

**History Grows in Oakland**

**Teaching American History in  
an Urban School District**

**LESSON  
STUDY**

*A Teaching American History Project of the Oakland Unified School District*

## **“TEACHERS AT THE CENTER: LESSON STUDY\* AND THE TEACHING OF AMERICAN HISTORY”**

A conference sponsored by the  
Oakland Unified School District  
Teaching American History Grant  
and  
The University of California, Berkeley  
History-Social Science Project

Saturday, May 20  
9 AM - 2 PM  
370G Dwinelle Hall  
University of California, Berkeley  
(conference highlights on following pages)

For more information and registration please go to the  
Oakland Unified Teaching American History Project website.

Register early as space is limited.  
[www.teachingamericanhistory.us](http://www.teachingamericanhistory.us)  
or call Stan Pesick at (510) 879-8497

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\* Lesson study is a process in which teachers jointly plan, observe, analyze, and refine actual classroom lessons called "research lessons."

## Speakers

### I. Catherine Lewis, Mills College

#### "Lesson Study: Teacher Led Instructional Improvement"

Catherine Lewis is a senior researcher at Mills College, in Oakland, California. Her writings and videotapes, including "A Lesson is Like a Swiftly Flowing River," and "Lesson Study: A Handbook of Teacher-Led Instructional Change," have introduced many U.S. educators to Lesson Study. Lesson study is a process in which teachers jointly plan, observe, analyze, and refine actual classroom lessons called "research lessons."

Below is a teacher comment included in "Lesson Study: A Handbook of Teacher-Led Instructional Change" (2002).

*"A lot of [American] schools develop mission statements, but we don't do anything with them. The mission statements get put in a drawer and then teachers become cynical because the mission statements don't go anywhere. Lesson study gives guts to a mission statement, makes it real, and brings it to life."*

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### II. Eric Foner, Columbia University

#### "American Freedom: Before and After 9/11"

Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, is one of this country's most prominent historians. Professor Foner's publications have concentrated on the intersections of intellectual, political and social history, and the history of American race relations. His books include: Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (1988) (winner, among other awards, of the Bancroft Prize, Parkman Prize, and Los Angeles Times Book Award); The Story of American Freedom (1998); and Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World (2002). Professor Foner is also a winner of the Great Teacher Award from the Society of Columbia Graduates.

Below is an excerpt from Professor Foner's article "Rethinking American History in a Post-9/11 World" (*History News Network* – September 6, 2004)

*"It is not the role of historians to instruct our fellow citizens on how they should think about our turbulent world. But it is our task to insist that the study of history should transcend boundaries rather than reinforcing or reproducing them. In the wake of September 11, it is all the more imperative that the history we teach must be a candid appraisal of our own society's strengths and weaknesses, not simply an exercise in self-celebration – a conversation with the entire world, not a complacent dialogue with ourselves."*

### **III. Teacher Participants – OUSD Teaching American History Grant “Developing the Eyes to See Students”**

Teachers in lesson study groups will discuss their lessons and engage conference attendees, using student work from their classrooms, in an analysis of student learning. Attendees will experience this portion of the lesson study process.

*5<sup>th</sup> grade strand* – Using the trial of John Peter Zenger to study freedom of expression and the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment. Presentations will include lessons that focus on

- using debate to help students develop a persuasive piece of writing
- identifying what reading strategies help students learn historical content
- using primary source documents (transcripts of the Zenger trial) with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students
- helping students understand the idea of freedom of expression – connecting past and present

*8<sup>th</sup> grade strand* – Using David Walker’s *Appeal* to study the abolitionist movement in antebellum America. Presentations will include lessons that focus on

- using primary sources - “A David Walker Murder Mystery”

*11<sup>th</sup> grade strand* – Using the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to study significant events in American history. Presentations will include lessons that focus on

- Plessy v. Ferguson
- Mexican-American repatriation during the 1930s

### **IV. Roundtables/Lunch/Closing Discussion – Project Teachers and Conference Attendees**

Lesson Study – Possibilities and Challenges

- What has been most useful?
- What has been most challenging?
- Ideas for implementation at schools, districts, and within other Teaching American history projects.