



RELEARNING THE PAST: INFORMING THE PRESENT

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PURPOSE

- To understand the importance of history and its relation to the present.
- To be able to identify false narratives and investigate how they impact us today.
- Showing, through time, how racism has been maintained by the spreading of inaccurate and incomplete information.



WHAT IS RACE?

- Race: A social construct that is used to classify humans into groups (Anemome, 2011); race has no meaning independent of its social definitions; it is socially constructed phenomenon based on erroneous assumptions related to intellectual, moral or cultural superiority (Henry & Tator, 2006).
 - Roediger (1998): " The construction of the white race in the United States was an effort to mentally distance slave owners from slaves."



IMPACTFUL QUESTIONS

- Who is history for?
- What do we take from our history?
- Where do we keep our history?
- Why is history important?
- How does history translate into the present?
- What is power?
- How does power play a role in your daily life?



HISTORICAL FRAMING

- “Until the story of the hunt is told by the lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”
- The purpose of history, storytelling and perceptions of experience.
 - If you can control the narrative, you can also control the logical frame that is used to determine ethical and moral “right.”



WHY IS HISTORY IMPORTANT?

- Frames your perspective
 - “It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have.” – James Baldwin.
 - “To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.” - James Baldwin
- Culture: “the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group; the attitudes and behavior characteristic of a particular group.



WHAT DO WE TAKE FROM OUR HISTORY?

“People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them.” – James Baldwin

- Historical trauma
- Perceptions of people
- Moral and Ethical Compass
- Expectations
- Social Standing



WHAT IS AMERICA'S HISTORY?

How have the conversations changed through time? Where is the progress that we have claimed to make?

- Thomas Jefferson
- Abraham Lincoln
- Lyndon Johnson
- Richard Nixon



THOMAS JEFFERSON (1801-1809)

- “I believe that slavery is an exercise of the most boisterous passions, of unremitting despotism on the one hand, and degrading submission on the other. It teaches white children to be tyrants after the pattern of their parents. It destroys the will to work in white men and above all, it robs man of God’s greatest gift, and that is the gift of liberty. Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.”
- “I can say with conscious truth that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would, to relieve us from this heavy reproach, in any practicable way...but as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.”



ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1861-1865)

- “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.”
- “I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races...and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races from living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be a position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.”



LYNDON JOHNSON (1963-1969)

- “If you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he’ll empty his pockets for you.”
- “As long as your are black, and you’re gonna be black till the day you die, no one’s gonna call you by your goddamn name. So no matter what you are called, n*gger, you just let it roll off your back like water, and you’ll make it. Just pretend you’re a goddamn piece of furniture.
- “These Negroes, they’re getting pretty uppity these days and that’s a problem for us since they’ve got something now they never had before, the political pull to back up their uppityness. Now we’ve got to do something about this, we’ve got to give them a little something, just enough to quiet them down, not enough to make a difference...I’ll have those n*ggers voting Democratic for the next 200 years.” ***



NIXON ADMINISTRATION (1968)

- “You want to know what this was really all about. The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I’m saying. We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.” – John Ehrlichman, Nixon Domestic Policy Chief



CLINTON (1992)

“When we moved, I was told that using prison labor at the governor's mansion was a longstanding tradition, which kept down costs...we enforced rules strictly and sent back to prison any inmate who broke a rule....emotional illiterates.”



HOW DOES HISTORY TRANSLATE?

- #Metoo Movement
 - Soujourner Truth/ Tarana Burke
 - Dr. Christine Ford/Anita Hill
- Police Brutality
 - Rodney King, Philando Castile
- Housing, Land
 - Gentrification (Rondo, 94, MLS Stadium)
 - Tent City
- Internment Camps and separation of families
 - Japanese in WWII, Separation at the border
- #BBQBecky #PermitPatty
 - Segregation



“BEYOND VIETNAM”

- “A time comes when silence is betrayal...Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy...we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation unable to seat them together in the same schools...I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today – my own government...We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear.”



NEGATIVE PEACE

“First I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods of direct action;’ who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a more convenient time.

Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.



FALSE HISTORIES AND POWER

- What is power? How is power held?
- “Power” through false narratives is oppression.
- How are you addicted to power?



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- History reveals the dynamics of relationships.
- How do we build relationships with acknowledgment of the pain and suffering that it has been previously based on?
- RESTORATIVE JUSTICE – the importance of making amends in order to rebuild and move forward.



WHAT DOES OVERCOMING RACISM REQUIRE

- Understand the history and structure that it supports.
- Challenge false narratives; intentional language.
- Cultivating collective power.
- EMPATHY.
- Letting go of the addiction to privilege.
- TAKING INTENTIONAL ACTION



THANK YOU!

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