



Race Relations in the United States – Classroom ideas and materials

Recorded event: **Lecia Brooks: Black Lives Matter and the Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNqsDVtEx1s>

Moderated discussion with Mrs. Lecia Brooks of the Southern Poverty Law Center, moderated by Dr. Andreas Etges of the Amerika-Institut at the LMU Munich.

About Lecia Brooks:

Lecia Brooks is the chief of staff for the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), where she assists with strategic planning and works with stakeholders across the organization to ensure the SPLC's success. Before her current role, Brooks served as the SPLC's chief workplace transformation officer, where she supported leadership and staff efforts to build a culture of inclusiveness and ensure a continued focus on diversity and equity. Brooks also previously served as the SPLC's outreach director, where she traveled across the U.S. and abroad to speak about rising extremism and authoritarianism. She also served as the founding director of the SPLC's Civil Rights Memorial Center, an interpretive space designed to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of the civil rights movement.

The SPLC offers extensive teaching materials regarding **U.S. multicultural history** and non-country-specific materials which promote **human rights, social justice and intersectionality**:

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources>

Primary Source work: Using the SPLC "Hate Map" <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>

Students can use this tool to review the organizations the SPLC has deemed as "hate groups" in the last 22 years, answering the following questions:

- What criteria do the SPLC use to determine hate groups? (also can use the video with Lecia Brooks around the 45-minute mark) Which ideologies are on their list?
- What is the general trend you can see about the number and locations of hate groups in the United States?
- What do you notice for 2021 about the number of hate groups per capita? Which states seem to have the highest number per capita? The lowest?
- Can you find any external news sources citing the SPLC hate watch data in their reports on hate groups? What other sources do the sources you find mention? (Find 2 to 3 articles and scan them).



Background information: Self-defense, “stand your ground” laws in the U.S.:
PBS News Hour article from February 25, 2022:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/stand-your-ground-laws-proliferate-after-trayvon-spotlight>

This type of law came into the spotlight again because of the **Kyle Rittenhouse trial**. A contextualizing description of the trial and its divisive political implications was offered by the BBC on November 19, 2021:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-59348734>

SPLC’S Work and its reception:

In the recording, Mrs. Brooks refers to the SPLC’s research and how it is utilized by various groups of people. One detail she mentions is that the SPLC can investigate individuals involved in hate groups, which governmental organizations are barred from doing. These details are available on their website and can be used in class.

Critiques:

Here is an article in Christian Science Monitor from 2016 offering information about how the **SPLC’s focus on individuals has been viewed as targeting conservatives**:

<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2016/0218/Does-the-Southern-Poverty-Law-Center-target-conservatives>

In 2018, the Washington Post published an opinion piece **questioning the reliability of the modern SPLC’s analyses and research**. This could start a conversation about the ways information is retracted, redacted and republished online:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-southern-poverty-law-center-has-lost-all-credibility/2018/06/21/22ab7d60-756d-11e8-9780-b1dd6a09b549_story.html

Here is an overview provided by Harvard’s Digital Media Law Project about **what happens when an organization and/or person decides to correct/retract something online**:

<https://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/correcting-or-retracting-your-work-after-publication>

SPLC and Germany:

Brooks mentions the idea that world leaders may also find their work useful. Discuss with your class how everyday citizens in other countries might also benefit from their work. This might be especially useful in combination with the SPLC classroom resources.