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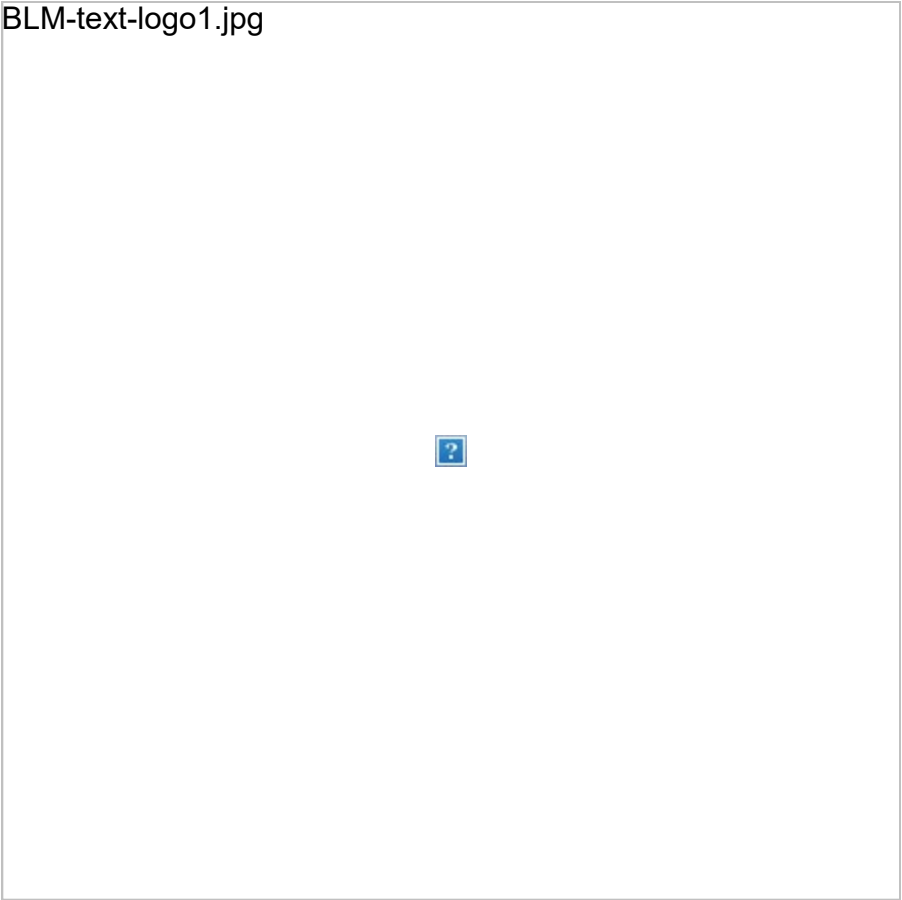
Black Lives Matter High School Lessons

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BLACK LIVES MATTER HIGH SCHOOL

LESSONS

BLM-text-logo1.jpg

COURSE AT A GLANCE

Background for Teachers

Black Lives Matter, the social protest movement

against "the disproportionate impact of state violence on Black lives," has emerged to develop into an influential social and political force. (The quote is from the Black Lives Matter website.)

From its inception, the movement has been a prominent force on social media, disseminating information that had previously been deemed un-newsworthy by traditional news outlets. (Connecting BLM and Ferguson   ) It has since found inroads in the traditional mainstream media and has even become a force to be reckoned with forcing the political landscape to take into account the needs and demands of minority communities in unprecedented ways. In the lesson below we'll take a close look at the Black Lives Matter movement, why and how it came into being, and what it has evolved into. ***Before beginning these lessons, you may want to review these guidelines   for teaching about difficult or controversial issues.***

The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter was created around the time of George Zimmerman's acquittal in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin in July 2013. It lay somewhat dormant until the shooting death of Michael Brown in early August of 2014—a young man of color, shot and killed by a white police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, MO. It wasn't until November 25, 2014, when the news not to indict Darren Wilson came out, that the hashtag gained real traction and went mainstream. In the first 20 hours of that day, #BlackLivesMatter was used to send around 10,000 tweets. But in the four hours that followed the verdict, the twittersphere lit up: 92,784 tweets were sent using the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, and the movement was to become a force to be reckoned with. (See this NPR Codeswitch article for more.)

Since those early days of online activism, Black Lives Matter has evolved into a movement that is now as much physical as it is digital. It is not a traditional movement with a centralized system of leaders, headquarters or appointed spokespeople. It sees itself more as a diffuse ideological and political intervention in a world where systemic racism and structural inequality fail to be sufficiently acknowledged or addressed. The vast

inequalities left by a legacy of slavery and subsequent racist economic, social, and political policies are once again brought into the public eye by a social movement that is fighting inequality and injustice while also affirming "Black folks' humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression." (https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/)

Though the hashtag is separate from the Black Lives Matter organization and movement, it is often used in in the organizing, mobilizing, momentum building and reporting of events and interventions.

On August 1, 2016, a coalition or organizations with affiliations to Black Lives Matter called the Movement for Black Lives released a detailed platform of demands. These were soon tweeted on social media using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. #BlackLivesMatter has connected people from around the U.S. (and beyond) with the goal of ending various forms of racial injustice, while also seeking to celebrate and humanize Black lives

High School Lessons

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