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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2009 Volume III: Shakespeare and Human Character

African Americans and Shakespeare: Partners in Search of Humanity

Curriculum Unit 09.03.08, published September 2009
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Introduction

As an ll-year-old from Brooklyn vacationing in the South for the summer, Earle Hyman made his way to the black community's recreation center. There he could find a library that would both welcome his presence and lend him some reading material. "I want the biggest book here!," he said boldly. He walked home with a copy of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare. [1] Earle sat down to begin his reading and at that moment began the love affair and life journey that would take him to the stages of the Jan Hus Auditorium, New York in 1953 and the Stratford Connecticut theater in 1957, where he assumed leading roles in the plays of his literary hero. More familiar to current high school students as the actor who played the grandfather on the Bill Cosby show, Mr. Hyman joined a long and distinguished roster of African American actors who, going back as far as the 1820's, met the challenges of a society that denied them at various junctures the opportunity to learn to read, to go to school, to play any parts (even on occasion to be a comedian in blackface fomenting racial stereotypes [2]), then eventually to take on the part of Othello, and finally to have access to an almost total range of parts in Shakespeare productions. Audra McDonald, African American concert vocal artist, joined the 2009 summer cast in New York's Delacorte Theater vehicle of Twelfth Night with little or no fanfare relating to her race. This close to two-century progression provides fascinating and inspiring as well as heart-breaking stories which catalogue the desire of a people denied their very humanity to master and perform the works of the greatest poetic dramatist in the English language. The wealth of material available for research can both challenge and stimulate student interest in the Bard and connect them with heroes and heroines of communities both urban and rural who paved the way for their own involvement with Shakespeare - as analysts, audience and performers.

Overview

A. Philip Randolph Career Academy is a small co-ed career technical high school located in the East Falls section of northwest Philadelphia. Currently serving a student body of 350 students, we have the capacity to expand to 400. Students must complete state-mandated hours for their respective career path classes, pass a rigorous exit examination in the chosen field, and complete all the academic credits required of students

across the city. The student body is primarily African American (92%) with a small representation of Caucasian (3%) and Latino/a (5%) attendees. Although our school has achieved Adequate Yearly Progress in writing and reading more than once, the students' level of comfort with complex and, some might even say — in the case of William Shakespeare — antiquated texts, is somewhat limited.

By providing an opportunity for students to take an in-depth, historical approach to the place of Shakespeare in the lives and aspirations of African Americans, involvement with this unit can increase students' familiarity with, and ideally their affection for, drama. With Julius Caesar (10 th grade), Macbeth (12 th grade), and Hamlet (Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition) firmly ensconced in the curricula for which I am responsible, a focus on human character both in the dramas themselves and in the lives of actors, whether amateur, semi-professional or professional, who struggled for their rightful place on our national stage may inspire students to regard their own challenges as exciting rather than daunting. The core curriculum of necessity fosters haste in completing segments in accordance with the planning and scheduling timeline, oftentimes disallowing the leisure for contemplation of Shakespeare's "invention of the human" that might resonate in the students' lives. Sophomores who are a year away from our state-mandated standardized tests may sharpen their literary comprehension and composition skills. The same will hold true for my seniors as they prepare for college-level writing and my Advanced Placement students who will be expected to produce that level of writing in May of their senior year.

Rationale

The unit will demonstrate for my largely African American student body that their community has been closely and significantly linked with Shakespeare for at least 150 years, if not longer. New York City boasted an all African American Shakespeare company decades before the Civil War. Our school's namesake, Asa Philip Randolph, though honored as a great civil rights leader, had the early aspiration to be, and then actually had the community theater experience of being, a Shakespearean actor. Students from our school have participated in the annual English-Speaking Union Shakespeare competition. Shakespeare, credited by Harold Bloom with "the invention of human", became the writer of first resort for African Americans, both enslaved and freed, to establish their ability to comprehend and to perform at the highest level of European culture. Bloom delineates his concept of character development as pertaining to individuals depicted in drama who are able to "reconceive" themselves. [3] African Americans, whose identity and destiny were for so long in the hands and minds of others, had first to conceive themselves as human, convey this truth to the deniers, and finally, to re-conceive a panoply of individuation from this essential understanding. Bloom confirms the choice of Shakespeare's plays as vehicles for establishing humanity as they "remain the outward limit of human achievement: aesthetically, cognitively, in certain ways morally, even spiritually." [4] This last designation takes in the African American devotion to the Bible and the link this in turn provides to Shakespeare, both textually and vocationally. African American spiritual leaders, both lay and clerical, followed Shakespeare, who embedded Biblical teaching in his plays. Biblical understanding in turn enhanced understanding of Shakespeare's plays. Abraham Lincoln, and other individuals educating themselves, frequently leaned on these two sources for inspiration, spiritual sustenance, guidance and syntax. Biographical study of Shakespearean actors of color reveals a well-worn path from religious homes to the pulpit, held by fathers or mentors, to the stage, then on to political activism. Actor, college professor, play producer and director and theater scholar Errol Hill clearly describes the established interweaving of these traditions in his own home

while growing up. "The Scriptures and Methodist hymns were the first literature I knew. Dramatic story and Shakespeare came later in the upper grades of elementary school." [5]

More than one civil rights leader was raised in a household headed by a minister. Some followed that path as a way of agitating for rights, most notably the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and others diverged from the pastoral path to fight on the secular battlefield, among them Ira Aldridge, Asa Philip Randolph, and Paul Robeson. Robeson, eloquent as both lawyer and actor, was a premier performer of the role most closely associated with African American actors: Othello. Dr. King made clear his familiarity with Shakespeare's writing with his Richard III allusion in the "I Have a Dream" speech: "This is the summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent."

Through study of this history and these traditions, our students will gain a deeper understanding of African American heritage and English literature, where the two intersect and how the young people may, in their own future endeavors, both appreciate and contribute to the future development of both.

Background

Minorities in Shakespeare's England and the Americas

William Shakespeare, living most of his life in Elizabethan England before the first African slaves landed in the Jamestown, might not have anticipated that an authentic tragedy for Africans would play out on the newly "discovered" continent over the next 400 years, or that his play would be a continuing touchstone of progress or lack thereof, on and off the stage. Joseph Papp, producer extraordinaire, suggested that basing a major tragedy on a Moor, given the small population of people of color in England at the time (similarly, the writing of The Merchant of Venice given the small Jewish community) was a puzzlement. Stereotypes of the financially grasping Jew, however, had taken root, with the establishment of working restrictions that limited Jewish participation in other professions, simultaneous with Christian eschewing of the lending vocation or usury. Even if the African population in England was small, their numbers apparently discomfited Queen Elizabeth sufficiently to move her to seek removal of the 'Negroes and Blackamoors…which are crept into the realm…to the annoyance of her own people.' [6] Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Moor held considerable stature in the Venetian society he had adopted, and Shylock, given a sympathetic portrayal, might be seen as a mourning widower and parent rather than an avaricious moneylender. A most interesting confluence occurred in the stage career of Ira Aldridge, the stellar 19 th century African American exile, who performed Shylock in Russia "so sympathetically…that the Jewish community thanked him for his interpretation of a character that Jews have usually condemned as inimical to their race." [7]

Both Blacks and Jews, in Elizabethan England and in contrasting ways in the Americas, lived close to yet apart from white and Christian society. Although numerous Caucasians, notably Irish debtors, arrived in the New World as indentured servants, their terms of service, in contrast to the Africans, were limited because the challenge of detaining them given their ability to blend into the general population became too troublesome. Better designate people of color as destined for servitude based on their "birthright" and Biblically-certified subhuman status. Re-capturing and retention, the latter with the help eventually of the U.S. Constitution, made better economic sense. Jews had dramatically greater freedom (some, regrettably, using it to profit from the slave trade), yet could still be suspected as being in league with the devil and could be denied the

privilege of signing the Declaration of Independence. Both of these groups, segregated residentially and separating during hours of worship, carried the burden of being considered 'the other,' and appeared in popular theater not as unique individuals (human characters) but as stereotypes. Though included in Shakespeare's pantheon of major characters, they were relegated to the two roles, Othello and Shylock, that, especially when played in caricature, reinforced stereotypes.

Shakespeare's True Beliefs

It is important, certainly to Shakespeare's admirers (not just your garden variety predictable high school English teachers), that the stereotypes seeming to flow from the characters of Othello and Shylock not be attributed to the true feelings of our beloved author. As Marjorie Garber so acutely points out: "The question 'What was Shakespeare like?' often contains a not-so-secret wish that Shakespeare should be like us." [8] I can certainly picture a 21 st century Will living on the East Coast, registered Democratic and contributing to the Obama campaign. He could not, of course, escape the influences of the society in which he lived, but could — given his great heart, powers of observation, and dedication to creating a world of human characters with nary a flat one to behold - take himself and his audience through poetry and drama to a world of possibility beyond the narrow outlook of a single time and place.

Everyday Worldview in Early Modern England

As mentioned earlier, persons of color and Jews held a precarious position in Elizabethan society. Moors, Barbary Coast captives and Egyptians as well as Spaniards and Portuguese and even the occasional Italian stood apart from their pale fellow British Islanders. James Schultz, reporting on Imtiaz Habib's 2002 study, Shakespeare's Colors: Race and Culture in Elizabethan England, highlights the "true" Englishperson's wary confusion: Africans, Indians, South Asians, pre-Columbian Americans and blacks were "interchangeable in the Elizabethan popular mind." G.K. Hunter, in his essay, "Elizabethans and foreigners" notes that persons from outside England lived "between the xenophobic poles of Fear and Derision." [9] Certainly the concept of melding varied populations into one multicultural family would be neither preached nor practiced.

Jews had an even more interesting position in England based on their actual absence, dramatically made effective by their expulsion in 1290, leaving them "A people utterly despised and degraded… deported en masse and never allowed to return, an invisible people who functioned as symbolic tokens of all that was heartless, vicious, rapacious, and unnatural…". [10] It stands to reason that people you cannot see are more frightening than those you can, hence the medieval rumors of Jews kidnapping Christian children for the production of matzoah, spreading disease, and plotting uprisings.

The two groups shared a geographical commonality: the commercial and world conquering port of Venice. Shakespeare's two plays, written ten years apart, allowed audiences in England and later in America, to revel in imaginative dramatizations of groups they would prefer to keep at a distance.

Shylock and Othello as Representatives of Their Races

In The Merchant of Venice (in one source alternately titled The Jew of Venice) we find two Christian business men, Antonio and Bassanio, the former a regular harasser of the Jewish lender, Shylock, in need of a loan. Having no collateral because Antonio's goods-laden ships are at sea, the Christian accedes to the Jew's proposal of a pound of flesh as surety for the loan of 3,000 ducats. When the loan comes due, Shylock, though offered payment from another source (Bassanio's new wife), perseveres in his seemingly bloodthirsty demand.

A clever solution (flesh can be paid only with the absence of bloodletting - see the fine print) leaves Shylock bereft of daughter and fortune and facing forced conversion to Christianity.

Othello, the Moor of Venice, though not a native son, has risen to great heights in society through his military valor and exploits. When the Venetian hospitality of an aristocrat, Brabantio, leads without his intention to the development of a love relationship and eventual elopement with the clueless parent's daughter, Desdemona, the stage is set for tragedy. Key strategist in bringing everyone to grief is Iago, disgruntled (so he says) aide-de-camp to General Othello who has been passed over for a promotion. With this justification, and many others equally suspect along the way, Iago sets out step-by-step to bring this "outsider" to a deadly fall. That the Moor is a man of color, royal in birth but enslaved in battle and converted to Christianity, and significantly older than his wife, sets him apart in enough ways to allow Iago, himself an "outsider" by class status, to cast Othello as "barbarian" and "savage", especially in the play's culminating horror of the murder of Desdemona. The character with the black skin establishes himself and his kin as sensuous and violent.

Modern Day Defense and Interpretations

Though commoner and aristocratic crowds in Elizabethan theaters would neither shrink from these portrayals nor argue with their implications modern contemporary writers find mitigating evidence for all the parties: Elizabethan society, the characters, and Shakespeare himself. One of American's most prolific interpreters of Othello on stage, actor James Earl Jones suggests that "Race was a convenient category to put people in, especially when it could be manipulated to keep the Western mind feeling superior; but institutional racism as we know it did not exist in Shakespeare's time." [11] Jones further seeks to exculpate Othello by identifying his murderous mental state not as jealousy, but as insanity, the result of the vision of his world crumbling implanted in his brain by Iago. Othello's challenge, in the eyes of C.L.R. James, a 1960's Socialist writer, "was not that he was black, but that he was a foreigner, an outsider in Venetian society…." [12]

With an exhaustive and historical report on Shylock through the ages along with information on presentation and interpretation, Marjorie Garber provides a semi-palatable compromise for the unsympathetic userer: we can seem him as "an ambivalent figure, neither the one-dimensional monster of the past nor the humane, tragic victim of modern, post-Holocaust productions." [13] Since so much of what constitutes the character of Shylock is embedded in centuries of religious history, perhaps a historian's insight would be of special value. A.L. Rouse writes in 1963: "We hardly need to be reminded, after the appalling anti-Semitism that has disgraced this century, that with the Elizabethan mob, a Shylock was a villain. And so his creator meant him to be - then Shakespeare's indefeasible human sympathy took over and the villain becomes a human being." [14]

Text Analysis in Defense of the Bard

It is proven over and over again in human history and relations that accurate communication is essential for judicious and happy outcomes. As a recent interaction between a college teacher and a local peace officer in Cambridge Massachusetts amply demonstrates, understanding only comes with clear and careful review of what was actually said. So it is with Shakespeare and his characters, particularly in the case of those whose portrayals might, though not intended by the author, lead to deleterious representations and even harmful incidents befalling actual persons.

Thus, for scholars, general readers, and— most important in this context— for students, we must look at the received text of the plays, read them carefully, and reach our conclusions based on citations of that text. To this end, students will have the opportunity to consider the plays in their entirety, to pay attention to what is

said by whom, what the statements can be understood to mean, and how they might reasonably reach conclusions (however tentative) about the author's intent. Since Shakespeare could not have envisioned the depth, breadth and longevity of attention his plays have received, this seems only fair.

Theatrical Portrayals of and by People of Color

Producer Glenda Gill notes that "White playwrights all too often wrote parts for the African American in dialect, as if all blacks lacked formal education." [15] For African American men, their presentation on stage, first by whites in blackface and then by themselves, presented "black minstrel troupes in the 1860's and 1870's....wearing blackface, using 'darky' dialect, and presenting southern stereotypes...". It is encouraging to note that "black resistance....occurred early..." [16]

Women, both on stage and in the world of work, were portrayed as "the Mammy, the Tragic Mulatto, and the Jezebel." [17] Advertising history cites Aunt Jemima as the longest lived commercial image extant. As sophisticated and entertaining as fast-talking comedy films from the 1930's might be, a 21 st century fan must steel oneself for the almost inevitable appearance of the black maid or nanny. The first African American winner of an Academy Award, Hattie McDaniel, played Scarlett O'Hara's mammy, a character of great resources, but the actress was barred from attending the film's 1939 premiere in an Atlanta movie theater. In an ironic twist, a decade later, Vivien Leigh, the actress who played Scarlett, served on a judge's panel in London at the royal Academy of Dramatic Art where she awarded the category of 'distinction' to future theater historian Errol Hill for his recitation of a selection from Othello. Leigh's husband, Laurence Olivier, famously portrayed Othello in a film version rated wanting by Earle Hyman.

Errol Hill, an experienced actor himself and author of a seminal study of this aspect of Shakespearean history, noted that a mentor "insisted that the only way to learn acting was to start with Shakespeare." Yet it was clear from many of his experiences with theater in the course of his London studies and play attendance that "Shakespeare reigned ...as the prerogative of the ruling class." In his training in London, mid 20 th century, the few black actors allotted parts in these productions were constrained to wear white face. Hill enjoyed the experience of becoming unrecognizable to his closest friends, but envisioned a bleak future for his own Shakespearean stage aspirations when he reflected that in three years attending performances in England, he "...never saw a black actor in Shakespeare." [18]

Harlem itself, both in the Renaissance era of the 1920's and later, provides a backdrop for the interaction of African Americans with the Elizabethan muse. As mentioned before, A. Philip Randolph's theatrical aspirations found expression as he and his wife participated in a community theater, Ye Friends of Shakespeare, in the 1920's. [19] This activity was contemporaneous with Randolph's designation by the U.S. Attorney General as "the most dangerous Negro in America," following the Socialist's urging his peers to decline military service in a country still tolerating widespread discrimination and sporadic lynching. Langston Hughes boldly paid tribute to Avon's son with his book of poetry, "Shakespeare in Harlem," adapted for a 1960 Forty-first Street show. [20] In the poem "Theme for English B," Hughes appeals to his Columbia professor:

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 I like a pipe for a Christmas present, Or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach. I guess
being colored doesn't make me NOT like the same things other folks like who are
other races.
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Zora Neale Hurston was a kindred spirit of Will as she was not only inspired in her youth, as he was, by a traveling troupe of actors, but actually ran away with the troupe and in later years produced a story, "Spunk,"

whose plot roughly mirrors Hamlet. Valerie Traube avers: "African-American women writers' return to Shakespearian drama is hardly surprising, for what more obviously status-studded example of Anglo-European patriarchal culture exists to 'signify' or 'trope' upon?" ("Rainbows of Darkness: Deconstructing Shakespeare in the Work of Gloria Naylor and Zora Neale Hurston," 1993. www.enotes.com).

Both during and after the era of slavery in the United States, African Americans faced a multi-faceted challenge of survival. Bereft of homeland, family, language, culture, and spiritual sustenance, labeled as sub-human, subject to involuntary servitude whose justification was based on Scripture citations, the seekers of freedom built a history of triumph against incredible odds. That they would embrace the religion that had been complicit in denying their humanity and adopt as their entitlement the literature of the society that first brutalized then shunned them, is testament to a fortitude worthy of tribute and emulation.

African American Shakespeareans

Four actors, three men and one woman, typify the yearning felt and the struggle joined by African American Shakespeareans. Two of the four, Ira Aldridge and Paul Robeson, could earn more approbation abroad than in their own land. The other two, A. Philip Randolph, never reaching beyond amateur status, and Henrietta Vinson Davis, who traveled and appeared widely in her theatrical career, channeled their disappointment into political activism.

Ira Aldridge

Ira Aldridge was born in 1807 in New York City. He attended the African Free School and took an early interest in Shakespeare performance. His early adolescence coincided with the establishment in Manhattan of the New York African Theater. The theater's founder, William Henry Brown, worked with his premier acting star, James Hewlett, to produce both works of Shakespeare and original works like Brown's own play King Shotaway. Beginning as the African Grove in 1821, where free African Americans could enjoy dessert treats of a summer's evening, and transforming into a legitimate theater, the company's first production was Richard III. White patrons were welcomed and invited to sit in the rear of the auditorium. When rowdiness of later uninvited Caucasians developed, a police raid resulted in the demand by authorities that the group were 'never to act Shakespeare again.' [21] Fortunately, the troupe returned for an additional year or two before having its challenge to a rival theater met with legal action. This provided Aldridge the opportunity to make his first appearance on the stage as Romeo. If one looks for omens of what might follow in the hostility expressed by hecklers, critics, law enforcement and especially rival companies, it can be found in Hill's assessment: "...the determination of the white theater establishment at this early date to keep Afro-American performers out of the theatrical mainstream was prophetic of its attitude for generations to come." [22]

To mix metaphors, Ira Aldridge saw the handwriting on the wall, took his cue and departed for Europe before his 18 th birthday. His acting career spread across forty years and took him to a dizzying round of cities, including Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Munich, Stockholm, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Constantinople, Warsaw, and Paris. Because critics in London were loathe to sanction the appearance of a black man on the stage, particularly in the role of Othello, a power figure of color who both kisses and strangles a white woman, Aldridge's performances in the British Isles took place primarily in the countryside. Not only did he break free of the tradition limiting black men to the roles of Shakespeare's three black male characters — Othello, The Prince of Morocco (Merchant of Venice), and Aaron the Moor (Titus Andronicus) by taking as his own Richard III, Shylock, Hamlet, Macbeth, and King Lear - but he took part in the evolution of Shakespeare production from declamation to more naturalistic acting. An English critic offered praise by pointing out that Aldridge

"...rants less than almost any tragedian we know..." and in Moscow, he won approval because he "...concentrates all your attention only on the inner meaning of his speech [and] moves about completely naturally, not like a tragedian, but like a human being." [23] Perhaps in this last appreciation lay a hint of the romantic ideal Communism held for a later Shakespearean, Paul Robeson.

It is poignant to contemplate that at the same time Aldridge would be recognized as both artist and human being, African Americans for the most part were either still enslaved, or if free, subject to random slave catchers emboldened by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Eight years later, press reports suggested that Aldridge might be returning to America and he gave the idea more serious consideration with the end of the Civil War. Sadly, Aldridge died in Poland in 1867, never to return to his native land. His dream of sharing his talent in his homeland, as Errol Hill explains, would likely have been punctured promptly upon his arrival, since "the only roles available to black performers were on the minstrel stage. Interracial casting was nonexistent, and there were no black companies with which he could work." [24]

Aldridge's acceptance as fully human (on an individual basis) on the Continent and in the British Isles was affirmed by his marriages and additional liaisons with white women: the Irish Margaret Gill and the Countess Amanda von Brandt of Sweden. His four children went on to careers in music and theater. This is not to say that controversy did not erupt initially; but he eventually enjoyed a full life as a family man, attractive lothario and, finally, a British citizen. A monument in his memory can be viewed in the town of William Shakespeare's birth, Stratford-on-Avon. Numerous amateur theatrical companies in the United States took Aldridge's name in tribute to his worldwide fame. Through the four decades of his exile he continued to take an interest in his family back home and provided financial support for his sister and her children.

Henrietta Vinton Davis

Not to say that women are less adventurous than men, but another thespian of African descent in the United States, Henrietta Vinton Davis, carried on her effort to establish a career in Shakespeare performance within the bounds of her own country. Born in 1860, she experienced, in Errol Hill's words, "all of the promise, high expectations, and frustrations experienced by black actors of her generation." [25] Born in Baltimore, she studied elocution with a white tutor, Marguerite E. Saxton, in Washington, D.C. At the conclusion of her studies, the instructor wrote a note filled with sentiment: "My dearest Pupil: I shall watch with the keenest interest your future career. You have studied diligently, faithfully; you have talent, youth and beauty; in fact, all the qualifications essential to success, and I have, I think, a right to feel proud of you." [26]

Davis embarked on her promising but ultimately frustrating journey by traveling extensively, and continuing to study. On her own, and throughout the country, she performed readings of speeches by Rosalind, Cleopatra, Juliet, Portia, Ophelia, Lady Anne, Queen Elizabeth and Lady Macbeth. Her advertising offered audiences an opportunity to witness "the first lady of her race to publicly essay a debut in Shakespeare." [27] In collaboration with another black actor, Powhatan Beaty, for a 1884 production of scenes from Macbeth and another play in Cincinnati, they elicited this astoundingly hopeful pronouncement: "The local newspapers, black and white, had been lavish in their praise for both principals." [28] Preparation, hard work, recognition by critics, a triumphant performance in Washington D.C. (graced by the presence of other distinguished actors, selected Howard University players and Frederick Douglass himself) taken altogether would, in a perfect world, have brought Henrietta to the legitimate stage. Despite all her promise and prodigious efforts, the doors remained closed. Understanding that simple excellence would not create fair opportunity, Davis moved on to social service; then she joined the efforts of Marcus Garvey to lift the lives of African Americans on a mass scale, holding leadership positions for a period of twelve years. She did not abandon theatrical

performance altogether and died in 1941.

Asa Philip Randolph

On a somewhat parallel track, an individual born in Florida in 1889 also set the goal of professional Shakespeare performance and likewise diverted his talents to the political realm. Asa Philip Randolph, son of a former slave and itinerant minister, grew up in a household that boasted volumes of Shakespeare and other great writers in bookcases and promoted the message that education mattered and that religion formed the basis of a good life. Excelling in school both academically and in sport, Phil Randolph showed early promise in debate. Since his family could not provide the economic support for college, Randolph secured a series of odd jobs, but in his spare time memorized Shakespeare speeches for performance in churches and in the community. [29] Restless at the lack of opportunity in Jacksonville, he headed for New York City via steam boat. Once there, he continued his search for meaningful employment and began taking college courses, yet, his "mind was never far from the purpose that had brought him to New York: to become a stage actor." [30]

When Asa joined church groups, particularly the Epworth League, for social reasons, he proceeded to create opportunities for political discussion and for theater performance. Randolph was a prime mover in "...rehearsing scenes from Shakespeare and presenting them, at least one Sunday afternoon a month, before community audiences at the Salem Methodist Church." On his own he worked to 'memorize every line from Othello, Hamlet, and The Merchant of Venice.' [31] Taking elocution lessons on the side, Randolph perfected his already powerful voice and took on the faint accent that led people he encountered throughout his crusading career to believe that he might have attended Oxford or Cambridge University. When he arrived at a crossroads where he might have embarked on a professional acting career, his respect for his father's wishes (the elder Randolph was already disappointed that his son had not pursued the ministry) caused him to relinquish the opportunity. Focusing then instead on his political interests, Asa took on the publication of a radical newspaper, The Messenger. Though it was focused on issues of workers' rights and social justice, Randolph included columns devoted to the arts. As he moved on to take leadership of the upstart Brotherhood of Pullman Porters, Randolph's stage presence and elocution may have served him well in inspiring workers at union meetings and in negotiations with elite railroad powerbrokers. If one audits Randolph's stentorian tones as he introduced the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, one can perceive the echoes of that young Shakespearean aspirant and reflect that though his path diverged from his original intent, his efforts on behalf of all African Americans may in some small part have contributed to the opening of doors for later generations of professional thespians.

Paul Robeson

The pattern of early striving and career path divergence can be seen in the life and art of Paul Robeson. Also the son of a former slave and pastor, born in 1898, Robeson's early life in New Jersey was, from his point of view, idyllic until the tragic death of his mother in a house fire. Nevertheless, Paul went on to achieve outstanding academic and athletic success in high school and in college at Rutgers. He went on to law school and toyed with the concept of one day rising to a position on the Supreme Court. This bold vision was promptly quashed by his encounter with a secretary in a law firm where he applied for a job. She vowed that she would never take dictation from a "black man." Profoundly disillusioned, though not entirely surprised, Paul accepted the opportunity to appear in a play on Broadway and the rest is theater and music history. Rapturous crowds responded to his performances in Showboat, concerts of spirituals and opera, and Othello.

Shakespeare's work with Robeson in the role was presented in London in 1930, in New York (1943) by way of

Cambridge and New Haven in 1942, and in Stratford-on-Avon in 1959. Reviews of the New York performance offered this tribute: "the production presented a black man of dignity and intelligence in the role of a black man of dignity and intelligence." [32] Accolades of this and greater magnitude could not, however, save Robeson from meeting hostility - again as for earlier black actors playing Othello - from audiences who could not abide visions of race mixing - and even in one instance where a fellow elevator passenger spit on him when he was in the company of Uta Hagen, his co-star. Worse, for Robeson's theatrical life, was the public anger at his association with the Communist Party. Seeing this leftest of left-wing organizations and its political state, the Soviet Union, as the only hope for true recognition of African American humanity, Robeson was hounded by government agencies, denied a passport and deprived of the opportunities due him for his magnificent voice and acting skills. A small museum in Philadelphia, once the home of Robeson's sister, who provided him refuge in his final years, is seeking to honor his legacy.

Strategies

The development of a classroom wall annotated timeline will help us keep track of the dual histories of African American actors and American history. We will see side by side the often mind-bending contrast between soaring dramatic performance and abject human degradation. Attention to the variety of performances in live theater, film and television will round out this inquiry. Students will use primary and secondary sources and be encouraged to make personal contact via telephone or email with research entities like the Schomburg Library in Harlem. We will look at the interaction of personal story, political context and theatrical tradition in the biographies of these men and women. We will consider solo performances, all-black casts, and the issue of black directors — something debated in the context of plays by August Wilson among others.

Students will research societal attitudes in the United States, theater history, and the myriad ways in which obstacles were both placed and overcome. Seemingly inevitably, Othello, the Moor, has traditionally been the role first won by black actors. We will investigate the nature of the story, the history of its staging, the evolution from white to black actors and back again. We will evaluate what elements of the story relate to African American history, or as Marjorie Garber suggests, to any situation in society where "difference" in the context of society is significant in the lives of its members.

On a philosophical level, looking at a range of Shakespeare plays reveals themes that apply to any and all cultures: power acquisition, jealousy, sibling rivalry, revenge, and distrust. As far back as the 1820's black actors embraced roles in Shakespeare plays other than Othello: Richard III, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, King Lear and Hamlet. In the ensuing years, popular vehicles among African American Shakespeareans included The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Once students perceive the powerful lessons in the plays, they have the foundation for preparing their own scenes to perform as well as to write modernized versions following Hollywood efforts like the movie "O." With this grounding and with funding from the school district, classes can journey to live performances of Shakespeare plays with a keener understanding. Ultimately we will extend our study to other writers, carrying forward the analytical skills utilized in looking at Shakespeare's mastery of creating living, breathing, believable human beings out of nothing more than "mere" words.

Activities

Activity # 1: Survey of Black Actors in Shakespeare

Time Requirements: Two class periods

Day One:

We will survey students' knowledge about the history of African Americans in Shakespeare plays, especially in film They may know about Denzel Washington in Much Ado About Nothing or more likely the black actor in the Leonardo DiCaprio version of Romeo and Juliet. Tenth graders will only have read the latter while seniors may remember reading Julius Caesar in 10 th grade. Current curriculum and planning guides for 11 th grade English with a focus on American literature, does not have a Shakespeare play as required reading. For this reason, time spent on Othello in the context of the history of black actors may allow for at least a respectable familiarity with the play.

Begin with an anticipatory set of questions that may include:

1. What is the earliest date you expect to find African Americans performing Shakespeare?
2. Which play or plays do you think the actors would have selected?
3. Which traditions of Elizabethan theater do you think were observed and/or changed? (e.g. boys playing women's parts, costumes, etc.)
4. Describe the reaction you think the earliest African American Shakespeareans received from the white community? From the black community?
5. What would have been the appeal that Shakespeare represented for aspiring actors "back in the day"?
6. How would Shakespeare characters compare or contrast with popular images of African Americans before modern times? With the images of today?

Students will be asked to locate and assess a minimum of five online information sources for the data on black actors. The parameters for this 'search" are that only two sources may be dot coms; all others need to be dot org, dot edu or dot gov. Notes from each source should represent at least three facts. Double points for information relating to questions from the anticipatory set. Students have the option of working alone, in pairs or in a group. Bookmark prizes will be given to the individuals who discover the earliest date for an African American Shakespeare performance. e.g. www.questia.com/read/10282406?title=1%3a%20Shakespeare%20and%20the%20Black%20Actor

Day Two:

Warm-up: Utilizing a Promethean, chalk or white board, brainstorm and record dates from African American history already known by the, e.g. The Emancipation Proclamation, integration of the military, Jackie Robinson, Brown v. Board, Rosa Parks, The March on Washington, the election of Barack Obama.

Divide the class in half. Group A will gather as many dates as possible for black actors' performances (list of names in Appendix B). Utilizing a search engine, and dividing names evenly among the group members, students will gather data for each of the actors listed (as much as possible - some may not be available through this means) www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/paul-robeson/about-the-actor/66

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Group B will use web search engines to identify key dates in African American history. Students may divide up American history (now that we have established 1820 as a beginning for African American Shakespeare productions.[)] www.blackpast.org/?q=african-american-history-timeline-home-pag

On a sheet of butcher block paper attached to one wall of the classroom, we will create a double timeline for the black actors and dates in history. For homework, students will be asked to select three pairs of dates from the timeline for comment and reflection.

Activity # 2: History of Othello: Shakespeare as Writer and Human Being (Othello and The Merchant of Venice) Time Requirement: Two Class Periods

Day One:

We will combine two sources: print and electronic. The Folger Othello provides a history of the play in the opening of the book. Students will begin by making notes from that source in their journal books on the left hand side. Halfway through the period we will switch to the computers and find as much additional and different information as we can before the end of class. www.rsc.org.uk/othello/about/stage.html

For homework follow-up, students will identify the information that interested them and surprised them.

Each student will be asked to create an informational poster representing what in their view are the most important factual and affecting items that every high school student should know about Othello.

Day Two:

Students will be provided key speeches by Othello and Shylock. First they will identify unfamiliar vocabulary and use the text notes to secure definitions. Then they will create three parallel summaries: the main message, the emotional tone, and the representation of character. In light of the plot,, how does the student think the message fits in as a representation of the author's point of view.

OTHELLO:

Soft you; a word or two before you go. . I have done the state some service, and they know't. No more of that. I pray you, in your letters, When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, (390) Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak Of one that loved not wisely but too well; Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,(395) Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes, Albeit unused to the melting mood, Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees Their medicinal gum. Set you down this; (400) And say besides, that in Aleppo once, Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk Beat a Venetian and traduced the state, I took by the throat the circumcised dog And smote him, thus. (405) Othello Act 5, scene 2, 340-346

SHYLOCK:

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He

hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his(50) reason? I am a Jew: hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as(55) a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge. If a(60) Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? why, revenge. The villany you teach me I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. The Merchant Of Venice Act 3, scene 1, 58-68

For homework, students will select one each of three additional characters from each play. Othello: Iago, Roderigo, Brabantio

The Merchant of Venice: Antonio, Bassanio, Portia. For the selected character, collect one extended speech (more than 5 lines) and two isolated lines for similar analysis.

Activity # 3: Universal Themes in Other Shakespeare Roles Taken on by African Americans Time Requirement: Two class periods

Day One:

Students will select a title from the plays other than Othello either produced or acted in by African American Shakespeareans. Choices include: Richard III, Julius Caesar, Henry V, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, Romeo and Juliet.

The first assignment is to secure a story summary from a web source and a selection of famous quotations to convey the feeling of the play, including one speech of at least 20 lines. Report out to the class on findings and perform a first reading of the speech.

Homework follow-up: begin memorization of the speech.

Day Two:

In small cooperative learning groups, identify the key themes of the play worked on the day before. Create a comparison chart to link the themes of the play with issues in African American and American history. Report out to the class on the findings and conclusions.

Activity #4: Shakespeare and African American Writers

Not just civilians, but many African American writers have interfaced with Shakespeare through American literary history. Just like everyday people, poets and essayists felt that Shakespeare was both accessible for their own reading and even more, for their right to analyze his life and works and to utilize their findings as part of their commentary on the African American experience. Literary luminaries include Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, August Wilson, Owen Dodson and Richard Wright. In addition, African American civil rights leaders like A. Philip Randolph, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., James Farmer and Barbara Jordan have

utilized Shakespeare references or sought involvement with the Bard in a variety of other ways.

Having selected one writer for additional inquiry, begin a research that will encompass several websites and at least one complete book by or about the person selected. A classroom montage of writers and their Shakespeare connections will be mounted at the conclusion of the project. (2-4 weeks, most work done at home)

Teacher Resources

Alexander, Catherine M.S. and Stanley Wells, editors. Shakespeare and Race. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. This collection of scholarly essays covers the issue by specific play (Othello, the Tempest, King Lear) and by historical aspects.

Anderson, Jervis. A. Philip Randolph. Berkley: University of California, 1986. Anderson provides the labor leader's portrait from early childhood through his crusading years.

Angelou, Maya. I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings. New York: Bantam Books, 1969. The first of Angelou's memoirs includes a poignant graduation scene where young Shakespeare scholars find their accomplishments are neither appreciated nor rewarded.

Bean, Annemarie. A Sourcebook of African-American Performance: Plays, People, Movements. London: Routledge, 1999.

Becker, George J. Shakespeare's Histories. New York: Ungar, 1977. Here are succinct summaries with pertinent background information.

Bloom, Harold. Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human. New York: Riverhead, 1998. Thought-provoking, elegant essays providing a fresh slant on Shakespeare's gifts.

_____, ed. William Shakespeare's Othello: Modern Critical Interpretations. New York: Chelsea, l987. Arranged in chronological order, Bloom's colleagues in Bardolatry include Susan Snyder and Stephen Greenblatt.

Bradley, A.C. Shakespearean Tragedy. Greenwich: Fawcett, 1955. A work that is considered the finest in Shakespeare criticism.

Brantley, Ben. "Looks It Not Like the King? Well, More Like Burton." , 11/01/2007, E1,12. This article reports on an attempt to present live action and filmed drama simultaneously.

Bryson, Bill. Shakespeare: The World As Stage. New York: Atlas, 2007. Breezy account that confirms our suspicion that Shakespeare wrote his own plays.

Fauset, Jessie Redmon. Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral. Boston: Beacon, 1990. This reprinted work portrays a talented writer/scholar's struggle against racism during and prior to the Harlem Renaissance.

Garber, Marjorie. Shakespeare and Modern Culture. New York: Pantheon, 2008. Fascinating and little-known facts most do not know about American's varying responses to The Bard.

Gill, Glenda W. No Surrender! No Retreat! African American Pioneer Performers of Twentieth-Century American Theater. New York: St. Martin, 2000. Through biographical chapters, Gill reveals the travails and triumphs of performers including Rose McClendon, Paul Robeson, James Earl Jones and others.

_____. White Grease Paint on Black Performers: A Study of the Federal Theatre, 1935-1939. New York: Peter Lang: 1988. Might this account of federal dollars spent to revive an economy and foster the arts be a blueprint for us today? Note Canada Lee and the Orson Welles-directed Macbeth.

Greenblatt, Stephen. Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare. New York: Norton, 2004. Vivid accounts of significant details in the life of Shakespeare, notably the sectarian violence that made his world so dangerous.

Greenleaf, Barbara Kaye. Charles Waterhouse, Illustrator. Forward March to Freedom: A Biography of A. Philip Randolph. New York: Gosset, 1971. Though having the appearance of a children's book, the information provided is detailed and well told.

Harrison, Paul Carter and Bert Andrews. In The Shadow of The Great White Way: Images from the Black Theatre. Photographs by Bert Andrews. New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1989. Painstakingly gathered replacements for images of theater productions (1957-1984) lost in the photographer's house fire, including black and white images of black actors in non-Othello Shakespeare roles.

Hawkes, Terence, ed. Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare. New York: Putnam, 1959. Here is an insightful, opinionated sounding board for future critics.

Hedrick, Donald and Bryan Reynolds. Shakespeare Without Class: Misappropriations of Cultural Capital. New York: Palgrave, 2000. In Chapter Three, this volume provides a detailed account of the African Theater in New York City, 1820 - 1823.

Hill, Errol. Shakespeare in Sable. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. (Book and accompanying DVD). Exhaustively researched and elegant telling of the lives of a pantheon of black actors who honored Shakespeare, themselves and their community.

_____ and James V. Hatch. A History of African American Theater. Cambridge UK: Cambridge, 2003. This book features an introduction by director Lloyd Richards and covers a rich heritage of theater from slavery times through the Millenium.

Isherwood, Charles. "From Shakespeare, Love Curdled Through a Malevolent Scheme." The New York Times: 02/24/2009, C1. With a color photograph suitable for classroom bulletin board, we see a New York Times critic's rapturous assessment of a recent production of Othello.

Lamb, Charles and Mary. Tales From Shakespeare. New York: Grosset & Dunlap. From long ago, a retelling of the play plots. Adjectives for Shylock are pejorative to say the least.

Lower, Charles. "An Alliance Othello." Shakespeare Quarterly, Sep 1980, Vol. 31, No. 2, 218-220. The reviewer avers that this Georgia summer production surpassed both New York and Stratford, Connecticut, with Richard Dreyfuss as Iago and Paul Winfield as Othello.

Orr, David. "The Great(ness) Game" On Poetry. The New York Times Book Review: 02/22/2009, 14-15. Orr notes that if Shakespeare lived in today's critical world, he might be intimidated, then provides possible criteria for the designation.

Partridge, Eric. Shakespeare's Bawdy. New York: Dutton, 1960. Teachers may consult this volume for elucidation yet hesitate to share all the information with students.

Potter, Lois. Shakespeare in Performance: Othello. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. A comprehensive survey of performances from Shakespeare's company to film and television productions in 1995. Two main parts: Before Robeson; Robeson and after.

Rowse, A.L. William Shakespeare. New York: Harper, 1963. Rowse is a strict Stratfordian and blends historical fact with literary appreciation.

Shapiro, James. Shakespeare and the Jews. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. Both scholarly and historical background that aids in understanding Shakespeare's portrayals.

Solomon, Alisa. "What She Learned From Her Alma Mater." The New York Times: 11/04/2007. A contemporary African American Shakespeare student and actress places the Bard in context.

Sotiropoulos, Karen. Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America. Cambridge MA: Harvard, 2006. Black artists negotiate their performing lives in a race-conscious society.

Teague, Frances. Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2006. Broadway incorporated Will in song and dance as well as declamation.

Tillyard, E.M.W. The Elizabethan World Picture. This background helps explain Shakespeare's own world view and thus that of his characters as well.

Traversi, D.A. An Approach to Shakespeare. New York: Doubleday, 1956. Classical in outlook, Traversi focuses on Shakespeare's language and versification as he corrects the critics who came before him.

Weis, Rene. Shakespeare Unbound: Decoding a Hidden Life. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007. Weis provides detailed links between the poet's life and works with revelations unknown and unacknowledged in many a high school classroom.

West, Rebecca. The Court and the Castle: Some treatments of a recurrent theme. Binghamton: Yale University Press, 1957. Dame West offers strong opinions on Hamlet's ethics and Shakespeare's unique genius.

Willingham, Daniel T. "Ask the Cognitive Scientist: What Will Improve a Student's Memory?" in American Educator, Winter 2008-2009, Vol. 32, No. 4, 17-25. Both teachers and students can benefit from accurate information on memorization.

Woll, Allen. Dictionary of the Black Theatre: Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Selected Harlem Theatre. Westport CT: Greenwood, 1983. Here is comprehensive information organized by personality, organization, chronology and discography. Add song and play indices.

Woodward, C. Vann. The Strange Career of Jim Crow. A Commemorative Edition. Oxford: Oxford, 2002. Woodward provides the historical background that constrained and motivated black dramatic artists.

Student Resources

Chute, Marchette. Stories from Shakespeare. New York: Penguin, 1976. In delightfully engaging style, Chute tells us almost all we need to know before reading each of the plays. Older students' research and reading will amplify Chute's comprehensive and quotation-rich introductions.

Epstein, Norrie. The Friendly Shakespeare. New York: Penguin, 1993. Little known facts, entertaining illustrations and valuable teacher-friendly information to share with students.

Jones, James Earl. Actors on Shakespeare: Othello. Colin Nicholson Series Editor. London: Faber and Faber, 2003. In a slim volume, we see personal experience acting and critical analysis reading of Othello by an actor familiar across several generations.

Shakespeare, William. The Merchant of Venice. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992. The Folger edition is widely used in

Philadelphia high schools.

_____. The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice. New York: Washington Square Press, 1993. This edition features a Modern Perspective by Susan Snyder.

Appendix A Implementing District Standards

1.1. Learning to Read Independently

A. Locate various texts, media and traditional resources for assigned and independent projects before reading. [This will include web search engines and print media.]
B. Analyze the structure of informational materials explaining how authors used these to achieve their purposes. [Students will be asked to observe, analyze and take notes on selection and organization of information.]
C. Use knowledge of root words and words from literary works to recognize and understand the meaning of new words during reading. [Pay particular attention to root words for decoding Shakespeare's language.]
D. Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text.
E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.
F. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading.
    - Read familiar materials aloud with accuracy. [Dialogue and Soliloquies]
    - Use appropriate rhythm, flow, meter and pronunciation. [Blank verse]

1.2. Reading Critically in All Content Areas

A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents. [Bios]
B. Use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced.
    - Select appropriate electronic media for research and evaluate the quality of the information received. [Shakespeare websites: commercial, educational, gov.]
    - Use, design and develop a media project to demonstrate understanding (e.g., a major writer or literary period or movement). [Timeline, posters, power point]
C. Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.

1.3. Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

A. Read and understand works of literature. [Shakespeare's plays]
B. Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style. [Othello, The Merchant of Venice, Sonnet 160]

1.6. Speaking and Listening

- Listen to selections of literature (fiction and/or nonfiction). Relate them to previous knowledge. [Audio tape, CD's, I-pod]
- Predict solutions to identified problems. [Shakespeare's P.O.V.]
- Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations. [Oratorical Contest]

Appendix B

Starter List of Black Shakespearean Actors, Activists*, Mentors**

- J.A. Arneaux
- John Mason Brown
- Ira Aldridge
- William Henry Brown
- Roscoe Lee Brown
- Jack Carter
- Henrietta Vinton Davis
- Ossie Davis*
- Ruby Dee
- Jasper Deeter
- Owen Dodson
- Charles Dutton
- James L. Farmer*
- Thomas T. Fortune
- Al Freeman, Jr.
- Morgan Freeman
- Charles Gilpin
- Richard B. Harrison
- James Hewlett
- Paul Molyneaux Hewlett
- Errol Hill
- Ellen Holly
- Robert Hooks
- Earle Hyman
- James Earl Jones
- Canada Lee
- William Marshall
- A. Philip Randolph*
- Paul Robeson
- Samuel Morgan Smith
- Howard Taubman
- Henry Wallack**

- Lester Walton
- Franklin B. Webb
- Jane White
- Egbert Austin Williams
- Paul Winfield
- 30-

Endnotes

[1] Errol Hill, Shakespeare in Sable, DVD. [2] Karen Sotiropoulos, Staging Race: Black Performers in turn of the Century America, 3. African American entertainers after the Civil War were "marketing themselves as authentic 'darkies'...black vaudevillians, male and female, blacked up...". [3] Harold Bloom, The Invention of the Human, xvii. [4] Ibid. [5] Errol Hill, Shakespeare in Sable, xviii. [6] Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare and Modern Culture, 66. [7] Errol Hill, Shakespeare in Sable, 20. [8] Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare and Modern Culture, 126. [9] Catherine M. s. Alexander and Stanley Wells, Shakespeare and Race, 45. [10] Stephen Greenblatt, Will in the World, 261. [11] James Earl Jones, Actors on Shakespeare: Othello, 19. [12] Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare and Modern Culture, 165. [13] Ibid, 136. [14] A.L. Rouse, William Shakespeare: A Biography, 229. [15] Glenda W. Gill, No Surrender! No Retreat!, 27. [16] Errol G. Hill and James V. Hatch, A History of African American Theater, 109. [17] Glenda E. Gill, No Surrender! No Retreat!, 21. [18] Errol Hill, Shakespeare in Sable, xix-xx. [19] Barbara Kaye Greenleaf, Forward March to Freedom, 25. [20] Allen Woll, Dictionary of the Black Theatre: Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Selected Harlem Theatre, 146. [21] William Over, "New York's African Theatre: Shakespeare Reinterpreted" in Donald Hedrick and Bryan Reynolds Shakespeare Without Class, 65-67. [22] Errol Hill, Shakespeare in Sable, 14. [23] Ibid, 19-20. [24] Ibid, 27. [25] Ibid, 64. [26] Ibid. 65. [27] Ibid. [28] Ibid, 67. [29] Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, 47. [30] Ibid, 55. [31] Ibid, 59. [32] Errol Hill, Shakespeare in Sable, 128.