

Social Studies Content Themes for Middle/High School
From
“The Making of Milwaukee Curriculum”

African Americans:

Teaching about African Americans in Milwaukee

The following activities are from “The Making of Milwaukee” on-line curriculum.

- **Singing the Blues in Milwaukee (Writing Songs)**
- **Resistance, Resentment, and Racism (Discussing Challenges of Racism)**
- **The Role of Protests During the Civil Rights Movement and Now**
- **The Mighty Migration (Mapping and Writing Diaries)**
- **American Black Holocaust Museum (Fieldtrip)**

SINGING THE BLUES IN MILWAUKEE

During times of war and peace a number of Milwaukeeans faced discrimination, insult, and even violence. Groups and individuals were hated and unaccepted in Milwaukee for a variety of reasons. Historically, one outlet for dealing with oppression has been music. During the early and into the mid-1900’s musical forms like the blues became increasingly widespread and well known across the United States.

1. Have students create a blues song that addresses the discrimination and cruelty that different groups in Milwaukee faced during this period of time (e.g. African Americans, Hispanics, German Americans, Catholics, Jewish Americans, etc.). As students watch any of the video chapters from this unit they should pay close attention to groups who experienced discrimination and the ways they were victimized. Students should also consider the ways individuals in these groups may have been affected by this intolerance. The following questions can serve to help guide their thoughts about discrimination against various groups in Milwaukee during this time.
 - Why did this particular group face discrimination?
 - In what ways did this group, as a whole, face discrimination?
 - How were individuals in this group possibly affected by discrimination in different ways?
 - How could or did this group try to fight against discrimination?
 - What lasting impact do you think this discrimination has on the city of Milwaukee today?
2. After students answer or discuss these questions, they can begin to think about writing their blues song.

- a. If the teacher has a fairly strong understanding of music, the following websites can assist him or her with helping students write a truly unique blues song:

<http://www.wpsweb.com/performingarts/BrownBagJazz/blues.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/essays12bar.html>

- b. If the teacher is new to the blues, the following website offers clips of blues songs that students could possibly use to create their own songs:

<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/cd.html>

- c. If neither of the above options works well, simply have students choose one of their favorite sad, slow or moving songs (it does not have to be a blues song) and use the rhythm or melody to write their own song lyrics.
 - d. A final option might be to work with the school's music teacher to help students create these songs.
3. After students have written their songs, ask them to perform them for the rest of the class or simply have them discuss the lyrics with the rest of the class. Focus discussion on the multiple ways people faced discrimination during this period of time and the multiple ways people dealt with intolerance.
 4. The teacher might want to end the discussion by asking students if they think music is as an effective way to deal with discrimination. Students can also consider how any music today tries to address discrimination.

Follow-up Learning Activity:

- If the school or community has a variety show or talent competition, the teacher might want to encourage students to use their songs and performances as an entry in this activity.

RESISTANCE, RESENTMENT, AND RACISM

As depicted in Video Chapter 16, *City Under Siege*, Milwaukee, like many major cities in the U.S., experienced much turmoil and growth during 1960's and the Civil Rights Movement. The crisis was rooted in issues of poverty and race. Unlike many other big cities in the U.S., Milwaukee's African American population had remained very small, barely two percent, as late as 1945. However, after World War II, the booming Milwaukee economy attracted newcomers by the droves and the African American population soared to 15 percent by 1970. Sadly, African Americans were faced with resistance, resentment, and often racism when they arrived.

1. After viewing Video Chapter 16, *City Under Siege*, engage students in a discussion about what life was like for African American families during this time. Ask the students to describe ways in which the various African American family members might have faced resistance, resentment, and racism when they moved to Milwaukee.
2. After this initial discussion, ask individual or small groups of students to think about, record descriptors, and share the meaning of the following terms: resistance, resentment, and racism? If deliberating in small groups, provide individual think time before placing them into their cooperative groups and then have students number off “1,2,3,4” as soon as they get into their groups. Explain that at the end of their recording session you will choose a specific number within each of the groups to report the groups’ thinking so that all students know they might be called upon to share their thoughts.
3. Have students share their thinking about the terms resistance, resentment, and racism with the whole class.
 - (After this discussion, if you determine that students are not capturing the essence of racism, show students portions of these PBS Video Series: “*The Power of an Illusion*” or “*Eyes on the Prize*”. Go to the PBS websites: www.pbs.org or www.pbs.org/teachersource for information and learning activities related to each video series.
 - Or, use the book, **“*Children in the Civil Rights Era*” by Catherine A. Welch as a reference.) **Welch, Catherine. (2001). *Children in the Civil Rights Era*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books.
 - Other valuable social justice resources can be accessed from the Southern Poverty Law Center that publishes the *Teaching Tolerance* magazine for teachers. This organization also provides other free teaching materials focused on issues of social justice. Their website is: www.tolerance.org
4. Finally, pose the following questions for groups to analyze:
 - In what ways are resistance and resentment different than and similar to racism?
 - In what ways is racism in a class by itself?

Follow-up Learning Activities:

- Just before class ends and after the above discussion, have students use the words “resentment, resistance and racism” within one written sentence as a way to demonstrate how they have begun to think about the terms. Have students hand in this sentence synthesis for feedback and/or assessment.
- As a homework or in-class writing assignment have students imagine what it would have been like to be a new African American moving into a predominant European Milwaukee culture. Assign or let students choose a specific role or voice to represent in their writing: such as, mother, father,

worker, or young adult. The teacher or student may also choose a format and audience, such as: a descriptive or persuasive essay, poem, or letter to a family member or newspaper editorial in which to represent their thoughts.

THE ROLE OF PROTESTS DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND NOW

During the 1950's and 1960's, and following the Brown vs. Board Supreme Court decision, a cross-section of people throughout the U.S. engaged in various kinds of protests to demonstrate their frustration with the inequities in educational, housing, and economic opportunities. Milwaukee was no exception, as protests to secure the basic rights of all American citizens regardless of race, class or gender, became a recurring event. This age was called the "Civil Rights Movement". Some protests seeking to ensure equal rights for all Americans were peaceful or non-violent and some were violent.

1. After viewing Video Chapter 16, *City Under Siege*, have students recall what they learned about the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee. Specifically ask them to describe what civil rights issues seemed to be most prominent in Milwaukee, as well as who protested those issues, and the various ways in which they protested. Suggest an organizer with 3 columns for students to represent the descriptors: civil rights issues, people who protested, and type of protest.

Follow-up Learning Activities:

- Have students explore the term "civil rights". What rights do students believe they have as an American citizen? What is a civil right? Research how rights are protected within our country. Students then compose a brief descriptive or persuasive essay in which they explain what rights they most cherish, why they believe this right should be guaranteed to all American citizens, and what social action they would take to ensure that everyone is benefiting from this right.
- Have individual or small groups of students explore and create a continuum of descriptors (synonyms in varying degrees) between the terms "non-violent" and "violent" as possible responses to perceived injustices. What are the points or various degrees in-between "non-violent" and "violent"? Have students share their thinking with the whole class. After sharing, pose these questions: Does a protest have to be one way or another? What options are available to American citizens when they want to protest a perceived injustice?
- Have students brainstorm current civil rights issues in Milwaukee, the U.S., or any other country that concern people. Suggest that the class hold a rally in which individual or small groups of students will be allowed to peacefully, yet persuasively, protest a social justice issue

with speeches, posters, and/or written communications with appropriate public leaders. The teacher may decide to let students choose their own issue or one particular issue that is of concern to the majority of the class. The rally may be held in-class or as part of an all-school assembly. (****Be sure to inform the students' parents and your building administrators about this "peaceful" protest so that personal and professional decisions can be made about the issues of choice and the medium and space used to express the protests.*)

THE MIGHTY MIGRATION

1. Migration Map

(Note: Teachers and/or students may want to visit the following sites to gather background information for this activity):

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>

<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/>

http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/frameset_reset.html?http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/stories/0701_0131.html

<http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm>

- a. On a blank map of the United States, have students show the migration of African Americans from the South to northern cities such as Chicago and Milwaukee.
- b. Students should use a variety of colors, lines and arrows to show the various routes taken from southern states.
- c. Discuss with students the following questions concerning the migration of blacks to northern cities:
 - Why did blacks leave the South?
 - What did blacks leave behind as they migrated north (traditions, family, jobs, homes, culture, etc)?
 - What types of challenges did blacks face as they migrated (segregated facilities, safety risks, uncharted territories, long trips, etc.)?

2. Dear Diary...

Photos of the following topics are available in the "Image Library" of the "In the Classroom" section on The Making of Milwaukee website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com. Choose "Lesson Activities Photos" from the pull down menu and use the "search" tool to locate the photos related to the topics below:

- a. Have students consider the movement of African Americans from the South to the North. They should reflect on the challenges blacks faced once they

settled in Milwaukee. Briefly discuss the following issues with students:

- North Side blight
 - Hillside housing project/low income housing
 - Hostility with whites
 - Resistance to diversity in neighborhoods/communities
 - Poverty and prejudice
 - Acquiring jobs in a new city
 - Milwaukeeans United for School Integration Committee (MUSIC) Protests
 - Father Groppi marches
 - The riot of July 30, 1967
- b. Students will take on the perspective of an African American who has migrated to Milwaukee during this time period. Using the topics of the reflective activity, students will write 1-3 diary entries explaining their experiences in Milwaukee. They should bring to light the difficulties that were explained Video Chapter 16, *City Under Siege*.
- c. Students may also consider interviewing someone who lived in Milwaukee during these difficult times. They should use the information in the interview to create a journal or diary for that particular person based on the information they gathered. These diary or journal entries can cover several days or weeks in which these events took place. Students should draw on the interviewee's experiences to bring about a passionate, realistic account of what it was like to live in Milwaukee during this era.

Follow-up Learning Activities:

- Students may exchange diaries with a partner, read a day's entry to a small group or select a passage to read to the class.
- Have students respond to the following questions in written form or group discussion:
 - What were the experiences of new blacks arriving in Milwaukee from the South?
 - What fears did whites have about an increasing black population in Milwaukee?
 - How does the "inner core" (North Side of Milwaukee) in the 1960s compare with the "inner core" of 2006?

3. Rising Above Racism...A Message for Milwaukee

- a. Allow students to reflect on the events surrounding the racial tensions in Milwaukee.

- b. Encourage students to write a persuasive speech that will be presented in a local Milwaukee church. The speech's message should focus on the following:
 - The racial tensions of Milwaukee in the 1960s
 - How blacks have faced and struggled through racial animosity
 - What needs to be done in Milwaukee to make it a great place for ALL people to live, regardless of color, race, religion and socio-economic status?
- c. Speeches should be written in the context of the 1960s. Limit speeches to 1-2 minutes to ensure that all students will be afforded the opportunity to present and promote their ideas.
- d. After listening to speeches, discuss the following questions with students or have students discuss them in small groups:
 - What are the benefits and consequences of a diverse city?
 - How can racial equality be obtained in cities that contain an assortment of ethnic groups?
 - Does violent behavior lead to progress towards racial equality? Why or why not?
 - Have race relations improved today in comparison to what Milwaukee experienced throughout the 1960s? Explain by incorporating specific examples.
- e. Students may also contact local churches to present their speeches. Assist students in making contacts and organizing a visit to local churches and their congregations to deliver their powerful messages. Encourage community leaders to work with students in delivering informative and passionate speeches that help uplift individuals during difficult times.

AMERICA'S BLACK HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

1. Organize a trip to America's Black Holocaust Museum in downtown Milwaukee. Prepare students by covering content about the African culture, the African Slave Trade, the Middle Passage, Colonization, Plantation Life and the Underground Railroad.
2. Show portions of the critically acclaimed television miniseries, "Roots", to give students a different perspective on African traditions and customs.
3. Have students develop at least five questions that they would like to ask tour guides on the trip.
4. As a follow-up, have students participate in an open forum where they discuss their experiences at the museum, the artifacts and documents displayed and the

information delivered by tour guides. Teacher may develop a series of questions pertaining to the content delivered at the museum as an additional assessment.

For further information contact:

America's Black Holocaust Museum, Inc.

2233 N. Fourth Street

Milwaukee, Wisconsin USA 53212

Phone: 414-264-25