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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2019 Volume II: Teaching about Race and Racism Across the Disciplines

Talking Back to Empire: Investigating International Issues & Human Rights With New Lenses

Guide for Curriculum Unit 19.02.02

by Leslie Blatteau

This unit focuses on the history and impact of United States imperialism. However, rather than relying on the dominant narratives that justify and defend the militarism, expansionism and capitalism associated with interventions, this work centers the voices of resistance. I have developed this unit for a 12th grade International Issues seminar with a focus on human rights. Through the use of counter narratives, I have addressed some misgivings about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the colorblindness associated with contemporary human rights discourse. Throughout the unit, students will analyze sources and find evidence of the dominant and counter narratives in the study of international issues. For example, while learning about the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary, students will study the life and work of Cuban revolutionary José Martí. While learning about the U.S. overthrow of the democratically elected leaders in Central America, they will investigate the Black Panthers' presence in international politics. While learning about the origins of the War Resisters' League, they will read the work of Latina women resisting war on their own terms. By engaging with primary sources in this way, students will uncover lost alternatives and recognize the impact of the work of historians in times of crisis in the past and present.

(Developed for International Issues/Social Studies, grade 12; recommended for Global Studies, World History, U. S. History, and Latin American Studies, grades 7-12)

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