

# MEDIA AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

You will need to do pre-work for this lesson that will require you to complete the Social Justice Action Planner and write a letter as an exemplar. This will help students understand the expectations for the lesson and group work. Students may not use the examples in their work.



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can media be used to advance social justice?
- How can we connect our learning from the entire unit?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Create a class campaign that focuses on an issue that is important to their school community.
- Use prior knowledge to draw attention to the misrepresentations of Black people in the media.
- Write letters to government officials or companies as a call to action to solve issues outlined from their investigations.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

75–90 minutes



## MATERIALS

- Teacher Edition—Vocabulary Planning and Definitions
- Images for Social Change Slide Show
- Social Justice Action Planner



## VOCABULARY

### CONTENT

Community  
Collective Responsibility  
Local Government  
Explore

Community

Advocate

Representation

Stereotype

### ACADEMIC

Examine

Informative

Quote (5th grade)

**PART 1****Introduction (15 min): Knowledge Building**

- 1** *Say: Today we will be exploring how we, as students, can use our voice to address an issue that is of importance and is specific to Black communities. In our last lesson, we thought about ways to use our voice to advocate for a more positive representation of Black people and other people of color on tv. We will use our collective voices to advocate for more positive representation through our writing. Often you may think that because you are a child, you don't have any authority to make a difference in your community. We want to shift that narrative and empower each other to use our voice through our writing. Remember the images of social justice movements throughout time? Those were small moments in time that had a significant impact on society. They were chances to lift the voices of those who had not been heard. Here is a quick recap (show images 1–9 in the Images for Social Change handout). What do you remember about these images? (They were stronger together, etc.) The collective movement of people, when people work together for a common cause, will get results and attention in the media.*
- 2** *Say: We will watch a video of a young Meghan Markle, an American actress and the Duchess of Sussex. That's a fancy way of saying she is a princess. She married the king of England's son Harry. She is a Black woman, and because of racism the media heavily and unfairly targeted her in London. As a result, she and Harry decided to leave England and come to America. This speaks to a few things we have learned about: how Black people are portrayed in the news and the unfair representation of Black people in media overall. Here are some examples of the differences in headlines in regard to Meghan Markle and Kate Middleton (Show the last 3 images in the handout on page 77.) As you can see, unfair representation doesn't only happen in the United States. As a child, Meghan spoke out about the issue of stereotypes of women in commercials. Women play different roles in different families, but in the commercials she saw, women were only portrayed in one way. Please watch the video and think about how people can use their voices to address an issue.*

- 3 Play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfAGleA4qYo> As students watch the video, have them focus on the process of change. Have students think about the following question: How can people use their voices to address an issue? The goal is for the students to understand that significant change begins with direct action focused on the right people.
- 4 Say: *We have had several lessons that talked about the issues that Black people face. We discussed negative images in cartoons and stereotypes and the need for positive images in the media. How can we continue to bring awareness to these issues? Are there shows, cartoons, or commercials that continue to display misrepresentations or negative images of Black people and if so, can you explain how that they do so?* (Allow students to answer. Listen for or suggest the following: call for a ban on certain tv shows that include negative stereotypes of Black people, advocate for more representation on local or national media shows and remove or change a commercial based on misrepresentation).
- 5 Say: *We are discussing imagery in the media and images that produce stereotypes, so we must understand what we can do to make a difference. There is power in writing and making your voice heard in this way.*
- 6 Once students land on a topic specific to imagery and stereotypes of Black people and a company/tv show/commercial/etc., break students into groups of 4 to begin planning their writing/actions.

## PART 2

### Content Analysis (40 min)

- 7 Modeling (10 min): For this lesson section, you will model how to generate responses on the Social Justice Action Planner.
- 8 Say: *I want to use the example that we saw in the commercial to help you and your group members think about how to focus on your social justice action plan. While watching the commercials, Meghan Markle noticed that they all relied on the mother to cook, clean, and care for the children. In reality, mothers have lots of roles in and outside the home. Also, every household looks different. So, she narrowed her lens on a particular company, Dawn, owned by Proctor and Gamble, to voice her concern. She claimed that commercials that only focused on women doing the housework painted an inaccurate picture of all women. She wanted to convince people to change the commercial so that women would be represented differently and fairly.*

- 9** Continue to go through each step of the social justice action plan, ensuring that students see the clear connection between how they will choose a focus, make a claim, and advocate for the positive representations of Black people in the media.
- 10** Group work (30 min): Before students begin working, visit with each group to ensure they have a focus and a claim that accurately advocates for positive representation of Black people in the media. Students may need support for this, so have a few ideas available for those struggling to come up with a focus.
- 11** Students will use the Social Justice Action Planner document for their social justice letter project.
- 12** *Say: You will be using your voice to write a letter to a company or local politician, detailing the problem and what you think could be done better, just like Meghan Markle did as a child. We must choose where to direct our concerns depending on the issue. Would we contact the school principal about the neighborhood recycling program? No! So, we must make sure we contact the correct person.*
- 13** Based on what students choose as their focus, gather a list of references for them. This will require you to work in the moment with each student group to determine their focus and who will address their social justice issue. Ensure that students stay focused on the person or group that will directly impact their concerns. Allow students to research (or Google search) the addresses for local/state/federal representatives, etc. This will be added to their Social Justice Action Planner. Some examples of possible contacts include:
- FCC—Federal Communications Commission—regulates communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable across the United States
  - School principal—ensures student safety, advises teachers/staff, controls operations and functions of the school
  - Local representatives (i.e., mayor, city councilmembers, etc.)—handles budgets, taxes, school resources, neighborhood safety (i.e., stop signs)
  - U.S. Representatives (depends on district)—creates and reviews bills nationally (federal level)
  - State Senators—vote on laws and bills, appoints judges, represents the entire state (Bob Menendez and Corey Booker as of 2023)

## PART 3

### Writing (30 min)

**14** For students who need help coming up with a topic, you can use the following as suggestions:

- More Black people on local news programming
  - Contact local station
- Commercials that show a range of positive Black representation from all backgrounds marketing cereal, toys, cleaning products, etc. (choose a specific one as a focus)
  - Contact specific company

**15** Allow students the full 30 minutes to write independently. What they write will be used as their assessment to determine how well they met the demands of the standards and how well they have developed a sense of agency around racial justice.

**16** They will use the information they collected and discussed as a group to help them develop their letter. You can support struggling students individually or in small groups by providing them with sentence frames to help move their writing along. The students must generate all ideas. If students are stuck on finding an address, provide them with the information.

## PART 4

### Share/Closing (5 min)

**17** Students in groups of 4 share their letter drafts.

#### NOTE

You must revisit this lesson to have students write a final draft of their letter. You will also need students to address envelopes to be sent to the appropriate contact people/organizations. Postage fees will apply, so this should be addressed with the school administration, or a local representative may have an office within walking distance so letters can be hand-delivered. In this instance, the teacher must contact the local office to determine if this is permissible.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + [5 years into water crisis, Little Miss Flint hasn't given up](#) | [GMA](#) (for additional example of students/children being advocates for social justice)



# Teacher Edition: Vocabulary Definitions

This document is meant to serve to build teacher knowledge and capacity. Please use the following document to know and understand the vocabulary for this lesson. Review and define these terms before teaching your lesson to help better understand and frame the content. There is also space to add any context necessary for your students.

Word	Definition	Teacher Notes/Context
<b>CONTENT VOCABULARY</b>		
Collective Responsibility		
Local government		
Exploring		
Community		
Advocate		
Representation		
Stereotype		
<b>ACADEMIC VOCABULARY</b>		
Examine		
Informative		
Quote (5th grade)		



## Images for Social Change



Vigil for Breonna Taylor, an innocent victim of over-policing Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old black woman, was fatally shot in her Louisville, Kentucky apartment on March 13, 2020, when at least seven police officers forced entry into the apartment.



The Civil Rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., went to Memphis to support the sanitation workers. He marched with them and made speeches. During the marches, many workers wore signs that read "I Am A Man." This showed that they were fighting for equality, dignity, and respect.



## Images for Social Change



The Montgomery bus boycott was a political and social protest campaign against the policy of racial segregation on the public transit system of Montgomery, Alabama. It was a foundational event in the civil rights movement in the United States. Here is Rosa Parks, a secretary for the NAACP, who is refusing to give up her seat on the bus.



Cecil Williams, civil rights activist and lawyer, drinking from a white only water fountain. He was back from a 1956 trip photographing South Carolina's segregated beaches for Jet magazine, Cecil J. Williams stops at a gas station, closed at the time, and drinks from a "WHITE ONLY" water fountain. Image captured by Rendall Harper, a friend of the photographer.



The Little Rock Nine were a group of nine African American students enrolled in Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Their enrollment was followed by the Little Rock Crisis, in which the students were initially prevented from entering the racially segregated school by Orval Faubus, the Governor of Arkansas





## Images for Social Change



During their medal ceremony in the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City on October 16, 1968, two African-American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, each raised a black-gloved fist during the playing of the US national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner".



The Rainbow Coalition was an antiracist, anticlass multicultural movement founded April 4, 1969 in Chicago, Illinois by Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party, along with William "Preacherman" Fesperman of the Young Patriots Organization and José Cha Cha Jiménez, founder of the Young Lords.



Black Lives Matter is a political and social movement that seeks to highlight racism, discrimination, and racial inequality experienced by Black people. Its primary concerns are incidents of police brutality and racially motivated violence against Black people.



# Images for Social Change

Both moms-to-be are holding their stomach but for Meghan Markle it is portrayed as negative.



Both moms are given an avocado to help them with morning sickness from pregnancy but only one mom is linked to abuse, drought and shame because of it.



One princess is seen as a fashion icon and the other is shamed for her fashion sense.





# Social Justice Action Planner

TOPIC/ISSUE: \_\_\_\_\_

GROUP MEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

*What commercial/tv show/article/book/topic/etc. are you drawing attention to?*

*What is the claim that your group is going to make to others? What will you convince people of?*

*Based on this claim, what do you want to convince people to do to make a difference in the lives of Black people and how they are represented?*

*Who are you writing your letter to? How are they able to help?*

*How do you plan to share this information with others? How will you share your writing and anything else you create with the world outside our classroom?*

*What do you need help with? What do you need from your teachers or other adults?*



# Social Justice Action Planner Letter Draft

COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

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Sincerely,

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