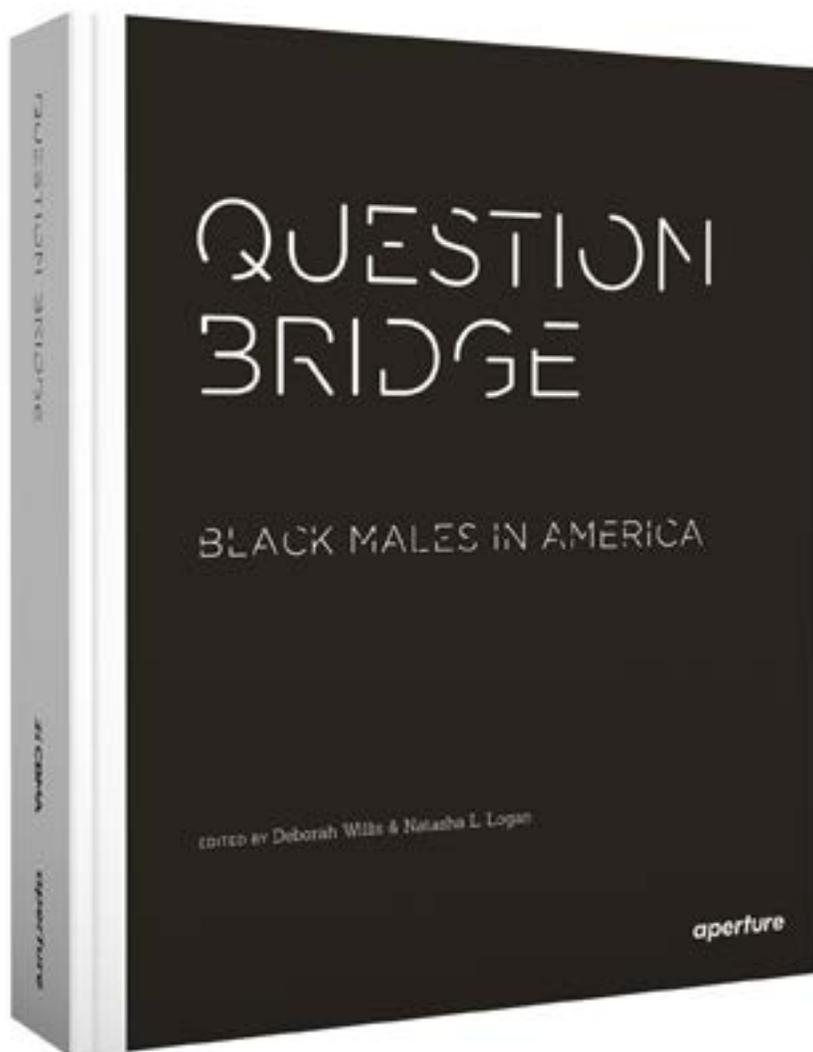


This resource is intended to inform educators about Aperture's publication

Question Bridge: Black Males in America

and aid them in leading meaningful discussion surrounding its content.

HIGH SCHOOL AND UP



***“Question Bridge harnesses the magnetic power of art to create a tool that forges connection and catalyzes conversation.”
—Kamal Sinclair***

Question Bridge: Black Males in America

This learning guide is intended to inform educators about Aperture's publication *Question Bridge: Black Males in America*, and aid them in leading meaningful discussions surrounding its content. *Question Bridge: Black Males in America* serves as a physical record of and accompaniment to the Question Bridge transmedia project, which originated as a video-recorded question-and-answer exchange designed to explore issues within the African American male demographic. The publication is an important resource, concretely grounding the critical conversations between black men about pressing contemporary issues, and can be used as a tool in classrooms to stimulate candid dialogue about race and gender identities in America.

While the subject of this particular book is black males and their ideas about and experiences of race and gender, *Question Bridge* can be utilized as a model to explore the identity and socioeconomic issues of any demographic (Question Bridge Curriculum). Most critically, the project asks: How can we start to dismantle the myths and misconceptions that have evolved around race and gender in America? How can we work to reset and disrupt the existing narrative?

The democratic nature of the Question Bridge video project is a crucial aspect of its effectiveness as a platform. The simple yet profound process of videotaping people asking and answering questions creates a safe, nonjudgmental space where participants feel comfortable posing and responding to questions in a way that they might not have otherwise. When watching the video installation and reading the questions and answers presented within the book, one becomes immediately cognizant of the diversity of perspectives and the spectrum of consciousness within the demographic of black males.

Educators have used the Question Bridge curriculum, along with *Question Bridge: Black Males in America*, with students in high school and up.

The Question Bridge online curriculum contains in-depth lesson plans, essential questions, activities, and resources that supplement the question-and-answer sequences found in Question Bridge: Black Males in America as well as the Question Bridge video project. To access these additional educational resources, visit <http://questionbridge.com/educators/curriculum>

Join the Question Bridge conversation!
Download the Question Bridge: Black Males app from the iTunes store to participate in the dialogue.

Supporting Essays

The eight supporting essays found at the beginning and end of the book serve to contextualize the body of work within our contemporary social climate, and can be utilized by educators to connect the Question Bridge project to current events, as well as to overarching themes relating to identity and representation. Below each essay title, you'll find relevant topics for discussion.

Foreword by Ambassador Andrew Young, p. 8

- Examine advocacy and activism movements for black males throughout American history.
- Read “The Nation’s Problem” speech by Frederick Douglass (1889) and discuss connections to present-day issues.

Preface by Jesse Williams, p. 14

- Consider the mainstream media’s representation of black males in movies, TV, magazines, and other media outlets. What stereotypes do you notice?
- Ask your students: Does the media inform and/or influence racial dynamics? If so, how?
- Consider methods for changing the media’s “status quo” dialogue. Ask your students: How can we work toward altering the media’s reductive representation of black males?

Introduction by Chris Johnson, p. 16

- Discuss the evolution of the Question Bridge project and how art can be used as social activism.
- Explore the value and importance of asking questions presented by Chris Johnson on page 16.
- Discuss the Question Bridge team’s decision to focus on black males specifically. How did focusing on a single gender affect the outcome of their project?

“Reflecting B(l)ack,” by Hank Willis Thomas, p. 236

- Discuss pertinent statistics (pp. 236–237) and how they shape our current social climate.
- Consider the importance of creating multifaceted, self-determined representations of identity.

“The Conversation,” by Bayeté Ross Smith, p. 242

- Consider how Question Bridge can be used as a case study that can be applied to other demographics, or universally.

“What are the Parameters of Identity?” by Kamal Sinclair, p. 246

- Explore twentieth-century versus present-day conceptions of identity as presented by Kamal Sinclair on pages 247–249. How have conceptions of identity changed over time? How have they stayed the same?
- How are current models of categorizing identity limiting for individuals and/or demographics?

“Reflection,” by Delroy Lindo, p. 250

- Reflect on the historical pattern of the killing of unarmed black men by armed assailants (mentioned in Question Bridge: Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Oscar Grant, Eric Garner, Sean Bell, Amadou Diallo, Tony Robinson). Talk about recent events and the national conversation that has ensued.

“#Blacklivesmatter,” by Rashid Shabazz, p. 256

- Ask your students: When you hear “Black Lives Matter,” what is the first thing that comes into your mind?
- Discuss the Black Lives Matter movement: its manifesto, its objectives, and its connection to the Question Bridge project.
- Consider racial stereotypes and biases, and their role in our current social climate.

Question & Answer Sequences

Within the book, on pages 24–235, curated question-and-answer sequences from the video project are grouped thematically into six chapters: “Identity”; “Education, Community, & Family”; “Relationships & Sexuality”; “History & Politics”; “Representation & Media”; and “Last Word.”

A crucial aspect of the presentation of the question-and-answer sequences in both the Question Bridge book and the video installation is that the questions and responses stand on their own. Formulated by black males and addressed to black males, the questions and their answers remain open to interpretation rather than being contextualized by an authoritative narrator that tells the viewer/reader what to think (*Question Bridge*, p. 243).

The questions range from comic to sublimely philosophical, and the answers candidly address different issues surrounding black male identity. For each question posed, the transcriptions of several responses are shown alongside portraits from the Question Bridge video project. This format, which juxtaposes different points of view and acknowledges each participant’s unique frame of reference, accentuates the diversity of perspectives and can serve as a basis to stimulate dialogue, leaving room for students’ distinctive points of view.

You can use the question-and-answer sequences within the book to spark valuable discussions with your students. Below, you’ll find an introduction to the themes explored within each chapter, and selected questions from the book. Begin an open-ended dialogue about the questions posed by the participants in the book, and then read the wide spectrum of responses to take the discussion further.

1. Identity

The “Identity” chapter offers the opportunity to discuss the different frameworks for defining identity, in addition to how and why identity is constructed.

Lonnie Graham (p. 53)

“Why is it so difficult for black American men in this culture to be themselves, their essential selves, and remain who they truly are?”

Lolis Eric Elie (p. 59)

“I’m trying to figure out the parameters of blackness. I know the stuff that I’m supposed to believe and read and listen to and look at if I’m definitely going to be black, like in the heart of blackness. But I keep wondering—suppose, for example, I prefer to listen to classical music or to travel to places where there are no black people or I like Picasso maybe even more than I like Romare Bearden or Jacob Lawrence. Am I still black? How do we figure out where these boundaries are, if we want to be part of this community?”

2. Education, Community, & Family

The “Education, Community, & Family” chapter sets the stage for a rich dialogue about the wealth and education gaps, and their intersection with individuals’ identity and their communities.

Omarr Flood (p. 65)

“This is for the brothers that go to school, that have been to college, have degrees, possibly have well-paying jobs. What makes you better than a brother who came from poverty, who stands on a street corner, or who works a garbage-man job or a job that’s not making as much as you? What makes you better?”

Anthony Trochez (p. 79)

“Growing up, I’ve seen black people who’ve made it out—either financially or educationally change who they are. So my question is, how has your financial or educational success compromised who you feel that you are on the inside for what you feel that people want you to be?”

3. Relationships & Sexuality

The “Relationships & Sexuality” chapter can be used to start a dialogue about experiences of sexual identity as it relates to and intersects with racial identity.

Ronald Porter (p. 125)

“So this question is for all the black gay men that are out there, and I’m not talking about the ones on the DL, or the ones that don’t identify, but ones that are open and honest about their sexuality. How do you really feel about yourself? Are you frightened about living openly in this country? What do you do in order to survive as a full human being?”

4. History & Politics

The “History & Politics” chapter provides the scaffolding to start a conversation with your students on the relationship between our country’s history of black oppression and the political climate in the United States as it relates to contemporary experiences.

Tony Snow (p. 153)

“As a black man in America, do you feel free? I guess it’s true that the Fourteenth Amendment gave us legal freedom, but as a black man in America, do you really feel free—when you’re dealing with the economic restraints, and also the mental restraints that are placed upon you?”

5. Representation & Media

The “Representation & Media” chapter presents an opportunity to have a dialogue with your students surrounding stereotypes and monolithic representations of race in the media.

Eternal Polk (p. 169)

“This may seem like a silly question, but I want to know. Am I the only one who has problems eating chicken, watermelon, and bananas in front of white people?”

Anthony Trochez (p. 187)

“How does black media representation affect you?”

Shaun Chapital (p. 197)

“This question is to you, the member of the older generation. The older culture seems to focus on a lot of negative—or what they perceive as negative—aspects of our culture, whether it be the dress, the music, things of that nature. If you took a step back, would you really say that this is the problem? Is it the music? Is it the clothing? Is that the problem? Or is it a bigger problem that maybe starts in your generation?”

6. Last Word

The question and answer sequences found in the “Last Word” chapter are centered on advice, inspiration, and overarching, existential questions. They can be used to start a deep dialogue reflecting on personal experiences.

Anthony Vaughn (p. 214)

“I try to live good, but I’m surrounded by bad. I want to know what it is I could do to be better and live peaceful, surrounded by all evil. How can I do that?”

Key Vocabulary

Assumption (noun): something taken for granted; a supposition; the act of taking for granted or supposing.

Attribute (noun): a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something.

Bias (noun): a particular tendency or inclination, especially one that prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question; prejudice.

Commonality (noun): a sharing of features or characteristics in common; possession or manifestation of common attributes.

Community (noun): 1. a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, and often have common cultural and historical heritage; 2. a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists.

Culture (noun): the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc.; the predominating attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group or organization.

Decode (verb): 1. to translate (data or a message) from a code into the original language or form; 2. to extract meaning from (spoken or written symbols).

Demographic (noun): the statistical data of a population, especially those showing average age, income, education, etc.

Dialogue (noun): 1. conversation between two or more persons; 2. the conversation between characters in a novel, drama, etc.; 3. an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, especially a political or religious issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.

Disparity (noun): lack of similarity or equality; inequality; difference.

Diversity (noun): difference; unlikeness; variety; multiformity; a point of difference.

Encode (verb): to convert (a message, information, etc.) into code.

Identity (noun): the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another; condition or character as to who a person or what a thing is.

Justice (noun): righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness; rightfulness or lawfulness; the moral principle determining just conduct.

Misconception (noun): an erroneous conception; mistaken notion.

Monolithic (adjective): having a uniform, massive, or inflexible quality or character.

Multi-faceted (adjective): having many aspects or phases.

Norm (noun): an established standard of behavior shared by members of a social group to which each member is expected to conform.

Perception (noun): the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.

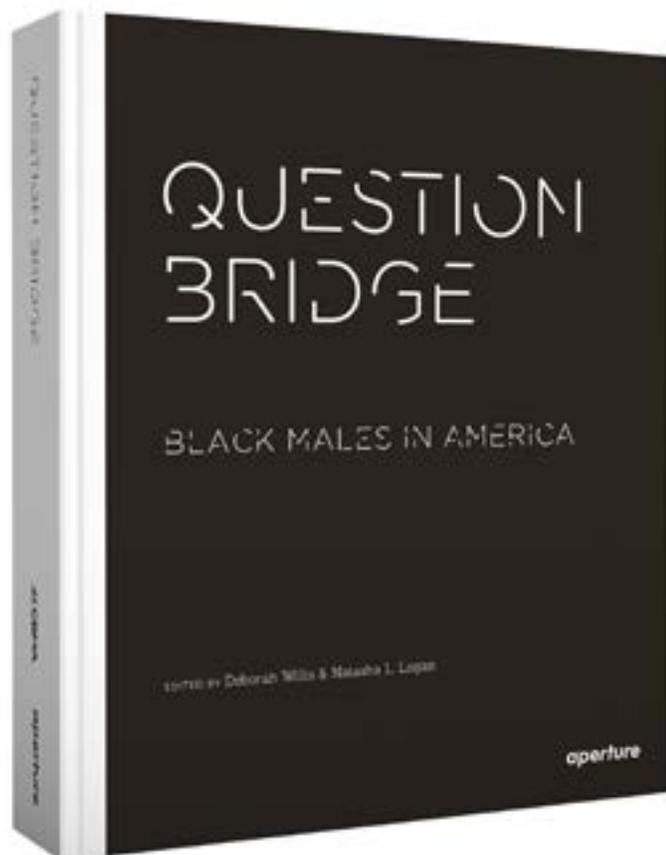
Prejudice (noun): an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason; any preconceived opinion or feeling, either favorable or unfavorable; unreasonable feelings, opinions, or attitudes, especially of a hostile nature, regarding a racial, religious, or national group.

Representation (noun): the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way.

Socialization (noun): a continuous process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns.

Stereotype (noun): a set of inaccurate, simplistic generalizations about a group that allows others to categorize them and treat them accordingly.

Sources: Question Bridge curriculum, Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English, and Dictionary.com



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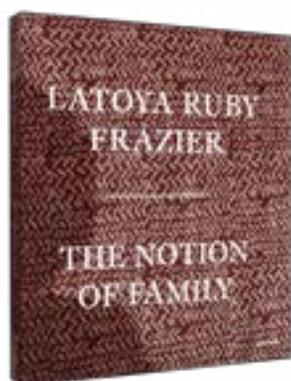
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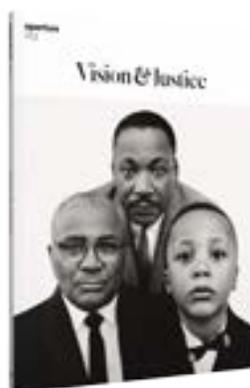
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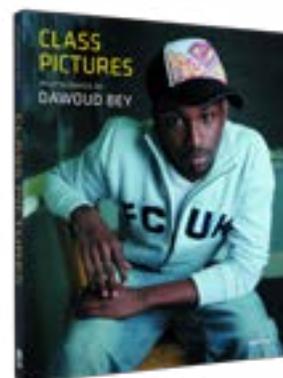
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