

LESSON 4

INTERGENERATIONAL, BLACK FAMILIES, BLACK VILLAGES

BLACK LIVES MATTER**BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS**

Planning is essential to the success of this lesson. It incorporates three different themes with the goal of ultimately elevating the principles surrounding black families in the Black Lives Matter movement. Teachers will need to lead students through the injustice of mass incarceration and its impact on families to the representation of black people in the media and how that impacts mass incarceration and the black family, to a celebration of black family and how that can impact policy and save lives.

**ANTICIPATED MISCONCEPTIONS**

This lesson is a minefield for reinforcing negative stereotypes for black people in America. It is imperative that teachers have developed strong background knowledge to address mass incarceration from a position of sensitivity and respect. Please conduct appropriate research before teaching this lesson. If you feel like you could benefit from professional resources (not to be used in the classroom) please consult some of the following options:

- 📺 13th - documentary from Ava DuVernay
- 📖 *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by, Michelle Alexander
- 📺 Michelle Alexander, "The Future of Race in America" TEDTalk

The future of race in America: Michelle Alexander at TEDxC...



- ["The Black Family in the Age of Incarceration"](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/403246/)
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/403246/>) *The Atlantic*, Ta-Nehisi Coates



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why are these principles surrounding black families integral to the Black Lives Matter movement?

- Black Families
- Intergenerational
- Black Villages



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning Objectives(s):

- I can describe the impact of mass incarceration on the black family and village.
- I can analyze the impact of media representation on both black families and the criminalization of black people.
- I can identify positive and negative images of black families in the media.
- I understand and can advocate for the principles of BLM in reality and media representation.



LESSON DEVELOPMENT

MASS INCARCERATION AND THE IMPACT ON THE BLACK FAMILY:

Students should review the infographic, “Is This ‘Justice’?”, the excerpt from *The Atlantic* article, “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration” by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions:

- Describe what it means to be in an “Age of Mass Incarceration?”
- Is this new information?
- Who is being incarcerated in greater numbers?
- How might incarceration impact a family? And the black community?

Show the video of Ta-Nehisi Coates and ask students what he means by the idea that the system isn’t broken - it is working exactly how it was designed.



(Optionally, have students review the [↓ Causes of Mass Incarceration](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1) (<https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1>)  (<https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1>)  handout).

Then give students the handout of [↓ BLM tweets](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1) (<https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1>)  (<https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1>) . Ask students how these tweets focus on the ideas of mass incarceration.

Focus on the last tweet and use it as the position to pivot your lesson to the representations of black people in the media.

REPRESENTATIONS IN THE MEDIA:

Ask students:

- How are black people most often portrayed in the news? on tv? in movies?
- Why does that matter?

Either read the  [excerpts from the *Washington Post*](https://hpcss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922324/download?wrap=1)

(<https://hpcss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922324/download?wrap=1>) 

(<https://hpcss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922324/download?wrap=1>) article as a class, recap the article for students, or assign students to read the article independently.

Ask students to reflect on the connection between the depictions of black people in the media and the criminalization and incarceration of black people in the United States.

Ask students:

- Why does media depiction matter? *Students should be able to articulate that depictions in media socialize everyone from black people to white cops. Therefore depicting black people disproportionately as poor, uneducated, and criminal reinforces systemic racism.*
- What is the impact of incarceration on the black family? If necessary, prompt students to answer with the following quote:

“The consequences for black men have radiated out to their families. By 2000, more than 1 million black children had a father in jail or prison - and roughly half of those fathers were living in the same household as their kids when they were locked up. Paternal incarceration is associated with behavior problems and delinquency, especially among boys.” - Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration, The Atlantic, October 2017.

 Show students the following clip from the first episode of *Blackish*.

Black-ish season 1 episode 1 trailer



Ask students:

- How does this television show depict an African American family?
- What do you think the response to this show has been in American culture?

Ask students to read the following clip from The Guardian:

“It’s a question that has divided US presidents: is the sitcom Black-ish the best thing on television or, well, racist? For Barack Obama, the show is like watching his own family on screen, while Donald Trump tweeted that the title alone is “racism at highest level”. If it is hard to imagine, say, Mrs Brown’s Boys sparking the same passion, that’s because Black-ish is not your average network comedy.

The programme follows Andre “Dre” Johnson, a wealthy executive, and his family through the usual sitcom misunderstandings, squabbles and moral dilemmas. So far, so Cosby Show. But Black-ish’s creator, Kenya Barris, has made a small tweak that sets the programme on to an altogether more groundbreaking track. Race is not treated as an incidental background detail but part of the show’s identity. The Johnsons are not a family who “happen to be black” but a family who are black. If that doesn’t sound revolutionary, it’s enough to ensure this broad, warm-hearted comedy confronts issues of race, class and culture every week.”

Ask students:

- How do the presidential responses to this show reflect the ideas behind BLM we have looked at so far?
- How does this show reflect the principles of BLM we are studying today?
- How might this show and its popularity (and shows like it) impact mass incarceration?



LESSON CLOSURE

Ask students to reflect on the BLM principles surrounding the idea of family. Why do you think these principles are together the way they are? Why do BLM connect these three principles? How are all of these connected to mass incarceration? How is mass incarceration connected to media portrayals and racial socialization? How do we work to combat these portrayals and the criminalization of black people?



RESOURCES

- [BLM Tweets \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1)
 [_ \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922321/download?wrap=1)
- [Causes of Mass Incarceration](#)
[_ \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1)
[_ \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922322/download?wrap=1)
- [Excerpts from "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration"](#)
[_ \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922325/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922325/download?wrap=1)
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- [Is This Justice \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922323/download?wrap=1\)](#) [_ \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922323/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922323/download?wrap=1)
- [News Media Black Families](#)
[_ \(https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922324/download?wrap=1\)](https://hcpss.instructure.com/courses/122235/files/14922324/download?wrap=1)
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