

State v. Derek Chauvin

Community Meeting Plans: K-12

Before you begin...talking with your students about the murder of George Floyd through the Minneapolis State v. Derek Chauvin trial you must mentally, emotionally and physically prepare yourself. You do not have to nor are you expected to have all the answers as an educator; the best role for you in supporting your students is as a consistent and caring facilitator.

Click each of these links which contain resources regarding race and racism, talking with students and youth, and the court records for the case:

- [10 Ways to Talk to Students About Sensitive Issues in the News](#)
- [Nice White Parents: Podcast Episodes and Discussion Guide](#)
- [How to Talk to Children: Derek Chauvin Trial](#)
- [Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)
- [State of MN v. Derek Chauvin: Court Records](#)

Below you will find lesson plans to be used as Community Meeting/community building discussion guides for processing the trial.

Kindergarten through 2nd Grade

- 1. Ask students:**
 - If/what they know about George Floyd
 - If/what they know about the news regarding Derek Chauvin's trial
 - How they are feeling and if they have anything they want to share about their feelings
- 2. Show students this slide deck:**
 - [Social Story for George Floyd](#)
- 3. Allow students several minutes** to process the information and draw a picture, write, or record themselves talking about their feelings. Remember: students do not owe us an explanation for their trauma; allow them to process the information you just shared in a way that is healthy for them.
- 4. If you'd like to prompt students to take action, read [this post](#) before you decide on a project or purpose. Here are some actions you may suggest:**
 - Talk with others about what happened to George Floyd and the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement by sharing information on social media, having individual conversations or organizing an educational event in the school or community.
 - Learn more about bias and talk together about how our biases may show up, especially on the lower levels of the Pyramid of Hate (i.e., biased attitudes, acts of bias).
 - Write a letter to your school or community newspaper about your thoughts and feelings about George Floyd and the racial disparities in the criminal justice system. In the letter, explain what you think should be done about it.
 - Get involved in local activism on these or other issues of injustice that are important to you.

3rd Grade through 5th Grade

- 1. Conduct a read aloud or shared reading of the following summary:**

"On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, an African American man, was killed while being arrested by the police. A bystander video recording of the incident showed that a white police officer pinned Floyd to the ground while he was

handcuffed. The police officer's knee pressed into the back of Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes, even after Floyd lost consciousness. On the video, Floyd was heard saying, "Please, I can't breathe. My stomach hurts. My neck hurts. Everything hurts. ... (I need) water or something. Please. Please. I can't breathe, officer. ... I cannot breathe. I cannot breathe." In a statement, the Minneapolis Police Department said that officers had responded to a call about a man suspected of forgery.

A video of the incident was shared widely on social media. This led to community and national outrage, an F.B.I. civil rights investigation and the firing of the officer, Derek Chauvin and three other officers who were also at the scene. On May 29, 2020 Chauvin was arrested and charged with third-degree murder and manslaughter. On June 3, the charges against Chauvin were upgraded to second-degree murder and the three other officers were charged with aiding and abetting murder. Chauvin's trial began on March 29, 2021."

2. Ask students:

- What were your initial thoughts and feelings when you heard about what happened to George Floyd?
- Do you see people talking about this issue on the news, on social media or among your friends? What impact has that had on you?
- Why do you think the movement to stop police violence against African American people is called Black Lives Matter? What does it mean to you? What kind of change are activists and others calling for?
- Are you surprised to learn that police officers have used force that has killed people?
- Why do you think it is rare for police officers to get arrested, prosecuted and convicted in these cases? What should be done about that?
- What can each of us do as individuals to stop the escalation of bias and hate? What can we do on a societal level?
- What are other ways that racism (or other forms of injustice) show up in our institutions (education, government, business, media, etc.) and what can we do about that?

3. Project, print, and/or share the "Pyramid of Hate." Ask students to work together in groups, or as a whole class to talk about their experiences with each layer of the "Pyramid of Hate:" who/what/when/where/why they've seen/heard/experienced biased attitudes, acts of bias, systemic discrimination, bias-motivated violence, and genocide.

6th Grade through 8th Grade

Adopted from PBS

1. Read this to students:

- "Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin is on trial right now. He was charged with second and third degree murder and manslaughter in the killing of George Floyd last May. On the fourth day of the trial, jurors heard from Floyd's girlfriend about his life and struggles.
- Floyd's girlfriend, Courteney Ross, told the story of how the two met at a Salvation Army shelter in 2017, and she spoke about their shared struggle with opioid addiction.
- Chauvin's defense is trying to blame Floyd's death on his drug use, coupled with underlying health conditions.
- Lawyers for Floyd's family released a statement, saying, 'We fully expected the defense to put George's character and struggles with addiction on trial, because that is the go-to tactic when the facts are not on your side.'
- Minneapolis Police Sergeant David Ploeger testified that the officers should not have restrained Floyd in the manner in which they did, or for as long as they did. The emergency

room doctor who tried to revive Floyd suggested that he likely died due to lack of oxygen to his lungs.”

2. Ask students:

- Who is Derek Chauvin? Who is George Floyd?
- Why is Derek Chauvin on trial?
- What strategy did Chauvin’s lawyers use to defend him?
- How is Sergeant Ploeger’s testimony important?
- Where is this trial based?

3. Play this video for students.

4. Ask students to dig deeper, in groups or as a whole group:

- Did you expect Chauvin’s defense to use Floyd’s past drug use against him? Why is this something Floyd’s family could assume would happen?
- What important perspective does Floyd’s girlfriend bring to the trial? Why do you think they chose to have her comment on his character and their relationship?
- *Media literacy:* Of all the witnesses on the fourth day of the trial, including the Minneapolis police sergeant, first responders and Floyd’s girlfriend, why do you think the reporters chose to highlight Courteney Ross?

9th Grade through 12th Grade (3 Days)

Adopted from PBS

Introduction

Derek Chauvin has been charged in the murder of George Floyd and the prosecution and defense are using two very different tactics to highlight their cases. This lesson plan has students analyze the facts of the Derek Chauvin trial as well as any potential stereotypes used in the case and the racial undertones thereof.

Essential Question

What does the role of trauma play in people’s lives as it relates to police brutality and ensuing court trials?

Day 1:

1. Watch this video.

2. Then be sure to look at the latest updates on the trial. The defense wrapped up their case on Wed. April 14, following the prosecution last week and the jury is currently deliberating.

3. Discussion questions:

- What did the prosecution aim to do as it lays out its case?
- What is the goal of the defense team in laying out their case?
- How is the citing reacting and responding to the events in the case?
- What is the extra layer of trauma that is described ? How do young people play a role?
- What were some of the things jurors took note of during testimony?

Day 2:

1. Watch this video.

2. Discussion questions:

- How did the two witness testimonies differ?
- In questioning Mr. Williams, the defense seemed to try to portray him as being “mad” or “angry.” Why do you think they would do this?
- There is multiple witness testimony in this specific case. How could that potentially impact the outcome of the case?
- How do you think race playing a role in the questioning tactics on both sides?

Day 3:

1. **After students engage in a discussion about the witness testimony and the case, they will then use their knowledge of the case to compare it with that of the Rodney King case.** You may also want your students to read additional articles on the Rodney King case, including:
 - USA Today article Derek Chauvin trial in George Floyd death compared to Rodney King case 30 years later
 - The Guardian's Rodney King: 30 years after brutal beating, activists say LAPD 'still corrupt and violent'
 - ABC Denver's Longtime activists remember Rodney King case ahead of Derek Chauvin trial.
2. **Next, have students create a Venn diagram that focuses on the following:**
 - Highlight (5) key differences between the George Floyd and Rodney King trials.
 - Highlight (5) similarities in their cases.
3. **After students complete their research, share out and discuss the following questions as a class.**
 - What do these similarities and differences say about where we are as a country as far as police brutality goes over the last 30 years?
 - How did the response to the Rodney King beating being aired on television non-stop compare to what happened after George Floyd was murdered?
 - Do you think the verdict in the Rodney King case is a precursor of what to expect with the George Floyd verdict?

For further resources and support with these discussions, please contact:

Jaimie Piotrowicz, Assistant Director of Social-Emotional Learning at jpiotrowicz@philasd.org

Lauren Thomas, Social-Emotional Learning Specialist at lthomas@philasd.org.



Social Story for George Floyd



People are angry and sad



in our cities and our country.



George Floyd was killed by a police officer.



Mr. Floyd was African American, the officer was white.



People are protesting because



Mr. Floyd should not have died.



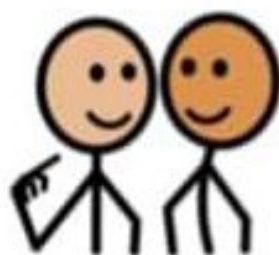
Many



police officers



protect



us.



This officer



did not



protect



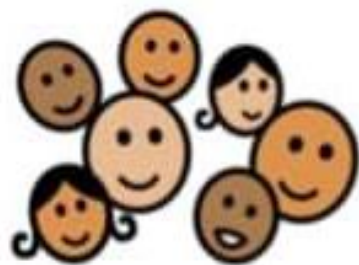
George Floyd.



For many years,



some police officers have hurt African Americans.



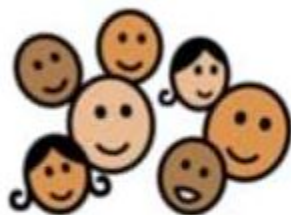
People



need



to be safe.



People



need



to be treated



fairly.



People are protesting



to make things better.



They need African Americans



to feel safe and be treated fairly.

ADL[®] PYRAMID OF HATE

The **Pyramid of Hate** illustrates the prevalence of bias, hate and oppression in our society. It is organized in escalating levels of attitudes and behavior that grow in complexity from bottom to top. Like a pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. Bias at each level negatively impacts individuals, institutions and society and it becomes increasingly difficult to challenge and dismantle as behaviors escalate. When bias goes unchecked, it becomes “normalized” and contributes to a pattern of accepting discrimination, hate and injustice in society. While every biased attitude or act does not lead to genocide, each genocide has been built on the acceptance of attitudes and actions described at the lower levels of the pyramid. When we challenge those biased attitudes and behaviors in ourselves, others and institutions, we can interrupt the escalation of bias and make it more difficult for discrimination and hate to flourish.

