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### **WHOSE STREETS?**

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### **WHOSE STREETS?**

Directed by Sabaah Folayan, Damon Davis 2017| USA | 90 min

#### **TEACHER'S GUIDE**

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Whose Streets?* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

#### The Film

Told by the activists and leaders who were in the thick of this movement for racial justice, Whose Streets? is a raw and unflinching look at the uprising in Ferguson, Missouri, after unarmed teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed in broad daylight by a white police officer. The incident was the breaking point for Ferguson residents, a town with a history of long-standing racial tension; where people of colour, who make up most of the population, are served by a glaringly white police force. Brown's death prompted demonstrations, heavyhanded policing, violence and, eventually, national outcry. As the national guard descended on Ferguson with military grade weaponry, this film shows empowered parents, artists and teachers from across the country who unified as freedom fighters, becoming the torchbearers of a new resistance. An impassioned battle cry from a generation fighting for the right to live, it is an emotionally turbulent film that provides a ground-level look at this national tragedy, which was the catalyst to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Source: http://www.hotdocs.ca

#### **The Filmmakers**

Sabaah Folayan (writer/director/producer) is an activist and storyteller born and raised in South Central Los Angeles. As an advocate at Rikers Island, Folayan interviewed incarcerated people about their experiences with trauma. She later helped organize The Millions March, one of the largest marches for racial justice in New York history, in response to the non-indictment of the police officer who choked Eric Garner to death. Folayan entered the world of storytelling through theatre, attending the Lee Strasberg Institute of Theatre and Film as a teenager, and performing as a member of the Black Theater Ensemble while a pre-med student at Columbia University. In September 2014, she went to Ferguson with cinematographer Lucas Alvarado-Farrar to learn the truth behind the dramatic scenes playing out on the news. Hearing the stories from the community inspired her to embark on her directorial debut Whose Streets?, landing her a coveted spot on Filmmaker Magazine's annual "25 New Faces of Independent Film" along with co-director Damon Davis. Folayan recently directed an episode of Glamour Magazine + The Girl Project's Get Schooled web series, presented by Maybelline. She is a 2015 Firelight Media Producers Lab Fellow, 2016 Chicken & Egg Accelerator Lab Fellow, and 2016 Sundance Institute Documentary Edit and Story Lab Fellow.

Damon Davis (co-director/producer) is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist who works and resides in St. Louis, Missouri. His scope includes illustration, painting, printmaking, music, film and public art. Davis has work in the permanent collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and has exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn and the San Diego Contemporary Museum of Art. Acclaimed cultural critic and scholar Jeff Chang licensed Davis' piece, "All Hands on Deck," as the cover art for Chang's 2016 book We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation. For his work as the founder of independent music and art imprint, Far Fetched, Davis received The Riverfront Times Master Mind Award (2013), St. Louis Soup Across the Delmar Divide Award (2013) and Best Hip Hop Producer SLUMfest Award (2014). He is also a Regional Arts Commission Community Arts Training Fellow (2012) and was named to Alive magazine's Buzz List (2013). The documentary short A Story to Tell (2013), which profiled Davis, his work and the creative process, won an Emmy Award Mid America for Best Short Form Program. Whose Streets? is Davis's first foray into feature-length documentary; Filmmaker Magazine selected him and director Sabaah Folayan for their "25 New Faces of Independent Film 2016." Davis is a 2015 Firelight Media Producers Lab Fellow and a 2016 Sundance Institute Music and Sound Design Lab Fellow at Skywalker Sound.

Educational package written and compiled by Raneem Azzam raneem5@rogers.com

#### **VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS**

The following three sub-sections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

#### **Pre-Viewing Activities**

As a class, have students brainstorm what they know about The Movement for Black Lives (Black Lives Matter) and/or protests against police violence in the US and Canada.

As a class, have students brainstorm what they already know about the shooting of Michael Brown Jr. and/or the Ferguson uprising.

Explain the meanings of terms from the film that may be unfamiliar to students, such as: lynching, 1992 LA Uprising, the Civil Rights Movement, liberation, revolution and looting.

Introduce and explain concepts that the students should understand to fully grasp the issues in the film, such as: anti-Black racism, systemic injustice, oppression, civil disobedience, direct action activism, the prison industrial complex, police brutality, militarization of policing, stop-andfrisk/carding and criminalization.

Ask students to privately reflect on whether they have ever been to a political demonstration or thought about attending one. Ask them to think about the kinds of political or social causes they have been or might be willing to get involved in.

Have students work in pairs to think of an issue that the mainstream media has portrayed differently from the way they experienced it if they were present. If they can't think of examples, ask them to work in pairs to brainstorm an issue that media outlets have portrayed differently from one another. Discuss as a class.

Show students the trailer of the film (http://www.youtube. com/watch?v=upiJnjJSerw). Ask them to write down a list of the themes or main ideas of the film that stand out to them. Ask them to keep these themes in mind as they watch the film.

#### **Viewing Activities**

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20 of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf). Students can revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Have students jot down three to five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Have students make a timeline of the events that are addressed in the film. What were the key moments in the uprising? What were the outcomes?

Have students take notes about the storylines of one or two of the subjects in the film. How were their lives and communities affected by: the killing of Michael Brown Jr., the National Guard's crackdown on the protests, the presence of mainstream media in their communities and their activism?

Have students take notes about the scenes showing the positive aspects of organizing and activism in the lives of the subjects of the film.

#### **Post-Viewing Activities**

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/ WhatSeminar04.pdf

Have students look at their notes from the Pre-Viewing Activity and see if their opinions were changed, altered or enhanced by the film. Discuss with students their initial reactions to the film, the featured individuals and the themes. How did their feelings evolve over the course of the film?

Discuss as a class: What were students' initial perceptions of The Movement for Black Lives? How did their original perceptions compare and contrast with their perceptions after viewing the film? Using these questions as a prompt, have students write a two-paragraph written response.

One of the women in the film says that she does not consider the destruction of property to be violence, she considers it to be "righteous non-violent direct action." Define nonviolence and civil disobedience. Organize a debate in which student take sides about the place of civil disobedience in bringing about political and social change.

Have students imagine that an uprising similar to the one in Ferguson were to happen in Canada. Have them work in groups to address which clauses in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms would be relevant to the government and police actions towards activists. Have each group present their findings to the class.

In one scene, a man criticizes President Barack Obama for failing to uphold the US Constitution in Ferguson. Have students imagine that they are a citizen of Ferguson in 2014. In character, have them write a letter to President Obama about all the ways they feel their constitutional rights are being violated and what they think the federal government should do.

Throughout the film, protest chants are used to convey the spirit of the movement and the commitments of the activists. Have students write a personal reflection about the meanings of three of the chants that stood out to them. Their reflection should address what they think the chants mean in the context of the events in Ferguson, and what they mean to them personally.

Have students do further research into the Ferguson police department, the militaristic response during the aftermath of Michael Brown Jr.'s death, and the report on Ferguson issued by the Department of Justice. Write a persuasive essay about the ways policing in Ferguson shows anti-Black bias and racism. Have students research a police killing in Canada (e.g., Abdirahman Abdi, Jean-Pierre Bony, Andrew Loku, Jermaine Carby) and compare the issues. What happened? Was there a charge? Was there a conviction?

Have students complete an exit note. The exit note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

#### WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

#### The Filmmakers

Website: http://www.whosestreets.com

Twitter: @WhoseStreetsDoc

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/whosestreetsdoc

Instagram: @whosestreets

#### **Additional Resources**

*Film Inquiry*: "Putting Human Life Above Political Rhetoric" is an August 10, 2017, interview with directors Sabaah Folayan and Damon Davis.

http://filminquiry.com/ Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

Department of Justice: "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department" is a March 4, 2015, report by the Civil Rights Division of the DOJ on policing in Ferguson, started in the immediate aftermath of the killing of Michael Brown Jr. http://www.justice.gov/ Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

*We Live Here*: "Finding Art in Activism" is an August 22, 2017, podcast interview with Sabaah Folayan and Damon Davis. *We Live Here* is a social justice podcast from St. Louis, Missouri; therefore, many other episodes are also relevant. http://www.welivehere.show/ Type the title of the episode into the search function of the website.

*Ferguson Syllabus*: This is a reading list, with links, put together by a group of academics called Sociologists for Justice.

https://sociologistsforjustice.org/ferguson-syllabus

*Black Lives Matter Syllabus*: This is the website of a course put together by NYU professor Frank Leon Roberts. The site traces the digital and live activism of Black Lives Matter, and provides links to videos and readings to teach about the movement systematically, focusing on key themes. http://www.blacklivesmattersyllabus.com

A Vision for Black Lives: A political platform produced by 50 US organizations representing thousands of Black Americans with a vision and specific demands. Originally launched at the Democratic National Convention in 2016. https://policy.m4bl.org/platform *TED Talks*: "An Interview with the Founders of Black Lives Matter" is a 16-minute video interview from October 2016 with Black Lives Matter organizers Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi.

http://www.ted.com/ Type the title of the interview into the search function of the website.

*Al Jazeera*: From August 2015, the one-hour documentary "Ferguson: Race and Justice in the US" was made for the program *Fault Lines* about the race and law enforcement issues in Ferguson, Missouri.

http://www.aljazeera.com/ Type the title of the documentary into the search function of the website.

*Towards Race Equity in Education*: The Schooling of Black Students in the Greater Toronto Area. An April 2017 analysis by Dr. Carl James and Tana Turner of the issues affecting Black students in Toronto-area schools, as well as recommendations.

https://edu.yorku.ca/ Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

#### **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

## Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What are the themes and issues explored in this film?

Choose one of the themes that stands out to you and discuss what this film made you think/realize about that issue.

Why do you think the film opens with a discussion of poverty and education?

Why do you think the filmmakers chose to have the subjects say what they were each doing on August 9, 2014, before Michael Brown Jr. was killed?

To what extent do you relate to the themes in the film? What aspects of systemic injustice, policing, activism or community organizing do you experience in your own life?

Describe the ways policing affects the day-to-day lives of the subjects of the film.

What were your views about political activism before viewing this film? How does this film reflect or influence your perspective about political protest or activism?

A man in the film said that when Michael Brown Jr.'s body was left lying in the street for over four hours, it reminded him of a lynching. What do you think he meant?

Several subjects of the film said that "fear left the people" after the killing of Michael Brown Jr. Why do you think their feelings changed? How did their courage affect the movement?

A man in the film talked about being stopped by police since he was 13 years old. Relate the experience of random stops by police to the issue of "carding" in Toronto.

In what ways did the police provoke the civil unrest, according to the subjects of the film?

Discuss the ways the police tactics in Ferguson resembled military operations.

Discuss the optimism of the subjects of the film. Why does the movement make them hopeful?

#### **QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE**

- "That camera that's right up there right now, that wasn't right there. They just put that one up. But there was a camera on the side of this building and they took that camera down. That's what I'm saying. There was a camera out here that saw that whole thing." Activist David Whitt
- 2. "The constant denial of our humanity by not even looking us in the eye. Like, you killed a boy, you have to answer for that. You don't just get to shut yourself in an office." Female activist
- 3. "I don't consider that violence, I consider that righteous non-violent direct action. The question that solidifies violence is, 'Were any people harmed, did any people die?' A building is a building. That's a revolutionary act, that's strategic." Female activist
- 4. "They don't tell you the fact that the police showed up to a peaceful candlelight vigil, just a bunch of people holding up candles because they're hurting, and boxed them in and forced them onto a QuickTrip lot. They put property over people and say we got a problem in St. Louis because a QuickTrip burned down. But no alchemist, no doctor, no wizard on this planet can bring back Mike Brown Jr." Male activist
- 5. "You ain't gonna outshoot 'em. It sound good, it feel good, it look good, but you ain't gonna outshoot 'em. They got more jails, they got more guns, they got more bullets. So you not gonna win that battle, man. You know somebody that got a sound system, get on the phone and call them. You know somebody that got a car that can carpool somebody to a meeting or to a rally, do that. That's progressive, that's progress, that's positive. But burning down QuickTrip ain't gonna get us nowhere, but there will be more guns in our faces shooting more of our kids." Hip hop artist Tef Poe
- 6. "Right now is the time to influence the people who don't think like we think. Have the right conversations, use your social media. I'm telling you, I got on Twitter yesterday and got to work, man. Use these things the right way. What we gonna do? Where we gonna meet at? What's good? Feel me? Let's do it the right way, man. Let's influence the world right now. We got the stage, so let's do it. This is it!" Hip hop artist Tef Poe

- 7. "I want her to think for herself, to resist and participate in democracy. That is your right and that cannot be taken away from you." Activist Brittany Ferrell
- 8. "I went to school in the West Bank. I saw the checkpoints come up and I saw that the tanks were out there. I didn't see no difference between the West Bank and Ferguson." Male activist
- 9. "Just to know at five o'clock in the afternoon you see police with M16s strapped across their bodies, asking you for an ID to see if you even live in this area and it's just like, you don't even live in this area, like how are you gonna keep me out?" Female activist
- 10. "All of this is chemical warfare that you are not supposed to be able to use on US soil." Male activist
- 11. "No matter how much I put into the preservation of that memorial, I still didn't build it, the people did. That in itself is like how you fight back for space. We are fighting for our space right here." Activist David Whitt
- 12. "There are a lot of people in Ferguson who have become very fearful living in this community, but I would like to help you understand one thing. There are many people who have only been fearful for two months. There are more people who have been fearful for two decades." Ferguson resident, speaking at City Hall
- 13. "Our enemy is directly the police. There is no buffer between us and the cops. They know who we are, they got files on all of us. For all we know, they are building the craziest conspiracy theories... you know, it never stops." Hip hop artist Tef Poe
- 14. "The city relies on the police force to serve, essentially, as a collection agency." Attorney General Eric Holder

- 15. "This is like an unseen war where they wage war on the people without anybody else knowing. This era or generation, we are raising activists. We have to create a generation of activists; if there is going to be any change it starts with our children. And all these people that are about this are going to start raising their kids in another way. And that's where the change is going to come." Female activist
- 16. "It is our duty to fight for our freedom, it is our duty win, we must love and support each other, we have nothing to lose but our chains." Common chant

#### **CULMINATING ACTIVITY: DEBATING THE RIGHTS OF FERGUSON PROTESTORS**

The state government in Missouri declared a state of emergency and brought in the National Guard to quell the Ferguson protests. The police in Ferguson used military weapons and tactics in response to the protests. Investigate the varying issues on government and police tactics to contain or suppress protests and conduct a class debate on the following resolution: Be it resolved that the government and police violated the constitutional rights of the citizens of Ferguson.

The affirmative side will argue that the citizens' rights were violated; the negative side will argue that the citizens' rights were not violated.

Research your facts and arguments using sources from the mainstream media and alternative media. Evaluate the credibility of all the sources you use.

You should submit your notes and reference list after the debate as part of the evaluation.

#### **ACTIVITY RUBRIC: DEBATING THE RIGHTS OF FERGUSON PROTESTOR**

Knowledge and Understanding

Knowledge and Understand	ling			
	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0
Clear understanding of issues	Limited success in use of terms and concepts	Some success in use of terms and concepts	Moderate success in use of terms and concepts	High degree of success in use of terms and concepts
Thinking and Inquiry				
	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0
Ability to research, synthesize and organize resources	Demonstrates a limited ability to research, synthesize, and organize resources; evaluates credibility of sources with limited effectiveness	Demonstrates a moderate ability to research, synthesize and organize resources; evaluates credibility of sources with some effectiveness	Demonstrates a considerable ability to research, synthesize and organize resources; evaluates credibility of sources with considerable effectiveness	Demonstrates an outstanding ability to research, synthesize and organize resources; evaluates credibility of sources with a great deal of effectiveness
Application				
	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0
Applies ideas and facts to construct arguments	Applies ideas and facts with limited effectiveness to form ineffective arguments	Applies ideas and facts with some effectiveness to form somewhat persuasive arguments	Applies ideas and facts with considerable effectiveness to form persuasive arguments	Applies ideas and facts with a high degree of effectiveness to form very persuasive arguments

Communication

	2.5 2.9	3	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Communication of ideas	Ideas lack clarity; speaks with limited emphasis and confidence	Ideas are sometimes clear; speaks with some emphasis and confidence	Ideas are usually clear; speaks with considerable emphasis and confidence	Ideas are always clear; speaks with a high degree of emphasis and confidence	/5

arguments

Comments:

Total \_\_\_\_\_ /20 = \_\_\_\_\_ /100

arguments

/5

/5

#### **EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS**

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS		
Grade 9–12 English	<ul> <li>generate, gather and organize ideas and information to speak for an intended purpose and audience.</li> <li>demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.</li> <li>identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.</li> </ul>		
Grade 11 Media Studies	<ul> <li>demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.</li> <li>deconstruct a variety of types of media texts, identifying the codes, conventions and techniques used and evaluating how they create meaning.</li> </ul>		
Grade 11 Media Arts	<ul> <li>analyze, through examination and reflection, their initial response to media art works, using various strategies and modes of communication.</li> <li>identify and explain the messages in and meanings of media texts.</li> <li>describe the characteristics of particular media genres and forms, and explain how they help to convey meaning and influence the audience.</li> </ul>		
Grade 11 Law	<ul> <li>analyze how various factors have influenced and continue to influence the development of human rights law in Ontario and Canada.</li> <li>analyze situations in which it may be appropriate to limit rights and freedoms, and explain the arguments for and against such limitations.</li> <li>describe the structures and key roles and processes of the Canadian criminal justice system and explain key interrelationships among them.</li> <li>assess the ability of the Canadian criminal justice system to provide appropriate and even-handed justice to people living in Canada.</li> </ul>		
Grade 12 Law	<ul> <li>explain the principles underpinning human rights law and the legal significance of those laws, in Canada and internationally.</li> <li>analyze various contemporary issues in relation to their impact or potential impact on human rights law.</li> <li>analyze emerging global issues and their implications for international law.</li> </ul>		
Grade 10 Civics	<ul> <li>use the concepts of political thinking when analyzing and evaluating evidence, data and information, and formulating conclusions and/or judgments about issues, events and/or developments of civic importance.</li> <li>describe some civic issues of local, national and/or global significance.</li> <li>communicate their own position on some issues of civic importance at the local, national and/or global level.</li> </ul>		
Grade 11 Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology	<ul> <li>explore topics related to anthropology, psychology and sociology, and formulate questions appropriate to each discipline to guide their research.</li> <li>explain, from a sociological perspective, how diverse factors influence and shape individual and group behaviour.</li> <li>explain, from a sociological perspective, the relationship between prejudice and individual and systemic discrimination and describe their impacts on individuals and society.</li> <li>explain the ways in which social structures affect individual and group behaviour.</li> <li>explain how structural changes take place in social institutions in response to diverse influences.</li> </ul>		
Grade 11 & 12 Equity Studies	<ul> <li>explore topics related to equity and social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research.</li> <li>explain how power and privilege operate in various Canadian social, economic and political contexts.</li> <li>demonstrate an understanding of a range of perspectives on and approaches to equity and social justice issues, and of factors that affect inequity and social injustice.</li> <li>analyze, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization.</li> <li>analyze historical and contemporary equity and social justice issues and the impact of economic and environmental factors on these issues.</li> </ul>		

Grade 12 Challenge and Change in Society	<ul> <li>explain the relationships between poverty, affluence and social change.</li> <li>explain the relationship between social panic about crime and deviance, and the attention given to these issues by media, politicians and other social groups.</li> <li>demonstrate an understanding of various types of discrimination and their impact on individuals and groups</li> </ul>
Grade 11 American History	<ul> <li>describe various social, economic and political events, trends and developments in the United States since 1945, and analyze their key causes and consequences.</li> <li>analyze how various events and developments have affected specific groups in the United States, and relations between the United States and other countries, since 1945.</li> <li>analyze how various groups, trends and cultural developments have affected identity, citizenship and heritage in the United States since 1945.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Politics in Action	<ul> <li>use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them.</li> <li>analyze how various factors can contribute to, and present a barrier to, their own and others' political engagement.</li> <li>explain the political importance of some current issues and analyze various perspectives associated with these issues.</li> <li>analyze some issues of political importance in terms of their causes, their impact and ways in which they have been addressed.</li> <li>analyze the objectives and strategies, and assess the influence, of individuals and groups in addressing issues of political importance.</li> <li>demonstrate an understanding of factors that facilitate and present challenges to democratic political change.</li> <li>identify and analyze a political issue, with the goal of developing a personal plan of action to address this issue.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 Politics	<ul> <li>use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events and developments of national and international political importance.</li> <li>demonstrate an understanding of various political ideologies, theories and concepts, and analyze their relevance to Canadian and international politics.</li> <li>analyze how social, economic and geographic factors influence contemporary politics in and relations between various countries around the world.</li> <li>explain violations of human rights in Canada and abroad, as well as the role of Canadian and international processes in the protection of human rights.</li> <li>analyze the role of civic awareness and responsibility among citizens and non-governmental stakeholders in the national and international community.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 World Geography: Urban Patterns and Population Issues	<ul> <li>formulate different types of questions to guide investigations into issues affecting ecumenes.</li> <li>apply the concepts of geographic thinking when analyzing current events involving geographic issues.</li> <li>analyze the influence of social factors on the characteristics of a selected ecumene.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 World Issues: A Geographic Analysis	• analyze relationships between demographic and political factors and quality of life in various countries and regions.

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations can be found at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html