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**The Teacher Institute at  
Eastern State Penitentiary  
Historic Site Presents:**

# **MASS INCARCERATION**

## **LESSON PLAN**

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**EASTERN STATE  
PENITENTIARY**

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# MASS INCARCERATION

## LESSON PLAN

### **Unit Title:**

Mass Incarceration Project

### **Grade Levels:**

7th & 8th

### **Number of Class Periods:**

20 (8 designated to in school project work days)

### **Author:**

Aishah Nashedem is a third year Humanities teacher at Science Leadership Academy Middle School in Philadelphia. She has a passion for literacy, history, and teaching children to understand the world around them. Ms. Nashedem was born and raised in Philadelphia and graduated from West Chester University in 2020. Outside of school she is a fashion enthusiast who spends time as a wardrobe stylist and creative director.

### **Co-Author:**

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## INTRODUCTION & UNIT OVERVIEW

Over about 5-7 class periods students watched *13th* a documentary by Ava DuVernay. Using this amongst other online resources students were able to learn about the judicial system and mass incarceration. Concluding that America has a long history of incarceration that carries through to the present day.

For the project, students were expected to create a website that defined Mass Incarceration by writing a detailed history as well as including data to support the history. Students were also expected to draft a “Call to Action” that urged society and the government to make changes to the current system. The final piece to this project was including a social media or flyer campaign that promoted their website to the larger community. This was a group project with group sizes varying between 5-6 students.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is mass incarceration? How is it able to exist in America?
- How are laws created and how do they affect people long term?
- What does resistance look like when it comes to mass incarceration?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Understandings** - *What specifically should students be able to understand after completing the unit?*

U1 How history follows us into the present

U2 Analyzing lawmaking and acknowledging how they have impact

U3 How to take action and resist oppressive systems

**Students will know...** - *What facts and basic concepts should students know and be able to recall?*

K1 The history of mass incarceration

K2 How mass incarceration impacts minorities in America

K3 How to create an action plan and cultivate change

**Students will be skilled at...** - *What skills and processes should students be able to draw upon and use?*

S1 Creating a timeline of important historical events and resistance

S2 Making connections between historic content and present day

S3 Creating campaign website

## MATERIALS

- Documentary - 13th by Ava DuVernay (Pre-screened and approved by principal)
- Note taking sheet
- Project planning sheet
- Google Sites Account

## ARTICLES

*Used to build background context.*

- “I’m a prisoner in solitary confinement, and I’m suing the state to end this torture” by Montana Bell
- “Disturbing new photos inside Philly’s juvenile jail show kids sleeping on floors in crowded, filthy cells” by Ellie Rushing and Samantha Melamed
- School to Prison Pipeline Infographic
- Stages of a Criminal Case

## BOOK

- *Race to Incarcerate: A Graphic Retelling* by Sabrina Jones & Marc Mauer
  - Can be used as an anchor text if necessary.
  - Used to create “Kemba Smith Activity” (pg 7).

Click [here](#) to access a Google Drive folder with all materials, excluding specific website links.

# PROCEDURES

## Daily Lesson Structure (65 minute class periods)

{ “/” indicates “or” as the structure stayed the same daily but what we did each day differed }

- **Journal (5 minutes)**
  - engaging questions meant to get thinking started or to recall thoughts from previous day
  - i.e “*How does someone end up in prison? List all of the things you can think of that causes a person to go to prison.*” This was used the day we were going to do the Timeline to Prison Mini lesson
- **Artifact/Mini Lesson/Screening of documentary (30 minutes)**
  - Artifacts were things we would show as a pin point to the lesson that day. So if it was a day we were doing a mini lesson we would show an artifact related to that lesson then explain and discuss it.
  - Artifacts were, infographics, pictures, articles or websites.
  - Mini lessons were used to build background knowledge, explore important vocab, etc.
  - Screening was broken into 20 minute sessions per class period and accompanied by a note taking sheet to help keep students engaged.
- **Discussion / activity/ project work time (20 minutes)**
  - Activity suggestions on page 7.

## KEMBA SMITH ACTIVITY

- Text
- Worksheet

## REAL LIFE STORIES GROUP ACTIVITY

- Text
  - Students are divided into small groups.
  - Each group is assigned a story to read and discuss.
  - Findings are shared with the class.

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS

**CCSS.L.8.2** - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization/ punctuation/spelling.

**8.1.7.A** - Demonstrate continuity and change over time using sequential order and context of events.

**PASS5.2.8.B.** - Describe how citizens resolve conflicts in society and government

**CCSS.WHST.9** - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**CCSS.WHST.6** - Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

## QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Contact [anashedeem@philasd.org](mailto:anashedeem@philasd.org).

Learn more about the Center for Justice Education at Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, and about the Teacher Institute, at

**EASTERNSTATE.ORG**