Teaching Inquiry About Race and Democracy Through Primary Sources
“A Revolution is Based on Land”: Using Inquiry to Explore the History of African American Farmers

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Agenda

01 Land

02 Critical Race Theory & teaching economics & geography

03 Using critical inquiry to explore the history of Black farmers using primary sources

04 Taking Informed Action
Land Acknowledgment
“The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our labor—that is, by the labor of the women, and children, and old men—and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare... We want to be placed on land until we are able to buy it and make it our own.”

(Garrison Frazier)
“In 1875, African Americans owned three million acres of land. Five years later, they owned eight million, and by 1900, it was twelve million.” (White, 2018, p. 28).
“By the 1920s, Black people owned about a million farms—14% of all of the farms in the country. In the decades that followed, that number dropped to below 2%.”

(New York Times, 2019)
“The love you have for the land is unreal... and I want this land back”.

June Provost
"The oppression of slavery, land tenancy, and sharecropping is but one part of the story."

(White, 2018, p. 61)
“In order for any people or nation to survive, land is necessary”

-Fannie Lou Hamer
“Down where we are, food is used as a political weapon. But if you have a pig in your backyard, if you have some vegetables in your garden, you can feed yourself and your family, and nobody can push you around. If we have something like some pigs and some gardens and a few things like that, even if we have no jobs, we can eat and we can look after our families”.

—Fannie Lou Hamer
## Dimension One: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

**Is Food a Political Weapon?**

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<tr>
<th>Staging the Compelling Question</th>
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<td>Begin with a class read aloud of the book <em>Every Human Has Rights: A Photographic Declaration for Kids</em> published by National Geographic. The teacher can start by discussing the cover of the text and ask students what they know about human rights. What are human rights? Why do we have them? Do kids have human rights? What happens if your rights are violated by your country? The inquiry unit should begin reading and pause on right #25 “you have the right to food, shelter, and health care”. The teacher should pause and discuss with students what it means that you have the right to food? Do they agree or disagree with that statement? What is the government’s role in making sure that every person has enough to eat?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Supporting Question 1</th>
<th>Supporting Question 2</th>
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<td><em>What is the history of African Americans and the land?</em></td>
<td><em>What is a farm cooperative? What impact did cooperatives have on Black farmers?</em></td>
<td><em>Who was Fannie Lou Hamer? How did she create change in her community?</em></td>
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Geography

“... Developing a sense of place lets children know that they belong in the physical world around them and in the social and cultural world they share with others”
(Brilliante & Mankiw, 2015, p. 3)

Economics

“The discipline of economics is not primarily about memorizing items... it’s about empowering people to make thoughtful choices”
(Gallagher & Hodges, 2010, p. 15)
Critical Race Theory

(Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1989; Harris, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Tyson & Howard, 2004)

Counterstorytelling (Matsuda, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002)
A method of telling stories that aims to challenge the validity of the master narrative or myths held by the majority by centering the knowledge and experiences of communities of Color.

Critique of liberalism (Crenshaw, 1988)
Critique of notions such as color blindness, meritocracy, and neutrality of the law.

Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995)
Because of the history of race/racism in the U.S., the notion of whiteness can be considered a property interest.
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<tr>
<th>Economic Themes</th>
<th>NCSS- The College, Career, and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards</th>
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| **Slavery and the Economy** | Economic Decision Making  
D2.Eco.2.3-5. Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.  
Exchange and Markets  
D2.Eco.3.3-5. Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services. |
| **Sharecropping and Slavery in the context of wage earning** | Economic Decision Making  
D2.Eco.2.K-2. Identify the benefits and costs of making various personal decisions.  
Economic Decision Making  
D2.Eco.1.3-5. Compare the benefits and costs of individual choices.  
Exchange and Markets  
D2.Eco.3.3-5. Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services. |

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| **Blacks living in rural, urban and suburban contexts** | Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture  
D2.Geo.5.K-2. Describe how human activities affect the cultural and environmental characteristics of places or regions.  
Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture  
D2.Geo.4.3-5. Explain how culture influences the way people modify and adapt to their environments.  
Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture  
D2.Geo.5.3-5. Explain how the cultural and environmental characteristics of places change over time. |
| **Black farmers, sharecroppers, and farm cooperatives** | Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements  
D2.Geo.7.K-2. Explain why and how people, goods, and ideas move from place to place. |
| **Segregation, integration, environmental justice movement** | Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture  
D2.Geo.5.K-2. Describe how human activities affect the cultural and environmental characteristics of places or regions.  
Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture  
D2.Geo.4.3-5. Explain how culture influences the way people modify and adapt to their environments.  
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Staging the Compelling Question

● What are human rights? Why do we have them?

● Do kids have human rights?

● What happens if your rights are violated by your country?

● What does it mean that you have the right to food?

● What is the government's role in making sure that every person has enough to eat?
F is for food, grown and farmed with our hands, worked and tilled and pulled from the land.

For fried fish, ham hocks, warm buttermilk bread, or maybe the sharp taste of mustards instead.

F is for folklore by the light of the moon, for family, for freedom, for jumping the broom.
The First cotton-gin / drawn by William L. Sheppard.
1869 Dec. 18.
Library of Congress
Emancipation / Th. Nast ; King & Baird, printers, 607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.
Published by S. Bott, no. 43 South Third Street, Philadelphia, Penna., c1865.
Radical members of the first legislature after the war, South Carolina 1876

Library of Congress
The Union as it was The lost cause, worse than slavery // Th. Nast
1874
Library of Congress
“The slave went free; **stood for a brief moment in the sun;** and then moved again toward slavery.”

- W.E.B DuBois
“Borne down by ever-increasing debts, trapped by a legal system which severely restricted their every movement, weakened by malnutrition and disease, and violently denied access to legal relief, black tenant farmers labored under a weight of oppression which offered virtually no escape.”

(Hinson & Robinson, 2018, p. 288)
Negro tenant farmer family. Greene County, Georgia. June, 1941. Library of Congress

Old Negro farmer and his grandson, near Greensboro, Alabama 1941 Library of Congress
NSF brings help

In the Southeastern United States, the National Sharecroppers Fund focuses on the one-third of the population which makes up the "hard-core" rural poor. With help, many of these people can live satisfying and useful lives on the land.

- NSF's field staff brings information about available government aid programs, helps prepare individual applications, overcomes processing delays, secure reviews of unjustified denials.
- It helps to build truly representative local groups to seek federal aid for new small rural industry and area improvement projects.
- It aids in organizing cooperative groups for farm tool ownership and produce marketing.
- NSF's grass-roots conferences bring rural people together with government and private agencies for discussion and exchange of information, spread knowledge of successful techniques, and encourage local planning. At these conferences the people with problems confront the people with power.

- NSF's representation to government agencies assists understanding and review of individual applications and local projects, supplies liaison between officials and newly-developing local leadership, and stimulates new approaches to meeting the problems of the rural neediest.
- NSF's cooperation with other organizations brings the experience, strength, and good-will of church, labor, and civic groups to bear on these problems.
- NSF's public education service publishes pamphlets and reports, furnishes background material for writers, editors, and commentators, and supplies speakers for church, student, and other groups.

we must do more

The quickening pace of rural displacement and the resulting urban disorganization of uprooted families make it urgent that NSF NSF must do much more before it is too late. Your support will make this possible.

let's face this fact

From Southern voter registration drives and student sit-ins, the Negro march for human freedom has surged on to Northern picket lines and demonstrations for equality in jobs and housing. Now the whole country must face up to the responsibility it has ignored. But the starting point remains the rural South:

Mechanization, land concentration, and improved food processing are bringing our housetful farm product to market from fewer farms with ever fewer farm workers. It is not enough to say these people are no longer needed to grow the food and fiber to feed and clothe the nation. A more creative alternative must be found to forcing them off the land and out of the South.

Many of these low-income farm workers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers—with their families—would remain in the South if they had job opportunities and the training to fill the jobs, if they were given credit assistance to own and improve their houses on their own few acres, and if they were treated with human dignity. Their plight should be first on the agenda of the unfinished American Revolution.

Is the only answer from this...
SQ3: Who was Fannie Lou Hamer? How did she create change in her community?
SQ3: Who was Fannie Lou Hamer? How did she create change in her community?

Not much food and rarely meat on our table—
often greens with gravy or onions with bread or cornmeal. Neighbors gave my mother chitlins, pig's feet, and hog heads for helping with the slaughters. Our beds were cotton sacks stuffed with corn shocks and grass, we had no electricity, heat, or plumbing and no money for a doctor to look after whatever crossed this limp or to save my mother's sight when a wood chip hit her eye.

Once my father managed to buy a wagon, plow, three mules—Bill, Bird, and Henry—and two cows, Allien and Delta. But a white neighbor poisoned the livestock.

That knocked us right back down to doggone dirt-poor doing-without. My parents never did get a chance to get up again. I sure did miss Delta's milk.
SQ3: Who was Fannie Lou Hamer? How did she create change in her community?
Hardship after hardship
wore my father down.
By the time I was twenty-two,
we had buried him.
Most of my brothers and sisters
moved up north, hoping
for higher pay and a better life.
I can’t blame them.
Jim Crow chokes every chance
a black man gets down here.
Who wouldn’t long
for something better?

I might have gone, too,
but my mother needed care.
I couldn’t bear the thought of her
in some nursing home.
She was in her eighties, nearly blind
and worn down by hard work,
when she moved in with me.
Sometimes I read to her.
Other times, I’d hear her singing.
Songs that would really sink down in me,
powerful message songs.
I never regretted staying behind.

Not a single minute, not a single note.
"...Very few people appreciate that the African Americans in those communities did not go there as immigrants looking for new economic opportunities, THEY WENT THERE AS REFUGEES FROM TERROR"

--Bryan Stevenson
The Freedom Farm Cooperative (White, 2018, p. 72)

1. Building affordable, clean, and safe housing

2. Creating an entrepreneurial clearinghouse - a small business incubator that would provide resources for new business owners and retraining for those with limited educational skills but with agricultural knowledge and manual labor experience.

3. Developing an agricultural cooperative that would meet the food and nutritional needs of the county’s most vulnerable.
NO REST

Summer of 1968, I sat at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago as part of the Loyalist delegation, what was formed to crush the Freedom Democrats. Still, I let my voice be heard — for aid to farmers and against the war in Vietnam. I was weary as an old soldier, but I couldn’t rest — no, I couldn’t. Not as long as blacks was poor, not as long as schools was segregated, and black teachers was discriminated against. Not as long as laws be holding women back. One day an old white man told me he appreciated me doing what he was afraid to do. Ain’t no telling how long he’d wanted change. He could not be free until I was free.

I had always believed: We serve God by serving our fellow man.

And no child should know what hunger is. So I started a Freedom Farm, a pig bank, and a Head Start program, and I help folks living in shacks get hold of government housing loans. I mind a lot of pots. I given my two cents to the women’s liberation movement. I won a lawsuit against Sunflower County to integrate the public schools. And I lost a bid for state senate in 1971. The outcome was rigged against me. But fifty-five blacks was elected in Mississippi that year — a record for a southern state. And in 1976 the Congressional Black Caucus, made up of black congresspeople, given me a lifelong service award.

Maybe I had won after all.
“...have a stake in it; they are not relying on handouts; they are enhancing their own dignity and freedom by learning that they can feed themselves through their own efforts”

1968 report by the National Council for Negro Women
Black Farmers protest outside the U.S. District Courthouse prior to a hearing on their class action lawsuit against the Department of Agriculture.

John Francis Ficara

Allen Gooden, cattle farmer

John Francis Ficara

Rosa Murphy, in her late '80s, continues to do light work in her fields.

John Francis Ficara

"...reconnecting with the land as a strategy of self-determination and self-sufficiency"

(White, 2018)
“A revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality... A revolutionary wants land so he can set up his own nation, an independent nation.”

-MALCOLM X
A New Generation of Black Farmers Is Returning to the Land

LEAH BY PENNIMAN

6 MIN READ

NOV 19, 2019
Environmental Justice Movement
Thank you!

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