



The Roots of The Modern Day African Americans And The Suggested Motivation For A Bright Future (Actual Experiences of Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass And Joseph Sengbe (Cinque))

Curriculum Unit 89.05.08
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The purpose of my unit is to educate the youths about the African American roots. The unit includes how to progress toward a brighter future. My unit is geared toward giving the youths a sense of knowledge and pride about themselves, Africa, its people, and its descendants, who were born outside of Africa.

This unit is divided into sections. The first deals with a brief historical background of Africa and its people before blacks were kidnapped and brought to America. The second pertains to the enslavement of innocent black families seen through the eyes of three African men who were once forced to live as slaves. These men were Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass and Joseph Sengbe (Cinque). The third section briefly mentions other black individuals who were born after the three men mentioned above, and who accomplished and contributed priceless talents to America. Popular black individuals will also be mentioned as their prominence throughout this nation is being recalled. The fourth section entitled—Develop Your Talents, strengthens and motivates youngsters toward a better and brighter future for themselves and for their families. This section is of vital importance to the students. The fifth section includes sample lesson plans, individual activities, group activities, field trips, suggested speakers, resources, an annotated bibliography for teachers and suggested readings for the students.

The overall strategy consists of giving the students only the truth about their past and preparing them for a useful and satisfactory future, especially since the laws, as well as the myths have prevented their ancestors from pursuing freedom and happiness for themselves and their families.

Students must learn to understand and adjust their present lives by learning about the past, in order to understand the present.

The Invasion of Africa

Before the Africans were kidnapped and brought to America in the 1700's, many foreign nations with few resources such as Asia, Greece and Northern Europe had tried to invade Africa, but failed. ¹ Africa was known to be a nation of wealthy people whose natural riches were a warm climate, which is conducive to cooperation and sharing, exotic fruits, gold, ivory, diamonds, etc. The Europeans were in awe when they observed such riches. They engaged in all sorts of devious plans in order to obtain such riches for themselves.

Had it not been for the use of guns and trickery, the Europeans would never have been able to take hostage so many black men and women to keep in bondage for centuries. ² Such acts have been recorded in history, and are puzzling to many. It has been calculated that slavery in America was not to be compared to slavery elsewhere, since slavery here was the worst.

Actually, in West Africa from which the largest group of Africans were kidnapped, there were three powerful tribal empires namely, Ghana, Mali and Songhay. ³ The socioeconomic institutions were very complex. "Most of these units had all the appurtenances of the modern state—armies, courts, and internal revenue departments." ⁴ As the anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits has stated, "Not even the kingdoms of Peru and Mexico could mobilize resources and concentrate power more effectively than could these African monarchies, which are more to be compared with Europe of the Middle Ages than referred to the common conception of the primitive state." ⁵ Although Ghana was the closest to the coast line of Africa, the kings, queens, the noblemen and their followers who made up the kingdoms, were safely situated deeply in the inner establishment. The Europeans who invaded Africa were traders, who first met the African fishermen, who lived around the coastline. These Europeans became friendly with the Africans and later settled along the coastline themselves. It was then easy for them to do business with the Africans. These Europeans were Portuguese traders, who did business with the indigenous, in order to learn what the Africans were using for trade. They discovered that the Africans were using gold, ivory, cotton and slaves. ⁶

These slaves in Africa were really prisoners of tribal wars. They were captives who later worked for themselves and became a part of the group of tribes who captured them. For example, in the Dahome tribe Dahomean kings were known to choose the sons of slaves to succeed to the throne. ⁷ Many slaves were men of accomplishments and learning, and furthermore, African slavery was not based on race. The slavery which existed in Africa in the 1700's was considered slavery by the Europeans, but in fact, the Africans saw and treated the situation as harboring captives. As early as the 9th century the Ghanaian king was trading slaves to Arab merchants for goods from the Mediterranean and the East. ⁸

Prior to the 1700's blacks were kidnapped from Africa while whites were kidnapped from the streets of London and Bristol. Under this system, thousands of whites who were paupers, ne'er-dowells, religious dissenters, waifs (homeless), prisoners, etc., were shipped to the American colonies and sold to the highest bidder. ⁹ At that time, racial differences were of no concern to the people who made up three of the races of people placed on this earth. ¹⁰ The American Indians, the Africans, as well as the whites were all referred to as indentured servants. These servants had to work under contract for a certain period of time, after which they were considered to be free. Freedom then, meant that they were later able to purchase land. They also voted, testified in court, and mingled together regardless of race. They even intermarried, as is done today. However, when the Indians, along with the white servants became ill and died under the strain of hard work, the total number of servants was vastly decreased. Such servants were abandoned. Africans were then used as

scapegoats.

These were the alternatives: 1. Both whites and blacks could have continued to be indentured servants. 2. Both whites and blacks could have become slaves. 3. The Indians could have been enslaved. 4. A free labor system for blacks and whites, Indians and immigrants could be instituted. The socioeconomic forces selected the blacks because they were the only group of people qualified enough to do the job. Again trickery came into play, and forced slavery resulted. Instead of fair and adequate pay for a job well done, the blacks were forced to use their strengths for confined labor only, rather than for total and successful self development.

Thus the 15th century Portuguese explorers who were the first modern Europeans to reach West Africa by sea, took advantage of the situation and began turning over to the king in Ghana, guns for captives. The slave trade then became a vicious trap. If the African king refused to trade his captives, then his gun supply which he used to defend his country would be discontinued. This was the manner in which the great kingdoms such as the ManiCongo kingdom in Africa were ruined. ¹¹

At a later date the Europeans became even stronger, since they knew where to find good strong black men whose culture they understood on the surface. The Europeans then abducted all the individuals they could find. The Americans then considered slavery, manpower. No longer were the captured individuals allowed to be independent citizens. They now became a profitable manpower for the new world. The African kings did not expect such a vicious plan.

The black people who were taken from Africa were sent to many different parts of the new world. It takes a bit of time and research to learn how slavery was handled in other parts of the world, but it is always best to learn first about your roots and your home. Our focus here and now, is how slavery in America affected both blacks and whites, the struggles and efforts which occurred, and which should be continued, in order to bring about a brighter and more rewarding future for all our youths.

In order to study this slave system in America, let's focus our attention on the lives of Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass and Joseph Sengbe (Cinque). The information gathered on these men was obtained from the autobiographies of the first two men, and from the written historical records about Sengbe's experiences. Sengbe's historical experiences were taken from old New Haven newspapers and from Yale University magazines. The study of these men will concentrate on those aspects of their lives which will develop self confidence, pride and hope for our youth's brighter future. The first person to be discussed is Booker T. Washington.

Although Booker T. Washington was a descendant of free Africans who were stolen from their nation, he was brought up in slavery. He was truly ambitious and always wanted to change his life through advancing his knowledge educationally.

Washington was born on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia in the year 1859. Washington's mother was a cook at a plantation. He lived with her, and with his brother and sister, in a tiny cabin. The cabin was without glass windows. There were only small holes at the side of the cabin, which allowed light and air to venture. There was a small movable object bearing a resemblance to a door from which they entered and departed when necessary. ¹² The floor was not of wood, but rather of dirt. They had no bed, so they slept on the dirt floor. Said Washington, "Never did my entire family ever sit down to the table together and God's blessing was asked and the family ate a meal in a civilized manner." ¹³ The children had to obtain their food when and where they could, on their own. In other words, slavery destroyed the black family unit by bringing

excruciating pain and torture to black individuals across the land.

For example, Washington's mother had little time to spend in the training of her children. She was forced to work day and night. She often had to sneak away after 10:00 p.m. to spend time with her son, although it was forbidden. At such an hour, young Washington would either be asleep or drifting off to sleep. ¹⁴ This was one way that a concerned mother could show her love for her offspring. Unfortunately, to avoid being discovered, she had to leave her son before he awoke, so that she could return to work. Washington's struggle throughout his childhood and during his entire life was one of strife against the hardships and cruelty which slavery inflicted.

Young Washington did not know his father or his father's relatives. Washington's father was white, and in those days whites and blacks did not marry. It was against the law. As a result, such a law prevented the white men who had children with black women from caring for their mixed blooded children as they should. Often when they showed favoritism to these children, chastisement would result, as it came from the other whites who saw. Many white fathers of children like Washington had to send such offspring off to live and work within a household where they would be treated considerably better than they would otherwise be treated. These children and their parents were usually separated, as slavery dictated. They were quite miserable and unable to live a life of freedom. Racism which is almost as bad as slavery, carries much more subtle strategies in these days. It is also the infliction of wrong and it demonstrates its share of humiliation and destruction, in areas of growth and advancement on a large scale.

Young Washington observed that slavery was harmful to both the whites and especially the blacks. For example, the Civil War, which would decide whether slavery would continue, brought about great hardships for everyone. Even the whites in the South found it difficult to provide for themselves adequate food or in some cases, minimal food to eat. Due to the good natured slaves who did not harbor hatred toward the whites, but hated in fact what slavery did to them, these whites were being fed by the blacks. The blacks shared with the whites their food, which consisted of corn bread and pork. Foods such as coffee, tea, and sugar were not attainable at that time; therefore, the black people made coffee with parched corn and used a very dark molasses instead of sugar. All these they shared with the whites who were in dire need. ¹⁵ Often the blacks had to assist with the female family members when the male members of the family had to be fighting in the fields. Proper and sincere care went out to these whites from the blacks. Washington recalls knowing of several occurrences where former slave owners had become poor and dependent on their so called slaves. These black men and women supplied them with money and food which they had saved during the war. ¹⁶ This went on for years. This is quite astonishing—to say the least.

As we continue with the hardships which Washington encountered, it is necessary to mention that even as a young child, Washington had to work hard and was not allowed the regular play periods essential for all children. His duties were often too difficult for a child of his age, Washington always had a strong desire to learn. Washington's mother gave him his first spelling book.

When Washington had saved enough money to attend the Hampton Institute, he began his journey. He had to ride on a stage coach at first and at that time, he ran into a racial problem which he never could erase from his mind. The coach had stopped at an Inn to allow the passengers to rest after a long journey. This was before they had reached the Hampton Institute. He got off the coach with the other passengers and proceeded to the Inn as the other passengers did, but upon entering the Inn he was told by the desk clerk that due to his color, he was not allowed to stay and rest at the Inn. There was no room for him. For hours he walked until he became utterly exhausted. He had no choice but to creep under a portion of a sidewalk and

stay there for the night. ¹⁶ That was one of the pinnacles of his humiliation. Washington worked hard to earn his tuition for the Institute, and he taught his brothers to do the same, in order to achieve educationally. He became the Director of the Hampton Institute.

Mr. Washington loved family life. He married three times. Due to the deaths of his first two wives, it was necessary for him to marry again. He had two sons and a daughter. He and his family believed that in order to derive the most value from one's vocation or career, one should do the type of work one enjoys the most. ¹⁷

After nineteen years of continuous working without ever taking a vacation, friends of Mr. Washington, who felt that he needed one, arranged to give him one as a gift. He and his wife accepted the generous offer, and off they went on a well needed and deserved vacation. Mr. Washington was unaware of his extreme tiredness. During the ten days at sea, he slept for fifteen hours each day.

The Washingtons spent a remarkable vacation which involved receiving superb treatment on the Friesland Ocean Steamer, as well as being warmly accommodated in Europe. Their first hotel faced the public square with refreshing sights of people selling beautiful flowers, going to the cathedral or to church, etc. Riding slowly on a canal boat gave the Washingtons an opportunity of seeing and studying the real people of Holland. The Washingtons remarked about and admired the way in which Holland wasted no land, but rather used their land adequately for the benefit of their people and their animals. For example, they witnessed the vast amount of space which the animals and the people had for themselves. At one time there were four hundred Holstein cows grazing in an intensely enormous green field. ¹⁸ While staying in Holland they visited the battlefield of Waterloo at Brussels, they attended banquets and met an enormous number of dignitaries. Before leaving America, friends had given he and his wife letters of introduction and the natives of the foreign countries were informed of their pending visit. Some of the people whom they met at that time were the American Ambassador, General Horace Parter and his wife, who invited them to a reception at his residence. There he met the United States Supreme Court Justices, Fuller and Harlan. From these people, as well as others, the Washingtons received overall kindness and good will. ¹⁹

While visiting Paris, the Washingtons reacquainted themselves with the American Artist, Mr. Henry C. Tanner, who happened to be black and who was also traveling in Europe during that time. Mr. Tanner was being honored at the Luxembourg Palace in Paris, where his works of art were being displayed. ²⁰

The Washingtons were truly impressed with the French. They admired their sincerity, the thoroughness in which they went about their daily activities and the fact that they were economical. It was noticed by the Washingtons that the French were merciful and kind to people, as well as to animals. ²¹ This was expressed by Mr. Washington himself. The Washingtons who knew the black race of people quite well however, felt that the black race was, nevertheless, ahead of the French by their nature, in such an area.

The Washingtons continued to travel, meeting members of Parliament in London, England and giving speeches which were widely published both in England and in America. The Washingtons also met in England, the well known William Lloyd Garrison, and the Hon. Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists. They met the Duke of Westminster and Mr. Washington was asked to be the principal speaker at the Commencement exercises of the Royal College for the Blind. The exercises were held in the crystal Palace and the residing officer was the late Duke of Westminster, who was at that time considered the richest man in England. Washington and his wife finally met Queen Victoria at the Windsor Castle during a party to which friends had invited them. They had tea with the Queen of England. ²²

Regarding Mr. Washington's advancement, he was an extremely disadvantaged youngster who moved up from slavery to become a prominent American. Students should learn a great deal from such a man although he no longer lives. Lessons of pride and joy of realizing that no one should give up and be willing to stay enslaved in a pig pen. It should be stressed that life should be devoted to the pursuit of happiness for all. People need people regardless of their origins and their races. This becomes very evident after a serious tornado like the recent one which affected parts of New Haven and Hamden this July, 1989. Members of the Hamden community were seen working together for one cause. It was so evident that people of all races need to interact and bring comfort to one another.

Mr. Booker T. Washington felt that the future of his race depended on whether other races realized that blacks are necessary to the happiness and wellbeing of the community in which they live. ²³In my opinion, the blacks have already displayed or convinced the world of this since they were kidnapped from Africa. Their continuous hard work and sacrifices in America speaks for itself. What they now need are equal chances, equal education, equal time, void of double standards, plus concessions for centuries of oppression. The daily custom should no longer deal with what the Indians, blacks, whites and orientals are able to do to make this nation greater, but should rather deal with what all the Americans are doing as a group, to improve relations at home, as well as abroad. It appears that this will occur when all Americans begin to work together for human rights for all and for the removal of double standards. As the myths are removed by those who spread the truth, unjust acts will be seen clearly. Hopefully corrections will be made for a major cause.

The second person to be discussed is Frederick Douglass.

Frederick Douglass was an African American who was born in Tuckahoe, Maryland around 1835. This was his estimation, since his parents did not inform him of the correct date, and since the system of slavery caused more confusion and destruction in the minds of even healthy men and women. Douglass' mother was Harriet Bailey, but similar to Booker T. Washington, Douglass' father was white, and never made himself known to him. ²⁴This was the system of slavery.

As a child Douglass witnessed brutal, cruel acts which slavery inflicted on his people. He was truly affected negatively by this life, because he was often not clothed and was not adequately protected from the raw winter weather. He stated that the cracks on his feet were so deep that a fountain pen could be laid in the gashes. ²⁵He worked hard and long, but received no rewards or payment for his labors.

Food for Douglass was the same as food for Washington, and the overall environment was almost the same. Between the ages of seven and eight, Douglass moved away from the plantation on which he had lived. His mother had died, and he was sent to live with a new family—the Auld family. Mrs. Auld was extremely civil and kind to him and even began to teach him to read. She was unfamiliar with the actual practices of slavery and was actually treating him the way any and all humans should justly be treated. When her husband discovered this, however, he was angry and had much to say. Douglass heard Mr. Auld remarking vehemently, that slaves should not be taught to read, but to obey; that reading would cause them to become restless and to feel good about themselves, by desiring to achieve, as other men; and that he desired blacks to remain as slaves. Although Douglass was himself angry to hear this opinion stated so sincerely yet harshly, he began to understand the game of slavery. ²⁶He realized that the blacks were only used to do the work which the whites did not want to do for themselves, and that all forms of deceit were being used to oppress blacks.

Douglass used this invaluable insight as the key to the road of knowledge and achievement. He decided that he would learn to read, even if he had to teach himself. He became interested in the schools nearby, although

he could not attend them. He inquired from the white students in his neighborhood, who attended such schools, what they were like, and he talked with them about the books they read. As a result, he found an old spelling book and began to study secretly. By age twelve, he was able to read well. He would watch for scraps of newspapers or magazines, hide them and read them when time allowed. He found jobs in the neighborhood and saved his money just to purchase books, which the privileged children had read. One of his favorite books was *Columbian Orator*,²⁷ a book of speeches about liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Douglass practiced speeches about liberty. He practiced aloud and had fun with them, especially when he came across words, such as, abolitionist. If Douglass came across a word which he did not know, he would check to see if such a word was in the newspaper, since he was able to read the newspaper. He would then understand the meaning in context. Douglass read where some of the slaves who tried to escape to freedom went to the North and some went to Canada, since the Canadian government did not allow slavery. He began to have a strong desire to be free. He finally escaped to the North, since the North had abolished slavery.

Douglass was married to one Anna Murray who was too shy to travel with him during his speeches. When his friends encouraged him to spread the news regarding true slavery as he saw it, she allowed him to go instead of opposing him. While speaking at a rally, thirty men accosted him. Many believed that he had not been a slave. In order to convince them he wrote his autobiography. When the Auld family heard of the book, they demanded his return to the South. Douglass had to immediately escape to England. He was welcomed in England, Scotland and Ireland where large crowds of people gathered to hear his speeches. He did, however, tell them that America was his home, and that although he was so well treated abroad, his desire was to return home. The English collected \$700.00 to pay the Auld family for Douglass' freedom and \$2,100.00 to help him with his work. ²⁸ Two months thereafter, he returned to America as a free man. Douglass became a well known orator himself and made speeches across the North to both white and black audiences. Douglass became very popular indeed.

During the Civil War, Douglass encouraged the government to allow black Americans to fight. He did receive his wish, but when he found out about the double standards, he was extremely angry. The white soldiers were being paid more than the black soldiers for the same job. ²⁹ The black soldiers at that time received little care and no promotions to better jobs. Douglass immediately went to see President Lincoln about the matter, but soon afterwards President Lincoln died.

Many of Douglass' friends thought that he would now rest, but he informed them that he was just ready to begin his fight for full citizenship for blacks and the right to vote. He felt that schools and churches along with colleges should open their doors to all people. Some people argued that the black people were not ready for such privileges but Douglass argued that the whites were selfish and not ready for equality. ³⁰

Douglass and his wife began a printing press. Their daily newspaper was called *The North Star*. This paper helped all people to fight for equal rights, such as women who could not vote at that time and who could not hold government offices as men could. Of course, the main fight was equal rights for the black race in America. Douglass assisted with the Underground Railroad by making his home a station for the Railroad. After his wife Anna died, he married Helen Pitts. Helen helped her husband with his work when Douglass became the American Ambassador to Haiti. She traveled with him as well.

By this time, Douglass had purchased a twenty room home in Washington, D.C. He now had grandchildren. ³¹ His leisure time was devoted to his family, and with entertaining friends. He enjoyed playing the violin, while Helen, his wife, played the piano.

The third person to be discussed is Joseph Sengbe, (Cinque).

The Amistad Affair in New Haven

In 1839 approximately forty Africans were kidnapped from West Africa. These men were from the Mendi tribe or group of Africans who lived near the coast of Sierra Leone. They were taken on a Portuguese ship by Spaniards to be sold in Havana, Cuba as slaves.

Nineteen years before that date, however, slavery had been abolished in all Spanish countries and was, therefore illegal. Ten days after the Africans arrived in Havana, Cuba, they were purchased by Don Jose Ruiz and Don Pedro Montez. These men had fraudulent papers stating that the Africans whom they had captured were “Ladinos,” (Cuban blacks who had been in servitude in 1820). They had supposedly paid for such falsification. ³²

After the purchases were made the Africans were immediately placed on a schooner called the Amistad. Two nights later “a powerful black African from the group of men named Sengbe” (Cinque in Spanish) headed his group in their defense. Sengbe demanded to know the destination of the Spanish vessel when the cook amused himself by replying that they were being taken somewhere to be killed and eaten. Sengbe and his men immediately rose up, armed themselves and took control of the ship. After a scuffle, both the captain and his cook were dead. Sengbe (Cinque) held Ruiz and Montez as prisoners, while he permitted the crew to go free. Since Sengbe and his men were not navigators, they trusted the two Spaniards to navigate the ship back to Africa, and made their demands. The Spaniards were, however, deceptive, and managed to work the vessel northward instead of eastward, as requested. Sixty days later, on August 26, 1839, about a half mile from the northern shore of Long Island, the long schooner was anchored. The American lieutenant who investigated the matter placed the Africans in safe keeping after hearing the twisted story of the Spaniards. These African men unfortunately were kept in the New Haven jail.

There were white men of good will whose sympathies were aroused. Three antislavery philanthropists also volunteered to solicit funds for the protection of the Africans. ³³ The funds were also used to hire attorneys to defend them. The attorneys were Roger Sherman, Seth Staples and Theodore Sedgwick.

A Yale professor of theology became interested in the case and tried to assist with the understanding of the language which the Africans spoke. In order to do this, he visited them and memorized the words and sounds which they used for numbers one through ten. With this information, he visited the docks in New York and repeated the numerals one through ten in the Mendi language. Finally a Mendian native came forward in recognition of the language. After hearing the story of Sengbe and the predicament of him and his men, he offered to help. This Mendian native was James Covey. ³⁴ He traveled back to New Haven with Professor Gibbs and interpreted what Sengbe and his companions had to report. Covey became Sengbe’s interpreter, and soon thereafter, a vocabulary of the Mendi language was made, and conversation with the Africans became possible. It is said that English lessons were being taught to the Africans, as well as Christianity. Clothes were given to these men also, and they were often taken to the New Haven Green where they did their physical exercises. The English lessons were given to them by a Jewish professor who taught at the Yale Divinity School at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Regarding the court ruling, the legal questions were these:

1. Did the schooner taken from Montauk Point come within the jurisdiction of Connecticut?
2. Should the Africans be tried for murder on the high seas?
3. Were the officers of the Brig Washington entitled to salvage?
4. Were the Africans the property of Ruiz and Montez, or were they free men who were kidnapped?
5. Should the United States accede to the demands of the Spanish minister that the schooner and cargo be delivered to the owners and the Africans taken to Havana, Cuba as assassins? ³⁵

The Circuit Court, as well as the Supreme Court, decided that the Africans would not and could not be detained for murder occurring on a Spanish vessel. The matter was mainly tried in the district court and was quite an exciting trial here in New Haven. The judge who presided, a Judge Judson, although not sympathetic about the antislavery agitation, was just and honest in enforcing the correct laws as they pertained to the Africans. This Judge Judson pointed out that Ruiz and Montez had fraudulent papers; that the Africans were not at all slaves, but rather free men who were illegally captured. He further explained that the Africans had been unlawfully transported to Havana, Cuba, and that the African men were free to return to their native Africa. The judge further stated that Ruiz and Montez had made their purchases with full knowledge that the Africans were free men; that the Africans had not become pirates and robbers by taking possession of the Amistad and seeking their freedom. ³⁶ It was further explained that no clause in the U.S. treaty with Spain demanded the surrender of the Africans.

Justice was done and Sengbe and his African followers were safely accompanied home to Africa, sailing eastward.

In observation of the 150th anniversary of the Amistad Affair involving Joseph Sengbe known to the Spaniards as Cinque, the Amistad Committee in New Haven this year (1989) expects to raise \$350,000. A statue of Sengbe erected in the center of New Haven is being considered, to remind us of the accomplishments of the Africans. These accomplishments were possible only because the community did what was right by insisting that fairness should prevail. The officials practiced the right action by enforcing just laws for the betterment of mankind.

Several events including exhibits, will be held beginning September 17, 1989 in the New Haven area. There will be a symposium at Yale University and an essay contest in the New Haven Schools. An original musical performance has also been planned for the occasion. ³⁷

Many other African Americans have contributed endlessly to building and improving the United States in the following areas: Math and Science, Research, Law, Inventions, Engineering, a variety of technical fields, Almanac making, Traffic Light Designing, surgery, Writing, Facilitating in the Press and News Media, Civil/ Human Rights, etc.

Some of these Americans are:

William E.B. DuBois
Benjamin Banniker
George Carruthers
George Washington Carver

Dr. Charles Drew
Lewis H. Latimer
Garrett Morgan
Charlotte Forten
Lester Granger
George Edmund Haynes
James Weldon Johnson
Eugene K. Jones
Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.
Rosa Parks
Malcolm X
Kelly Miller
William Trotter
Sojourner Truth
Harriet R. Tubman
David Walker
Whitney Young, Jr.
Adam Clayton Powell
Julian Bond
Constance Baker Motley
Barbara Jordan
Shirley Chisholm
Judge Thurgood Marshall
Reverend Jesse Jackson
Judge Warren L. Pierce
Carl Rowan
Roy Wilkins
James Baldwin
Inamu Amui Baraka
Leroy Jones
Lerone Bennett, Jr.
Arthur Mitchell
Pearl Bailey
Harry Belafonte
Cab Calloway
Nat King Cole
Diahann Carroll
Bill Cosby
Ossie Davis
Sammy Davis, Jr.
Aretha Franklin
Redd Foxx
Lena Horne
James Earl Jones
Mahalia Jackson
Johnny Mathis

Diana Ross
Sidney Poitier
Paul Robeson
Cicely Tyson
Leslie Uggams
Adam Ward
Desmond Wilson
Flip Wilson
Jan Matzeliger
Granville Woods
Lewis Latimer
Garrett Morgan
George Washington Carver
Guion Bluford
Walter Massey
Daniel Arbus
and many more.

Students may make a list of the local black individual Americans who have contributed to the growth of this area and country.

In order to further motivate students in the areas of education and achievement of purpose, such motivation will now be discussed.

Develop Our Talents

We are all blessed with special talents. As we grow up, we casually become aware of them. We might suddenly have the urge to draw, to paint, to sing, to dance, to care for people in a special way, by giving them words of comfort. We might desire to care for the sick, to use our hands in relation to science, to build or construct, to create designs or with thoughts. We might desire to change a bad situation and make it good, desire to express thoughts orally and/or in writing, desire to type, to use the computer or to fix the computer, etc.

In order to develop our talents, we must motivate ourselves or be motivated by our parents, friends, teachers, or any person who has our best interests in mind. Time and association with such people will tell whether they are sincere in giving us the best possible guidance. ³⁸

It is vitally important for adults to encourage children (especially descendants of the Africans who were first brought here) to believe in themselves and to have confidence in themselves. They must learn to believe that they are capable of accomplishing whatever they desire to become in life, if they are willing to put in the time and effort that learning and practice dictates. As time matures, they might change their minds about the first chosen profession or vocation. The important fact for them to keep in mind is that perseverance in their talented areas or chosen field will pay off.

Students should be encouraged to participate in oral discussions in class and voice their opinions about the jobs they would like to someday hold and why. Teachers could discuss at such a time the subjects one must take in order to obtain such positions. As a result, the students will have some idea as to why the required subjects are necessary, and why paying attention in the classroom is so vitally important.

Instilling good values in students and convincing them to change those values which will lead them down the road to perdition, is also of great importance. Students need to develop their own skills which will later give them a sense of accomplishment and pride. They need to learn how to make and fix items themselves so they will be self sufficient in many areas in life. ³⁹ They should not be encouraged to be dependent on strangers. Strangers are not expected to know or to see the beauty and the talents which time and social interaction usually reveal. Students should be encouraged to check out library books on work ethics, employment, business ventures, etc. (on their level). If finding books on the level of the students is difficult, then their teachers could on a weekly basis relate such information to the students, orally or in writing. Explaining and discussing their values could follow.

So far the areas covered are:

1. developing the talents of the students

2. motivating the students to have visions of their own
3. encouraging students to think of positive values and to display them in their daily lives.

The above three areas will hopefully reduce the astonishing black rate of unemployment. ⁴⁰ Students must be convinced that they are able to, and capable of performing well, if they pay attention and if they put in the time needed to study, understand and apply knowledge without distractions and concentrating. When extra help is needed, students need to be taught how to request tutoring from their teachers or through their principals. (Parents should definitely involve themselves in this area.)

It is becoming more evident that parents, teachers and administrators need to talk to their legislatures and encourage them to revise certain laws. The needed revision seems to be focused on making it mandatory for parents to give up some of their time, in order to become involved with the step by step process of teaching acceptable attitudes and proper values to their children.

Certain unattractive attitudes which are displayed by children are often a direct result of lack of adequate parental love and guidance. Such attitudes also stem from inflicted racism which is a constant evil in our society. It leads to frustration and delay in the happiness and advancement of blacks in all areas. Many children and adults alike react by rebelling in assorted ways.

The children with no proper guidance usually drift off to where their fancies lead them, and without realizing what they have gotten themselves into, they are accosted by the law. Often these are potentially bright children with worthwhile ideas and innocent intentions. But, without the proper guidance, they are sometimes treated like hard core criminals. They often end up in the hands of the law or in the hands of adults who do not have their best interest in mind.

Most parents who have to deal with their African American children in the inner cities especially, are dealing with too many social problems which need to be corrected. These parents do love their children and want the best for them, but often their hands are tied. Fighting society daily, in order to keep their dignity, the job (if there is one), balancing the budget, etc. is not easy. The emotional problems which result from some of the above, cause despondence and hopelessness in an abundant number of cases. The result: Parents are often unable to muster the energy to find the time to attend parent teacher meetings, or to be sure that their children are always in the safe hands of caring, responsible adults.

It seems clear then that someone must teach these children how to behave and how to prepare themselves to become good citizens. The communities must find decent happy social outlets for young people. Travel and social interaction with other races and ethnic groups are important for a full and broad development.

Children cannot be expected to work hard and follow the rules when they are always saddened by the lack of rewards and lack of joyful outlets. Children should be able to run and laugh and build their muscles, as they are allowed to participate in beautiful settings which instill in them cheerfulness and pride.

The encouragements in the area of displaying proper manners and respect are often lacking in most youngsters who are taught often by their parents to call adults by their first names. Some of these youngsters even address their parents by their first names, thereby giving the child or student the idea that disrespect is O.K.

It is never too late to teach the students proper grooming and to explain to them that such grooming should

take place in their bedrooms or bathrooms, and not in the classrooms, the halls or the streets. Combs, for example, should remain in their pockets instead of conspicuously sticking out from their hair.

Students in high school should be reminded that when they obtain a job, be it part time or full time, the following should be kept in mind: show interest in the job, show your best performance, try to get along with other workers, try to improve yourself and develop marketable job skills. ⁴¹

Obtaining marketable skills are important. In order to be more qualified for work, it would be advisable to develop a given talent while improving academic skills. If a job doesn't present itself in one area, then by being self sufficient, monetary earnings will still be possible, with perseverance. As Mr. Booker T. Washington once said, "Learn to do something well, and try to do it better than any one else." ⁴²

Lesson Plans

This unit may be used for children in grades 5-12.

This year I intend to use my unit for children in grade 5.

Sample Lesson Plan #1

Objective Each student will be given a research assignment pertaining to a country in West Africa.

Procedure The children will visit the library and obtain information which includes the size of the country, the culture of the people, the type of educational system, the manner of dress, the natural resources, medium of monetary exchange, forms of recreation, the average income of the employees, daily customs of town and city life.

Students would later read their reports orally in order to inform and share ideas.

FollowUp Assignments *Students will visit the Yale Art Gallery and learn of the art of their chosen country, such as the sculptures, designs, woven cloth, etc. This knowledge will lead to the appreciation of the beauty of their heritage. This should be stressed orally to the children.*

Sample Lesson Plan #2

Objective *Students will read and learn about Mr. Booker T. Washington, Mr. Frederick Douglass and young Joseph Sengbe (Cinque).*

Oral and silent reading should occur in the classroom with oral discussions following each chapter.

Procedure Vocabulary words and meanings taken from each chapter will be given to the students before the readings begin.

Follow Up Assignments *The main idea of each chapter and the important details will be discussed.*

Sample Lesson Plan #3

Objective Students will learn to appreciate the following: The African language, the way of dressing, the colorful materials and prints used to wrap the heads of the African women, the dances performed for various

ceremonies or occasions.

Procedure The teacher will invite one or more African students from the Yale undergraduate or graduate school to visit the classroom. Items worn or displayed will be explained and discussed by the visitor. Native dances performed can be illustrated. Vocabulary words relating to the African and their meaning will be placed on the blackboard for the students to copy. This relaxed session should be most entertaining.

Follow Up Assignments *Students will draw and paint African designs, head dresses and the like. Films may be shown as they relate to life in West Africa.*

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