



Is this Justice or “Just Us”

Effects of Incarceration on Communities

Background

Imprisonment and incarceration are interconnected with who a person is in terms of race, class and gender. Racial disparities within the criminal justice system exist at every level, from arrest rates, to bail amounts, sentence lengths, and probation hearings and outcomes.

Focus: Students will move beyond just “passing the GED test” and explore how literacy encourages self-expression, self-development, self-resilience, and self-sufficiency. Focusing on self (the individual), the group, the community and society as a whole can promote change

Discussion Questions

- **Why is literacy important?**
- **How has racial disparities in mass incarceration influenced communities? You personally?**
- **What role does school play in imprisonment amongst youth? (School to prison pipeline)**
- **What are some ways we can combat mass incarceration?**

Objectives

- Students will begin to evaluate mass incarceration as a pressing social issue and examine structural, societal and institutional barriers that contribute to the problem.
- Students will identify ways that education and literacy can disrupt unequitable hierarchies of power and privilege.
- Students will reflect on the connection between mass incarceration, the community and their own lives.

Required Materials

- **["A System of Racial and Social Control"](#)**
- **My Daddy's In Jail Too!!**

Activities:

10 minutes: Warm-up

- Prompt students to guess what the title of today's lesson will be about.
- As a class, discuss what students already know about the topic. Ask what questions the students have about the topic. Write the questions on the board. Allow students to write the questions in their notebooks to answer later.



Before Reading

10 minutes: Vocabulary

- Have students define key terms using the handout. Allow students time to independently complete the word list and to define these terms using their own words and complete sentences.
- Explain and/or model word meanings in pairs or in a whole class setting.

During Reading

25 minutes

1. First Read "**A System of Racial and Social Control**". Have students read independently and silently, marking the text with **Thinking Notes**. Thinking notes are annotations (highlights, underlines or symbols) that students make to document their thinking during reading.
2. Second Read **My Daddy's In Jail Too!!** Have students do a guided reading from the article using a Venn diagram model. Students can work alone, in partners or small groups. As they read, students briefly discuss and jot down similarities and differences in articles.

After Reading

20-25minutes

1. Facilitate a class discussion that centers on the two articles that were read and discussion questions.
2. Have students write a small reflection on today's activity including what steps can they (individually and collectively) take to create a more just and equal society.

Background Knowledge and Knowledge Areas

[How the Tough on Crime Movement Enabled a New Regime](#)

[The Education of Prisoners: A Holistic Perspective](#)

Additional Resources and Lesson Plans

[http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/resource/chicago-defender-news-literacy-curriculum-lesson-7-
parallels-between-mass-incarceration-and](http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/resource/chicago-defender-news-literacy-curriculum-lesson-7-parallels-between-mass-incarceration-and)

[https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/parallels-between-mass-
incarceration-and-jim-crow](https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/parallels-between-mass-incarceration-and-jim-crow)

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/paying-for-crime/>

<https://readwriteact.org>



Vocabulary Word List

African American Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968)

Bias

Class

Discrimination

Jim Crow

Mass Incarnation

Power

Privilege

Stereotype

Racism

Recidivism

Jim Crow