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*“Are we there yet?”* - A Resource Guide  
for Educators to Teach about Race and  
Anti-Black Racism in Social Studies Classrooms

This is a collection of resources for teachers to examine issues related to race and anti-black racism in social studies classrooms. The title of this piece is a quote from Canadian journalist and activist Desmond Cole from a speech he made at a fundraiser for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2018. The phrase, “are we there yet?,” represents an attitude that Cole has encountered from some white progressives who believe that while Canada has not reached racial equity, Canada has come a long way and that things could be much worse. The reality is that anti-black racism, systemic racism, and white supremacy are still prevalent in our society and there is still much work to be done before racial equity can be achieved in Canada. In addition, it should be noted that while other racial groups continue to face racism in Canadian society, this guide is focused on anti-black racism.

Before going any further, the concept of racial equity, and its difference from racial equality, should be defined. The concept of racial equity involves the understanding that historically racialized groups in society have not had the same level of opportunity that white people have enjoyed, that our society is not a level playing field (Equity vs. Equality and Other Racial Justice Definitions, 2020). Racial equality, on the other hand, is a concept that all people should have the same level of opportunity regardless of race; it is a sense “colour blind” (Equity vs. Equality and Other Racial Justice Definitions, 2020). In the context of anti-black racism in Canada, the concept of

racial equality ignores the historic injustices against black people. Racial equity involves the dismantling of societal structures that continue to prevent the achievement of racial equality in society. This resource guide aims to address the issue of anti-black racism in our society from a perspective of racial equity, rather than racial equality.

Given the continued presence of racism and systemic racism in our society, it is disappointing that issues related to race and racism continue to be under examined in Canadian schools. This could be for several different reasons. Some teachers might not consider racism to be a problem in Canada society, that we have achieved a satisfactory level of racial equality. I hope that resources listed in this guide are sufficient in dispelling this notion. Some teachers might not be comfortable discussing race and racism in a school context because other teachers, administration, parents, or students might see it as controversial. In this case, I hope that teachers examine their own reasoning behind this reluctance and continue their own education on issues related to race and racism. The resources listed in this guide are not only useful to teaching students in our classrooms, but also for teachers to continue their own education on these issues.

I encourage all educators to answer the question of “are we there yet?” with a resounding “no.” Canadian society has a long road to travel before achieving a reasonable degree of racial equity. I hope these resources are useful and can be integrated into any willing teachers social studies curriculum.

## Resources

*Black Boy Fly (Clean)* - Kendrick Lamar. (2020, November 6). [Video]. YouTube.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_vRqSimRto](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_vRqSimRto)

*Black Boy Fly* is a song that appears on the deluxe version of Kendrick Lamar's second studio album *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*. In this song, Lamar narrates parts of his life growing up in Compton, California and the difficulties he faced there. The song explores Lamar's worries and anxiety about getting out of the "ghetto" and succeeding in life. Lamar mentions two of his role models growing up, Aaron Afflalo and Jayceon Taylor, who were both from Compton but had managed to become successful and leave the city. These examples also represent what Lamar describes as the stereotypes of succeeding from this circumstance by either playing basketball or becoming a successful musician (Afflalo played in the NBA and Taylor became a successful rapper). The song is lyrically dense and insightful. This could be used to examine and discuss contemporary issues related to race, social mobility, and the barriers black people face from achieving success. The song does contain profanity not appropriate for a high school classroom and therefore I have chosen to list a clean version of the song.

Cab, O. A. (2020, June 17). *Confessions of a Former Bastard Cop* - Officer A. Cab.

Medium. <https://medium.com/@OfcrACab/confessions-of-a-former-bastard-cop-bb14d17bc759>

The issue of police brutality and systemized anti-black racism within police departments is very relevant considering the number of black people murdered by police in recent history. This article, written by a former police officer, highlights the extent to which white supremacy and racism is embedded into the structure of American police departments. The author discusses the extent to which police officers will manipulate situations to achieve desirable outcomes for themselves, without much consideration of morality or justice. This piece shows a mentality of “us against them” within American police departments. Because this piece is written by a former American police officer about the American policing system, its application could be limited in Canadian schools as it is not representative of Canadian policing. That being said, it would be useful to teach about racial injustice in the United States and the growing movement to abolish the police. The piece also contains the word “bastard” which could be inappropriate or problematic depending on the context of a given school.

Dellinger, D. (2018, June 7). *Martin Luther King Jr. 's Last March: the Poor People's Campaign*. The Atlantic.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/mlk-last-march/555953/>

Martin Luther King Jr. is famous for his work in the civil rights movement, but perhaps an underexplored part of his legacy is his Poor People's Campaign in 1968. This was his last political project before his murder. This campaign focused on poverty, economic inequality, and a lack of economic opportunity for black Americans. This piece is important because it shows King's move from issues of

civil rights (mostly focused on racial discrimination, disenfranchisement, and segregation) to economic injustice related to black Americans. This resource could be used to connect racism with social class and economic inequality in society. This article from The Atlantic provides a brief overview and could be used as a resource during a unit on the civil rights movement, or as a way of connecting race and class during a broader unit.

*Desmond Cole: Are we there yet? The struggle for racial equity in Canada.* (2018, December 5). [Video]. YouTube.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d8QBSKikt0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d8QBSKikt0&feature=emb_logo)

Desmond Cole is a Canadian journalist and activist concerned with issues of racial discrimination and systemic racism in Canada. In this 2018 speech he discusses current issues related to white supremacy, anti-black racism and systemic racism in Canada. The speech directly addresses contemporary issues related to the process of anti-racism in Canada. It is relatively long, about 60 minutes, therefore as a teaching resource it might be most useful to select shorter segments to show in class to introduce or explore topics related to systemic racism and white supremacy.

Diverlus, R., Hudson, S., & Ware, S. M. (2020). *Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada*. University of Regina Press.

This book is a collection of essays related to the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada. Black Lives Matter is very likely the most significant popular movement

against anti-black racism in both Canada and the United States. The essays discuss a variety of topics such as the Canadian prison system, political organizing, the connection between activism and art, and connections between black and Indigenous activism amongst others. This variety provides educators with many different ways of approaching and studying the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada, and ways of connecting it with other curriculum. These essays related directly to anti-black racism in Canada and provide avenues to an anti-racist future.

Douglass, F. (2016). *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (Written by Himself)* (3rd ed.). Bedford St. Martin's.

Frederick Douglass was an American abolitionist and former slave who lived during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His autobiography tells the story of his early life and his eventual escape from slavery into freedom. Douglass is undoubtedly a historically exceptional figure as someone who managed to escape slavery and teach himself how to read and write. His writing is eloquent, insightful and fascinating from a historical perspective. As a primary source, it is useful in relation to the history of racism because it provides a first person account of slavery and racism in the United States. The book is relatively short, and could be part of the curriculum for several different social studies courses.

*Equity vs. Equality and Other Racial Justice Definitions.* (2020). The Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://www.aecf.org/blog/racial-justice-definitions/>

This website contains a list of important concepts and definitions related to race and racial justice. These provide a useful base of knowledge for both teachers and students in order to discuss issues related to racism, racial equity, racial justice, institutional racism, and racial privilege. This would be a useful resource to use in class before looking at other resources related to race and racism.

Ideas. (2019, February 18). *Canada's slavery secret: The whitewashing of 200 years of enslavement*. CBC Radio. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/canada-s-slavery-secret-the-whitewashing-of-200-years-of-enslavement-1.4726313>

This is a two-part podcast by CBC Radio's Program *Ideas* that provides an overview of the history of racial slavery in Canada and explores how this history has been erased from much of the Canadian collective memory. This could be an important resource because in popular culture racial slavery is mostly associated with the United States. It is important to acknowledge and study Canada's history of slavery in the context of Canadian education on race. It is a longer piece, each part is about 50 minutes, and because of this it might be best assigned as homework in a teaching context.

Jordan, W. D. (1989). Modern Tensions and the Origins of American Slavery. In P. Rose (Ed.), *Americans from Africa: Slavery and its Aftermath* (pp. 103–115). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315082486>

This article by the historian Winthrop Jordan examines the beginnings of race based slavery in the American colonies and how it developed in North America.

This piece shows that racial slavery was not an institution imported to North America, but one that developed over time in the colonies. This history combats the popular notion that racial slavery was always a fact of life in North America prior to emancipation. While it is an academic piece, it could provide useful excerpts for teaching the history of slavery in North America.

Maynard, R. (2017). *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (1st ed.). Fernwood Publishing.

This book by Robyn Maynard provides a historical overview of violence against black people and anti-blackness in Canada from slavery to the present day. The book uses an intersectional approach to examine many issues related to anti-black racism in Canada's history. In doing so, Maynard highlights black resistance throughout this history. The book is likely too long for assigned reading in a high school social studies class, but sections could be used to teach Canada's history of anti-black racism. That being said, this book could be very useful for teachers to learn more about the history of anti-black racism in Canada. Teacher's learning more about these issues can only be a positive for the future of education in Canada.

McIntosh, P. (2010). "*White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*" and "*Some Notes for Facilitators.*" National SEED Project.

<https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>



This article provides an overview of the concept of white privilege, as well as a list of privilege that white people benefit from in everyday life. Due to the reality that most teachers in Canada are white, and that in most contexts the majority of our students will be white it is crucial to include the concept of white privilege when confronting the issue of race in curriculum. This article is very useful for unpacking the idea of white privilege and highlight the often unexamined benefits that white enjoy in society. The article also includes useful notes for teachers when engaging in discussions concerning white privilege in a classroom setting.

Robin DiAngelo on Educators' "White Fragility." (2019). *Educational Leadership*, 76(7), 10–11.

In this piece Sarah McKibben interviews author Robin DiAngelo on the subject of white fragility in the context of education. The term "white fragility" refers to the difficulties white people have discussing topics related to race and racism. This is an important obstacle for educators to overcome if we want to discuss race in our classrooms and engage in anti-racist pedagogical practices. This piece is a useful starting point for educators to think about their own biases related to race, and for white teachers, white supremacy. It is important for teachers to recognize the history of racism and racial bias within schools and how it continues to this day in order to improve this situation and move towards racial equity in schools.

Sandamini, R. (Director). (2019). *Ice Breakers* [Film]. National Film Board of Canada.

<https://www.nfb.ca/film/ice-breakers/>

*Ice Breakers* is a short documentary that tells the story of a young black hockey player in the Maritimes. The film shows his positive experiences growing up playing hockey, as well negative ones, such as experiencing racism and relative isolation as one of the only black hockey players in his league. The film also touches on the mostly ignored history of black hockey players in the Maritimes and the Colored Hockey League that was founded in the late 1800s. This could be a useful resource to connect how race shapes peoples' experiences in sport, and how access to Canada's national sport may not be as open as we think.

*Slavoj Žižek on Political Correctness: Why "Tolerance" Is Patronizing | Big Think.*

(2017, January 5). [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IISMr5OMceg>

Slavoj Zizek is a contemporary philosopher and political theorist. In this short video, he discusses contemporary conceptions of tolerance and its limitations when it comes to confronting racism and prejudice. In the context of race, this could be used to discuss how tolerance is not enough if, as teachers and students, we want to engage in active anti-racism. Due to its relatively short length, about 10 minutes, this resource could be integrated into a lesson or class activity without much difficulty.

*What systemic racism in Canada looks like.* (2020, July 9). [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GmX5stT9rU&t=23s>

This short video (about 10 minutes) challenges the idea that systemic racism does not exist in Canada, as well as the idea that Canada history's of racism is somehow fundamentally different from that of the United States. As shown in this video, the reality is, that just like the United States, Canada is a country founded in colonialism and white supremacy and this history is still alive in Canada's institutions today. This video could be a useful introduction to the concept of systemic racism and how it functions in contemporary Canadian society.