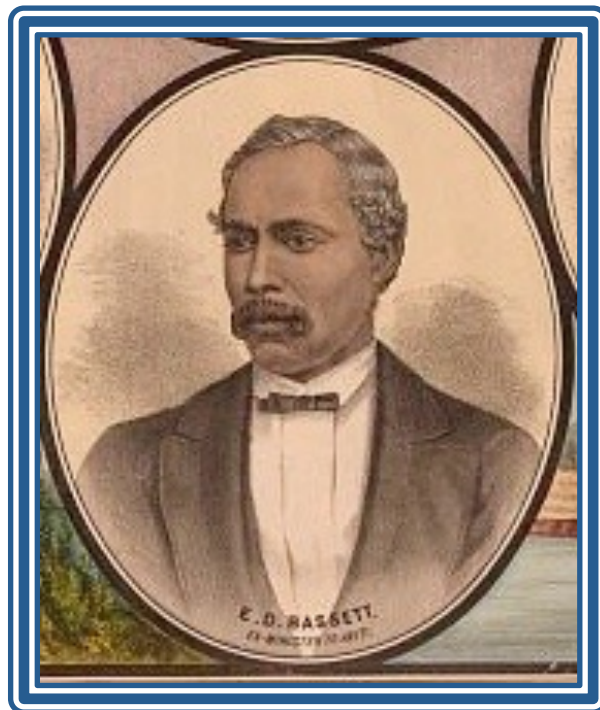


8th Grade Ebenezer Bassett and Rebecca Primus Inquiry (Reconstruction)

Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?



Ebenezer D. Bassett, detail from "Distinguished Men of Color," A. Muller & Co, c. 1883
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Supporting Questions

1. How were members of the African Diaspora civically engaged in the local, national, and international contexts?
2. Did race relations improve as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction?
3. What historic and contemporary examples of change and continuity in race relations exist?

Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?

Connecticut Social Studies Framework Indicator	CHANGE, CONTINUITY AND CONTEXT HIST 8.2: Classify series of historical events as examples of change and/or continuity.
Staging the Question	Snapshot in Time: Post 10 images detailing African American history leading up to 1870. Students view the images, taking note of the date and if the image shows progress. Next, students respond in writing to the compelling question. As a class, discuss the students' responses, with attention to the idea of progress and how students determined progress by viewing the images.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
How were members of the African Diaspora civically engaged in local, national, and international contexts?	Did race relations improve as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction?	What historic and contemporary examples of change and continuity in race relations exist?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Create a Civic Engagement Map detailing the places, people and civic actions taking place.	Write a formal letter explaining whether Bassett's experience was similar to or different from other African Americans.	Write a paragraph explaining whether a selected current event related to race relations is an example of progress.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: "Ebenezer Bassett's Historic Journey," <i>African American Connecticut Explored</i> Source B: "Distinguished Colored Men" Source C: Civic Engagement Map Activity	Source A: Frederick Douglass letter to Ebenezer Bassett Source B: J.M. Langston letter to William H. Seward, Secretary of State Source C: Rebecca Primus letter to Family, April 7, 1866	Source A: Rebecca Primus letters to Family, June 2, 1866 Source B: "Poll Finds Most in US Hold Dim View of Race Relations," <i>New York Times</i> Source C: Relevant Current Events

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT Compose a formal letter to your representative in Congress explaining whether a current event connected to race relations is an example of progress and stating how he or she feels the politician should approach similar issues in Congress. EXTENSION Working in small groups the students contribute to a class wide, or grade wide, bulletin board or display detailing a timeline of events. The descriptions of the events include an image, brief description and evaluation of the event as a moment of progress or setback. Once complete, students evaluate the display and draw further conclusions related to the compelling question.
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND Explore the connection between self-segregation in schools and overall school climate issues such as bullying. ASSESS Examine the current status of self-segregation in the school based on gender, race, social status. ACT Work with school staff and administration to build interest in and execute a Mix-it-Up at Lunch event.

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of race relations in the United States as they examine the life of Connecticut native Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett. Bassett broke the color barrier when he attended and graduated from Connecticut's State Normal School, known today as Central Connecticut State University, and was appointed Minister Resident to Haiti by President Grant. Students will also learn about Rebecca Primus, also from Connecticut, who taught school to newly freed blacks in a rural Maryland village after the Civil War. Adolescent students are quite concerned about issues of equality and justice. This inquiry gives students an entry point into thinking like historians about Reconstruction and its legacy. The question of progress invites students into the intellectual space that historians occupy. By investigating the question of the progress of race relations, students will need to make decisions about what the reality of the race relations was by comparing the experiences of various African Americans, and use that understanding to evaluate the condition of race relations over time.

Students will learn about Ebenezer Bassett's, Rebecca Primus's, and other African Americans' efforts to participate in the public sphere leading up to, during, and after the adoption of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. As part of their learning about race relations, students will practice thinking globally, in terms of the African Diaspora, and writing various positions on historical and contemporary events. The final performance task asks students to synthesize what they have learned, compare historical and contemporary events, and determine the extent of change and/or continuity over time.

It is important to note that this inquiry will require prerequisite knowledge of historical events and ideas, so students should already have studied antebellum America and the Civil War. *African American Connecticut Explored* provides this. For instance, they should understand that slavery existed as a social and economic institution in the United States and that although some would argue that the Civil War was not initiated over slavery, it was a major factor in causing disunion—and abolition of slavery and freedom for African Americans was the result.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take five to seven 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and sources). Inquiries are not scripts, so teachers are encouraged to modify and adapt them to meet the needs and interests of their particular students.

Acknowledgements

This toolkit was commissioned by *Connecticut Explored*, the magazine of Connecticut history, and written by Anthony Roy. Elizabeth Normen, publisher of *Connecticut Explored* and editor of *African American Connecticut Explored* (Wesleyan University Press, 2014) coordinated its development. *Connecticut Explored* offers discounted subscriptions to teachers and more essays and resources about Connecticut history may be found on ctexplored.org.

Content Background

The history of race relations in the United States is present in every era of American history dating to the Colonial Era. Following the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution and the commencement of Reconstruction after the Civil War, African Americans in Connecticut and beyond were elated with the prospect of liberty and opportunity. During Reconstruction, the United States appointed its first black international diplomat when Ebenezer Bassett was appointed Minister Resident and Consul General to Hayti (as it was then spelled), the world's first black republic. Bassett, raised in Derby, Connecticut, was one of many civically engaged members of the African Diaspora during this time. Rebecca Primus, raised in Hartford, taught school to newly freed African Americans in rural Maryland on behalf of the Freedmen's Aid Society. Although one could cite these instances as evidence of progress, it is also important to examine these successes within the larger context of the era. Looking at various instances of the history of race relations reveals both change and continuity inherent to the historical and contemporary discussion of this issue.

Rather than dealing with the significance of abolition of slavery and Reconstruction, the compelling question, "Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?," allows students to wrestle with the complexities and legacy of the era just as historians do. The compelling question implies that interpretation of change and continuity is subjective, leaving room for diverse claims and explanations. The first supporting question provides a context—civic engagement—for examining progress. The next two supporting questions examine historical and contemporary examples of change and continuity. Both periods—antebellum America and Reconstruction—help students understand the complexity of race relations and its relevance to today's society. The final supporting question allows students to make past-present connections prior to finalizing their claim.

By investigating the featured sources, students will be able to construct multiple, complex claims about the progress of race relations. In the first formative performance task, they will read and annotate a secondary source reading from *African American Connecticut Explored* and biographical sketches of "Distinguished Colored Men" to create a civic engagement map of the Atlantic World. Students will then turn to primary source accounts illustrating race relations during Reconstruction in an attempt to compare and contrast experiences in this era. Students will analyze letters of recommendation for Bassett's application to represent the United States in Haiti. Students will contrast these letters with Rebecca Primus's 1866 accounts regarding race relations during Reconstruction. Last, students will compare historical accounts and relevant current events illustrating race relations. In describing change and continuity between historical and contemporary eras, students should note the similarities and differences between both the events and the context in which the events occur, namely what other societal factors may also play a role in understanding the events.

Content, Practices, and Literacies

In addressing the compelling question "Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?" students will need to weigh evidence from each of the eras addressed in the unit. Through the Staging the Compelling Question activity, students will examine race relations in America over the course of a century. Next, students will examine instances where the African Diaspora exercised social and political autonomy within the Atlantic World. Students will compare and contrast African American experiences during Reconstruction to understand the complexities of race relations in the United States. Finally, students will have to determine the extent to which examples of current race relations show change and/or continuity.

Throughout the inquiry, students are asked to do increasingly complex assignments that will develop their cognitive capacity to deal with the complex Summative Performance Task. At first, students are asked to complete a map of civic engagement throughout the Atlantic World (Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence). The second and third tasks ask students to begin articulating explanations that will later be used as evidence in the Summative Performance Task (Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence; Chronological Reasoning and Causation). Finally, in the Summative Performance Task and the Extension, students need to pull together varying perspectives and support them with evidence from the range of sources used throughout the inquiry (Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence; Comparison and Contextualization).

The Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy offer social studies teachers numerous opportunities to integrate literacy goals and skills into their social studies instruction. The Common Core supports the inquiry process through reading rich informational texts, writing evidence-based arguments, speaking and listening in public venues, and using academic vocabulary that complements the pedagogical directions advocated in the Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks. At the end of this inquiry is an explication of how teachers might integrate literacy skills throughout the content, instruction, and resource decisions they make. The Common Core connections are listed on the last page of this inquiry.

Staging the Compelling Question

Compelling Question	Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?
Featured Source	Source A: Snapshot in Time (Image Bank): The African Diaspora in North America, 1792–1900

THE COMPELLING QUESTION “Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?” asks students to deal with the complexity of a changing society over time. To help get students warmed up for the inquiry, it will be important to have them start thinking about the concept of a race relations over time.

One way to do this is to have students look at images detailing the history of African Americans as a way of activating prior knowledge and generating curiosity about change and continuity over time. Begin by posting the images around the room and allowing students to walk around the room viewing the images and taking note of the year the images were created and if the images show “progress.”

Once the students have viewed the images, take some time discussing how the students defined “progress” while they examined the images. Guide the students to understand that historians examine change over time. Next, pose the compelling question to the students and allow them to share with a partner. After taking some responses from the class, provide time for students to write their initial answers to the compelling question using evidence to support their claim.

It is important to note that making direct comparisons between events across history is challenging, so teachers should avoid oversimplifications or anachronistic connections. As an example, it is an oversimplification to suggest that Connecticut, as a Northern state where slavery was legal until 1848 and the right to vote was taken away in the early 1800s and not restored until the passage of the 15th amendment, was sympathetic, or supportive, towards African Americans. In fact, in the 1830s abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison called Connecticut the “Georgia of the New England.” (See the introduction of *African American Connecticut Explored* for other examples.)

The goals of this exercise are twofold: First, to help students recognize that the status of race relations in the United States have been in flux for centuries; and second, depending on the instances used to support your position, there is a wide range of arguable answers. Often students see these kinds of events as isolated instances of progress and/or setback, and it is hoped that by examining race relations over time, students will come to understand that change and continuity occur over time and connect those living today with each person that came before.

Staging the Compelling Question

Featured Source

Source A: Snapshot in Time (Image Bank): The African Diaspora in North America, 1792–1900

Image 1

Cruikshank, Isaac. "The Abolition of the Slave Trade Or the inhumanity of dealers in human flesh exemplified in Captn. Kimber's treatment of a young Negro girl of 15 for her virjen (sic) modesty." Lithograph, 1792. *Library of congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510128/> (accessed July 27, 2015).



Image 2

"United States slave trade, 1830." Engraving on Wove Paper, 1838. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661746/> (accessed July 27, 2015).

"An abolitionist print possibly engraved in 1830, but undocumented aside from the letterpress text which appears on an accompanying sheet. The text reads: "United States' slave trade, 1830. The Copper Plate from which the above picture has just been engraved, was found many years ago by workmen engaged in removing the ruins of Anti-Slavery Hall, in Philadelphia, which was burned by a mob in 1838. No previous impression of the Plate is known to its present owner. A scene in the inter-State Slave trade is represented." The writer goes on to describe the scene as a group of slaves in chains, with a mother "fastened to her children," being sold by a trader on horseback to another. "Both dealers have whips in their hands. A ship and a boat, each loaded with slaves, are seen on the left. In the background, slaves are working in gangs, and one man is being flogged. The United States Capitol, surmounted by its flag, overlooks the scene in the distance. The engraving....is an interesting contribution to American History. Price 20 cents."

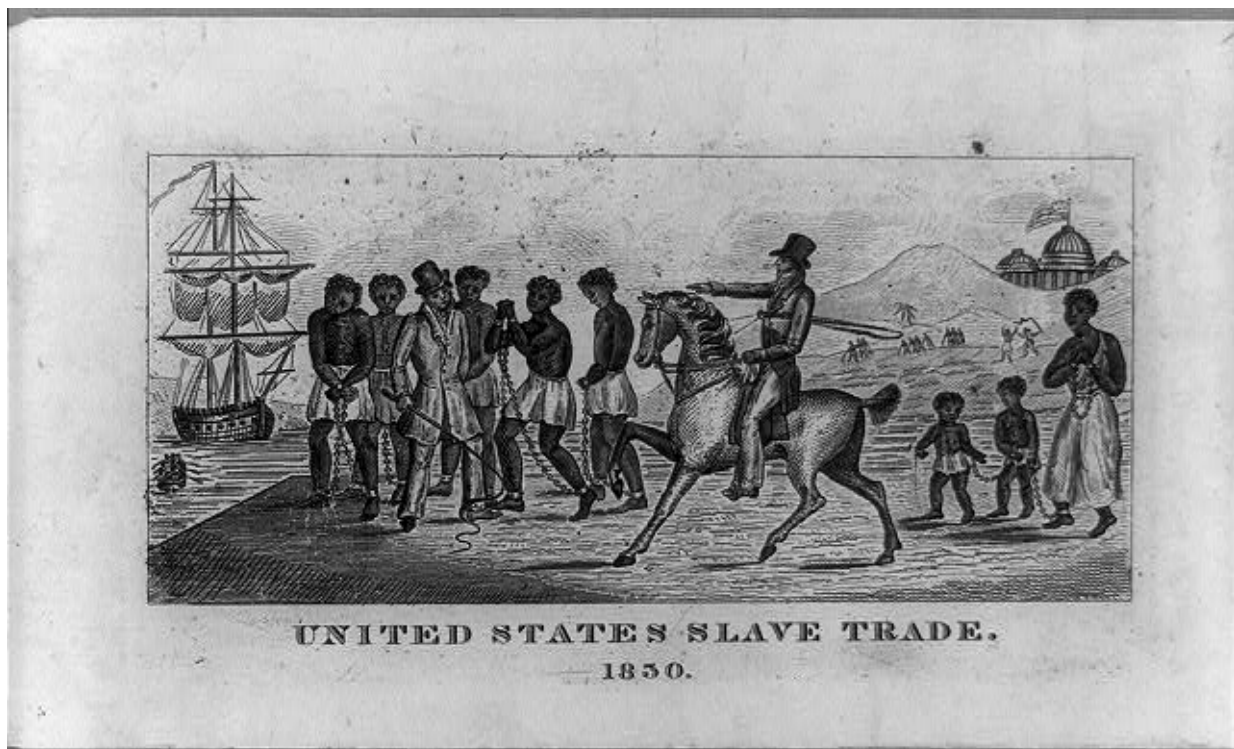


Image 3

"Horrid massacre in Virginia" (Nat Turner's Rebellion), Woodcut, 1831. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510363/> (accessed July 27, 2015).

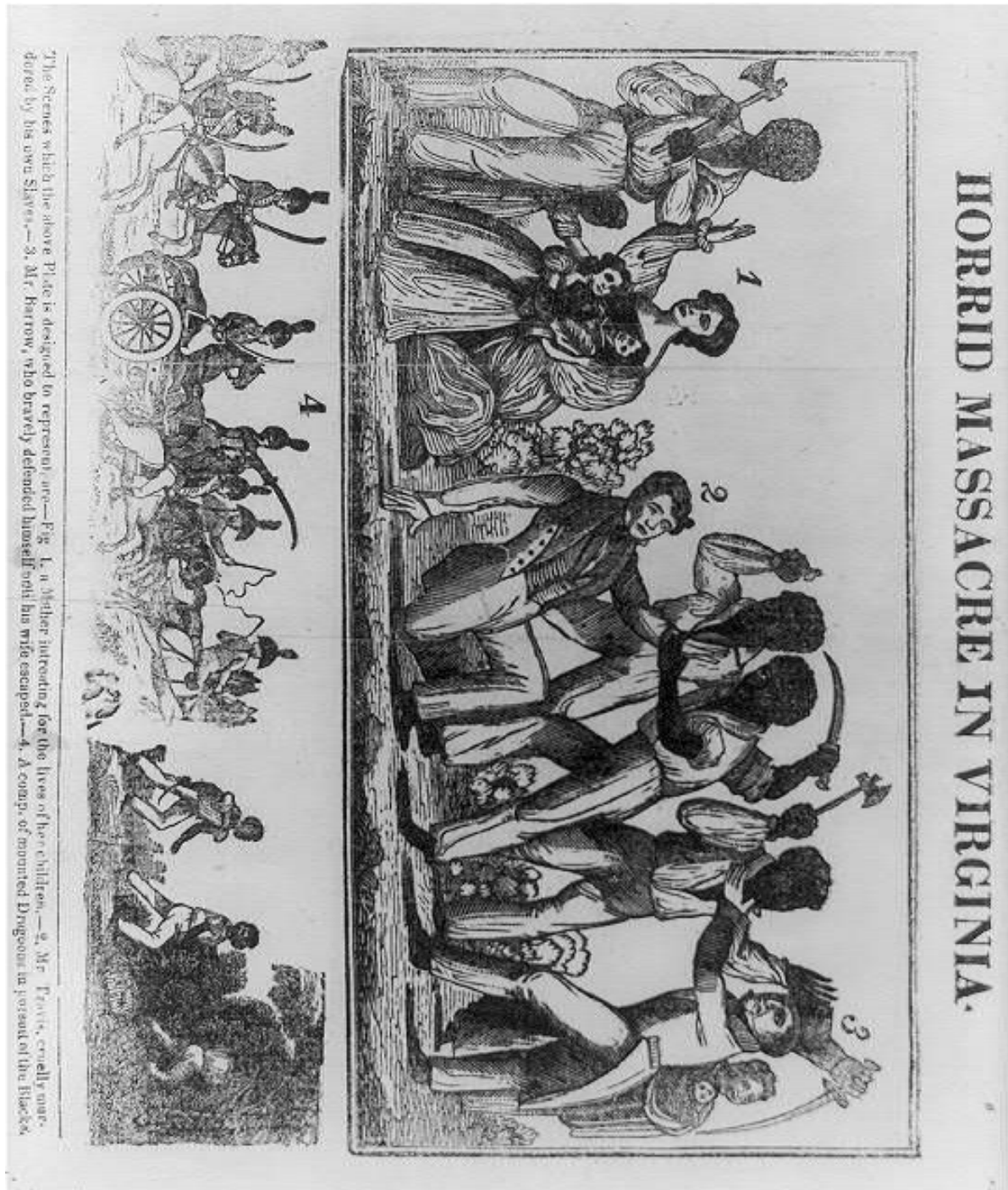


Image 4

"Practical Illustration of the Fugitive Slave Law." Lithograph, 1851. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661534/> (accessed July 27, 2015). A satire on the antagonism between Northern abolitionists on the one hand, and Secretary of State Daniel Webster and other supporters of enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Here abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (left) holds a slave woman in one arm and points a pistol toward a burly slave catcher mounted on the back of Daniel Webster. The slave catcher, wielding a noose and manacles, is expensively dressed, and may represent the federal marshals or commissioners authorized by the act (and paid) to apprehend and return fugitive slaves to their owners. Behind Garrison a black man also aims a pistol toward the group on the right, while another seizes a cowering slaveholder by the hair and is about to whip him saying, "It's my turn now Old Slave Driver." Garrison: "Don't be alarmed Susanna, you're safe enough." Slave catcher: "Don't back out Webster, if you do we're ruined." Webster, holding "Constitution": "This, though Constitutional, is 'extremely disagreeable.'" "Man holding volumes 'Law & Gospel': "We will give these fellows a touch of South Carolina." "Man with quill and ledger: "I goes in for Law & Order." A fallen slaveholder: "This is all 'your' fault Webster." In the background is a Temple of Liberty flying two flags, one reading "A day, an hour, of virtuous Liberty, is worth an age of Servitude" and the other, "All men are born free & equal." ...It is more likely that the print was produced in Boston, a center of bitter opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 and 1851.

[see next page]

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW.



Image 5

Martin & Judson. "Emancipation Proclamation." Lithograph, 1864. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003671404/> (accessed July 27, 2015).

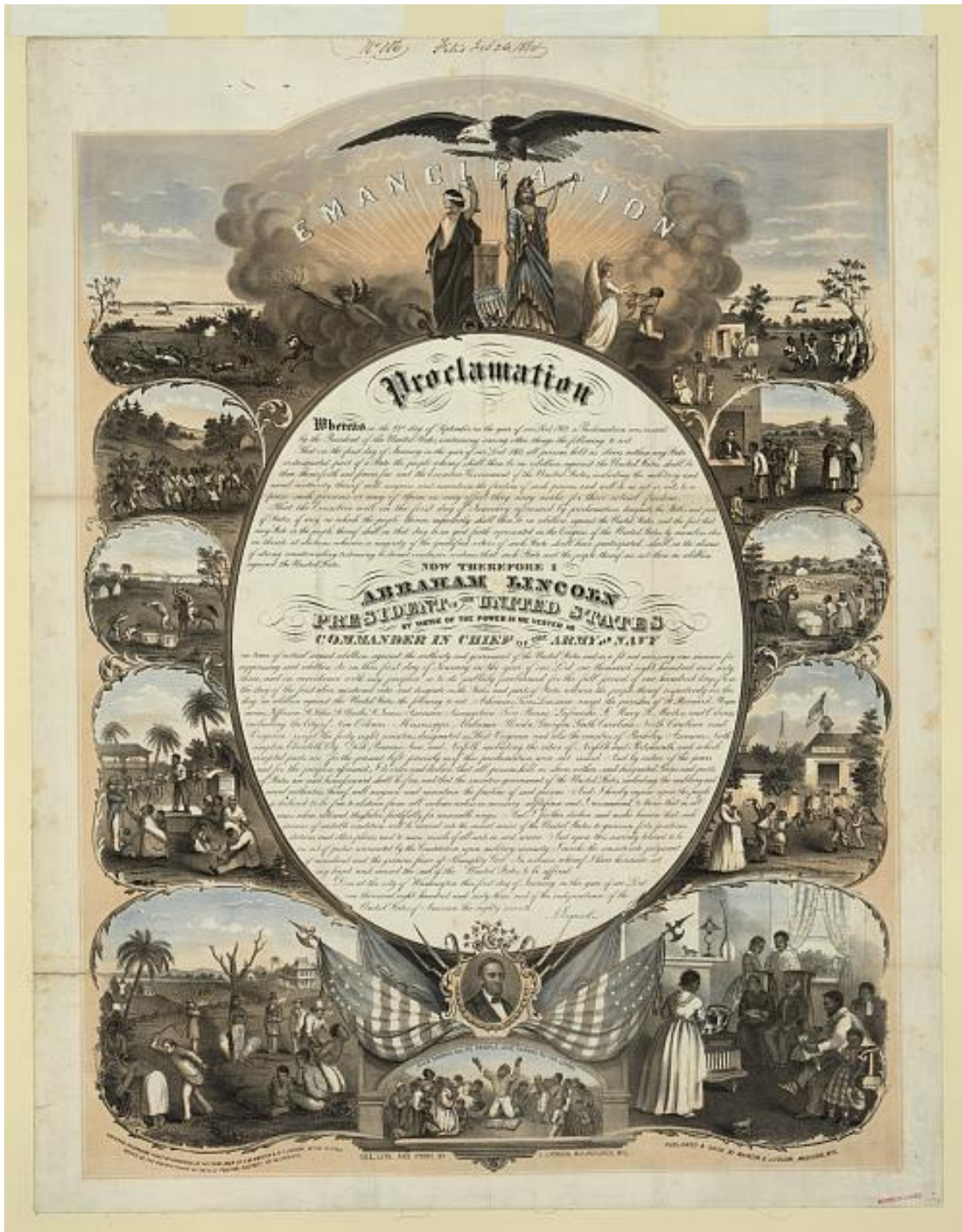


Image 6

Cooley, Sam A. "Beaufort, South Carolina. 29th Regiment from Connecticut." Digital Reproduction of Original Negative, 1864. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003001314/PP/> (accessed July 27, 2015).

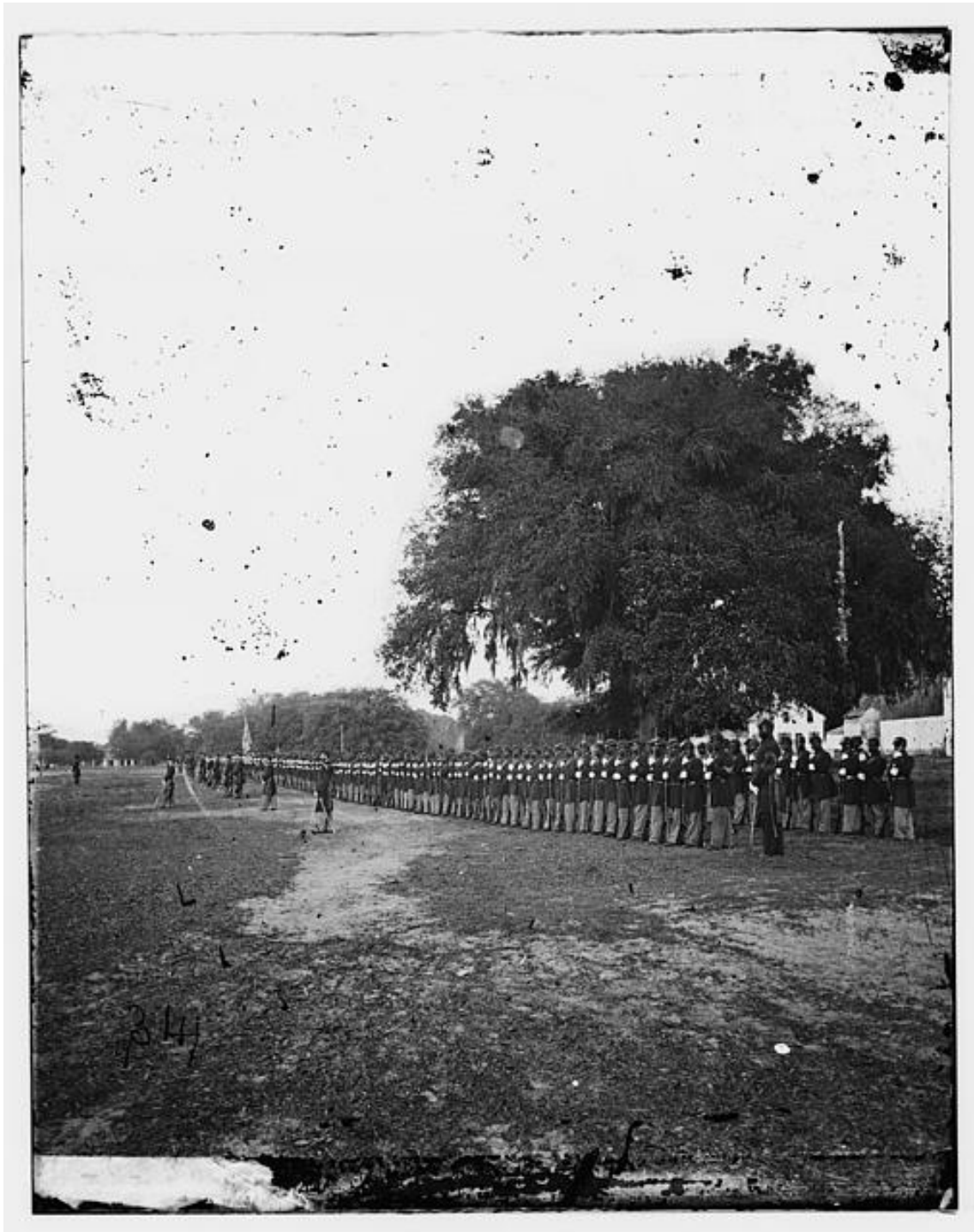


Image 7

Stephens, H. L. "Free!" Lithograph, 1863. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93505065/> (accessed July 27, 2015).



Image 8

Kelly, Thomas. "The Fifteenth Amendment." Lithograph, 1870. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93510386/> (accessed July 27, 2015).



Image 9

Nast, Thomas. "This is a White Man's Government. We regard the Reconstruction Acts (so called) of Congress as usurpations, and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void - Democratic Platform," Wood engraving, 1868. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98513794/> (accessed July 27, 2015).

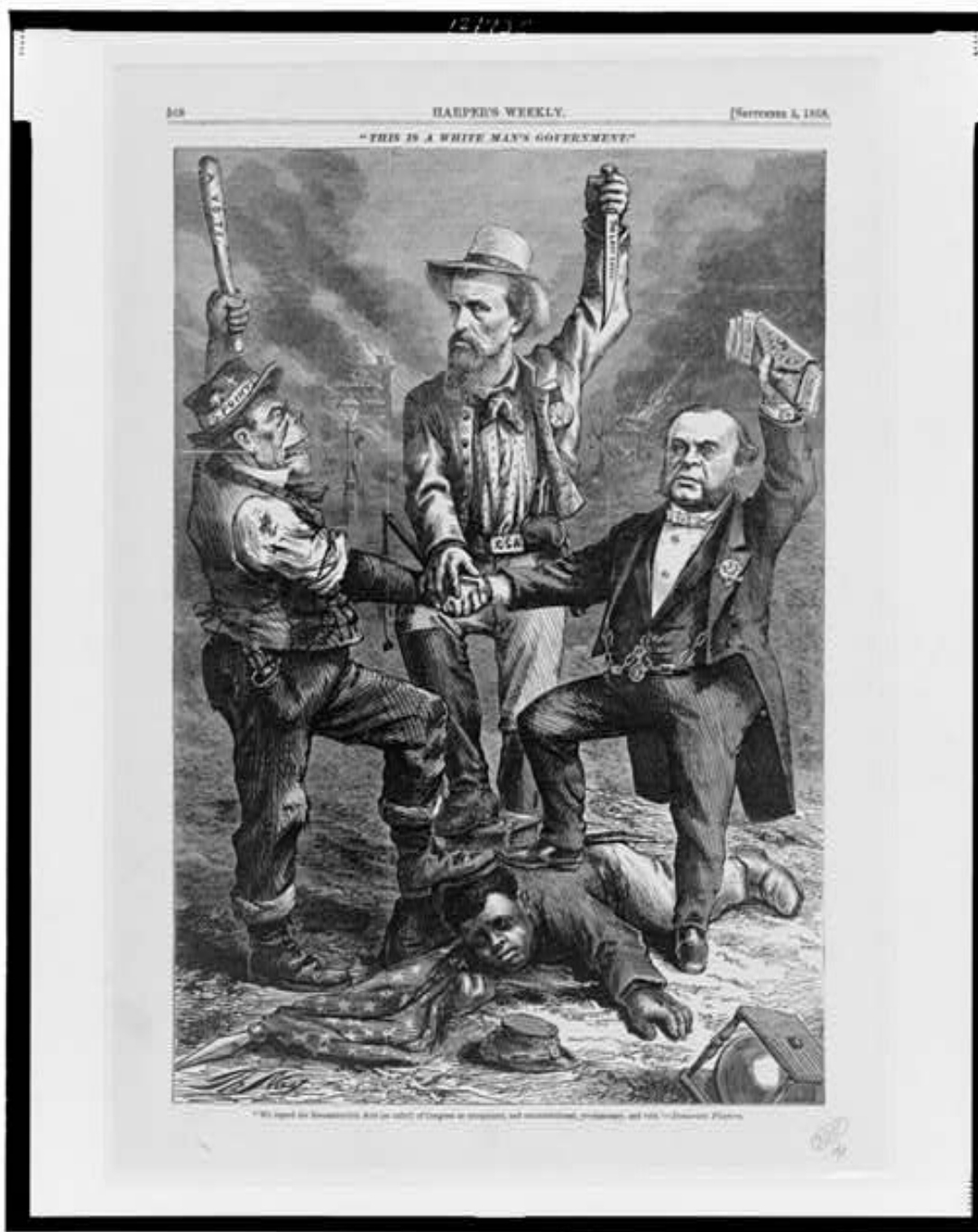
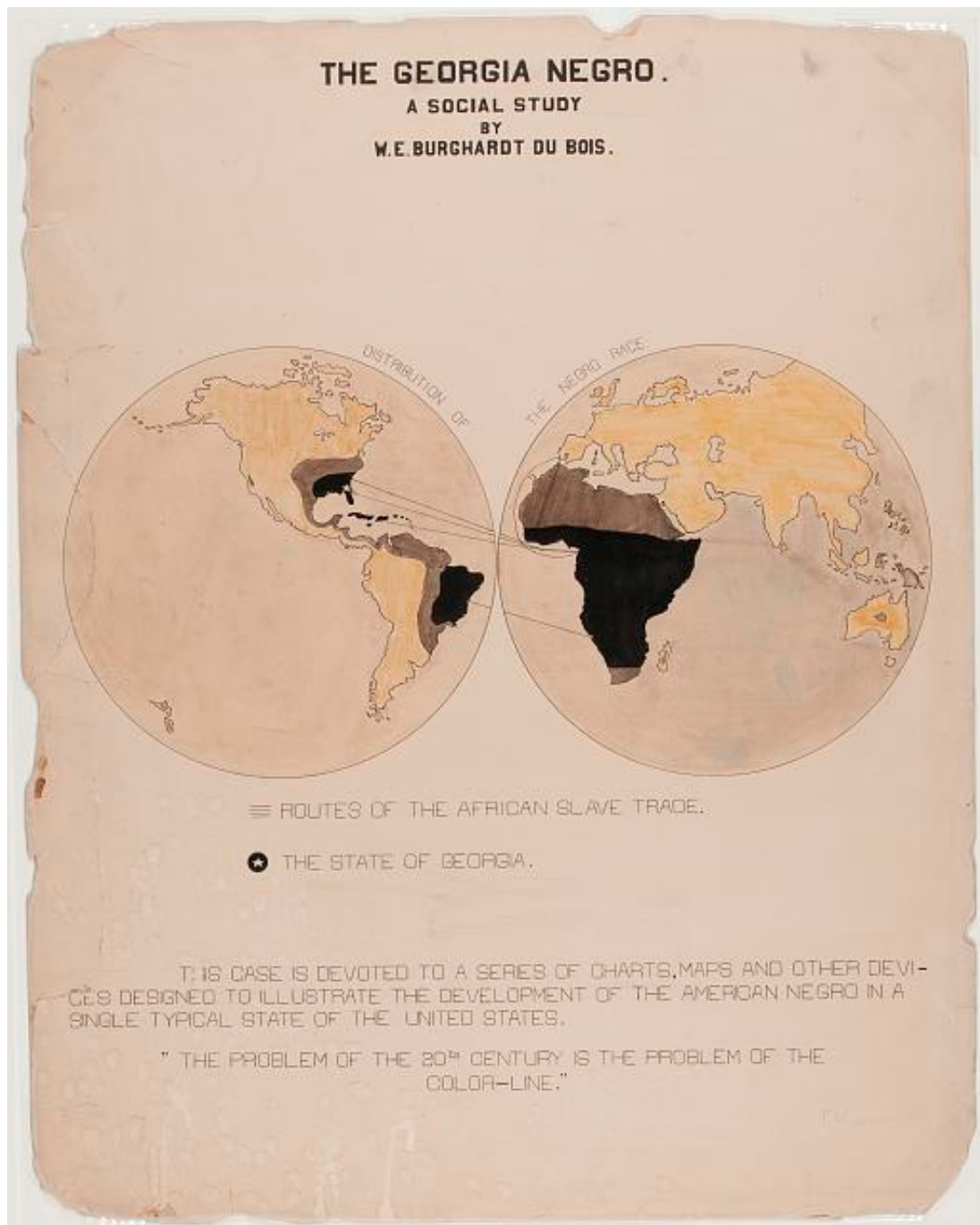


Image 10

Du Bois, W.E.B. "The Georgia Negro, A Social Study." Drawing: Ink and Watercolor, 1900. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2013650420/> (accessed July 27, 2015). Chart prepared by Du Bois for the Negro Exhibit of the American Section at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900 to show the economic and social progress of African Americans since emancipation



Supporting Question 1	
Supporting Question	How were members of the African Diaspora civically engaged in local, national, and international contexts?
Formative Performance Task	Create a Civic Engagement Map detailing the places, people and civic actions taking place.
Featured Source(s)	Source A: “Ebenezer Bassett’s Historic Journey,” <i>African American Connecticut Explored</i> Source B: A. Muller & Co., “Distinguished Colored Men,” c. 1883 and Biographical Entries Source C: Civic Engagement Map Activity
Content Specifications	Students will draw from primary and secondary sources to create an infographic detailing where, when and how members of the African Diaspora were civically engaged throughout the Atlantic World.

Supporting Question

To answer the compelling question “Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?” students will need to understand the social condition of African Americans and other members of the African Diaspora throughout the Atlantic World and how blacks were civically engaged to effect change for their situation. By answering this supporting question, students should be able to use their response throughout the rest of the inquiry to judge if race relations in America progressed over time.

Formative Performance Task

The formative performance task calls on students to create a map and key detailing how, when, and where members of the African Diaspora were civically engaged throughout the United States and Atlantic World. Within this task, students are working directly with the social studies practice Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence as they read and interpret two featured sources to discover examples of civic engagement. Students will use key details from the sources to create a “civic engagement” map detailing examples of African Americans and Haitians engaging the social and political spheres at the local, national, and international level.

Offering students opportunities to verbalize their emerging understandings while working collaboratively in small groups will help them think about and respond to the task. Additionally, teachers may want to allow students to share their work with other groups as they progress through the task. This formative performance task is the students’ first step toward creating a summative argument. Their basic understanding of ways in which the African Diaspora was working to address community issues and issues of race will provide students a starting place for evaluating the extent to which race relations have progressed over time.

Featured Sources

FEATURED SOURCE A is secondary source illustrating the life of Ebenezer Bassett. This text is modified from a chapter in *African American Connecticut Explored* (Wesleyan University Press, 2014) for classroom use. Accompanying the article is a list of tier 2 and 3 words found in the text. While reading the text, students should annotate the document specifically looking for examples of civic engagement. Students will use key details from this source to complete the Civic Engagement Map.

FEATURED SOURCE B is a lithograph with biographical sketches included in the image. Using this source, students will complete the Civic Engagement Map.

FEATURED SOURCE C is a map illustrating the Atlantic World and part of the United States. Students will label the map to illustrate where civic engagement took place.

Additional Resources

In addition, teachers may want students to consider other sources that further their understanding of civic engagement and race relations in Connecticut and beyond. Here are additional chapters of *African American Connecticut Explored* that will support the context of this question.

- 6. In Remembrance of their Kings of Guinea: The Black Governors and the Negro Election, 1749 to 1780"
- 8. The Rise of Communities and the Continued Quest for Freedom for All
- 9. Colonization and Abolition in Connecticut
- 10. Black Governors, 1780 to 1856
- 18. Rev. James W.C. Pennington: A National and Local Voice for Freedom
- 23. No Taxation without Representation
- 28. Connecticut and the Aftermath of the Civil War
- 29. Rebecca Primus and Addie Brown

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

Source A "Ebenezer Bassett's Historic Journey," *African American Connecticut Explored*

For original text, see Ivanoff, Carolyn B., with Mary J. Mycek and Marian K. O'Keefe, "Ebenezer Bassett's Historic Journey," *African American Connecticut Explored* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), or online at <http://ctexplored.org/ebenezer-bassetts-historic-journey/>

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

History: Change, Continuity and Context; Perspectives**Economics:** Economic Decision Making; The Global Economy

Words to Know

• ambassador	• abolitionist	• rebellion
• republic	• elite	• diplomatic
• independence	• Republican	• economic
• surname	• Hispaniola	• Human rights
• Underground Railroad	• plantation	• Administration

Ebenezer Bassett's Historic Journey

Lexile: 1110 Word Count: 987

By Carolyn B. Ivanoff with Mary J. Mycek and Marian K. O'Keefe

Adapted by permission of Wesleyan University Press

On June 5, 1869, thirty-six-year-old Connecticut native Ebenezer D. Bassett (1833-1908) became our nation's first black ambassador, a position then known as minister resident, to the world's first black republic. Bassett was aware he was making history. He also knew the risks and difficulties that lay ahead. A few days earlier he pledged to President Ulysses S. Grant and a large crowd in New York City that he would exhibit "an honest heart, a generous purpose, and unflagging industry, and an elevated patriotism."

Early Life

Bassett's great-grandfather, Pero, came to Connecticut as an enslaved African. Bassett's grandfather, Tobiah, gained freedom by fighting for American independence in the Revolutionary War. Tobiah was a leader of the black community in Derby and was elected Black Governor in 1815. Bassett's father, Eben Tobias, was also a prominent leader in Derby and served as Black

Governor from 1840 to 1845. Eben Tobias married Susan Gregory Bassett and adopted the Bassett surname. Ebenezer, born in 1833, was a middle child. By the 1850s the family farmed land on Great Hill along the banks of the Housatonic River in Derby.

In the late 1840s Ebenezer went to Birmingham Academy located near the Derby green. Unlike other towns in the state, Derby did not exclude Bassett from an education because of his race. Bassett later reflected, “My success in life I owe greatly to that American sense of fairness which was tendered me in old Derby, and which exacts that every man whether white or black, shall have a fair chance to run his race in life and make the most of himself.”

After attending Birmingham Academy, Bassett went to the Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts (now the Wilbraham and Monson Academy). The school was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Following Wilbraham Academy, Bassett became the first black to attend Connecticut’s State Normal School in New Britain. The Normal School was the first teacher training school in Connecticut and one of the first in the nation. Bassett graduated in 1853. The Normal School is now known as Central Connecticut State University.

Bassett began his career as a teacher at the Whiting School. This school educated children of color in New Haven. His salary was \$300 a year. After his first year the school board reported that Bassett “transformed 40 or 50 thoughtless, reckless, tardy and reluctant youngsters into intelligent, ambitious, well-disciplined and well-behaved students.” While in New Haven, Bassett also attended classes at Yale University and was an active member of the community. It was there that he married Eliza Park and met, for the first time, Frederick Douglass, the nationally recognized abolitionist and civil rights leader.

In 1855 Bassett became principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia (now Cheyney University). ICY was a leading institution for black education. The Bassetts became members of the black elite in Philadelphia. Ebenezer Bassett became active in abolitionist efforts and was in constant touch with Frederick Douglass.

Bassett did not serve in the military during the Civil War. He did, however, recruit black soldiers, often working with Douglass. During and after the war, Bassett was involved in civil rights, was recognized as a pioneer black educator, and was active in Republican politics. His experience made him a perfect fit as the United States’ representative to Haiti.

Minister Resident to Haiti

Haiti is a Caribbean nation on the western side of the island of Hispaniola. Columbus claimed the island for Spain in 1492. France took control of the western side of the island in the 1660s. By 1790 Haiti was known as “Pearl of the Antilles” because it was the richest French colony in the New World. The intensely brutal French plantation system produced sugar, coffee, and indigo there. Under this system, it was cheaper to work a slave to death and purchase a new one than to

care for existing workers. French plantation owners imported 30,000 to 100,000 slaves a year during more than a century of control. Haitian slaves won independence in an armed rebellion from France in 1804.

As a free nation, Haiti provided the U.S. with valuable trade. Unfortunately, Haiti also suffered from a pattern of revolution, revolt, civil war, famine, disease, earthquakes, and hurricanes. This created a tricky diplomatic situation. When Bassett arrived in 1869, one of his first acts was to lease a fireproof building for his records to protect them from the violence of the on-going civil war. Bassett served as minister resident for almost nine years. His diplomatic efforts were made extremely delicate since the U.S. had economic interest in the Caribbean. Bassett had to repeatedly calm Haitian suspicions of an American takeover.

Bassett was a pioneer in protecting human rights, even if it created tension with Washington. Bassett regularly protected refugees at a time when human rights were not of widespread concern. Bassett saved many lives through this controversial practice. It helped that communication was slow. Letters were sent by ship and took weeks to go back and forth. Bassett often did what he felt was right and asked for forgiveness after the fact.

At the end of the Grant Administration Bassett resigned. The Rutherford B. Hayes Administration appointed John M. Langston, who had been born enslaved in Virginia, earned his freedom, and was serving as dean of Howard Law School.

On December 1, 1877, Bassett and his family boarded a steamship for the two-week trip to New York City. Back in New Haven, Bassett began speaking out about political and civil rights issues. Although Bassett would never receive another U.S. diplomatic appointment, he was not forgotten in Haiti. In 1879, the Haitian President appointed Bassett Haitian consul in New York City. Bassett held that position until 1889, when he resigned in protest because American merchant ships were illegally delivering arms to Haitian rebels. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, Haiti appointed Bassett vice consul general, a position he held until his death in 1908.

Additional Resources

Mycek, Mary J., Marian K. O’Keefe, and Carolyn B. Ivanoff. *Ebenezer D. Bassett (1833-1908)*. Derby, Connecticut: Valley Historical Research Committee, 2008.

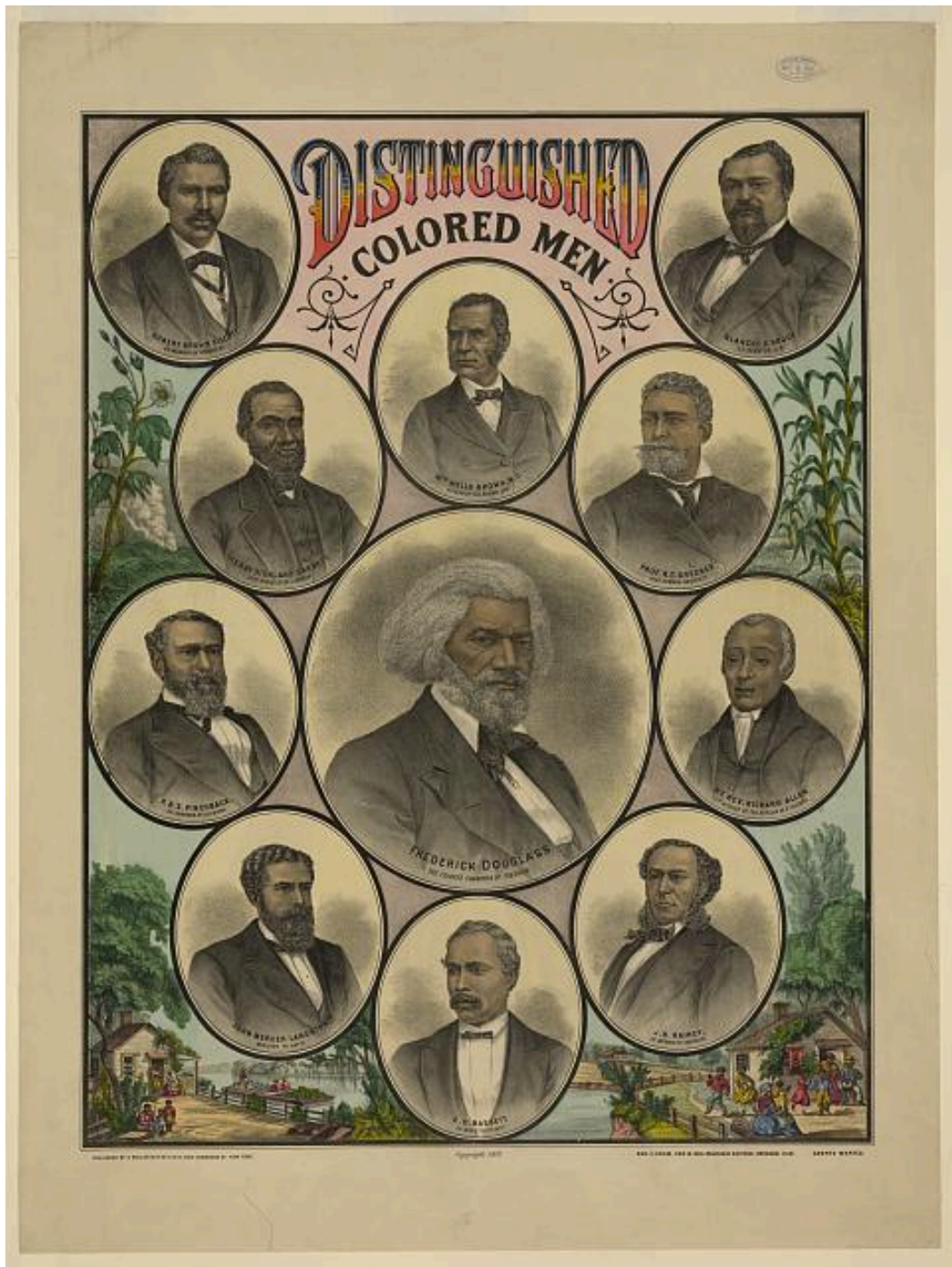
Teal, Christopher. *Hero of Hispaniola: America’s First Black Diplomat, Ebenezer D. Bassett*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008.

Spalding, J. A., *Illustrated Popular Biography of Connecticut*. Hartford: Case, Lockwood, & Brainard, 1891.

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source B

Source B: A. Muller & Co. "Distinguished Colored Men." Lithograph, c. 1883. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00651115/> (accessed July 27, 2015).



Frederick Douglass was born into Maryland slavery in 1817 to an enslaved mother and a slave master father. Young Douglass toiled on a rural plantation and later in Baltimore's shipyards as a caulker. Douglass, however, learned to read and soon sought out abolitionist literature that alleviated what he termed the graveyard of his mind. He eventually escaped to New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1838, and took the surname Douglass, which he borrowed from the Scottish romance novel, *Lady of the Lake* by Sir Walter Scott. Douglass's wife, Anna, followed with their five children. She worked as a laborer in a New Bedford shoe factory while Douglass became a world-renowned anti-slavery orator.

Douglass's life spanned important decades of American history in which the contradictions of race, class and gender were debated. Douglass played a crucial role in those debates. He spoke out against Northern race prejudice as well as Southern slavery. However, with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, even Douglass began to entertain radical and violent solutions which would help blacks gain their freedom and, at the same time, destroy American slavery.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Douglass urged black men to support the war effort and specifically to join the Union Army with essays such as "Men of Color, To Arms." Two of his sons were among those men who joined the all-black Fifty-fourth Massachusetts regiment. After the war, Douglass served as President of the Freedman's Bank. He recognized the failure of Reconstruction in an 1888 speech entitled "I Denounce the So-Called Emancipation as a Stupendous Fraud."

Source: Malik Simba, "Douglass, Frederick (1817-1895)," *Blackpast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/douglass-frederick-1817-1895>

Robert Brown Elliott, Reconstruction-era Congressman, was born in 1842 in Liverpool, England. He attended High Holborn Academy in London, England and then studied law, graduating from Eton College in 1859. From there he joined the British Royal Navy. Elliott decided to settle in South Carolina in 1867. He was admitted to the South Carolina bar in 1868 and began practicing law in Columbia, the state capital. Elliott worked under the future Congressman Richard H. Cain as associate editor of the *South Carolina Leader* and was an elected delegate to the 1868 state constitution convention. Later that year, he won a seat in the South Carolina House of Representatives. In 1869, partly because of his military background, Elliott was appointed assistant adjutant-general for South Carolina. He became the first African American commanding general of the South Carolina National Guard which, as the state militia, was charged with fighting the white supremacist organization, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

In 1870, Elliott was nominated by the Republican Party to run for Congress from the Third Congressional District. Elected in November 1870, he took his seat in March 1871. While serving in Congress Elliott continuously fought the activities of the KKK. He also opposed the granting of general amnesty to ranking ex-Confederate military officers and civilians.

Source: Nancy Cho, "Elliott, Robert Brown (1842-1884)," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/elliott-robert-brown-1842-1884>.

William Wells Brown was an African American antislavery lecturer, groundbreaking novelist, playwright and historian. He is widely considered to have been the first African American to publish works in several major literary genres. Known for his continuous political activism especially in his involvement with the anti-slavery movement, Brown is widely acclaimed for the effectiveness of many of his writings.

Brown was born to a white father and enslaved mother on a plantation outside of Lexington, Kentucky, most likely in 1814. He spent his childhood and much of his young adult life enslaved in St. Louis, Missouri working a variety of trades. Brown slipped away from his owner's steamboat while it was docked in Cincinnati, Ohio and declared himself a free man on New Year's Day 1834. Shortly thereafter he was taken in and helped to safety by Mr. and Mrs. Wells Brown, a white Quaker family. He would adopt their surname in respect for the help they provided him.

By 1843 Brown was lecturing regularly on his experiences in slavery for the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. By that time he also became deeply committed to lecturing on behalf of women's rights and temperance laws. In 1845, in the wake of the tremendous success of Frederick Douglass's narrative autobiography, Brown published his own *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself*. The resounding success of his narrative led Brown to travel across Europe and launched his writing career.

Source: Robin Jones, "Brown, William Wells," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/brown-william-wells-1814-1884>.

Henry Highland Garnet escaped from bondage via the Underground Railroad with his parents in 1824. The family settled in New York City and his father found work as a shoemaker and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Garnet attended the African Free School, which was one of several schools established in northeastern cities by white philanthropists. He joined the First Colored Presbyterian Church in New York where he also found a community of abolitionists. In 1843 Garnet became nationally prominent when he delivered an address at the National Negro Convention meeting in Buffalo. He urged slaves to rebel and claim their freedom. In 1864 Garnett became pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. On Sunday, February 12, 1865 Garnet preached a sermon in the U.S. House of Representatives. Although he did not address Congress, his presentation was the first by an African American in the Capitol Building.

In 1868 Garnet moved to Pittsburgh where he briefly served as President of Avery College, a school of religious education for African Americans. Originally an opponent of the colonization movement, by the mid-nineteenth century Garnet shifted his support to the migration of black Americans to Liberia. In December 1881 President James A. Garfield appointed Garnet minister to Liberia. Garnet moved to the West African nation but died on February 13, 1882, barely two months after his arrival.

Source: Shirley Yee, "Garnet, Henry Highland," *Blackpast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/garnet-henry-highland-1815-1881>.

Richard Theodore Greener, the son of a sailor and a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania became the first African American to graduate from Harvard College. He later was assigned to serve the United States in diplomatic posts in India and Russia.

Greener lived in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts as a child but received his secondary education at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. He entered Harvard in 1865 and in 1870 became the first African American to receive an A.B. degree from the institution. After graduation he was appointed principal of the Male Department at Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth which later became Cheyney University. Three years later, Greener became professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at the University of South Carolina where he also served as librarian and taught Greek, Mathematics and Constitutional Law. While there, Greener entered the Law School and received an LL.B degree in 1876. His most prominent role as an attorney occurred in 1881 when he was part of the legal team that unsuccessfully defended West Point cadet Johnson C. Whittaker who was convicted of the charge of self-mutilation after an attack by racist fellow cadets. Whittaker had been one of Greener's students at the University of South Carolina.

Source: Pamela Spratien, "Greener, Richard T.," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/greener-richard-t-1844-1922>.

Richard Allen was born into slavery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on February 14, 1760. He went on to become an educator, writer, minister and founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1783, by working at odd jobs for five years, Allen purchased his freedom for \$2,000. In the meantime, Allen began to preach in Methodist churches and meetings in the Baltimore area. Through his Methodist connections Allen was invited to return to Philadelphia in 1786.

Because of segregation in the pews, Allen became convinced that a separate church was necessary for black congregants. In 1787 he and a number of other African American Methodists formed a separate church that would become Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first Methodist church in the United States specifically for African Americans. On April 9, 1816, after two decades of conflict with white Methodism, Allen and other African American Methodist preachers hosted a meeting in Philadelphia to bring these churches together and to form a new denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). Allen was elected bishop, and with his consecration became the first African American bishop in the United States

Allen cared passionately about education and opened a day school for African American children. He worked actively for abolition, and maintained his home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. He was committed to self-determination for African Americans in the United States, and eventually opposed all colonization plans for African Americans in other countries.

Source: Priscilla Pope-Levinson, "Allen, Richard," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/allen-richard-pennsylvania-1760-1831>.

Joseph Hayne Rainey, a Republican, became the first African American to be elected to the United States House of Representatives and take his seat (1870). Others were elected earlier but were not

seated. Rainey was born in Georgetown, South Carolina, on June 21, 1832. His parents had been enslaved but his father purchased his family's freedom and taught him to be a barber. The family moved to Charleston in 1846. Rainey traveled frequently outside the South and married in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1859.

In 1861 Rainey was drafted to work on a Confederate blockade-runner. In 1862 he escaped to Bermuda with his wife and worked there as a barber before returning to South Carolina in 1866.

In 1868 he was elected a delegate to South Carolina's Constitutional Convention. Two years later in 1870 he was elected to the state senate where he soon became the Chairman of the Finance Committee. When South Carolina Congressman Benjamin F. Whittemore resigned, Rainey won the seat in a special election. He served in the 41st Congress and was appointed to the Committee on Freedmen's Affairs and the Committee on Indian Affairs. He ran for reelection in 1872 without opposition. In May 1874 he became the first African American representative to preside over a House session.

In 1876, with the Democrats reemerging at the end of Reconstruction as the dominant force in South Carolina, Rainey barely defeated Democrat John S. Richardson for Congress. Richardson, who never conceded the election, contested Rainey's seat for the next two years. In 1878 Richardson won the seat, ending Rainey's Congressional career.

Source: Allison Marie O'Connor, "Rainey, Joseph Hayne (1832-1887)," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/rainey-joseph-hayne-1832-1887>.

Ebenezer D. Bassett was appointed U.S. Minister Resident to Haiti in 1869, making him the first African American diplomat. For eight years, the educator, abolitionist, and black rights activist oversaw bilateral relations through bloody civil warfare and coups d'état on the island of Hispaniola. Bassett served with distinction, courage, and integrity in one of the most crucial, but difficult postings of his time.

During the Civil War, Bassett became one of the city's leading voices illuminating the cause behind that conflict—the liberation of four million black slaves—and helped recruit African American soldiers for the Union Army. In nominating Bassett to become Minister Resident to Haiti, President Ulysses S. Grant made him one of the highest-ranking black members of the United States government.

Source: Christopher Teal, "Bassett, Ebenezer D. (1833-1908)," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/bassett-ebenezer-d-1833-1908>.

John Mercer Langston was born a free black in Louisa County, Virginia in 1829. Langston gained distinction as an abolitionist, politician, and attorney. Langston took his surname from his mother, Lucy Langston, an emancipated woman of Indian and black ancestry who had been formerly enslaved. At fourteen Langston began his studies at the Preparatory Department at Oberlin College. Known for its radicalism and abolitionist politics, Oberlin was the first college in the United States to admit black and white students. Langston completed his studies in 1849, becoming the fifth African American male to graduate from Oberlin's Collegiate Department.

In 1854, Langston married Caroline Matilda Wall, an emancipated woman from North Carolina. She and Langston had remarkably similar backgrounds. Like Langston, Wall also attended Oberlin, graduating in 1856. In 1855 Langston was elected town clerk of Brownhelm Township in Ohio, becoming the first black elected official in the state. In addition to his law practice and activities as town clerk, Langston, his wife, and brothers, Gideon and Charles, participated in the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, Langston recruited black volunteers for the Massachusetts 54th Infantry Regiment, officially the country's first African American military unit.

In 1868 Langston moved to Washington, D.C. to help establish the nation's first law school at Howard University. He became its first dean and served briefly as acting president of Howard in 1872. In 1877, President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed Langston U.S. minister to Haiti, succeeding Ebenezer Basset. Langston returned to the U.S. in 1885 and became president of Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (now Virginia State University).

Source: Shirley Yee, "Langston, John Mercer (1829-1897)," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/langston-john-mercer-1829-1897>.

Blanche Kelso Bruce was born enslaved in 1841 in Prince Edward County, Virginia but was raised in Missouri. Shortly after the beginning of the Civil War, Bruce fled to Kansas, becoming a free man before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

After the Civil War he returned to Missouri and founded the first school for African Americans in Hannibal. Bruce briefly attended Oberlin College, but lacking funds, began working as a steamboat porter on the Mississippi River. Hearing Mississippi gubernatorial candidate James L. Alcorn speak, Bruce decided to move to the state in 1869 to enter politics.

Mentored by white Republicans, his political rise was swift. He was sergeant at arms in the State Senate, then Sheriff and Tax Collector of Bolivar County in 1871. As Bolivar County Superintendent of Education, he started more schools. Financially successful due to his job as Sheriff, he bought a 640-acre plantation in Floreyville, Mississippi in 1873. Bruce was elected as a Republican to the United States Senate in 1875 and served until 1881.

Source: Robin Jones, "Bruce, Blanche Kelso," *BlackPast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/bruce-blanche-kelso-1841-1898>.

Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback was born on May 10, 1837 to William Pinchback, a successful Virginia planter, and Eliza Stewart, whom William Pinchback had formerly enslaved. The Pinchback family moved to Mississippi, where young Pinchback grew up in comfortable surroundings on a large plantation. At the age of nine, he was sent by his parents to Ohio to receive a formal education at Cincinnati's Gilmore School. In 1848 his father died suddenly and his mother fled to Cincinnati with her children for fear of being re-enslaved in Mississippi. Shortly thereafter, 12-year-old Pinckney became sole-provider for his mother and four siblings.

Pinchback found work as a cabin boy on a canal boat and worked his way up to steward on the riverboats which ran the Ohio, Mississippi, and Red rivers. During these years, he sent as much money as possible to help support his mother and his siblings. In 1860 when he was 23, Pinchback married Nina Hawthorne, with whom he would have four children. During the Civil War, Pinchback ran the Confederate blockade on the Mississippi River to reach Union-occupied New Orleans, Louisiana where he raised a company of black volunteers to fight for the North. In 1863, after being passed over for promotion a number of times, Pinchback resigned from service. At the close of the war, he moved his family to Alabama in order to test their new freedom, but they encountered dreadful levels of prejudice and moved to New Orleans.

In New Orleans, Pinchback organized the Fourth Ward Republican Club, and was a member of the delegation that established a new constitution for the state of Louisiana in 1868. Later that year, he was elected to the Louisiana State Senate, and subsequently became the institution's president pro tempore. In 1871, the Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana, Oscar Dunn, died of pneumonia and Pinchback was chosen by the state senate to succeed Dunn. He served as lieutenant governor until the winter of 1872 when impeachment proceedings were initiated against Governor Henry Clay Warmouth. From December 9, 1872, to January 13, 1873 Pinchback served as acting governor of Louisiana, making him the first person of African descent to serve as governor of any state.

Source: Victor Tolly, "Pinchback, Pinckney Benton Stewart (1837-1921)," *Blackpast.org*, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/pinchback-pinckney-benton-stewart-1837-1921>.

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source C

Source C: Civic Engagement Map Activity

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/93/Atlantic_Ocean_laea_location_map.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/32/Blank_US_Map.svg



Person or Event Featured:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Civic Engagement Map Key

<p>Topic 1: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>	<p>Topic 2: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>
<p>Topic 3: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>	<p>Topic 4: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>
<p>Topic 5: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>	<p>Topic 6: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>
<p>Topic 7: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>	<p>Topic 8: _____</p> <p>Date/Place: _____</p> <p>Key Details about Civic Engagement:</p>

Supporting Question 2	
Supporting Question	Did race relations improve as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction?
Formative Performance Task	Write a formal letter explaining whether Bassett's experience was similar to or different from other African Americans.
Featured Source(s)	Source A: Frederick Douglass letter to Ebenezer Bassett, September 16, 1867 Source B: J.M. Langston letter to William H. Seward, October 3, 1867 Source C: Rebecca Primus to family, Hartford, April 7, 1866.
Content Specifications	Students will examine letters of recommendation written in support of Ebenezer Bassett's application for Minister Resident of Haiti and compare this information to Rebecca Primus' accounts of race relations following the U.S. Civil War.

Supporting Question

For the second supporting question, students build on their understanding of the race relations in the United States by analyzing the relationship between the experiences of Ebenezer Bassett and other African Americans during Reconstruction. Understanding that African Americans from across the United States had different experiences during this era will provide a basis for evaluating whether or not race relations progressed during this era. Students can look back at the source materials related to civic engagement to corroborate whether or not race relations experienced progress after the Civil War.

Formative Performance Task

The formative performance task for this supporting question requires students to write a formal letter explaining whether Bassett's experiences were similar to or different from other African Americans. In their explanations, students should describe specific experiences that show differences or similarities. This explanation can be the starting place for the claims that students will write to respond to the compelling question.

Featured Sources

FEATURED SOURCE A is a letter written by Frederick Douglass to Ebenezer Bassett in support of his application as Minister Resident and Consul General to Hayti. Teachers will want to be sure that students understand the background of who Frederick Douglass was and why his comments are significant. Students should then be able to read the text and articulate whether or not the letter shows progress in race relations. For students who need assistance navigating the source, consider having them read with a partner or do a whole-group reading of the source before asking students to begin their analyses.

FEATURED SOURCE B is a letter from J.M. Langston to William H. Seward, recommending Bassett for the appointment. This letter provides another perspective as to why Bassett was fit for the position and outlines some of his accomplishments.

FEATURED SOURCE C, a letter from Rebecca Primus to her family in Hartford (April 7, 1866), contrasts the experiences of Bassett with an African American woman living and working in the Reconstructed South. Readers will notice that in both cases African Americans wished to exercise civic engagement, but the context for each experience determined the individual’s ability to exercise his or her autonomy. For further background on Rebecca Primus, see chapter 29 in *African American Connecticut Explored*.

The sources featured in this formative performance task are exclusively text-based and require students to closely read terms and ideas that could be challenging for even the strongest readers. One possibility is to significantly reduce the three documents to key ideas that would answer the supporting question “Did race relations improve as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction?”

Additional Resources

In addition, teachers may want students to consider other sources that further their understanding race relations in Connecticut and beyond in this era. Here are additional chapters of *African American Connecticut Explored* that will support the context of this question.

- 28. Connecticut and the Aftermath of the Civil War
- 29. Rebecca Primus and Addie Brown
- 30. The Fisk Jubilee Singers Tour the North
- 32. Charles Ethan Porter

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source A

Source A: Frederick Douglass to Ebenezer Bassett, 16 September 1867, Letters of Application & Recommendation During the Administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, 1861-1869 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M650, roll 3); National Archives at College park, College Park, MD.

Transcription

Prof. Bassett:

Dear Sir, I am glad to know that you are making an effort to induce Hon. William Seward, Secretary of State, and through him, the President of the United States, to send some competent colored citizen to represent this country in Consul in Port au Prince.*¹ If there are any good reasons against this measure, I have never heard them stated. There is, I think, an obvious propriety in the measure. Its adoption would be scarcely less gratifying and assuring to Hayti there to the millions of colored citizens of the United States. But I will not argue the question. The Secretary of State better than either of us may understand the relations and dealings of the proposed measure. My purpose is, in case it is thought to be wise and proper to send any colored citizen to that post of duty to recommend yourself as a man whom I regard as everyway fitted to discharge the duties of the position. Your education, manners, business talents, prudence, and general information are full equal to the dignity and duty of the Office. I say nothing of your industry. The fact that you have satisfactorily discharged the duties of principal in the Institute over which you now preside during nearly a decade of years is proof enough of this. You have acted under the supervision of Members of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia. Men who tolerate no sluggards and were you other than industrious and painstaking they would have dispensed with your services long ago.

I write this therefore, in order that you may show it to Hon. William Seward a gentleman whom I have no special claims upon, except that fact that I know and understand him better than many others who indulge in harsh criticisms upon him.

I wish you every success in your efforts to have the United States represented at Port au Prince by a colored man.

Your Friend,
Frederick Douglass

¹ Minister Resident and Consul General of Hayti

Rochester, Sept 16. 1869

Prof. Bassett:

Dear Sir. I am glad to know that you are making an effort to induce Hon. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, and through him the President of the United States, to send some Competent Colored Citizen to represent this Country as Consul in Port au Prince. If there are any good reasons against this measure, I have never heard them stated. There is I think, an obvious propriety in the measure. Its adoption would be scarcely ^{less} gratifying and assuring to Hayti than to the millions of Colored Citizens of the United States. But I will not argue the question. The Secretary of State better than either of us may understand the relations and bearings of the proposed measure. My purpose is, in case it is

* Minister Resident and Consul General at Hayti.

thought ~~wise~~ to be wise and proper
to send any Colored Citizen to that
post of duty) to Recommend yourself
as a man whom I regard as every way
fitted to discharge the duties of the position.
Your education, manners, business talents,
prudence, and general information are
full equal to the dignity and duties of
the Office. I say nothing of your Industry.
The fact that you have satisfactorily discharged
the duties of principal in the Institute
over which you now preside during
nearly a decade of years is proof
enough of this. You have acted under
the supervision of Members of the Society
of Friends in Philadelphia - men who
tolerate no sluggards and were you
other than industrious and pains-
taking they could have dispensed
with

your services long ago.

I write this therefore, in order that
 you may ^{show} it to Hon. William A. Seward,
 a gentleman, whom I have no special
 claims upon - except the fact that I know
 and understand him better than many
 others who indulge in harsh criticisms
 upon him.

I wish you every success in your efforts
 to have the United States represented
 at Portland Prince, by a colored man -
 and I that man will be yourself.

Your friend

Fredrick Douglass

Henry B. Bassett.

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source B

Source B: J. M. Langston to William H. Seward, 16 September 1867, Letters of Application & Recommendation During the Administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, 1861-1869 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M650, roll 3); National Archives at College park, College Park, MD.

Transcription:

Oberlin, O., Oct. 3rd 1867.

Hon. William H. Seward,
Secretary of State,
Washington City, D.C.

Sir: I take great pleasure in commending to your favorable consideration Prof. E.D. Bassett, of Philadelphia, Penn., as a person, who, by reason of his scholarly attainment, his thoughtfulness habits, his integrity, and identification with the African race, is, in all respects, well fitted to fill skillfully, and with acceptance to all concerned, the office of Minister to Hayti, as the representative of our Government in that Country.

I may say of Prof. Bassett, that he is one of the ablest and most influential colored citizens, and if honored with the position above named, and which he is so well qualified to fill, will honor his race no less than serve his country. I am confident, too, that his appointment to this office would give universal satisfaction to the colored man of the country and would be regarded by them as an honor justly conferred when one of their best and truest men. Permit me, Sir, to express to you in this connection, sentiments of profound regard and respect.

I have the honor to be

Your most obedient servant,

J. M. Langston

Oberlin, O., Oct. 3rd 1867.

Hon. William H. Seward,
Secretary of State,
Washington City, D.C.

Sir:— I take great pleasure in commending to your favorable consideration Prof. E. D. Bassett, of Philadelphia, Penn., as a person, who, by reason of his scholarly attainments, his thorough business habits, his integrity, and identification with the African race, is, in all respects, well fitted to fill skilfully, and with acceptance to all concerned, the office of Minister to Hayti, as the representative of our Government, in that Country.

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in this connection, sentiments of profound regard
and respect.
I have the honor to be,
Your most obedient servant,
J. M. Langston

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source C

Source C: Rebecca Primus to family, Hartford, April 7, 1866 in Primus Family Papers, 1853-1924, Connecticut Historical Society Library, Hartford, CT.

Transcription

Royal Oak, Talbot Co., Md.
Sat 8 ¼ A.M. Apr. 7th, '66

My Dear Parents and Sister,

Your letter was not received until yesterday. I sent to the Office on Thurs. as was told there was no mail for me, I was somewhat disappointed, however I thought I should get it on Saturday so I endeavored to quiet my mind and make myself contented, when to my surprise yours and Addie's letters were sent to me about 6 P.M. I was delighted. I'm pleased to hear that you are all well...

There is a plenty of work here now for men and I think none have reason to complain for want of it. All have some kind of employment; at the saw-mill [sic] where Mr. Thomas works, from four to six men are constantly employed, all colored too.

A number of men follow hewing and sawing, others are at work in the fields. Although the whites are mostly secesh here they all give colored men and women employment, the greatest difficulty is they do not pay sufficient wages and if the people will not accept their terms the send off and get "contraband," as they are here denominated, to work for them so that it takes the labor right out of these people's hands and they are obliged to submit.

I hope there will be justice, impartial justice, given to the colored people one of these days. I was reading the "Civil Rights Bill" for colored and all people, in the "Communicator" and...it had passed both houses of Congress with amendments. I am very anxious to know whether Prest. Johnson has signed it or not. The Bill is excellent I think, only I hope the Colored people will not take the advantage of the privileges prescribed.

I'm glad there is so much sympathy manifested in behalf of the Colored man's Rights, and I hope the subject will continue to be agitated throughout the Country by our smart and intelligent Colored men as well as white, until these rights which are so unjustly withheld from us now have been obtained...

I received a letter from Miss Dickson at Trappe, Tues. she has 14 scholars and until the last month every thing has gone on quietly and well and now she's stoned by white children, and repeatedly subjected to insults from white men, in passing they have brushed by her so rudely she says "as to almost dislocate her shoulders," she says she tries to bear it patiently. I feel real sorry for her, her position is truly an unenviable one. The whites are very mean there I'm told. White children take colored children's books from them, and otherwise misuse and ill-treat them....

Royal Oak, Talbot Co. Md. ⁽²⁾
Sat 8 1/4 A.M. Apr 7th /66.

My Dear Parents & Sister.

Your letter was not rec^d. until yesterday I sent to the Office on Thurs as was told there was no mail for me. I was somewhat disappointed, however I thought I should get it on Saturday so I endeavored to quiet my mind & make myself contented, when to my surprise yours and Addie's letters were sent to me about 6 P.M. I was delighted. I'm pleased to hear that you are all well

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very mean there I'm told.
White children take col^o chil-
dren's books from them, and
otherwise misuse and ill-
treat them.

Supporting Question 3	
Supporting Question	What historic and contemporary examples of change and continuity in race relations exist?
Formative Performance Task	Write a paragraph explaining whether a selected current event related to race relations is an example of progress.
Featured Source(s)	Source A: Rebecca Primus to family, Hartford, June 2, 1866. Source B: "Poll Finds Most in US Hold Dim View of Race Relations," <i>New York Times</i> Source C: Appropriate Current Events
Content Specifications	Students will examine evidence related to the progress of race relations overtime by comparing and contrasting historical knowledge to current events.

Supporting Question

This supporting question focuses on turning our knowledge about the past into an understanding of current events. Rather than simply comparing and contrasting historical and contemporary events, the students will go one step further by determining the extent to which progress has been made. Teachers might use the first featured source as a way to compare historical and contemporary race relations and allow students to utilize the remaining sources to draw conclusions.

Formative Performance Task

The formative performance task requires students to closely read various sources to identify similarities and differences between different historical eras. In trying to understand the progress of race relations over time, students will practice the skill of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence.

Featured Sources

FEATURED SOURCE A contains excerpts of letters written by Hartford native and teacher, Rebecca Primus. The source illustrates the status of race relations in a village on the eastern shore of Maryland and compares it to life under slavery. This source provides context for drawing connections between historical and contemporary issues of race violence.

FEATURED SOURCE B is a 2015 *New York Times* article detailing American perspectives on race relations in the contemporary era. The article provides several examples of the status of race relations and the feelings associated with each. While examining this source the students should look for underlying change and continuity that span the historical and contemporary eras.

Instead of providing fixed sources on the status of race relations, teachers and/or students should research current events to supplement **FEATURED SOURCE C** as additional evidence corroborating an answer to this supporting question.

Additional Resources

In addition, teachers may want students to consider other sources that further their understanding race relations in America since the end of the Civil War. Teachers may also find it relevant to use this as an opportunity to examine race relations in more of a broader sense, including other ethnic groups and regions in the United States. Here are additional chapters of *African American Connecticut Explored* that will support the context of this question.

- 28. Connecticut and the Aftermath of the Civil War
- 29. Rebecca Primus and Addie Brown
- 32. Charles Ethan Porter
- 34. Black Southern Migration and the Transformation of Connecticut, 1917-1941
- 39. World War II and the Civil Rights Years
- 48. Black Panthers: Interview with Butch Lewis

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source A

Source A: excerpts of Rebecca Primus to family, Hartford, June 2, 1866 in Primus Family Papers, 1853-1924, Connecticut Historical Society Library, Hartford, CT.

Transcription

Royal Oak, Talbot Co., Md.
Saturday A.M. June 2nd, 1866

Dear Parents and Sister,

I have just completed my reports for the month and I thought I'd devote the remainder of the morning to writing to you...

I have forgot to tell you in my last of a murder that occurred at Easton last Sunday night one week. It seems a very respectable colored man, who resided with his family there, was on his way to church and en-route he was shot by a white rascal so that he fell a dead man immediately. The villain made his escape and has not yet been caught, he is said to be skulking about in the woods and sustained by his secesh sympathizers. He is well known and detectives are after him.

Now a law has been passed there fining any person the sum of five dollars, who is known to fire off a pistol or any thing else, in the place.

There are some very lawless fellows in these towns and there is nothing to [sic] bad for them to do to a colored person. I trust some thing like justice will be given to the black man one of these days, for some are persecuted almost as badly now as in the days of slavery. Miss Cummings writes me that two of the colored teachers, Miss Anderson and Mrs. Jackson, are having a lawsuit in Balto., with a fellow who put them out of the Ladies Room at the Depot, where they sitting waiting for the train. It was going in their favor when the fellow plead a jury trial, and she says there's no telling now which way it will go. I hope however he may get the worst of it at any rate....

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Supporting Question 3

Featured Source B

Source B: "Poll Finds Most in U.S. Hold Dim View of Race Relations," *New York Times*, July 23, 2015, (accessed July 29, 2015) <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/24/us/poll-shows-most-americans-think-race-relations-are-bad.html>.

Poll Finds Most in U.S. Hold Dim View of Race Relations

New York Times By KEVIN SACK and MEGAN THEE-BRENAN JULY 23, 2015

Seven years ago, in the gauzy afterglow of a stirring election night in Chicago, commentators dared ask whether the United States had finally begun to heal its divisions over race and atone for the original sin of slavery by electing its first black president. It has not. Not even close.

A [New York Times/CBS News poll](#) conducted last week reveals that nearly 6 in 10 Americans, including heavy majorities of both whites and blacks, think race relations are generally bad, and that nearly 4 in 10 think the situation is getting worse. By comparison, two-thirds of Americans surveyed shortly after [President Obama](#) took office said they believed that race relations were generally good.

The swings in attitude have been particularly striking among African-Americans. During Mr. Obama's 2008 campaign, nearly 60 percent of blacks said race relations were generally bad, but that number was cut in half shortly after he won. It has now soared to 68 percent, the highest level of discontent among blacks during the Obama years and close to the numbers recorded in the aftermath of the riots that followed the 1992 acquittal of Los Angeles police officers charged in the beating of Rodney King.

Only a fifth of those surveyed said they thought race relations were improving, while about 40 percent of both blacks and whites said they were staying essentially the same.

Respondents tended to have much sunnier views of race relations in their own communities.

For instance, while only 37 percent said they thought race relations were generally good in the United States, more than twice that share, 77 percent, thought they were good in their communities, a number that has changed little over the past 20 years. Similarly, only a third thought that most people were comfortable discussing race with someone of another race, but nearly three-quarters said they were comfortable doing so themselves.

The nationwide telephone poll of 1,205 people, which focused on racial concerns, was conducted from July 14 to July 19, at the midpoint of a year that has seen as much race-related strife and violence as perhaps any since the desegregation battles of the 1960s. It came one month after the [massacre of nine black worshipers](#) at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, S.C., apparently by a white supremacist, and after a yearlong series of shootings and harassment of blacks by white police officers that were captured by smartphone cameras.

The Charleston shootings, which took place during Bible study on June 17, generated a national outpouring of outrage and grief. The suspect's embrace of the Confederate battle flag in Internet photographs prompted South Carolina's Republican governor, [Nikki R. Haley](#), and its Republican-controlled legislature to order the flag's removal from the grounds of the State House in Columbia.

But despite the perception that the shootings inspired a moment of empathy and reconciliation, the poll suggests that attitudes toward the flag remain deeply divided between whites and blacks, and not just in the South.

When asked how they regarded the battle flag, 57 percent of whites said they considered it mostly an emblem of Southern pride, while 68 percent of blacks said they saw it more as a symbol of racism. The view that the flag represents heritage more than bigotry was shared by 65 percent of white Southerners, including three-fourths of white Southern men.

About 4 in 10 whites, and 1 in 10 blacks, said they disapproved of the decision to lower the flag in Columbia, while 52 percent of whites and 81 percent of blacks favored it. Nearly half of white Southerners disagreed with the decision. Four in 10 blacks said they would be less likely to shop with a retailer who sold Confederate flags and merchandise, but only 17 percent of whites said so.

“The Confederate flag is a part of history that should not just be thrown out the door,” said Mary Nordtome, 66, a white retired rancher from Fort Sumner, N.M., in a follow-up interview. “It really hurts me that we have to be so politically correct in everything.” She added, “Hate groups have distorted what the Confederate flag means and the history we should not forget.”

Mindy Zhu, a 19-year-old college student from Queens who is Asian, said the crusade against the Confederate flag, regardless of its meaning, posed a threat to free speech. “As soon as you start taking away a symbol for something, then you start taking away other people’s freedom,” she said.

In the aftermath of the Charleston shootings, many Americans were deeply moved when relatives of five of the victims told the suspect in the killings, [Dylann Roof](#), at a court hearing that their faith directed them [to forgive him](#). The poll found that about half of those surveyed, including 49 percent of whites and 41 percent of blacks, could not have brought themselves to do the same.

Mr. Obama delivered perhaps his most pointed reflection on race in late June when he eulogized the Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, the pastor of Emanuel A.M.E. “For too long,” he said, “we’ve been blind to the way past injustices continue to shape the present.”

But Mr. Obama has largely succeeded in persuading the country that, as he asserted in 2012, he is “not the president of black America” but rather “the president of the United States of America.” Two-thirds of those surveyed said his administration’s policies treated whites and blacks the same. Yet in 2010, 83 percent of Americans said the administration did not favor one race over the other.

Still, almost half of those questioned said the Obama presidency had had no effect on bringing the races together, while about a third said it had driven them further apart. Only 15 percent said race relations had improved. Seventy-two percent of blacks said they approved of the way Mr. Obama is handling race relations, compared with 40 percent of whites.

The president won 95 percent of the black vote and 43 percent of the white vote in 2008, according to exit polling, and 93 percent of the black vote and 39 percent of the white vote in his re-election. His job approval ratings also demonstrate a deep racial divide.

The divide, seen in the answers to virtually every question in the poll, was stark when respondents were asked whether they thought most Americans had judged Mr. Obama more harshly because of his race. Eighty percent of blacks said yes, while only 37 percent of whites agreed.

"I'm not surprised it's gotten worse under President Obama," said Elizabeth Gamble, 33, an African-American cook from Albany, Ga., "because he's black, and so he already had that strike against him once he got into office."

Deep racial schisms were also evident in responses about law enforcement and the criminal justice system. About three-fourths of blacks said they thought that the system was biased against African Americans, and that the police were more likely to use deadly force against a black person than a white person. Only 44 percent of whites felt that the system was biased against blacks.

Clearly, views of the police are informed by personal experience. Four in 10 blacks, and nearly two-thirds of black men, said they felt they had been stopped by the police just because of their race or ethnicity, compared with only 1 in 20 whites. Fully 72 percent of blacks said they had suffered what they perceived as racial discrimination, compared with 31 percent of whites.

At a time when the unemployment rate for blacks is double that for whites and black households earn 40 percent less, blacks continue to assert they do not enjoy an equal shot at attaining financial success. The share of blacks who said whites have a better chance to get ahead rose by 14 percentage points in about a year's time, to 60 percent. More than half of whites said blacks have equal opportunities, compared with about a third of blacks who said so.

But in a finding that may highlight class divisions more than racial ones, identical majorities of blacks and whites, 59 percent, said the economy enabled only a few people at the top to get ahead.

More than 80 percent of blacks favored affirmative action programs for minorities, a figure that has largely stayed static for nearly two decades. Only half of whites supported special efforts for minorities. This fall, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a new challenge to affirmative action policies in college admissions.

In large measure, the poll found that blacks and whites live in separate societies. Most whites say they do not live (79 percent), work (81 percent), or come in regular contact (68 percent) with more than a few blacks. While the numbers have not changed among whites in the past 15 years, the poll suggested some erosion in residential segregation among blacks. Only a third of blacks surveyed said that almost all of the people who lived near their homes were of the same race, compared with half who said so in a 2000 Times poll.

The poll has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points for all adults, four points for whites and eight points for blacks.

Summative Performance Task	
Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress? Compose a formal letter to your representative in Congress explaining whether a current event connected to race relations is an example of progress and stating how they feel the politician should approach similar issues in Congress.
	EXTENSION Contribute to a class-wide, or grade-wide, bulletin board or display detailing a timeline of events. The descriptions of the events include an image, brief description and evaluation of the event as a moment of progress or setback.
Connecticut Social Studies Framework Indicator	CHANGE, CONTINUITY AND CONTEXT HIST 8.2: Classify a series of historical events as examples of change and/or continuity.
Content Specifications	Students will examine evidence related to the history and progress of race relations, comparing events from Reconstruction to the contemporary era.

Building an Argument

In this task, students construct an extended, evidence-based argument responding to the prompt “Is the history of race relations in America a story of progress?” At this point in the students’ inquiry, they have examined several primary and secondary sources illustrating historical and contemporary examples of race relations in America. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their distinct claims. As students work through the Summative Performance Task, they are demonstrating the social studies skills of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence as well as Comparison and Contextualization.

Before the Summative Performance Task, it may be helpful for students to review the sources provided and the graphic organizers created during the formative performance tasks; doing so should help them develop their claims and highlight the appropriate evidence to support their arguments. The Evidence to Argument Chart below can be used to provide students with support as they build their arguments with claims and evidence.

It is important to note that students’ arguments may take a variety of forms. In some cases, teachers may have them complete a detailed outline that includes claims with evidentiary support, and in other cases, teachers may want them to write a paper that formalizes their argument. Their decision to do either may be predicated on whether they plan to do the Summative Performance Extension Task.

Extension

In this task the students will work to create a public display in the school showing the instances race relations through time. They can pull from any of the sources provided to begin this exercise. Each student will create a description of the event, an image, and evaluation of the event as progress or setback. Once the display is complete, the student can evaluate the display and draw further conclusions related to the compelling question.

Evidence Chart

Initial Claim	
What is your opening claim about the progress of race relations in America? This claim should appear in the opening section of your essay. Make sure to cite your sources.	

Evidence	
What evidence do you have from the sources you investigated to support your initial claim? Make sure to cite your sources.	

Additional Claims	
What are some additional claims you can make that extend your initial one? Make sure to cite your sources.	

Additional Evidence	
What additional evidence do you have from the sources you investigated that support your additional claims? Make sure to cite your source.	

Double Check	
What ideas from the sources contradict your claims? Have you forgotten anything? Make sure to cite your sources.	

Pulling it Together	
What is your overall understanding of the compelling question? This should be included in your conclusion. Make sure to cite your sources.	

Taking Informed Action

Taking Informed Action

UNDERSTAND Explore the connection between self-segregation in schools and overall school climate issues such as bullying.

ASSESS Examine the current status of self-segregation in the school based on gender, race, social status.

ACT Work with school staff and administration to build interest in and execute a Mix-it-Up at Lunch event.

Taking informed action can manifest itself in a variety of forms and in a range of venues: Students may express action through discussions, debates, surveys, video productions, and the like; these actions may take place in the classroom, in the school, in the local community, across the state, and around the world. The three activities described in this inquiry represent a logic that asks students to (1) *understand* the issues evident from the inquiry in a larger and current context, (2) *assess* the relevance and impact of the issues, and (3) *act* in ways that allow students to demonstrate agency in a real-world context.

For this inquiry, students draw on their conceptual understanding of the term “progress” to think about the nature of contemporary race relations in America. Clearly, there are many modern-day examples of change and continuity in race relations, but they should also understand how this is connected to their everyday life. In this way, students will be able to transfer their knowledge around Ebenezer Bassett and other African Americans during Reconstruction to other contexts, evaluating the ways in which progress in race relations, and human relations, can be measured in terms of progress.

To understand the situation, students could identify connections between self-segregation in schools and overall school climate issues such as bullying. Students should read about the causes and impacts of self-segregation and assess the status of self-segregation in school based on gender, race, and social status. Last, students could collaborate with teachers and administration to promote and execute a Mix-It-Up at Lunch event in their school.

Common Core Connections Across the Grade 8 Inquiry

Social studies teachers play a key role in enabling students to develop the relevant literacy skills found in the Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. The Common Core emphasis on more robust reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language skills in general and the attention to more sophisticated source analysis, argumentation, and the use of evidence in particular, are evident across the Toolkit inquiries.

Identifying the connections with the Common Core Anchor Standards will help teachers consciously build opportunities to advance their students' literacy knowledge and expertise through the specific social studies content and practices described in the annotation. The following table outlines the opportunities represented in the Grade 8 Inquiry through illustrative examples of each of the standards represented.

Compelling Question	Is the history of race relations in the United States a story of progress?
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Common Core Anchor Standard Connections	
Reading	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p> <p>See Formative Performance Tasks 2 and 3: Students read various illustrations of race relations during Reconstruction to evaluate the extent of progress.</p>
Writing	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</p> <p>See Summative Performance Task: Students write an extended, evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.</p> <p>See Summative Performance Task: Students develop an outline of their written argument using an Evidence Chart.</p>