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Blacks In Nature...Oxymoron or Paradox?

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Introduction

Imagine police (or the governmental equivalent) being called about a black man in “nature.” In your mind’s eye, what do you see? If I could step back in America’s history with all its splendor, I would venture that some of your responses might include...in the 1830s “an escaped slave in the woods of Georgia”...1860s “a California freedman being forcibly removed by a sheriff from farmland he has occupied and tilled from seed to harvest for the last five years based on a white settler’s claim”...1938 “a Negro man given a traffic citation by a Maryland trooper for being unsafe with a motor vehicle because he was taking pictures at the peak of Negro Mountain”...1955 “the body of Emmett Till being dragged from the Tallahatchie River of Mississippi”...or perhaps you saw in 2020 “video footage of “Karen’s” call to police reporting feelings of being unsafe in New York City’s Central Park because of African American, Christian Cooper’s birdwatching...

This prospective unit, entitled, Blacks in Nature...Oxymoron or Paradox? based on the seminar Social Struggles of Black Contemporary Art is intended to create a body of work to present students with an opportunity to gain language to discuss issues and concepts related to the “whiteness” in nature. It is an attempt to counter the “whiteness” of the environmental justice movement, by exposing students to a diversity of art, literature and nonfictional texts defining, documenting, examining, challenging, and elaborating the presence of nonwhites in nature text by illuminating its convergence with land and the Civil Rights’ movement. Students will be afforded an opportunity to examine the foundations and assumptions made of the various text as well as the basis of their own as it relates to the inclusion of nonwhites in and the study of nature and the environmental justice movement.

This curriculum uses reflective writing, visual creation, small and whole group discussions to explore the concept of nature and the environment as a human construct. Using art, literature and nonfiction texts, students will be asked to critically analyze ideas of nature, preservation of wilderness, and endangered species against the human concerns of hunger, toxic waste, culture, and urban planning in the context of environmental justice. Students will have an opportunity to critically analyze perceptions, foundations, and/or myths contained or on which the various text is constructed.

The curriculum forces students not only to gather information about nature as a concept from fictional narratives and historical, sociological, and economic essays but it asks them to expend synergistic energy to

evaluate various expressions to develop agency, to determine the presence and role of nonwhites in nature and the environmental justice movement. Using critical analysis of text and related concepts (both visual and literary), students will garner a greater appreciation of both their connection and envision a greater potential role in the environmental justice movement. Further supported by a myriad of representations of art, literature, and nonfiction text featuring artists and writers of color the curriculum documents the presence of nonwhites in nature and the environmental justice movement. By extending personal connections to nature to nonwhite students, they will shift their perception from passive recipients of environmental injustices to members of a larger environmental justice community where they are active and viable change agents within a larger global community.

Rationale

Literature helps us cultivate an understanding that those who may appear dissimilar share many of the same problems and possibilities.² Through literature, we can vicariously experience what a character is experiencing, challenge our own thinking based on a characters' actions and emotions, think critically about an issue, grow as a person, and become more empathetic and educated. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire defines critical literacy as the reading of texts with the intent to critically examine and question the social, political, and economic conditions of the society in which the texts were written.¹ Critical literacy practices encourage readers to examine texts deeply to identify an author's stance and include perceived themes of social justice.³ According to Ladson-Billings, culturally responsive teaching uses students' cultural knowledge to support their learning. It empowers students by valuing the students' respective identities, experiences, and norms in ways that improve their literacy outcomes. This occurs because the dynamic transactions between reader and text, through which meaning is made are facilitated when the reader has more relevant cultural knowledge that aligns with the text. Lack of accessibility to culturally diverse children's literature privileges white students and marginalizes nonwhite students.⁴

Using culturally relevant texts (crt) is especially beneficial for culturally and linguistically diverse students.⁵ According to numerous research studies, well-matched crt can help readers construct meaning because they can draw from their background knowledge to make predictions and inferences, emergent bilingual middle school students had fewer miscues and higher comprehension when reading stories and African American middle grade students who were reading well below grade level made significant gains and contributed to the positive shaping of identities.⁶ In order to align with culturally relevant pedagogy, educators must be willing to expand mainstream views/concepts of environmental justice, community and nature to include students' lived experiences, honors and affirms their cultural identities, and empowers young people to engage in social change in their own communities.⁷ Without a platform for personal sharing and critical conversations that this curriculum includes, it would be easy for some students to leave with an appreciation of nature and the environmental justice movement but an appreciation of the inclusion and the role of their respective communities.⁸

Teachers can serve as guides with questions, writing prompts, works of art modeling how to frame discussion topics for informal or formal whole and small group discussions or reflective writing. An equally important part of this authentication process is building and bridging student connections which may be achieved by connecting with community groups. During this phase, teachers can lead students toward avenues of possible

expansion of how they define nature and environmental justice and examine the context in which their respective constructs were contrived. Teachers can present examples of how others similarly situated as those in the foundational text created other opportunities, exercised choices, or alternate outcomes within the various contexts. Using this methodology, students are being asked to reflect on the origins of their respective constructs of nature and appreciate the construct's malleability, reevaluate future choice implications, and create opportunities for themselves to build on their existing cultural skills.^{9, 10, 11}

These student skills and networks can be thought of as forms of currency or capital. A literature review by Locke et al cites sources showing that students from traditionally marginalized groups (TMG) come to school with various forms of capital that are often not recognized or valued by schools.¹² Additionally, they cite other research that illustrates that achievement comes at significant personal and community costs for students from TMGs.¹³ This curriculum unit hopes to maximize student capital while minimizing the costs to a student as a member of a particular cultural, racial, and/or linguistic group. It is hoped that this curriculum will assist in the increase of both student agency and achievement.

Often students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds find their images are missing in their classrooms and the materials from which they are taught. Even when images are present, they represent a stereotypical view of their culture and position their ways of knowing and communicating as deficient or obstacles to their success. These students walk a tightrope between their communities and school expectations, and teachers are responsible for helping them bridge the two. Applying asset pedagogies which are culturally sustaining and reimagining students' local knowledge as assets to their learning is necessary. It is a pedagogy focused on a student's right to their own language, keeping their community and cultural ways of communicating while allowing them to pick up mainstream communication styles without sacrificing their culture.¹⁴

Critical Race Theory

Students should be treated equitably. However, structural and experiential inequities can create racial injustice. Racism and its intersections with gender, class, language, and immigration status may hinder educational experiences. Stereotypes and assumptions may lead to marginalizing policies limiting exposure to advanced curriculum causing students of color to be disproportionately represented in low level academic tracks.

The main tenets of Critical Race Theory,¹⁵ (CRT) include: a) racism is an ordinary and not aberrational; b) white and "other" interest convergence; c) race is a social construct; d) each group has a unique voice to share its story or counter-story; and e) whites as a dominant group have benefited from different racializations of the "other." Originally developed to address Civil Rights issues of African Americans, other groups who share its basic tenets have adopted and expanded this concept beyond the black-white binary to address the needs of their specific populations.¹⁶ CRT values "experiential knowledge" which informs both thinking and research. Expanding this context is to include the needs of specific populations. Implicit in this expansion is the idea "valuing" others and their experiences allows for the integration of additional lenses for oppression stemming from colonization, immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture.

LatCrit builds on and specifically addresses situations in which Latinx find themselves in everyday life, including immigration, language, identity, culture, and skin color.¹⁷ Both CRT and LatCrit frameworks share several core tenets: a) permanence of racism, b) interest convergence, c) color blindness, and d) counter storytelling.¹⁸ However, the tenet of permanence of racism sometimes applies differently to Latinx in that the federal court have ruled that in some instances Latinx should be considered white. However, language and racial linguistic ideologies continue to subordinate Latinx. Both CRT and LatCrit challenge the objectivity, meritocracy, racial equality and color blindness of the dominant ideology and its educational discourses.¹⁹

AsianCrit emphasizes and critiques the nativistic racism embedded in the model minority stereotype, immigration and naturalization, language, and disenfranchisement issues that relate to Asian people in the United States.²⁰ Its tenets include (a) Asianization (Asians as foreigners and as the model minority); (b) transnational context (how the lives of Asian Americans were and are shaped not only by national and transnational contexts such as US imperialism, the emergence of global economies, international war, and migration); (c) (re)constructive history (seeks to transcend invisibility by constructing a collective Asian American historical narrative); (d) strategic (anti)essentialism (dualing the oppressive nature of pan-ethnicity against identity politics used to empower the disempowered); (e) intersectionality-- acknowledging the intersection of systems of social oppression; (f) story, theory, and praxis (bringing the voices of Asian Americans and works of Asian American scholars to deconstruct and reconstruct the discourse; and (g) commitment to social justice.

Tribal Crit emphasizes that colonization is endemic to society as its primary tenet while acknowledging the role of racism.²¹ It holds that the concept of race alone does not address American Indians' "liminality as both legal/political and racialized beings or the experience of colonization." TribalCrit provides a theoretical lens for addressing many of the issues facing American Indian communities today, including issues of language shift and language loss, natural resources management, the lack of students graduating from colleges and universities, the overrepresentation of American Indians in special education, and power struggles between federal, state, and tribal governments.²²

The telling of counter narratives serves to demonstrate the role of voice. Teachers assist students by providing a space for students to name their own reality and provide an outlet to create unique experiences. In this manner, teachers assist students to discover that black concepts like race are socially constructed. Educators can assist students to discover ways to circumvent barriers associated with underrepresentation.²³ By appreciating the power of collective memory shaping the environment, teachers can help legitimate and provides a forum for students to examine the ideologies, beliefs, myths, and experiences of their view of nature and the environment.

People of Color in Nature?

Since the age of Enlightenment, man has afforded himself the highest hierarchal value in relation to his ecosystem.²⁴ By doing so, he created and maintained a nature-culture divide, whereby nature was considered an "objective" environment (sans culture) and culture was considered a "built" environment (sans nature). This nature-culture divide creates schisms and discursive distancing between ecology and culture. Terms like environment, nature and wilderness perpetuate anthropocentric and exploitive practices and

prevent the realization of social and environmental justice.²⁵

When you hear the words environment, nature and wilderness do you conjure up? National parks, camping, traveling across country admiring the protected environs like those presented in Al Gore's book (and later movie), *An Unconventional Truth*, where he describes his travels across country with his wife and later his family..."²⁶ The movie references a montage of accomplishments of America-the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage and victory in World War II to convince the viewing audience of their capacity to do the work needed to save the future of the planet. When one speaks of nature, they generally reference the 3 W's: wilderness, the West and "whiteness."²⁷ The wilderness is depicted as a place governed by a natural order not the human orderliness reflected in rural and urban landscapes. The wilderness is sometimes referred to as a place of spiritual or political refuge. It has been described as a place to start over or an "Edenic" untouched paradise. Unlike the Old-World view of the American landscape, typical of the "Wild West," it is has not been agriculturally cultivated or impacted by the human settlement of white-European Americans. The "Wild West" was said to be the home of savages and beasts-a place of danger.²⁸

In some instances, "environmentalists are seen as "self-righteous, privileged, and arrogant" in their interactions with and ecocentric assertions to communities of color.²⁹ Some have remarked that African Americans are perceived collectively as uncomfortable with nature.³⁰ Perhaps this is why a search for nature and/or environmental writings by African American produces such a scant reporting. Are Africans Americans not interested in issues concerning nature and our environment? Do people of color experience the montage of America's accomplishments in the same way? Do they need convincing that they are capable of saving the planet? Or do they question whether this appeal applies to them?

Ruffin in *Black on Earth* highlights that African American activism in environmentalism dates to the Progressive era.³¹ She acknowledges that their activism presents differently than white European American efforts surrounding conservation and wilderness campaigns in that it is generally locally focused and framed as civil rights issues, such as access to urban parks, combatting air pollution, and protecting public health. She asserts the basis for these civil rights issues is the assumption that "environmental amenities and freedom from environmental harms are critical to the good life and should be available to all."³² This assumption informs the ideological roots of black politics and black thought and connects such with environmentalism from the periods of abolition movement through the Harlem Renaissance to the current environmental movement. It denies the misperception that African Americans are indifferent to environmental values and presents evidence of a rich tradition.

Carolyn Finney in *Black Faces, White Spaces* defines environment as "any outdoor green space, whether natural or constructed, insofar as it relates to environmental issues such as air quality, climate control, and species protection."³³ This definition of environmentalism is indicia of human engagement directed to some problem or issue. It is activity based or a stewardship of nature or its inhabitants.³⁴ Her definition of environment is much more expansive and encompassing than that of the romanticized view of the environment and nature.³⁵ This definition broadens environmental thought to include not only the natural environment but humans' relationship to it. This definition broadening allows voices of color to be heard. It also allows the effects historic events such as slavery and racial oppression and their respective past and contemporary effects to be included in the conversation about its relationship to both people and nature.

Both Finney and Ruffin redefine the nexus between land, labor, and liberty as it relates to collective consent, the passage of time and the property conflicts that arise as result of the triad.³⁶ In contrast to white

European American nature and environment writers such as Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, Rachel Carson, and Aldo Leopold, who saw the natural world as independent of human manipulation-- "untouched," Finney, Ruffin and other African American and Black writers hold that America (as defined by its political community) and its physical terrain is impacted by (and some go as far to say it is cursed with) injustice and is in need of redemption."³⁷ The black environmental tradition holds that slavery and post-Emancipation racial oppression place African Americans into a conflicted relationship with nature. They hold that African Americans view nature through an historical lens of coerced labor, ownership prevention, and impaired ability to interpret nature's landscape. Further legitimating this oppression was the development and promotion of a scientific racist ideology of an environmental determinism that insisted that blacks, as a race, had virtually no capacity for free creative action. As a result of this denial, both African Americans and the land have been scarred.

The black environmental tradition sees the evolution of private land ownership moving away from an individual's (corporation's) property claim to do whatever they wish with "their" private property to incorporate changes in what is deemed good for the larger community. It asks that the centrality of consent of the collective move away from the "absolute rights of ownership"³⁸ but asks that it include claims of stewardship.

Freedom is an important theme as it relates to nature, especially in the context of creative agency in relationship to nature. Being able to not only own land but do with it what you desire is part of the definition of what it means to be an American. Unlike the mainstream environmental tradition, the black environmental tradition sees humans as "active, creative, and co-equal partners in giving meaning to and redeeming the natural world. In the black environmental tradition, the central question is not how to protect the natural world from human interference but how to facilitate a responsible and morally beneficial interaction with nature."³⁹

The concept, ecoculture operates to decenter anthropocentrism and promote a more holistic human and human-ecology relationship. It is based on the biologically defined understanding of relationships within ecology. It holds that the relationships between human sociocultural systems and ecosystems are so intertwined that they cannot be separated or divided. Instead, it promotes an interdependence of life systems. Conceptually, promoters of ecoculture, see ecoculture as a potential "bridge" between the disciplines with shared goals.⁴⁰

The black environmental tradition seeks to deepen the American environmental discourse."⁴¹ By acknowledging that both narratives exist coupled with a historical recontextualization and close textual analysis of environmental justice criticism. This developing discourse offers a common ground for environmental history and ecocriticism to exist. This eco-historicism is a multidisciplinary approach that historicizes text within both a sociocultural context and environmental history. Claborn argues that history matters not because it complicates the history of Civil Rights and environmentalism but that it articulates the interconnectedness of the scope of the Civil Rights and environment struggles of today.

Environmental racism, a term credited to Robert Bullard, "father of environmental justice" is a subset of the larger environmental justice movement that originated in the United States."⁴² It refers to environmental policies, practices or directives that disproportionately disadvantage individuals, groups or communities (intentionally or unintentionally) based on race or color. The concept emerged when the Northeast Community Action Group, a group of African American suburban homeowners in a middle-class enclave in Houston tried to prevent the siting of a landfill near their neighborhood in 1979 (*Beans v Southwestern Waste Management, Inc.*). In their suit, they were able to document "ecoracism" with a finding that over 80% of landfills and

incinerators in Houston were built in African American neighborhoods.”⁴³

Additionally, in *Civil Rights and the Environment*,⁴⁴ Claborn proposes a supplement to the eco-historical method of analysis of African American literature. He proposes a Marxian and intersectional understanding of ecology and environment. He posits that a Marxian ecology places an emphasis on the “natural” whereby labor theories of value are not materialistic enough. A Marxian ecology recognizes that capitalism has a material limit—total economy of the planet’s ecosystems and that all value is derived from its metabolic cycles to fuel it and survive. An eco-Marxist reading of text should uncover the homology between human ecological exploitation holding that the same forces that generate exploitation and oppression, generate ecological damage. Citing Marxist text, “Capitalist production...only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.”

The challenge for integrated analysis is to go beyond establishing mere correlations among these intermeshed systems of oppression but to unearth points of causation, homology, and overdetermination in that the systemic oppression of historically and environmentally embedded groups and identities have multiple causes and origins. Not treating all categories as equal or that they create an artificial totality rather that intersectional analysis is more complete than atomized analysis of race and class.

However, according to Myers, Ruffin’s ecocriticism is incomplete. He asserts that it needs to include contemporary race theory not only for reasons of fairness and social justice but also ecocriticism that does not account for racism or include in its vision of a sustainable human relationship to the land that many perspectives on the nonhuman world that different cultures afford is necessarily incomplete.⁴⁵

Land Law and Policy Timeline

Just like the interconnectedness of ecology, nature, and humans, so too were the effects of policies and laws granting land to European Americans and the impact African Americans and other populations of color. As a new country, it was important to America’s development to claim, own, and control land. It was “manifest destiny”⁴⁶ that America would acquire land. In the period of the 1840’s-1850’s, European Americans armed with their belief of superiority and a mission to remake the world in their own image they surged across North America commandeering land despite current control held by British, Mexican, Spanish or indigenous populations.⁴⁷ As this land was “acquired” decisions were made by the American government in the form of policies and laws were made concerning how and to whom this land would be distributed and maintained.^{48 ,49}

In the making of America, Europeans were given land for their military service, and their willingness to settle in “uncharted” lands. Others were given an option to gain citizenship if the occupants were deemed from another country, and if the “country” was not another, they were offered treaties that were not always honored.

As early as 1681, a Pennsylvania colony governor, William Penn ordered colonists to conserve one tree for every five cut down.⁵⁰ While in 1872, Congress passed the Yellowstone Act establishing America’s first national park. And later in 1900 through the Lacey Act outlawed hunting in Yellowstone National Park and prohibited the transport of illegally obtained wildlife across state lines. Yellowstone National Park was

"dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" and "for the preservation, from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders. . . and their retention in their natural condition."⁵¹

However, Cora Tappan, a spiritualist of the time period would declare that despite the manifest destiny (God's vision for the procurement of all of North America) "a government that has for nearly a century enslaved one race (African), that proscribes another (Chinese), proposes to exterminate another (Indians), and persistently refuses to recognize the rights of one-half of its citizens (women), cannot justly be called perfect."⁵² Blacks of that time period (and other time periods) may have been inclined to agree with her considering it wasn't until 1865 that the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Civil Rights Act of 1875 guaranteed African Americans equal treatment in public accommodations and public transportation, later in 1883 cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court declared parts of the 1875 Civil Rights Act unconstitutional, including the prohibition of racial discrimination in inns, public conveyances, and places of public amusement, and Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 upheld the constitutionality of "equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races."⁵³ Congressional discussions of 1867 coupling land ownership (of lands taken by the government from former masters to be given to former slaves) with freedom and citizenship for former slaves never materialized in the form of forty acres and a mule as reparations for their involuntary servitude.⁵⁴ Hence, many blacks and African Americans were not able to take advantage of preemptions (transfers of land from the federal government to individuals, in the form of land grants, inducements for settlements, or "payment plans for the purchase of land"⁵⁵) offered European Americans for land ownership or enjoy the public parks due to questions of personhood and applicability of citizenship status and the associated affiliate rights for a colored person.

Civil Rights Timeline

The civil rights movement was an organized effort by Black Americans to end racial discrimination and gain equal rights under the law. It began in the late 1940s and ended in the late 1960s. Some legislative and movement event highlights include:

- July 26, 1948: President Harry Truman issues Executive Order 9981 to end segregation in the Armed Services.
- May 17, 1954: Brown v. Board of Education, a consolidation of five cases into one, is decided by the Supreme Court, effectively ending racial segregation in public schools. Many schools, however, remained segregated.
- August 28, 1955: Emmett Till, a 14-year-old from Chicago is brutally murdered in Mississippi for allegedly flirting with a white woman. His murderers are acquitted, and the case bring international attention to the civil rights movement after Jet magazine publishes a photo of Till's beaten body at his open-casket funeral.
- December 1, 1955: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus. Her defiant stance prompts a year-long Montgomery bus boycott.
- July 2, 1964: President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, preventing employment discrimination due to race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. Title VII of the Act establishes the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to help prevent workplace

discrimination.

- February 21, 1965: Black religious leader Malcolm X is assassinated during a rally by members of the Nation of Islam.
- March 7, 1965: Bloody Sunday. In the Selma to Montgomery March, around 600 civil rights marchers walk to Selma, Alabama to Montgomery—the state’s capital—in protest of Black voter suppression. Local police block and brutally attack them. After successfully fighting in court for their right to march, Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders lead two more marches and finally reach Montgomery on March 25.
- August 6, 1965: President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to prevent the use of literacy tests as a voting requirement. It also allowed federal examiners to review voter qualifications and federal observers to monitor polling places.
- April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated on the balcony of his hotel room in Memphis, Tennessee. James Earl Ray is convicted of the murder in 1969.
- April 11, 1968: President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act, providing equal housing opportunity regardless of race, religion, or national origin.

Although tumultuous at times, the movement was mostly nonviolent and resulted in laws to protect every American’s constitutional rights, regardless of color, race, sex or national origin.

Highlights of Environmental Movement

- 1929 -38: The Great Depression and the New Deal to overcome economic depression is linked with conservation and preservation.
- 1933: Robert Marshall’s The People’s Forests—a program to turn over private forests to government promoting access to the outdoors for people of all classes.
- 1933- 45: New Deal Conservationist programs—the Tennessee Valley which built dam projects in the western U.S, Civilian Conservation Corps, which enlisted young men to develop parks and wilderness areas; and Soil Conservation Service, which advocated the creation of soil banks and the prevention of soil erosion.
- 1936: National Wildlife Federation founded to conserve fish, wildlife, and other natural resources and to lobby for legislation to conserve wildlife.
- 1941- 45: World War II—environmentally served as the dividing line between New Deal responses to the environment and the modern environmental movement. Technological advances invented or brought into wide use during the war (atomic bomb/energy, DDT) posed threats to the safety of the environment and humans. Before the war, efficient management of resources dominated environmental thought; after the war, people began to emphasize environmental quality and human and ecological health.
- 1946: Creation of Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- 1948: Water Pollution Control Act—is the first federal law to deal officially with water pollution, authorized funding for state and local governments to identify and improve polluted waters.
- 1951: Nature Conservancy founded as a citizen’s environmental organization dedicated to purchasing and protecting the habitats of plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on earth.
- 1962: Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring is published. The book identified and discussed the environmental impact of pesticides (especially DDT), including their concentration as they move up the food chain and

insects' development of genetic immunity (requiring still stronger pesticides).

- 1964: Wilderness Act where Congress designated certain federal lands as wilderness areas, "where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, and where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."
- 1968: Indian Civil Rights Act mandated tribal consent in civil and criminal juridical matters concerning Indian lands.
- 1968: Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* discussed the negative impacts that the population explosion of the late twentieth century would have on food and other resources. It drew on Malthus's idea that the rich control their population, but the poor multiply.
- 1970: Founding of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created in the executive branch of the federal government for the purpose of regulating air and water quality, radiation and pesticide hazards, and solid-waste disposal, amalgamating earlier separate federal programs.
- 1971: Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act where Alaskan Eskimos, Aleuts, and Indians received federal grants, federal and state mineral revenues, and land in exchange for their agreement to settle long-standing land claims.
- 1980: Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was designed to preserve Alaskan lands and waters that have "scenic, historic, or wilderness values." It provided rural Alaskan residents with the right to continue a subsistence way of life.
- 1980: Conference on "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the '80s" in Amherst, Massachusetts, marked the beginning of ecofeminism as a movement in the United States and undertook to explore and act on the cultural connections between women and nature.
- 1982: Environmental Justice Movement began in 1982 a group of African Americans protested the designation of a landfill site in Warren County, North Carolina, for disposal of toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), initiating the environmental justice movement.⁵⁶

The Environmental Justice Movement (EJ) is a grassroots community-based movement that addresses the disproportionate burden of toxic pollution and lack of environment benefits/amenities borne by low-income communities and communities of color. From a litigation perspective, the movement has mostly relied on traditional environmental laws to address environmental disparities. But beginning in the early 1990s, EJ communities turned to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), as a way to address racial discrimination in the permitting and siting of facilities that release hazardous pollutants and cause environmental health risks. Section 601 of Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin by any entity or program that receives federal funds. EJ communities have utilized Title VI in two major ways: by directly suing recipients of federal funds in federal and state courts under Title VI and by filing Title VI administrative complaints with EPA and other agencies. Courts have set a high evidentiary bar where communities must prove discriminatory intent.⁵⁷

Literature

This curriculum recognizes the inter-relatedness of concepts race and nature as they present themselves in art, literature, race, history, law, science, and politics. It is not an attempt to simplify or prioritize intersectionality of the respective concepts. It does seek to make transparent the inter-relatedness and the diverse complexities of the concepts of race and nature as they apply to African Americans particularly and

people of color in general. The curriculum strives to assist students develop a methodology to garner a better understanding of how to critically examine visual and written texts. Through dynamic and interactive styled analysis, students will be asked to deconstruct and construct text in relation to individual and community placement, develop an appreciation of the mutuality and connectiveness between subordinated and dispossessed groups.⁵⁸

The curriculum will attempt to use a “transscalar critique” approach whereby “both big and small matters of concerns (for the student) may be discussed” without reference to a scale in either size or value while simultaneously adjusting the dimensionality of matters of concern by “zooming in and out.”⁵⁹ This approach offers students a way “think about questions of ontology and planetary responsibility while not foregoing identity politics and literary critique.” It is a methodology that will allow student to discuss concepts and their associative values as they are presented in visual and written presentations of nature, ecology, race, and writing in both fictional and nonfictional formats.

The use of an English/Language Arts or literature approach instead of a scientific approach to discuss the African American presence in nature “may seem superfluous in the hierarchy of ecological needs” but allows for the inclusion of myth according to Kimberley Ruffin in *Black on Earth*.⁶⁰ The inclusion of myths within the natural world, she contends is a powerful vehicle in the reconciliation of conflicts, contradictions and descriptions of both the individual and community reality and their respective history and behavior.

Based on a review of the literature, nature writing by African Americans does not seem to exist as a separate genre for African Americans to the extent that it does for European Americans.⁶¹ Fortunately, there are some collections reflecting nature and environmental writings from the African American lens.⁶² If the writer is a writer of color, then their writing is classified under the canon of X-American writing, where it is up to the reader to discover and categorize if the writing falls under “nature/environment-related” writing. As a result of cultural valuation of African American writings,⁶³ recent European American nature anthologies and edited older “traditional” anthologies now reflect a few African American and other writers of the Black diaspora.⁶⁴ In anthologies of African American writers, writings about nature and the environment may be found within such collections.⁶⁵ The format of the writings generally reflects the themes or writing formats featured by the anthology.

For purposes of this curriculum, I have defined African American literature and visual arts as works produced by those who identify as African Americans. I have used the literature and periods presented in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*⁶⁶ and *African American Art and Artists*⁶⁷ with some modifications (to include Black Arts Movement) to mark time periods when a work is said to have originated or the time period from which it provides commentary. Having fixed markers (even if arbitrarily created) provides a structure to begin a conversation about the temporality of literary and visual texts and the critiques about our present, past and implications for the future.

I am aware that this “broad stroke” characterization of literary works by African American, black, or Negro writers may conflict with other historicizing of such literary works but for purposes of this curriculum the locating of the works was more important than a present or past classification.⁶⁸ By doing so I believe the curriculum assists the reader locate literary text and the reader is able to determine using their respective lens whether the nomenclature is relevant for the work. It is also a way to contextualize text by examining the environment in which it was created and published.

Visual Arts

Just like African American writers, African American visual artists were not prevented from producing art but did find that their work was not valued in the same manner as European American artists.⁶⁹ As a result, this limited opportunities for their work to be seen. To be recognized as “professionals,” they needed to simulate European artistic styles.⁷⁰ Examples of visual artists who were considered successful include: Edward Mitchell Bannister, Robert Scott Duncanson, Meta Warrick Fuller, Joshua Johnston, Edmonia Lewis, and Henry Ossawa Tanner. Henry Ossawa Tanner was able to achieve recognition of poor blacks as subjects.

A 1913 Armory Show showcasing European cubist and modernist painters and the interest in African art forms opened doors for greater artistic expression in America. However, many African American artists felt interest in their work was in Europe and some were able to travel there to study. Emerging from artists demonstrated expressions of personal dignity and ethnic awareness period. Artists of this period include Palmer Hayden, Archibald Motley, Malvin Gray Johnson, William Edouard Scott, Meta Warrick Fuller, and Laura Wheeler Waring.

During the 1920s, after World War I, there was a growth of cultural activities and organizations in major American cities and the establishment of philanthropic foundations that supported both African American artists and art education programs. The Harlem Renaissance marked the first intense major activity by African Americans in the areas of music, literature and art.⁷¹ Artists began to assert new images of themselves and African Americans that defied the existing stereotypes of African Americans which in turn changed the image for others. Some of the artists of this time period include: Hughie Lee-Smith, Zell Ingram, Charles Sallee, Elmer William Brown, William E. Smith, and George E. Hulsinger.⁷² Aaron Douglas was considered the leading painter of this time period.

The WPA of the 1930s brought murals by African Americans to public buildings and exhibits in southern regions. Some of the artists whose works were featured included: Aaron Douglas, Augusta Savage, Charles Alston, Hale Woodruff, and Charles White, Richmond Barthe, Malvin Gray Johnson, Henry Bannarn, Florence V. Purviance, Hale Woodruff, Dox Thrash, Robert Blackburn, and Archibald Motley.⁷³

African American culture represented through art was an important goal in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Collaborations in literature, music, theater, and art depicted America from its social and political lens increasing awareness of African American’s cultural heritage. World War II and the integration of the armed forces brought hope and a sense of urgency for equality in all facets of American life. Seeking greater cultural and professional opportunities, many blacks migrated from the South to urban areas in the North. Artists documenting this migration included: Romare Bearden, Beauford Delaney, Jacob Lawrence, and Hughie Lee-Smith.⁷⁴

The 1940s and 1950s saw large numbers of African Americans being awarded degrees in art, as well as the continued studies in art both abroad and America, the end of World War II, and the beginning of the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation laws. While this period of social unrest unfolded, social and political expressions dominated African American art. However, while some African Americans thought it was imperative to “document, inspire, and champion the cause,” others believed social and political expressions should remain separate from art.⁷⁵

The search for a black identity and the expression of militancy were the most pervasive themes of black art in

the 1960s. Demanding political, social, and cultural recognition, and not satisfied with limited philanthropic support, African American artists looked for and developed alternative forms of exposure. In addition to the formation of galleries, community art centers, and galleries, art literally took to the streets “to meet with, appeal to, and celebrate the people.”⁷⁶

The Black Arts Movement spanning over a decade from the founding of the Black Arts Repertory Theater School in Harlem in 1965 to the demise of the *First World Magazine* in Atlanta 1980. It emerged in conjunction with a radical shift in strategies and protocols of the black liberation strategy in America. It was a “cultural wing” to Black Power rhetoric and agenda. It sought to answer the question “What would a “black nation gained through revolutionary means” look like? It sought to develop a national culture and correct the mistakes of the Harlem Renaissance which did not include the myths and lifestyles of the black community.⁷⁷ “Blackness” as a veritable liberation theology, “to be free to love Blackness” emerged. It sought to answer the questions, “Can art possess a “distinctive racial uniqueness?” and “Should an artist who is “phenotypically black” be compelled to devote herself to be an instrumentally revolutionary black cultural production-a functional art of the people?”⁷⁸

In addition to murals inspired by Charles White and others, the 1970s saw the development of “wall graffiti” starting in New York City by black and brown teens expressing loyalty and pride or sometimes just the “tag” of the painter or colorful cartoon characters and flamboyant lettering. By the end of the 1970s and 1980s, graffiti gained popularity and acquired value in the art market. Jean-Michel Basquiat, is an example a street artist “extraordinaire” who was accepted and became an art “superstar” in the mainstream art world.⁷⁹

By the 1990s mainstream museums across the country were sponsoring major exhibits of African American artists’ works or displaying collections and artifacts designed to appeal to black audiences. African American museums, who began in the 1960s still in existence include the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library, the Cinqué Gallery in New York, the Du Sable Museum in Chicago, the Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C., which transitioned to the Smithsonian Institution in 1984.⁸⁰

Artists of the twenty-first century confront the issues of race, beauty, and identity pertaining to the individual and within the cultural landscape. Examples of these artists include Kara Walker, Lorna Simpson, Charles Bibbs, Synthia Saint James, Barbara Chase-Riboud, William T. Williams, Richard Hunt, Raymond Saunders, and Melvin Edwards, Betye Saar and Leah Gilman. Although not an exhaustive list, these artists and others create to reach not only local but global audiences.”⁸¹

School/Classroom Environment and Identity/Curriculum

Rudine Sims Bishop uses a metaphor of mirrors and doors when she describes the impact of children’s literature on young people. She compares picture books to “mirrors” that reflect aspects of a child’s identity and stories as “sliding doors” that support children in encountering characters from different and unfamiliar backgrounds.⁸² Picture books serve as artifacts that convey cultural messages and values about society and help children learn about their world⁸³

School—a place where adolescents spend a lot of time—is an important context where adolescents’ identity development can be supported.⁸⁴ Different types of in depth and reflective explorative learning experiences can be organized to foster adolescents’ identity development. Such experiences can stimulate adolescents to explore new understandings or investigate existing self-understandings⁸⁵

According to McCullough, in her study of girls in an urban school found that girls use school and the classroom environments to negotiate and extend power over their relationships with boys and teachers.⁸⁶ However, she suggests that such acts of agency offer little resistance or opportunity to create systemic changes in the school environment concerning the understanding of sexism and strategies used when dealing with harassment from boys. Her study also concluded that girls’ acts of agency did not improve the conditions of the girls at their school. She contends that educators need to describe experiences of pain, oppression and suffering outside of the terms of victimhood.⁸⁷

EcoJustice education is, essentially, about reframing.⁸⁸ Its primary premise is the ecological crises that currently exists is the result of destructive behaviors and patterns of belief. These destructive behaviors and belief patterns reflect our “frames of reference” or mental structures by which understand our experiences. Frames of reference may be transformed through awareness and the critical reflection of one’s own and others’ assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs and habits of mind or points of view are based.⁸⁹ Reframing is a social process requiring group deliberation and problem solving followed by action and further critical reflection.

Teaching Methodology

The curriculum is asking students to look beyond fact finding and use an inquiry approach. Using an inquiry lens, students are asked to systematically question and examine issues and principles raised by the text, and articulate different points of view of the concept of nature. Students are asked to examine the text in terms of its representation of African Americans and their role in nature. What words are used to describe them? How are they included? What choices do they make or are made for them? Where are they missing? Students are asked to explore and discuss the constructs of race and nature from both the text and their personal experiences. It is hoped that students will gain insight as to the fluidity of the constructs of race and nature as they apply these fluid concepts as what they define as community.

One way to encourage students to critically explore contemporary topics in the media and their world is to use literature. Acknowledging the social nature of learning and that middle and high schoolers are very social, a strategy that causes them to critically think and inquire, and discuss possible answers is a preferred methodology over a search for a superficial reading of the text. In this exploration, the role of the teacher is that of a facilitator. The teacher serves to implement strategies to target student dialogue. One such strategy is the Socratic Seminar method. By doing so, the teacher is still able to encourage students to challenge their thinking, while trying not to impose their ideas onto students.⁹⁰

Sosa and Bathena citing Dutro and Zenkov argue that students, especially those living in urban poverty contexts need spaces to tell their story in ways that challenge the deficiency perspective.⁹¹ Adopting this approach suggests a deviation from a traditional approach to literature to one where students are allowed to

practice required skills along a more participatory and transformative path. The curriculum seeks to allow students to discuss literature and nonfiction text in ways that allows them to draw upon “personal experiences, using linguistic and cultural knowledge, and enacting fluid identities.”⁹² This curriculum seeks to support student voice and make connections to students’ experiences.

Race and Nature...Connecting the Dots Through Class Activities

The approach of this curriculum is to use art to bridge contextual gaps between literary text, social/political history, and student knowledge by highlighting ideas for the student to guide discussions as they contextualize, connect, and develop language for their framing of the struggles of African Americans as they relate to nature and the environment. Using art with a quasi-K-W-L (know-wonder-learn) approach, students are asked to critically think and discuss visual art as presented and consider the ideas as embedded in respective visual or written text. After previewing the various timelines, students are also asked to look and wonder at what isn’t represented in the visual artworks, the effects of how a subject represented, and reflect on reasons why or alternatives to specific representation. Class discussions should center on not only how historical and cultural information is portrayed or disseminated in both literary and visual artwork but what may be missing or not being represented, and how narratives would be affected if the missing information is included or modified in the presented narrative.

Class discussions could be structured using the approach offered by *Six Thinking Hats* by Edward De Bono.⁹³ Using this approach may require some individual students to deviate from their comfort zones of seeking “a right answer” to consider ideas and concepts from multiple perspectives of a visual and/or literary text. Teachers as facilitators are able to maximize opportunities of synergy within the classroom group setting by guiding discussions through the various lens provided by the *Six Thinking Hats* approach.

Assignments for respective “hats” may be formal or not. From a classroom discussion point of view, I find it better to assign each individual or group with a hat to ensure that a myriad of perspectives are presented. The more students use this approach, the easier it becomes to shift from one perspective to another in their consideration of an idea or concept. Groups/individuals may be paired. One such group pairing may include: White and red, black, and yellow, and green and blue. Group discussions may be made to the whole group or recorded digitally.

Six Hats, Six Colors Discussion Perspective

White	White is neutral and objective. The white hat is concerned with objective facts and figures.
Red	Red suggests anger, rage and emotions. The red hat gives the emotional view
Black	Black is somber and serious. The black hat is cautious and careful. It points out the weaknesses in an idea.
Yellow	Yellow is sunny and positive. The yellow hat is optimistic and covers hope and positive thinking.
Green	Green is grass, vegetation, and abundant, fertile growth. The green hat indicates creativity and new ideas.

Blue Blue is cool, and it is also the color of the sky, which is above everything else. The blue hat is concerned with control, the organization of the thinking process, and the use of the other hats.

Class Activity One: Reflective Journal on early African American paintings

Guiding Question: What We Can Learn from Visual Text?

This activity serves to introduce the student to the use of the Reflective Journal and record their framing of their ideas about and concepts of race and nature. First impressions, interactions with visual and literary text, interactions and/or connections with class discussion operate to provide students with evidence of their metathinking.

Students are asked to view paintings by African American painters of landscapes and pastoral scenes depicting a romanticized version of nature. Students are asked to maintain a reflective journal where they record their impressions of visual art presentations, their responses to questions, and reflections about reading and class discussions. Students are provided with a land, environmental history, and literary/art timeline for their review and a context from which they may explore associative ideas or concepts.

- What do you see?
- What does this depiction remind you of?
- Why do you think the artist created this work in this manner?
- What is the message of the work?
- Do you think the work is effective in delivering its message?
- Reflections
- Follow Up Question: What is not reflect in the painting given the time period in which it was created?

Additionally, students should generate at least 3 questions that could be used for discussion or areas for further exploration. It should be impressed that students are creating primary sources and that they should be authentic and honest. Student reflections should incorporate initial responses to readings, feedback of peers and classroom discussions. The journal may be either digital or print. (This writer admits to a preference to written reflective journals (mind-body learning connection) and this may be accomplished digitally by having students screen shot written pages.) For group or class journals which are meant to be public conversations, original entries should be made first and then responses to others are made after an original entry—a way to ensure all voices are heard and limit “group think.”

Using *Six Thinking Hats* approach also assists students accustomed to the “one right answer” integrate or expand their thinking that allows them to organize a systemic approach to a concept or idea presented in a visual or literary text.

View and Reflect Activity One Artwork:

The following artwork features landscapes by African Americans romanticizing American frontier and/or a style reflective of the period of European and/or European-American painters.

- Flood Waters, Little Miami River (1851)⁹⁴
- Edward Mitchell Bannister, Landscape, 1882. Oil on panel, 16” x 22”⁹⁵
- Edward Robert Stuart Duncanson, View of Cincinnati, Ohio, from Covington, Kentucky, 1848. Oil on

canvas, 25" x 36"⁹⁶

- Robert Stuart Duncanson, untitled mural, ca. 1848. Oil on plaster, 109 3/8" x 91 3/8"⁹⁷
- Grafton Tyler Brown, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone from Hayden Point, 1891. Oil on canvas. 24"x 16"⁹⁸
- Grafton Tyler Brown, Yosemite Falls, 1888, Oil on Canvas 30" x 18"⁹⁹
- William A. Harper, Landscape with Poplars (Afternoon at Montigny) 1898 Oil on canvas, 23" x 28"¹⁰⁰

Expansion of Ideas Activities: Watch excerpts from the movie, *Buffalo Soldiers* (2018) for images of Hollywood's depiction of landscape, Native Americans, African Americans and relationship with white commanding officers. Additional, nonfiction resources may be found online through university generated documentaries, databases i.e., Britannia, bibliographic listings found in a 2019 study of the *Buffalo Soldiers* by National Park Service, Department of Interior, and local libraries.

Possible topics for student exploration

- Visual depictions of Native American and African Americans (fact or fiction?)
- The role of the Buffalo Soldier as a federal agent the of United States army
- Relationship between African Americans and Native Americans
- Role of women in war

Class Activity Two: Reflective Journal entry for memoir, *Mississippi Solo*

Guiding Question: Can an individual be "raceless" in nature?

Students are asked to read and reflect on their reading of *Mississippi Solo* by Eddy L. Harris¹⁰¹ excerpt (chapter 3). Author presents himself as a man first that is incidentally also African American, and he positions himself as on a man versus nature journey or his quest of self-discovery. Those around him alert him to his "blackness" and how others may respond to "his blackness" but he posits that his perspective of life his broader than those African Americans who are "too sensitive" about race. He argues that his perspective on life allows him to experience more than those who have relegated themselves to what others have proscribed for them. Students are asked to evaluate the credibility of the narrator's point of view about race and nature.

Do you believe that Harris will achieve the "social prize"¹⁰² of acceptance by all under equal protection under the law, if he "paddles his canoe" down the Mississippi River?

What do African Americans bring to nature?

How would you define a landscape? Why?

What do African Americans bring to nature?

What happens when you add people to the landscape?

On the last night before Harris enters the portion of the Mississippi River located in the South, he dreams of being attacked by dogs. As a result, Harris arms himself with a gun in his boot. The following morning, he sees a flock of geese or ducks flying overhead. He notes one "silly goose" that does not fly in the vee formation but "aloof and singular."¹⁰³

Interpret Harris's dream using elements of how he has identified himself as an American who happens to African American, his quest to discover himself, his locale on the river, and the flock of geese.

View and Reflect Activity Two Artwork:

Robert Scott Duncanson, *The Blue Hole*, 1851 Oil on canvas 29 ¼ x 42 1/4¹⁰⁴

Edward Mitchell Bannister, *Approaching Storm*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 40" x 60"¹⁰⁵

Kara Walker, *Gone: An Historical Romance of Civil War as It Occurred B'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Heart* (1994) Paper on wall 13' x 50'¹⁰⁶

Class Activity Three: What Does the African American Bring to Nature? (short story, *Ark of Bones*)

Guiding Questions: What do myths teach us about culture?

Students are to read and write their reflection of the story in their journals to the short story, *Ark of Bones* by Henry Dumas.¹⁰⁷ Class discussion will be based on what is culture and how it is passed on. How do we as individuals and as a collective decide what to keep and what to throw away?

Art Activity: After reviewing artwork featuring surrealistic art, they are asked to create and present to the class a poster reflecting who they are and what they bring to nature. In their class presentations, they will be asked to explain their posters to identify who they are, origins of this current self, and share any transformations that may have occurred to create this present self.

View and Reflect Activity Three Artwork:

Hale A. Woodruff, *Afro Emblems* (1950)¹⁰⁸

Al Hollingsworth, *Memorable Wall* (1963-64) Oil, acrylic, collage assemblage 6' x 4'¹⁰⁹

Emilio Cruz, *Straited Voodoo* (1987) Pastel on paper, 27 ½" x 30"¹¹⁰

Leslie Price, *Purusa*, (1971) Oil, 4 ½' x 6 ½'¹¹¹

Class Activity Four: What Does the African American Bring to Nature? (poem, *Between The World And Me*)

Guiding Questions: What are some ways African American writers and visual artists share their experience of nature?

Respond to artist, Rodney McMillian's description of landscape art. "It is a political indoctrination machine-code for propagandistic for Western expansion. It is not a pastoral scene, but a space associated with work, ownership, and oppression related to toil, rape, and murder."¹¹²

Reflective Journal entry on *Between The World And Me*, a poem by Richard Wright, published in 1935 that tells the story of a man's walk in nature one morning and encounters a lynching site.¹¹³ Students are asked to read and reflect on the question, "What Does The African American Bring to Nature?"

View and Reflect Activity Four Artwork:

Frank Williams, *Environment* (1987) Pastel, 51 ½" x 60"¹¹⁴

Vincent Smith (1972) *Negotiating Commission for Amnesty*¹¹⁵

Vincent Smith *Queen of the Nile*¹¹⁶ Oil and sand 42" x 54"

Betye Saar, *Black Girl's Window* (1969)¹¹⁷

Kerry James Marshall, *Bang* (1995)¹¹⁸

Jonathan Green, *African Tree Markings*, 2013. Acrylic on archival paper, 11" x 14"¹¹⁹

Edward Clark, *Wasted Landscape* (1961)¹²⁰

Equal Justice Initiative/Human Pictures. Jars of soil from lynching sites.¹²¹

Benny Andrews, *Black 1971* Oil 34 x 24¹²²

Expansion of Ideas Activity: Read and respond to the essay, *Black Women in the Wilderness* by Evelyn White¹²³ and compare any experiences or connections you make to the text.

Class Activity Five: Gallery Walk of the Women of the "Wild West" (novel, *God's Country*)

Guiding Question: What are some associations or roles of women in nature?

The purpose of this prereading activity is to determine prior knowledge of students, generate awareness of beliefs they may possess and begin a reflective process that they will build on throughout their experience with this curriculum. It is also a way to create student ownership in the learning experience.

It is also a way to direct student focus to the concepts of race and gender found in the fictional text, *God's Country* by Percival Everett. For inspiration, use the children's book, *The True West: Real Stories About Black Cowboys, Women Sharpshooters, Native American Rodeo Stars, Pioneering Vaqueros, and the Unsung Explorers, Builders, and Heroes Who Shaped the American West* by Mifflin Lowe¹²⁴ and *Dreaming In Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale.¹²⁵ Individual students will be asked to create a digital or print "Wanted" poster in response to the following questions:

1. Create or post a photograph of a woman needed or wanted in the "Wild West?"
2. Explain what role she plays in your version of the "Wild West"?
3. Comment on her limitations and strengths?
4. Describe how she became a success?
5. Pick her shoes. Why did you select those shoes? (Provide a photo of the following shoe types: a. moccasins, b. stiletto/high heels, c. sneakers, and d. cowboy boots)

Discussion Questions:

What are standards of beauty?

Do we judge women by what they wear?

What is success for a woman?

Are there strengths/limitations of a being a woman?

View and Reflect Activity Five Artwork:

Rahim Fortune, Shinnecock Powwow, 2018 Photograph¹²⁶

Rahim Fortune, Chichimecas, Inwood, New York, 2019 Photograph

Rahim Fortune, Cherokee and Lumbee brothers, Inwood New York 2019

Rahim Fortune, Dancers Gather Along the Hudson River

Charles Alston, *Exploration and Colonization (1537-1850)*1949. Oil on canvas 111 1/4" x 198"¹²⁷

Hale Woodruff, *Settlement and Development (1850-1949)*1949. Oil on canvas 111" 1/4" x 198"¹²⁸

Richard Mayhew, *Meadow*, 1982. Oil, 48" x 50"¹²⁹

Bernie Casey, *Orbital Moonscape*, 1970

Horace Pippin, *Buffalo Hunt*, 1933, Oil on canvas, 21 5/16 x 31 5/16in. Whitney Museum¹³⁰

Horace Pippin, *Night Call*, 1935, Oil on canvas, 28" x 32"

Lawrence Burney with Art by Gioncarlo Valentine, *The Enduring Legacy of Baltimore's Arabbers*, Photography¹³¹

Expansion of Ideas Activity: Read and respond to the 5/10/2019 Los Angeles Times OpEd piece by Gordan H. Chang of Stanford University, *Remember the Chinese Immigrants Who Built America's First Transcontinental Railroad*¹³² and *U.S. Inducts Chinese Railroad Workers into Labor Hall of Honor*¹³³ and compare the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American experiences with that of African Americans. Respond to the "celebrated" photograph commemorating the driving of the last spike of the transcontinental railroad.

Explore urban cowboying in Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Compton¹³⁴ . Read *Ghetto Cowboy* by G. Neri.¹³⁵

Class Activity Six: Reflective Journal entry on "reframing" nature in students' own communities.

Guiding Question(s): "What does (could) nature look like in your community?" or "What would your garden/farm look like?"

Students are asked to read/listen to audiobook, watch videos and then reflect on the concept of farming as presented in the visual text and supporting literary text. After reflection, students are asked to "reframe" the narrative for their present or future community.

Using novel excerpts:

(sugar farming) Chapter 19 of *Queen Sugar* by Natalie Baszile¹³⁶ or

(turpentine farming) *Georgia Dusk* excerpt from *Cane* by Jean Toomer¹³⁷

(cane and sorghum farming) *Sweet Tooth* excerpt, *The Cooking Gene* by Michael W. Twitty¹³⁸

OR

Using picture books (Although not authored by African American writers, the listed books either feature or are illustrated by a people of color):

Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table by Jacqueline Briggs Martin¹³⁹ (illustrated by an African American) children's biography about Will Allen, a 2008 MacArthur Foundation named innovator of urban farming methods for his Milwaukee farm including aquaponics and hydroponics.

The Secret Garden of George Washington Carver by Gene Barretta¹⁴⁰ (illustrated by an African American) children's biography about George Washington Carver.

The Good Garden by Katie Smith Milway¹⁴¹ is an introduction to food insecurity as a global issue. It is a story about a family who learn new methods of farming that transforms their lives.

What's in the Garden? by Marianne Berkes & Cris Arbo¹⁴² is introduction to fruits and vegetables and healthy recipes for kids.

Videos

Noah Trevor's reporting on President Biden's aid to African American farmers video (9:35 minutes)¹⁴³ .

The Young Black Farmers Defying A Legacy of Discrimination video (10:27 minutes)¹⁴⁴

Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table by Jacqueline Briggs Martin¹⁴⁵ (illustrated by an African American) children's biography about Will Allen, a 2008 MacArthur Foundation named innovator of urban farming methods for his Milwaukee farm including aquaponics and hydroponics.

View and Reflect Activity Six Artwork:

Romare Bearden, Untitled (Harvesting Tobacco) 1940. Gouache on paperboard 43" x 30"¹⁴⁶

Photographs from Ralph DeLuca Collection of African American Vernacular Photography c. 1879-1950¹⁴⁷

Charles Alston, Magic in Medicine: Study for Harlem Hospital Mural, NYC. 1936. Graphite on paper. 16 ¾" x 13 ½"¹⁴⁸

Charles Alston, Modern Medicine: Study for Harlem Hospital Mural, NYC. 1936. Graphite on paper. 16 ¾" x 13 ½"¹⁴⁹

Appendix on Implementing District Standards.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Notes

¹ Koss, Melanie D., and Concetta A. Williams. "All American Boys, #BlackLivesMatter, and Socratic Seminar to Promote Productive Dialogue in the Classroom." *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, vol. 46, no. 2, Spring 2018, p. 3. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=csl&db=mfi&AN=127989038&site=eds-live&scope=site.

² Freire, Paulo, and Myra B. Ramos. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Seabury Press, 1970.

³ Koss, Melanie D., and Concetta A. Williams. "All American Boys, #BlackLivesMatter, and Socratic Seminar to Promote Productive Dialogue in the Classroom." *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, vol. 46, no. 2, Spring 2018, p. 3. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=csl&db=mfi&AN=127989038&site=eds-live&scope=site.

⁴ Sharma, Sue Ann, and Tanya Christ. "Five Steps Toward Successful Culturally Relevant Text Selection and Integration." *Reading Teacher*, vol. 71, no. 3, Nov. 2017, pp. 295–307. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1002/trtr.1623.

⁵ Kibler, Kristin, and Lindsey A. Chapman. "Six Tips for Using Culturally Relevant Texts in Diverse Classrooms." *Reading Teacher*, vol. 72, no. 6, May 2019, pp. 741–744. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1002/trtr.1775.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kruse, Adam J. 2020. "'He Didn't Know What He Was Doin'": Student Perspectives of a White Teacher's Hip-Hop Class." *International Journal of Music Education* 38 (4): 495–512. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=csl&db=eric&AN=EJ1275076&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

⁸ Ibid.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=csl&db=eric&AN=EJ1275076&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Williams, Toni Milton. "Do No Harm: Strategies for Culturally Relevant Caring in Middle Level Classrooms from the Community Experiences and Life Histories of Black Middle Level Teachers." *Research in Middle Level Education Online*, vol. 41, no. 6, June 2018, pp. 1–13. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/19404476.2018.1460232.

¹¹ Hollie, Sharroky. "STEPS TO AUTHENTICITY: How Authentic Are Your Culturally Relevant Texts?" *Literacy Today (2411-7862)*, vol. 36, no. 6, May 2019, p. 30. *EBSCOhost*,

¹² Locke, Leslie Ann, et al. "‘If You Show Who You Are, Then They Are Going to Try to Fix You’: The Capitals and Costs of Schooling for High-Achieving Latina Students." *Educational Studies*, vol. 53, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 13-36. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/00131946.2016.1261027.

¹³ *Ibid.*

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