



LESSON PLAN

GRADES: [9 -12]

Stateless Lesson Plan:

"And I refuse to feel like A foreigner in my own country." Juan Teofilo Murat



OVERVIEW

How would you feel if the nation where you were born and raised stripped you of your citizenship? Stripped you of the political identity you had known since your birth? What would you do? That is the premise of the moving observational documentary *Stateless* by the renown filmmaker Michèle Stephenson that follows Rosa Iris and Juan Teofilo, two black Dominicans of Haitian descent who struggle to reclaim Dominican citizenship, and a non-Haitian light-skinned Dominican xenophobic nationalist female who protests Haitian

immigration to her country. This lesson provides a humanistic framework in understanding the role and impact of the 168-13 Constitutional Tribunal ruling/policy in the Dominican Republic which deprived thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent of their nationality essentially rendering them stateless.

KEYWORDS: humanization , bureaucracy, borders, foreigners, walls, racism

A Note from Curriculum Creator, Edward Paulino

“There’s no such thing as neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom.” Paolo Freire

Paolo Freire is one of the most important educators of the 20th century. His seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has been for me a powerful reminder that education is a powerful tool that, if wielded correctly, can liberate one from ignorance. Freire has influenced me as an educator, as a historian, a Jedi of history(ies) where the vocation is to educate and serve, wielding my lightsaber of critical thinking in the service of enlightenment. And this is precisely why I felt compelled to create this lesson plan: the need to educate audiences on how laws and policies of a state can exclude historically underrepresented groups. As someone who has been studying the Dominican Republic and as the son of Dominican immigrant parents and born and raised in the United States I felt compelled to show students that laws against racial/ethnic/religious minorities are not just the province of global powers but smaller and developing countries all over the world. Perhaps the film and this lesson plan can help us understand that there is nothing neutral about laws and policies that question and deny citizenship. Also, this lesson plan is a way to examine and interrogate the role of nationalism in democracies.

Subject Areas

List 5-8 relevant subjects areas in which this lesson can be used

- Racism
- Borders
- Xenophobia
- Social studies
- Citizenship and Rights
- Statelessness

Grade Levels: 9th - 12th Grade

Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Identify issues with the border and cross border trade.
- Identify how Haitians are seen; assess and evaluate response to role of border wall.
- Identify why and how exclusion is happening; how statelessness is carried out; discuss exclusion but also make comparisons with Tulsa black communities/individuals being stripped of identity and potential of wealth.

Learning Objectives:

- to relate with racism, xenophobia, jingoism;
- bureaucratic indifference; obedience to authority; to identify the difficult and frustrating process of engaging with bureaucracy in seeking to reclaim your citizenship.

Materials

The following materials are required for this lesson plan:

- For the film clips teachers will need a computer with a WiFi connection to the internet with video and audio connections connected to a projector and some type of blank screen.
- An internet connection is vital to connect to articles/videos via the links provided in the lesson plans

Time Needed

This assignment will require two 30 minute class periods to complete the assignment.

Depending on the age group teachers can send a link of a scene of the documentary or the documentary itself to review the clips.

FILM CLIPS & ACTIVITIES

Clip 1: Dajabon: Dominican-Haitian Border (8:52-11:24 min.)

In this clip the film introduces Gladys Feliz-Pimentel, a xenophobic member of the Dominican nationalist movement is photographing people passing through an iron gate which is the international crossing separating Haiti and the Dominican Republic. She sees Haitians crossing into Dominican Republic unimpeded. She says: "Damn, they can cross to our side so easily and we can't enter?"

Clip 2: Who will help me feel safe? The state? (22:33-26:34 min.)

This clip shows Rosa Iris meeting with her cousin Juan Teofilo Murat in Belladère, Haiti. Rosa Iris is helping her cousin secure the documents that the Dominican state annulled. The scene shows an indignant Juan Teofilo denouncing his country's corruption and racism. The clip ends with Juan Teofilo saying: "I refuse to feel like A foreigner in my own country."

Clip 3: Anti-Haitian Rally at the Office of Migration and Passports (31:10-32:54 min.)

At an anti-Haitian nationalist rally in Santo Domingo a man yells out "We are have to destroy this international plot. They have their Island. We have ours." Another man yells: "To live without a Homeland is to live without honor. We must defend our homeland. Amen." Gladys rails against an international plot against the Dominican Republic.

Clip 4: “Serving who?!” (38:20-39:49 min)

In this clip the protagonist Rosa Iris is visiting a friend and is brought to tears by their experiences as black police officers of Haitian descent. One officer explains his struggles to obtain citizenship documents and despite representing the nation as uniformed officers his Dominican identity is challenged by fellow citizens who call him “Haitian because of my skin color.”

Clip 5: The banality of bureaucratic indifference (53:22-57:33 min)

Filmed inside the Junta Central Electoral (Central Electoral Board) the clip shows the frustrating moment when Juan Teofilo seeking to obtain his cancelled ID card at the mercy of a government employee who sees a litany of discrepancies in the documents and finally exits the conversation by nonchalantly checking his mobile saying: “...this has nothing to do with me, this is your problem.”

ACTIVITIES

These activities are meant to be carried in direct relationship to the clips provided. You will find that we instruct you to screen particular clips and follow-up with discussion and activities.

Warm-Up Activity: Establishing Foundations of Knowledge

Step 1: What is Statelessness?

Have students locate the Dominican Republic on the map. Then, have them share what things come to mind when they think of the Dominican Republic. Record and document their answers.

You can refer to BBC's [Dominican Republic Country Profile](#) for more information to share with your students.

Have students listen to the podcast "[Sugarcane Citizenship](#)" and have them discuss certain key terms and ideas below:

Trujillo

Anti-Haitianism

The role of sugar and Haitian labor in the Dominican Republic.

On pages 10 and 11 of the [Nationality and Statelessness: A Handbook for Parliamentarians](#), ask students to discuss the difference between de jure and de facto statelessness.

Have students read this: [Statelessness in the USA](#) and this [A History of De-Naturalization in the USA](#).

Then ask students: are there stateless persons or persons who fit the statelessness criteria in the state or country you live in? Can statelessness happen in the United States? Under what circumstances?

Step 2: Screen Clips and Engage in Discussion and Engagement

Begin: Watch Clips 1 and 2

Clip 1: What makes Gladys so upset as she takes photographs at the Dominican-Haitian border?

Put students into break out rooms or small groups and ask students to consider the role of borders. It is important to create a safe space when conducting these discussions. Discussing borders and their consequences might be upsetting for some students so it is imperative that the teacher alerts the students to non-judgemental language.

Ask students:

- Do you think there should be open borders?
- If not, who should be responsible for controlling access to borders? The state? Local residents?

Bring students back together as a whole class and discuss their thoughts and ideas about the questions above.

- Do you feel the same way about borders after your discussions with classmates?

Clip 2: Who will help me feel safe? The state?

After viewing clip #2 have students break into groups and discuss the following questions:

Why does Juan Teofilo find himself in Haiti? Why is Rosa Iris visiting him?

How does Juan Teofilo explain why ID documents and racism are inextricably connected?

Have students review the webpage below:

[Denationalization in the Dominican Republic](#)

Then ask students to answer the following questions:

What is the 168-13 ruling?

Why is it about the ruling that is unjust?

Ask students to read [169-14 Law](#).

What was 169-14?

Ask students to discuss the challenges and advances of this law.

Did the 169-14 in 2014 remedy the exclusion wrought by the 168-13 ruling?

Break Out Rooms: Split the class in groups of 4. During the five minute exercise ask students to google Statelessness around the world. What countries are known for groups experiencing statelessness? Are there any examples from around the world that remind you of Juan Teofilo?

In the Americas groups like Dominicans of Haitian descent seek legal recourse outside of their nations in the highest court in the Western Hemisphere: the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights. In 2005 the Court issued a seminal ruling against the Dominican Republic **Case of the Girls Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic, Judgment of September 8, 2005.**

Have students review the first ten pages of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights case below.

[Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#)

Ask students to describe the case.

- What were the main charges that the plaintiffs Yean and Bosico plaintiffs charged against the Dominican government?

Next Up...

Clip 3: Anti-Haitian Rally at the Office of Migration and Passports (31:10 min.)

This clip shows nativistic Dominicans at a rally decrying an “international plot.”

Have students compare and contrast the anti-Haitian rally in the Dominican Republic with similar examples in the United States? Who are the groups being targeted in the U.S.?

[Anti-Immigrant Rallies in the USA](#)

Around the world anti-Haitian rallies are common. The article below describes anti-immigrant rallies in Germany particularly those seeking asylum. What similarities in terms of language from German protestors are similar to those at the rally in Santo Domingo?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/06/world/europe/pegida-rally-dresden-germany.html>

The article also states that “The nation’s Nazi past is often cited as a reason to offer sanctuary...” In the Dominican Republic there is also a genocidal precedent in the 1937 Haitian Massacre. Ask students to watch [the 1937 Haitian Massacre](#) and have them discuss how previous violence in a nation’s past can potentially inform present and future policies. And, can nationalism be used to rally people that may conclude in violence?

Clip 4: “Serving who?!” (38:20 min)

In this clip the protagonist Rosa Iris starts crying because Dominicans of Haitian descent police officers are called out for being Haitian, for being black.

Have students read the following article: [Black soldiers in WWII, Racism](#)

Ask students to discuss the role of patriotism and service:

- What does it mean to serve your country and still be seen as an outsider?

Clip 5: The Banality of Bureaucratic Indifference (53:22 min)

In this clip we see the Dominican bureaucrat’s indifference as he eventually ignores Juan Teofilo by fidgeting with his pen, checking his cell phone and saying: “No, no this has nothing to do with me, this is your problem.”

Discuss:

- If you were this bureaucrat’s supervisor how would you respond to this incident?
- If you were Juan Teofilo how would you have reacted differently? Why?
- How would you resolve Juan Teofilo’s situation which is the problem of thousands who have had their citizenship stripped?

What is the proper function of government?

Have students watch this clip ([What is the role of government?](#)) and have them engage in a larger philosophical conversation on the morality of bureaucracy or bureaucratic morality. Is it possible to be a “good bureaucrat?” And, what’s the right thing to do in very mundane ordinary situations? What does it mean to be a good citizen?

RESOURCES

Helpful Sources (Optional)

Eve Hayes de Kalaf, *Legal Identity, Race and Belonging in the Dominican Republic: From Citizen to Foreigner*, (NY: Anthem Series, NY: 2021).

[Hayes de Kalaf's Legal Identity, Race and Belonging in the Dominican Republic: From Citizen to Foreigner](#)

[Frontline Defenders Ana Maria Belique](#)

Resource List

Reconoci [Reconoci#NosCambioLaVida](#)

OBMICA: [OBMICA](#)

We are All Dominicans: [We Are All Dominicans](#); [We Are All Dominicans](#)

InCultured Company: [InCulturedCompany](#)

Dominicans Love Haitians: [dominicansloveHaitiass](#)

Border of Lights:

[TedEdUglyHistories:the1937HaitianMassacre](#)

Hasta la Raiz: [Hasta la Raiz](#)

Standards

http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Text Types and Purposes*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 6–12

- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic and convey a style appropriate to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward Paulino is an Associate Professor and faculty major advisor in the department of global history at CUNY's John Jay College. His first book *Dividing Hispaniola* traces the origin and relationship of the Dominican state with Haiti through its porous border region and its local citizens, including anti-Haitian policies such as the genocidal massacre of 1937. His forthcoming co-edited book with Prof. Megan Myers, *The Border of Lights Reader: Bearing Witness to Genocide in the Dominican Republic* will be published in July 2021 by Amherst College Press and is based on the organization he co-founded in 2012 called Border of Lights, which returns every year to the Dominican Republic and Haiti to bear witness to the victims of the 1937 Haitian Massacre while promoting historic solidarity and understanding between Haitians and Dominicans and supporting the citizenship rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent. Paulino has been interviewed for several media outlets such as the New York Times, and on MSNBC.

Since 2014 he has been performing in U.S. colleges and universities his one-man show (directed by Samantha Galarza) called "Eddie's Perejil": about growing up Dominican in New York City and discovering for himself the history of the 1937 Haitian Massacre. He also wrote the script for the Ted Ed series Ugly History: The 1937 Haitian Massacre which has garnered more than 1 million views.

Paulino is a member of the 50 Playwrights Project which "supports Latin@ playwrights by creating digital resources, disseminating research, and supporting new play development." More recently he served as the historical consultant/advisor for Michèle Stephenson's documentary *Stateless (Apátrida)*. Since 2016 Paulino has been a co-editor of the Palgrave MacMillan Afro-Latin@ Diasporas Book Series. As part of the NEH-funded Making Objects Speak, portable audio guides for Teaching with Visual Culture in the Humanities" project, Paulino wrote and narrated (with Dr. Karen Graubart as the specialist-consultant), a free downloadable interactive audio-tour entitled "Converging Cultures: Latin America 1520-1830," for the Brooklyn Museum of Art's Andean art collection. Paulino is the board president of the non-profit Coalition for Immigrant Freedom in New York City that supports immigrant services and is currently working on several interdisciplinary writing projects.

