--What Would Abe Do?  
-Race and the Brownsville Affair

A) Connection to High School Curriculum:  
The life of Abraham Lincoln generally falls outside the High School Curriculum for many states. My state, Ohio begins the high school history curriculum in 1877. His legacy can be an important way to view the rise of racial intolerance and the era of Jim Crow. The Brownsville Affair in 1906 and the Political fall out provide teachers a useful tool to examine the Lincoln Legacy as it was being re-interpreted in the Jim Crow Era.

B) Goal of Lesson:  
Students gain an understanding and appreciation for the words and legacy of Abraham Lincoln. Students gain an appreciation for the effects of social changes and attitudes toward the rights of African Americans in the early 20th century.

C) Objectives:  
1) Students read Lincoln’s words and compare and contrast with the words of Senators Foraker and Tillman bearing in mind regional differences.  
2) Students see the events of the Brownsville Affair as an example rising tide of racial intolerance during the Jim Crow Era.  
3) Students look at regional differences toward race.  
4) Students discuss how Abraham Lincoln might have handled the Brownsville Affair differently.

*Tips for teachers:  
- The events surrounding the Brownsville Affair show regional differences and attitudes toward race from 1865-1906.  
- Students enjoy “What if” assignments; use journaling or small group discussion as a way to use the material.

*If time permits:  
- View a segment from the movie “Birth of a Nation” and discuss the troubling images and stereotypes of African Americans.  
- View segments from HBO’S “Unchained Memories: Readings from the slave narratives.” Discuss the reality of life for African Americans in the early 20th Century.

This can be a tough topic to discuss. Debates can be problematic as a teaching tool. Don’t be afraid to tackle this tough topic. Sadly it is easier to avoid this topic, than to deal with it in a frank open manner.