
Black Excellence Is Everywhere We Look!

Facilitator Guide

Goals:

- Families will leave with an appreciation of how Black history is American history, and how learning about it benefits all families.
- We will identify contributions from Black leaders which go beyond the “single stories” that we usually get during Black History Month and gain an understanding for how Black excellence has benefited all Americans.
- Families will begin to notice their own biases and have strategies for countering bias.
- Families will be empowered to continue learning together about Black excellence and countering bias on their own, in their communities & throughout the year.

Instructions (for facilitator): At a SURJ, school or community meeting, surround yourselves with lots and lots of examples of Black excellence by making and putting up posters of influential Black people. Use the poster template and find your own examples of Black excellence to lift up. Share the template and instructions with families ahead of time so they can do research as a family and bring their own.

Picking examples of Black excellence (for facilitator): We want this exercise to help us break out of “the dangers of a single story” which Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes in her powerful TED talk. Look for excellence in different disciplines (art, science, politics, business, movement work, etc), and intersections of Black identities with other identities and stories (disability, afro latino and other cultural mixes, immigrant identities, mixed race leaders, and Black people who have built multiracial coalitions).

Look for images that are positive and interesting to children. Use kid photos of leaders if they are available. Make sure to include living leaders as well as past leaders. Can include fictional heroes. This project is focused on success and victory, not oppression.

Pre or Post-discussion (for facilitator): You can start with a brief overview of the exercise, or just give families the instructions as they are coming in to the meeting and let them start looking by themselves. When the meetings starts, you can then introduce the goals, discuss bias and go into the post exercise discussion about getting Black history into schools.

- 1) Introduce the goals of the exercise in a large group.
- 2) Discuss bias and strategies for countering bias. Note that:
 - a) Bias is expected. We grew up in a society that taught us a limited, white-centric view of history & stories. We didn’t ask for it, but now that we know we have it, it is our responsibility to limit, counter it, & work to prevent it from being passed on.
 - b) To counter bias, learn about a lot of examples which counter stereotypes.
 - c) To counter bias, become a part of meaningfully integrated communities, developing equitable, genuine and long term relationships with families of color.

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Instructions (for families):

- 1) **Now:** Walk around the room and look at the examples of Black excellence. Notice which ones stand out to you. Some questions to consider:
 - a) Which Black leaders share identities with your family? How have they contributed to your liberation?
 - b) What biases do you notice in your head as you look at these posters?
 - c) What work does your family do? Who are Black leaders in your field and what are their contributions?
 - d) What does your family enjoy? Who are Black leaders in these areas?

- 2) **Later (at work/school):** Change our culture. Brainstorm places where you can do this or other exercises to advocate for teaching Black history and stories of Black excellence.
 - a) Find community groups who are advocating for ethnic studies in your community and get involved in advocacy with them. Bring their resources to your schools.
 - b) Use SURJ's Black History Month Toolkit for ideas on how to advocate for the inclusion of Black (and other) histories in your school or other community spaces.
 - c) Hold a brownbag lunch at your work to encourage your coworkers to identify and learn from Black leaders in your field. Share what you learn with the rest of your co-workers.
 - d) When you are looking for speakers or honoring leaders in your community look to invite and lift up Black leadership. Offer honorariums or pay speakers' fees.
 - e) What else?

- 3) **Later (at home):** Continue the learning. Pick one or two leaders you want to explore more. Use the internet to learn more about their contributions. Look for different ways to learn more. Are there videos of them online? Books about them? Paper dolls, or museum exhibitions? As a family, spend time exploring and learning more.

Notes: _____

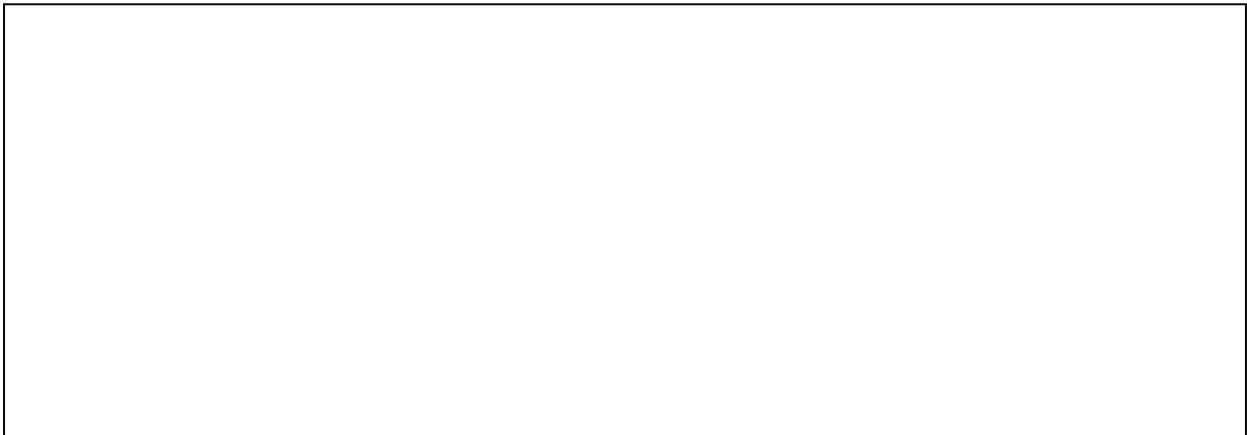
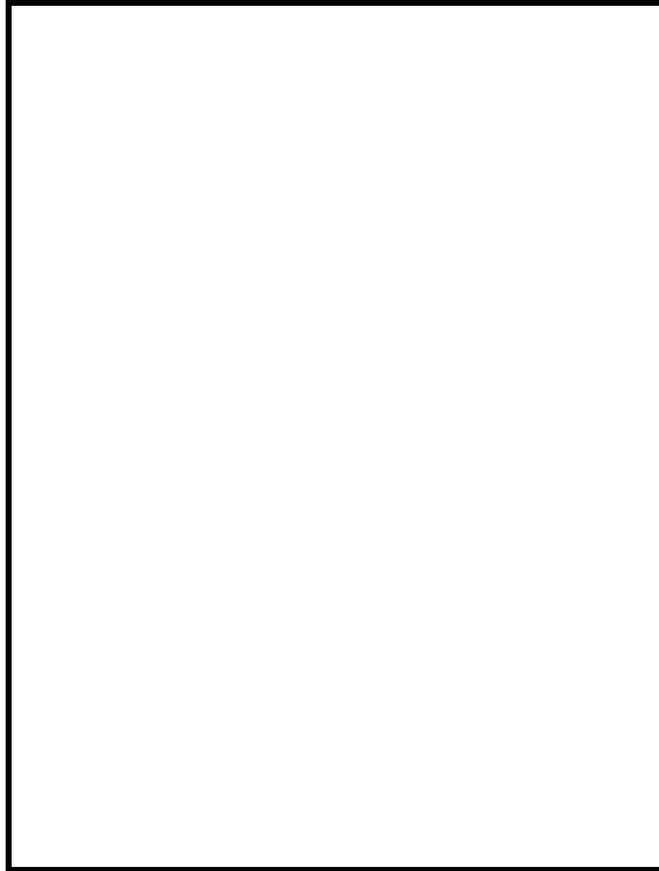
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Post exercise discussion (to be led by facilitator):

1. Ask families what they noticed & learned.
2. Ask families to raise their hand on a scale of 0-5 based on how “much” Black history they are getting in their school. No fingers is 0, 5 fingers outstretched is the maximum.
3. Ask families if they have talked to teachers and/or principals to ask for more Black (and other) histories. Encourage people to share stories to learn from each other.
 - a. Once the conversation has gotten started, make sure that you encourage accountability to Black families. White families should ask for more Black histories, and the transformative goal is getting schools and educators to recognize and respect Black families. Schools should see them as a resource and treat them with the same respect White families get. As we are asking for Black histories to be taught, we should be asking Black families how they think the school is doing, as well as asking & telling teachers and principals to talk to and be accountable to Black families. We should add our voice to their wishes, not talk over them.
4. Ask families what responses they might expect from these conversations, and brainstorm strategies to address them. Make the last one: “Your teacher says, ‘yes’”
What do you do now?
5. Share resources with families which they can use to encourage schools to teach more Black (and other) histories. (SURJ Black History Month Toolkit, Teaching Tolerance, Mamademics, Rethinking Schools, Teaching for Change)
6. Ask people to raise their hand if they will commit to talking to their school and asking for more Black History this week.

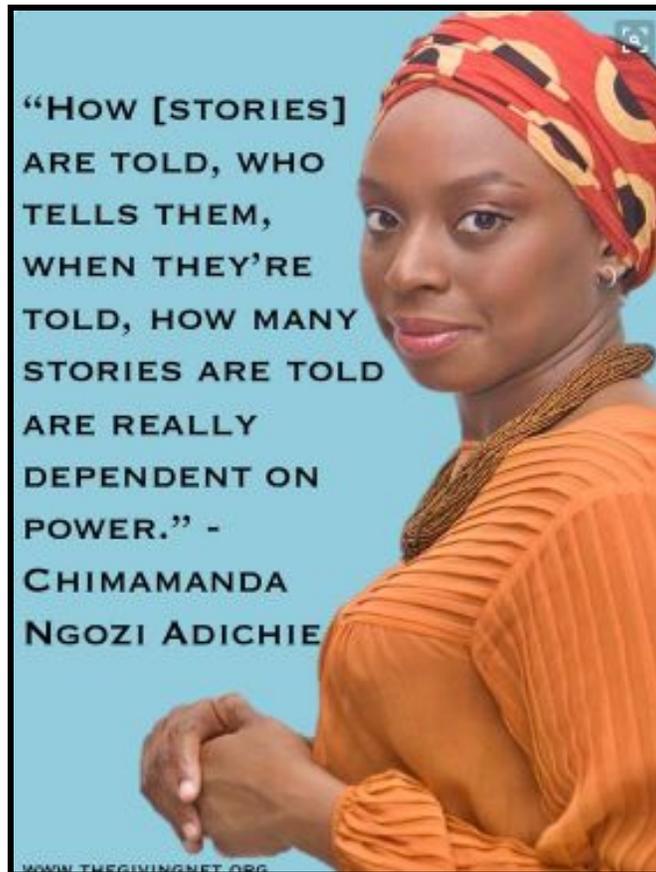
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_____ is an example of Black excellence.



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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an example of Black excellence.



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an award winning Black Nigerian writer. She tells us not to believe it when people tell just one story about a group of people over and over. Telling just one story is called a stereotype.

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Black Excellence Starter List:

This list is just a start, and the descriptions only capture small pieces of these leaders stories. Find and add your own examples of Black excellence.

Harriet Tubman - Disabled, freedom fighter
Zadie Smith - writer, mixed race Black woman (Black & White)
Zora Neale Hurston - writer
Trevor Noah - comedian, South African, mixed race (Black and White)
Octavia Butler - science fiction author
Maya Angelou - author & poet, disabled, lived in San Francisco, first female cable car operator
Mae Jemison - astronaut, science
Fannie Lou Hamer - Democratic party activist, involuntarily sterilized, adoptive mom
Ella Baker - Civil rights organizer
Ida B. Wells - journalist
George Washington Carver - scientist
Geraldine Johnson - Black Union leader and coalition builder in SF, organized to win the MLK, Jr monument in Yerba Buena Center
Shirley Chisholm - first woman to run for President
Sojourner Truth - worked for women's right to vote, not formally educated, powerful speaker
Martha P Johnson - Trans, activist, Stonewall leader,
Miss. Major - Trans elder, Stonewall leader, formerly incarcerated
Billie Holiday - singer, bisexual, formerly incarcerated
Dinah Washington - singer
Janet Moss - Trans woman activist, advocate for sex workers
Nina Simone - musician & activist
Tiger Woods - Golfer, (Asian and Black)
Sammy Davis Jr. - Entertainer, Jewish
Beyoncé - entertainer, activist, wealthy
Bree Newsome - activist, took down the Confederate Flag
Soledad O'Brien - Afro-latina journalist
John Lewis - Congressman, civil rights leader
Junot Diaz - Afro-Latino bestselling author
Henry Louis Gates Jr. - Harvard academic
John Horse - Black Seminole (Native American) freedom fighter
Malcolm X - Muslim, freedom fighter
Stevie Wonder - disabled Black musician, used "Happy Birthday to You" to help win a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.
Keith Ellison - Black Congressman, Muslim
Wangari Maathai - environmental activist
Maria Ewing - opera singer, Native American
Yassmin Abdel-Magied - mechanical engineer, advocate, Muslim

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[Camille Seaman](#) - Black and Native photographer, active against climate change and with Standing Rock

Paul Robeson - singer, actor, civil rights activist, union leader

Donald W. Murphy - first African-American Director of the California Park system

Lisa Jackson - Chemist and EPA Director

Kamala Harris - DA of California (Black and Asian)

Shonda Rimes - television producer

Muhammad Ali

- Champion boxer, civil rights leader, Muslim, refused to fight in the Vietnam-American War

Melissa Harris - journalist

Nelson Mandela - freedom fighter and president of south africa

Bayard Rustin - LGBTQ, organizer behind the civil rights March on Washington

Sarah Roberts - Boston child who brought a lawsuit in Boston to integrate public schools

Malia Obama goes to Standing Rock protest

Lists:

Disability:

<https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/14-black-disabled-women-reminding-us-of-our-pow-er/>

Afro-latino:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/latino/2017/02/08/513695420/for-black-history-month-celebrate-af-ro-latino-music-with-smithsonian-folkways>

Muslim women:

<http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/muslimwomen/summary/country-search/United%20States>

<https://blackpowerabcs.com/>

Local (Bay Area):

Angela Davis - intellectual, academic and activist

John Templeton - historian, author and businessman

Micia Mosely - Black Teacher Project, LGBTQ, comedian, racial justice trainer

Shamann Walton - SFUSD School Board President

Barbara Lee - Congresswoman

Colin Kaepernick - 49's football player, started a movement of kneeling while the national anthem is played at sporting events

Kareem Abdul Jabbar - Athlete, writer, activist

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