



Highways to Destruction: Oakland & Boyle Heights

Time: Two and half hours over Four-Five days

Grade Level: 9 -12

Purpose

The purpose of the lesson is to expose students to understanding of racial capitalism and to describe its impact on two communities of color during and after WWII. Students examine the construction of two California highway projects and their impact on the development of Black and Brown communities. This lesson is a comparative historical analysis of urban gentrification in Oakland and Boyle Heights. Moreover, students connect the concept of racial capitalism to urban gentrification and the destruction of communities of color. In addition, students will connect the history of gentrification to the current conditions in their communities today.

- Students will be able to define racial capitalism and urban gentrification.
- Students will learn how Anti-Blackness and Anti-Immigrant worldviews directly link to the physical destruction of communities of color.
- Students examine and analyze the complexities of racial capitalism and describe how it contributed to urban gentrification of Oakland and Boyle Heights, specifically describing how communities have been; affected, destroyed, unvalued and oppressed, and how it led to the creation of unhealthy environments.
- Students compare the intersectional experiences of black and brown people in the urban areas of Boyle Heights and Oakland and compare these experiences to the current conditions of their own communities.
- Using art, students will spread this knowledge of resistance to gentrification to their families, friends and community.

Unit Enduring Understandings Alignment:

- African-Americans & Chicanx/Latinx people have been systematically targets of oppression and that oppression includes corporate takeover of communities.
- The struggles of the Chicanx/Latinx people are tied to the African-American struggle for liberation.
- Racial capitalism has directly impacted the destruction of communities of color.

Lesson Guiding Questions:

- How have freeway developments projects contributed to the destruction of black and brown communities?
- How have the struggles against gentrification linked the African-American and Chicanx/Latinx community, consciously and unconsciously?
- How have public domain projects destroyed communities?

Essential Skills:

- Students will learn to critically think, write and discuss the term racial capitalism and apply the term to projects of urban gentrification in Oakland and Boyle Heights through discussion, writing short responses to questions and art.
- Students will be able to think, reason and explain how art can be used to expose and challenge urban gentrification of communities of color
- Students will engage in a variety of listening and writing activities on substantive issues facing black and brown communities impacted by racial capitalism.

Cultural Wealth (Yosso, p. 78):

- Social capital
- Resistant capital

Ethnic Studies Principles Alignment:

- Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native peoples and people of color.
- Critique empire and its relationship to white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, and cis-heteropatriarchy.
- Challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels.

History-Social Science Standards Alignment:

- 12.2 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.
- 12.4. Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.
- 12.9 Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political

systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles.

- 12.7 Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments. 5. Explain how public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and implementation of it through regulations and executive orders.
- **Economics**
- 12.1 Students understand common economic terms and concepts and economic reasoning.

Standards Alignment

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9; (CA ELD 2.I.A.2)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 (CA ELD 2.I.B.6a)

Materials:

<p>Slides Video clips (embedded in lesson) Student handouts</p>	<p>Writing Instruments Chart Paper LCD projector Computer</p>
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Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students :

Throughout the lesson, students are encouraged to ask questions and teachers may be required to accommodate the languages of students by scaffolding terms, creating collective assignments, etc.

Critical Vocabulary:

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept
Racial Capitalism	the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person, [for example].. in which white individuals and predominantly white institutions use non-white people to acquire social and economic value” (Leong, 2013, p. 2152).

Urban gentrification	The process whereby a poor urban community is uprooted and changed by wealthier people moving in, attracting new businesses, displacing current residents and changing community culture.
West Oakland	Western District of Oakland, California adjacent to San Francisco.
7th Street	Busy business strip of West Oakland.
BART	Bay Area Rapid Transit (subway system)
Slim Jenkins	Harold "Slim" Jenkins (July 22, 1890 – May 24, 1967) was an Black nightclub owner whose Cafe was popular in <u>West Oakland</u> from the 1930s to the 1960s.
Cypress Viaduct Freeway	The Cypress Street Viaduct, often referred to as "Cypress Structure" or "Cypress Freeway," was a 1.6-mile-long, raised two-deck, multi-lane freeway constructed of reinforced concrete that was originally part of the Nimitz Freeway in Oakland,
Loma Prieta	1989 SF Bay Area Earthquake
Bracero	An executive order called the Mexican Farm Labor Program established the Bracero Program in 1942. This series of diplomatic accords between Mexico and the USA permitted millions of Mexican men to work legally in the United States on short-term labor contracts.
Esther's Orbit Room	Esther's Orbit Room, which opened in 1959, the last of the "Harlem of the West Coast" jazz clubs in West Oakland. The club was located on 1724 - 7th Street and closed in 2011.
Boyle Heights	Predominantly Chicano community in southern California located close to downtown LA.

C1: Cultural Ritual and Energizer

Title of Cultural Ritual/Energizer: Their Dogs Came With Them

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1 Slide 2	<p>Land Acknowledgement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are invited to acknowledge the Indigenous land that you occupy in the chat. Why is it important to acknowledge the people and land that you are seated upon? 	5 mins

Step 2 Slide 3	Ancestor Acknowledgement Explained An Ancestor Acknowledgement is a way to express our appreciation to those who fought and suffered for our freedom, liberation and human rights. <i>Note: Image credit -Ancestral Voices: Esoteric African knowledge</i>	
Step 2 Slide 4	Ancestor Acknowledgement (Ron Dellum) Read the text in the slide about Ron Dellum	2 mins
Step 3 Slide 5 & 6	Cultural Energizer (Slide 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post the quote by Maria Elena Viramontes, <u>Their Dogs Came With Them.</u> Read the quote or have a student read it. (Slide 6) ● Have students respond to the questions below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are a few of the significant cultural, recreational and community structures that are important to you? What are they used for? ● How would you feel if the earthmovers used their sharpened metal teeth to remove them? ● What can be done about unwanted structural projects like highways beginning in our communities? 	

C2: Critical Concepts

Racial Capitalism and Urban Gentrification: Oakland and Boyle Heights

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Slide 7 Step 4	Critical Concepts: Racial Capitalism Read the following text and explain to student the concept of racial capitalism: Leong (2013) defines the term <i>racial capitalism</i> as the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person. Leong clarifies the term further by describing how it is a process whereby “white individuals and predominantly white institutions use non-white people to acquire social and economic value” . In this case of this lesson, we exposed how a neighborhood’s racial composition influences how corporations, urban planners, banks, and transportation	2 mins

	<p>agencies deliberately choose vulnerable communities to build highways that support most white and middle class commuters. According to () “race continues to define urban processes including the suburbanization of poverty, subprime mortgage lending, and gentrification”.</p> <p>Environmental Racism is another term often used to describe land use policies that target racialized communities for destruction, examples include exposure to chemical waste and poor air quality.</p>	
<p>Slide 8 Step 6</p>	<p>Critical Concepts: Urban Gentrification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and explain the following definition:The whereby a poor urban community of color is invaded, uprooted and changed by wealthier people or corporations moving in, often displacing family-owned business or residents by building more profit-driven industries 2. Explain to students that they will be taking notes as they listen to the conversation on the story about Oakland and Boyle Heights Post WWII. 3. Student handout for taking notes 	<p>3 minutes</p>
<p>Slide 9 & 10 Step 8</p>	<p>Connections Oakland and Boyle Heights (Slide 8) History of Oakland (Slide 9)</p> <p>Read the following text and explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oakland California was founded in 1852, located east of San Francisco and the largest city in Alameda County. ● Oakland became the transportation hub of the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1870’s and was declared the final link to America’s first transcontinental railroad. ● All trains led to Oakland California. ● Daily trans-continental travelers took the Ferry from Oakland to San Francisco which turned Oakland into a boom town almost overnight. 	<p>3 minutes</p>
<p>Slide 11/ Step 9</p>	<p>WWII in Oakland, CA</p> <p>Read the following text and explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WWII created an abundance of shipyards jobs like the Moore Dry Dock Company. In addition, there was an increase in blue collar occupations such as welding that created large waves of immigration. 	<p>3 minutes</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trains to Oakland carried soldiers to Naval ships destined for the Pacific. ● Baracero’s from Mexico and other Latin American countries were contracted to work on the railways and trains, bringing opportunity and immigrants. ● This also brought an influx of African-Americans from the South. 	
<p>Slide 12&13 Step 9</p>	<p>Seventh Street (Slide 11) Read and explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the 1940’s Oakland’s Black population nearly quintupled when African-Americans fled the Jim Crow-era South as part of the great migration to work in East Bay shipyards. ● This boom led to decades of entrenched inequality and discriminatory housing patterns. ● West Oaklands’ 7th street became a thriving strip of African-American doctors, lawyers, pull porters, business men and women. ● Known as the Harlem of the West - Jazz clubs, Movie theaters, and Soul Food restaurants created an International destination for nightlife. ● Slim Jenkins, nightclub touted musical icons such as; Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole, Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, the Ink Spots, Earl Hines, Louis Jordan, and Dinah Washington performed for racially mixed middle class audiences. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Slims. ● Ester Marby, a former waitress at Slim Jenkins, started her own prominent nightclub called “Esther's Orbit Room,” with singers such as; Tina Turner, Lou Rawls, Etta James, B.B. King and Al Green. <p>Slide 12 Photos</p>	
<p>Slide 14 Step 10</p>	<p>End of the war Read and explain the following text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The end of WWII created an economic downturn which led to unemployment disrepair. ● Popularity of cars slowed the railroad traffic and the building of bridges slowed the need for Ferry’s. ● Oakland officials labeled the neighborhood a “slum” and a “blight” area as crime rates rose. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The US Housing Act of 1949 allowed redevelopment through eminent domain. ● In 1955, the construction of the highway leading to the Bay Bridge — the Cypress Freeway — cut through the middle of West Oakland, displacing swaths of Black and Brown families. Over 800 businesses were shuttered and destroyed, over 2,500 Victorian homes demolished, which displaced nearly 5,000 households. ● In 1960 alone, 500 more homes were razed to make way for the U.S. Postal Service Distribution Center. 	
<p>Slide 15& 16 Step 11</p>	<p>Boyle Heights (Slide 15) Read and explain the following text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boyle Heights was posed to become a “sophisticated white suburb” but the delay of adequate water supplies, bridges and transportation created the prospect of a location suitable for “urban apartheid”. ● <i>Note: Urban apartheid is defined as an urban area predominantly composed of people of color. These communities are often created as isolated locations divided by freeways, highways, etc.</i> ● Southern California created “restrictive covenants” directed at Chinese, Japanese, Jews, Italians and Mexicans. ● In the 1950’s Boyle Heights was a multiracial community made-up of Mexicans, Jews, Japanese, African American, Armenian, Italians—gradually becoming predominantly Mexican though multiracial, it was still segregated. <p>Slide 16 Photos</p>	
<p>Slide17 Step 12</p>	<p>Struggles of Solidarity, Struggles and Strife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timeline events in the Boyle Heights community. ● The Chronological timeline depicts a series of incidents impacting communities of color that often called for coalition building. 	
<p>Slide 18 Step 13</p>	<p>Beyond WWII Read text and explain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The deliberate proliferation of segregated enclaves 	

	<p>composed of migrants of color from the south, southwest and midwest, post WWII, lowered property values and thus, Boyle Heights became a key area for the construction of freeways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This caused the exodus of Jewish families which resulted in the solidification of the largest Mexican-American segregated and impoverished community in the nation. ● The construction on Aliso Village was accompanied with added state and federal funding leading to federal and state highway construction for “slum clearance purposes”. The separation of Boyle Heights was solidified by the 101 freeway. 	
<p>Step 14</p>	<p>Student Note Page on Racial Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remember, that students have copiously been jotting down examples of racial capitalism and urban gentrification. Student handout for taking notes ● Students share their answers. ● Teachers use chart paper or the white board to draw a venn diagram. On the left side of the diagram, the teacher writes Oakland, on the right side writes Boyle Heights. ● Ask for student volunteers to write examples in each of the sections (Boyle Heights/Oakland). ● Ask students to list commonalities in the center. 	
<p>Slide 19 Step 15</p>	<p>Community Cultural Knowledge: Resistance</p> <p>Teacher explains that often when communities are invaded by forces from outside the community, coalitions (alliances for combined action are formed by members of different constituencies with similar political interests) are formed in response to the invasion. These coalitions take-up issues like gentrification and the destruction of the community. Also, in response to the marginalization and racism, these newly formed coalitions share cultural, social and familial knowledge. Sometimes these groups form social clubs (race alike and multiracial) and meet in common places like parks, etc.</p> <p>So, while often experiencing racism and injustice, communities of color also preserve cultural and historical knowledge through the establishment of:</p>	

	<p>Teacher reads list on slide and asks student to provide examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Historical or Cultural Sites ● Family and Community Narratives ● Environmental/Recreational Sites ● Cultural/Political Forms of Protest ● Solidarity Actions ● Art Activism <p>This has occurred more recently as urban gentrification continues unabated today. Have students provide examples of sites of preservation in their communities. For example, Watts Towers, murals, urban hangouts, churches, etc.</p>	
<p>Slide 20 Step 16</p>	<p>In small groups students complete the chart on slide 20 Using the Venn Diagram (Boyle Height/Oakland) and their own community, provide one example of community cultural knowledge.</p>	
<p>Slide 21 Step 17</p>	<p>Freeway Racism Explain to students</p> <p>Is an example of how racial capitalism works. During the construction of freeways in Los Angeles and Oakland, urban planners deliberately selected black and brown communities to construct highways. These highways benefited commuters in predominantly white communities or corporations</p>	
<p>Slide 22 Step 18</p>	<p>Cypress Freeway Read and explain the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● June 11, 1957, the Cypress Street Viaduct opened and was the first double-decker freeway in California. ● The viaduct connected 880 to the Bay Bridge. ● However, the highway was built directly through the middle of West Oakland, cutting it in half, and along with the construction of Interstate 980 to the south, it further isolated the remnants of 	

	<p>West Oakland from downtown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Both the Cypress and 980 highways encircled West Oakland, presenting a formidable barrier of this redlined Latino and African-American neighborhood. ● On Oct 17, 1989 the Cypress freeway collapsed during an earthquake. 	
<p>Slide 23 Step 19</p>	<p>Mandela Parkway Read and explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Cypress Highway was completely destroyed after the Loma Prieta earthquake. With this tragedy came an opportunity for Oakland to revitalize a neighborhood and reconnect it with the rest of the city. ● However, with this tragedy came an opportunity for Oakland to revitalize a neighborhood and reconnect it with the rest of the city. ● A \$1.1 billion project routed the freeway along a more appropriate industrial area near railroads. ● Along the highway’s previous route, Oakland built the Mandela Parkway, a four-lane boulevard with a wide, green median that reconnected the formerly bisected West Oakland community. ● Mandela Parkway has become a new community focal point, promoting an active urban life. It also reconnected West Oakland neighborhoods. 	
<p>Slide 24 Step 20</p>	<p>East Los Read and explain the following:</p> <p>It is impossible to stand anywhere within the 2.2 square mile radius of Boyle Heights and not be able to hear, see, smell or touch a freeway.</p> <p>There were no dramatic standoffs with bulldozers and sheriffs, no storming of public hearings with gas masks and megaphones, and no congregation of angry housewives against the work of urban planners...</p> <p><i>Note quote is from the work of David Avila</i></p>	
<p>Slide 25 Step 21</p>	<p>Resistance Read and explain:</p> <p>“Organized models of protests failed to stop the freeway</p>	

	<p>construction, but “after the damage had been done, after freeways had gouged into the neighborhood, after the area had completed its mid century transition into the nation’s largest Spanish-speaking barrio.”</p> <p>Boyle Heights, once again, became the center of protest and organizing. The high school student walkouts of the 1960’s, the Chicana/o Moratorium, student and community activism was in the streets. The movement also impacted the arts world and “freeways earned a distinct notoriety in the emerging portrait” of East LA.</p> <p>Los Four, Botella and Healy, Judith Baca and others used the barrio walls and freeways to tell the story of the Chicana community, including how “progress” led to destruction and division of communities.</p> <p><i>Teachers should also explain to students that resistance to urban gentrification occurs in many forms. In this lesson, we take a look at the role of art as protest.</i></p>	
<p>Slide 26, 27 & 28 Step 22</p>	<p>Teacher should explain the concept of “Art Activism”.</p> <p>Art activism has occurred more recently as urban gentrification continues unabated today. Have students provide examples of sites of preservation in their communities. For example, Watts Towers, murals, urban hangouts, churches, etc.</p> <p>Art as a Resistance Boyle Heights (Slide 26) Oakland (Slide 27) Boyle Heights & Oakland (slide 28)</p>	

C3: Community Cultural Production

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
<p>Slide 29 & 30 Step 23</p>	<p>Cultural Production (Slide 29) Examples of Cultural Production, Art as Resistance in Oakland & Boyle Heights (Slide 30)</p>	

<p>Slide 31 Step 24</p>	<p>Teacher explains “Through this project, you will create a poster series that highlights significant cultural, artistic, social or meaning community sites.</p> <p>You will imagine the sharpened metal teeth of the earthmovers are about to destroy this site and use art as a form of political protest. The project will be a visual expression and an urban guerilla narrative and action.”</p> <p>Teacher reads directions for student project and students begin to construct their resistance project</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a site of particular significance to the community. 2. Discuss and write a 30 word statement of significance describing the importance of the site to the life of the community. 3. What role can art play in spreading information and organizing demonstrations against the removal of the site? What images come to mind that might be used to educate others about the importance of the site? 4. Develop a series of three posters to be used to educate others about the site. 5. How can you use these posters and your statement to educate and organize? 6. Develop a plan to protect the sites including a presentation to the community and elected officials. 	<p>60 minutes</p>
<p>Slide 32 Step 25</p>	<p>Gallery Walk Students stand by their work and explain the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the title of the presentation? 2. What do each of the images represent? 3. How does the image make you feel? 4. What is the message the image is sending? 5. Does the image adequately describe the importance of the site? 6. Is the artwork an effective tool for organizing? 	<p>20 minutes</p>

C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

<p>Connection: How is this relevant to students? How is it relevant to the unit? How do you bring back to the PURPOSE of the unit?</p>	<p>Slide 34 Questions for Conclusive Dialogue</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are some ways art and culture can be used to bring a community together? 2. What are some ways (past and present) that art has been used to call attention to important community issues? 3. How can art be a form of resistance or urban guerilla organizing? 	<p>10 minutes</p>
	<p>Slide 35 & 36 Resource Page</p>	
<p>Assessment: How will the students be assessed?</p>	<p>Students may present their research using a Google slide to the class or turn into the teacher. Students will review, discuss and compare findings.</p>	
<p>Evaluation: How will the effectiveness of this lesson plan be evaluated?</p>	<p>Students will be able to describe how transportation projects systematically affect people of color.</p>	

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