

A Living History: Past to Present Connections

FACILITATOR'S KEY

(These are just for supportive reference...there are other connections that people might make)

Past

Science of the time categorized people into four basic races, symbolized by four colors: red, black, yellow, and white

Present

We continue to use these same color terms, with the addition of brown for Latinos, even though the American Anthropological Association now rejects the idea that race has a biological basis. (Skin color is not a consistent predictor of racial group.)

Past

The minstrel stage showed African Americans to be dirty, lazy, clownish, sexual, flashy, comic, and stupid

Present

Current stereotypical images on TV shows and in movies continue to portray African Americans in the same ways

Past

Nativist political parties blame dire economic circumstances on recent immigrant populations. Examples are the Know Nothing or American Party of the 1850s and the Immigration Restriction League of the 1890s.

Present

Reactions against immigrants and people of color when economic conditions worsen, i.e. Minutemen acting as a militia at the U.S.-Mexico border

Past

Sundown Towns chased people of color out of certain towns. Redlining and inequitable mortgage availability made it impossible for many people of color to live in certain neighborhoods. Local ordinances forbade people of color from living in certain areas.

Present

People of color are largely concentrated in inner cities

Past

Not all European immigrant groups were immediately considered white. Irish were not considered white until the mid 1800's and Russians, Jews, and Italians were not considered white until well into the 20th century

Present

Many Jewish people do not consider themselves white. Many Italians feel more connected to their ethnic heritage and often are conflicted about accepting white as their racial category

Past

White people were shown to be individualistic (highly valued) in the colonies, while others groups were denigrated as "communal"

Present

U.S. culture as one of rugged individualists where a sense of communal obligation is perceived as socialism, portrayed as severely problematic

Past

Naturalization laws in effect until the 1950's required that a person be considered "white" in order to become a naturalized citizen

Present

The U.S. is still over 60% white (although this number is declining) and many still use the term "American" as a synonym for "white"