?](#)

[Unit 4 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

self-interest

self-perpetuate

bureaucracy

upward mobility

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask students if they have heard the terms *economic mobility* or *social upward mobility*. What do those terms mean? Have students watch [Pew Charitable Trusts: Economic Mobility and the American Dream](#) (video 3 minutes, 2 seconds). As students watch, they should take notes on a definition for *economic mobility*.
- When students have finished watching, students should pair up and discuss their notes. As a class, have students share their notes and help develop a class definition for relative and absolute economic upward mobility. Write these definitions on the board.
- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "What are some ways that government intervention has helped African American upward mobility in the last 175 years and in what ways has it failed to help? In what ways has government intervention impeded upward mobility? What should be the government's

role in future African American success?” Ask students to make a prediction of what they think the government’s role should be in future African American success. Let students know that they will be asked the question again after considering the role of government in the past and present.

Step 2:

- As a class, create a chart on the board with three columns:

Government Helps for African Americans	Government Harms for African Americans	Individual and Collective African American Action

- Create student groups and ask students to take notes that would help fill in the chart with examples from the course so far of where the US government has helped with African American upward mobility, where it has hurt, and where African Americans have successfully forged their own way to upward mobility.
- When students have completed their group brainstorming, as a class, have each group take turns with column 1, then column 2, then column 3. If students leave out some of the following examples, make sure to remind them and add them to the list. As a class, ask students what they might infer about best practices for promoting African American roads to success in the future.

Government Helps for African Americans	Government Harms for African Americans	Individual and Collective African American Action
13th, 14th, 15th Amendments 1964 Civil Rights Act <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> - Fair Housing Act of 1968	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> - Jim Crow laws - Redlining - American Dream - Downpayment Assistance Plan	- NAACP and Anti-Lynching Crusade - The Great Migration - War service - Cowboys - Selma march - Black-owned businesses - Black Lives Matter

Step 3:

- As a class, ask students why some government interventions might fail. Form students into three groups. Have students read the following articles. As students read, they should take notes on what are some of the reasons that government interventions can fail.
 - Self-interest in political decision-making: [U.S. News & World Report: The Logic of Bad Policies](#)
 - Bureaucratic inefficiencies: CATO Institute: [War on Poverty at 50—Despite Trillions Spent, Poverty Won](#)
 - Government’s need to self-perpetuate: [ACLU: How Can Smart, Ethical Individuals Form Dumb, Amoral Government Agencies?](#)
- When students have completed their reading, form three new groups made up of equal numbers of experts from the three original groups. Have the expert groups share some of the reasons that government interventions can fail. When all three expert groups have shared, have groups share with the class, and take notes on the board about reasons that government interventions can fail. Ask students to look at the list that was made earlier in the class and assign possible reasons for failure to their previous list:

- *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- Jim Crow laws
- Redlining
- American Dream Downpayment Assistance Plan
- And others that the class may have come up with

Step 4:

- As a class, remind students of the debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. What do students remember from the two sides of the debate on roads to success for African Americans? An earlier African American writer, Frederick Douglass, also had something to say about the conditions for African American success even before emancipation. (If necessary, read to students from [The White House Association: Frederick Douglass, 1818-1895.](#))
- As a class, use a group reading strategy such as round robin or popcorn to read paragraphs 38 to 43 (or the paragraph that begins “From these remarks...” to the paragraph that begins “The nearest approach to justice...”) of [Frederick Douglass Heritage: “Self-Made Men” \(1872\)](#). As students listen to the speech, they should take notes on what Frederick Douglass is advocating that the government should do and what he is advocating that African Americans should do.
- When students have completed their notes, have students pair up to compare their notes. Have pairs share their notes with the class, and ask them to consider how their views from the beginning of the lesson on government intervention in African American success have stayed the same or changed.

Step 5:

- As a class, ask students what they have learned so far about this lesson’s questions, “What are some ways that government intervention has helped African American upward mobility in the last 175 years, and in what ways has it failed to help? In what ways has government intervention impeded upward mobility? What should be the government’s role in future African American success?” and this unit’s question, “How has life changed for African Americans over the last 250 years?” Make note of what was learned on this unit’s KWL chart, along with additional questions.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits, and for homework, have students read [Forbes: Black Politics—An Excerpt from “Please Stop Helping Us,” by Jason L. Riley](#). As students read, they should take notes on at least five pieces of evidence the author uses to support the idea that “re-evaluation of ... [attention on Black political power as a means of addressing these outcomes] is long overdue.” From the author’s point of view, how have political interventions failed to result in African American upward mobility? Also, students should address whether they agree or disagree with the author in their long paragraph and should cite their sources carefully.

Additional Readings and Resources

Attarian, John. “Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour.” *Religion and Liberty* 2, no. 5 (2010). [Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour | Acton Institute](#)

Becker, Gary S. “An Economic Theory of Discrimination.” In *Discrimination, Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity*, edited by W. E. Block and M.A. Walker. Fraser Institute, 1981, 129-141.

Boghossian, Peter, and James Lindsay. *How to Have Impossible Conversations: A Very Practical Guide*. Lifelong Books, 2019.

BookTV. “Jason Riley, ‘Please Stop Helping Us.’” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnAq7HhaqZA>

- Buckley Institute. "Jason L. Riley on Please Stop Helping Us: How Liberals Make It Harder for Blacks to Succeed," 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzlcAxG5Wus>
- Capaldi, Nicholas, and Miles Smit. *The Art of Deception: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*, 2nd ed. Prometheus, 2019.
- Caplan, Bryan. *The Economics of Antipathy and Stereotyping*. http://www.bcaplan.com/The_Economics_of_Discrimination.pdf
- Choi, Young Back. "Review of *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior*, by Helmut Schoeck." *Southern Economic Journal*, April 1990. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1059904>
- Douglass, Frederick. "Let the Negro Alone," May 11, 1869. In *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One*, edited by John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan, vol. IV. Yale University Press, 1979–1992. Also in McKivigan, John R., Julie Husband, and Heather L. Kaufman, eds., *The Speeches of Frederick Douglass: A Critical Edition*. Yale University Press, 2018, 247–249.
- Douglass, Frederick. "What Shall Be Done with the Slaves If Emancipated?" <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4386>
- Douglass, Frederick. "What the Black Man Wants," April 1865. [What the Black Man Wants | Teaching American History](#)
- Ferguson, Rachel S., and Marcus M. Witcher. "The Commercial Society and the Vice of Envy." In *Black Liberation through the Marketplace*. Emancipation Books, 2022, 114–116.
- Ferguson, Rachel S., and Marcus M. Witcher. "The Economics of Discrimination." In *Black Liberation through the Marketplace*. Emancipation Books, 2022, 83–84.
- Gorman, Linda. "Discrimination." In *Fortune Encyclopedia of Economics*, edited by Davide R. Henderson. Warner Books, 1993, 470–475. [Discrimination—Econlib](#)
- Hoover Institution. "Jason Riley on 'False Black Power,'" 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bi2hqL5KkHc>
- LibertyPen. "Thomas Sowell—Government is Not the Answer." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuxZUAZDRns>
- McWhorter, John. *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America*. Portfolio Penguin, 2021.
- [National Association for Independent Schools: Facilitating Politically Sensitive Discussions](#)
- Riley, Jason L. *False Black Power?* Templeton Press, 2017. (Includes responses from Glenn Loury and John McWhorter.)
- Riley, Jason L. *Please Stop Helping Us: How Liberals Make It Harder for Blacks to Succeed*. Encounter Books, 2014.
- Roback, Jennifer. "The Political Economy of Segregation: The Case of Segregated Streetcars." *Journal of Economic History*, December 1986, 893–917.
- Senholtz, Hans F. *Love and Envy*. Foundation for Economic Education, 1995. <https://fee.org/articles/love-and-envy/>
- Schoeck, Helmut. *Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour*, reprint edition. Liberty Fund, 1987.
- Sowell, Thomas. *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* William Morrow & Co., 1984.
- Sowell, Thomas. *Discrimination and Disparities*, revised edition. Basic Books, 2019.
- Sowell, Thomas. "[Economic inequality? More like economic envy.](#)" PennLive, January 30, 2014.

- Sowell, Thomas. "The Economics of Discrimination." In *Applied Economics*, revised edition. Basic Books, 2009, 207-237. Also in *Markets and Minorities*, Basic Books, 1981, 19-33.
- Sowell, Thomas. "End It, Black History Lesson." In *Barbarians Inside the Gates*. Hoover Institution Press, 1999, 225-228.
- Sowell, Thomas. "Legacy of slavery' a legacy of cliches and lazy thinking." Daily Telegram, July 20, 2015. <https://www.lenconnect.com/story/opinion/columns/2015/07/20/thomas-sowell-legacy-slavery-legacy/33837908007/>
- Sowell, Thomas. "Racial Facts and Fallacies." In *Economic Facts and Fallacies*. Basic Books, 2008, 153-187.
- Steele, Shelby. *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America*. Harper Perennial, 1998.
- Steele, Shelby. *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*. Harper Perennial, 1991.
- Steele, Shelby. *Shame: How America's Past Sins Have Polarized Our Country*. Basic Books, 2015.
- Steele, Shelby. *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era*. HarperCollins, 2006.
- Thomas SowellTV. "I Am No Friend to Politics and Politicians, Here's Why." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cm0DZSuBS5k>
- [Walter E. Williams: Edwards uses envy to get political gain—Deseret News](#)
- Williams, Walter E. "Blacks Need Economic Freedom." In *America: A Minority Viewpoint*. Hoover Institution Press, 1982, 132-133.
- Williams, Walter E. "How Much Can Discrimination Explain?" In *The Free Market and the Black Community*. Hillsdale College Press, 1990, 15-24.
- Williams, Walter E. "On Discrimination, Prejudice, Racial Income Differentials, and Affirmative Action." In W. E. Block and M. A. Walker, eds., *Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Equal Opportunity*. Fraser Institute, 1981, 69-99.
- Williams, Walter E. "Promoting jealousy, envy is for control, not solutions." Syndicated opinion column. October 23, 2011.
- Williams, Walter E. *The State Versus Blacks*. McGraw Hill, 1982.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

Ethnic Studies 4A: KWL Chart

KNOW	WONDER	LEARNED
<i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i>	<i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i>	<i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i>