A brief history of racism in the US



Preface

In commemoration of the murder of Georges Floyd, the SEW/OGBL would like to provide teachers with a set of free teaching materials on the topic "A brief history of racism in the USA." Their aim is to provide teachers with a set of activities to raise awareness among students that racism is not merely a thing of the past. The public murder of Georges Floyd is one link in the chain of racism inflicted upon people of African descent which began with the North American slave trade and it still very much alive today

This teaching material provides teachers and learners with some notions about the the historical tradition of racism by focusing on the following topics:

- Slavery
- Segregation
- The use of racial slurs (ex. the N-word)
- Black face

The teaching material intends to make students more aware of explicit and implicit racist behaviour. Furthermore, we would like to encourage schools to add or include more literature written by non-white authors to their curricula and school libraries. Schools should reflect their multicultural school population and pictures and quotes of non-white personalities should be readily visible in schools' hallways.

Raymond Rickard & Michel Reuter & Vera Dockendorf

A brief history of racism in the United States



1. Describe the following pictures and try to set them into their historical context.



2. PowerPoint presentation: The History of Slavery in the US



Notes:





Notes:

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

.12% of the slaves die during the passage

More than 12 millions of slaves were transported from Africa to the United States from 1525 to 1808.

In 1808 the importation of slaves was prohibited, but slavery was not abolished until 1865 (end of the Civil War)

Jim Crow Laws

•1876-1964: racial segregation in the USA

."separate but equal"

•Separated toilets, waiting rooms, cafés and bus areas for Afro-Americans



Notes:

Segregation in Daily Life



Rosa Parks

1955: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat for a white man and is put into prison for this act of insubordination.

This event triggers the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, which will last for 381 days.



Notes:

Freedom Riders

1961: route from Washington D.C. to New Orleans







In the 1960s "sitins" were organized at segregated lunch corners.

Notes:

Martin Luther King

•1963: Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington



Nation of Islam



Very popular in the 1960s

."black muslims"

Famous members: Malcolm X & Muhammed Ali

Wanted to create a separate black state in the South of the USA



Notes:

Black Panthers



•Founded after the assasination of Malcolm X in 1965

.Marxist-leninist

.Carry arms

Idea of armed resistance



The Legacy of the Past: Dealing with the US's History of Slavery and Racism

3. a.) Take a closer look at these brand logos. Can you explain why people labelled them as racist and wanted the companies to change the look of their logos?

*Background knowledge: Aunt Jemina is a brand of pancake mix, syrup, and other breakfast foods.



b.) Do a quick online research about the historic signification of "aunt" and "uncle" in relation to slavery in the US. Write down your findings.

c.) Read the following text about minstrel shows.

Minstrel Show



The minstrel show, also called minstrelsy, was an American form of racist entertainment developed in the early 19th century. Each show consisted of comic skits¹, variety acts, dancing, and music performances that depicted² people specifically of African descent³. The shows wer performed by mostly white people in make-up or blackface for the purpose⁴ of playing the role of

black people. There were also some African-American performers and black-only minstrel groups that formed and toured. Minstrel shows lampooned⁵ black people as dim-witted⁶, lazy, buffoonish⁷, superstitious⁸, and happy-go-lucky⁹.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minstrel_show

Can you explain why blackfacing has its roots in racism and is very offensive?

¹ Sketch

² darstellen

³ Abstammung

⁴ Absicht/Zweck

⁵ verspotten

⁶ Dumm, minderbemittelt

⁷ clownhaft

⁸ abergläubig

⁹ sorglos

Background knowledge to the mammy caricature: Read the text and fill in the missing words



Mammy is the most well known and enduring¹⁰ racial caricature of African American women. The Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State University has more than 100 items with the mammy image, including ashtrays¹¹, souvenirs, postcards, fishing lures¹², detergent¹³, artistic prints, toys, candles, and kitchenware. (...)

5

Real Mammies

treated – black - laughter - lie

From slavery through the Jim Crow era¹⁴, the mammy image served the political, social, and economic
 interests of mainstream white America. During slavery, the mammy caricature was posited¹⁵ as proof that blacks - in this case, ______ women - were contented, even happy, as slaves. Her wide grin¹⁶, hearty ______, and loyal servitude¹⁷ were offered as evidence of the supposed humanity of the institution of slavery.

This was the mammy caricature, and, like all caricatures, it contained¹⁸ a little truth surrounded by a
 larger______. The caricature portrayed an obese¹⁹, coarse²⁰, maternal figure. She had great love for her white "family," but often ______ her own family with disdain²¹. Although she had children, sometimes many, she was completely desexualized. She "belonged" to the white family, though it was

- ¹⁹ dick
- ²⁰ grob

¹⁰ Anhaltend / beständig

¹¹ Aschenbecher

¹² Angelköder

¹³ Waschmittel

¹⁴ Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. The laws—which existed for about 100 years, from the post-Civil War era until 1968—were meant to marginalize African Americans by denying them the right to vote, hold jobs, get an education or other opportunities. Those who attempted to defy Jim Crow laws often faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence and death.
¹⁵ (hier) wurde dafür verwendet

¹⁶ Grinsen

¹⁷ Dienstbarkeit

¹⁸ enthielt

²¹ Verachtung

rarely stated. (...) She had no black friends; the white family was her entire world. Obviously, the mammy caricature was more myth than accurate portrayal.

20 Commercial Mammies

Image -	water -	song
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pancake mix.

Mammy's most successful commercial expression was (and is) Aunt Jemima. In 1889, Charles Rutt, a Missouri newspaper editor, and Charles G. Underwood, a mill owner, developed the idea of a self-rising flour that only needed ______. He called it Aunt Jemima's recipe. Rutt borrowed the Aunt Jemima name from a popular vaudeville _______ that he had heard performed by a team of minstrel²² performers. The minstrels included a skit²³ with a southern mammy. Rutt decided to use the name and the ______ of the mammy-like Aunt Jemima to promote his new

Source: https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/mammies/homepage.htm (26.1.2022)

Questions:

1. Describe the mammy caricature.

2. Explain why the image of a so called 'mammy' is a very racist concept that has its roots in slavery.

²² Minstrel Shows zeigten in stilisierter Form den Weißen, die oft keine Schwarzen aus ihrem Alltag kannten, zahlreiche Stereotype von Schwarzen. Sie werden als ständig fröhliche, singende und naive Sklaven dargestellt, die ihre Besitzer trotz harter Arbeit lieben. Dabei wird eine romantisierende Vorstellung vom Alltag der Sklaven auf den Plantagen inszeniert. (Quelle: wikipedia)

²³ Sketsch / Parodie

The 1950s and 1960s : The Civil Rights Movement

Historical Background:

The civil rights movement was a struggle for social justice that took place mainly during the 1950s and 1960s for Black Americans to gain equal rights under the law in the United States. The Civil War (1861-1865) had officially abolished²⁴ slavery, but it didn't end discrimination against Black people— they continued to endure the devastating²⁵ effects of racism, especially in the South. By the mid-20th century, Black Americans had had more than enough of prejudice and violence against them. They, along with many white Americans, mobilized and began an unprecedented fight for equality that spanned two decades²⁶.

(source: https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement)

Important Civil Rights Leaders

Rosa Parks – The Mother of the Civil Rights Movement



Rosa Parks is an American civil rights activist whose refusal to relinquish²⁷ her seat on a public bus lead to the 1955–56 *Montgomery bus boycott* in Alabama, which became the spark²⁸ that ignited²⁹ the civil rights movement in the United States.

For her role in igniting the successful campaign, Parks became known as the "mother of the civil rights movement."

(Source: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rosa-Parks)

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Martin Luther King, Jr. was a civil rights activist in the 1950s and 1960s. He led nonviolent protests to fight for the rights of all people including African Americans. He hoped that America and the world could form a society where race would not impact a person's civil rights. He is considered one of the great orators of modern times, and his

²⁴ abgeschafft

- ²⁵ Vernichtend / niederschmetternd
- ²⁶ Jahrzehnt
- ²⁷ aufgeben
- ²⁸ Funke
- ²⁹ zünden

speeches still inspire many to this day. He held his most famous speech "I have a dream" during the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* on August 28, 1963.

Sources: <u>https://www.ducksters.com/biography/martin_luther_king_jr.php</u> & <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Have_a_Dream</u>

Malcolm X



Malcolm X, original name Malcolm Little, Muslim name el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, (born May 19, 1925, Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.—died February 21, 1965, New York, New York), is an African American leader and prominent figure in the *Nation of Islam* who articulated concepts of race pride and Black nationalism in the early 1960s. After his assassination, the widespread distribution of his life story—The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965)—made him an ideological hero, especially among Black youth.

Source: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Malcolm-X

Huey P. Newton & Bobby Seale & Assata Shakur & Angela Davis



Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale formed the *Black* Panther Party in 1966 in response to incidents of alleged police brutality and racism and as an illustration of the need for Black self-reliance. The party's original purpose was to patrol African American neighbourhoods to protect residents from acts of police brutality. The Panthers eventually developed into a Marxist revolutionary group that called for the arming of all African Americans, the exemption of African Americans from the draft and from all sanctions of so-called white America, the release of all African Americans from jail, and the payment of compensation to African Americans for centuries of exploitation by white Americans. At its peak in the late 1960s, Panther membership exceeded 2,000, and the organization operated chapters in several major American cities.



Other famous members were Assata Shakur (on the left picture - also known as the godmother of Tupac Shakur) and Angela Davis (on the right picture)

Source: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Panther-Party

Segregation in education

Little Rock Nine



(© <u>https://www.britannica.com/topic/Little-</u> <u>Rock-Nine</u>)

The Little Rock Nine were a group of nine Black students who enrolled at formerly all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957.

Their attendance at the school was a test of Brown v. Board of Education, a landmark 1954

Supreme Court ruling that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional³⁰.

On September 4, 1957, the first day of classes at Central High, Governor Orval Faubus called in the Arkansas National Guard to block the Black students' entry into the high school. Later that month, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent in federal troops to escort the Little Rock Nine into the school. It drew national attention to the civil rights movement.

(Source: <u>https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/central-high-school-integration</u>)

³⁰ verfassungswidrig

Watch this short documentary about Little Rock Nine and try to answer the following questions.

Link: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qk1tTCk2Kks</u> / Title: Little Rock – School integration

Questions:

1. What happened to Elizabeth Eckfort on her first day at Central High School in Little Rock?

2. Which historical event took place one year before Little Rock Nine?

- 3. What did the National Guard do on the black students first day in Little Rock's Central High School?
- 4. How did President Eisenhower respond to this?

Almost 40 years later the Little Rock Nine come face-to-face with two of their tormentors.

Youtubelink: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExWmMl2gEKw</u> / Title: *The Little Rock Nine Come Face-To-Face With Their Tormentors | The Oprah Winfrey Show | OWN*

a.) Watch the video and try to explain why everyone either remained silent or participated in racist and violent actions against the Little Rock Nine.

b.) Try to think of similar situations that are happening today. What can we learn from the Little Rock Nine?

Hip Hop and the Civil Rights Movement

Background knowledge:

A Short History of Hip hop

Harlem, Bronx
Influenced by the soul and funk of the 1960s
Rap: developed from the Jamaican "Toasting"
Sampling & Scratching
Block Parties
Kool DJ Herc & Lovebug Starski
Shared identity: slavery

The Last Poets

Brief history of the band:



The Last Poets are several groups of poets and musicians who arose from the late 1960s African-American civil rights movement's black nationalism. The name is taken from a poem by the South African revolutionary poet Keorapetse Kgositsile, who believed he was in the last era of poetry before guns would take over.

Source: <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Poets</u>

Last Poets: Hands Off

https://youtu.be/3WyXZ_Q4Iao

(...)

What manner of man is this, I ask?

10 Who roams³¹ the seven seas

who graces the skies of birds of iron and wanders where he pleases

Who walks into another's home and takes his property

15 Then slaves the man, his wife and child in the name of liberty

What manner of beast is this I ask who drops the napalm³² from the skies

Then send my sons away to war to maim³³ and kill and die

What manner of man is this I ask, who arrogantly displays³⁴ his might³⁵

What manner of man is this, my friend, needless to say he's white

25

So take your hands off of me, white folks,

I've done you no wrong

I'm only guilty of making you strong

I've built all of your cities and I've worked in

30 your mines

I've fought to protect you many a time

It was I who taught you what it is to be brave

I had great civilizations when you lived in caves

35 I taught you what soap was when you dyed³⁶ yourselves blue

I taught you of planting and harvesting³⁷ too

I showed you what clothes were to cover your backs

40 when you were wearing wolfskins and running in packs

When you knew nothing of the barrier of sound

It was I who taught you that this planet was 45 round

In Palermo, Sicily and Italy and Spain I left monuments of my grandeur and fame

And during your dark ages when your people were blind

50 I built universities to enlighten³⁸ your kind

When your homeland was weak and your people were poor

It was I who brought you to America's shore³⁹

Why you did not even know how to survive

55 I showed you medicine to keep you alive

How earnest you seem, how well you did learn Now vile⁴⁰ a reward⁴¹ I received in return But time is on my side,

60 I'm sure you must know that the day will arrive when you'll reap⁴² what you sow⁴³

For I gave you Religion

And you know it's a fact that the Christ and the Buddha and Mohammed were black

65 I taught you to dance and I taught you to sing

You repaid me with treachery and slavery and chains (...) $^{\rm 44}$

- ³⁷ Erntearbeit
- ³⁸ aufklären
- ³⁹ Küste
- 40 bösartig
- ⁴¹ Belohnung
- ⁴² ernten
- ⁴³ säen
- ⁴⁴ Ketten

³¹ herumwandern

³² Napalm: Eine Brandwaffe, die vor allem im Vietnamkrieg von den Amerikanern benutzt wurde und der viele Zivilisten zu Opfer fielen.

³³ verstümmeln

³⁴ darstellen

³⁵ Macht

³⁶ färben

Questions:

1. How is the white man described in contrast to the African man?

White man	African man

2. Why did the band choose to put drums and the rhythmical chanting at the beginning of the song?

KRS-ONE: Sound of da Police

https://youtu.be/9ZrAYxWPN6c

() Now here's a little truth	The officer will pull you over just when he's pursuing ⁴⁶	
Open up your eye	The overseer had the right to get ill	
While you're checking out the boom-bap ⁴⁵ , check the exercise	And if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill	
Take the word "overseer," like a sample	The officer has the right to arrest	
Repeat it very quickly in a crew for example	And if you fight back they put a hole in your chest!	
Overseer, Overseer, Overseer, Overseer!	(Woop!) They both ride horses	
Officer, Officer, Officer!	After 400 years, I've _got_ no choices!	
Yeah, officer from overseer	The police them have a little gun	
You need a little clarity?	So when I'm on the streets, I walk around with	
Check the similarity!	a bigger one	
The overseer rode around the plantation	(Woop-woop!) I hear it all day	
The officer is off patrolling all the nation	Just so they can run the light and be upon	
The overseer could stop you what you're	their way	
doing	()	

Questions:

1. Explain the comparison that KRS-ONE draws between the police and the overseers of a slave plantation. Write down your answers in the column below.

police	overseer

2. Do a quick online research about police violence against black people in the US. Then discuss whether this comparison is justified or not.

You might want to watch with your class a short documentary of the New York Times about Georges Floyd. Link: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vksEJR9EPQ8</u> (Title: How George Floyd Was Killed in

Link: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vksEJR9EPQ8</u> (Title: How George Floyd Was Killed Police Custody | Visual Investigations) – Note that the video contains violence.

Extract from the song "Escape from Babylon" by Paris

Paris (Rapper)



Oscar Jackson Jr. (born October 29, 1967), better known by his stage name Paris, is an American rapper from San Francisco, California, known for his highly charged political and socially conscious lyrics. Influenced by the Black Panthers, he was once a member of the Nation of Islam.

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_(rapper))

Escape from Babylon https://youtu.be/S8vaYDDOfBc

'The only politics in this country that's relevant to black people today

is the politics of revolution. None other.' (...)

5 Call to arms, revolution's in the house

Unforgettable the words of wisdom

Brought to life by the ten point system

- * ONE: Freedom and power to determine our destiny
- * TWO: Full employment for the black community
- 10 * THREE: Fight the capitalist with a raised fist
 - P.U.I. black and stack awareness
 - * FOUR: Decent housing for the shelter of human beings
 - * FIVE: Education and truth for the black youth
 - * SIX: All black men exempt from military service
- 15 Hear my words and get nervous

* SEVEN: A quick end to police brutality

Death of blacks at the hands of the P.D.

* EIGHT: Release of all black men who are held in prison;

guilty 'fore proven innocent

20 * NINE: Black juries when our brothers are tried in courtAnd in addition to all this we want

* TEN: Land bread and housing and education

Clothing justice and peace for the black nation

Questions

Put this text in a cultural context by answering the following questions:

 a.) What do the words "revolution", "capitalist", "raised fist", "stack awareness", "land bread and housing and education" reveal about the political position of the poet?
 b.) Do a quick online research about the "ten point system".

2. What kind of injustices against the "black community" does the text reveal and denounce? Try to explain them.

Malcolm X: "The house Negro and the field Negro"

Speech to SNCC workers, Selma, Alabama, Feb. 4, 1965

There were two kinds of slaves. There was the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negroes – they lived in the house with master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good 'cause they ate his food — what he left. They lived in the attic⁴⁷ or the basement, but still they lived near the master; and they loved their master more than the master loved himself.

5 They would give their life to save the master's house quicker than the master would. The house Negro, if the master said, "We got a good house here," the house Negro would say, "Yeah, we got a good house here."

Whenever the master said "we," he said "we." That's how you can tell a house Negro. If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze⁴⁸ out than

- 10 the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, "What's the matter, boss, we sick?" We sick! He identified himself with his master more than his master identified with himself. And if you came to the house Negro and said, "Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate," the house Negro would look at you and say, "Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food
- 15 than this?" That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger." And that's what we call him today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

This modern house Negro loves his master. He wants to live near him. He'll pay three times as much as the house is worth just to live near his master, and then brag about⁴⁹ "I'm the only Negro out here." "I'm the only one on my job." "I'm the only one in this school." You're nothing

20 but a house Negro. And if someone comes to you right now and says, "Let's separate," you say the same thing that the house Negro said on the plantation⁵⁰. "What you mean, separate? From America? This good white man? Where you going to get a better job than you get here?" I mean, this is what you say. "I ain't left nothing in Africa," that's what you say. Why, you left your mind in Africa.

25

On that same plantation, there was the field Negro. The field Negro — those were the masses.

⁴⁷ Speicher

⁴⁸ Feuer

⁴⁹ prahlen

⁵⁰ Plantage

There were always more Negroes in the field than there was Negroes in the house. The Negro in the field caught hell. He ate leftovers. In the house they ate high up on the hog⁵¹. The Negro in the field didn't get nothing but what was left of the insides of the hog⁵². They call 'em "chitt'lin'" nowadays.

30 In those days they called them what they were: guts⁵³. That's what you were — a gut-eater. And some of you all still gut-eaters.

The field Negro was beaten from morning to night. He lived in a shack⁵⁴, in a hut; He wore old, castoff⁵⁵ clothes. He hated his master. I say he hated his master. He was intelligent. That house Negro loved his master. But that field Negro — remember, they were in the majority,

- 35 and they hated the master. When the house caught on fire, he didn't try and put it out; that field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze. When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die. If someone come to the field Negro and said, "Let's separate, let's run," he didn't say "Where we going?" He'd say, "Any place is better than here." You've got field Negroes in America today. I'm a field Negro. The masses are the field Negroes. When they see this man's house on fire, you
- don't hear these little Negroes talking about "our government is in trouble." They say, "The government is in trouble." Imagine a Negro: "Our government"! I even heard one say "our astronauts." They won't even let him near the plant and "our astronauts"! "Our Navy" that's a Negro that's out of his mind. That's a Negro that's out of his mind.
 Just as the slave-master of that day used Tom⁵⁶, the house Negro, to keep the field Negroes in check,
- 45 the same old slave-master today has Negroes who are nothing but modern Uncle Toms, 20th century Uncle Toms, to keep you and me in check, keep us under control, keep us passive and peaceful and nonviolent. That's Tom making you nonviolent. It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So he squirts⁵⁷ some stuff in your jaw⁵⁸ called Novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to

)

⁵¹ Luxuriös leben

⁵² Schwein

⁵³ Innereien

⁵⁴ Baracke/Hütte

⁵⁵ Abgelegt, alt

⁵⁶ Uncle Tom: Uncle Tom is the title character of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin. The character was seen by many readers as a ground-breaking humanistic portrayal of a slave, one who uses nonresistance and gives his life to protect others who have escaped from slavery. However, the character also came to be seen (...) as inexplicably kind to white slaveholders. This led to the use of Uncle Tom – sometimes shortened to just a Tom – as a derogatory epithet for an exceedingly subservient person or house negro, particularly one aware of their own lower-class racial status. (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncle_Tom

⁵⁷ spritzen

⁵⁸ Kiefer

50 you. So you sit there and 'cause you've got all of that Novocaine in your jaw, you suffer peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. 'Cause someone has taught you to suffer — peacefully.

(Source: https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/message-to-the-grassroots-speech-transcript-malcolm-x)

Questions:

1. Compare the so-called "house Negro" to the "field Negro".

"House Negro"	"Field Negro"

2. What is Malcolm X's view on nonviolent protest?

3. Can you understand his point of view?

Sources:

Books:

Malcolm X Speaks. Selected Speeches and Statements edited with prefatory notes by Georges Breitman. New York: Grove Press. 1990. P. 10-12.

<u>Online</u>

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- <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_(rapper)</u>
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- <u>https://www.britannica.com/biography/Malcolm-X</u>
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- <u>https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Panther-Party</u>
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