



Walter Williams: Economist of Liberty

Opening Questions

*These questions should be given to students for either group discussion or individual responses **before** they have been presented with the story of Walter Williams's life. After the presentation, students can be asked to reconsider their original answers.*

What is economics? What kind of work does an economist do?

How would you define “freedom” or “liberty”? What do these concepts actually look like in real life? What does it mean to “be free,” “have liberty,” or “live in a free society”?

What makes an arrangement “fair”? What does it mean, for instance, to get a “fair deal” or to “play fair”? What makes the rules that govern a society “fair” to all involved?

What’s the hardest job you’ve ever worked? What made it difficult? Do you think you were fairly compensated for it, either with money, experience, or some other reward?

To what extent is persistent racial inequality a problem in our society? What aspects of life are unequal, and which racial groups are most affected? What causes this inequality?

Why does socioeconomic inequality exist? Why do some people have more money, resources, and opportunities than others? Which methods of decreasing socioeconomic inequality actually work? Are some forms of inequality ever acceptable?

When is it moral to take money from someone and give it to another person or group? When is it immoral? What people or institutions should have the power to reallocate wealth?

What are capitalism and socialism? What is libertarianism? Try to define these terms as best you can without looking them up (yet). If you have no idea, give your best guess!

When did you change your mind about an important issue? Why and how did this happen?