Abstract:

Taking form as equal parts historical-account, personal-narrative, and data-analysis projects, the following seventh grade curriculum unit serves as a means of exploring the role of the commerce as a dynamic, contemporary migration catalyst; a source of cultural arbitration; and a motivator for job migration, rather than worker migration.

In part, this unit asks students to consider American cultural imperialism through the lens of the used clothing trade in Africa. In larger part, this unit serves as a meditation on the changing shape of commercial influence and worker migration.

In the interest localizing the unit to Philadelphia, students will compare contemporary, mass-production textiles to the high-end specialty items produced in Philadelphia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ultimately, these lessons serve to scaffold students as they come to understand the role of immigration in the post-industrial world. This unit’s tacit conclusion emerges when students come to understand any nation’s need for a migrant-work-force population during periods of industrial growth. Philadelphia’s need for immigrant laborers served as microcosm of America’s need for the same. In contrasting turns, the student views the post-industrial world as a place where the work migrates toward the laborer, rather than demanding that the laborer migrate to the work.