



An Introduction to African American Participation in Citizenship

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Introduction

Entering high school is a rite of passage all young adults anticipate. The socialization with peers, and the imminent light at the end of the tunnel, are seen as an opportunity to leave your parents' home and be on your own. I have been preparing students for life after high school for the past three years. This experience has been enlightening in part, because the juniors and seniors whom I teach are in many instances ending their formal educational careers. The decisions made concerning their futures become very real to some at the end of their senior year. In some cases, my students already have the responsibility of taking care of siblings, parents and occasionally, their own children. For these students, the responsibility of adulthood has already begun and attending classes is no longer a priority. For others, the responsibility of adulthood is limited by the choices they have made while in high school. Some of my students directly enter the work force, others will enlist in the military and a select few will enter institutions of higher learning.

Many students do not realize (even if it is explained to them) that once they leave the graduation ceremony, the real-life lessons begins. They are now full-fledged citizens of the United States, with the right to vote, the duty to pay taxes, and the responsibility to serve as jurors. As we complete another year and send these young adults into the adult world of responsibility, we have to ask, "In November, will they vote?" "Do they understand what their tax dollars are for?" "Do they truly understand why it is important to serve on jury?" Have they forgotten the struggles of the not so long ago past, of the men and women who in some cases lost their lives, so that they can enjoy the rights of citizenship they take for granted? History classes taught during high school cover these topics, but do they know it?

My unit will serve as a reminder to my students, of the rights and responsibilities they take for granted as citizens of the United States. We will examine the meaning of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments as they relate to African Americans. We will question if the passage of these amendments define our citizenship by looking at the treatment of African Americans after these amendments were passed. While examining the impact of these three amendments on the lives of African Americans, we will also examine the contributions of men and women in an attempt for African Americans to gain the recognition as citizens of the United States. Women such as Maria W. Stewart and Sojourner Truth traveled parts of the United States, offering words meant to inspire and encourage African Americans. We will also study the roles African American political organizations and their part in the struggle for African Americans in the effort to be treated

as US citizens.

Rationale:

This unit will be taught in my Advance Placement Government and Politics class. This class is taught as a survey class to seniors who plan on attending college after their completion of high school. At the conclusion of the course, a comprehensive examination is given for college credit. Although any student may enroll in the class, because it is taught as a college course, finding students who have the potential and ability to be successful in the course is not an easy task. Many students are intimidated by the amount of work that is required of them.

In addition to having difficulty enrolling students in the class, poor writing, comprehension and lack of prior knowledge can also pose a problem when trying to present lessons that will challenge students' critical thinking skills. Typically, students who have a genuine interest in taking the course will put in the work necessary to survive the class. In an effort to prepare students for the end of course exam, I have to build into our schedule time to accommodate the diverse writing abilities and comprehension skills of the students in an effort to improve student performance on the exam.

In the Advance Placement course, we study the general concepts used to interpret the US government by examining specific examples that test our knowledge. In order to complete this task, students must become familiar with the different institutions, groups, beliefs and ideas that were used to formulate and create the Constitution. Students also become familiar with a variety of perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes. At the completion of the course and unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify and understand important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. Government and Politics.
2. Understand patterns of the political processes and behavior and their consequences, including the political effects of political structure and procedure.
3. Critically analyze relevant theories and concepts. Students must also be able to apply them correctly in the appropriate context, and develop their own connections to subject matter.

Traditionally, we begin our study for this government class with the Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government. In this unit we examine the type of government that is established by the Constitution. Students gain knowledge of the historical relevance of the Constitutional Convention and they examine the ideological and philosophical ideals from which the framers drew inspiration when creating our government. However, when I start the year off with an introduction to the U.S. Constitution and the people who wrote it, students are almost immediately turned off. In an effort to keep their attention and to make the subject matter relevant to them, we will start with the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties unit.

In the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties unit, students gain an understanding of the development of individual rights and liberties and their impact on citizens. Students analyze and become familiar with the judicial interpretations of the Constitution on various civil rights and liberties. Students should also understand the legal, social, and political implications of social issues following Supreme Court decisions. In addition, students will be able to discuss the impact of these decisions as they relate to racial segregation, rights of minority

groups and women. Students will also examine how the fourteenth amendment has been used to extend protection of rights and liberties and be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Supreme Court decisions particularly those effecting the questions of African American citizenship. In teaching these units out of sequence, I hope to allow my students to build a connection to the laws and decisions that have been made, so that they may enjoy the freedoms and benefits afforded to them. I want them to understand that they can be valuable participants in society while making historical connections to their African American heritage.

Since the election of Barak Obama, students have shown interest in government, when we discuss the office of the presidency. However, few of them have registered to vote and although many my students are exposed to the great works of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, fewer students are aware of the contributions African American women made after our emancipation and during the suffrage movement. In the study of African American Life after the Civil War and the struggle for full citizenship, the focus is primarily on the contributions of the few men we are required to study such as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Martin Luther King. The role of African American women is but a footnote in American history. There are only a handful of woman who are required to be taught. In most cases they are not presented in the forefront of the movement in the fight for citizenship and equal rights for African Americans.

My unit "An Introduction of African American Participation in Citizenship" will introduce students to the men and woman who began to speak out before the Civil War. Women like Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth and Martin Delany who traveled and lectured on the ills of slavery and the women's Suffrage movement. Students will also examine the political organizations that were created and utilized to help African American voices be heard.

Students will be asked to respond (in writing) to several essential guiding questions to introduce them to the unit topic:

1. What does it mean to be an American citizen? Discuss what rights and privileges come with it. (Whole class will answer)
2. What does it mean to be an African American male? (answered by the female students)
3. What does it mean to be an African American female? (answered by the male students)
4. How important was it that men received the right to vote before women? (whole class will answer)

These questions will guide class discussion as we begin to compare and contrast student answers. The answers the students provide will also provide a framework of what the students know and understand about what it means to be a citizen of the United States. At the completion of this unit, I would like my students to have a renewed pride in the adults they are becoming. I also hope that by personalizing the African American struggle for citizenship, they will gain an appreciation for the value and importance of the Constitution. They should also be able to use this unit as the foundation for the work they will have to complete in order to be successful while taking the advance placement exam.

Demographics

I have been a teacher at George Wythe High School for three years. This upcoming school year will be my fourth year teaching the Advance Placement Government and Politics class. Our district is in the process of building our Advance Placement program. We offer four to five Advance Placement classes each year. Usually the students enrolled in the class are taking at least one other Advance Placement class. Any student who shows interest in taking the class, has the opportunity to do so. However, because it is a government class, there usually is not that much interest. The class requires a lot of reading. The class is taught as a survey class and the students are required to take a comprehensive exam in May. The May exam is graded by teachers from across the country and they are graded on a five point scale. Students who receive a 3 or above, depending on the school they attend, can receive college credit. The average class size is approximately twenty students. All students who are enrolled in the class, are not always headed to college after graduation. The course however, is taught with the intention that all will attend college. Only seniors are enrolled in the class. There is no formal assessment that is given to determine ability and eligibility, although student ability varies. Despite this variation, all students are capable of successfully completing the course.

Background/Content

Although students will need to be familiar with all of the amendments to the Constitution, for this unit it is important that students know the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. In order for students to understand what it means to be an (African) American citizen, they must recognize the Constitution as the foundation upon which their citizenship is based. After the completion of the initial class discussion of what it means to be an African American citizen, I would like for my students to read the three amendments. Through group discussion, I want them to recognize three important facts: 1. In the Thirteenth Amendment, the institute of slavery no longer exists in the United States. 2. Under the Fourteenth Amendment, being born (or naturalized) in the United States makes you a citizen of the United States and no law can be passed depriving a citizen of their rights of life, liberty or property without due process of the law. And as citizens, their rights are protected under the law. And 3, the right to vote (for men), could not be denied because of race, color or because you (or ancestors) were slaves. I want my students to make the connection that the United States Constitution includes and protects them. If they can understand and accept the constitution as a document that applies to them, hopefully, learning and understanding about the creation of the government will help them as they identify and understand important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. Government and Politics

Amendment XIII

(Ratified December 6, 1865)

1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation

Amendment XIV

(Ratified July 9, 1868)

Section 1

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Amendment XV

(Ratified February 3, 1870)

Section 1

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

What is our "Place"?

Since the arrival of the settlers from Europe with their dream of economic freedom and the escape of religious persecution, the future United States of America became the land of opportunity for many people looking for a new start. For the people of Africa, their involuntary removal from home forever placed them in a different category, because the desire for a new start was not their own. During the forced servitude, Africans were "placed" into slavery. Slavery was eventually to be their "place" for life. Not being considered subjects of Great Britain, they were the property of their owners.

During the creation of the United States government with the writing of the Constitution, the institution of slavery was taken into consideration without sincere benefit to the slaves themselves. In an effort to appease the southern states when determining the representation in the House of Representative, in an effort to appease the southern states, three-fifths of slaves were counted in the total population of the southern states. This calibration helped increase southern representation in the House. Although the physical presence of slavery helped dismantle a discord between the North and South, slaves still were not considered citizens as they had no voting or taxation rights.

After the ratification of the Constitution, citizenship was defined and the former English subjects had established their place in society as citizens of the United States with the benefits of citizenship and responsibilities it guarantees. After Emancipation, and with the eventual passage of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, African Americans traditionally had their citizenship rights challenged and were not allowed to fully participate as citizens of the United States. During the late 1800's and early 1900's, African Americans began to try to define their own place by attempting to share space and place with White Americans. In a continued effort to gain recognition and acceptance, African Americans continued to try to

participate in the political process thru voting and by becoming self-sufficient and educated citizens who obey the law. Organized groups, such as the Klu Klux Klan, began to use tactics that whose sole aim was to, "suppress the colored vote by intimidation and murder" (Marable 192). Black men, woman and children were lynched, beaten, shot and burned from 1882 to 1908 in numbers that far outnumber Whites. The eventual progress and success of African Americans as American citizens not only threatened White America politically and economically, it also threatened the class and race structure already established. According to historian Glenda Gilmore, "Black progress threatened what southerners called "place" (Gilmore, pg3).

After the Civil War

After the Civil War, came freedom. One of the most important responsibilities that had to be taken care of was the re-establishment of the Black family. Through slavery and war, family members were sold off, ran away or were dislocated by war efforts as men fought on the side of the Union. In almost any culture, the foundation that a family unit can provide becomes important during times of struggle and uncertainty. After this time of slavery and war, the re-establishing of family unit became an important aspect in rebuilding the foundation torn apart because of war. Men and women "refused to form new connections and declared their purpose to keep faith to absent ones" (Giddings, pg. 37).

Receiving freedom and re-establishment of families brought many natural, but unforeseen decisions that as a race had to be made. African Americans wanted to be treated as human beings, but under the institution of slavery, the threat of violence, death and the possible sale of a loved one, was always present. No longer a people of bondage the desire to be heard, recognized and accepted as citizens began to change, because now action could be taken to achieve their recognition as citizens. With the ending of slavery and the passages of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments, the courage to voice the hope of fair treatment guaranteed to citizens began to be expressed by brave men and women. As political thought began to emerge, men and women stepped forward as leaders; while organizations formed to educate and inform African Americans on a variety of issues.

African Americans have been able to find ways to voice their objections to their treatment. Through public speaking, the formation of political organizations and the publication of newspapers, leaders have risked their lives to be able to participate as citizens of the United States. Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, and Martin Delany, are just a few of the African Americans who made it their life's mission to emphasize, the importance of citizenship.

It is important that I reintroduce my students to United States Constitutional history highlighting the role of African Americans. Traditionally, the foundation of US government is taught from the perspective of the founding fathers (James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and George Mason). Providing historical content from a perspective that students can relate, will allow them to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts. This skill will allow them to apply them in the appropriate context, while developing their own connections to subject matter.

Selected quotes (below) of Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth and Martin Delany, illustrate a message of action. By exposing my students of the 21st century to quotes of the 19th century, they will have the opportunity to examine the quotes of these African American and put them into context of the time. Students will also have the opportunity to determine if these quotes are relevant in any way issues faced by African Americans today.

Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879)

Before Emancipation, in addition to various men, there were a women who also began to advocate for African Americans and women. During a time when activism, especially African American women's activism, was very limited, Maria W. Stewart, a woman with limited education, published a pamphlet: *Religion and the Pure Principles of Mortality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build*. She also traveled the public lecture circuit. In doing so she also accomplished something that no other women had done in recorded history: she spoke to a mixed crowd of men and women on the controversial movement to expatriate African Americans to West Africa. Stewart, probably the first African American women to speak out publicly in defense of women's rights, made a plea to all Blacks to "Organize against the tyranny of slavery in the south and to resist and defy the restrictions of bigotry in the North" (Richardson, xiii).

"What If I Am a Woman?" 1833 (Selected quotes of Maria Stewart)

"African rights and liberty is a subject that ought to fire the breast of every free man of color in these United State, and excite in his bosom a lively, deep, decided and heartfelt interest" (Marable, pg. 41)

"If you are men, convince them that you possess the spirit of men; and as your day, so shall your strength be. Have the sons of Africa no souls?...shall the chains of ignorance forever confine them?" (pg. 41).

"Most of our color have been taught to stand in fear of the white man from their earliest infancy, to work as soon as they could walk, and call 'master' before they scarce could lisp the name of mother" (42)

"The unfriendly whites first drove the native American from his much-loved home. Then stole our fathers from their peaceful and quiet dwellings, and brought them hither and made bond men and bond women of them and their little ones; they have obliged our brethren to labor, kept them in utter ignorance, nourished them in vice and raised them in degradation; and now that we have enriched their soil, and filled their coffers, they say that we are not capable of becoming like white men, and that we never can rise to respectability in this country". (pg. 46)

Sojourner Truth (1799-1883)

Born into slavery as Isabella Bomefree in New York, she experienced the hardships of slavery early as she was beaten and mistreated by several masters. During these harsh times she resorted to daily prayer as a way to live through the reality of her life. After losing all of her possessions while living in New York, she makes her way as a traveling preacher and changes her name to Sojourner Truth. In 1850, her memoir *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave* was published giving her an income and the opportunity to participate in speaking engagements. Using her own experiences as a slave she spoke on the anti-slavery movement and women's rights.

"A'nt I a Woman?" 1851 (selected quotes of Sojourner Truth)

"Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'n't I a woman?"(164)

"I could work as much and eat as much as a man- when I could get it-and bare de lash as well! And a'n't I a woman"?(164)

"If my cup won't hold a pint, and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye e mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?"

"If de fust woman god ever made was strong enough to turn de world upside down all alone, dese women togedder (and she glanced her over the platform) ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right up again! And now dey is asking to do it, de men better let 'em" (Marable, pg 67)

Martin R. Delany (1812-1885)

He was a lecturer, an educator, a physician, African explorer, an author and journalist. African Americans began to speak up and out about their condition, causing different types of African American thought to emerge. Most agreed that African Americans' conditions needed to change. Opinions on how this could be achieved, however, began to differ. Martin Delany, an early black nationalist, began to express the same message, in a different way. He realized that the African American from twenty-five years ago had gone through a transformation. According to Delany, colored people required, "very different means and measures to satisfy their wants and demands and to effect their advancement" (Delany, preface). Historical information about the race had systematically been withheld to keep the race ignorant; information vital to the advancement and betterment of the race. By not being allowed to receive an education, limited the actions that African Americans could take in order to better their current status in life and the lives of future generations. In an effort to offer Blacks a publication dedicated to providing necessary information that would promote black pride with a commitment to abolition, Delany created the newspaper *The Mystery*. Briefly, Delany worked with Frederick Douglas on *The North Star*, however philosophies over the African American community caused a split between the two abolitionists. In an effort to promote black freedom, Delany published *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*, which advocated separation of the races and colonization

Means of Elevation (selected quotes of Martin Delany)

"By the regulations of society, there is no equality of persons, where there is not an equality of attainments. By this, we do not wish to be understood as advocating the actual equal attainments of every individual; but we mean to say, that if these attainments be necessary for the elevation of the white man, they are necessary for the elevation of the colored man" (Marable, 71).

"Until we are determined to change the condition of things, and raise ourselves above the position in which we are now prostrated, we must hang our heads in sorrow, and hide our faces in shame" (72)

The United States Our Country (selected quotes of Martin Delany)

"We are Americans, having a birthright citizenship-natural claims upon the country-claims common to all others of our fellow citizens-natural rights, which may, by virtue of unjust laws, be obstructed, but never can be annulled" (73).

Things As They Are (selected quote of Martin Delany)

"Unfortunately for us, as a body, we have been taught to believe, that we must have some person to think for us, instead of thinking for ourselves (pg. 76).

sbA Glance At Ourselves - Conclusion (selected quote of Martin Delany)

"No people are ever elevated above the condition of their female; hence, the condition of the mother determines the condition of the child" (pg. 7)

Objectives

The students in my Advance Placement class will participate in this unit as an introduction to United States Government and Politics class. The customary unit that begins this course is the Constitutional Underpinnings of United States government, which explains the historical content of the Constitutional Convention, the ideological and philosophical traditions of the framers. It also defines federalism, the separation of powers, and checks and balances. In an effort to get my students to fully understand the content and get them interested, we will be starting with the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties unit. In this unit, students will gain an understanding of United States politics that includes the examination of the development of individual rights and liberties and their impact on citizens. We will primarily focus on the civil rights and liberties of African Americans. At the end of this unit, students will: 1. Know the important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics, 2. Understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures) and 3. Be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum.

Strategies

The final exam is given at the end of this course concentrates on multiple choice questions and four free response questions. The students need to be able to write based on what they have read in class and independent reading that is done outside of the classroom. The strategies used will concentrate on allowing students to organize information and critically analyze information resulting from class notes, group discussion, and personal reflections. Some of the strategies used are:

Power point notes/Graphic Organizers: Content information will be presented in power point format. Students will then use various graphic organizers to help disseminate information for student study.

Cooperative Learning Groups: Students will be provided with discussion questions and assignments that require them to work effectively together. This will also provide students the opportunity to practice critical thinking skills, while formulating and communicating ideas with one another.

Free Response Questions: In preparation for the Advance Placement exam, students will complete Free Response writing question that will measure students understanding.

Classroom Activities

Day One: Introduction/Discussion Questions

Students will be grouped into four groups (Two male and two female). Each group will read, answer and record a response to the following questions: 1. What does it mean to be an American citizen? 2. How important was it that men received the right to vote before women? (Explain group response).

The female groups will also answer the following question: What does it mean to be an African American male? (Explain group response).

The male groups will answer the following question: What does it mean to be an African American female? (Explain group response).

Groups will then present their responses to the class. Through this group activity, students should be able to discuss and explain the different points of view in the individual groups. Also, through this group discussion, the male and female students should be able to agree or disagree with each others' response (to the gender questions). It will be interesting for the males to listen to the female perspective on what it means to be an African American male (and vice versa). As a class we will discuss any misconceptions held by either group (male and female).

Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments

Students will remain in groups. Each group will be presented with a copy of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Each group will respond to the following questions:

- In one sentence, rewrite each amendment in regular terms.
- Select any of the three amendments and write a group statement as to how the amendment selected would have affected the lives of African Americans immediately after its ratification. Name two problems that would have to be dealt with by African Americans as a result of the amendment.

After completion, each group will present the definition (summary) of each amendment. Students will select the amendment explanation that better helps them understand its meaning to be written into their notes.

Class discussion: Each group will post the problems discussed within their groups. Class will then participate in discussion on the problems African Americans may have had to deal with after the ratifications of the amendments. By participating in this discussion, students will hopefully have a better understanding how laws and policies that are meant to make life better for citizens, does not always solve the problem. Through this class discussion, students will also be allowed to brainstorm for ideas as to how these problems were dealt with by African Americans (Students will have to keep in mind that the solutions should be based on the time period, not 2012).

Day two: Power point presentation

Students will be presented content information via Powerpoint. During content presentation and discussion, students are encouraged to document relevant information. Note taking for students (even as seniors) can sometimes be difficult. Students are used to being told what to write down. For students preparing for college, it is important that they be able to write down key information while participating in class discussion of information

Student Quote Discussions

Students will be divided into three groups. Each group will be given select quotes of Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth and Martin Delany. Each group will analyze and discuss the relevance of the quotes. Students will use graphic organizer to organize relevance of quotes. Through group discussion, it will be important for students to demonstrate an understanding of the relevance of the quote during the time period it was spoken and students should be able to make a real world connection to the quote.

Selected Quote of _____

Quote:

- In regular terms, rewrite the quote.
- Why is the quote important? What is the message?
- Is the message relevant now? Why/why not? (Give examples)

Day Three

Writing Assessment /Free Response questions

In preparation for the writing portion of the Advance Placement exam, students will have their first opportunity to practice completing a free response question. Students will be presented with four questions. For this writing exercise, students will select two of the four questions. Using their notes from class and group discussions, students will respond to questions based on their knowledge. Students will be provided with a rubric, illustrating how the essays are graded. Students will also have the opportunity to use the rubric to guide them to completion. With daily practice, by the time the students take the exam, they will feel comfortable with their knowledge and how they use that knowledge to construct their answers.

Sample Questions:

Does the Thirteenth, Fourteenth or Fifteenth Amendment impact your actions and/or participation in the political process as a citizen of the United States? Explain.

Select a quote from Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth or Martin Delany. Discuss the relevance of the quote as it relates to an issue a group or culture is experiencing today. Site examples as to how this group can use the political process to inspire action and awareness within the community.

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