

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) Lesson Plan
BLACK DIPLOMATS BREAK BARRIERS
First Class Citizens Abroad, Second Class Citizens At Home
Middle/High School Grades 6-12

This lesson plan features an episode from the PBS [American Experience](#) documentary series containing excerpts from the ADST oral history of Ambassador Terence A. Todman and the oral history of Ambassador Edward R. Dudley Jr., conducted by the Phelps Stokes Fund, made available through [adst.org](#)

Objective: Students will discover how three Black diplomats broke racial barriers at the U.S. Department of State during the Cold War and the fight for Civil Rights. Asked to represent the best of American ideals abroad while facing discrimination at home, they left a lasting impact on the Foreign Service. This lesson focuses on individual agency in the face of racial injustice, highlighting how these remarkable individuals demonstrate dignity and grit in the face of challenges through innovative solutions to policies within the system.

Supporting Questions:

- How did the recruitment and employment policies at the State Department before and after the Rogers Act change diversity, equity, and inclusion of African-Americans and other disadvantaged groups in the twentieth century?
- How did these Black diplomats challenge this unwritten system?
- How did these Black diplomats resist widespread cultural norms within the system?

Time Required: 1-3 class periods

Standards:

This unit is aligned with the following [C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#):

- **Civics:**

MS: D2.Civ.4.6-8. Explain the powers and limits of the three branches of government, public officials, and bureaucracies at different levels in the United States and in other countries.

D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

HS: D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic

principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

- **Geography:**

MS: D2.Geo.4.6-8. Explain how cultural patterns and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people in both nearby and distant places.

D2.Geo.7.6-8. Explain how changes in transportation and communication technology influence the spatial connections among human settlements and affect the diffusion of ideas and cultural practices.

HS: D2.Geo.5.9-12. Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.

D2.Geo.7.9-12. Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and the distribution of human population.

- **History:**

MS: D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

HS: D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

Background Information:

PBS' "The American Diplomat" explores the lives and legacies of three African-American ambassadors — Edward R. Dudley Jr., Terence A. Todman, and Carl T. Rowan — who pushed past historical and institutional racial barriers to reach high-ranking appointments in the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations. At the height of the civil rights movement in the United States, the three men were asked to represent the best of American ideals abroad while facing discrimination at home. Oft reputed as "pale, male, and Yale," the U.S. Department of State maintained and cultivated the Foreign Service's elitist character and was one of the last federal agencies to desegregate. Through rare archival footage, in-depth oral histories, and interviews with family members, colleagues, and diplomats, the film paints a portrait of three men who left a lasting impact on the content and character of the Foreign Service and changed American diplomacy forever.

The following activity builds upon the student's working knowledge of the Cold War and Civil Rights. Such reading and vocabulary help students to understand the concept of diplomacy and its key vocabulary.

Resources:

PBS' American Experience: "The American Diplomat" (running time: 56 min.)

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) Oral History Excerpts:

- Ambassador Edward R. Dudley Jr. (Phelps Stokes Fund)
- Ambassador Terence A. Todman

Lesson:

1. **Background:** What do students know about the Foreign Service? How does someone become a diplomat? What do diplomats do?

Suggested resources:

- a. [Changing the World: Joining the Foreign Service](#)
 - b. [How do you become a diplomat?](#)
 - c. Review [The Rogers Act of 1924](#)
2. Look over the **diplomatic vocabulary** prior to viewing the video (See attached worksheet).

3. **Setting the stage:** These diplomats' experiences span the Truman to Reagan administrations. Discuss as a class: What were key historical events during each of these administrations, both in the U.S. and around the world?

- a. Truman
- b. Eisenhower
- c. Kennedy
- d. Johnson
- e. Nixon
- f. Ford
- g. Reagan

4. Either in small groups or as a class, have students locate on a world map the countries of the "Negro Circuit" as well as the cities to which Black diplomats were later assigned (Monrovia, Ponta Delgada, and Madagascar).

5. View the PBS *American Experience* Documentary: ["The American Diplomat"](#)

6. Share the ADST Oral History Excerpts for Ambassadors Dudley and Todman in small groups to read together, or as homework, and answer the discussion questions that follow.

7. **Extension:** Have students research other [famous Black diplomats](#), both before this time period, and after the years that Ambassadors Dudley and Todman served (i.e. Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, Linda Thomas Greenfield, etc.). Create a poster or presentation of the Black Diplomat who most inspired you. Evaluate how this person demonstrates dignity and grit in the face of challenges through innovation, resistance, or legal actions.

Name _____

Date: _____

**Black Diplomats Break Barriers
Vocabulary Sheet:**

Please define the following vocabulary words found in the oral histories and video:

1. **Diplomat:**

2. **Foreign Service Officer**

3. **Ambassador (Amb.):**

4. **Deputy Chief of Mission:**

5. **Post or Posting:**

6. **The Foreign Service:**

7. **The Negro Circuit:**

Post-Video & Readings

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. **How were diplomats hired before the Rogers Act?**
2. **What did the Rogers Act of 1924 do for the U.S Diplomatic Corps?**
3. **Who was president when Amb. Todman was hired?**
4. **Who was president when Amb. Dudley was hired?**
5. **What careers did each man have before they joined the Foreign Service?**
6. **How did Amb. Todman change the dining situation at the Foreign Service Institute? What challenges did he face? What was the outcome?**
7. **How did Amb. Dudley change the assignments that Black diplomats received? What challenges did he face? What was the outcome?**
8. **How did Amb. Todman support other Black diplomats to be successful?**
9. **Why was it advantageous for the United States to have Black diplomats serve abroad generally, and during the Cold War when both Ambassadors Dudley and Todman served?**
10. **How was each man perceived abroad by the local inhabitants of the new country when he became ambassador?**
11. **What did each man say was their proudest accomplishment as diplomats?**
12. **Can you identify any rules/customs within your school, community, local, or national government that you feel are unfair and would like to change? How might you go about creating change within that organization?**

Excerpt from the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) Oral History of Ambassador Terence A. Todman

(Interviewed by: Michael Krenn, Initial interview date: June 13, 1995):

Q: I came across a number of State Department documents, all the way from the 1940s, all the way, really, up into the 1960s talking about where the State Department could and could not send black Americans to serve, because of the country's practices and so forth. One of the areas that they seemed very tense about, was sending black Americans to Arabic nations. Did you find any problem?

TODMAN: Absolutely not! I am prepared to say that that business about not being able to send blacks was purely concocted within the State Department; it was made out of whole cloth. It was a total lie. I never found in any of the places that I went to that there was any question of any resentment or anything. The only question that people ever had, and you would get this as they got to talk to you, you would feel some doubt: "Does this person have the influence with his own country, to be able to get for us what we need?" But as far as color, as far as any of those other things were concerned--zero. The problem has been, and is, in the United States of America. The only opposition that I ever found, anywhere, has been from Americans. I found it in Costa Rica: Americans, only Americans. In Spain: Americans, only Americans. In the Arab world? Not a hint, absolutely not a hint of it. And the Arab world would be the last place. You go through the Arab world and how many blacks do you find? And you find them doing everything. You find them in positions of importance, in their own country and they're all over. So, this was a story concocted by Americans to keep from doing these things. It's damned nonsense.

Q: Well, that certainly goes along with what I've heard from fellow ambassadors. That all of these that were sort of set aside as "Can't send blacks there can't send blacks there..."

TODMAN: Nonsense, Nonsense! And the business of sending blacks to Africa is one of the worst. Because, again, the African countries are looking for the same thing any other country is: what influence does this guy have? And when you're up on the ambassadorial level, they want to know about that. Many people assume that the ambassador can pick up the phone and talk to the president and get something done. And it's one of the reasons, quite frankly, why in many places a political appointee is much preferred. Because they assume if this guy isn't career, yet the president picked and sent him here, he must be a buddy. And if anything happens he can..."Hey, Prez," and it's done. That's what a country is looking for. They're looking for a channel of direct communication and a person of influence. So, that's the only thing and that has nothing to do with color. And I think, frankly, that the career people are at a slight disadvantage in this, in terms of what the countries would like, because of their perception that the instrument of influence would be more a political than a career. But that's the only place where it exists. And the business about racial preference, absolutely not!

This is a continuation of an interview with Ambassador Terence Todman. Today is June 27 [1995.] The interview is once again being conducted by Michael Krenn and once again at Ambassador Todman's residence in Tampa. You mentioned that you had a couple of points from your earlier career that you'd like to start our interview off with today. So, why don't we go back and pick up those points and then we'll come back to the point where we left off the last interview.

TODMAN: Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. The first one concerns actually the arrangement for meals, the possibility for black Americans to be able to eat in the State Department cafeteria. This was in 1957. The State Department had just established a Foreign Service Institute over in, I think it was Rosslyn, Virginia. And the courses, the introductory courses on countries, for people who were going overseas were held there. When I was assigned to go to New Delhi, I therefore had to attend courses over at the Foreign Service Institute. When I got there, I discovered that the only thing they had for any meal arrangement was a very small coffee shop where you could basically get some coffee cake and some coffee, tea or whatever. And at lunchtime, all of the white officers went across the street to a regular Virginia restaurant and had their meals.

On my first day, when I went to the coffee shop and saw there were no eating facilities, I asked where I could have lunch. They said they were sorry, this was all they had. And I said, "Well, I'm accustomed to a good warm lunch at midday and I'd like to be able to do that, so how can we work that out?" I said I was willing to go into town across the bridge, if that were necessary, but it meant that I couldn't go and get back in time for the class. So we would have had to adjust the class schedule. Or they would have to find some place where all State Department people could eat. They regretted that they were in Virginia, and the laws of Virginia didn't allow blacks and whites to eat together and they had no control over the policies of the restaurant, it was privately owned and run. I said, well, no one forced them to move there. There were other places they could have gone where this would not have been a problem. And this got to be a major issue. It went up to the Under Secretary for Management. They said, people had gone there before I had and no one else had complained, they had just managed to get by on it, they had taken it. I said, that's fine, they took it, but I'm not going to and so we need to work something out.

The outcome of this, after a lot of unhappiness on the part of many people, was that the State Department leased a half of the restaurant and a partition was put up. The same kitchen was used, the same waiters, but one half belonged to the State Department, or was leased by it and the other half was a regular private restaurant. And so we were able to go over to the State Department leased part and have lunch there. And you ran into ridiculous situations where one side would get full and then overflow into the other. But basically the State Department recognized that it had to make provisions of an equal nature for all its employees. And eventually, of course, with the changes, then the restaurant gradually became integrated in fact, because people were moving back and forth. As I said, the same kitchen, the same waitresses, and so the matter was resolved. But I was considered a troublemaker, and that was all right. But it was an important

change for everyone else who went to the Institute after that, to know that things were being done properly.

Source: [Ambassador Terence A. Todman Oral History, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training \(ADST\)](#)

Excerpt from the Oral History of Ambassador Edward R. Dudley Jr., conducted by the Phelps Stokes Fund, made available through [adst.org](#)
(Interviewed by: Celestine Tutt, Initial interview date: April 3, 1981):

Q: How were you perceived by your peers, that is, other U.S. ambassadors, since you were the first black ambassador?

DUDLEY: In many instances, in a small country such as I've just described, with relief that you are going to be the one who's going to be out front and take the brunt and make the speeches and do the work, in that sense. On the other hand, there is very little difference in how you are treated, because if you get a change in status during an assignment, as I did, you've already, number one, established the position of yourself and your government and made the kind of contacts that you need, and this does not change. You get congratulatory messages and that kind of thing, but I do not, again, believe that the substance of the relationship is changed to any degree.

Q: As a Black American or an ambassador of color, do you feel that you suffered any hardships or difficulties in these positions because of your color?

DUDLEY: I don't think so. There are two schools of thought on this. There's one that Black Americans should not be sent as Chiefs of Mission, and I'm talking about at that particular time, and that was because it was felt, and, mistakenly I think, by the people in the country to which you were sent that the treatment of Americans of color was such that they would not be in a position to give maximum effect to the needs of the country to which you were assigned. In other words, they didn't think that the Black American was sufficiently high on the totem pole in order to get them loans at the bank if they needed them, to get them the trade contracts that they needed, because at that time they were not able to see visible blacks in positions of power in this country. Now there is another school of thought also that blacks in countries of their own racial origins, and this would be true of Latins too, that they would quickly make more friends and therefore get that country more on the side of the United States, so to speak, quicker than if someone else went who was a total stranger to these kind of people. I don't know whether I'm making myself clear or not, but I think Kissinger, who was in the Middle East, was able to take some of the fears that Israel might have had very quickly, than if he had been, say, Caucasian from the South, or even a black. Now obviously we can't base our representation on that and we shouldn't, but this has something to do because it does come up, and it's up to us to determine which is the best. I think we should send people irrespective of their race, creed or color. But I recognize that sometimes if you send a woman into a place -- let's say, into a conference or something -- or send a young fellow rather than a senior citizen, you may be doing something that's very

carefully done and the only way you can do it is when you have the power of appointment. You certainly can't be part of any merit system. If we all had to take an examination, let's say, as to who would go down and run the railroad and the first ten people who came out on that list would go down and run the railroad despite whether they were coal 15 miners or this or that or the other. And that's the way our country's moving, and that's the way I think it should move. But since you asked me these questions, I must tell you that you have that attitude in some countries and we have to face it. We are facing it in this country today because of what the Arab nations have done with respect to the Jews. They have absolutely refused in many areas to permit the Jews to come in, in many of the work capacities there. And, of course, this is wrong because they have gone too far in this kind of thing. But we don't have a large Arab population here, educated and part of our government and what not. My point here is that if we did, there would be nothing wrong, as we have just done, in sending one of Mexican background to Mexico. But I don't advocate that. I'm not advocating that. Because if I did that, they would say there's no point in sending any blacks to Europe. I want you to understand in what context I'm making this statement. But it is something that creates discussion and has to be dealt with. And we dealt with it there and in our discussion with the people of those governments. We give them the American point of view, that we're a democracy and that we believe that everyone is entitled to an inalienable right to his place in the sun. And we talk about equality and what it means; and we talk in terms of our own laws which say that we cannot do certain things if they're based on religion or race or national origin, and so forth and so on. But you still have to deal with the problem.

Q: Do you feel that you enjoyed any special advantages being a black ambassador in a black country?

DUDLEY: I think so. Just as here in this country affirmative action has pushed some blacks to the top, certainly in private industry, probably faster than they would have gotten. Not fast enough because we've been a couple of hundred years when nobody was permitted into these sacred portals. But on the other hand, if ten persons come out of Harvard University and one's a black man, I can tell you now that black man will get a real top job because he is black. It goes back right here to the so-called token woman and that kind of thing, so there are those kinds of advantage. On the other hand, if you're dealing with white America you run into all kinds of things. I used to come back here on consultations and invariably I would be moving around in a circle with nothing but white people. I'd be introduced as Ambassador to Liberia, and none of them would ever hear that because they would turn to me and ask me, "How do you like our country?" -- talking about America -- and so forth and so on. You always get this sort of thing, because the fact of the matter was they could never conceive that a black man could ever be an ambassador. So when someone is talking about this, they don't hear that -- that you're the American Ambassador. In fact, they just simply introduce you as Ambassador to Liberia, but they don't hear that. They think you're from there; they miss that. "Oh, I misunderstood," they'd say. I've had that happen any number of times, so I think there are advantages there. 16 There was no particular advantage to us in having me at that time in Liberia, because, as I will point out to you at some time in our

discussion, for years only blacks had been sent there and this was not breaking any new ground at all. In fact, it would have been breaking some new ground if I had been sent to Romania, Barbados or Spain or someplace. So from that point of view, there was no advantage to us. It was an advantage to me personally. It certainly was a boost, an ego trip for me in my own career, obviously, to become United States ambassador anywhere. So I was extremely pleased for the opportunity, but that's about the only real advantage that I could see.

Q: Judge Dudley, you've mentioned that for many years only blacks had been sent, or just about only, had been sent to a black area. Before we formally started the interview you discussed a document, a study that you had carried out of blacks in the Foreign Service. Would you like to talk about that now or hold it to another session?

DUDLEY: Well, I think we could talk about it briefly now and describe it. And what I'm going to do and while I can't put it all on tape, I'm going to get you a copy of this memorandum of mine and give it to you for whatever purpose that you may see fit to use it. In fact, shortly after I arrived in Liberia, where we had a white charge d'affaires, since the previous minister had left the country. I found that a very unhappy situation existed in that the leading black Foreign Service officer there had never had the opportunity of serving anywhere else in the world, despite the fact that it was a policy of our State Department to rotate Foreign Service officers about every two years, and in four and five different posts for various reasons. Number one, it was felt that you would get a better prepared and more well-rounded Foreign Service officer if you gave him this kind of varied experience. And number two, it would certainly assist him in his own career in moving up a very tight ladder which they call the FSO's.

There is the elite corps of the State Department, the Foreign Service officer, and that's different from the other career services there. These are the so-called professional diplomats and the corps from which they are drawn. Despite the fact that we had scores of black people -- men and women -- in both the Foreign Service Officer corps and in the other areas of government such as secretaries, clerks, other people, none had ever gotten outside of a little triumvirate there that we called Monrovia, Ponta Delgada and Madagascar -- all black, hardship, disagreeable posts. This had been going on for year after year after year, after year. Some very brilliant people among the blacks wound up in the Foreign Service. I am reminded of one man by the name of Rupert Lloyd, a graduate of Williams College, who had been serving in the Foreign Service when I got there at Monrovia for almost ten years. Another fellow, William George, who had just moved over to one of the other hardship posts, but his brother was still there, John George. There had been one woman they told me who had been there for almost twenty-five years. She'd gone when I got there. Another one for 17 seventeen years. So I decided to check into it and I got the staff to prepare some research on it, and I did some myself. We put together a memorandum which was a statement documenting every black in the Foreign Service over a long period of years: where they were; when they came into the service; how long they had been in; and, the fact that they had never been transferred. And next to that we added a class of white Foreign Service officers that we took from the register who came in at the same time as Rupert Lloyd came in

and we showed where they had been. In every instance, they had had four, five, six transfers and had been in three, four and five different posts throughout the world, and very few hardship posts.

Well, right away you would know that there was something wrong and it didn't take a Philadelphia lawyer to tell me that something was wrong because my entire background had been with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and I knew exactly what to do. We documented this case and on one of my trips to Washington I asked for an audience with the Under Secretary of State, a man by the name of John Peurifoy. I went to see Mr. Peurifoy and I gave him a copy of my memorandum and sat in his office while he read it. And he was visibly disturbed and asked me what I intended to do with it. My response was that I was bringing it to his attention because it was his responsibility to correct what was not only an unwholesome situation but, in my judgment, an illegal situation since the Foreign Service Act had indicated that discrimination of this kind was not to be permitted. Mr. Peurifoy suggested that I leave the memorandum with him, which I was glad to do since I had copies of it, and that he would get in touch with me. In about a few days I went back to Africa and resumed my mission work and, sure enough, within six months time, transfers came through and the number one Foreign Service officer was sent to Paris, France: Rupert Lloyd. And this is the first time that a black Foreign Service officer had ever served in Europe. A second Foreign Service officer, Hanson, was sent to Zurich, Switzerland, and a young lady of great talent was sent to Rome, Italy. They even cleared my code clerk -- a fellow by the name of Mebane -- out and he was sent to London, England, and they moved the people out so fast that the Liberians complained and said, "What's happening?" I think we could stop here and having introduced this topic and introduced the fact that there was a satisfactory conclusion, and in my judgment this was probably one of the more important things that I did the whole time I was there, not so much between the relations of Liberia and the United States, but for black Americans. We think we opened the door and stopped this kind of discrimination.

Source: [Ambassador Richard E. Dudley Jr. Oral History, Phelps Stokes Fund, made available through the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training \(ADST\)](#)

A later interview conducted with Amb. Dudley in 1995 is also available [here](#).