**Title of Lesson**: The “Wars” on Crime and Drugs: A Gateway to Mass Incarceration?

OH Social Studies Academic Electives Standard 2 & 3

**Grade Level**: 12

**Origins Article:** “From Harlem to Ferguson: LBJ’s War on Crime and America’s Prison Crisis”

<http://origins.osu.edu/article/harlem-ferguson-lbjs-war-crime-and-americas-prison-crisis>

**Author of Lesson:** Chelsea Ray

**Description:**

This lesson plan deals with the concept of mass incarceration. The specific focus of this lesson looks at what the current state of mass incarceration in America is, how it may have arrived at this state, and possible responses that have been or could be elicited. The Origins article I selected discusses the ties between the prison crisis in America and the declaration of the “war on crime”. This article successfully introduces the concept of mass incarceration in America, how legislation could have played a role in producing this crisis, and makes connections to the concept of “the new Jim Crow”. Once students have read this article and are introduced to these ideas in an introductory activity, they will be able to visit stations of primary and secondary sources to further investigate this issue. At each station, they will complete a handout with guiding questions in small groups. Stations include exploration of statistics about the current state of mass incarceration, excerpts from an article about Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* and the “war on drugs”, a TED Talk by Michelle Alexander, a compelling performance by Kendrick Lamar at the Grammys, and the Origins article and the “war on crime”. After this activity, a whole class discussion will synthesize ideas gathered from the sources and guiding questions from the stations activity. Students will discuss how mass incarceration impacts society and how the wars on crime and drugs have impacted mass incarceration in America. In the next activity, done either at home for homework or in the following class period, students will be given the opportunity to respond to what they have learned in a format of their choice. This could be to take action, to raise awareness, or to simply respond to the sources they viewed.

**Instructional Strategies:**

* Think, Pair, Share
* Stations
* Whole Class Discussion
* Student-Choice Response Activity

**Key Words:**

Incarceration, Justice, Disparities

**Materials:**

* PowerPoint Slides
* Think, Pair, Share Handout
* Stations Handout
* Stations Labels
* Response Activity Handout
* Sources Template: Origins Article, Statistics Images (6), *The New Jim Crow* Text, Kendrick Lamar’s 2016 Grammys Performance & Lyrics, “The future of race in America”