MOVING FREEDOM FORWARD:
TEACHING A MORE EXPANSIVE HISTORY

Teaching African American History

1619 400 YEARS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY COMMISSION 2019

FREEDOM FORWARD

NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY®

MANAGING EDITOR

Lynne M. O'Hara

LEAD HISTORIAN

Gretchen Sullivan Sorin, Ph.D.

EDITORS

Krista Grensavitch, Ph.D.
Natasha Holtman

NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY®

NHD IS ENDORSED BY

American Association for State and Local History
American Historical Association
Federation of State Humanities Councils
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council for History Education
National Council on Public History
Organization of American Historians
Society for American Archivists

THIS PUBLICATION IS SPONSORED BY

1619 400 YEARS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY COMMISSION 2019

bezos family foundation

NHD IS ALSO GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY

Behring Global Educational Foundation
The Better Angels Society
Betty MacMillan
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
Celie and Tabitha Niehaus
Dr. Scholl Foundation

4511 Knox Road
Suite 205
College Park, MD 20740
Phone: 301-314-9739
Fax: 301-314-9767
Email: info@nhd.org
Website: nhd.org

ISBN: 979-8-9880776-1-9

Table of Contents

Editors' Note

Welcome to the first volume of the *Moving Freedom Forward*, created by National History Day® (NHD). The series is part of NHD's *Expansive History Initiative*. The goal of this initiative is to bring the latest scholarship to teachers to help them teach American history in more expansive ways and increase access to the National History Day program.

The first part of this resource engages historians and pedagogical experts, focusing on resources for teaching African American history, new ways historians are considering the stories of the past, and ways to deal with difficult content in history with young learners.

The second part of the resources considers three themes in history: teaching the history of enslaved people, considering migration and movement in history, and exploring the long Civil Rights Movement. In each of these sections, teachers can read about the latest scholarship being produced by historians.

Each module also contains a lesson—one in which an educator has taken one element and developed a lesson plan that engages primary sources and critical thinking. These lessons are not designed to be comprehensive (not three lessons could cover the scope of African American history), but instead provide models for teachers to develop their own lessons. Each lesson is accompanied by a short video to help provide historical context. While the printed book only contains the instructions, teachers can visit nhd.org/expansivehistory to download copies of the lessons with the primary sources and supporting materials for classroom use.

NHD wishes to thank the 400 Years of African American History Commission and the Bezos Family Foundation for their generous support of these resources.

What is National History Day®?

National History Day® (NHD) is a nonprofit organization that creates opportunities for teachers and students to engage in historical research. NHD is not a predetermined, by-the-book program but rather an innovative curriculum framework. Students learn history by selecting topics of interest and launching into year-long research projects. The mission of NHD is to improve the teaching and learning of history in middle and high school. The most visible vehicle is the NHD Contest.

When studying history through historical research, students and teachers practice critical inquiry, asking questions of significance, time, and place. History students become immersed in a detective story. Beginning in the fall, students choose a topic related to the annual theme and conduct extensive primary and secondary research. After analyzing and interpreting their sources and drawing conclusions about their topics' significance in history, students present their work in original papers, exhibits, performances, websites, or documentaries. These projects are entered into competitions in the spring at local, affiliate, and national levels, where professional historians and educators evaluate them. The program culminates at the national competition held each June at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Each year, National History Day uses a theme to provide a lens through which students can examine history. The annual theme frames the research for students and teachers alike. It is intentionally broad enough to allow students to select topics from any place (local, national, or world) and any period in history. Once students choose their topics, they investigate historical context, historical significance, and the topic's relationship to the theme. Research can be conducted at libraries, archives, and museums; through oral history interviews; and by visiting historic sites.

NHD benefits students and teachers. For students, NHD allows self-direction of their learning. Students select topics that match their interests. NHD provides program expectations and guidelines for students, but the research journey is unique to each project. Throughout the year, students develop essential skills and foster intellectual curiosity. Through this process, they gain critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to manage and use information now and in the future.

The classroom teacher is a student's greatest ally. NHD supports teachers by providing instructional materials and hosting workshops at local, affiliate, and national levels. Many teachers find that bringing the NHD model to their classroom encourages students to watch for examples of the theme and to identify connections in their study of history across time. To learn more, visit nhd.org.

Resources for Studying African American History

TARA Y. WHITE, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

> "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."
>
> **Maya Angelou**

The past few years have been notable due to the attention that African American history has received in the public sphere. The year 2019 was the four hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Africans to the shores of British North America. The year 1619 marked the beginning of the American colonies' direct involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and, thus, the ongoing introduction of Africans into British colonial America as an enslaved labor force. The eventual development of enslavement as an American institution transformed not only the lives of the enslaved men, women, and children who were forcibly brought here but also life in the American colonies for Europeans, Native Americans, and others who came here. This increased public attention to African American history has brought an increase in resources for teaching it in the context of presenting a more diverse, expansive, and accurate account of the past.

National History Day® (NHD) encourages students to develop projects that would help them to excavate local history, especially through the primary and secondary sources found in local libraries, historical societies, museums, and archival repositories. These local storehouses of history are the perfect places to gather sources illuminating local people and poignant local stories that may be nationally significant. The resources below can help to provide context for those local people and events that have an impact on the national narrative.

Often, online resources can help students who have an interest in a particular subject find a topic to research. For example, a student with an interest in science and medicine might explore the digitized selection of the papers of Dr. Charles R. Drew (profiles.nlm.nih.gov/spotlight/bg) at the National Library of Medicine in collaboration with Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. Students with an interest in civil rights and women's history might explore the papers of renowned anti-lynching activist, club woman, and suffragist Ida B. Wells-Barnett at the University of Chicago Library (lib.uchicago.edu/e/scrc/findingaids/view.php?eadid=ICU.SPCL.IBWELLS).

Students might be surprised to learn about the Civil Rights Movement in their communities. For example, they can explore documents related to the Tallahassee Bus Boycott of 1956–57 (floridamemory.com/learn/classroom/learning-units/civil-rights/tallahasseebusboycott/), as well as the boycott that Florida A&M University students started shortly after the Montgomery Bus Boycott (kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/montgomery-bus-boycott).

[1] Maya Angelou, "On the Pulse of the Morning," in *On the Pulse of the Morning* (New York: Random House, 1993).

GENERAL INTERNET RESOURCES AND REPOSITORIES

These repositories offer a variety of primary sources over a broader period of African American history and can be useful for almost any historical period.

Black Freedom Struggle in the United States: Challenges and Triumphs in the Pursuit of Equality | blackfreedom.proquest.com/

This website focuses on Black Freedom, and features select primary source documents related to critical people and events in African American history from the abolitionist movement to the present.

BlackPast | blackpast.org/

BlackPast is dedicated to providing the inquisitive public with comprehensive, reliable, and accurate information concerning the history of African Americans in the United States and people of African ancestry in other regions of the world.

International African American Museum (Charleston, South Carolina) | iaamuseum.org/

The International African American Museum explores cultures and knowledge systems retained and adapted by Africans in the Americas and the diverse journeys and achievements of these individuals and their descendants in South Carolina, the United States, and throughout the African Diaspora.

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, University (Washington, D.C.) | msrc.howard.edu/

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) at Howard University is the largest and most comprehensive repository of books, documents, and ephemera on the global Black experience.

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library (New York, New York) | nypl.org/locations/schomburg

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, one of The New York Public Library's renowned research libraries, is a world-leading cultural institution devoted to the research, preservation, and exhibition of materials focused on African American history and culture, the African Diaspora, and African experiences.

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington, D.C.) | nmaahc.si.edu/

The National Museum of African American History and Culture is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture.

WEST AFRICAN PAST

Proper study of African American history starts with an understanding of the West African past. The majority of the Africans transported for the purpose of enslavement in the New World originated from countries on the western coast of Africa. It is important that as we frame the forced removal of Africans for slavery in the American colonies, we note that they had lives and families, came from tribal groups with centuries of history, and lived and thrived within their respective cultural communities in the West African countries of origin before they became a part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Africana Collections: An Illustrated Guide, Library of Congress | loc.gov/rr/amed/guide/afrillguide.html

The *Africana Collections* of the Library of Congress include materials produced over the centuries by people living in sub-Saharan Africa and others inspired by the continent.

Ancient Manuscripts from the Desert Libraries of Timbuktu [Mali], Library of Congress | loc.gov/exhibits/mali/

Timbuktu, Mali, is the legendary city founded as a commercial center in West Africa 900 years ago. Dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the ancient manuscripts presented in this exhibition cover every aspect of human endeavor and intellectual achievements attained by West Africans during the Middle Ages.

Exploring Africa, African Studies Center, Michigan State University | exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/

The Michigan State University African Studies Center is a National Resource Center for the study of Africa.

Lost Kingdoms of Africa, BBC | bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01bgnb1

British art historian Dr. Gus Casely-Hayford explores the pre-colonial history of some of Africa's most important kingdoms. This site includes episodes and clips for classroom use.

TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The Transatlantic Slave Trade was a piece of a larger system that saw the transportation of goods and enslaved people from the Old World to the New World, namely, from Europe to Africa and then to the Caribbean, with stops at several ports along the coast of British North America. However, trade between Europeans and Africans had been ongoing for centuries. A struggle for power among the nations on the western coast of Africa led to the trade in human beings. The result was wars that destabilized many of the countries.

The earliest recorded Africans to land at Point Comfort, Virginia, near present-day Hampton, were "20 or so odd negroes" from Angola who were captured and brought to these shores aboard the *White Lion* by English privateers.[2] Many of the members of captive nations were traded to European slave traders for other goods in earlier years; in later years, coastal raids filled the slave ships with captives on their way to the Americas.

The resources below include websites documenting the voyages of slave ships that brought Africans to the shores of the present-day United States. Other resources use advertisements to find self-emancipating enslaved people placed by their former owners. The *Slavery Images* site shows depictions of African Americans from the period of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade | enslaved.org/

Enslaved.org is a discovery hub that helps users search and find information from a large and growing number of datasets and digital projects. The site also provides richly detailed stories of the lives of those enslaved.

Slave Voyages | slavevoyages.org/

Slave Voyages is a collaborative digital initiative that compiles and makes publicly accessible records of the largest slave trades in history.

[2] To learn more, see "Virginia's First Africans," Encyclopedia Virginia, updated February 6, 2023, accessed July 7, 2023, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/africans-virginias-first/.

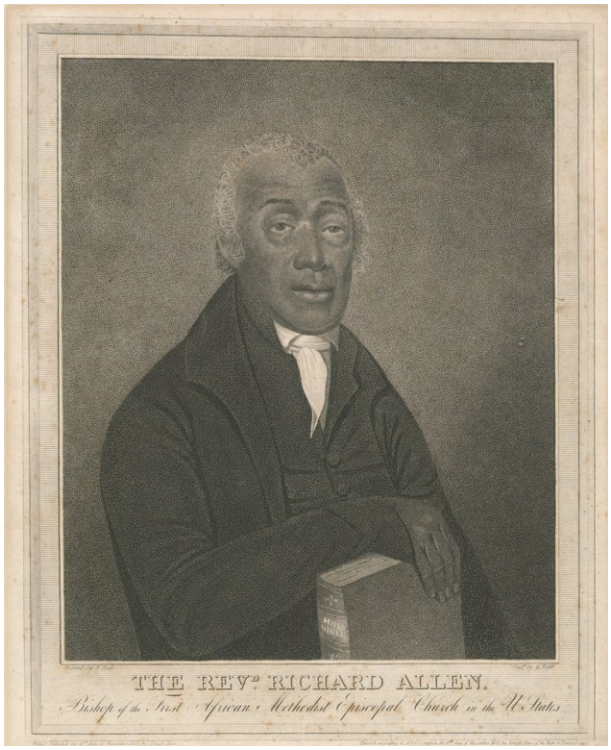
John Smith's map (created in 1608, printed in 1612 and 1624) shows "Poynt comfort," where the first enslaved Africans were brought to Virginia by English privateers. Library of Virginia.

Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora | slaveryimages.org/about/about.php

This website is a digital archive for hundreds of historical images, paintings, lithographs, and photographs illustrating enslaved Africans and their descendants before 1900.

BLACK LIFE IN COLONIAL, REVOLUTIONARY, AND EARLY AMERICA

Africans who were trafficked along the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the first century of the American colonies had lives that were marked by decreasing degrees of freedom. By the early eighteenth century, the lives of most Africans in the American colonies were marked by a lifetime of enslavement and legal status as property. Primary sources like this 1693 affidavit from Warwick County (now Newport News), Virginia, help to show the legal status of enslaved people (virginiahistory.org/learn/affidavit-1693).



An engraving of the Reverend Richard Allen, Bishop of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, December 1823. Library Company of Philadelphia (P.2006.29)

The limited number of enslaved Africans emancipated in colonial and revolutionary-era America formed small communities in major eastern cities, such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, and other places where they were allowed to remain. Their freedom was limited. The remaining enslaved Africans toiled in urban and rural settings in almost every one of the original thirteen colonies that would become the United States.

Although the rhetoric associated with the American Revolution was taken up by all, including free Black people, the developing nation would exist in a contradictory state where full freedom and equality did not apply to them. Despite valiant service by African Americans, such as Crispus Attucks, Peter Salem, and Jordan B. Noble in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, it would take another half century or more before Black people could be legally classified as a free people with full citizenship, equal rights, and equal protection under the law.

Resources in this section explore the evolution of political thought and the ideas of Black writers and thinkers concerning their plight in the United States of America. Speeches, pamphlets, essays, and flyers from anti-slavery activities, programs from local and national political meetings, and agendas from national conventions show African Americans engaging with questions about freedom and abolition, the limits of their rights, and collective solutions to the problems they faced. There are also debates featuring competing visions for abolition expressed in some of the documents below. Finally, these resources show the development of African American community institutions, such as the Black Masonic order under Prince Hall or the African Methodist Episcopal Church under Bishop Richard Allen, organizations that fostered nurturing environments for the continued growth of unique cultural, intellectual, and spiritual communities.

African American Perspectives: Materials Selected from the Rare Book Collection, Library of Congress | loc.gov/collections/african-american-perspectives-rare-books/

African American Perspectives is a research collection that gives a panoramic and eclectic review of African American history and culture and is primarily comprised of two collections in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division: the African American Pamphlet Collection and the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection (1822–1909).

Black Lives in the Founding Era, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History | gilderlehrman. org/history-resources/curriculum/black-lives-founding-era

The *Black Lives in the Founding Era* project compiles stories of the lives and works of a wide array of African Americans from 1760 to 1800.

BLACK LIFE IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

African Americans in the early nineteenth century represented a diverse group—some were enslaved, some emancipated, some self-emancipated, and some were born free. It is important that as we look at African Americans in the antebellum period, we must remember that no one group represents the entirety of the Black experience. Nevertheless, we must also recognize that the majority of Black people in America during this period were enslaved in northern and southern states.

Free Black people understood that their freedom was tenuous as long as slavery existed. To this end, they became part of the long history of resistance through their participation in political conversations about the destiny of African Americans, enslaved or free, in the United States. They wrote letters, petitioned, published articles in newspapers, published books and pamphlets, gave speeches, held meetings, and aided fugitives in their escape from enslavement. Free people like William Still participated in the Underground Railroad, a nationwide secret network for escaping slavery.

Many offered their homes or churches as stops for freedom-seeking, self-emancipated Black people, and provided other kinds of assistance. David Walker, for example, wrote an incendiary pamphlet, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles* (1830), calling for the enslaved people to revolt against their enslavers.

Enslaved people resisted captivity and reasserted their humanity through simple acts of daily resistance, such as burning meals, sabotaging equipment, or engaging in work slowdowns. In many cases, they carried out carefully planned, full-scale rebellions, striking at the heart of the slave system through violent uprisings. From Gabriel Prosser to Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, enslaved people pushed back against the system of enslavement in the South during this period.

A portrait of anti-slavery activist and abolitionist Harriet Ross Tubman Davis. Library of Congress (2018645050).

The ultimate resistance was self-emancipation from the entire system. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass represented the ongoing resistance to enslavement, leading others to emancipation by helping them escape, reuniting families, or working in the growing abolitionist movement. Ultimately, they sought to take advantage of the life and liberties offered in America—liberties they felt they had earned through their physical toil and struggle in the building of this nation.

Colored Conventions Project | coloredconventions.org/

From 1830 until well after the Civil War, African Americans gathered across the United States and Canada to participate in political meetings held at the state and national levels. A cornerstone of Black organizing in the nineteenth century, these "Colored Conventions" brought Black men and women together in a decades-long campaign for civil and human rights.

Freedom on the Move | freedomonthemove.org/

Freedom on the Move is a database of fugitives from North American slavery. With the advent of newspapers in the American colonies, enslavers posted "runaway ads" to locate fugitives.

Hallowed Grounds Project: Race, Slavery and Memory at the University of Alabama | bfsa.ua.edu/hallowed-grounds-tours.html

Google Maps tour: hngreenphd.com/hallowed-grounds-tour.html

This page, created by Dr. Hilary N. Green, highlights visualizations, transcriptions, primary sources, and other materials for understanding the history of slavery at the University of Alabama and its legacy.

The Oak of Jerusalem: Flight, Refuge, and Reconnaissance in the Great Dismal Swamp Region | arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f3a23e246cba476b8ece52fb1463ce5d

Dr. Christy Hyman uses historical geography to examine the Great Dismal Swamp as a place of refuge for enslaved fugitives. The swamp was connected to the phenomenon called the Maritime Underground Railroad—enslaved people helping other enslaved people get to vessels sailing north to freedom.

CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

The American Civil War (1860–1865) was a profound reckoning in American history and became a national reconsideration of the meaning of freedom and equality. As a result of the tireless work of advocates like Frederick Douglass, many African Americans participated in their emancipation by joining the fight for the Union and partnering with the United States military to deliver a decisive victory in 1865. Brave African American men and women, including Susie King Taylor, Robert Smalls, and William H. Carney, risked life and limb during the Civil War serving as a nurse, an emancipator, and a soldier, respectively. Soldiers of the United States Colored Troops exhibited courage and steadfast loyalty to the nation at its most difficult hour.

Reconstruction (1865–1877) saw the ascendance of African American citizens as political participants and co-creators of American democracy as elected officials in the local, state, and federal governments. The founding of Black institutions, such as churches, schools, hospitals, colleges and universities, benevolent societies, and other organizations, transformed communities across the South. Black colleges, such as Howard University (1867), Shaw University (1865), and Fisk University (1866), were founded in this period and offered Black men and women access to higher education. With the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, America's Black men were legally guaranteed freedom and full equality (Black women would receive the legal right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920). However, these unprecedented legal changes did not universally translate to change on the ground. Northern indifference to racial violence and discrimination and the White South's unyielding campaign for White supremacy ended Reconstruction a little more than a decade after it started.

Resources in this section explore the participation of Black men and women in the Civil War. They examine Beaufort, South Carolina, and other communities across the South as they grappled with the issues that emerged from Reconstruction concerning land ownership, political parity, education for the children of freedmen and women, the reunion and reestablishment of families and communities, and the development of Black institutions in freedom.

Lithograph of the first African American Senators and Representatives who served in the U.S. Congress, 1872. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (NPG.80.195)

The African American Civil War Memorial Museum (Washington, D.C.) | afroamcivilwar.org/

The African American Civil War Memorial Museum tells the story of the heroic role 209,145 U.S. Colored Troops played in ending slavery and keeping America united under one flag. The museum uses a rich collection of artifacts, documents, primary sources, and technology to create a meaningful learning experience for families, students, Civil War enthusiasts, and historians about the period from the American Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement and beyond.

Free & Equal: The Promise of Reconstruction in America, University of South Carolina | freeandequalproject.org/

Free & Equal: The Promise of Reconstruction in America is an online educational project and mobile app that tells the story of the Rehearsal for Reconstruction, a largely forgotten place and time in history that played a critical role in defining freedom and equality for African Americans during and after the Civil War. It includes an audio and augmented reality journey exploring a key moment in the history of Reconstruction.

Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland | freedmen.umd.edu/index.html

The *Freedmen and Southern Society Project* captures the essence of that revolution in the words of its participants: liberated slaves and defeated slaveholders, soldiers and civilians, common folk and the elite, northerners and southerners. Using resources from the National Archives and Records Administration, the project's editors selected, transcribed, organized, and annotated 50,000 documents to explain how black people traversed the bloody ground from slavery to freedom between the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 and the beginning of Radical Reconstruction in 1867.

The Henry McNeal Turner Project | thehenrymcnealturnerproject.org/

This digital archival project is dedicated to the writings and study of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, African American Leader during the Civil War, Reconstruction, and post-Reconstruction Georgia, and the twelfth Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

Podcast: Seizing Freedom | seizingfreedom.vpm.org/

Ending slavery was only the first step in the fight for equality and justice for Black people in America. Freedom gets built up over time—through a billion tiny, everyday acts. This podcast features stories directly from the people who seized it.

Visualizing Emancipation, University of Richmond | dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/

Visualizing Emancipation is a map of slavery's end during the American Civil War. It finds patterns in the collapse of southern slavery, mapping the interactions between federal policies, armies in the field, and the actions of enslaved men and women on countless farms and city blocks.

GILDED AGE AND PROGRESSIVE ERA, JIM CROW AMERICA

Black men and women in America during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era organized to counter the steady erosion of their civil rights through legal and extralegal means. Challenges to the Civil Rights Act of 1875 resulted in a Supreme Court case invalidating the measure. Supreme Court cases, such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Williams v. Mississippi* (1898), transformed Black citizenship in the South, as legally sanctioned segregation and voter disenfranchisement rolled back most of the gains of Reconstruction. Black women's clubs came together to create the National Association of Colored Women to mitigate the effects of racial segregation and discrimination while educating and uplifting Black communities.

College President Mary McLeod Bethune, Margaret Murray Washington, and the Women of the Southeastern Federation of Colored Women, an affiliate of the National Association of Colored Women, 1921. Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation Collection, University of Central Florida.

Anti-Black violence, in the forms of lynchings and race riots in places like Colfax, Louisiana; Wilmington, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and Springfield, Illinois, stunned and horrified Black citizens and their allies. A select group of Black men formed the Niagara Movement to combat these ills. Later, in 1909, an interracial group met in New York City, creating the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to combat racial violence and the loss of civil rights.

Other leaders, such as Booker T. Washington, emerged as the voice of Black America, while people like Ida B. Wells, William Monroe Trotter, and Marcus Garvey provided a different vision of the solutions to the problems wrought by racial discrimination.

Black men, women, and children began to leave the South in large numbers during what became known as the Great Migration (c.1910–1940) in search of educational resources for their children, better economic opportunities for their families, and the ability to vote and participate in the political process. Many people migrated to the large urban centers of Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and New York City during this period. The New York City neighborhood of Harlem became the cultural center of Black life in the 1920s, with a variety of new cultural forms produced there during the Harlem Renaissance.

The resources in this section document the lives of ordinary Black citizens who found their freedom increasingly limited from the end of Reconstruction through the end of World War I. The centrality of the Black press in keeping people connected cannot be overstated during a period when people were leaving the South and creating new Black urban spaces. Lynching and racial violence increased to become the most egregious crime against Black humanity. Finally, most Black citizens found that these new settlements were not the "promised land" that most believed, and grappled with issues of redlining and housing discrimination that accompanied the administration of the New Deal programs for housing.

Behind the Veil Oral History Project, John Hope Franklin Center, Duke University | repository.duke.edu/dc/behindtheveil

This selection of recorded oral history interviews chronicles African American life during the age of legal segregation in the American South from the 1890s to the 1950s.

Black Women's Suffrage Project, Digital Public Library of America | blackwomenssuffrage.dp.la/

The collection explores linkages between women's suffrage and other social causes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (anti-slavery, anti-lynching, education reform, and civil rights), as well as racism within the Suffrage Movement.

Building the Black Press | buildingtheblackpress.com/

This digital history project explores the Black press and the built environment.

Digital Harlem: Everyday Life, 1915–1930 | digitalharlem.org/

Digital Harlem forms one part of a collaborative research project on everyday life in Harlem between 1915 and 1930. This project focuses not on Black artists and the Black middle class but on the lives of ordinary African American New Yorkers by exploring legal records and Black newspapers.

Digital Harlem Blog | digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/

This blog is an extension of the *Digital Harlem* website, intended as a forum that the researchers involved in the project can use to provide news of updates to the site and offer ongoing analysis of its content and which users of the site can use to offer comments and feedback.

The Great Migration, Digital Public Library of America |
dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-great-migration

This primary source set and teaching guide explores the Great Migration in the early twentieth century.

Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror, Equal Justice Initiative |
lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/

This project documents lynching as a vicious tool of racial control and includes audio stories, interviews, maps, and resources for educators.

Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America |
dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=5/39.1/-94.58

Mapping Inequality uses the records of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) to explore how government officials, lenders, and real estate interests surveyed and ensured the economic health of American cities.

Mapping The Green Book | mappingthegreenbook.tumblr.com/

From the 1930s to the 1960s, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, known commonly as the *Green Book,* was a directory that would let African American travelers know which hotels, restaurants, and service providers would serve them as they traveled across the United States. These sources include 21 digitized volumes of the book and tools to help connect the story to local communities, and mapping tools to show the location of these sites.

Navigating The Green Book, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library |
publicdomain.nypl.org/greenbook-map/

The *Green Book* was a travel guide published between 1936 and 1966 that listed hotels, restaurants, bars, and gas stations where black travelers would be welcome.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice (Montgomery, Alabama) |
museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice is the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved Black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence.

Visualizing the Red Summer | visualizingtheredsummer.com/

Visualizing the Red Summer aims to connect the public and academia with the data and geographically dispersed archival material needed to facilitate research on the Red Summer. The Red Summer Archive contains over 700 documents and images collected from over 20 institutions across the country, which can be filtered by location, type of document, and other factors.

W.E.B. Du Bois Papers, 1803–1999, Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst |
credo.library.umass.edu/view/collection/mums312

The papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, son of Massachusetts, scholar, writer, editor of *The Crisis* and other journals, co-founder of the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, and the Pan African Congresses, are archived here. Du Bois was an international spokesperson for peace and the rights of oppressed minorities who articulated the strivings of African Americans and developed a trenchant analysis of the problem of the color line in the twentieth century.

WORLD WAR II AND POST-WAR AMERICA

World War II was a turning point in the history of African Americans. Black soldiers went to war, aiming to fight against fascism abroad and to return home to fight American racism. The Double V campaign launched by *The Pittsburgh Courier* successfully made the fight against racial discrimination an aim of the post-war era. Black men trained as soldiers and distinguished themselves in combat; examples include Dorie Miller; a hero of Pearl Harbor, the Montford Point Marines; and the Tuskegee Airmen. Black women participated as U.S. Army nurses and served in the Women's Auxiliary Corps (WAC), distinguishing themselves in units such as the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, led by Major Charity Adams.

The postwar prosperity enjoyed by most American veterans through the GI Bill of Rights did not benefit Black veterans in the same way. Housing discrimination was widespread. In newly developing suburbs, restrictive covenants forbade property owners in certain areas from selling to Black home buyers. Meanwhile, redlining discouraged lenders from extending mortgages to buyers in redlined areas, which contained mostly Black and minority residents. Business loans were often refused to Black soldiers for qualifying projects. Harry S. Truman's Housing Act of 1949 failed to remedy this situation for Black homeowners, and ensuing urban renewal programs resulting from the act destroyed the many predominantly Black neighborhoods in the name of progress and made the housing situation for many urban dwellers even more tenuous.

Many Black veterans took advantage of educational benefits by enrolling at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). They were among the young leaders who emerged to challenge segregation during the modern Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site | nps.gov/tuai/index.htm

The Tuskegee Airmen gained notice and respect as the result of a test conducted by the U.S. Army Air Corps (Army Air Forces) to determine if African Americans had the mental and physical abilities to lead, fly military aircraft, and courage to fight in war. The Airmen were not just pilots—they were technicians, radio operators, medical personnel, quartermasters, parachute riggers, mechanics, bombardiers, navigators, meteorologists, control tower operators, dispatchers, and cooks. Also included were White officers, Native Americans, Caribbean islanders, Latinos, and people of mixed racial heritage.

Renewing Inequality: Urban Renewal, Family Displacements, and Race, 1950–1966 | dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=0/0/1&viz=cartogram

Renewing Inequality presents a newly comprehensive vantage point on mid-twentieth-century America: the expanding role of the federal government in the public and private redevelopment of cities and the perpetuation of racial and spatial inequalities.

MODERN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Before the 1950s, twentieth-century activism usually resembled the strategy of the NAACP in dismantling the legal architecture of racial segregation by court challenges. Landmark Supreme Court decisions, such as *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), which determined that restricting primary elections to White voters was unconstitutional, and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), which rendered school segregation unconstitutional, happened more frequently after the 1930s. These transformative decisions led to a showdown between Black leaders determined to effect positive change and White leaders in southern, midwestern, and northern cities and towns unprepared for such large societal transformations.

Meanwhile, new organizations challenged the NAACP's mantle for civil rights leadership: members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were front and center, placing their bodies on the line in direct-action protests against segregation at restaurant lunch counters, on busses and mass transportation, and in public places, such as local parks and movie theaters. Although the traditional Black middle class led the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the sit-ins that occurred in cities and towns around the South were led by college students at local Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). CORE and SNCC joined in partnership to launch the Freedom Rides in 1961.

The Voting Rights Movement was defined by early organizational leadership such as local NAACP chapters, the Tuskegee Civic Association, and the Dallas County Voters League from the 1930s through the 1950s. The movement led to Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964 and the Selma and Lowndes County voting rights movements in 1965 and 1966. After major legal victories, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the movement moved north to places like Chicago, Boston, and New York, where similar issues surrounding segregated housing, limited job opportunities, and segregation in education caused major upheaval as local whites resist change.

The resources in this section on the Civil Rights Movement are rich: from the civil rights veterans' archive to the portal for SNCC, there are many primary sources related to civil rights campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s. Video resources, with oral history interviews from movement activists, provide additional commentary on their experiences and the times in which they lived. Finally, the digital site for Harambee City offers an amazing view inside CORE's work in Cleveland, Ohio.

"Civil Rights Teaching," Teaching for Change | civilrightsteaching.org/

This website, a project of *Teaching for Change*, provides lessons, handouts, news, and resources for teaching about the role of everyday people in the Civil Rights Movement.

Civil Rights Movement Archive | crmvet.org/

This archive was created by Civil Rights workers active in CORE, NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, and similar Southern Freedom Movement organizations during the 1950s and 1960s to preserve and share materials, histories, narratives, remembrances, and commentaries related to that movement.

Harambee City | harambeecity.rrchnm.org/about.html

In *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism*, Dr. Nishani Frazier summarizes CORE history from its early formation to the 1970s. The website expands public understanding of CORE, Black power, community organization, and economic development through access to primary sources, teacher resources, and mapping.

SNCC Digital Gateway | snccdigital.org/

The *SNCC Digital Gateway* portrays how SNCC, alongside thousands of local Black residents, worked for Black people to take control of their political and economic lives. It also unveils the inner workings of SNCC as an organization, examining how it coordinated sit-ins and freedom schools, voter registration and economic cooperatives, anti-draft protests, and international solidarity struggles.

SNCC Legacy Project | sncclegacyproject.org/

The *SNCC Legacy Project* reflects a continuation of SNCC's work. The *SNCC Legacy Project* digital movement platform tells its history and aims to motivate people toward the future through bridging generations.

Veterans of Hope Project | veteransofhope.org/

The *Veterans of Hope Project* is a community-based educational initiative on religion, culture, and participatory democracy. It gathers and shares wisdom from elder activists about the role of spirituality and creativity in their work for racial, gender, economic, and environmental justice.

BLACK POWER AND BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

The Black Power Movement continued the struggle for equal rights and political parity. By the end of 1965, civil rights activists were discouraged by the stubborn, violent resistance to Supreme Court decisions affirming Black civil rights, as well as reprisals by southern White leaders that continued for citizens registering to vote and participating in the political process after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Activists rejected integration as a goal, placing Black self-reliance and community control as objectives. They believed that they needed Black institutions under Black control. For them, Black power meant the freedom to determine their collective destiny as a people.

The Black Arts Movement was the cultural arm of the Black Power Movement, highlighting African cultural forms and visual, literary, and performing arts created by and about African Americans. Through the 1970s and 1980s, we see the influence of Black Power and the Black Arts Movement on political leaders, political philosophy, performing arts, visual art, and culture.

The Black Power Movement, American Archive of Public Broadcasting | americanarchive.org/primary_source_sets/black-power

Dr. Brenna Wynn Greer created a primary source resource discussion set on the Black Power Movement for the American Archive of Public Broadcasting. The resources include video and audio clips from the 1960s of Black Power advocates and activists speaking in various settings, including interviews, conferences, rallies, protests, television broadcasts, and press conferences.

Black Power Archives Oral History Project | csun.edu/bradley-center/black-power-archives-oral-history-project

The *Black Power Archives Oral History Project* is a collection of oral histories conducted by Dr. Karin Stanford and Keith Rice, documenting the experiences of Black Power activists in Los Angeles.

The Black Panther Party, Pacifica Radio Archives | pacificaradioarchives.org/black-panther-party

The Pacifica Radio Archives presents a sample of recordings of key activists and organizers of the Black Panther Party. This collection of audio recordings documents speeches, interviews, news coverage, and documentaries by or about the Black Panther Party as broadcast on Pacifica Radio stations between 1966 and 1989 and includes the voices of many notable members of the Panthers.

Black Panther Black Community News Service Collection, African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, California) | oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8cn773c/entire_text/

The *Black Panther Black Community News Service Collection* consists of 420 newspapers published by the Black Panther Party between 1967 and 1980. Each issue was between 16 and 28 pages and featured a range of articles and op-eds on the party's activities, Black power, police brutality, communism, and party leadership.

MODERN AMERICA

These organizations continue to archive the African American experience into the twenty-first century.

Barack Obama Presidential Library | obamalibrary.gov/

The Barack Obama Presidential Library is the 14th Presidential library administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), a federal agency. It covers the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African American President of the United States (2009--2007). [en dash] Unlike other Presidential Libraries administered by NARA, the Obama Presidential Library is the first fully digital Presidential library.

Facing History & Ourselves | facinghistory.org/

Facing History & Ourselves uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate.

The HistoryMakers | thehistorymakers.org/

The HistoryMakers is a national nonprofit research and educational institution committed to preserving and making widely accessible the untold personal stories of both well-known and unsung African Americans.

President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and their daughters, Sasha and Malia, sit for a family portrait in the Green Room of the White House, September 1, 2009. Office White House Photograph by Annie Leibovitz, Barack Obama Presidential Library.

Using Material Culture to Tell the Stories of Enslaved African Americans

TIFFANY MOMON, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

Within the 1816–1819 account book for Charles Pinckney's Pinckney Island Plantation in Beaufort County, South Carolina, are records of purchases to support the plantation and a record of labor. Among the objects purchased for the 349 enslaved people at Pinckney Island were spectacles for an enslaved woman named Sarah; several purchases for fabrics including flannel, homespun, and osnaburg for enslaved women Phyllis and Sophia; summer clothes for an enslaved man named Maurice; stockings for an enslaved woman named Nancy; and multiple purchases of so-called negro shoes.[1] Despite the differences between the objects Pinckney purchased for the people that he enslaved, they all have one thing in common. They are all material culture.

Historical archaeologist James Deetz defined material culture as "that sector of our physical environment that we modify through culturally determined behavior."[2] Art historian Jules David Prown defined material culture as "the study through artifacts of the beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time."[3] Across disciplines such as historical archaeology, art history, public history, and museum studies, scholars agree that material culture is both the study of objects and the objects themselves.

Scholars of African American history often turn to material culture as evidence when the documentary or written record falls short. In the case of enslaved African Americans, more often than not, the documentary record does not capture their lived experiences. Some enslavers wrote records that documented parts of the lives of the enslaved people they owned; however, these records are incomplete, because they do not include an account from the perspective of the enslaved person. In other cases, enslavers kept no written records, or those records were lost over time. For these reasons, to better understand the experiences of enslaved African Americans, scholars turn to the study of the objects or material culture they left behind.

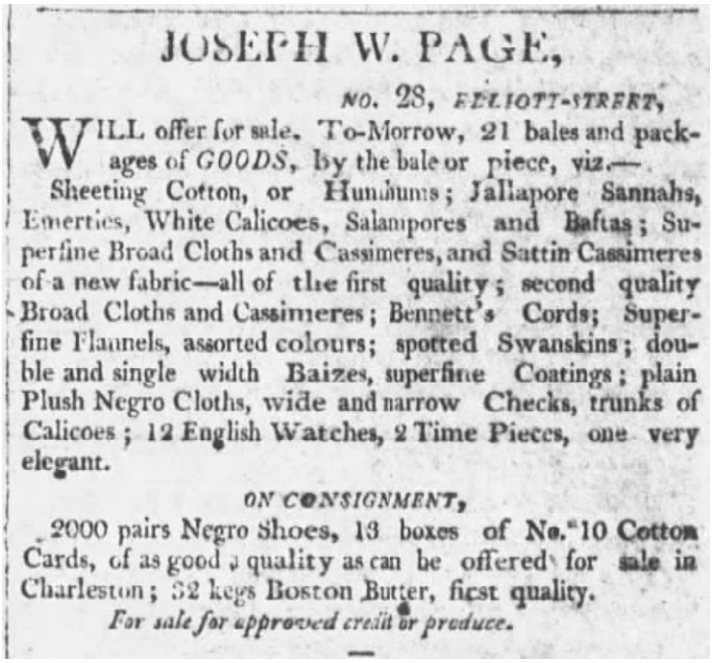
By reading documents such as Charles Cotesworth Pinckney's account book, alongside material culture associated with the experiences of enslaved people and other archival records, we can better understand the lives of enslaved people. For example, Pinckney's purchase of osnaburg fabric was common practice, as osnaburg was a coarse, unbleached linen fabric once considered appropriate for clothing enslaved people. In fact, South Carolina's Negro Act of 1735 dictated that clothing for the enslaved be made from specific fabrics, including coarse kerseys, coarse calicoes, checked linen, cotton, and osnaburg. Enslaved men wore osnaburg pants and shirts, while enslaved women wore osnaburg shift dresses.

---

[1] Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, "Pinckney Island Accounts 1816, 1817, 1818" (South Carolina, 1816), University of South Carolina, South Caroliniana Library.

[2] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor, 1996), 35.

[3] Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1.



JOSEPH W. PAGE,

NO. 28, ELLIOTT-STREET,

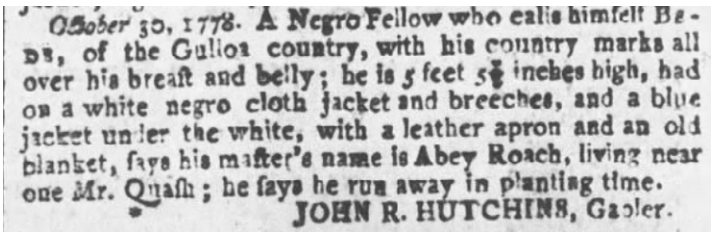
WILL offer for sale, To-Morrow, 21 bales and packages of GOODS, by the bale or piece, viz.—

Sheeting Cotton, or Humhums; Jallapore Sannahs, Emerties, White Calicoes, Salampores and Baftas; Superfine Broad Cloths and Cassimeres, and Sattin Cassimeres of a new fabric—all of the first quality; second quality Broad Cloths and Cassimeres; Bennett's Cords; Superfine Flannels, assorted colours; spotted Swanskins; double and single width Baizes, superfine Coatings; plain Plush Negro Cloths, wide and narrow Checks, trunks of Calicoes; 12 English Watches, 2 Time Pieces, one very elegant.

ON CONSIGNMENT,

2000 pairs Negro Shoes, 13 boxes of No. 10 Cotton Cards, of as good a quality as can be offered for sale in Charleston; 32 kegs Boston Butter, first quality.

For sale for approved credit or produce.



October 30, 1778. A Negro Fellow who calls himself Bede, of the Gullos country, with his country marks all over his breast and belly; he is 5 feet 5½ inches high, had on a white negro cloth jacket and breeches, and a blue jacket under the white, with a leather apron and an old blanket, says his master's name is Abey Roach, living near one Mr. Quash; he says he run away in planting time.

JOHN R. HUTCHINS, Gaoler.

Top: This newspaper advertisement for merchant Joseph W. Page lists objects for sale, including negro shoes and plain plush negro cloths. *The Charleston Daily Courier*, October 27, 1806.

Bottom: The enslaved man, Bede, was described as wearing a white negro cloth jacket and breeches with a leather apron. "Brought to Camden Gaol," *The South-Carolina and American General Gazette*, December 3, 1778.

Archival records, such as newspaper advertisements, show the abundance of goods that enslavers had available to purchase for enslaved people, including osnaburg fabric. Many of these objects, such as clothing and shoes sold by merchants, exemplify that many people profited from the practice of enslavement. Advertisements like the one to the left display the availability of goods produced for enslaved people and the goods marketed for purchase by enslavers. All of these objects became part of the material culture of enslaved life.

Often, enslaved men and women were given clothing connected to their labor, such as leather aprons for blacksmithing work and livery and uniforms for enslaved butlers. The newspaper advertisement to the left, seeking the return of enslaved man Bede, provides a clear example of this by noting that he self-emancipated with a leather apron, a sign that he labored as a blacksmith.

Enslaved women were regularly assigned to the textile trades, while enslaved men were assigned and apprenticed to various trades, including blacksmithing, carpentry, stone masonry, furniture making, shoemaking, and more. Through laboring in these trades, enslaved people acquired the tools necessary to complete their work. These tools included wooden carpentry planes, spinning wheels, needles, and more.

Enslaved carpenter's apprentice Boston King described his labors in a carpentry shop in Charleston, South Carolina, on the eve of the American Revolution. Of his time there, King wrote in his memoirs:

> When 16 years old, I was bound apprentice to a trade. After being in the shop about two years, I had the charge of my master's tools, which being very good, were often used by the men, if I happened to be out of the way: When this was the case, or any of them were lost, or misplaced, my master beat me severely, striking me upon my head, or any other part without mercy.[4]

After he self-emancipated or freed himself, King recalled wanting to work but being unable to do so due to a lack of tools. He wrote, "I endeavoured to follow my trade, but for want of tools was obliged to relinquish it."[5] Here, we see how essential tools were to working in a shop environment and to supporting oneself after self-emancipation.

[4] Boston King, "Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, A Black Preacher," *The Methodist Magazine*, March 1798, 106–15.

[5] King, 106–15.

One of the objects that would have been under Boston King's care was a carpenter's tongue plane like the one pictured to the right. A tongue plane is a tool used to cut interlocking wood joints. Cesar Chelor, the maker of the pictured tongue plane, was born enslaved in about 1720 and is the earliest identified African American toolmaker. Upon the death of his enslaver, Chelor was freed. He then used his skills as a toolmaker to begin a successful business making and selling planes to carpenters and joiners.

Tongue Plane Made by Cesar Chelor between 1752 and 1784. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and Culture (2001.5001.0001).

Like Chelor, some enslaved people used their skills to sell objects, and then used their profits to purchase objects they could sell to others. Others bartered or traded with shopkeepers to acquire goods. In her study of the backcountry of Virginia, material culture scholar Ann Smart Martin recounted the story of Sukey, an enslaved woman who traded four pounds of cotton for a looking glass, or mirror, and a ribbon from merchant John Hook in February 1774. Martin pointed out that enslaved people "could appropriate commodities even as they could be appropriated as commodities themselves."[6] Sukey's purchase of a looking glass and ribbon also assists in understanding the material culture of enslaved life and how material culture can be used to tell stories of enslaved African Americans.

Through Sukey's story, we learn the history of enslaved people as consumers purchasing their own objects. Martin's in-depth research of Hook's store revealed purchases from 13 enslaved people. Among the items bought or traded for were rum, sweeteners, molasses, mirrors, ribbons, hats, and textiles.[7] Nearly 30 years later, Hook's store ledger revealed more purchases and trades by enslaved people. For example, an enslaved man named Will was recorded several times exchanging harvested tobacco for a wool hat, household ceramics (including a dozen plates), a knife, cotton cards (tools used for brushing cotton fibers), two more hats, three jars, and a pair of men's shoes.[8] What we can determine through Will's purchases was that he was farming his own tobacco and using that as payment at Hook's store. Will's purchases of ceramic plates suggest that he sought better dinnerware, perhaps indicative of how he viewed himself—and how he would want his fellow diners to view him. His purchase of jars indicates that he was possibly canning and preserving food. His purchases of hats and a pair of men's shoes, much like the earlier documented purchases by enslaved people at Hook's store 30 years prior, suggest that he wanted better clothes and shoes than those provided by his enslaver. Additionally, Will and the previous enslaved buyers interested in fabrics and ribbons may have sought to adorn their clothing in ways that reflected their identities.

Using the examples provided in this essay, we can determine that the material world of enslaved people was wide and varied. Whether objects were given to enslaved people by enslavers, provided to enslaved people for their labor in trades or handicrafts, or purchased by enslaved people, examples of material culture became practical tools and necessities for living. Today, what remains of most of these objects are descriptions written in a few documents.

---

[6] Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 173.

[7] Martin, 180.

[8] Martin, 181.

Top Left: Stoneware Storage Jar by enslaved potter David Drake, c.1852. Enslaved potters such as David Drake labored to craft stoneware storage jars to store food and other goods. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and Culture (2011.69).

Top Right: Enslaved people in the early nineteenth century used this large, handmade basket to carry cotton. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and Culture, Gift of Danny Drain, Walterboro, SC (2012.134.2).

Bottom Left: Printed floral skirt, worn by Lucy Lee Shirley (1855–1929) as an enslaved child in Leesburg, Virginia, c.1860. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and Culture, Gift of the Black Fashion Museum founded by Lois K. Alexander-Lane (2007.3.5).

Bottom Right: Jesse Burke (1834–1909) was given this violin (c.1850–1860) by his enslaver Elisha Burke. Jesse was a trained violinist who played the violin for his enslaver and in social settings. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and Culture, Donated by Shirley Burke, Great-Granddaughter, on Behalf of Jesse Burke's Descendants (2007.3.5).

However, through historical archaeology—which studies the lifeways of past people by combining archaeological work with written accounts and oral histories—some of these objects have been recovered. Many historical archaeologists who study enslaved life have made their findings available digitally. Collections such as the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) provide photographs of the material culture of enslaved people recovered archaeologically from plantation sites across the Atlantic World.[9] Objects in the database range from colonoware (earthenware pottery used for storing food),[10] to glass beads used in jewelry or to adorn clothing, to tobacco pipes and pipe bowls, to recreational objects such as dice, objects for sewing such as thimbles, needle guards, and buttons, to objects used by enslaved children such as marbles and ceramic dolls.

Through studying the material culture from the lives of enslaved people, we can understand some of the experiences that shaped their lives. Domestic objects such as ceramic plates and colonoware, and work objects such as leather aprons and carpenter's planes, aid our understanding of the objects and tasks that filled their days. Many of the objects used by enslaved people are also used in the present. In many ways, examples of material culture such as children's marbles, ceramic dolls, or dice, are all social objects—ones that we can connect to our own lived experiences. We can turn to these to tell stories and to form personal connections with people of the past. Through the process of examining and contextualizing material culture, we can determine the objects' significance in the lives of enslaved people, explain the roles of enslavers and enslaved people, consider the complexities of enslaved life, and identify the roles and lived realities of individual enslaved people and their contributions to our country.

By showing students examples of material culture, we can encourage them to explore and discuss the daily, lived reality of enslaved people. The objects in this article can act as social objects to which students can relate. Material culture can be used to introduce the study of slavery and the the lives of enslaved people. Students can reflect on the lives of enslaved people and think about how many enslaved people used objects similar to ones familiar to us in the present day. Though enslavement in the United States ended over 150 years ago, it is important to remember that the objects enslaved people used—and the reasons they used them—are not so different from the objects we use and the reasons why we use them today.

[9] To learn more, visit the Dgitial Archaeology Archive of Comparative Slavery at daacs.org/.

[10] See examples of colonoware at daacs.org/galleries/colonoware/.

What's in a Word? Being Thoughtful about Terminology in Historical Writing

RENEE ROMANO, PH.D., ROBERT S. DANFORTH PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES AND AFRICANA STUDIES, OBERLIN COLLEGE

Everything has a history, and that includes language. When students do historical research in primary sources, they may encounter terms describing race, ethnicity, sexuality, or disability that are no longer in use today or that are considered offensive. Words have power. Historically, people have used derogatory or stigmatizing terms to express their superiority to other people, to justify unequal treatment, and even to excuse violence. Students of history have a particular responsibility to understand the power of language, to be aware of the historical context of the terms that have been used in different eras, and to make respectful choices about their own use of language.

Language choices can be especially challenging in historical work. On the one hand, the language used in a primary source from a different historical era might be important evidence to help you understand conditions in the past or the perspective of the writer. A primary source reflects the ideas and values of the time in which it was written, and as historians, we are trying to understand those past beliefs. On the other hand, repeating outdated or offensive language in your own writing can detract attention from the argument and might offend readers in ways that you did not intend. This short guide explores some of the issues you might encounter in historical research and offers current best practices when deciding what languages to use in your own historical communications.

As teachers, it is important to model this behavior for our students in class and explain why we speak the way that we do about people in the past. This will help students to do the same in their National History Day® (NHD) projects.

OUTDATED TERMS

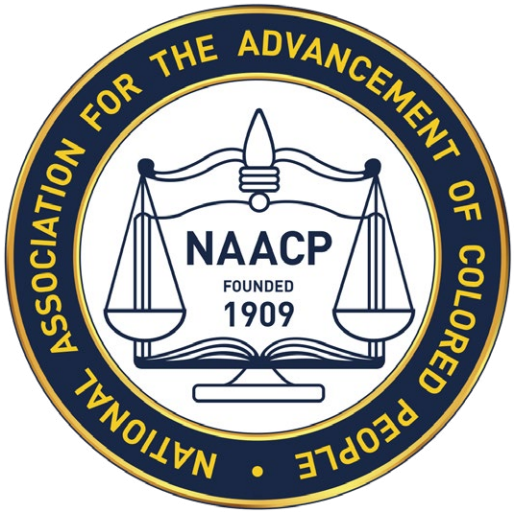
Some terms that were once commonly used to talk about race, sexuality, or disability are today considered outdated. These include terms that might even have been considered respectful in a particular historical time period. See examples of language on the next page, now considered outdated, that you or your students might find in primary sources (with their favored contemporary alternatives):

OUTDATED TERM	PREFERRED CONTEMPORARY TERM
Negro or Colored	African American people or Black people
Caucasian	White people
Miscegenation or Amalgamation	Interracial relationships
Oriental	Asian American
Crippled	A person with a physical disability
Feeble-minded, imbecile, retarded	A person with an intellectual or cognitive disability
Homosexual	Gay, lesbian, queer
Minorities	People of color, non-Whites, marginalized populations

Many of these terms are considered outdated because they have been rejected by the group they are supposed to describe. As a rule, it is most respectful to use the terminology preferred by the group in question to describe themselves. Some of the terms referenced in the table originated not simply as descriptions but as part of definitions that stigmatized or mischaracterized people. The word “homosexual” was first used by psychiatrists who defined same-sex attraction as a disease. “Caucasian,” a term historically used to describe people of European descent, was coined by German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in 1795. Blumenbach believed that humanity had its origins in the region of the Caucasus Mountains in Eastern Europe and that people from the region were the most beautiful in the world, so he used the term “Caucasian” to refer to people who were considered White. The term reflects a discredited theory of biological racism.

Teachers and students should avoid using outdated terms when writing in their own voices. If an author needs to use dated terminology when discussing a subject in its historical context, these terms should be placed in quotation marks to indicate that you understand the word is dated. Use modern-day terms in the analysis rather than repeating the outdated term.

Some organizational or institutional titles may incorporate terms that were once respectful but are today considered outdated. For example, the organizers of the NAACP, or the National Association of Colored People, chose to use the term “Colored” in its title when it was founded in 1909, and the organization continues to use the same name today. The many political conventions organized by African Americans from the 1830s to 1870s are known as the Colored Conventions Movement. The National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, like the NAACP, has maintained the same title since its founding in 1896. The Black baseball teams of the early twentieth century were known as the Negro Leagues.



Organization names or titles might contain terms that were once respectful but now considered outdated when used in other contexts. As long as the organization continues to use the term in its name, it is perfectly acceptable to refer to the organization in your own writing. An example would be the NAACP, which stands for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Formal titles of organizations should not be changed. It is not disrespectful to use terms like "colored" or "Negro" when they are part of an organization's title. But do not use the outdated term except to refer to the organization. For example, you might write: "African Americans in Philadelphia in 1830 held the very first Colored Convention."

It is also now outdated to use descriptors of racial or ethnic identities, like Black or Latino, as nouns. Do not refer to "Blacks" or "the Blacks" when describing a group of people of African descent. Instead, use these descriptors as adjectives (Black people, Latino soldiers, African American women). Using a racial identity as a noun is considered dehumanizing because it reduces a person to a racial category. African American or Asian American are acceptable terms because the terms "African" or "Asian" in these instances are adjectives that describe American.

Latino/Latina is commonly used to describe people living in the United States who are originally from Latin America; it describes people who came from a particular geographic area. Hispanic refers to people who are from Spanish-speaking countries. A person from Spain, in other words, could properly be described as Hispanic but not Latino.

PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

Historians today prefer what is known as people-first language, which means using terms that prioritize the individual above any specific identity or condition. People-first language recognizes that a person's status or diagnosis does not define them. It focuses attention on people's humanity rather than their identity characteristics or conditions imposed upon them. Some examples of language choices that many historians today prefer:

- *enslaved person* instead of a slave
- *incarcerated person* instead of an inmate
- *a person with a disability* instead of disabled or crippled
- *a person with a learning disability* instead of learning disabled

SLURS AND OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE

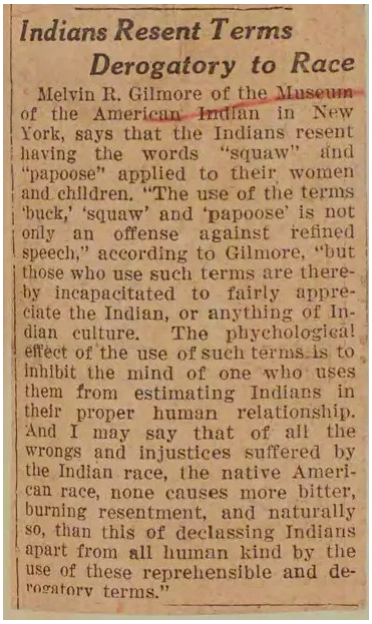
Beyond outdated language, students may also encounter terms that are racial, ethnic, or sexual slurs in a primary source. Slurs are terms that are insulting and demeaning; they were used historically (and may still be used today) to attack and denigrate a person based on their racial, ethnic, or sexual identity.

Understanding the power and significance of these terms can be an important part of historical analysis. In historical context, using an insulting and denigrating term might be evidence of the writer's or speaker's personal attitudes.

Offensive language might also be a sign of broader cultural attitudes. Finding racial slurs used in political speeches helps illuminate the nature of political debates at the time of the speeches and could well be evidence of how certain groups of people were marginalized in the political sphere. Offensive language, in short, deserves attention and analysis.

ANALYZING SOURCES THAT CONTAIN OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE

But how to analyze offensive language without repeating the offense in your own writing or when teaching your students? It is challenging, even in writing this guide, to discuss how to deal with offensive language without using or quoting that language. But here are some guidelines to follow and share with your students when dealing with language from the past that is degrading and designed to stigmatize others.



Indians Resent Terms Derogatory to Race

Melvin R. Gilmore of the Museum of the American Indian in New York, says that the Indians resent having the words "squaw" and "papoose" applied to their women and children. "The use of the terms 'buck,' 'squaw' and 'papoose' is not only an offense against refined speech," according to Gilmore, "but those who use such terms are thereby incapacitated to fairly appreciate the Indian, or anything of Indian culture. The phychological effect of the use of such terms is to inhibit the mind of one who uses them from estimating Indians in their proper human relationship. And I may say that of all the wrongs and injustices suffered by the Indian race, the native American race, none causes more bitter, burning resentment, and naturally so, than this of declassing Indians apart from all human kind by the use of these reprehensible and derogatory terms."

Complaints about the use of derogatory terms are not new. This 1927 newspaper article describes how terms like "squaw" and "buck," once used to describe and stereotype Native American men and women are dehumanizing and cause anger and resentment among Indigenous peoples. Excerpt from MAI Scrapbook of Newspaper Articles, May 1926–Sep 1927, MAI-Heye Foundation Records, Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI.AC.001).

- If you are unsure how offensive a term might be to others today, do additional research or ask. Some terms that once might have been considered slurs (like the term "bloody") no longer carry such negative meanings. But many slurs that refer to people of different religious, racial, or ethnic backgrounds or to women or queer people are highly inflammatory today. If you are not familiar with a word you find in your research but can tell from context that it is meant to be an insult, try to learn more so you can make informed decisions in your own writing.
- If you determine a word is a slur, do **not** use it when writing in your own voice. If you feel you must quote a primary source verbatim that uses a racial, ethnic, or sexual slur to convey an argument or to be truthful to the meaning of the original source, be careful not to repeat the slur as part of your analysis.
- Consider carefully whether you need to use a quotation that contains insulting or degrading language. If you are analyzing rhetoric or if you are making a case about a particular individual's attitudes or the cultural attitudes at the time, you might feel like it is necessary to offer evidence in the form of a direct quotation that contains a slur. But often, it is possible to make the argument without the direct quote. Consider whether you might be able to paraphrase without compromising your analysis. You might explain that the author of a source used harmful or derogatory language without quoting the source directly.
- If you do feel that you need to use a quote that contains a slur, you should acknowledge that the language is offensive and explain why you chose to use it, either in your analysis or in a footnote. Some writers choose to write just the first letter of the word and substitute asterisks (*) or dashes (–) for the other letters. If you make that kind of change to a source, you should again acknowledge that in the text or a footnote.

Historical work should be true to the past and should not shy away from telling hard stories or acknowledging racism, sexism, or other forms of discrimination. At the same time, historians need to consider how to best communicate with and respect their present-day audience. Be thoughtful about the terminology you use in your historical work and communicate openly with your audience about your choices. By doing so, you will demonstrate both an understanding of the past and a sensitivity to the present.

Navigating Sensitive Content While Meeting Students' Needs

JASON BUTLER

Teaching is full of tension. As educators, we are pulled between having a mountain of content to cover and the difficult choices that limited time frames necessitate. We want to maintain high standards for all students but realize that some students face serious challenges that may impede their learning. The mandates of our school administration do not always match the realities of our classroom. And teaching history, in particular, presents unique challenges: there is hardship in history. There is struggle. There is conflict. Inequity, exploitation, and oppression. Hatred. War. Death. There is no denying that each of these realities has a significant presence in American history.

In addition, we teach children. We teach young people who may not be emotionally or cognitively able to swallow every ounce of the pain and suffering that humans have perpetrated on one another.

Just as importantly, we also know that educators may perpetuate flawed assumptions or inaccurate information by avoiding or underplaying the realities of the past. This choice (whether conscious or not) prevents students from fully understanding the present or the past. *Who are we as a country? How did we get here? What have been the highlights and hardships of our journey?* To sugarcoat is to run the risk of committing "educational malpractice," in the words of Ohio State University historian Hasan Kwame Jeffries.[1]

There is great beauty in our country's history and in African American history. There is wisdom, strength, creativity, and inspiration—alongside countless examples of individuals who worked hard to make life better for others. Joy, pain, triumph, and tragedy are splashed across the broad landscape of African American history. To serve our students well, we must remember that we are charged with teaching history and facts, not myths and fairy tales. This article will explore how to navigate the tensions, and how to guide students through learning challenging content, all while prioritizing sensitivity and discretion.

TEACHING TRUTHFULLY: WHY AND HOW

If educators shield students from important dimensions of history, students' understanding will be neither full nor fully truthful.

[1] To learn more, watch Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries's TED Talk, *Why We Must Confront the Painful Parts of US History* at youtu.be/UL95OYBRbOc or read Maureen Costello, "We Rest Our Case: American Slavery Is Widely Mistaught," Learning for Justice, March 1, 2018, https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/we-rest-our-case-american-slavery-is-widely-mistaught.

The humanity of those who were oppressed is central to a full understanding. Victims of historical oppression—just like everyone else—had loved ones, hopes, dreams, strengths, and limitations. They were defined by more than the circumstances of their hardship because they had agency (the power to act and make choices), which they harnessed to resist, to make decisions, and to find joy.

At the same time, it is not possible to adequately teach the 250-year saga of enslavement without an honest appraisal of the brutality that its victims experienced. For example, students' knowledge of Jim Crow will be quite incomplete if they are familiar with separate water fountains but not the terrors of lynching. But the question remains: how do we decide what content students should or should not be exposed to? With graphic or violent content, what is appropriate for a twelfth-grade student may not be appropriate for a sixth-grade student.

As indicated by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, students' emotional maturity and cognitive ability are both important considerations for decisions related to sensitive content.[2] By middle school, most children are able to empathize with victims of violence while understanding the scope of what took place. They can process the difference between ten victims and 1,000 victims and between tragedies that occur in one day versus those that span centuries. Importantly, they also can separate themselves from the content under review—in the sense that they will not have undue fear that what occurred to other people will happen to them.

While teaching your curriculum, following learning objectives, or supporting your students' research projects, many topics related to African American history could contain graphic or violent content. They range from topics typically taught (such as the brutality of the Middle Passage and the violence undergirding the racial hierarchy of Jim Crow) to less prominent topics (like discrimination faced by Black soldiers or forced medical experimentation on Black women and men).

Still, strength, courage, and resistance are embedded even within these topics. Exploring the topics reveals stories of heroism, dignity, resourcefulness, and creativity by Black people subjected to hardship and injustice. And yet there is an inescapable tragedy as well. Talking about these topics—let alone reading sources or viewing images—requires sensitivity and may provoke all sorts of reactions and emotions in your students. Adolescents may react in unpredictable or surprising ways. This can be scary for educators because we deeply understand the importance of controlling our classroom environment. To prepare for both uncertainty and sensitivity, the first order of business is establishing a safe classroom space. A safe classroom is one with established norms pertaining to respect, communication, and students' identities.

Students must feel comfortable expressing themselves while knowing their emotions will be validated. Be prepared with what Kid Power, a nationally recognized social-emotional learning platform, calls an "escape hatch." This tool can be used if students are uncomfortable with something you introduce that contains sensitive content.[3] Engaging the "escape hatch" could involve allowing a student to step outside your classroom for a few minutes, sit in a neighboring classroom, or continue their work in the media center. Many teachers find that journaling—perhaps not to be graded or evaluated—is a wonderful way to provide students an outlet for expressing emotions and reflections after digging into unsettling topics.

Before engaging students in sensitive material, prepare them by describing what it is and explaining that some of them may find it startling or upsetting. Consider touching base beforehand with administration—making sure to justify your decisions with correlations to standards or learning objectives—if there is a chance that students' reactions may bubble up outside your classroom.

---

[2] "Age Appropriateness," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/age-appropriateness.

[3] Tami Mount, "10 Steps: Teaching Sensitive Topics to Students," Kid Power, March 7, 2022, https://gokidpower.org/10-steps-teaching-sensitive-topics-to-students/.

The best path to successfully navigating these tricky waters is through careful discretion in what materials you select. **The best rule of thumb is to use the least graphic or violent example available, but that still helps students to learn what they need to learn**.

When choosing materials for your lesson planning, ask and answer these questions: *What benefits does using this item have? What would I lose or gain by using an alternative image or text*?

For example, many textbooks are written with sterile, unemotional language that only hints at the horrors of violence rained down upon nonviolent civil rights protesters in the 1960s. A clip of documentary footage may prove more effective in provoking students' understanding. On the other hand, it is probably unnecessary to show a photo of Emmett Till's mutilated and lifeless face, which could be disturbing to anyone, young or old. Instead, you could ask students to reckon with the magnitude of this heinous tragedy by analyzing written accounts of what happened or reading comments by the sheriff or attorneys for Till's murderers at their trial.

This is why, when making decisions about what kind of content to use, a good place to start is with your learning outcomes. What would you like students to understand? Consider these examples.

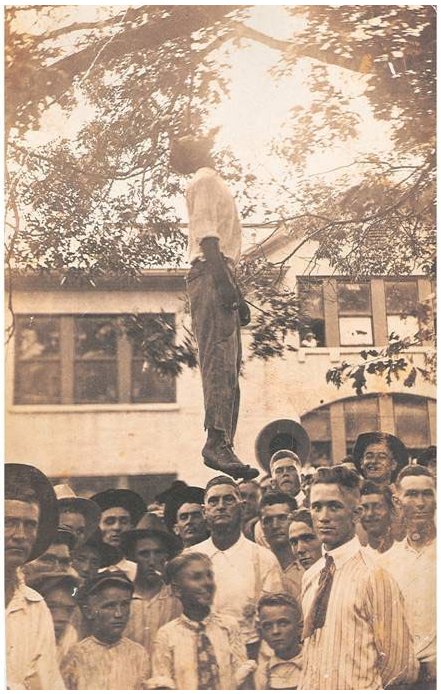
VISUAL SOURCES

When teaching about the Jim Crow era, students need to understand what it was like for Black children to be relegated to crumbling schoolhouses and banned from public swimming pools. But that's not all. Students cannot fully grasp the realities of the time period without grappling with how White people—fueled by beliefs that Black people were inferior or even less than human—used violence to enforce racial separation and subjugation.

There are ways to do this without showing a charred or maimed body hanging from a tree. Consider this postcard depicting the lynching of teenager Lige Daniels in Center, Texas, on August 3, 1920.

Consider cropping out or blocking out everything above Daniels's knees. Reveal the image in segments. First, show a few of the White men's faces at a time. Ask the students: *What do you see? What do you think? What emotions are the men showing? Why might they be gathered together? Where might they be—at some sort of ceremony or public event, perhaps*?

Most of the students' guesses will not gravitate toward an unspeakable act of violence. Revealing Daniels's feet and ankles—and telling your students they belonged to a 16-year-old child—probably will impact your students in ways that help them think about Jim Crow in deep, visceral ways. You will have accomplished that without subjecting them to a highly upsetting image.



The lynching of Texas teenager Lige Daniels, August 3, 1920. Wikimedia Commons.

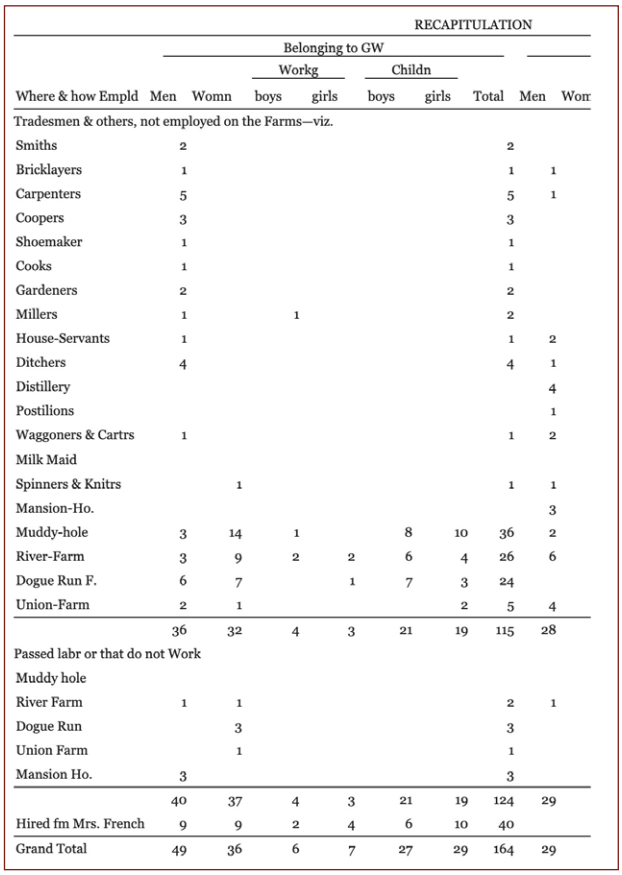
TEXTUAL SOURCES

As there are many angles to approaching the study of slavery, it may be unnecessary to show photographs of enslaved people's skin that had been ravaged by the whip—images that could convey savage violence and may include nudity.

Other sources can tell the same historical story but in a different way. Consider having students explore a list of the people enslaved at George Washington's Mount Vernon.[4]

GW MUDDY HOLE F[ARM]

Names	age		Remarks		
Gabriel	30	Wife	Judy	D.R.	GW
Uriah	24				
Moses	19	Son	to Darcus		GW
Kate	old	Husbd	Will	Muddy Hole	dowr
Nanny	ditto	Ditto	Tom—Cooper		GW
Sacky	40	No Husband			
Darcus	36	Husbd	James—Carpr		GW
Peg	34	Ditto	Nathan—C[oo]k		GW
Alce	38	Ditto	Sam ditto		GW
Amie	30	No Husband			
Nancy	28	Husbd	Abram		French
Molly	26	No Husband			
Virgin	24	Husbd	Gabl		Mr Lear
Letty	19	No husband			
Kate long	18	daughr of Kate			
Kate sht	18	Ditto	Alce	Muddy Hole	
Isbel	16	Ditto	Sarah—dead		
Townshend	14	Son	to Darcus		
			Children		
Alce	8	Daughr	to Darcus		
Nancy	2	Ditto	ditto		
Lucy	11	Daughr	to Peg		
Diana	8	Ditto	ditto		
Alexander	3	Son	ditto		
Darcus	1	Daughr	ditto		
Oliver	11	Son	to Nancy		
Siss	8	Daughr	ditto		
Martin	1	Son	ditto		
George	8	Ditto	to Alce		
Adam	7	Ditto	ditto		
Cecelia	2	Daughr	ditto		
Sylvia	10	Ditto	to Molly		
James	7	Son	ditto		
Rainey	8	Daughr	to Amie		
Urinah	2	Ditto	ditto		
Billy	2	Son	to Letty		
Henry	1	Ditto	ditto		
Workers	18				
Children	18	together	36		



RECAPITULATION

	Belonging to GW								
			Workg		Childn				
Where & how Empld	Men	Womn	boys	girls	boys	girls	Total	Men	Wom
Tradesmen & others, not employed on the Farms—viz.									
Smiths	2						2		
Bricklayers	1						1	1	
Carpenters	5						5	1	
Coopers	3						3		
Shoemaker	1						1		
Cooks	1						1		
Gardeners	2						2		
Millers	1		1				2		
House-Servants	1						1	2	
Ditchers	4						4	1	
Distillery								4	
Postilions								1	
Waggoners & Cartrs	1						1	2	
Milk Maid									
Spinners & Knitrs		1					1	1	
Mansion-Ho.								3	
Muddy-hole	3	14	1		8	10	36	2	
River-Farm	3	9	2	2	6	4	26	6	
Dogue Run F.	6	7		1	7	3	24		
Union-Farm	2	1				2	5	4	
	36	32	4	3	21	19	115	28	
Passed labr or that do not Work									
Muddy hole									
River Farm	1	1					2	1	
Dogue Run		3					3		
Union Farm		1					1		
Mansion Ho.	3						3		
	40	37	4	3	21	19	124	29	
Hired fm Mrs. French	9	9	2	4	6	10	40		
Grand Total	49	36	6	7	27	29	164	29	

An excerpt of George Washington's slave list, June 1799. National Archives and Records Administration.

Seeing fellow children on the list could hit students hard, as they imagine how so many of the things they take for granted in their lives were robbed from enslaved children. *What would these children have dreamed of, yearned for, and enjoyed?* Students could detect clues of families torn apart. *How would this have made parents feel? What would they have tried to do to prevent this from happening?* Students could speculate as to why there are so few old people on the list. They could wonder what it would feel like to be named by your enslaver rather than your parents.

Consider giving students the following transcribed letter, written by George Washington, or an excerpt from it. Here Washington wrote to Oliver Wolcott, Jr. in an attempt to recapture a woman who had escaped from the president's enslavement:[5]

[4] George Washington, "Washington's Slave List, June 1799," The Papers of George Washington, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed January 14, 2023, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-04-02-0405.

[5] George Washington, "From George Washington to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., 1 September 1796," The Papers of George Washington, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed January 14, 2023, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-20-02-0397.

To Oliver Wolcott, Jr.

Thursday Morning 1st Sep. [1796]

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is the name, and description of the Girl I mentioned to you last night. She has been the particular attendent on Mrs Washington since she was ten years old; and was handy & useful to her, being a perfect Mistress of her needle.

We have heard that she was seen in New York by some one who knew her, directly after she went off. And since by Miss Langden, in Portsmouth; who meeting her one day in the Street, & knowing her, was about to stop and speak to her, but she brushed quickly by, to avoid it.

By her being seen in New York (if the fact be so) it is not probable she went immediately to Portsmouth by Water from this City; but whether she travelled by land, or Water to the latter, it is certain the escape has been planned by some one who knew what he was about, & had the means to defray the expence of it & to entice her off; for not the least suspicion was entertained of her going, or having formed a connexion with any one who could induce her to such an Act.

Whether she is Stationary at Portsmouth, or was there en passant only, is uncertain; but as it is the last we have heard of her, I would thank you for writing to the Collector of that Port, & him for his endeavours to recover, & send her back: What will be the best method to effect it, is difficult for m e to say. If enquiries are made openly, her Seducer (for she is simple and inoffensive herself) would take the alarm, & adopt instant measures (if he is not tired of her) to secrete or remove her. To sieze, and put her on board a Vessel bound immediately to this place, or to Alexandria which I should like better, seems at first view, to be the safest & least expensive. But if she is discovered, the Collector, I am persuaded, will pursue such measures as to him shall appear best, to effect those ends; and the cost shall be re-embursed & with thanks.

If positive proof is required, of the identity of the person, Miss Langden who must have seen her often in the Chamber of Miss Custis—and I dare say Mrs Langden, on the occasional calls on the girl by Mrs Washington, when she has been here, would be able to do this.

I am sorry to give you, or any one else trouble on such a trifling occasion—but the ingratitude of the girl, who was brought up & treated more like a child than a Servant (& Mrs Washington's desire to recover her) ought not to escape with impunity if it can be avoided. With great esteem & regard I am always

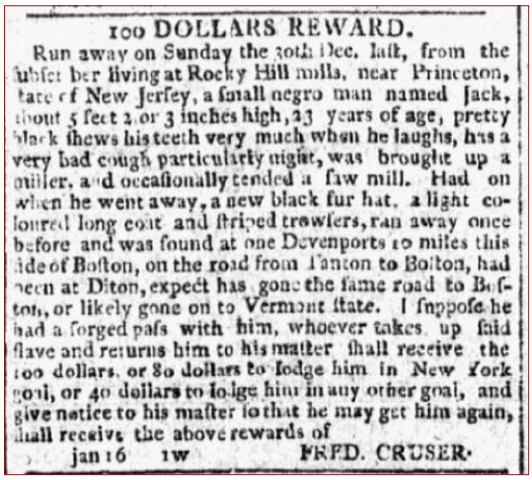
Yours

Go: Washington

Students could reckon with the reality that the Founding Father enshrined on the one dollar bill and countless other places owned, bought, and sold human beings. You can use questions like these to provide an opportunity for students to think about the choices made by Washington and by Oney Judge, the woman who fled Mount Vernon:

- What does the letter tell us about Judge?
- What inferences can you make about Judge's decision to make a risky escape from a man as wealthy, powerful, and well-known as George Washington?
- Judge was 22 years old at the time of her escape. How might that have influenced Washington's views on the situation?
- Why do you think Washington, in the final paragraph, refers to Judge's "ingratitude"?
- Why would Washington, an extremely wealthy man, go to such great lengths to try to have Judge captured?

Another way to have students grapple with what enabled the system of slavery to endure is to have them investigate newspaper advertisements written to bring about the recapture of individuals who had escaped from enslavement. An activity like this could be coupled with a study of the heroism of Black and White individuals who helped runaways to safety.[6] These advertisements describe not only physical characteristics, but also skills: carpentry, sewing, ironworking, machine repair, animal handling, and other abilities. They help to show the humanity of these individuals and the risks that they took (to themselves and their families) in seeking survival, freedom, and a better life.



100 DOLLARS REWARD.

Run away on Sunday the 30th Dec. last, from the subscriber living at Rocky Hill mills, near Princeton, state of New Jersey, a small negro man named Jack, about 5 feet 2 or 3 inches high, 23 years of age, pretty black shews his teeth very much when he laughs, has a very bad cough particularly night, was brought up a miller, and occasionally tended a saw mill. Had on when he went away, a new black fur hat, a light coloured long coat and striped trowsers, ran away once before and was found at one Devenports 10 miles this side of Bolton, on the road from Canton to Bolton, had been at Ditton, expect has gone the same road to Boston, or likely gone on to Vermont state. I suppose he had a forged pass with him, whoever takes up said slave and returns him to his master shall receive the 100 dollars, or 80 dollars to lodge him in New York goal, or 40 dollars to lodge him in any other goal, and give notice to his master so that he may get him again, shall receive the above rewards of

jan 16 1w FRED. CRUSER.

This advertisement in the January 17, 1799 *Daily Advertiser* seeks the return of Jack, an enslaved man who had training as a miller and had experience working in a saw mill. Princeton & Slavery.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's *Teaching Hard History* guide suggests that we teach the bravery, cunning, and strength of Harriet Tubman *and* explore the people, forces, and institutions she fought against in her efforts to free the enslaved.[7] This way, educators can expose students to both the joy and the pain, the triumph and the tragedy—in other words, a richer and more accurate understanding of history.

An example of this more complete approach would be to use the testimony of civil rights leaders such as John Lewis and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from a trial in the Alabama courtroom of Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr.[8]

After being severely beaten by Alabama state troopers in March 1965, activists such as Lewis, Hosea Williams, and Amelia Boynton filed a lawsuit. This lawsuit, which was (ultimately) decided in their favor, aimed to secure the right to peacefully march from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights.

---

[6] George Washington, "Advertisement for Runaway Slaves, 11 August 1761," The Papers of George Washington, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed January 14, 2023, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-07-02-0038. Other examples can be found through Chronicling America at the Library of Congress (guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-fugitive-slave-ads/selected-articles) or the Louisiana State University Libraries Special Collections (louisianadigitallibrary.org/islandora/object/lsu-sc-p16313coll80:collection).

[7] Teaching Hard History, The Southern Poverty Law Center, updated January 31, 2018, accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.splcenter.org/20180131/teaching-hard-history.

[8] Testimony from *Hosea Williams, John Lewis, and Amelia Boynton et al. v. Honorable George C. Wallace, Governor of Alabama* et al., March 1965, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21 National Archives and Records Administration at Atlanta (NAID 279204), https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/selma-testimony. The testimony of other activists including Amelia Boynton and Hosea Williams is part of the same document, although it is not included in the excerpt on this National Archives webpage.

Sharing their testimony would give students an accurate depiction of the events of Bloody Sunday, including the troopers' brutality, the protesters' courage, and the way that ordinary people fought for change. It is important to preview all primary sources before sharing them with students, as John Lewis's testimony includes racial slurs used against the protesters.

WHY PRIMARY SOURCES?

It may be tempting to stick to the textbook when studying graphic or violent content, with the rationale that it might be "easier" or "safer." However, it is dangerous to skirt the surface of the darker chapters of history if it means leaving students with an inaccurate or insufficient understanding of times when Americans have been denied liberty, justice, rights, and safety. Primary sources are a vital tool.

An article in the National Council for the Social Studies' *Social Education* journal helps explain why:

> Primary sources allow us to discover important details about horrific events of the past, especially the often-overlooked human response. For example, history textbooks make reference to shocking events of the past, but rarely do they provide insight into what people living at the time, who may not have been directly involved with the events, thought about those events—or what actions they took in response. Documents can help reveal those perspectives and actions.[9]

Primary sources can infuse the study of history with humanity. For example, laws were not just passed; they did not spring into existence out of thin air. *People* passed the laws—people with hopes and fears, virtues and vices, families and legacies. And countless other people argued about those laws, supported or opposed those laws, and felt happiness or anger about them.

The Library of Congress notes that primary sources are an effective way to immerse students in doing the vital types of thinking that are at the heart of studying history. Primary sources tend to show rather than tell, which lets the reader process the content in many rich ways. For example:

> In analyzing primary sources, students move from concrete observations and facts to questioning and making inferences about the materials. Interacting with primary sources engages students in asking questions, evaluating information, making inferences, and developing reasoned explanations and interpretations of events and issues.[10]

Students' critical thinking skills—not to mention their enjoyment of learning and understanding of history—grow immensely when we support them in tapping into their curiosity, making observations, drawing their own conclusions, and coming up with connections. Through primary sources, students also can understand different perspectives, which is another real-world skill applicable far beyond the history classroom. Doing so must include a diversity of voices beyond the powerful, wealthy, and well-known.

Providing historical context—the social, economic, political, and cultural circumstances that frame an event—will enhance students' understanding. When sharing this information, do not assume students know what was legal or illegal, what was normal or abnormal, what working or traveling or communicating was like at a certain point in history.

Teachers can provide context as an important pillar of support for students as they dive into primary sources, which provide fertile ground for rich inquiry. When studying the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, for example, consider starting with the following excerpt from a report about the event written by the American Red Cross:[11]

---

[9] Lee Ann Potter, "Teaching Difficult Topics with Primary Sources," *Social Education* 75, no. 6 (November/December 2011): 284–290, https://www.socialstudies.org/social-education/75/6/teaching-difficult-topics-primary-sources.

[10] "Getting Started with Primary Sources," Library of Congress, accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/.

[11] To learn more about the Tulsa Race Massacre, visit the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum at tulsahistory.org/exhibit/1921-tulsa-race-massacre/. Access the full report from the American Red Cross from the National Archives and Records Administration at catalog.archives.gov/id/157670060.

When the smoke had cleared it was found that

1256 buildings had been burned.

314 buildings (mostly homes) which were spared the torch, were looted and robbed of everything worth while.

10,000 (approximate) persons were homeless.

183 persons were in hospitals, practically all for gunshot wounds or burns.

531 other persons were seriously enough injured to require first aid medical or surgical care.

Many --- were dead. (Figures are omitted for the reason that NO ONE KNOWS.)

PROPERTY LOSSES.

A conservative estimate, based upon such data as has become available during a seven months period of relief work, places the losses on buildings, business stocks, household goods and personal property, at three million five hundred thousand dollars. (The only purpose of this estimate is to indicate the approximate size of the economic destruction.)

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS AND RELIEF.

In a situation such as this, which can better be imagined than described, it is not strange that the community instinctively turned to the American Red Cross.

True, the disaster was not "an act of God". It was "Tulsa made", but the American Red Cross, in accepting responsibility, generously and properly took the position that disaster had visited thousands of human beings, the majority of whom were innocent victims, helpless, and practically re-

-4-

sourceless. The "Greatest Mother" could not say no to such a challenge, where human need was so great and human suffering so evident.

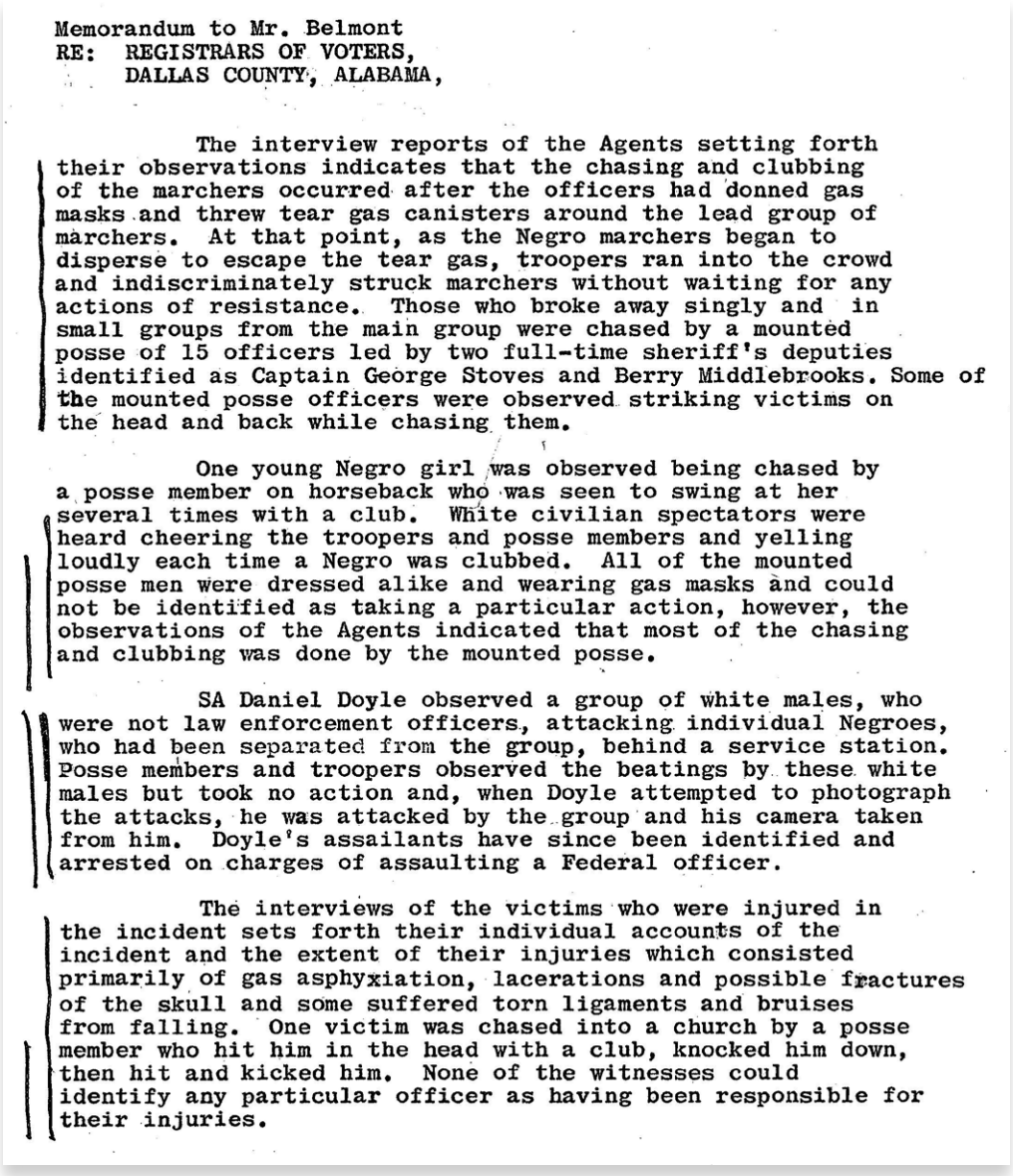
In addition to the wholesale destitution, the whole situation was aggravated by the destruction of morale among the victims. Thousands of them were literally frightened out of the city. Large contingents were found in Sapulpa, Claremore, Muskogee, Oklahoma City, and some were heard from at Kansas City on the north, Los Angeles on the west, Dallas on the south and New York on the east.

The significance of this "scattering" is that the whole relief situation was effected by the wandering of these people and the ultimate return to the site of their old homes, schools, churches and neighbors.

Excerpt from a report written by the American Red Cross detailing its disaster relief efforts in Tulsa, Oklahoma, from May 31 to June 1, 1921. Records of the American Red Cross, National Archives and Records Administration (NAID: 157670060).

Prompt students to generate questions and answer some as well. Both processes are beneficial in their own way. *What would students like to know about what transpired? What do they think were the motivations or objectives of the White perpetrators of the devastation? How might African Americans—even those who did not live in Tulsa—likely have reacted to this tragedy? What do students imagine were the economic effects of the massacre and destruction in the months and years that followed?*

Primary sources allow for open-ended thinking and exploration, making for a more impactful learning experience than a task in which all students are expected to come up with the same answers. Have students take a look at the following FBI memorandum that was issued after the 1965 Bloody Sunday attack on civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama.[12]



Memorandum to Mr. Belmont
RE: REGISTRARS OF VOTERS,
DALLAS COUNTY, ALABAMA,

The interview reports of the Agents setting forth their observations indicates that the chasing and clubbing of the marchers occurred after the officers had donned gas masks and threw tear gas canisters around the lead group of marchers. At that point, as the Negro marchers began to disperse to escape the tear gas, troopers ran into the crowd and indiscriminately struck marchers without waiting for any actions of resistance. Those who broke away singly and in small groups from the main group were chased by a mounted posse of 15 officers led by two full-time sheriff's deputies identified as Captain George Stoves and Berry Middlebrooks. Some of the mounted posse officers were observed striking victims on the head and back while chasing them.

One young Negro girl was observed being chased by a posse member on horseback who was seen to swing at her several times with a club. White civilian spectators were heard cheering the troopers and posse members and yelling loudly each time a Negro was clubbed. All of the mounted posse men were dressed alike and wearing gas masks and could not be identified as taking a particular action, however, the observations of the Agents indicated that most of the chasing and clubbing was done by the mounted posse.

SA Daniel Doyle observed a group of white males, who were not law enforcement officers, attacking individual Negroes, who had been separated from the group, behind a service station. Posse members and troopers observed the beatings by these white males but took no action and, when Doyle attempted to photograph the attacks, he was attacked by the group and his camera taken from him. Doyle's assailants have since been identified and arrested on charges of assaulting a Federal officer.

The interviews of the victims who were injured in the incident sets forth their individual accounts of the incident and the extent of their injuries which consisted primarily of gas asphyxiation, lacerations and possible fractures of the skull and some suffered torn ligaments and bruises from falling. One victim was chased into a church by a posse member who hit him in the head with a club, knocked him down, then hit and kicked him. None of the witnesses could identify any particular officer as having been responsible for their injuries.

Excerpt from a memorandum entered into FBI Case File #44-28492, following the Bloody Sunday March in March 1965. Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (File #44-28492), National Archives and Records Administration.

[12] Learn more and access this and other files related to the FBI's response to the Bloody Sunday March at "FBI Case File #44-28492: Bloody Sunday," Rediscovering Black History Blog, National Archives and Records Administration, February 24, 2015, https://rediscovering-black-history.blogs.archives.gov/2015/02/24/fbi-case-file-44-28492-bloody-sunday/#jp-carousel-1438.

Ask your students: *What phrases stand out to you? Why? What words would you use to describe the memorandum (memo)? How would different groups of Americans have reacted upon seeing photographs of this event in the newspaper?*

To demonstrate their understanding, students could write news articles that they imagine could have appeared in mainstream newspapers or African American newspapers. They could write a poem or a mock journal entry as if they were a bystander at the scene or a relative of someone who was involved. Or they could assess whether the events in Tulsa in 1921 or Selma in 1965 align with certain laws, Constitutional amendments, or cherished American values.

These sources and activities could facilitate an in-depth understanding of horrific events without exposing students to excessively harsh content.

CONCLUSION

It is widely accepted that educators should not cross certain lines in presenting graphic or violent content.[13] But we also know that we create problems that extend far beyond our classroom if we sugarcoat African American history, touch only superficially on the hardships, and downplay the choices of those who perpetrated injustice. As educators, we need to strike a balance and tell a more complete story.

Furthermore as educators, we should ask ourselves: what does it mean to teach history well? What do you want your students to leave your classroom with in terms of content, thinking skills, and mindset? As you prepare your students for the real world, how can your class help them understand our country today and productively engage in the issues and events that will emerge in coming years?

Answering these questions is not easy. Hopefully, in reading this article, you have found some ideas that will help you to do so.

[13] To learn more, see Fitchett, Paul G., Lisa Merriweather, and Heather Coffey, " 'It's Not a Pretty Picture': How Pre-Service History Teachers Make Meaning of America's Racialized Past through Lynching Imagery." *The History Teacher* 48, no. 2 (2015): 245–69. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43264403.

"Black History is American History:" Choosing African American History Topics for NHD Projects

LATOYA BAILEY WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR OF TEACHING & LEARNING, THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

"Black history is American history."

This is a slogan that has been made popular over the past few years. In fact, it has gained so much traction that in May 2020, former Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge of Ohio introduced H.R. 6902, the Black History is American History Act, to the 116th Congress. The bill requires that institutions such as colleges, universities, libraries, and museums include Black history in their teaching of American history to be eligible for certain grants administered by the Department of Education. The bill has been reintroduced in both the 117th and 118th Congresses by Congresswoman Joyce Beatty of Ohio.

Why would the Congresswoman introduce such a bill?

"Black history is American history, and it is under unprecedented attack," Beatty said. "Black history is crucial to understanding the complexity of our nation's past, present and future—not just slavery and civil rights. By incentivizing schools and educators to teach Black history in the classroom, we can all learn important lessons in our country's ongoing journey toward creating a 'more perfect Union' for all Americans."[1]

All too often, students are taught only about the African American "all-stars," such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, and Jackie Robinson. Some students learn only about these and a select few others during Black History Month. They may learn an overused and, unfortunately, whitewashed view of slavery or the Civil Rights Movement. Some students may be assigned a project on the 300 uses of the peanut or have to write a paper about Barack Obama becoming the first Black president of the United States—but then not much else in African American history.

More often than not, the teaching and learning of Black history prioritizes narratives of trauma or struggle. This practice of simplifying and narrowing Black history neglects the depth and breadth of the Black experience. Many Americans never learn about the thousands of Black people, events, inventions, and stories that are integral to building the United States. Moreover, African American students crave and deserve to see themselves reflected in their learning.

How, then, can teachers, who are often bound by the confines of state standards and a lack of time, help all students discover more of the varied history of African Americans and the lessons that can help create a 'more perfect Union' for us all?

[1] U.S. Representative Joyce Beatty, "Congresswoman Beatty Introduces Black History Is American History Act," updated February 1, 2023, accessed July 14, 2023, https://beatty.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congresswoman-beatty-introduces-black-history-is-american-history-act-0.

GETTING STUDENTS TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX

Often, when assigning a project, teachers confine students to a narrow list of topics chosen by the teacher instead of allowing students to choose what fits their interests. Usually, those are "traditional" history topics that may fit state standards for that class but, too often, are boring or irrelevant to students.

Participating in National History Day® (NHD) helps change that dynamic by giving students agency in their topic selection. The annual theme (nhd.org/theme) is broad enough that students can find a topic relevant to them and that fits their interests or passions. When students can choose their own topic, there is far greater buy-in to participate. This, in turn, makes learning history more engaging.

It is easy, however, for students to default to the tried and true topics because they have often not been encouraged to delve more deeply and take the path less traveled. Teachers can change that by having students brainstorm five areas of interest, reminding them to think "outside of the box." Students can be encouraged to identify activities they are involved in or areas they are passionate about, such as sports, dance, or music. Using a graphic organizer such as a funnel can then help them narrow down their area of interest to a smaller topic that fits the theme. They often will need to do some preliminary research to find the best topic for their project.

Neither teachers nor students should worry about a topic not being "historical enough." As long as there are both primary and secondary sources to be found, it works! A good rule of thumb is that the topic should be at least 15 to 20 years old so enough sources are available to conduct meaningful research.

DELVING DEEPER AND DISCOVERING LESSER-KNOWN TOPICS

When thinking about topics on war or military history, people often overlook women and African Americans. If they do think of those two groups, they usually go to Rosie the Riveter or the Tuskegee Airmen.

A lesser-known group from World War II was the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. The Six Triple Eight, as they were known, was the only African-American women's unit to serve overseas. This group of over 800 women, led by Major Charity Adams, lived by the motto, "No Mail, Low Morale," as they successfully worked to clear years of backlogged mail for American servicemen at the war's end in Europe. Their efforts went unsung for 70 years after the war. The unit finally gained recognition in the last ten years and, in 2022, was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. In 2023, U.S. Army Fort Gregg-Adams, the home of the U.S. Army Quartermaster School, was renamed, in part, in her honor.[2]

If a student is interested in politics, Reconstruction is a great era to investigate. Many African Americans were elected to state offices in the years following the Civil War. Oscar J. Dunn, born into slavery in New Orleans around 1822, would become the first African American to be elected lieutenant governor in the United States in 1868. Further, he became the first African American to serve as acting governor in 1871. When he died in office, the Louisiana state legislature elected another African American, PBS Pinchback, to replace him as lieutenant governor. Pinchback, a political foe of Dunn, also served a stint as acting governor.

[2] To learn more, visit home.army.mil/greggadams/redesignation.

Left: Major Charity Adams and Captain Abbie Campbell inspect the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion in England on February 15, 1945. National Archives and Records Administration (NAID: 531249).

Right: An albumen print carte-de-visite portrait of Lieutenant Governor Oscar J. Dunn of Louisiana, c. 1868. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (2018.62).

SPORTS, LITERATURE, MUSIC, FASHION, CULTURE . . . THE LIST GOES ON

A great topic does not have to be confined to politics or war. African Americans have touched every facet of the United States and its history. Many stories are waiting to be discovered and shared.

Take, for example, the 2023 NHD theme of *Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas*. A student who loves baseball could gravitate to Jackie Robinson, as he easily fits the theme by being the first African American to play Major League Baseball. With some encouragement, that student could discover a lesser-celebrated African American who also broke frontiers in baseball like Satchel Paige. Paige had many firsts, including being the first person who played in the Negro leagues to pitch in the World Series, which he did at the age of 42.[3]

Alice Dunbar-Nelson was a writer that few know of today. Born in 1875, Nelson lived a fascinating life as a teacher, poet, journalist, writer, critic, and activist. She advocated for women's suffrage and fought for anti-lynching legislation, among other causes. Nelson was a member of the Harlem Renaissance and had a complex personal life; she was married three times and had affairs with women—all of which she spoke of in her diary that was published posthumously in 1984. Her first marriage was to Paul Laurence Dunbar, one of the first African American writers to achieve international recognition.[4]

Consider the 2024 NHD topic of *Turning Points in History*. For students who love music, and rap music in particular, the song "Rapper's Delight" is a fun topic that highlights a turning point in the history of music. Released in 1979, this song by the Sugarhill Gang was not the first rap song, but it was the one that introduced hip-hop to a wider audience. It is preserved in the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.[5]

---

[3] Learn more about Satchel Paige's career at baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/paige-satchel.

[4] Today, Alice Dunbar-Nelson's papers are archived at the University of Delaware. Learn more at library.udel.edu/news/2023/02/22/from-alice-the-annals-of-african-american-activist-and-artist-alice-dunbar-nelson/.

[5] For more information, visit the Library of Congress' Complete National Recording Registry Listing at loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/recording-registry/complete-national-recording-registry-listing/, and view the full list of songs granted the Grammy Hall of Fame Award at grammy.com/awards/hall-of-fame-award#r.

Left: Satchel Paige's 1949 baseball card from his time as a pitcher with the Cleveland Indians. Wikimedia Commons.

Right: A photograph of Alice Dunbar-Nelson. Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT LOCAL HISTORY

An often-overlooked area is local history. Every state, city, and town has many topics that are great options for NHD projects. This local history may not only be in a student's "own backyard" but may be a part of their own family history. The student could investigate why a school is named for someone or what the name or event is behind a historical marker. Their research process could start with a bit of family lore or by looking at family photographs. Or, a student could enjoy an event in their area and decide to investigate its origin. Students can ask a local librarian to suggest local history topics related to African American history. Students can see if their local historical society can suggest collections of local primary sources.

For example, one of the most visible cultural traditions of the New Orleans area is the second line. The New Orleans second line today can be seen at the end of most weddings or other special events and on any given Sunday, but it originated during the late nineteenth century as a way for social aid organizations, pleasure clubs, or benevolent societies to celebrate a deceased person being laid to rest. It is a parade, with a brass band and the group originating the event, making up the "main line." The "second line" is made up of the people who follow to enjoy the music.[5]

[6] Learn more about the second line from The Historic New Orleans Collection at hnoc.org/publications/first-draft/symposium-2021/where-do-second-lines-come-origins-go-back-more-200-years.

RESPECTING HISTORY

Because Black history and culture are a part of the American fabric, all students should feel empowered to choose topics in African American history. It is imperative that teachers impress upon students the importance of giving every story and person the respect they deserve.

That includes being knowledgeable and aware of cultural appropriation and negative stereotypes. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines cultural appropriation as "the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society" and a stereotype as "a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing."

Just as we would not want someone to wear a Native American headdress as a Halloween costume, students should not think it is okay to wear blackface to portray someone who is African American when doing a performance. It cannot be taken for granted that all students know this or what blackface is. Blackface is when a person uses paint or another substance to blacken their face to portray a Black person, usually in a negative, stereotypical way. About one-third (34 percent) of Americans think that it is always or sometimes acceptable for a White person to use makeup to darken their skin to appear to be a different race as part of a Halloween costume, according to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey.[7] Although these issues could most likely occur with students doing a performance for National History Day, all students doing projects on African Americans in any category should be aware.

CONCLUSION

Working on a National History Day project can be the perfect vehicle for students to delve more deeply into the richness of African American history. With prompting and guidance, students can go beyond the usual or default topics to find lesser-told stories—and make them into ones every American can and should learn.

[7] Anna Brown, "About a third of Americans say blackface in a Halloween costume is acceptable at least sometimes," Pew Research Center, February 11, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/11/about-a-third-of-americans-say-blackface-in-a-halloween-costume-is-acceptable-at-least-sometimes/.

Teaching Enslaved People's History

SUSAN EVA O'DONOVAN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

The histories of enslaved people have come a long way over the past several decades. Jim Crow-era thinking dominated mainstream scholarship for the first half of the twentieth century, and scholars often dismissed the historical significance of Black people, particularly those who were enslaved. Contemporary scholars have not only integrated the study of slavery into mainstream history but also encouraged us to view enslaved individuals in new, more insightful ways.

No longer assuming that legal social status has ever been a valid predictor of one's humanity, historians now recognize what slaveholders had known all along: that enslaved people were powerful historical actors, agents of change no less than the free people around them. Enslaved people, this new scholarship tells us, laid the groundwork for today's nation, sometimes literally when we think in terms of railroad lines or the levees that tame the lower Mississippi River. It is a cognitive and interpretive shift that works to educators' advantage. Rather than teaching about a category called "slaves" and the institution that enthralled them, abstractions that distance our students from the lived realities of human bondage, we are now free to teach about a people: women and men, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends and foes, all of whom were, at their core, irrepressibly human with all that status entails.

Much of this interpretive shift has occurred since the 1960s when the Civil Rights Movement forced us to reassess Black Americans' roles in creating and shaping our nation. At first, this scholarship asserted that Black Americans had a past worth examining. In short order, historians were branching out, using ideas and questions developed in other academic fields to better understand enslaved people's histories. Among the first of these branches began the work of distinguishing Black women's experiences in bondage from those of Black men, a strand of scholarship that has further developed into nuanced investigations into the gendered lives of enslaved people. A more recent example of scholarship from this subfield includes Thavolia Glymph's *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* published in 2008.

Inspired, in part, by economic and technological events during the early 2000s, many historians have also been digging into the records of slave traders. As they unraveled a commercial system that became the model for today's integrated supply-chain management practices, they discovered that enslaved people flatly refused to play the part of a commodity. Instead, as demonstrated in Walter Johnson's *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (2000) and Calvin Schermerhorn's *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (2011), enslaved Americans weaponized the slave market whenever they could. Some played sick while standing on the auction block, hoping to lower their appeal and maybe avoid sale altogether. Others, like Solomon Northup, met and made friends and even plotted rebellion while chained together on coffle lines or locked inside slave traders' jails.[1] Maria Perkins, whose letter is accessible online, seized an opportunity in 1852. She attempted to use the existing market dynamics to her advantage by urging her husband to persuade his owner to purchase her and their youngest child. In this situation, she viewed the market as a potential way to keep her immediate family together.[2]

[1] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/northup/northup.html.

[2] "'My Master Has Sold Albert to a Trader': Maria Perkins Writes to Her Husband, 1852," History Matters, George Mason University, accessed July 13, 2023, https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6380/.

Some of the most exciting scholarship has resulted from a late twentieth-century effort to draw together histories of economics and enslavement. It has long been understood that cotton of the kind enslaved people produced on plantations from the Carolinas to Texas drove the antebellum national and global economies. A driving force in a tightly integrated system that raises its own questions about the antebellum existence of a "North" pitted against a "South," New England textile mills and tool makers, New York clothiers, shipping companies, insurance companies, and banks both domestic and foreign, raked in enormous profits from the cultivation and sale of cotton. In turn, southern planters used their cotton profits to purchase finished products from North American and European merchants.

What we only more recently have come to see is that those same enslaved people who could wreck enslavers' sales by holding their bellies and feigning sickness could just as easily wreck a year's crop. Exploring this reality has revolutionized the study of American slavery. No longer casting enslaved people as prisoners pinned to plantations by the weight of a slaveholder's oppression (and the always looming threat of the whip), historians are beginning to understand that enslaved people did much more than simply produce the cotton that filled their owners' coffers—and the nation more generally. They drove the wagons, crewed the boats, ran endless errands, and, in a sense, functioned as the primary gears in a vast global machinery. American planters needed enslaved labor, and enslaved laborers knew it.

None of these observations are meant to say that enslaved people had garnered enough power to revolt against and forcibly squash the system of human bondage, at least not yet. But it did mean they had the means to interfere with and sometimes upset the plans of their enslavers. Shelling out a part of cotton's profits to purchase runaway advertisements in regional newspapers was not an expense slaveholders liked to pay, neither did losing a part of a crop to a wave of runaways or having a teamster return to their home full of news gathered while they were depositing the cotton in a nearby city. Enslaved people, their owners knew, had the means to change the rules of what was always an awful game. Ira Berlin was among the first American historians to put this tension and its consequences into words when, in his magisterial study, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (2000), he likened the relationship between enslaver and enslaved to the "meanest of all contests," one in which slaveholders held the best cards, but never held *all* the cards. "Slaves held cards of their own," Berlin reminds us, and they were never averse to using them.

Berlin's analogy plays right into educators' hands. In inviting our students to search the historical record for the "cards" or forms of leverage that enslaved people had at their disposal, we can raise a host of subsequent questions. When answered, these questions can continue to open new understandings about the practice of human bondage on U.S. soil. Did women, for instance, hold different cards than men? Did the kind of crop enslaved people made or the work they were ordered to do outside of the field affect what and who they knew and what they could do to advance their interests? How about marital status? What difference did marriage make? And what about urban workers and factory workers of the kind Calvin Schermerhorn studies? Did these two groups share aspirations, or did life experiences give them different sets of priorities and different means to achieve them? We know from her letter that Maria Perkins was literate and that she used those skills in a desperate attempt to protect her small and vulnerable family. But since she and her remaining child were so close to the free states, why didn't she just run away? What does it mean that she found her solution in the same slave market that otherwise threatened to fracture her family? And how did she learn to read and write in the first place? Such questions drive our scholarship as well as that of our students, helping us all better understand our national past.

All this asking and answering questions about the experiences of enslavement has never been easier. Because few enslaved people left their own written record, studying their history has always demanded a lot of digging and heavy applications of critical thought as we fight through a labyrinth of primary sources, a wide range of perspectives, competing priorities, and more than a little prejudice. While we still must ask those basic critical questions about authorship, agenda, perspective, and purpose, the proliferation of digital archives eases our work considerably. Going to the archives now often means going no farther than the nearest tablet or computer. But as is the case with all historical research, the quality of our primary sources determines the quality of our finished projects.

Archives maintained by federal, state, and educational institutions remain our best bets. Like the highly acclaimed Southern Historical Collection (library.unc.edu/wilson/shc/) at the University of North Carolina (now largely digitized), government and educational archives are staffed by librarians and archivists who know how to manage their collections without altering the content or meaning of the primary sources they contain.

Most of the sources we have that pertain to the history of enslavement and enslaved people have not been transcribed, making them a little more challenging for students to use. But reading sources in the original is not all that difficult. As my students are quick to figure out, the alphabet has only 26 letters, and between a process of elimination and an eye to context (historical and within the document itself), most original sources can be made to yield their secrets.

For instance, I routinely assign Prince Woodfin's 1853 letter to his owner because it challenges many of the preconceived ideas students (and adults) have about enslaved people and slavery.[3] Writing from Tuolumne County, California, at the height of the gold rush, Woodfin, an enslaved man, reports to his master about how he has been getting along since the latter returned to North Carolina. After filling his master in on the latest gold mining news, Woodfin commands the man to "State to me whether you had rather I would Send you what gold dust I make between now and next winter or if you reather [*sic*] I sell the gold and bring you the money." Once my students "crack the code" (which usually does not take more than a few minutes), they are off and running, asking those questions that yield the most information, not least of which is "What happened out West that made an enslaved person believe and behave as though they were equal to an owner?" and "What's going on that Woodfin didn't tell his owner how much gold was actually in his pocket?"

As much as my own historical work depends on original copies of my sources, any transcriptions that can be found make our teaching much easier. Please feel free to use them. But as is the case when working with originals, ensure that historically literate specialists have produced the transcriptions your students use. Distinguishing between an "a" and a "c" is often an intellectual decision that requires a level of contextual knowledge that, once again, only comes from years of study. Similarly, a misplaced comma can turn the meaning of a sentence, or even a document, inside out and upside down. Even names can be tricky. "Judy" is commonly a woman's name today; that was not necessarily the case in the antebellum era. And imagine the damage to our understanding if the transcriber got the dates wrong! With that in mind, the same advice applies to transcriptions as to the originals: work only with those that come from reliable institutions and were produced by knowledgeable scholars. George Mason University's digital archive, *Many Pasts* (historymatters.gmu.edu/browse/manypasts/), is one of many that meets that criteria and is replete with accurately rendered primary sources that cover the length and breadth of the American past, including its history of slavery.

[3] Letter, Prince Woodfin to his master, April 25, 1853. Nicholas Washington Woodfin Papers, 1795–1919, 1950 (folder 4), Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina, https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/01689/#folder_4.

Antebellum slave narratives are another fine source. Nowhere near as problematic as those collected under the auspices of the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s, this earlier set of narratives was written by people who lived in enslavement for decades and whose memories had not been distorted by time. Many are available on Google Books. Many more have been made available at *Documenting the American South* (docsouth.unc.edu/), a vast library of nineteenth-century narratives maintained by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. On this site, you will find the familiar: works by Frederick Douglass, including *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom*,[4] Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl*,[5] and William Wells Brown's *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave*.[6] You will also find hundreds of more obscure but no less insightful and compelling life stories there, including Benjamin Drew's compilation of mini-narratives that he assembled from interviews conducted among the fugitives who made their way to Canada in the 1840s and 1850s.[7] These narratives draw us into the lives of enslaved Americans. When read against one another, they also underscore the complexity of the experiences of enslavement. There was no single slavery, just as there is no single freedom, a realization that invites a deeper consideration of historical context and change over space and time.

Many university and government archives have developed primary sources for classroom and public use. Sometimes, these materials take the form of complete lessons.[8] In other instances, archives transcribe and digitize individual documents that they think have classroom applications, such as Vilet Lester's 1857 letter to her mistress, which you can find on the Duke University library website.[9] Other institutions digitize around a theme, and though the primary sources found on the *Freedmen and Southern Society Project* (freedmen.umd.edu/sampdocs.htm) webpage were produced during or shortly after the Civil War, they can be read backwards into an era in which the system of slavery was alive and well. For instance, the letter Maryland resident John Boston sent to his wife in January 1862 raises questions about how, as an enslaved man, he came to know that the shortest path to personal freedom ran south, not north.[10] Savvy students can mine another post-Civil War digital archive, *Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery* (informationwanted.org), to gain a deeper understanding of enslaved people's families, what those families looked like, how they were constituted, how often they were broken apart by sale, and the lengths to which people in slavery, as well as freedom, went to keep them intact. Personally, I'm itching for an opportunity to ask my students to transfer information from these ads into a spreadsheet where they could then sort them by region, date, years since last seen, etc. Analysis like this almost always pays off in new insights and new understandings.

Local newspapers in the antebellum era, primarily accessible through *Chronicling America* (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov) and state and university library websites, contain a wealth of information. They cover a wide range of local news, including grand jury reports that shed light on the activities of enslaved individuals, advertisements for slave labor, and accounts of legislative efforts to control the enslaved workforce, which was crucial for generating profits.

---

[4] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself,* Documenting the American *South*. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html and Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html.

[5] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html.

[6] William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown47/brown47.html.

[7] Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery . . .*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/drew.html.

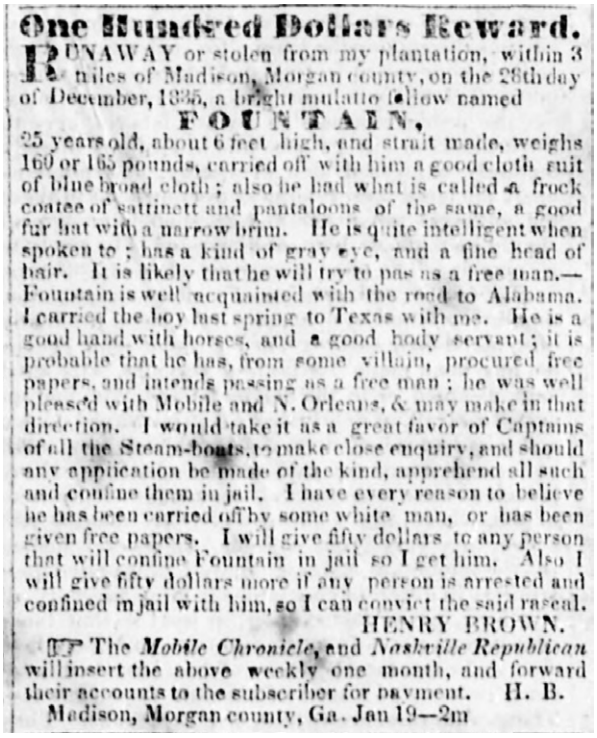
[8] "The Making of African American Identity," National Humanites Center, accessed July 13, 2023, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm.

[9] Vilet Lester Letter, 1857, Joseph Allred Papers, Duke University, https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/lester/.

[10] "Maryland Fugitive Slave to His Wife," Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland, http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/boston.htm.

Enslavers turned to newspapers to communicate that the people they held in bondage ran away, and every issue of every local and regional paper contained at least one runaway slave advertisement, a wide assortment of which are featured on the Cornell University website, *Freedom on the Move* (freedomonthemove.org/). Typically straightforward pieces of historical evidence, advertisements provide information about a person's physical characteristics, age, dates of departure, and thoughts about where the so-called "fugitive" may have gone. However, some offer a good deal more. Reading like miniature biographies, they lay out the fugitive's past, their skills, their family connections, and their ambitions.

The advertisement that slaveholder Henry Brown took out in *The Georgia Journal* when his enslaved worker, Fountain, ran away is a good example of the latter.[11] In it, we learn Fountain's age, weight, and posture, the clothes he wore when he absconded, and the color of his eyes. We learn that Fountain was a skilled horseman and a personal servant. Most importantly, we learn something about the places Fountain had been and the things he had seen. Fountain, the advertisement tells us, was a well-traveled man who, in accompanying his owner from Georgia to Texas and back again, had developed a fondness for big city life. "He was well pleased with Mobile and N. Orleans, & may make in that direction," Brown cautioned those who read the advertisement.



One Hundred Dollars Reward.

RUNAWAY or stolen from my plantation, within 3 miles of Madison, Morgan county, on the 28th day of December, 1835, a bright mulatto fellow named

FOUNTAIN,

25 years old, about 6 feet high, and strait made, weighs 160 or 165 pounds, carried off with him a good cloth suit of blue broad cloth; also he had what is called a frock coatee of sattinett and pantaloons of the same, a good fur hat with a narrow brim. He is quite intelligent when spoken to; has a kind of gray eye, and a fine head of hair. It is likely that he will try to pas as a free man.—Fountain is well acquainted with the road to Alabama. I carried the boy last spring to Texas with me. He is a good hand with horses, and a good body servant; it is probable that he has, from some villain, procured free papers, and intends passing as a free man; he was well pleased with Mobile and N. Orleans, & may make in that direction. I would take it as a great favor of Captains of all the Steam-boats, to make close enquiry, and should any application be made of the kind, apprehend all such and confine them in jail. I have every reason to believe he has been carried off by some white man, or has been given free papers. I will give fifty dollars to any person that will confine Fountain in jail so I get him. Also I will give fifty dollars more if any person is arrested and confined in jail with him, so I can convict the said rascal.

HENRY BROWN.

☞ The *Mobile Chronicle*, and *Nashville Republican* will insert the above weekly one month, and forward their accounts to the subscriber for payment. H. B.

Madison, Morgan county, Ga. Jan 19—2m

***The Georgia Journal*, Milledgeville, Georgia, January 26, 1836.**

Finally, there are countless volumes of published collections of primary sources, planter journals, and travelers' memoirs, all of which can shed additional light on enslaved people's pasts. Not quite as accessible to today's students (conducting research in books may require a trip to the library!), they are nonetheless invaluable sources of information that no historian of the enslaved past would dare ignore. Frederick Law Olmsted's *A Journey through the Southern Backcountry* and James Redpath's *The Roving Editor: Or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* are both antebellum travel memoirs, and they both include accounts of long conversations between the authors and the enslaved people they encountered, conversations that nearly always included probing questions about the enslaved person's experiences in bondage and their hopes for the future.[12] The Freedmen and Southern Society Project (freedmen.umd.edu/fssppubs.htm) has produced six main volumes of primary sources to date along with several smaller collections, all of which, like John Boston's letter to his wife, say as much about slavery as they do freedom. Another source that requires a trip to the library is a searchable microfilm collection (dlas.uncg.edu/petitions/) created by the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, historian Loren Schweninger. The result of years spent mining courthouse collections across the former slaveholding states, the *Race and Slavery Petitions Project* brings together more than 18,000 legislative and county petitions on virtually any subject related to enslaved people, slaveholders, and slavery. If detail is what you want, detail is what you'll get when you dive into this collection!

[11] "One Hundred Dollar Reward," *The Georgia Journal* [Milledgeville, Georgia], January 26, 1836, https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn82014251/1836-01-26/ed-1/seq-4/.

[12] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (Boston: Harvard University, 1860), https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Journey_in_the_Back_Country/aHIYAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0 and James Redpath, *The Roving Editor Or, Talks with Slaves in Southern States* (Boston: Harvard University, 1859), https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Roving_Editor/qfKuKEPr8u0C?hl=en&gbpv=0.

Finding enslaved people's history is no longer the hard part. Neither, frankly, is teaching it. In starting our studies with an acknowledgment of our shared humanity, the job becomes far less fraught. Anyone who is a part of a family today can relate to Maria Perkins's fear of losing hers. Anyone who has traveled for work or vacation can relate to Fountain's careful study of the places he saw. In starting our studies at the level of people (something easily achieved with our ever-growing access to primary sources), it becomes clear that people are people, no matter the horrors inflicted upon them. We are no longer confined to studying a faceless, nameless, generic "slave." We can now study individual women, men, children, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, workmates, and friends. We can ask what they did, where, when, with whom, why, for how long, and under what kind of conditions—questions that lie at the heart of any attempt to do social history. In asking and then finding answers to these questions, students' understanding of a people who played a significant role in the making of this nation can only deepen. But please tell your students to expect to be surprised. Studying history from the bottom up often changes and challenges the conventional story. We see the past through a different set of eyes, a shift in perspective that almost invariably leads us to new knowledge. This is, of course, the whole purpose of studying the past: to get to know that foreign land from which we all arose.

To learn more about National History Day's Expansive History Initiative,go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.

Slavery and Emancipation: A Complex Comparison

AUTHOR: Al Wheat, Director of Education, Mississippi Department of Archives and History

GUIDING QUESTION: According to formerly enslaved people, what were the hardships faced not only during enslavement but also after emancipation?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will use three oral histories to compare the experiences of three people who experienced enslavement, Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow era. Students will compare and contrast the perspectives of these three people and discuss how the realities led to the Great Migration.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- Explain how enslaved African Americans showed resilience while enslaved and during Reconstruction;
- Analyze the realities of how African Americans had their freedoms stripped away after Reconstruction ended; and
- Compare and contrast the realities of life during and after enslavement.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- D2.His.8.9-12 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTIONS

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Ebenezer Brown, August 16, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Amite County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/amite/436/brown-ebenezer

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/washington/436/oliver-mark

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Susan Jones, December 20, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Panola County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/panola/436/jones-susan

SECONDARY SOURCES

Article, Neil R. McMillen, "WPA Slave Narratives," February 2005
Mississippi History Now, Mississippi Department of History and Archives
https://mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/wpa-slave-narratives

Video, "Historical Context: The End of Reconstruction," 2024 [6:34]
National History Day
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPZU6x_2NZo

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- Oral History Comparison Chart
- Oral History Comparison Chart Answer Key

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- Read the article "WPA Slave Narratives" for background information.
- Preview all primary sources to determine appropriateness for your students.
- Print one copy of the Oral History Comparison Chart Answer Key for teacher use.
- Make one copy of the Oral History Comparison Chart for each student.
- Provide copies of the primary and secondary sources.
- Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- Arrange the classroom for group work.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: INTRODUCTION (20 MINUTES)

- Introduce the WPA Slave Narratives to students. Teachers may choose to have students read the article or summarize the key points. Ask students:
  - *Why are these oral histories valuable to our understanding of the time period (1850s to 1930s)?* (This collection preserves the stories of enslaved people from their perspective; they show a variety of perspectives.)
  - *What are some of the limitations of these sources?* (Told by elderly people many years after the event happened; most were children during the events; they were recorded by people who could stereotype or look down on the interview subjects.)
  - *What was happening in the 1930s that might have influenced the perspective of the people being interviewed?* (Jim Crow segregation, sharecropping, Great Depression, severe poverty, high unemployment.)
- Explain to students how the interviews they will read were written (reconstructed from notes, they attempted to use phonetic spelling to capture accents and speech patterns, interviewers lacked training and recording equipment, etc.)

ACTIVITY TWO: RESEARCH (45 MINUTES)

- Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- Play the video "Historical Context: The End of Reconstruction" [6:34] to help set the oral histories into historical context.

Teacher Notes:

- Remind students that whenever possible, we want to listen to people in history and use primary sources to learn about the experiences of those who lived during that time.
- When conducting lessons about enslavement, take time to teach your students how to use proper terminology (using terms like enslaved people, enslaved laborers, and not "slaves"). Read the article "What's in a Word? Being Thoughtful about Terminology in Historical Writing" in this resource for additional support.
- Read the article "Teaching Enslaved People's History" in this resource to learn more approaching teaching this topic.
- While this material is not graphic, it does describe violent actions and traumatic situations. Read the article "Navigating Sensitive Content While Meeting Students' Needs" in this resource for suggestions on teaching material with graphic or violent content.
- Preview all content in this lesson to ensure it is appropriate for your students. Consider using the redacted version of the primary sources.
- Remind students that formerly enslaved people (just like all groups of people) had very different experiences and a range of reactions to the same events.

- Distribute the Oral History Comparison Chart and assign students to read one of the three oral histories.
  - **Teacher Tip:** The three primary sources can be used to differentiate instruction. Ebenezer Brown's account is the longest and includes the highest level of phonetic spelling. Mark Oliver's account is slightly shorter and written in a clearer transcript. Susan Jones's account is the shortest and clearest to understand. Teachers may choose to assign student groups one, two, or all three interviews. Teachers may also choose to pair students on the more difficult reading (if appropriate).
  - **Editor's Note:** This lesson includes two versions of these sources. The second one is a version of the sources with a particularly offensive word blacked out after the first letter.
- Give students time to read and complete the appropriate column in the chart. Circulate and provide support as needed. Use the Oral History Comparison Chart Answer Key as a resource.
- Give students time to summarize their oral histories with their group members. If appropriate, review with the class and complete the chart on the board.

Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- **Enslavement in America (1619–1865)**
- **Reconstruction (1865–1877)**
- **Black Codes (1865–1866)**
- **The Mississippi Plan (1875)**
- **Works Progress Administration (1935–1943)**

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Students can submit their Oral History Comparison Chart.
- Students can complete a three-part Venn diagram to compare and contrast the experiences of Ebenezer Brown, Mark Oliver, and Susan Jones.
- Students can develop a list of questions that students would like to ask Ebenezer Brown, Mark Oliver, and Susan Jones to get a better understanding of their lives both during and after enslavement.
- Students can use oral histories to develop a list of why many African Americans chose to leave the southern states during the Great Migration. What factors pushed them out? What factors pulled them to move North and West?

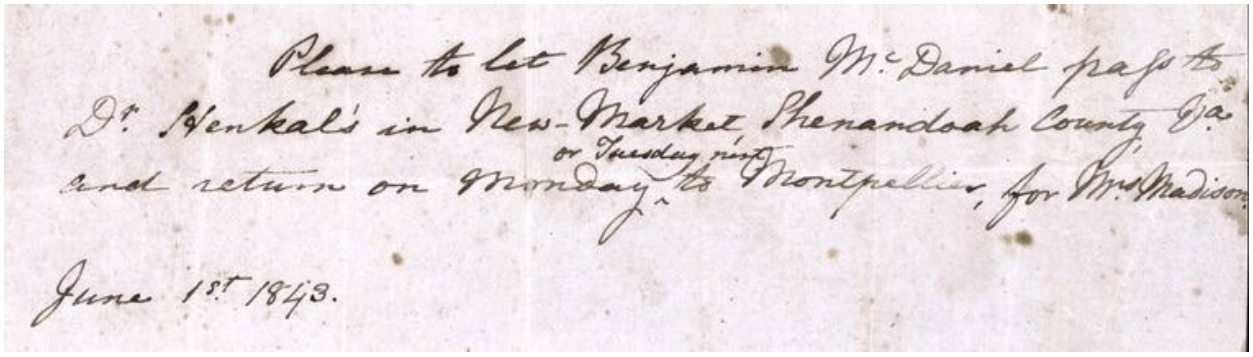
To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.

Migration and Movement in History

GRETCHEN SULLIVAN SORIN, PH.D., DIRECTOR & DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, COOPERSTOWN GRADUATE PROGRAM, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ONEONTA

English jurist William Blackstone's treatise on the rights of individuals greatly influenced the writers of the Constitution of the United States. "Personal liberty consists in the power of locomotion," he wrote, "of changing situation, or moving one's person to whatsoever place one's own inclination may direct, without imprisonment or restraint, unless by due course of law."[1]

The freedom to move about as one pleases—mobility—(or, as Blackstone called it, locomotion) is at the heart of a free society and has always been essential to American democracy. Imagine what it would be like to have restrictions on movement between communities or states. Not only did the freedom of mobility enable the growth of American free society, but it also enabled the nation, whether for good or ill, to grow from its original population along the East Coast and spread to the Pacific Ocean through immigration and migration. It made Manifest Destiny possible—the idea that White Americans were divinely ordained to settle across the entire North American continent, a practice that led to the removal and destruction of many Native American populations.


Please to let Benjamin Mc Daniel pass to
Dr. Henkal's in New-Market Shenandoah County Va
or Tuesday next
and return on Monday to Montpelier, for Mrs Madison
June 1st 1843.

Tight restrictions were placed on enslaved African Americans when they traveled. They were required to carry passes that identified the time and date of their absence from their master's property to prove that they had permission and were not running away. In Charleston, South Carolina, enslaved persons wore metal tags that permitted them to travel. New York Public Library (b19115609).

From the moment that enslaved Africans stepped onto the New World, their owners controlled their mobility. To travel alone, enslaved African Americans required a pass, which might be a handwritten slip of paper or a metal tag that gave them permission to leave their owner's property. Slave patrols, men and sometimes women who volunteered for the job, patrolled their community's streets at night looking for African Americans who ran away or who were gathering together. These slave patrollers checked passes and hoped to intimidate those considering running away. They also hoped to prevent enslaved African Americans from fomenting rebellions by keeping them from gathering. Many enslaved men and women lived their entire lives on the property of their owners. The freedom of movement was denied to them.

[1] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Absolute Rights of Individuals* (1753), 134.

Artist Winslow Homer became one of the most significant artists of the nineteenth century. As a young man, hired by *Harpers' Weekly*, he found himself fascinated by the African Americans who followed the Union troops and by the colorful uniforms of the Zouave units. He often depicted both in his sketches and paintings. The son of an abolitionist mother, he depicted runaway slaves sympathetically, unlike most other artists of the period who demeaned African Americans with stereotypical images. Here, in an 1875 watercolor, a soldier in a Zouave uniform shares the water in his canteen with a child who has escaped enslavement. Courtesy of The Arkell Museum.

African Americans who chose to run away from enslavement showed great courage and grit. Often hiding by day and traveling at night, they stole themselves from slavery. Some made their way to the Underground Railroad and the assistance of abolitionists who helped them reach freedom in the northern states or Canada. Others made their way to freedom without this assistance. Most enslaved people who could run away were young, single men. There were instances of women fleeing from slavery, but it was much more difficult for women, especially if they had children in tow. Fugitive slaves devised creative methods to reach freedom. Henry "Box" Brown mailed himself in a shipping crate from slavery in Virginia to freedom in Philadelphia. He endured rough rides with only a small container of water and some biscuits to sustain him. In 1848, William and Ellen Craft devised an ingenious plan to escape servitude in Georgia. Ellen, who had light skin, disguised herself as a sick White man traveling with William, "his" supposed manservant. To avoid having to sign her name, she placed her arm in a sling. After several harrowing experiences and near detection, they arrived in Philadelphia on Christmas Day and later traveled to Boston.

During the Civil War, many enslaved persons ran away to reach Union lines, believing that it was a route to freedom. Early in the conflict, some Union officers, not knowing what to do with the so-called "fugitives," returned them to their owners, viewing them as property. However, General Benjamin Butler, an attorney, believed that as property of states that illegally seceded from the Union, enslaved persons should be considered contraband and not returned to their previous enslavers. Butler's policy stuck, and thousands of enslaved persons who asserted their right to freedom by running away achieved freedom by reaching the advancing Union lines. Butler's policy on the battlefield ultimately helped to pave the way for emancipation.

With the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the official legal end of slavery, many African Americans did not travel or could not travel because they had no place to go. They knew no other life. Many could not read. Freedom did not make them free. At this time, the vast majority of the Black residents of the nation lived in the Southern states. These states reinstituted a new method of keeping African Americans in place, working on farms, and producing cotton and other crops for plantation owners. Former slaveowners "permitted" their formerly enslaved families—the people with no place to go—to remain on their land in exchange for a considerable portion of the crops that they produced. This system, called sharecropping, kept the formerly enslaved families poor and dependent. At the same time, Jim Crow restrictions on movement, the denial of voting rights, the segregation of public accommodations, as well as restrictions on education combined to make life in the South untenable for Black Americans. The Ku Klux Klan, White Citizen's Councils, and others used violence and intimidation to keep African Americans "in their place."

The end of Reconstruction in 1877 brought an end to the federal troops' protection of the South. Coupled with the possibility of obtaining their own tracts of land, African Americans fled to Kansas because of its reputation as a free state. The Homestead Act offered the promise of land grants, and Kansas held a special place in the hearts of Black Americans as the place that John Brown and his sons defended from pro-slavery activists. Known as Exodusters, these migrants compared their plight to the Biblical flight to freedom recounted in Exodus. As formerly enslaved people, they were among the first to leave the South and move north in large numbers to claim their rights as American citizens to the freedom of movement and the determination of their fates.

In the early twentieth century, the Great Migration began. It was the largest movement of any group within the borders of the United States. African Americans left the rural South for the urban North in large numbers, and this migration would continue for decades. Northern relatives urged Southern friends and family members to leave the South and resettle in the North. Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* encouraged African Americans to come to the North to take well-paying factory jobs and escape the worst segregated conditions.

As many as six million African Americans relocated to cities in the North and West, including Chicago, Detroit, Newark, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. Conditions in these cities were not perfect. The new residents faced discrimination in housing and education, as well as some segregation in public accommodations. But life was better.

Lutcher, La

May 13, 1917

Dear Sir:

I have been reading the Chicago defender and seeing so many advertisements about the work in the north I thought to write you concerning my condition. I am working hard in the south and can hardly earn a living. I have a wife and one child and can hardly feed them. I thought to write and ask you for some information concerning how to get a pass for myself and family. I dont want to leave my family behind as I cant hardly make a living for them right here with them and I know they would fare hard if I would leave them. If there are any agents in the south there havent been any of them to Lutcher if they would come here they would get at least fifty men. Please sir let me hear from you as quick as possible. Now this is all. Please dont publish my letter, I was out in town today talking to some of the men and they say if they could get passes that 30 or 40 of them would come. But they havent got the money and they dont know how to come. But they are good strong and able working men. If you will instruct me I will instruct the other men how to come as they all want to work. Please dont publish this because we have to whisper this around among our selves because the white folks are angry now because the negroes are going north.

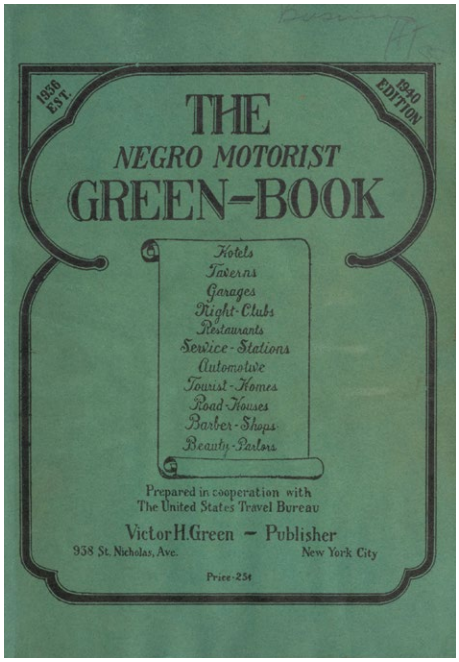
The *Chicago Defender*, one of the most prominent African American newspapers, urged Black residents in the South to relocate to northern cities with articles about good jobs and a better life. The *Defender* published dozens of letters from individuals in the South seeking employment and instructions on how to get North. This transcription includes the original spelling and capitalization.

Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company and inventor of the Model T automobile, is well known for his antisemitic beliefs, which hurt the American Jewish community, but he was willing to hire Black men to work in the Ford factory, albeit doing the dirtiest jobs. Many African Americans who migrated to Detroit during the Great Migration made good wages at the Ford plant and could support their families. Employers like Ford helped facilitate the movement of African Americans into the middle class. With their wages, they could buy automobiles and other consumer goods. The automobile gave important independence and increased mobility to African Americans since travel by bus and train throughout the United States remained segregated. Every Black family who could buy a car bought one. Automobiles became the preferred method of travel.

The power of movement provided by the automobile also facilitated the modern Civil Rights Movement. Cars enabled protestors to support successful boycotts by providing a way to transport people to work and keep them from riding on buses. They did not lose their jobs but could support the boycott. The Montgomery Bus Boycott succeeded because Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other planners purchased a fleet of cars and used public pressure to bankrupt the bus company while enabling local Black residents to continue to get to their jobs. They successfully desegregated the city bus company.

Not wanting to lose their cheap labor force, local businesses and plantation owners sought to prevent "the Negroes" from going North. Many African Americans had to escape from the South under cover of darkness. They traveled by bus and train and, if they were lucky, by automobile, carrying their most precious possessions and seeking freedom, a living wage, and good schools for their children. This family arrived in New Jersey with their possessions strapped to the car. Library of Congress (2017761088).

As the automobile grew in popularity, so did the enthusiasm for travel. African American families, like other Americans, wanted to explore the vast United States, take their children on vacation, and see the country's natural wonders. Many who had moved to the North also traveled each year, at least once, back to the South to visit family and friends. They remained connected to their southern roots. But, when they traveled by train or bus, modes of transportation often segregated into the 1950s and early 1960s, they felt humiliation, distress, fear, and even violence. Bus drivers threatened them, sometimes with guns, if they did not sit in the back of the bus or forced them to enter the bus at the rear door. Train conductors pushed them into the rarely cleaned "Negro car."



***The Negro Motorist Green Book*, one of many African American travel guides, gave peace of mind to Black travelers and provided national advertising for hundreds of small mom-and-pop businesses. 1940 edition, Rare Books Collection, The New York Public Library.**

The negative experiences of some travelers sparked many specialized travel guides and brochures designed to help African American travelers traverse the country in comfort and safety. *Travelers' Guide, The Bronze American, The Go Guide*, and the popular *The Negro Motorist Green Book* aided travelers by listing hotels and motels, restaurants, beauty parlors and barbershops, automotive repair shops, and tire stores—any businesses that might be needed along the road and that would welcome Black patrons. Black travelers knew that by stopping at the places in these travel guides, they would not be turned away or treated cruelly because of the color of their skin. These travel guides remained popular until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which opened all public accommodations to African Americans. By the end of the 1960s, even *The Negro Motorist Green Book* , the most long-lasting of the guides, was out of business. These guides provided models for travel guides for other groups who felt uncomfortable when traveling or who experienced discrimination.

Ironically, with the legal end of segregation and the end of the travel guides, many African American businesses also closed. While some Black customers still patronized them, competition from major hotel chains and popular restaurants cut deeply into these businesses. At the same time, the building of interstate highways, often through Black neighborhoods, helped to destroy or reduce the size of African American communities. Urban renewal, a process by which governmental agencies seized or purchased private property to "improve" it or redevelop it, became a popular method to restore urban areas. Most often, downtown neighborhoods or poor or immigrant neighborhoods where the residents had the least political power were the places chosen for renewal.

The denial of the freedom of movement from the time that the first Africans stepped ashore in the New World has made the ability to travel and move about without restrictions a thread that runs throughout Black history. From the forced travel from Africa to the desire to escape slavery by running away to the flight from the South to the North during the Great Migration, migration and movement characterize Black life and Black agency. In recent years, a report completed by the Brookings Institution indicates that a different exodus is in progress: many college-educated African Americans are now moving, in a sort of reverse Great Migration, to warmer southern and western states. Attracted by growing job opportunities, growing Black communities, and ties to family and friends, this new migration represents the next phase of the African American story and the desire to seize the American dream.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

- Alison Rose Jefferson, *Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era*
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*
  ibiblio.org/ebooks/Douglass/Narrative/Douglass_Narrative.pdf
- Frederick Douglass, *et al.*, *Slavery: Not Forgiven, Never Forgotten–The Most Powerful Slave Narratives, Historical Documents & Influential Novels*
  google.com/books/edition/Slavery_Not_Forgiven_Never_Forgotten_The/YdBxDgAAQBAJ
- *The Green Book* Digital Collection, The New York Public Library
  digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-green-book
- Gretchen Sorin, *Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights*
- Henry Louis Gates, *Stony the Road, White Supremacy and the Rise of Jim Crow*
- Ilyon Woo, *Master, Slave, Husband, Wife: An Epic Journey From Slavery to Freedom*
- Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*
- Nell Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present*
- Nell Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*
- *Sundown Towns*, Tougaloo University
  justice.tougaloo.edu/sundown-towns/
- William H. Frey, "A New 'Great Migration' Is Bringing Black Americans Back to the South," The Brookings Institution
  brookings.edu/articles/a-new-great-migration-is-bringing-black-americans-back-to-the-south/

To learn more about National History Day's Expansive History Initiative,go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.

Exodusters: Hope for The West

AUTHOR: Amy Page, Moriarty High School, Moriarty, New Mexico

GUIDING QUESTION: How did the settlement of all-Black towns empower African Americans to shape their own independence and success despite the realities of hardship and racialized oppression?

OVERVIEW

After analyzing secondary and primary sources, students will determine how the Homestead Act (1862), in conjunction with the 1866 Civil Rights Act and Fourteenth Amendment (1868), contributed to the development of all-Black towns in the West. By researching one town, students will examine the western expansion and homesteading in the West from the perspective of individuals, often referred to as Exodusters, who fled oppression in the South for the promise of new freedom they hoped to find in all-Black towns in the West.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- Describe how political, social, and economic factors related to racial oppression in the post-Civil War South gave rise to the Exoduster migration;
- Evaluate how the promise of prosperity and opportunities created by the Homestead Act, the 1866 Civil Rights Act, and the Fourteenth Amendment impacted the development of all-Black towns in the West; and
- Connect major events and people within the Exoduster migration, explore the communities they settled in, and explain their legacies.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- 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.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTIONS

"Black Homesteaders Project" Primary Source Collection
National Park Service
https://npgallery.nps.gov/SearchResults/812830b1e0d1411cb6a6437035932991?view=grid

Chronicling America
Library of Congress
https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/

SECONDARY SOURCES

Article, "African American Homesteaders in the Great Plains"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/articles/african-american-homesteaders-in-the-great-plains.htm

Article, "Blackdom New Mexico"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/places/blackdom-new-mexico.htm

Article, "Dearfield Colorado"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/places/dearfield-colorado.htm

Article, "DeWitty Nebraska"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/places/dewitty-nebraska.htm

Article, "Empire Wyoming"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/places/empire-wyoming.htm

Article, "Nicodemus Kansas"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/places/nicodemus-kansas.htm

Article, "Sulley County Black Homesteader Community"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/places/sully-county.htm

Video, "Historical Context: Exodusters," 2024 [4:34]
National History Day
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9u2ssAMb7uE

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- Exoduster: Hope for the West Mini Exhibit Student Research Packet
- Project Assessment Rubric

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- Make one copy of the Exoduster: Hope for the West Mini Exhibit Student Research Packet for each student.
- Organize students into groups of three to six students each. The assignment has three components, so in larger groups, students will work in pairs to complete some or all of the tasks.
- Arrange the classroom for group work.
- Organize materials (paper, pens, scissors, tape, glue) students can use for creating resources.
- Allocate space for exhibits (maximum size 40" wide x 30" inches deep). These can be table-top surfaces or wall space.
- Gather 3x5" index cards (one for each student).

Teacher Notes:

- Read the article "Migration and Movement History" in this resource to help set the lesson in the context of modern scholarship.
- Remind students that whenever possible, we want to listen to people in history and use primary sources to learn about the experiences of those who lived during that time.
- When conducting this lesson, take time to teach your students how to use proper terminology (Black migrants, African American laborers) and not to use collective terms (like "Blacks") to describe a group of people based solely on their race. Read the article "What's in a Word? Being Thoughtful about Terminology in Historical Writing" in this resource for additional support.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: INTRODUCTION (15 MINUTES)

- Show the introductory video "Historical Context: Exodusters" [4:34] to the students.
- Lead a brief discussion to solidify student understanding of how the Homestead Act opened up new opportunities for immigrants, women, and members of minoritized populations to own land and encouraged the promise and development of all-Black communities.
- Specify that all-Black communities and the contributions of Black Americans are integral to the history of the development of the American communities, education, and businesses, and the reshaping of the West.

ACTIVITY TWO: RESEARCH (45 MINUTES)

- Divide students into groups of three to six students each and assign them one of the following communities:
  - Blackdom, New Mexico
  - Dearfield, Colorado
  - DeWitty, Nebraska
  - Empire, Wyoming
  - Nicodemus, Kansas

- Sulley County Black Homesteader Community, South Dakota

- Distribute one Exoduster: Hope for the West Mini Exhibit Student Research Packet to each student. Explain to the students that they will be learning about the people and development of their assigned community.
- Explain that students will use resources from the National Park Service and the Library of Congress to research and create a mini-exhibit telling the history of the community they are researching.
- Begin by asking students to read the article "African American Homesteaders in the Great Plains" and respond to the guided reading question.
- Direct students to use the graphic organizer in the research packet to organize their research. They can compile research using:
  - the links to their assigned community at the end of the "African American Homesteaders in the Great Plains" article;
  - the Black Homesteaders Project Primary Source Collection; and
  - Chronicling America (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).
- Circulate and assist as needed.

ACTIVITY THREE: CREATING A MINI EXHIBIT (45 MINUTES)

- Museum exhibits tell stories through a collection of documents and artifacts. To tell the history of each community, groups will need to consider and include elements of each of the following aspects of the history of each community, including the:
  - racialized oppression in the post-Civil War South leading to the Exoduster Migration;
  - promise of new lands, greater freedom, and prosperity in the West;
  - physical, economic, and societal hardships of building and sustaining the community;
  - community's prosperity and success; and
  - community's legacy.
- Direct each student group to create three different types of sources from the list below that collectively tell the story of the community they researched. Students may select from the following options:
  - Diary or journal
  - Newspaper article
  - Photo album
  - Diorama or model
  - Advertisement or broadside
  - Political cartoon
  - Portrait or sketch that depicts the community and/or community members
- Each source must contain at least three historical facts about the community they are researching. Students may integrate primary sources into creating elements (such as a photo album). However, there must be student-generated words and explanations to accompany the primary sources.
- Final exhibits should include:
  - A one paragraph summary of 60–90 words introducing and providing a **brief** overview of the community.
  - One paragraph summary of 40–70 words explaining why the Exodusters left the South.

- Three student-created artifacts based on historical research that integrate at least three facts to tell the story of the community.
- One 3x5" index card exit slip from each student addressing the following:
  - In what ways were the dreams and promises of a new life and freedom for the Exodusters fulfilled in the community you researched?
  - What dreams and promises were not fulfilled and why?

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Teachers can assess the exit slips attached to the exhibit.
- Students can create maps to tie the exhibits together and compare and contrast the experiences of the Exodusters who settled in different places.
- Students can expand these exhibits later in the school year to other surrounding communities to look at the impact of the Great Migration or other historical events or trends.
- Students can do a gallery walk and leave "comment cards" (sticky notes) to provide positive and constructive feedback on exhibits.

Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- **Reconstruction (1865–1877) and the rise of Jim Crow laws**
- **The Exodusters**
- **The Homestead Act (1862), the Civil Rights Act (1866), and Fourteenth Amendment (1868)**
- **The Tulsa Race Massacre (1921)**
- ***The Green Book* (published 1936–1967)**

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.

African Americans: Pursuit of Equality

EVAN HOWARD ASHFORD, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ONEONTA

Teachers hold the potential to present history in a nuanced and multifaceted manner and motivate students to learn fascinating perspectives on United States history. One way to accomplish this feat is to present African American history within its proper context to the formation of the United States. For students to understand history, they need a starting reference to help them grasp the goals of any given societal group that lacks power and representation.

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution serve as the perfect starting points to frame how African Americans were active players in ensuring that they had access to the rights and liberties that form the backbone of the United States democracy. Starting with these documents can also highlight how individuals and groups sought to restrict African American access to these rights and liberties. The founding documents detailed what rights and freedoms were due to the inhabitants of the United States. From the colonial era to the beginning of the twentieth century, African Americans sought to hold the United States government accountable to these documents. Rather than make arguments based on racial lines, African Americans rooted their fight for representation and participation in their humanity as lawful citizens of the country they called home.

Educators should possess the ground-level knowledge that centers African American agency within the United States historical narrative. Scholars of Black Studies and History have written great works that provide a holistic view into the long fight for freedom, equality, and inclusion. This article explores African American agency from the colonial period to the twentieth century and references important scholarship and resources that can aid teachers in their classroom instruction.

CLAIMING HUMANITY IN SLAVERY

Since the colony of Virginia established the first laws creating race-based slavery in 1641, enslaved Africans developed a strategy to humanize their chattel status. They sought to seize as much control of the institution of slavery as possible to create an existence where enslaved people could assert themselves as free-thinking people entitled to reap the benefits of personhood. Slavery was a condition placed upon enslaved Africans and their descendants; slavery was not their identity. It is important to stress this concept so that this group is not presented solely through the lens of the people who enslaved them. Works such as *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America, Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, and *American Negro Slave Revolts: Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Gabriel, and Others* explain that enslaved people developed an identity similar to the slaveholding class and similarly constructed their lives.

The slaveholding class possessed the greatest access to freedoms and rights. By knowing how the system of slavery operated, enslaved people learned how to negotiate with slave owners to better their living conditions. Enslaved people understood their personhood and used labor negotiation to access improved treatment and rights within the slave system. Tactics such as slowing down work, refusing to work, destroying property, or rendering oneself incapable of work were acts of resistance that caused work stoppages and impacted slavery's profitability.[1] When the Founding Fathers wrote in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal, the words did not escape enslaved people. They had long developed a mindset that positioned them no less than any other person.

DEMANDING RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

The ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1787, in conjunction with the Declaration of Independence, laid the foundation for which African Americans held the United States government accountable for ensuring rights to all people. The Constitution makes no reference to slave or slavery; however, the Three-Fifths Compromise allowed Southern states to count their slaves as 3/5 of a person.[2]

Despite the abolition of slavery in northern states, free Black people in the North faced limited freedoms. They advocated for the abolition of many forms of inequality, which included rejecting colonization and voter disenfranchisement. The scholarship of Benjamin Quarles and James and Lois Horton underscores the importance of Black intellectual agency in the early nineteenth century. Free Black people banded together to tackle issues that members of their communities faced. They took control of their causes because they did not trust that others would do it for them. The evolution of the Black press provided an invaluable platform and voice. *The Colored American, The Mirror of Liberty,* and *The North Star* captured the spirit and politics of the time and serve as valuable primary resources today. [3]

Analyzing state constitutions and court rulings provides a first-hand account of how and why Black people used the law to fight injustices—but also how the law was used to prolong injustices. Obtaining access to uninhibited suffrage was the first step toward a society where equality was not just a notion but a fact. Abolition became more than abolishing slavery but abolishing inequality.[4] Abolitionists' greatest threat was not public opinion but the courts. The courts played a critical role in hindering the full enjoyment of rights and liberties. Northern state legislatures either limited or fully eliminated Black men from the ballot box. In the 1837 *Hobbs v. Fogg* case, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled "that a free negro or mulatto is not a citizen within the meaning of the constitution and laws of the United States, and of the state of Pennsylvania, and, therefore, is not entitled to the right of suffrage" after William Fogg, a Black man, sued based on his right to vote being violated.[5]

---

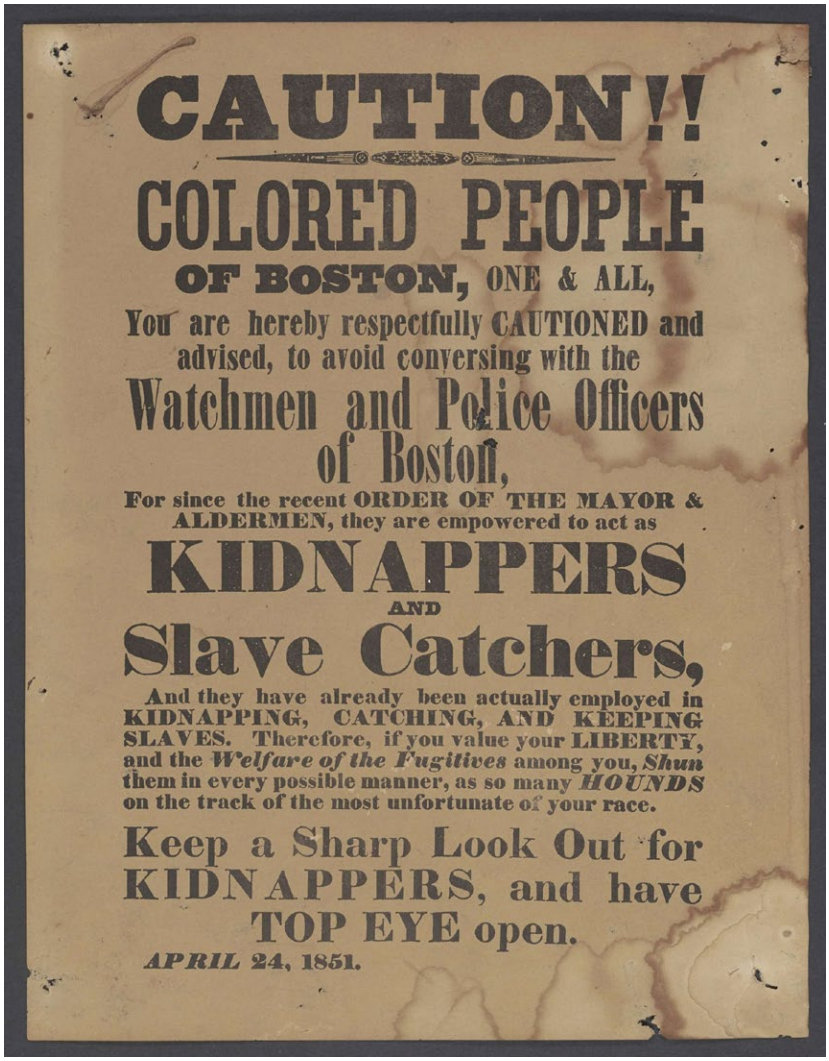
[1] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, Press, 1998), 34–38. Berlin also discusses the slaveholding class stripping away rights from enslaved peoples. This point is important because Herbert Aptheker wrote that slaves believed that liberty belonged to all people, not just White people. Eugene Genovese. *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3, 5–6, 217–218, 317; Herbert Aptheker. *American Negro Slave Revolts: Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Gabriel, and Others* (New York: International Publishing Co., 1983), 18–19, 83–84, 141–142.

[2] John Hope Franklin and Evelyn Higginbotham, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 100–101.

[3] James O. Horton and Lois Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 125, 129, 139; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 87. David Walker's, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html) and Robert Young's *Ethiopian Manifesto*: *The Black Abolitionist Papers Vol. I: The British Isles*, 1830–1865 provide primary accounts of the politics of slavery during the antebellum era.

[4] Quarles, *Black Abolitionist*, 168–169. Also see Martha Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) for an intersectional analysis of how Black women sought to include women's issues within the larger debate for race equality.

[5] Franklin and Higginbotham, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 162–163.



An April 24, 1851 poster warning the "colored people of Boston" about policemen acting as slave catchers. Papers of Anne Spencer and the Spencer Family, University of Virginia Special Collections (14204).

The Hobbs case exemplified the call-and-response struggle for civil rights. Black people's calls for freedom often led to a response that limited freedoms. The Underground Railroad, a complex system that aided escaping slaves to freedom, disrupted the slave institution and played a key role in a Fugitive Slave Act being passed. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act required all individuals to participate in the return of escaped slaves, even in free territory.[6]

When Dred and Harriet Scott sued for their freedom after living in a free state, the Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) that no Black person, free or enslaved, was a citizen and had no rights or access to democratic processes.[7] These legislative and judicial milestones resulted from Black people's demands to change the status quo.[8]

[6] "The Fugitive Slave Act (1850)," National Constitution Center, accessed March 10, 2023, https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/the-fugitive-slave-act-1850.

[7] "*Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857)," National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dred-scott-v-sandford.

[8] See Hanes Walton Jr.'s *Black Republicans: The Politics of the Black and Tans* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1975) for a discussion of how before being firmly affiliated with the Republican Party, African Americans understood their alliance to any party was their opportunity to create a platform that would benefit the race. The Republican Party was eager to have African Americans to build their numbers but had little interest in tackling the issue of slavery or the Fugitive Slave Act. Another valuable resource is the 1989 film, *Glory*, which chronicles the debate of the Union using Black soldiers in Civil War combat. The film showcases the desire for Black peoples to assist in their freedom struggle.

Engraving of a photograph of Dred and Harriet Scott, c. 1857, published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 27, 1857. Library of Congress (2002707034).

LIBERATION IN THE AGE OF EMANCIPATION

Teaching the difference between emancipation and liberation is crucial for teachers to explain the continued Black freedom struggle after the Civil War. Emancipation and liberation are not interchangeable. The post–Civil War era was a struggle for liberation. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery (except as a criminal punishment). The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments gave citizenship and ballot protections. As the Constitution expanded, so did Black people's expectations that their rights and liberties be respected and protected. Legislation did not equate to compliance. While legally free, the United States struggled to create a society rooted in equality because many White people would not accept being equal to Black people.

The racialization of U.S. society cemented the concept of racial superiority in the American psyche. Black Codes subjected African Americans to a near replicate of the slave institution. African Americans constructed their lives along the lines of their constitutional protections. They purchased land, built schools, created community organizations, formed positive interracial partnerships, and participated in politics to cement their presence at the local, state, and federal levels.[9] As African Americans continued to etch their pathways in U.S. society, anti-Black forces created mechanisms to curtail their forward advancement.

.

[9] See W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*; Leon Litwack's *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*; and Evan Howard Ashford's *Mississippi Zion: The Struggle for Liberation in Attala County, 1865–1915* for a nuanced examination of the active role African Americans took to establish the foundations of liberation.

The evolution of Jim Crow society grew from the successes that African Americans achieved in liberating themselves in slavery's aftermath. Jim Crow sought to firmly establish racial hierarchy. After the Supreme Court overturned the 1875 Civil Rights Act, states passed laws establishing color lines in public spaces such as streetcars, parks, and theaters. States stripped funds from African American schools to increase the quality of White education. During the 1890s and continuing into the twentieth century, Southern states passed new state constitutions that targeted voting. Literacy tests, comprehension tests, residency requirements, and poll taxes headlined the new requirements aimed to eliminate the influence of African American voters. These tactics alone could not eliminate educated and economically stable African Americans. The disenfranchisement of Black people's influence in elections occurred with the primary system.[10] Jim Crow halted the United States' responsibility to uphold its framework of liberty and justice for all.

Understanding the twentieth-century freedom struggle to defeat Jim Crow requires a familiarity with late-nineteenth century Black politics. The last decade of the nineteenth century centered on the accommodation versus agitation "debate." *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) made "separate but equal" the law of the land.[11] *Williams v. Mississippi* (1898) declared that Mississippi's voting regulations were constitutional.[12] These rulings eroded rights granted to African Americans in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The attack on Black freedoms left African Americans in a vulnerable position by making it difficult for the collective race to create thriving political, social, and economic identities and institutions because, at every turn, they were faced with some form of suppression.

Booker T. Washington, with whom accommodation is famously associated, assessed the southern African American situation and understood that Black Americans had to find a way to deal with White resistance until they were in a better position to take back control of their situation. By "accommodating," African Americans would provide additional time and opportunities to secure their rights by using the laws intended to oppress them, turning these laws against their oppressors Agitation served as a competing strategy to accommodation. African Americans, such as Ida B. Wells, W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and Timothy Thomas Fortune, believed that taking a slower pace, advocated by Washington, only emboldened those seeking to oppress the Black race.

Photograph of Booker T. Washington c. 1905. Library of Congress (2016857180).

[10] See Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Disenfranchisement of the Negro," *The Negro Problem: Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Others* (Milwaukee: Centennial Press, 2003), 24–26.

[11] "*Plessy v. Ferguson*," HISTORY®, updated January 11, 2023, accessed March 10, 2023. https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/plessy-v-ferguson.

[12] Amanda Brown, "*Williams v. Mississippi*," Mississippi Encyclopedia, accessed March 10, 2023. https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/williams-v-mississippi/.

Journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett exposed the reality of lynching and made it an international issue. African Americans understood that an organization would give them a voice to regain the rights taken from them. National organizations arose to respond to the loss of voting rights and the increased violence toward African Americans. The Afro-American League and National Afro-American Council were early attempts at national organizing.[13]

Photograph of Ida B. Wells-Barnett taken by Sallie E. Garrity, c. 1893. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (NPG.2009.36).

CONCLUSION

History is not one note, and teachers are positioned to add nuance to United States history by explaining how African Americans held the country accountable to protect all its citizens. While it is easy to frame their mission as a struggle, struggle is not always negative. Struggle indicates that a group is logically and intellectually making progress toward their goals, evidenced by the response from the dominant group seeking to maintain the status quo. African Americans of the nineteenth century framed the twentieth-century freedom struggle by making the civil rights question a referendum on how the United States presented itself to the world versus its domestic practices. The African American presence guaranteed they would always be active players in shaping U.S. democracy to live up to its true definitions of liberty and justice for all.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

- Shawn Leigh Alexander, *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP*
- Evan Howard Ashford, *Mississippi Zion: The Struggle for Liberation in Attala County, 1865–1915*
- Christopher James Bonner, *Remaking the Republic: Black Politics and the Creation of American Citizenship*
- Thulani Davis, *The Emancipation Circuit: Black Activism Forging a Culture of Freedom*
- P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson, Editors, *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century*
- Alton Hornsby, Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta*
- Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South*

To learn more about National History Day's Expansive History Initiative,go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.

[13] Shawn Leigh Alexander. *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 4–7, 26–27, 47, 69, 72. Other key readings on Black politics include *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography, Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion*, and *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. The National Association of Colored Women (NACW), founded by Mary Church Terrell, grew from the organizational success women enjoyed through the church. African American women found success by uniting women from all classes and showed that they would be instrumental in securing civil rights along race, class, and gender lines.

Expanding Inclusivity Through Constitutional Change

SUSAN GOODIER, PH.D., INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

The impetus to create a more expansive society by making changes to the Constitution has always come from the citizens of the United States, not from the legislature, the judiciary, or the executive branches of the government. Since the turn of the twentieth century, changes to the Constitution and the laws abolishing discriminatory practices have happened slowly, sometimes taking decades. The impulse and energy for those changes have come from African American people and their allies, as they continue to hold the government and the courts accountable to the citizens. The people who agitate for change have often risked a great deal; some even risk their safety or that of their families to change customs or the law. Even when the Constitution or laws are changed, it sometimes takes generations for the dominant society to accept the right of all people to full democratic participation.

The twentieth century opened many controversies related to the expansion of African American rights and responsibilities. The often violently enforced "system of racial segregation and African American disfranchisement" known as Jim Crow sought to support White supremacy and limit Black agency everywhere.[1] Although Jim Crow targeted Black citizens from the end of the Reconstruction Era, this system of institutional discrimination continued to dominate the first 60 years of the twentieth century. Virtually every social institution in the United States supported segregation, implying that people of color were somehow inferior to White people. This discrimination affected access to education, medical care, travel, housing, restaurants and hotels, and public restrooms throughout the United States. However, African Americans challenged White supremacy through the courts, on the streets, in stores, and in other public spaces.[2]

EXPANDING POLITICAL RIGHTS

Political rights expanded when women won the legal right to vote in 1920 after 70 years of campaigning. The Nineteenth Amendment states that the right to vote cannot be abridged because of sex. In practice, however, many women of color struggled to access this basic political right because individual states determine the specific details of voter eligibility. Native American women and men, barred from United States citizenship until 1924, continued to be denied access to the polls until the 1960s. African American women, particularly in southern states, suffered the same state-level discriminatory practices that African American men had suffered for decades. In addition, people of color who attempted to vote often faced hostility or violence from racist individuals at polling places. However, the challenges of accessing voting rights did not stop people of color from voting.

---

[1] *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from the Civil War to Civil Rights,* eds., Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

[2] For more on Black resistance to Jim Crow, see Dailey, Gilmore, and Simon, eds., *Jumpin' Jim Crow*; St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); and Gretchen Sorin, *Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights* (New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 2020).

From the 1910s until the 1970s, as many as six million African American people moved from the oppression of the South into the northern, midwestern, and western United States. This Great Migration afforded African Americans more economic opportunities, relief from laws "that would regulate every aspect of black people's lives," and freedom from the terrorism of a revitalized Ku Klux Klan that targeted African Americans.[3] After settling in the North, African Americans pushed for fair housing, access to better education, integrated public transportation, and other rights available to U.S. citizens.[4] Some African Americans embraced Black nationalism and racial separation. Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) emerged as one of this movement's leaders and founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) to support a "back to Africa" movement. Many Black people found his views too controversial, but his ideology influenced the Black Power Movement.[5]

Episodes of lynching, a terrifying form of mob violence, increased following the end of Reconstruction and continued into the twentieth century. African American academics, such as Monroe Work (1866–1945), and journalists, including Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862–1931), collected data and wrote articles about lynching.

James Van Der Zee documented African American life during the Harlem Renaissance. This photograph shows a middle-class family in Harlem. The man was a member of Marcus Garvey's African Legion in 1924. Museum of Modern Art (SC2008.1.101). This image is used with permission. James Van Der Zee Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Richard Benson.

[3] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010), 40.

[4] In addition to Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, see Eric Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2002); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011); Marcia Chatelain, *South Side Girls: Growing Up in the Great Migration* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2015); and Herb Boyd, *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination* (New York: Amistad, 2018).

[5] For more about Marcus Garvey, see Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) and "Marcus Garvey," National Archives and Records Administration, accessed February 17, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/individuals/marcus-garvey. See also Marcus Garvey, *The Tragedy of White Injustice* (Eastford: Martino Fine Books, [1935] 2017).

Campaigns against lynching invoked the law as well as the Constitution. North Carolina Representative George Henry White (1852–1918), at the time the only African American in Congress, introduced an anti-lynching bill in the House of Representatives in 1900. Various legislatures introduced about 240 anti-lynching bills before the Emmett Till Antilynching Act, named after a 14-year-old African American boy who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, finally passed in March 2022.[6]

The founding of the interracial National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 offered another approach to resisting lynching and other forms of violence against African American people. Founded by W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary White Ovington (1865–1951), and others, the NAACP focused on court cases related to discrimination in employment, government, and education. The establishment of African American organizations, such as the Afro-American League, the Afro-American Council, the National Association of Colored Women, the Niagara Movement, and conferences for the Study of the Negro Problems predated the NAACP's founding, and the organization continues to hold the government and the court system accountable for equality for all U.S. citizens.

WORLD WARS AND THE GREAT MIGRATION

Two world wars took place in the first half of the twentieth century, and many African American women and men believed it was their responsibility to serve their country. About 200,000 African American men joined the U.S. Army during the First World War. However, despite their military training, many were forced to do heavy labor on the docks and railway lines in France rather than fight the German Army. The 369th Infantry Regiment fought with French troops rather than with the American division. The regiment proved itself in combat and received the *Croix de Guerre*, the highest military honor France could bestow, and 171 decorations for individual heroism. Lieutenant James Reese Europe (1881–1919), who led the 369th Harlem Hell Fighters Regiment band, became famous for introducing jazz to Europe.

Black women sought assignments as nurses, likely caring for fellow African American service members, and some of those who could "pass" as White served in hospitals and medical tents. Still, racist policies limiting medical assignments for most African American women made it difficult for them to provide medical care to Black soldiers. Addie Waites Hunton (1875–1943) and Kathryn Magnolia Johnson (1878–1954) succeeded in getting to France through their positions with the YMCA, and African American pianist and composer Helen Eugenia Hagan (1891–1964) entertained soldiers overseas.[7] The record of African American contributions was remarkable, despite discriminatory policies and behavior from the U.S. military and White soldiers.[8]

During World War II (1941–1945), more than a million African American women and men served in every branch of the Armed Forces. They conspicuously fought with distinction in every arena of war. Yet, as veterans, they continued to face civil rights issues at home.

---

[6] Devery S. Anderson, *Emmett Till: The Murder That Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017); Public Law No: 117-107 (Emmett Till Antilynching Actl), Congress.gov, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/55/text.

[7] Addie W. Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women With the American Expeditionary Forces* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Eagle Press, c.1920, https://archive.org/details/twocoloredwomenw00huntiala/page/n7/mode/2up.

[8] Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 118–20; J. Patrick Lewis, *Harlem Hellfighters* (Mankato: Creative Editions, 2014); Peter Nelson, *A More Unbending Battle: The Harlem Hellfighters' Struggle for Freedom in WWI and Equality at Home* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2009); Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I* (New York: Viking, 1991), especially, chapter 6, "The Black Record," 168–176.

Between the wars, African Americans engaged in the "New Negro Movement," an intellectual and artistic revolution known today as the Harlem Renaissance. Connected to the resurgence of civil rights activism, African American literature, poetry, dance, and music both reflected and sparked a renewed interest in African American culture. Cities such as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, D.C., and others in the West experienced the same thrilling cultural awakening.[9] Anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960), novelist James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938), poet Langston Hughes (1901–1967), artist Aaron Douglas (1899–1979), band leaders Louis Armstrong (1901–1971) and Duke Ellington (1899–1974), and numerous others helped many African Americans find opportunities in business and other professions. Art and racial pride helped Black people prove they had humanity and the right to equality, laying a foundation for increased civil rights activism.

POST–WORLD WAR II

African Americans challenged segregation in transportation, housing, and education. They also boycotted businesses that refused to cater to African American customers. By 1954, with the combined support of the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union, the Supreme Court finally ended the era of "separate but equal" in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).[10] African Americans defied segregation on buses when individuals, such as teenager Claudette Colvin (1939–), sat in "Whites only" sections. This strategy accelerated when Rosa Parks (1913–2005) was arrested after she refused to give up her seat to a White passenger in Montgomery, Alabama. She and other African American leaders organized a boycott of the buses in the city. In conjunction with the boycott, local activists challenged the legality of government-mandated segregation on buses in *Browder v. Gayle* (1956). Eventually, the case reached the Supreme Court, which declared such laws unconstitutional because they violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.[11]

The bus boycott's effectiveness prompted a new phase of the Civil Rights Movement, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) emerged as a leading figure. Influenced by the methods of nonviolent civil disobedience practiced by anti-colonial activist Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) in India, King encouraged these strategies even when he was abused, arrested, and his house was bombed. The charismatic King traveled millions of miles, gave hundreds of speeches, and wrote numerous articles and books. He was also arrested 20 times. Other leaders, such as Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977), suffered similarly. Hamer joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to help protect African American people's right to vote. Arrested and beaten while in jail, she suffered from her injuries for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, Hamer continued to agitate for voting rights, participation in political delegations, and, later, economic rights.[12] Many people, including young students, demonstrated for civil rights.

---

[9] For more on the national experience of the Harlem Renaissance, see Cary D. Wintz, "The Harlem Renaissance in the American West," Black Past, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/harlem-renaissance-american-west/. There are many books on the Harlem Renaissance, including Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (Mansfield Centre: Martino Fine Books [1925], 2015); *Black Women of the Harlem Renaissance Era,* eds., Lean'tin L. Bracks and Jessie Carney Smith (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017); Flannery Burke, *From Greenwich Village to Taos: Primitivism and Place at Mabel Dodge Luhan's* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016); Cary D. Wintz, *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1992); *The Harlem Renaissance in the American West: The New Negro's Western Experience,* eds. Cary D. Wintz and Bruce A. Glasrud, (New York: Routledge Press, 2011); and Wil Haygood, *I Too Sing America: The Harlem Renaissance at 100* (New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2018).

[10] "History: *Brown v. Board of Education* Re-enactment," United States Courts, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/history-brown-v-board-education-re-enactment.

[11] Donnie Williams and Wayne Greenhaw, *The Thunder of Angels: The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the People Who Broke the Back of Jim Crow* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 2007); "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," National Park Service, updated September 21, 2022, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.nps.gov/articles/montgomery-bus-boycott.htm.

[12] Keisha N. Blain, *Until I am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer's Enduring Message to America* (New York: Beacon Press, 2021); Debra Michals, "Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977)," National Women's History Museum, updated 2017, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer.

Lincoln Memorial Youth March for Integrated Schools, October 25, 1958. National Archives and Records Administration (NAID: 175539930).

The Civil Rights Movement drew attention from around the world. King won the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership and strategies in 1964. He donated his prize money to the Civil Rights Movement.[13] That same year, Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in public places, required integration in schools and other public institutions, and made discrimination in employment illegal.[14] The next year, Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which made it illegal to prevent African Americans from exercising their constitutional right to vote under the Fifteenth Amendment.[15] Tragically, in 1968, while preparing to lead another protest march, King was assassinated. Despite their grief at the loss of an important leader, African American people continued to agitate for equal rights.

The end of the 1960s finally saw the end of "legal" Jim Crow, and everywhere people took down signs designating separate facilities for African Americans. But that did not guarantee equality. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, founded in 1966, was a militant Black power organization. In addition to providing services, including transportation, food, and clothing, to the Black community, Panthers challenged the police, protected African Americans from violence, and confronted politicians.[16] By the 1970s, the Black Power Movement, a precursor to the present-day Black Lives Matter movement, emphasized racial pride, access to economic power, cultural and political institutions to celebrate African American achievements, and demands for colleges to offer Black

[13] "Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical," The Nobel Prize, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1964/king/biographical/.

[14] "Milestone Documents: Civil Rights Act (1964)," National Archives and Records Administration, updated February 8, 2022, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/civil-rights-act

[15] "Milestone Documents: Voting Rights Act (1965)," National Archives and Records Administration, updated February 8, 2022, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/voting-rights-act.

[16] "The Black Panther Party: Challenging Police and Promoting Social Change," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed February 15, 2023, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/black-panther-party-challenging-police-and-promoting-social-change.

history and studies courses and hire more professors of color. Since 2013, the Black Lives Matter movement, now global in scope, has continued this work, focusing on eradicating White supremacy and violence against African American people today.[17]

African American people broke many racial barriers in the 1980s. Michael Jackson's (1958–2009) album *Thriller*, released in 1982, is the highest-selling album of all time, and he continued to produce popular music, win awards, and engage in philanthropy through the 2000s. Alice Walker (1944–) won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction with *The Color Purple* (1983), and Vanessa Williams (1963–) was the first Black woman to be crowned Miss America. African Americans became astronauts, newscasters, talk show hosts, neurosurgeons, anthropologists, and football coaches. Many Black people also won elections and served in Congress, as mayors of major cities, and in various other political offices. Their advocacy for civil rights, as well as broader acceptance of African American people as professionals, continued into the following decade.

Even greater achievements mark the 2000s. The world celebrated the 2008 election of Barack Obama (1961–) to the Presidency. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 for his "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."[18]

Barack Obama, elected in 2008, served two terms as the first Black President of the United States. During his second term, he gave a speech at the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery and another at the dedication of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. This photo is from his remarks at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, 2015. Official White House Photo by Pete Souza.

[17] "Black Lives Matter," accessed February 10, 2023, https://blacklivesmatter.com/.

[18] "Barack H. Obama: Facts." The Nobel Prize, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2009/obama/facts/.

Increasingly, women of color are entering politics, helping to ensure equal rights for all citizens. Attorney Stacy Abrams (1973–) ran for governor of Georgia in 2018. Although she lost that race, she has become nationally recognized for fighting voter suppression, winning several awards.[19] In 2020, the people of the United States elected Joe Biden as president, who had selected Kamala Harris (1964–), the first woman and first woman of color, as his vice president.

CONCLUSION

Discrimination and violence against African American people continues. As of this writing, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 has passed the House of Representatives and is in the Senate for consideration. Most people in the United States, Black and White, are angry that police violence continues.[20] Nevertheless, most African Americans take their responsibility as citizens very seriously and continue to contribute to their communities and the larger society through education, voting, volunteering, donating to help those in need, and patronizing Black-owned businesses.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

- Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy*
- Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African-Americans, 1619–1990s*
- Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross, *A Black Women's History of the United States*
- Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*
- Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, eds. *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from the Civil War to Civil Rights*
- St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*
- Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*
- Clint Smith, *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*
- Gretchen Sorin, *Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights*
- Marjorie J. Spruill, *Divided We Stand: The Battle Over Women's Rights and Family Values That Polarized American Politics*
- Christopher Waldrep, *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era*

To learn more about National History Day's Expansive History Initiative,go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.

[19] Emma Rothberg, "Stacey Abrams (December 9, 1973–)", National Women's History Museum, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/stacey-abrams.

[20] Matthew Horace and Ron Harris, *The Black and the Blue: A Cop Reveals the Crimes, Racism, and Injustice in America's Law Enforcement* (New York: Legacy Lit, 2019); Andrea J. Ritchie, *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* (New York: Beacon Press, 2017); and "Mapping Police Violence," Mapping Police Violence, accessed February 10, 2023, https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/.

Reframing The "Master Narrative": A Simulation of The 1946-1947 President's Committee on Civil Rights

AUTHOR: Aditi Doshi, Van Nuys High School, Van Nuys, California

GUIDING QUESTION: During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1930s and 1940s, which rights did African Americans seek to gain, and how did they compel the United States government to secure these rights?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will integrate perspectives from various components of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1930s and 1940s and "testify" before President Harry S. Truman's 1946 President's Committee on Civil Rights.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- Identify the long Civil Rights Movement as a continuum of Black protest, with a focus on the 1930s and 1940s;
- Research and represent individuals and organizations involved in civil rights activities during the 1930s and 1940s; and
- Evaluate how the United States government could have more effectively taken responsibility for protecting the civil rights of African Americans in the 1930s and 1940s.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WH.11-12.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Brochure, *Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor, A Story of Unequal Justice: The Woman Next Door . . .*, c. 1945
Library of Congress (018.00.01)
https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/rosa-parks-in-her-own-words/about-this-exhibition/early-life-and-activism/committee-for-equal-justice-for-mrs-recy-taylor

Harry S. Truman, Executive Order 9808, December 5, 1946
Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum
https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/executive-orders/9808/executive-order-9808

National Urban League, "Civil Liberties Implications of the Employment, Housing, and Social Adjustment Problems of Minorities," April 1, 1947 (excerpt)
National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 239790436)
https://catalog.archives.gov/id/239790436

Newspaper article[1], "Segregated Regional College Doomed by McCready Decision"
Miami Times [Miami, Florida], April 29, 1950
https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004231/1950-04-29/ed-1/seq-15/

Oral history interview, Frances Mary Albrier, "We Decided to Picket" [2:41]
The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
https://youtu.be/kJ9vTwM2A3I

Supreme Court decision, *Pearson v. Murray*, 1936 (excerpt)
BlackPast
https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/raymond-pearson-v-donald-g-murray-1936/

SECONDARY SOURCES

Article, "Harry S Truman and Civil Rights"
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/harry-s-truman-and-civil-rights.htm

Audio story, Michel Martin, "Hidden Pattern of Rape Helped Stir Civil Rights Movement," February 28, 2011
National Public Radio
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=134131369

Mary-Elizabeth B. Murphy, "African Americans in the Great Depression and New Deal," 2020
Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History
https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.632

[1] The article immediately next to this article in the newspaper contains a graphic story of a police brutality against three African American men. Please preview before deciding to share the link with students. The student handout does not contain the web address.

Theme Study, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Discrimination in Housing*, March 2021 (excerpt)
National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/upload/Civil_Rights_Housing_NHL_Theme_Study_revisedfinal.pdf

Video, "Historical Context: The Long Road to Civil Rights," 2024 [9:15]
National History Day
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-auo4bah_A

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- Group Simulation Instructions
  - Members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights
  - The "Don't Buy" Movement
  - Fair Housing
  - Sexual Violence
  - Desegregation of Higher Education before *Brown v. Board of Education*
- Simulation Notes
- Formal Written Statement Assessment

Teacher Notes:

- Read the articles "African Americans: Pursuit of Equality" and "Expanding Inclusivity Through Constitutional Change" in this resource to help set the lesson in the context of modern scholarship.
- Remind students that historical simulations help us understand ideas and perspectives from the past more deeply. During the simulation, students should avoid any participation that is disrespectful and may detract from that goal.
- When conducting this lesson, take time to teach your students how to use proper terminology (Black migrants, African American laborers) and not to use collective terms (like "Blacks") to describe a group of people based solely on their race. Read the article "What's in a Word? Being Thoughtful about Terminology in Historical Writing" in this resource for additional support.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- Arrange the classroom for group work.
- Organize students into five groups.
- Make one copy of the Group Simulation Instructions for each student group member. Students receive only the materials for their assigned group.
- Preview all materials for appropriateness for your students.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: INTRODUCTION (15 MINUTES)

- Introduce the focus question to students: *During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1930s and 1940s, which rights did African Americans seek to gain, and how did they compel the United States government to secure these rights?* Remind students that the fight for civil rights stretched back to the colonial era and a more accurate account of the Civil Rights Movement needs to include the important stories of students, preachers, working people, activists, and intellectuals who challenged Jim Crow segregation in the American South in the 1930s and 1940s.

- Show the video, "Historical Context: The Long Road to Civil Rights" [9:15]. Lead a class discussion:
  - *What is the long Civil Rights Movement?*
  - *What rights did African Americans seek to gain?*
  - *What strategies and tactics did activists deploy?*
  - *What is the master narrative of the Civil Rights Movement? In what ways does this resource challenge that narrative?*
- Record student responses for the follow-up discussion.

ACTIVITY TWO: SIMULATION PREPARATION (30 MINUTES)

- Explain that students will re-create the Truman administration's 1946–1947 President's Committee on Civil Rights. They will represent groups of civil rights activists from the 1930s and 1940s and members of the committee itself.
  - **Teacher Tip:** Remind students that when simulating people from the past, they should be respectful of those people, sharing their ideas and perspectives but avoiding the tendency to imitate or otherwise act disrespectfully.
- Assign each student group a simulation role and distribute the appropriate Group Simulation Instructions:
  - Members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights
  - The "Don't Buy" Movement
  - Fair Housing
  - Sexual Violence
  - Desegregation of Higher Education before *Brown v. Board of Education*
- Ask students to prepare for their role in the simulation by reading their assigned sources and preparing oral testimony that answers the focus question for their group. Members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights should prepare an opening statement summarizing the purpose of the Committee.

ACTIVITY THREE: SIMULATION (45 MINUTES)

- Arrange the room in a panel setting so that each group faces the members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights.
- Distribute the Simulation Notes handout to all students.
- Recreate the 1946–1947 President's Committee on Civil Rights.
  - Allow members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights to deliver their opening statement. Next, they should ask each group to present their testimony.
  - Following each group's testimony, members of the President's Committee will follow up with two or three clarifying and probing questions. For example, Committee members may ask each group how the different branches of the federal government can best use their respective powers to protect all Americans' civil rights. Each group should receive five or six minutes to present testimony and answer questions.
- Encourage students to use the Simulation Notes handout and record the main points raised by each group.

- Ask the members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights to prepare and deliver a closing statement. The closing statement should summarize the Committee's initial findings and next steps on the focus question: *How should the United States government more effectively take responsibility for protecting the civil rights of African Americans?*

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Assign the Formal Written Statement Assessment.
- Assign students to research connections between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1930s and 1940s and the later phase of the movement.

Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- **Housewives League of Detroit (1930s)**
- **Recy Taylor (1919–2017) and Betty Jean Owens (1940–)**
- **Executive Order 9981 (1948)**
- ***Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948)**
- ***Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1954)**

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to nhd.org/expansivehistory.