



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2025 Volume II: History, Science, and Racism: The Long Shadow of Eugenics

Identity and Latin Cultural Heritage: Elevating Voices Against Eugenics

Guide for Curriculum Unit 25.02.04, published September 2025
by Carmen Cordova-Rolon

This curriculum unit explores the challenges Latin American immigrant students face in balancing their cultural heritage with pressures to assimilate into a dominant culture that often marginalizes them. Many encounter policies and school curricula that overlook their contributions and experiences while depicting immigrants as threats or burdens. New arrivals in New Haven Public Schools undergo assessments that may place them at lower grade levels, perpetuating feelings of inferiority and limiting access to resources.

The way Latin American students see themselves is shaped by family, social, and academic structures, many rooted in eugenics policies of the late 19th century. Despite eugenics' significant historical influence, discussions around it are largely absent from the current school curricula, even though local research highlighted its effects as recently as the 1990s.

Through a careful selection of literature exploring discrimination, poverty, gender roles, immigration, and identity, this unit helps students understand how eugenics shaped societal attitudes and policies of inequality. By critically examining these themes, students are encouraged to value their ethnicity, voice, and identity. Ultimately, this unit serves as both a historical exploration and an intervention, empowering students to challenge eugenic legacies and contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

(Developed for Language Arts and Social Studies, grade 5; recommended for Language Arts, grades 5-6, and History, grades 5-7)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2025 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>