



FACING
HISTORY
AND
OURSELVES

Identity, Race and the Classroom

Part 1

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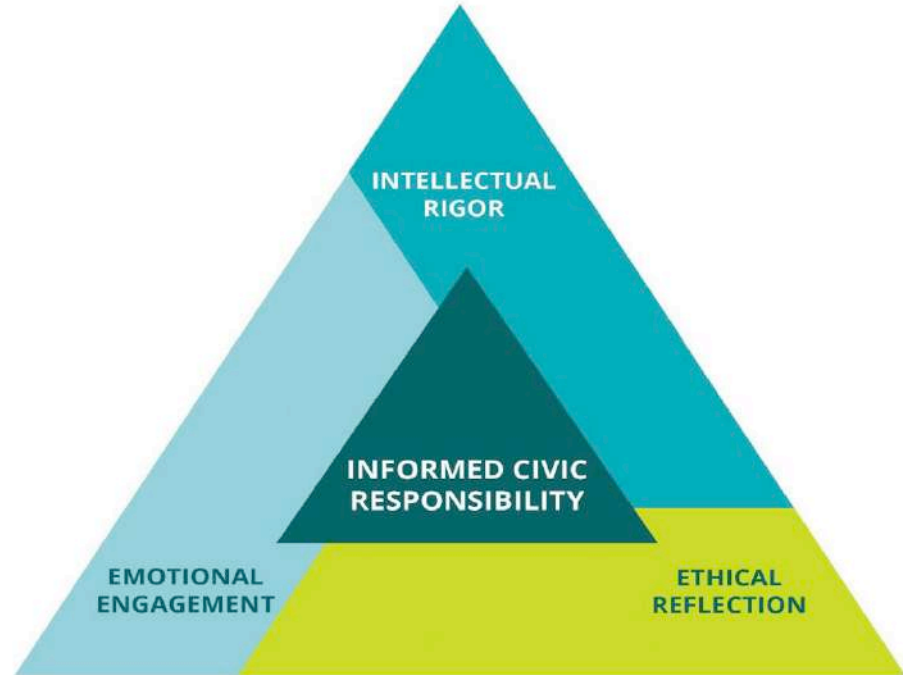
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Our Approach



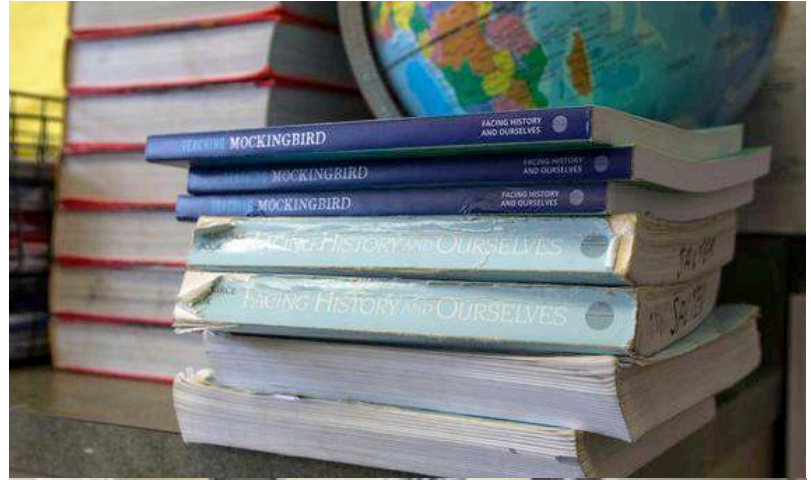
OUR PEDAGOGICAL TRIANGLE



What is the Core Work of Facing History?

We combine rigorous content and interactive pedagogy, to give students the opportunity to explore the ethical dilemmas in historical moments and to think critically about how to make connections to today and to their own lives.

The ultimate goal is not only to learn content but to increase students' agency, to empower them to be active citizens, and to develop their empathy and critical thinking skills.



Contracting to Discuss Race

I mostly feel _____
when discussing race
because _____.

Contracting to Discuss Race

I mostly feel _____

Respond with PollEverywhere:
Text 223812 and your response to 22333

Or, go to this webpage PollEv.com/jocelynstant818
and type your response

Challenges and Opportunities

- How do I define race?
- What language do I use?
- How do I know when it is appropriate to talk about race? What do I say?
- What if I'm misunderstood or the discussion gets out of control?
- Isn't it impolite to have these conversations?
- Is this really still an issue?
- Why do we keep talking about this; doesn't it only create differences?

Contracting: What agreements have we made to each other?

Personal investment: What are my individual goals and the goals of the group?

Head and Heart: I can bring my intellect and my emotions to these conversations.

Reflection: There will be quiet time for me to think and feel.

Common Text: There will be personal and historic examples to ground the conversations.

Debriefs: The group will have an opportunity to talk about what we are experiencing.



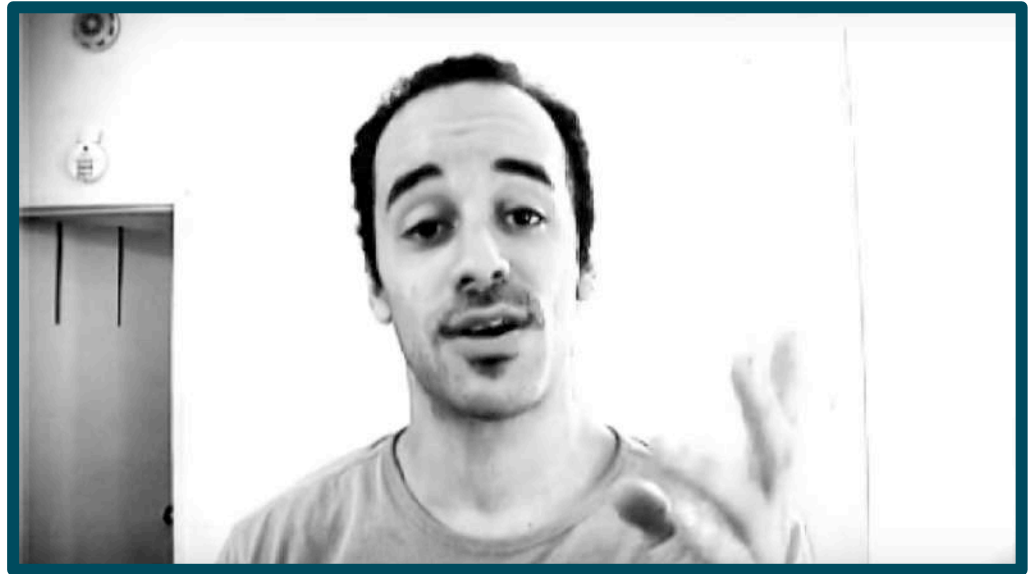
Contracting in the Classroom

Sample Contracting

- Listen with respect. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.
- Make comments using “I” statements.
- If someone says something that hurts or offends you, do not attack the person. Acknowledge that the comment—not the person—hurt your feelings and explain why.
- Put-downs are never okay.
- If you don’t understand something, ask a question.
- Think with your head and your heart.
- Share the talking time—provide room for others to speak.

Intent vs. Impact: Avoiding Labels

Jay Smooth:
How to Tell
Someone They
Sound Racist



Race the Power of an Illusion

Essential Questions:

- Where did these ideas about race come from and how did they take root?
How did we get to the point where we as a nation defined people and assigned levels of human worth by race?
- What are the legacies of these ideas about race? Police brutality, African-American men and criminality.

Important: it's not about individual acts of racism but ideas and institutions that need to be changed

[PBS: Race the Power of an Illusion: The Story We Tell](#)

The Great American Paradox

- The notion of natural rights: all men are created equal
- The notion that all humankind is divided into distinct and unequal races

For Many, Natural Rights = Equality

- To justify social inequalities, this appeal of natural rights can only be countered by proof of natural inequalities.
- The scientific community responds to the challenge by seeking to prove that human nature is not uniform but differs according to race.
- Consequently, the foundation is being laid for race science: eugenics.



Sir Francis Galton

“Eugenics is the study of the agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally.”

(1883)

Essential Questions to Ask About the Eugenics Movement

1

What happens to a society when science and education define human beings as superior or inferior?

2

How do these ideas affect human behavior and public policy?

3

Where are the legacies today?

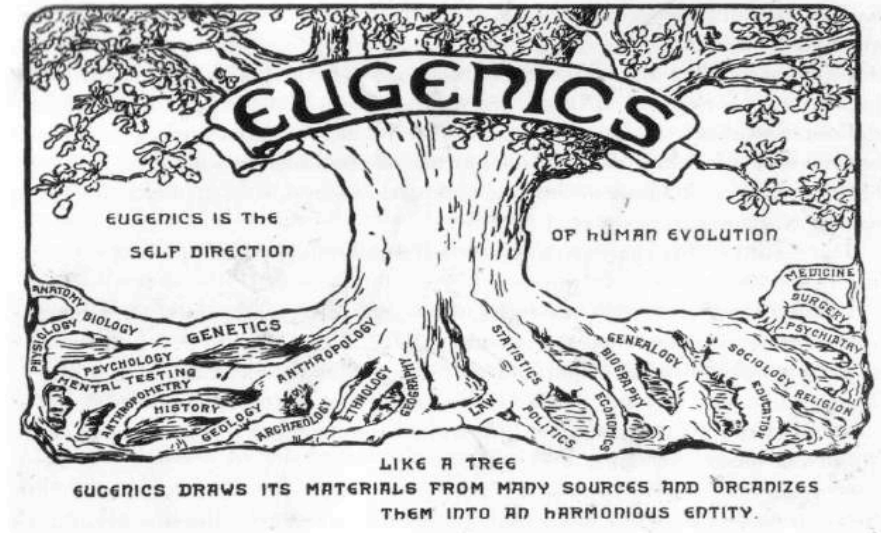
Historical Roots: 19th-20th Century Eugenics Movement

- Race exists.
- Races are unequal. Some are superior and others are inferior along a continuum.
- Physical and behavioral traits between and within races are biologically determined. Environment has little or nothing to do with a person's development.
- These traits are passed down from one generation to another by unit character (genes) in the germ plasma of the blood.
- Especially concerned with such traits as criminality, feeble-mindedness, pauperism, etc.
- Sexual relations and marriages between superior and inferior types should be avoided; otherwise, the national culture will decline.
- Science can help weed out "bad blood" through artificial selection. (Sterilization, immigration and marriage restrictions, etc.)
- Science can help society observe and measure eugenic differences in order to facilitate this process.

Why was there widespread acceptance in the 1920's-1940's?

Eugenics would tackle rising social ills such as:

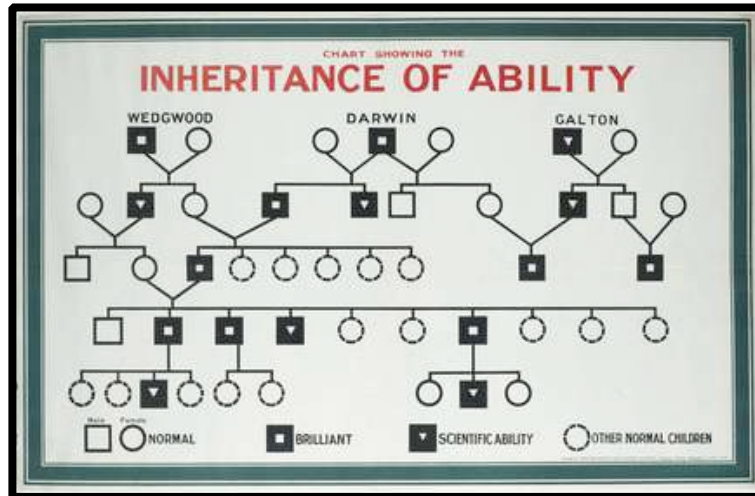
- Crime
- Diseases
- Concern over immigration
- A decline in intelligence



Eugenics as it was perceived during the first part of the twentieth century: an opportunity for humans to control their own evolutionary destiny

Eugenic ideas become policy

- State sterilization laws
- Tougher Anti-Miscegenation Laws
- Immigration Restriction Act of 1924
- Educational testing and tracking



Constructs of “Whiteness”

- It does not just refer to skin color but is **ideology** based on beliefs, values behaviors, habits and attitudes, which result in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin color
- It represents a **position of power** where the power holder defines the categories, which means that the power holder decides who is white and who is not
- It is **relational**. "White" only exists in relation/opposition to other categories/locations in the racial hierarchy produced by whiteness. In defining 'others,' whiteness defines itself.
- It is **fluid** - who is considered white changes over time
- It is a **state of unconsciousness**: whiteness is often invisible to white people, and this perpetuates a lack of knowledge or understanding of difference which is a root cause of oppression
- It shapes how white people view themselves and others, and places white people in **a place of structural advantage** where white cultural norms and practices go unnamed and unquestioned. Cultural racism is founded in the belief that "whiteness is considered to be the universal . . . and allows one to think and speak as if Whiteness described and defined the world."

Race is a Modern Idea

Ancient societies, like the Greeks, did not divide people according to physical differences, but according to religion, status, class or even language. The English word "race" turns up for the first time in a 1508 poem by William Dunbar referring to a line of kings.

Colorblindness Will NOT End Racism

Pretending race doesn't exist is not the same as creating equality.

Race is NOT Biological but Racism is Still Real

Race is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. The government and social institutions of the United States have created advantages that disproportionately channel wealth, power and resources to white people.

Race Justified Social Inequalities as Natural

The "common sense" belief in white superiority justified anti-democratic action and policies like slavery, the extermination of American Indians, the exclusion of Asian immigrants, the taking of Mexican lands, and the institutionalization of racial practices





Contemporary Connections

How might exploring the historical construct of race impact, improve, or influence contemporary conversations?

Transitioning to next week: Part 2

1

Create Safe and Reflective Space

2

Allow for Self Reflection: Individual Identity

3

Navigating Bias: We and They

4

Grounding the Conversation: Primary Sources

5

Safely out: Agency, Voice, and Upstander Behavior

Contact

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People make choices. Choices make history.



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