

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Middle School level

Grade	Strand	Standard	Code	Benchmark
6	Ethnic Studies	Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity and gender.	6.5.23.1	Identify and explain how discrimination based on race, gender, economic, ableism and social group identity affects the history, health, growth and/or current experiences of residents of Minnesota.
6	Ethnic Studies	Resistance	6.5.24.2	Identify individuals, community organizations, businesses and corporations that make their community in Minnesota unique. Analyze how these groups do community building efforts, specifically by racialized and marginalized groups/individuals in Minnesota.
6	Ethnic Studies	Ways of Knowing/Methodologies	6.5.25.1	Examine the impact of slavery and race in Minnesota today.
7	History	Historical Sources and Evidence	7.4.20.2	Generate questions based on multiple historical sources. Identify further areas of inquiry about the Great Depression, focusing on the impact on workers, women and ethnic and racial minorities.

Core Concept: How has the Supreme Court’s approach to racial discrimination changed over time, and what roles do the courts, legislatures, and citizens play in improving racial justice?

Preliminary Activities

- Use the following links to read about three important cases relating to racial discrimination:

Dred Scott v. Sanford, 60 U.S. 393 (1857):

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dred-scott-v-sanford>

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896):

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/163us537>

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

[https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/brown_v_board_of_education_\(1954\)](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/brown_v_board_of_education_(1954))

- Read the text of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution here: <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-13/>
- Read the text of Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution here: <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-14/#amendment-14-section-1>

Discussion Questions

1. What are your initial reactions to the Supreme Court rulings in the Dred Scott, Plessy, and Brown cases?
2. The Dred Scott decision is considered one of the worst rulings in the Supreme Court's history. How was the decision overturned?
3. In Plessy and Brown, the Supreme Court reached different conclusions about whether racial segregation violates the Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection. Why do you think the cases were decided differently?
4. Can you think of examples where racial discrimination or segregation continues to exist in our country? How about in your state, community, or school?
5. Courts, legislatures, and citizens all play a role in achieving racial justice. What actions can you as students take to create change and improve racial justice in your school, community, state, or country?
6. The legal team for the plaintiffs in Brown included African American attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley. Marshall later became the first African American justice on the United States Supreme Court. Baker Motley became the first African American woman elected to the New York senate and the first African American woman to become a federal judge.

Learn about Marshall and Baker Motley by viewing these links, and then answer the questions below.

Justice Thurgood Marshall Profile: <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/justice-thurgood-marshall-profile-brown-v-board>

Breaking Barriers: Constance Baker Motley: <https://www.icivics.org/videos/breaking-barriers-constance-baker-motley>

- a. Do you think Marshall and Baker Motley's race helped to make them effective advocates for civil rights when they were attorneys? Why or why not?
- b. Do you think Marshall and Baker Motley's race impacted the way they viewed and decided cases when they were judges? If so, how?
- c. What are some benefits to the legal system of having attorneys, judges, and legislators from diverse races, genders, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds?