

LESSON PLAN: Black Women's Activism and the Feminist Movement

Black Women's Activism and the Feminist Movement

Developed by: Emily Dychtenberg, MT Candidate, OISE

Grade and Strand: Grade 10 Canadian History, Strand D: Canada 1945-1982, Strand E: 1982 to the Present.

Note: This lesson plan was initially designed for high school teachers and with the Ontario-based curriculum requirements for grade ten Canadian history in mind. However, it can be used with students from grades ten through twelve. Community college and university instructors may also wish to adopt or modify the lesson plan for their own classes. The plan contains highly sensitive materials that may cause students discomfort, unease, or possibly “trigger” a recurrence of trauma, so we ask that appropriate measures be taken. More detailed comments below.

Lesson Critical Inquiry:

In this lesson the topic of Black women's activism and its rise in the 1970s and 1980s will be investigated. Students will have the opportunity to analyze primary documents in an effort to understand Black women's activism and some of the factors that accounted for it. A key focus is *the particular challenges faced by Black women as they related to both race and gender*. Students will also learn about specific activist groups and how their activism challenged some of the narratives from the women's movement at the time. Students will come to their own conclusions regarding the status of Black women's activism and its relevance in Canada today.

Teacher Trigger Warning: This lesson plan contains highly sensitive materials related to anti-Black racism, police violence, and the deaths of young Black men that may cause students discomfort, unease, or possibly “trigger” a recurrence of trauma. Out of a concern for the safety and mental health of your students, some of whom may have experienced a trauma that corresponds with that being addressed in the materials, we ask you to consider the following. Please warn the students of the sensitive nature of the materials for this unit and prepare them emotionally for the content or to decide not to interact with the content. The lesson plan has built-in units for student feedback and group discussion, but please ensure that students have all the opportunity they need to discuss the material without singling out any one student because you think or know they have personal knowledge of the issues being discussed.

Some students who have experienced a corresponding trauma in their own lives may be personally ready to address the issue in an academic/educational context, but others will not. Please note that students might cope with triggering content in a variety of ways, including engaging actively with the materials, withdrawing from discussion, appearing inattentive, or creating distractions during class. Try to create space for different types of responses to the content. You might also consider checking in with a student or proactively offering an alternative assignment to a student whose behaviour appears out of character.

Student Trigger Warning: This lesson plan includes materials (video and primary documents) that discuss graphic material related to anti-Black racism, police violence, and the deaths of young Black men that you may find disturbing or traumatizing. Please do your best to prepare yourself beforehand and reach out for support if you need to. If you believe that you will find the discussion traumatizing, you may choose to leave the classroom or not participate in the discussion. Since you will still be responsible for covering the material, please arrange to get notes from another student and/or arrange to speak with your teacher about the possibility of either completing this assignment without exposure to graphic material or developing an alternative but related assignment

Curriculum Expectations

Specific Curriculum Expectations:

D2.1: Describe some significant instances of social conflict and/or inequality in Canada during this period, with reference to various groups and communities

D3.1: Describe contributions of various individuals, groups, and/or organizations to Canadian society and politics during this period

E2.1: Describe some significant ways in which Canadians have cooperated and/or come into conflict with each other since 1982

E3.1: Describe contributions of various individuals, groups, and/or organizations to Canadian society and politics since 1982

Disciplinary Thinking Concepts:

- *Historical Perspective*
- *Historical Significance*
- *Continuity and Change*
- *Cause and Consequence*

Lesson Planning

Key Vocabulary:

- Black Lives Matter
- Activism
- Constitution
- Visible Minority
- Collective
- Congress

Materials/Resources Required:

- Blank Paper

- Computers
- All Handouts, as included below

Lesson Part One: Minds On

To begin their analysis of historic Black women's activism, students will be exposed to a contemporary example: Black Lives Matter movement.

First, show:

Black Lives Matter: How a Hashtag Defined a Movement

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

Show this 7-minute and 50-second video. It features the three founders of BLM (Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi) in an interview with documentary filmmaker Sabrina Schmidt Gordon. They explain the origin of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and their aspirations for the movement.

Dear Student: This video highlights the role of women as movement leaders. But it also contains some graphic and disturbing news coverage related to anti-Black racism, police violence, and the deaths of young Black men. Please prepare yourself emotionally beforehand. If you need support, we encourage you to reach out to a trusted adult and/or to contact one of the community resources provided.

Then, show:

Janaya Khan, Black Lives Matter Toronto (GWS Conference 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCfYQ3K3wpo&feature=emb_logo

Watch the first 3 minutes and 15 seconds of this 9-min. video. It features Janaya Khan, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Toronto, speaking at an international women's conference in London, England. In the first 3.5 mins., she explains the timing of BLM in the United States and in Canada and in Toronto in particular. She talks about the police practice of "carding" Black people (the stopping, questioning, and documenting of individuals when no offence is being investigated), and the very high incarceration rates among Black people in Canada. (The conference is called Caring, Survival and Justice vs the Tyranny of the Market, and she is speaking on a panel on "Women's justice work against sexism, racism and every discrimination.")

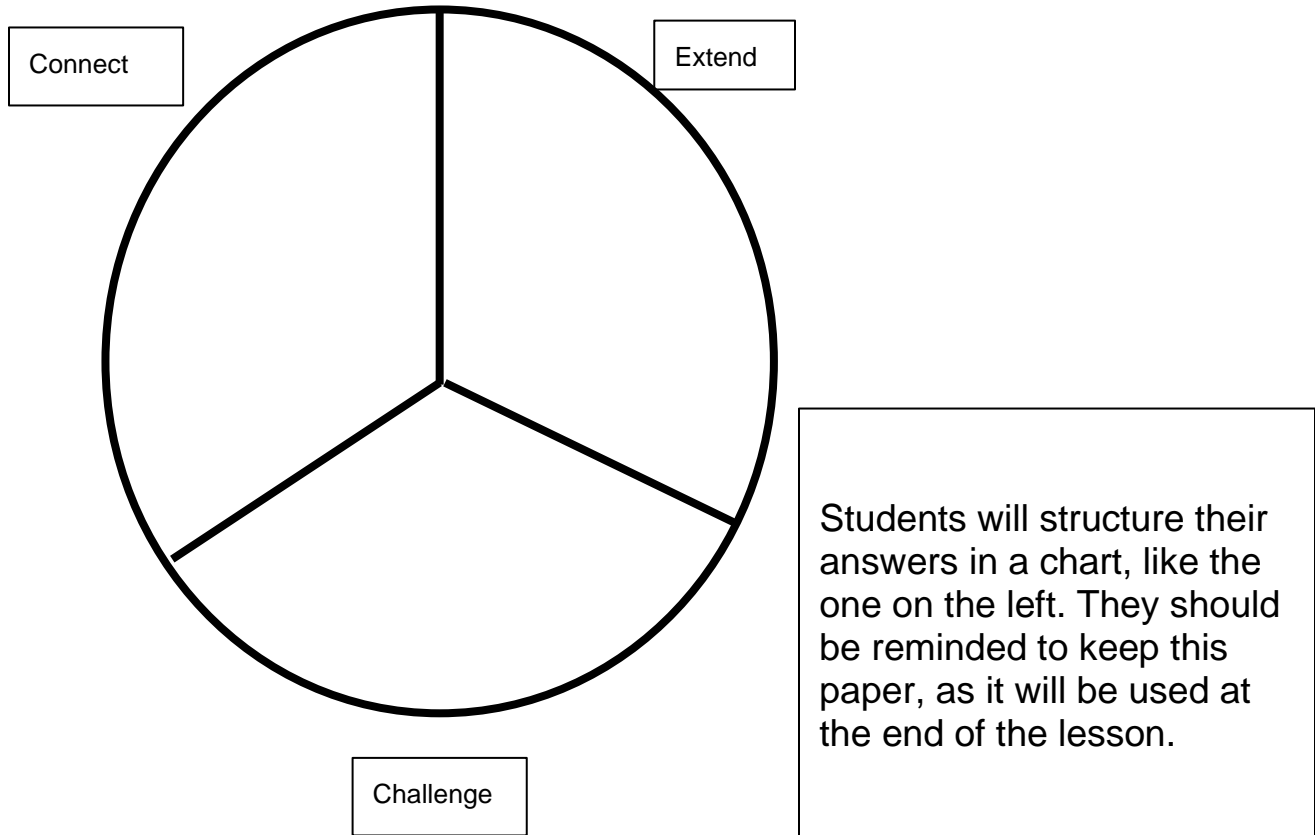
Trigger for Teacher: After the 3:15 point, Kahn talks about "why we don't need the police" and the need to empower marginalized communities. It is difficult to talk about Black women's activism against violence without addressing critiques of policing and the law. It is also a sensitive topic. As a teacher, you may feel that the critique offered in the first part of the video is sufficient for your class. Or you may feel that your students are in a position to view the entire video. Please show appropriate discretion.

After watching the two videos, the students will participate in a “connect, extend, challenge” activity. They will be asked to answer the following questions on a piece of paper:

Connect: Did you know that women were so central to Black Lives Matter? Were you aware of Black women’s activism? Did any content in the video connect to what you already knew?

Extend: How does this video help the viewer to think about Black women’s activism?

Challenge: What specific parts of the video challenged you to think differently or more deeply about Black women’s activism today? What questions does it raise for you?



Lesson Part Two: Inquiries & Assessment

Evidence Based Activity One

Materials & Set Up Required:

- Computers
- Hyperlinked Articles (Included Below)
- Brochure Structure Handout (Below)
- Brochure Completion Rubric (Below)

Instructions:

- 1) Students will work in groups of 5, and will begin their analysis on the rise of Black women's activism in Canada during the 1980s.
- 2) To begin, students will read the following: [Black women in the women's movement](#). This link provides students with some background information, and presents an overview of what will be analyzed in the lesson.
- 3) Working individually, students will then read one of the following documents and their connected primary document (1 per student):
 - a) [Black Women's Collective \(BWC\) & Constitution of the Black Women's Collective – March 1988](#)
 - b) [Congress of Black Women of Canada \(CBWC\) / Congrès des femmes noires du Canada & Congress of Black Women of Canada Information Booklet, CWBC Website](#)
 - c) [National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women \(NOIVMWC\) & National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada – Ontario Region Newsletter – January/March 1987](#)
 - d) Publications: [Our Lives: Canada's First Black Women's Newspaper](#) & [Our Lives – Vol.1, Issue 4 – November/December 1986](#)
- 4) One student per group will then click the following link: [Brochure Template](#), and will share the document with their group mates.
- 5) The students will then follow the template below, and will create a pamphlet about the information that they read.
- 6) Students will email their completed brochure to their teacher, who will then provide feedback with the attached rubric.

Assessment Strategies:***Formative Assessment:***

- Students participation and the quality of their responses can be evaluated using the attached rubric. The teacher feedback will help students develop their ability to critically respond to questions about the historical thinking concepts.

Accommodation Considerations:

- Students can work in pairs to read and answer the relevant questions about each topic, instead of working individually.
- If computers are not easily accessible, the students can make the brochures by hand.

Evidence Based Activity Two

Materials & Set Up Required:

- Computers
- Hyperlinked articles (included below)
- [Blank Plaque](#)
- Small piece of paper

Pre Lesson Introduction:

For this evidence-based activity, students will have the opportunity to begin to analyze historic heritage plaques and other methods of commemoration throughout the country at large. The following website: [Toronto's Historical Plaques](#), shows many of the historic plaques that are currently on display in Toronto. Looking through the website, pick 1-2 examples to show the students, so that they can begin to understand what information is included and not included on the plaques. Ideally, pick plaques that commemorate Black people and Black history (e.g., Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Albert Jackson).

Instructions:

- 1) Splitting into smaller groups (ideally of 3-4), students will be assigned one of the figures below:
 - a) **Kay Livingstone:** [Kay Livingstone: Celebrate the Vision -20th Anniversary of the Kay Livingstone Award Event, Kathleen \(Kay\) Livingstone](#)
 - b) **Rosemary Brown:** [Text of Rosemary Brown's Speech to Founding Convention, Rosemary Brown – NDP leader, Article- Rosemary Brown Laneway](#)
 - c) **Michael Wade Lawson:** [Justice for Michael Wade Lawson, Michael Wade Lawson Article](#)
 - d) **Albert Johnson:** [Justice for Albert Johnson, Albert Johnson Article](#)
- 2) Students will read all of the hyperlinked articles about their key figure, then one student will click on the following link: [Blank Plaque](#)
- 3) Working as a group, the students will write their own version of a plaque (or an updated version if their figure already has a plaque).
- 4) The students will then read out their updated plaque to the rest of the class, and will be able to contrast their created plaque to that of their classmates.
- 5) The students will then individually answer two reflective questions about the activity, which are also located within the slideshow above. Their answers will be handed in for a completion checkmark.

Dear Teacher: In the slide show, students are asked in which city the plaque should be displayed, so it would be helpful to have some discussion about the significance of the geographic location of a plaque. You might say the following. A commemorative plaque is normally installed in a location (a city, town, rural area etc.) that is closely related to the

designated subject and accessible to the public. There are different ways of arriving at the choice of location. It might be the city where an internationally prominent figure lived for a period of time in Canada, or the hometown of a figure who achieved national and international prominence. Within a given city or town, the plaque might be placed next to or near a house, public building, park, school or some other venue where that person lived, worked, delivered speeches, ran community events or was otherwise closely associated with.

Assessment Strategies:

- *Formative Assessment:* Student answers to the reflection questions will be submitted and assessed for completion.

Accommodation Considerations:

- The intention of the activity is to have multiple groups create a plaque for the same individual in order to compare/contrast their response and the students' attempt at commemoration. But, depending on the number of students in the classroom, students can work in smaller or larger groups.
- If computers are not easily accessible, the hyperlinked articles can be printed and distributed and the students can hand draw their own version of a plaque.
- Students can also attempt to create their own form of a memorial, and can be creative in their delivery of this memorial. This will allow them to attempt to memorialize (or commemorate) the individual in a way that they see fit, instead of simply following the prescribed memorial plaque method.

Lesson Part Three: Consolidation and Debrief

Wrap-Up:

To complete their lesson on Black women's activism, students will use their "connect, extend, challenge" handout, which they used at the beginning of the lesson. Using a different colour pen, they will again answer the questions in the "extend and challenge" sections.

Extend: How does the information presented in this lesson extend (or expand) your thinking about Black women's activism?

Challenge: What did you learn about Black women's activism? Did the lesson help you to think more deeply about this activism? Did it raise new questions for you?

The students can submit their "connect, extend, challenge" chart for a completion mark.

Assessment Strategies:

Formative Assessment: Student responses will be submitted for a completion mark.

Appendix

List of Resources/Materials Used:

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCfYQ3K3wp0&feature=emb_logo

[Black Women's Collective \(BWC\)](#)

[Constitution of the Black Women's Collective – March 1988](#)

[Congress of Black Women of Canada \(CBWC\) / Congrès des femmes noires du Canada](#)

[Congress of Black Women of Canada Information Booklet](#)

[CWBC Website](#)

[National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women \(NOIVMWC\)](#)

[National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada – Ontario Region](#)

[Newsletter – January/March 1987](#)

[Our Lives: Canada's First Black Women's Newspaper](#)

[Our Lives – Vol.1, Issue 4 – November/December 1986](#)

[Black women in the women's movement](#)

[Kay Livingstone: Celebrate the Vision -20th Anniversary of the Kay Livingstone Award Event](#)

[Kathleen \(Kay\) Livingstone](#)

[Text of Rosemary Brown's Speech to Founding Convention](#)

[Rosemary Brown – NDP leader](#)

[Article- Rosemary Brown Laneway](#)

[Justice for Michael Wade Lawson](#)

[Michael Wade Lawson Article](#)

[Justice for Albert Johnson](#)

[Albert Johnson Article](#)

Brochure Structure

<div data-bbox="110 289 571 352" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Creative Title</div> <div data-bbox="110 352 571 991"> <p>-Student Names</p> <p>-Relevant Photos</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="597 289 1036 457" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Black Women's Collective (BWC) & <i>The Constitution of the Black Women's Collective</i></p> </div> <p>From what years did the BWC run?</p> <p>What were the aims and objectives of the BWC?</p> <p>What is the historical significance of creating a women's collective that was open to "any Black woman"?</p>	<div data-bbox="1068 289 1507 457" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>The Congress of Black Women & <i>The Congress of Black Women of Canada Information Booklet</i></p> </div> <p>What symbol represented the Congress? Why?</p> <p>When did the Congress originally begin meeting? Where are their headquarters today?</p> <p>Comparing the information booklet to the Congress' new website, what changes can you notice? How has the Congress changed over time?</p>
<div data-bbox="110 1056 571 1224" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women & <i>NOIVMWC Newsletter</i></p> </div> <p>What is the purpose of the NOIVMWC?</p> <p>How many groups does the NOIVMWC represent?</p> <p>In their newsletter, the NOIVMWC addresses Black History Month, and how it was commemorated in 1987. Based on your own experience, how has the commemoration of Black History Month changed over time?</p>	<div data-bbox="597 1056 1036 1119" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Conclusion</div> <p>As a group, answer the following:</p> <p>Whose perspective is acknowledged in these groups and publications? Whose is missing?</p> <p>What changes can you note between historic Black women's activism and more contemporary examples?</p> <p>What questions do you still have?</p> <p>1) _____</p> <p>2) _____</p>	<div data-bbox="1068 1056 1507 1119" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><i>Our Lives Publication</i></p> </div> <p>Whose perspective is represented in the <i>Our Lives</i> publication? What is the importance of having this unique perspective represented?</p> <p>What topics are documented in the newspaper?</p> <p>Which photos/songs/and or drawings stand out to you in the newspaper? Why?</p>

Brochure Completion Rubric

Category	Met	Not Met
Knowledge and Understanding: <i>Knowledge and Understanding of Content</i> The students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the content through their answered questions on the brochure.		
Thinking: <i>Use of Critical/Creative Thinking Processes</i> The students are able to demonstrate their critical thinking skills through the brochure, as they answered thinking-based questions about their specific topic.		
Communication: <i>Expression and organization of ideas and information in oral, visual, and/or written forms</i> The students are able to present their researched information in a visual medium, namely, using a brochure.		
Application: <i>Making connections within and between various contexts</i> The students are able to demonstrate their ability to make connections between historic Black women's activism and more contemporary examples.		

Teacher Feedback:

Community Resources:

Black Youth Helpline

www.blackyouth.ca

1-833-294-8650 (Available from 9am-10pm)

Helpline which serves as the point of contact to professional services. Service in French and other languages is available upon request. Note: This is a faith-based service.

Good2Talk

www.good2talk.ca

1-866-925-5454

Text: Good2talkon to 686868

Provides professional counselling and information and referrals for mental health, addictions, and well-being. Free, confidential and anonymous helpline for people between 17 and 25.

Hope for Wellness Helpline – Online Chat Counselling Service

<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

24-hour support line: 1-855-242-3310

Offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Phone and chat counselling available in English and French. On request, phone counselling is also available in Cree, Ojibway or Inuktitut.

Kids Help Phone

www.kidshelpphone.ca

1-800-668-6868

Canada's only 24/7, national support service. Offers professional counselling, information and referrals and volunteer-led, text-based support to young people in both English and French. Whether by phone, text, mobile app or through our website, you can connect whenever you want, however you want. Completely confidential service — you don't even have to tell us your name if you don't want to.

LGBT Youth Line

<https://www.youthline.ca/>

Text: 647-694-4275

Email: askus@youthline.ca

Offers confidential and non-judgemental peer support through telephone, text and chat services. Get in touch with a peer support volunteer from Sunday to Friday, 4:00PM to 9:30 PM.

Mindyourmind

<http://mindyourmind.ca/>

Mindyourmind exists in the space where mental health, wellness, engagement and technology meet. We work with community partners and young people aged 14-29 to co-create interactive tools and innovative resources to build capacity and resilience.

Talk4Healing

www.talk4healing.com

Help line: 1-855-554-Heal

This is a culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women available in 14 languages all across Ontario. Services include a 24 hour help line and an online chat service.

Additional Suggestions for what you, as a teacher, may wish to say to your class:

In advance of the lesson plan: “Our classroom provides a space where we can exchange ideas about important and difficult subjects. For similar or different reasons, some students may find it difficult to deal with the content in this lesson plan and even possibly traumatizing. I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, sensitivity, compassion and support.”

Before a specific video or document: “I am forewarning you about the potentially disturbing content you are about to see [or read]. Please do your best to prepare yourself emotionally for this. It is normal to find the material we are discussing upsetting and your emotional well-being is very important to me. If you need a break from the material or discussion, please take one. You are also encouraged to speak to me individually about developing a related or alternative assignment.”

Specific Suggestions regarding a document:

Rosemary Brown’s speech: “You will be reading the text of a speech that Rosemary Brown, a leading Black woman activist, delivered in 1973. It addresses sensitive political issues related to anti-Black racism, sexism against Black women, and debates over Black women’s participation in the women’s movement.”

Justice for Lawson and Johnson: “You will read text that contains disturbing content about the police killing of a Black man.”

This lesson plan was initially developed for Rise Up! by Emily Dychtenberg.

Emily Dychtenberg
MT Candidate

Emily Dychtenberg is a student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, working towards her Master of Teaching degree. She attended Wilfrid Laurier University, completing her BA in history in English. Emily is passionate about inclusivity, and wants to ensure that all students have an opportunity to work and succeed within the classroom. Looking towards the future, Emily is excited to pursue a career in the classroom, continuing her work as a lifelong educator and learner.