



Ethnic Studies Lesson 3I: Latino American Housing

TOPIC:

LATINO AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Themes:

2. History and Movement
3. Systems of Power

Values and Principles:

2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
5. Challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, and imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices on multiple levels.
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. (RI.11-12.2)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)**

Analyze the major political, social, economic, technological, and cultural developments of the 20th century. (11.11)

Examine the impact of government policies and programs on different social groups, including racial and ethnic minorities. (11.11)

Lesson Purpose

Students will research the 1949 Housing Act and the 1956 Federal Highway Act and investigate those Acts' impacts on Latino/Hispanic Americans.

Essential Questions

How did urban renewal, as fueled by the 1949 Housing Act and the 1956 Federal Highway Act, impact Latino and Hispanic Americans?

How has life changed for Latino/Hispanic Americans over the last 250 years?

Materials

[Statement by the President Upon Signing the Housing Act of 1949](#)

[Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story](#)

WORKSHEET

[1950s Interstate Highway Promo Film by American Road Buildings Association](#) (watch segments 0-3:25, 19.20-20.43, and 26.24-31.27)

[Can a Highway Be Racist?](#)

[KWL Chart for Unit 3](#)

Vocabulary

barrios

urban

Housing Act

gentrification

urban planning

Federal Highway Act

urban renewal

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a whole class, ask students what they have learned so far about the realities of housing and isolation for Latino/Hispanic immigrants. Have they heard the term *barrio* before? In English, the word means neighborhood, but do students believe the term is always used positively? How might the term have been used in the 1940s, the 1960s, or today? What might *urban planning* and *urban renewal* mean? Why might cities need to be renewed? What was happening in 1949 that might have called for an increase in housing in the United States?
- Ask one student to read out loud (in a Harry S. Truman presidential voice) the [Statement by the President Upon Signing the Housing Act of 1949](#). Ask students that are listening to take notes on what Harry S. Truman wanted to happen with this law's enactment. Students may need a paper copy of the text in pairs after the reading to clarify their notes. Ask students to share what they believe the intent of the 1949 Housing Act was. Make sure that students notice that the word *slum* appears four times in this short text. Ask students where slums might have been located in rapidly expanding cities. What parts were the oldest and housed the most immigrants?

Step 2:

- As a class, have students watch up to minute 13 of [Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story](#) (the latter part of this video has some inappropriate language and deals with subtopics of McCarthyism and the 1950s). While students are watching the video, they should complete the shared T-chart on this lesson's worksheet with reasons why or why not the barrios of Chavez Ravine should have been made to relocate. Students should prepare as if they were going to share their evidence to a court. Where in the video did they get their information? Pause the video frequently to give students an opportunity to take notes.
- When the video is complete, ask students to share the evidence they recorded on the shared worksheet. Ask students if they believe this happened in other large cities across the country. Ask students if they believe that relocations of neighborhoods happened to other ethnic groups and their communities.
- Ask students what *gentrification* might mean. Who are the gentry? The word comes from England and, in common parlance, means higher-income people. Thus, gentrification means some higher-income people coming into a neighborhood. How might the gentrification of a lower-income neighborhood affect those already living there? Ask students to evaluate the pros and cons. (Cons: Displacement of residents and small businesses because of rising property values and higher accompanying taxes, loss of cultural identity and historical characteristics in neighborhoods, potential increase of differences between older and newer residents. Pros: Economic development lifts the poor and their neighborhood out of poverty, new businesses and job opportunities attracted to a neighborhood, reduced crime, increased tax revenue for street repairs and other public facilities, greater educational opportunities for children, property value increases benefit owners of those properties.)

Step 3:

- Let students know that the Federal Highway Act of 1954 also created displacement of minorities and immigrants. Have students watch films from two completely opposite points of view and complete the lower section on Reasons to Build Major Highways and Reasons Not to Build Major Highways on this week's [WORKSHEET](#). Break students into pairs to watch portions of the following videos. Remind students to be careful of listening to extreme voices on either side of a question and to look at all the information carefully from both sides.
 - [1950s Interstate Highway Promo Film by American Road Buildings Association](#) (watch segments 0-3:25, 19.20-20.43, and 26.24-31.27)
 - [Can a Highway Be Racist?](#) (video 5 minutes, 34 seconds)
- When students have completed their research, have them share in pairs with the whole class what was added to the T-chart on reasons to build or not build major highways. Make sure students note who sponsored both videos. How might that have impacted the videos' messages? Were there ways that highways could have been built differently? Can those decisions be made differently today?

Step 4:

- Ask students as a class to help answer this lesson's questions: "How did urban renewal as fueled by the 1949 Housing Act and the 1956 Federal Highway Act impact Latino and Hispanic Americans?" "How has life changed for Latino/Hispanic Americans over the last 250 years?" Make notes of what was learned on this unit's KWL chart.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits and for homework, have students read [Latin Reporter: Gentrification, rising rent prices push Latinos out of neighborhoods](#) and [The Federalist: Oh, Wait! Studies Find Gentrification Is Awesome](#). Use this article and the information from this lesson's shared worksheet to answer the question: "What are the pros and cons of a neighborhood being gentrified?" Students should answer this question in a long paragraph citing their sources and including information on both sides.

Additional Readings and Resources

Anderson, Martin. *The Federal Bulldozer*. MIT Press, 1964.

Beyer, Scott. "How the U.S. Government Destroyed Black Neighborhoods." *Catalyst*, Independent Institute, April 2, 2020.

Beyer, Scott. "What Actually Caused Gentrification in Brooklyn?" *Catalyst*, Independent Institute. <https://catalyst.independent.org/2020/01/29/what-actually-caused-gentrification-in-brooklyn/>

Chicago's Morning Answer. "Kay Hymowitz talks about gentrification and social justice," August 6, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2P4OYIAVUs>

Editorial. "What does Los Angeles owe the people who lost their homes in Chavez Ravine? More than an apology." *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 2024. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-05-09/editorial-what-does-los-angeles-owe-people-who-lost-their-homes-in-chavez-ravine-more-than-an-apology>

[The Federalist: Oh, Wait! Studies Find Gentrification Is Awesome](#)

Hartman, Chester W. *Yerba Buena: Land Grab and Community Resistance in San Francisco*. Glide, 1974.

Hymowitz, Kay S. "Gentrification for Social Justice?" *City Journal*, July 23, 2019. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/gentrification-for-social-justice>

Hymowitz, Kay S. "The mistaken racial theory of gentrification." *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 2015. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-1115-hymowitz-gentrification-20151115-story.html>

[Latin Reporter: Gentrification, rising rent prices push Latinos out of neighborhoods](#)

"The New Brooklyn' Looks at Gentrification, Inequality, Growth." *Brownstoner*, March 14, 2017. <https://www.brownstoner.com/brooklyn-life/brooklyn-books-the-new-brooklyn-kay-hymowitz-gentrification-manhattan-institute/>

Sowell, Thomas. *Economic Facts and Fallacies*, 32-36. https://scholar.cu.edu.eg/?q=mmyoussif/files/sowell_thomas_economic_facts_and_fallacies.pdf

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 244-270.

Sowell, Thomas. *The Housing Boom and Bust*. Basic Books, 2009.

Wissler, Mary L. Review of *The Federal Bulldozer*, by Martin Anderson. *Harvard Crimson*, December 2, 1964. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1964/12/2/the-federal-bulldozer-pithe-federal-bulldozer/>

NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

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REASONS TO FORCE RELOCATION

REASONS NOT TO FORCE RELOCATION

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REASONS TO BUILD MAJOR HIGHWAYS

REASONS NOT TO BUILD MAJOR HIGHWAYS

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Ethnic Studies 3A: KWL Chart

KNOW

WONDER

LEARNED

What do we think we already know about this topic?

What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.

After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.

<i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i>	<i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i>	<i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i>