

Exploring Social Issues: Lesson Plan

Documentary Title:

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North dir. Katrina Browne. Co-Directors: Alla Kovgan, Jude Ray. Co-Producers: Elizabeth Delude-Dix, Juanita Brown. 2008

Topic:

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North is a unique and disturbing journey of discovery into the history and "living consequences" of one of the United States' most shameful episodes – slavery. Katrina Browne, a direct descendant of Mark Anthony DeWolf, the first slaver in the DeWolf family, took the unusual step of writing to 200 descendants inviting them to journey with her from Rhode Island to Ghana to Cuba and back, recapitulating the Triangle Trade that made the DeWolfs the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Nine relatives signed up. *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North* is Browne's spellbinding account of the journey that resulted. (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/about.html>. 2008)

Handouts: Excerpt on the P.O.V. website from the book *Inheriting the Trade* by Thomas Norman DeWolf.

Materials: Documentary, dvd player, computers, map handouts.

Target Audience: U.S. history class (high school juniors)

Goals and Objectives:

One goal of this lesson is to introduce students to a family's interaction with their past as they struggle to find out what it means to be descendants of the biggest slave-trading family in the North. A secondary goal is to give the students tools and information to assist them in making educated decisions about current events regarding reparations for the descendants of slaves and what it means for healing to begin between races.

Timeframe:

The curriculum will be conducted over three days. Each day will include 20 minutes of activities and reflection and 30 minutes of watching the documentary. The contact time totals 2.5 hours broken down to 1 hour

of in class activities and reflection and the 1.5 hour documentary. Reflection will be continued through homework assignments.

Activities:

Lesson One:

1. The Game of Status (20 min)

Objectives/Issues: Power, Status, Citizenship

Source: Keith Johnstone (1991)

Material: Pens/Paper

Stages: Choose a social situation such as a party, where different people meet and interact. On pieces of paper, write numbers 1–10 and tape these to the players' backs. Nobody should know what number they have. Start the improvisation and explain that everyone should treat the others according to their number. (People with the number 1 have the highest status and those with 10 the lowest status). After a few minutes ask the participants to line up in order from 1–10.

Discussion: How did people treat you? Did you guess what number you were?

McCarthy, Julie. *Enacting Participatory Development: Theatre-Based Techniques*. London, GBR: Earthscan Publications, Limited, 2005. p 69.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nyulibrary/Doc?id=10128939&ppg=77>

2. Watch video (30 min). Have students write down questions and sections they think are interesting.

3. Homework (Lesson Extenders): Have students use familysearch.org to begin to research their family's history. Have them begin to talk to family members to find out as much information as possible. (Cari Ladd, M.Ed. "Traces of the Trade Lesson Plan: The History and Legacy of U.S. Slavery". <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/for.html>. 2008)

Lesson Two:

1. Have students share how far they were able to trace their family roots. What new information did they find out? (10 min)

2. Have students share what was of interest to them during the first thirty minutes of the video. Use the below discussion questions to help guide the conversation. (10 min)

3. Watch video (30 min)

4. Homework (Lesson Extenders): Pass out copies of the excerpt on the P.O.V. website from the book *Inheriting the Trade* by Thomas Norman DeWolf. Ask students their opinions regarding the legacy of slavery in the United States. Have each student bring in a news article or an object that symbolizes this legacy in their minds. (Cari Ladd, M.Ed. "Traces of the Trade Lesson Plan: The History and Legacy of U.S. Slavery". <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/for.html>. 2008)

Lesson Three:

1. Discuss the articles found. What do they say about reparations? What do the students think? Ask the students to read some of the articles and have the other students take notes on what they hear (20 min)

2. Watch video (30 min)

3. Homework (Lesson Extenders): Charles Ogletree believes that reparations should take the form of a trust fund that would meet the needs of the "bottom-stuck." Other reparations leaders talk about the need for congressional investment in social programs, from housing to health care to education and so on. These views are more common than the way reparations are often portrayed in the media: as being about the government writing a check to every individual descendant of enslaved Africans. How is this media portrayal influencing the debate? What do you think could be the appropriate approach to reparations in terms of whom it should benefit and how? Associated with certain groups as opposed to seen as within all of us? (Cari Ladd, M.Ed. "Traces of the Trade Lesson Plan: The History and Legacy of U.S. Slavery". <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/for.html>. 2008) Have students write how they think the issues of reparations should be addressed and worked out. Have them use the information provided in the video as well as the notes they took while students were reading the articles they brought to class

Discussion Questions:

What does it mean to accept responsibility for the "living consequences" of slavery?

What would it take to repair black/white relationships and to move beyond the guilt, defensiveness, anger, and fear that often separate us and silence us?

As a nation, how do we deal with what we inherited from our country's history?

If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, who would you ask and what would you ask him or her?

What did you learn from this film? What insights did it provide?

If friends asked you what this film is about, what would you tell them?

Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?

(Faith Rogow, PhD. "Facilitator's Guide: Traces of the Trade". http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/resources_guide.php. 2008)

Resources:

Wrestling with Race and Racism

INHERITING THE TRADE

www.inheritingthetrade.com

Tom DeWolf (featured in the film) has written his own account of wrestling with the family legacy and what he learned from the trip retracing the Triangle Trade. The book's website includes Tom's blog and chances to engage in discussion with the author.

BEYOND INTRACTABILITY

www.beyondintractability.org

Beyond Intractability is a conflict resolution project at the University of Colorado. The website has amassed a collection of hundreds of essays, handbooks, interviews and organizational links related to the process of reconciliation and various approaches to conflict resolution around the world.

History

SLAVERY IN THE NORTH

www.slavenorth.com

Historian Douglas Harper provides a state-by-state overview of slavery in the North. His footnotes provide a good bibliography of major historical works that have focused on the North's role in the U.S. slave trade and practice of slavery.

THE UNRIGHTEOUS TRAFFICK

<http://www.projo.com/extra/2006/slavery/>

This interactive series by the Providence Journal explores the history of slavery and the slave trade in Rhode Island, including information on the DeWolf family and the town of Bristol.

**CITIZENS ALL: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CONNECTICUT
1700–1850**

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/citizens/stories/index.html>

The website, created by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition and the Center for Media and Instructional Innovation at Yale University, provides a scholarly introduction to the history of slavery in Connecticut, the process of gradual emancipation, and the struggle for citizenship rights by free blacks and abolitionists both within and beyond the state's boundaries. Joanne Pope Melish, who is featured in the film, has written *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and Race in New England, 1780–1860* (Cornell University Press, 1998). Anne Farrow, Joel Lange and Jenifer Frank are the editors of *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged and Profited from Slavery* (Ballantine Books, 2005). For a seminal article on the importance of slavery to the development of the U.S. economy, read Ronald Bailey's "The Slave(ry) Trade and the Development of Capitalism in the United States: The Textile Industry in New England," *Social Science History* 14:3 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 373–414.

Privilege

PEGGY MCINTOSH ARTICLE

www.nymbp.org/reference/WhitePrivilege.pdf

Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" is a classic article describing white privilege and a good starting point for those who are new to the concept. At this link you can read part of the article for free.

"WHITE PRIVILEGE SHAPES THE U.S." BY ROBERT JENSEN

<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/whiteprivilege.htm>

In this essay, journalism professor Robert Jensen expands on McIntosh's ideas and describes how he experiences white privilege in his life.

TIM WISE ARTICLE

http://www.tolerance.org/news/article_tol.jsp?id=722

In his brief article "White Privilege: Swimming in Racial Preference," antiracist activist Tim Wise gives a selected historical overview of common practices that have favored whites.

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/PublicationsSeries/RaceMatters.aspx

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Race Matters" toolkit includes materials and strategies to help people from a wide range of professions and perspectives examine privilege.

Repair

CHARLES OGLETREE ARTICLE

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3843/is_200301/ai_n9233895?tag=rel.res1

This link takes you to a 2003 speech by legal scholar Charles Ogletree Jr. (available in print and reprinted on the website from the University of Memphis Law Review), "Reparations for the Children of Slaves: Litigating the Issues."

"REPARATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN OF SLAVES:
LITIGATING THE ISSUES" BY CHARLES OGLETREE

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3843/is_200301/ai_n9233895?tag=rel.res1

Legal scholar Charles Ogletree, Jr. specializes in the study of reparations for African Americans. Available in print and reprinted on the website from the University of Memphis Law Review, 2003.

BROWN UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE

www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice

In the light of historical revelations, many institutions are only now attempting to come to terms with a terrible past. Brown University appointed a steering committee, whose findings and resources are available on this site.

NPR

NPR: WHAT'S BEHIND APOLOGIES FOR SLAVERY?

www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11828362

Learn more about how some governments, corporations and institutions are attempting to repair the damages of slavery in this discussion with New York assemblyman Keith Wright.

NPR: SLAVE REPARATIONS

www.npr.org/programs/specials/racism/010827.reparations.html

As Americans question the best way to heal the wounds of slavery, some suggest salve might come in some form of "slavery reparations". A 2001 series explores the history and nuances of the slave reparation debate in the United States.

(Faith Rogow, PhD. "Facilitator's Guide: Traces of the Trade". http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/resources_guide.php.)

2008)