

## Teaching the Conflicts

### Understanding Westward Expansion through the Roles played by African American Buffalo Soldiers in the U.S. Army

Learn about a new curriculum in the Santa Fe Public Schools that focuses on “teaching the conflicts.” Our special guest, Dr. Lois Rudnick, will discuss the three-week unit she has developed for 7th graders. In the case presented, the perspectives of Buffalo Soldiers, who were fighting for freedom and respect by helping to “civilize” the West through forced displacement of Native Americans onto reservations, differ dramatically from those of their chief adversaries in New Mexico, the Warm Spring Apaches, who were fighting to protect their freedom, their natal lands, and their way of life.

**Dr. Lois Rudnick** is a retired professor of American Studies who taught for 36 years at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. During that time, she worked with high school teachers locally, regionally, and nationally to create multicultural and interdisciplinary curricula in U.S. Studies.

#### *Class Assignment*

To gain some background on the conflicts between Native Americans and the Buffalo soldiers, read/watch the following:

- **Victorio’s War.** By Robert M. Utley, History Net. For one tribal leader, the decision to make war on the United States was a matter of rights and spirituality.  
<https://www.historynet.com/victorios-war.htm>
- **Buffalo soldier. United States military.** An overview of the buffalo soldiers. (2:18 min video and short article) Learn how buffalo soldiers fought on the American frontier and protected Yosemite and Sequoia national parks. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/buffalo-soldiers>
- **Buffalo Soldiers - Service on the Frontier.** (4:19 min) Two African American cavalry regiments, known as the Buffalo Soldiers, were positioned between Native Americans and European settlers and also worked on infrastructure for westward expansion. For Buffalo Soldiers, military service offered the opportunity for a better life, and a greater level of independence and respect for their rights not yet widely found in American society. National Park Service, Dec 17, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y13RwS95PIM>