

#BLACK MUSIC MATTERS

“EYE TO EYE” / “ PROTEST ”

CADENCE WEAPON / HAVIAH MIGHTY FT YIZZY

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students will explore anti-Black racism as it relates to police brutality against Black people. Students will also compare and contrast how two modern day Canadian hip-hop artists use their music to protest against these social injustices.

English, Social Science, History, Health, Arts and Music-specific activities will enable students to identify and respond to the social issues of anti-Black racism and police brutality.

GRADE LEVEL:

11 - 12



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ADVANCE
CANADA'S BLACK MUSIC BUSINESS COLLECTIVE



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BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

In 2020, an approximately nine-minute video was widely shared across social media showing Minnesotan police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on the neck of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd. Floyd died while handcuffed and callously subdued by Chauvin.

This sparked a response that rippled throughout the globe. There were scores of public protests in several countries all decrying the many documented acts of police brutality and anti-Black racism. Protesters would use the phrase “Black Lives Matter,” which placed a spotlight on the social justice organization of the same name. This also recalled the long history of Civil Rights protests against anti-Black racism. For many, this felt like history repeating itself.

George Floyd’s murder was a watershed moment that demanded the re-examination of systemic racism in all structures of society. Businesses, media outlets, and boards of education have all begun the introspective work of rooting out anti-Black racism entrenched in their systems. They are spurred on by artistic work, as several artists have been releasing protest songs, a modern movement similar to the highly influential protest songs of the 1960s.

CONTENT WARNING

The full song of “Protest” contains coarse language, racial epithets, and descriptions of violence against Black bodies. To avoid the stronger language, only Haviah Mighty’s lyrics have been provided in Appendix 2 at the end of this lesson. Haviah’s lyrics run from 0:42 - 2:10 in the music video linked throughout.



Mural of George Floyd in Houston, Texas. Photo: Sergio Flores



FOUNDATIONAL ACTIVITIES

PRE-ACTIVITY

1. REVIEW ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES (2:00)

[Cadence Weapon Biography](#)

[Haviah Mighty Biography](#)

2. REVIEW KEY VOCABULARY (8:00)

Review the Key Vocabulary List

Read through the lyrics to “Eye to Eye” (Appendix 1) and “Protest” (Appendix 2)

Re-read the lyrics again if needed

3. WATCH THE MUSIC VIDEOS (7:00)

[Official Music Video, “Eye to Eye”](#)

[Official Music Video, “Protest”](#)



Still, “Eye to Eye” Official Music Video.
Photo: YouTube



Still, “Protest” Official Music Video.
Photo: YouTube

KEY VOCABULARY

Bwoi or Boi: in this case, slang for police officers

Caught up: slang for being arrested, involved with the law

Double Consciousness: a term coined by Sociologist W. E. B. DuBois in the early 1900s. The term describes the internal conflict of Black people in a white-dominated society. Black people face the psychological challenge of balancing both their own self-understanding while simultaneously seeing themselves through the eyes of racist people that surround them.

Man dem: slang for friends or friendly community

Peel: reference to the Peel region west of Toronto, an area with contentious relationship between the police and Black community

6ix: slang for Toronto, a city with notable instance: s of anti-Black police violence

Waste: slang for underachieving youth, often seen as a lost cause



DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

ESTIMATED DURATION (20:00)

As a class or in small groups, discuss the following questions and share responses. Refer back to the lyrics as needed while generating responses.

QUESTIONS

Consider the messages of the two songs. What similarities do you notice? (ie. both songs discuss the mental health challenges and fear of police violence. Cadence: “I feel it from a distance, feeling defenseless,” Haviah “Weight is on my back, I’m getting no rest.”) What differences do you notice?

(ie. Haviah Mighty uses historical references to reinforce her idea, whereas Cadence Weapon discusses the emotional impact of the issue without social context; Cadence Weapon describes the “big smile” he uses as a mask, whereas Haviah Mighty has a “focused exterior”).

Choose a line from each song that discusses the psychological effects of police brutality. Which line is more impactful to you? Explain your answer.

Both artists describe how Black people are viewed by the police. Why is this significant?

(ie. It reflects the idea of the Double Consciousness where Black people must consider how they are viewed by the wider society; It reflects the damage of historical bias, prejudice and racism; It demonstrates fear felt by all involved).

What historical references to police violence does Haviah Mighty use? (ie. attacks from police dogs, slave patrols, “ropes and chains”) What effect does this add to the song?

(ie. This shows the long history of violence against Black bodies and the psychological impact that can be felt today).



Cadence Weapon



Still, “Protest” Official Music Video.
Photo: YouTube



SUBJECT-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

MUSIC

- Describe how the musical elements of “Eye to Eye” and “Protest” help communicate the message of the music.
- Research a protest song of the 1960s American Civil Rights movement. Compare and contrast the lyrics to a protest song from the 21st Century.

ENGLISH

- Cadence Weapon writes “Both sides stay under pressure, but we live different. Thin line between the victim and the witness.” Write a poem representing two sides of this social issue (eg. A police officer and protester, a victim of police brutality and a witness).
- In groups of 2 or 3, examine one stanza from one of the songs. Analyze the meaning of the stanza and discuss its effectiveness.
- Write a 250-word response journal. Write your thoughts about any aspect of the songs. Consider questions like: What lines stood out to you? What lines did not make sense? What does this song tell us about the author? How do the two songs compare?



Still, “Protest” Official Music Video.
Photo: YouTube



SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Research the Black Panther movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Create a short report that describes their social role in the community, how were they perceived by larger society and the outcomes of the movement.
- Research W. E. B. DuBois. In a short presentation, outline DuBois' influence on Sociology, explain his idea of the Double Consciousness, and find modern examples of Double Consciousness.
- Research a respected psychologist that studies race-based trauma. Write a brief biography of their career and within it discuss their key ideas for dealing with racial trauma.



W. E. B. DuBois
Photo: Wikipedia

HISTORY

- Compare and contrast the modern Black Lives Matter protests with the American Civil Rights protests of the 1960s. What are some similarities and differences?

HEALTH

- Research a respected leader in mental health research. Find and summarize one of their writings on dealing with anxiety.

ARTS

- What are the themes of Cadence Weapon's song? In what ways don't we see 'eye to eye'? Create a visual representation of this conflict.
- Prepare a dramatic reading of the lyrics of either song.
- Create an interpretative dance that represents either Cadence Weapon's or Haviiah Mighty's lyrics. Share a brief explanation of your process in developing the dance.



Still, "Protest" Official Music Video.
Photo: YouTube



LINKS AND RESOURCES

[Official Music Video, “Eye to Eye”](#)

[Official Music Video, “Protest”](#)

[How Haviiah Mighty’s ‘Protest’ Keeps 2020’s BLM Demonstrations Alive](#) (Rolling Stone, 2021)

[Haviiah Mighty Unleashes Powerful Black Lives Matter “Protest” Video](#) (Complex Canada, 2021)



APPENDIX 1

EYE TO EYE

LYRICS

[INTRO]

Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, yeah

[VERSE 1]

I play ball like a prospect, they still look at me like a suspect
Look at me, they see conflict, look at me, they think combat
Got a contract off a Compaq, got a contract off my concepts
Look at me with such contempt, squint like they need contacts
See me, they see the wrong path
Stare down, they're scared now, officer, they wanna call now
In the park now, in the dark now, they watch the way I walk now
Don't really wanna talk now, wanna see me on lockdown
Yeah

[CHORUS]

Thank God I made it home today
If I walked another block, mighta gotten blown away
I don't think I'd be surprised, these things happen every day
Nowadays, eye for an eye, I don't know just what to say, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, yeah



[VERSE 2]

I worked all my life for this, tried to fit in
Tried to get in where I fit in 'cause the skin I'm in
Got two minds that I live with, double consciousness
Wear a big grin on the outside, but it's pain within
Hope things start getting better when the change begins
Both sides stay under pressure, but we live different
Thin line between the victim and the witness
I feel it from a distance, feeling defenseless
Damn

[CHORUS]

Thank God I made it home today
If I walked another block, mighta gotten blown away
I don't think I'd be surprised, these things happen every day
Nowadays, eye for an eye, I don't know just what to say, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, no, we don't see eye to eye, yeah
Don't see eye to eye, yeah



APPENDIX 2

PROTEST LYRICS

VERSE 1 (HAVIAH MIGHTY)

Y'all need to broaden your scope
Picture you got darker skin and broaden your nose
I be sick when I be thinking 'bout the trauma we know
This shit is scripted, watch the drama unfold
You hear them sirens, that's the sound of the law
They say be silent with they hands on your jaw
They say you violent, but they act like they God
They want submission
They'll let your ass get ravaged by dogs
'Cause there's a system, and my black ass just don't fit in
Oh I get it
Shit is a race game, and this game is hopeless
From the 60s they displaced the Scotians
Back then they made slave patrol and night watches, they became the roaches
Immigrants said this gate is open
Did the whole mile, an inch came the closest
So I walk with this strange emotion
In my head, 'cause this braid is ropes and chains
I don't feel safe in the 6ix or Peel
Bwoi pon the strip like a 6 course meal
And I ain't tryna get caught up
But I would never flip, I don't need no deal
I never straddle the devil
If it's hot I don't handle the kettle
They might hang you or shoot you, whatever

[BRIDGE]

Boi pon di right so mi go left
'Cause if dem nuh see me den it's no stress
Weight is on my back, I'm getting no rest
Better see the man dem at the protest
They say I'm a waste but I'm focused
Blizzard in the way, it's the coldest year
When you see us, play like you don't notice
I just pray the boi dem never roll up