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2020 Volume I: American History through American Lives

“Faces in the Frame: More than a Narrative”-The Lives that Frame the True History of the United States through Primary Sources

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Introduction and Rationale: The False Narrative

Malcolm X said, “Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today”.¹ This quote is very relevant in the year 2020. We are living in a time of consequences; four hundred years of systematic racism, oppression, and white supremacy have shaped this country into what it is today. The false narration and miseducation of history have contributed heavily to this outcome. Racism in the United States is hundreds of years of trauma, forced tolerance and racial oppression still prevailing. According to information in the historical works of Benjamin Campbell, in *Richmond’s Unhealed History*, African Americans, Native Americans and other people of color in this country have been disenfranchised and been the victims of racial violence and terrorism since European Americans came to North America in 1607.² Similarly, in Dr. Jaqueline Battalora’s book *The Birth of the White Race*, she outlines the concept of “white” was manufactured and written into legislation following Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676 as a form of legalized privilege.³ It was “...legislation that set “British and other whites” apart from those of native tribes, mulattos, and those of African descent”.⁴

This historical truth, however unsettling, is the cornerstone on which the United States was built: the concept of “white” vs. other. This concept of “white” in and of itself is a construct, and a “legalized status of privilege”.⁵ White is a color, not an ethnicity. Lack of education of these facts as well as a miseducation and false narrative of History has led to color blind and “euro-centric” curricula in the United States. Within the constructs of state curriculum, students are rarely taught about the African continent in terms of heritage or the true length and depth of the freedom struggle. History should be taught with equity, integrity and truth. History of the United States is often approached through fictional narratives, disjointed and decontextualized events, and isolated instances of change regarding African American people. For further information on combatting this, look no further than the work of Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries who wrote *Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement*. In his book, Dr. Jeffries outlines the concept of this skewed and mythical form of history coming from the “myth of racial progress”.⁶ Dr. Jeffries even goes on to discuss the literal lack of racial progress and its causes.

“What’s more the lack of racial progress was a direct result of efforts by those who wanted to

preserve the racial status quo...and maintain social systems and economic structures that reinforced and perpetuated inequality”.⁷-Jeffries

This approach to history has more consequences than just a lesson gone awry. By not teaching our students the truth of United States history is not only causing trauma and harm, but also allows inequality to continue.

The False Narrative in Education

Students are often taught history, and specifically the history of the civil rights movement through curriculum in an oversimplified way using the “Master Narrative”; a phrase coined by Julian Bond.⁸ The narrative highlights isolated events and people out of context or full scope in a condensed format.⁹ Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks are examples of figures often taught without complexity and depth. This decontextualized and one-dimensional view oversimplifies the four-hundred-year strength and struggle of African American people in the United States. “Civil rights history needs to be conveyed in a connected way”.¹⁰ In short, by not teaching students true history we are robbing them of self-awareness and pride within their history.

Demographics

I teach a population of students primarily of African American and Latin American descent, with only one or two students of European American descent per classroom. My students are engaged and eager to learn once they are taught history representative of who they are. My students’ express interest in learning about historical figures. This unit will illustrate the full four-hundred years of strength and struggle of African Americans in the United States by using biographies, but also highlighting the individuals and events they learn about who are linked by components of the movement. It is vital to teach truth and justice for our students, particularly our marginalized students of color. This unit will allow students to change their historical lens and think critically.

The Benefit of Biography

This unit will focus on the use of biographies. This will be the method in which we will address the historical figures and lives as they connect to events on the historical timeline. Not only can we address the “False Narrative”¹¹ of U.S. History using biographies, but we can also teach lessons and virtues through these stories.¹² These benefits are outlined in the article “*Why Teach Biography*” by Bernice Learner. Using biographies allows teachers to make a way for students to find themselves within the history curriculum which often omits them. “By encountering such individuals, students may learn...others who have gone before them have found ways of coping, of overcoming hardship...”.¹³ Biographies build our students’ historical lenses by

analyzing and debating material. Students will utilize these biographies to understand the complexities of history and the human story.

“Encouraging children to pose and answer for themselves such questions is the ultimate aim of schooling. Biography can help us reach this aim. A worthy life makes for the most compelling of stories. It illustrates that we humans are the sum of our choices, that we each have the power to shape our own destiny”.¹⁴

Unit Objectives and Components

My goal to address this unjust and distorted teaching of African American history requires not only teaching the full truth of the historical events but teaching the life stories of people from four-hundred years to connect movements and events. The goal is for students to have a true understanding of history to better understand who they are and what it means for the world they live in today. Using primary sources is vitally important in this unit; they allow us to show the truth about people, events in history, and allow students to uncover truth for themselves. This curriculum will use linked biographies along with supporting primary sources. Students will keep their information in notebooks as well as primary source information in a binder. We will spend one week on each specific figure through research, discussion and learning to foster historical thinking and inquiry in the classroom using primary sources.¹⁵ Students will complete a research and writing assignment for each historical figure, and this will turn into a collaborative writing project piece, with an audio-digital component. For a historical through-line to connect events and these individual lives, I will be using the text: *“From Slavery to Freedom” a History of African Americans* by John Hope Franklin and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham for teaching purposes.

What is humanity? (1600s-1800s)

For the period highlighting the 1600s and 1700s we will answer the question: “What is Humanity?” There are so many nameless faces and lost voices of people who were enslaved from this time period. We will learn through narratives of enslaved people and primary sources about selling, trading and abuse of enslaved African people in America. We will also discuss: What is color? What is ethnicity? What is race? The 1600s and 1700s in United States history were centuries of pain for so many people; particularly enslaved Africans. In 1607, Jamestown Virginia was first settled;¹⁶ however, in 1619, the first African people were brought against their will to the shores of this settlement with other indentured servants on a ship called the “White Lion”.¹⁷ There were 32 slaves who arrived, but shortly after there were only 25, as not all survived.¹⁸ Between 1620 and the 1640s, we begin to see the deliberate distinctions written between European Americans and enslaved Africans.¹⁹ More specifically, we see this begin in General Court Transcriptions from 1640 regarding runaway slaves.²⁰ These legal documents and transcripts are when we begin to see American racial slavery take form in the lives of people like John Punch.

The Freedom Struggle: Legalized Racial Slavery, John Punch and Bacon's Rebellion

John Punch was an enslaved man in Virginia during the 1630s and 1640s.²¹ During the time of Punch's enslavement, he attempted to run away to Maryland. Punch was captured along with two indentured servants who were of European descent.²² According to the documents held by the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Punch's case took place on July 9, 1640.²³ Punch was sentenced to "servitude for life",²⁴ unlike the European indentured servants he ran away with who only had time added to their terms.²⁵ This case was the first documented account of what would turn into legalization of slavery and official slave codes in the United States.²⁶ Teaching John Punch is teaching the beginning of the enslavement of African Americans in the United States and one of the first points we can teach students about the history of United States slavery through primary source documents. There are many key events following the John Punch case; such as Bacon's Rebellion, which became the foundation for the uprising of the oppressed. In 1676 Bacon's Rebellion was an uprising comprised of not only enslaved Africans, but also poor European indentured Servants, and wound up clashing with the colonial elite on grounds of protections and land.²⁷ Teaching events like Bacon's Rebellion allows us to teach the African American Freedom Struggle leading into the Civil Rights movement in a connected way throughout history.²⁸ Between 1700 and 1750, regional culture developed among enslaved people working to survive, and slavery began to spread and reach farther across the states.²⁹ This was possible through men like Richard Allen, the founder of the African American Methodist church and many others who contributed to this culture.³⁰ These facts about slavery during this time make the following biographical stories all the more remarkable to teach.

Phillis Wheatley

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) was an African born woman, who was captured and sold into slavery in the United States.³¹ In terms of accomplishments, Wheatley is one of the most inspiring stories to teach of this time period. In researching Wheatley, the suffering endured by enslaved Africans in the United States is painfully clear. Through her strength Wheatley became "the first African American and second woman...to publish a book of poems".³² She stood up to those who questioned her intelligence.³³ People stood in opposition to the inhumanity of slavery. According to encyclopedia Britannica, "Wheatley's work was frequently cited by abolitionists to combat the charge of innate intellectual inferiority among blacks and to promote educational opportunities for African Americans".³⁴ The National Women's History Museum talks about how her poetry focused on an array of topics pertaining to her personage.³⁵ Wheatley would be followed by people like Harriet Jacobs and many others who went on to write about their lives. Her work inspired so many other to share your mind and work with the world to rise up against oppression.

Benjamin Banneker

Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) was born and lived in a county of Baltimore and was one of few free African Americans in the area he lived.³⁶ Teaching about Banneker helps students connect so many accomplishments and events in history. He was an "author, scientist, mathematician, farmer, astronomer, publisher and urban planner".³⁷ Not only was Banneker an extremely accomplished man in this works, surveyed and planned out what would become Washington D.C.³⁸ After surveying the land, a co-worker sent a letter to Thomas Jefferson about Banneker.³⁹ According to Monticello's Encyclopedia, Jefferson, wrote to Banneker seeming surprised by the notion of someone of African descent displaying intelligence.⁴⁰ The encyclopedia article states Banneker composed a response letter August 19, 1791, arguing eloquently "...however variable we may be in Society or

religion, however diversified in Situation or colour, we are all of the Same Family...".⁴¹ Teaching about Banneker helps highlight the opposition of African Americans against those oppressing them, and can be done so using many primary sources. These sources help give a true depiction of who Banneker was.

Gabriel Prosser

Gabriel Prosser is the end of the 1700s in a single-human life. Prosser was born into the condition of enslavement in Henrico, VA in 1776.⁴² Teaching about the life and rebellion of Prosser helps teach the concept of rebellion and link it to other events. Prosser worked for multiple slave owners and eventually met others, with whom he inspired a revolt.⁴³ He planned a revolt which ended up unsuccessful due to a storm and enslaved participants who feared for their lives and told the slave-owners.⁴⁴ Prosser fled, along with some of the other conspirators and got away only to be sold to the authorities shortly after.⁴⁵ Prosser was tried and executed.⁴⁶ The freedom struggle shaped Prosser's life and oppressive violence forced him to fight back. Injustice, violence and oppression continued; this is how the next few centuries, began to take form.

The Revolution: African American Soldiers and Crispus Attucks

During the end of the 1700s, the Revolutionary War had occurred, while enslaved people still fought to survive, and many of whom fought in the war.⁴⁷ "...Slaves were running away—to fight with the British and win their own freedom or to ally with the Patriots and win freedom for their country as well as themselves".⁴⁸ This concept of freedom was the defining point of this century, and is displayed in the lives of people like Crispus Attucks. Attucks fled his conditions of enslavement in hopes of achieving his freedom through the revolution.⁴⁹ During the Boston Massacre, Attucks "...became the first martyr for freedom".⁵⁰ Attucks was a defining piece of the end of this century. The Boston Massacre and the Revolution are often taught without emphasis on African American soldiers, when that should be a focus. Crispus Attucks became known in the beginning of the Anti-Slavery Movement in the United States.⁵¹

What is Freedom? (1800s-1900s)

During the 1800s period of the centuries we will learn about historical figures and answer "What is Freedom?" We will have many discussions around this question regarding these figures and we will determine their contributions to freedom of enslaved African Americans. Life in the United States in early 1800s was rapidly changing as enslaved people expected to gain freedom for fighting in the Revolutionary War, and only some achieved it. Certain states began to change legislation for more slave-owners to have the ability to free their enslaved workers, while other states (particularly in the South) fought to keep people enslaved.⁵² Fugitive acts, auctions, violence and separation, meant to undercut any attempts of liberation.⁵³ African Americans of this century such became some of the most prominent voices of abolition and the anti-slavery movement leading up to the Civil War.⁵⁴

Nat Turner

Nat Turner (1800) was born into the condition of enslavement in Virginia.⁵⁵ Turner was born in the county of South Hampton and came into the world only a short time before the hanging of Gabriel Prosser.⁵⁶ To show

the links between the acts of opposition from African Americans across the centuries, it is important to teach about Nat Turner, as well as the overlap of his life with others who were starting rebellions. Turner was a religious man who frequently felt called to a higher power, which let him to commit several small acts of rebellion before his major rebellion in 1831.⁵⁷ Around sixty white people were killed as a result of the rebellion.⁵⁸ Turner was eventually tried and executed for the rebellion.⁵⁹ This happened exactly one lifetime after Gabriel Prosser attempted to lead his rebellion. It is vitally important to show the longevity of these rebellions. This displays people fighting back in defense, and the African American experience during this era was not one of non-violence and submission.

Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth, formerly Isabella Bomfree, was born at the beginning of the 19th century.⁶⁰ For teaching about strength and hope during this time period, Sojourner Truth is a perfect example. In reading the book *The Narrative of the Life of Sojourner Truth*, it is a vivid illustration of the pain and abuse she endured as an enslaved African American woman. In the Narrative, you learn Truth lost her parents to the cruelties of slavery and had her child taken away from her.⁶¹ Truth had incredible intrinsic self-discipline; she found it necessary to work hard and was a deeply religious individual.⁶² Her master denied her freedom and her son was sold away from her; she fought to reclaim her lost child.⁶³ Truth spoke in court and fight for custody.⁶⁴ Teaching about Truth can help link historical figures who also fought for their freedom or the freedom of their loved ones in court such as Dred Scott, and others who fought and exposed racism in the justice system. Once Truth regained custody, she left with her children, eventually arriving in New York City, where she became “an itinerant preacher”⁶⁵ and met Fredrick Douglass.⁶⁶ According to the National Women’s History Museum, “While in Washington, DC, she lobbied against segregation, and in the mid-1860s, when a streetcar conductor tried to violently block her from riding, she ensured his arrest and won her subsequent case”.⁶⁷ Sojourner Truth is a truly inspiring figure in American history and a picture of strength amidst struggle in a human life. Teaching truth helps us showcase those who not only rose against oppression and violence physically but also with their inner strength.

Fredrick Douglass

Fredrick Douglass (1818-1895) was a man born into the condition of slavery who fled to obtain his freedom and became a writer and abolitionist.⁶⁸ Much like Truth, Douglass witnessed the horrors of enslavement. Upon reading his autobiography: *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*, the reader cannot help but be deeply disturbed in reading the accounts of pure violence and inhumanity enacted upon Douglass and other enslaved people around him.⁶⁹ Some of his accounts of watching slave-owners abuse their slaves are truly traumatic. After living through the horrors of slavery during this century, Douglass never forgot living in the condition of chattel slavery.⁷⁰ “I would allow myself to suffer under the greatest imputations...rather than exculpate myself, and thereby run the hazard of closing the slightest avenue by which a brother slave might clear himself of the chains and fetters of slavery”.⁷¹ By the end of his narrative, Douglass achieves his freedom and the remainder of his story lies in his work as a writer, a politician after working with Abraham Lincoln and his work as an abolitionist over all.⁷² It is important to teach the different stories of people gaining freedom to show the different stories of strength and struggle of African Americans across the centuries.

Elizabeth Jennings

Elizabeth Jennings (1827 to 1901), was a schoolteacher in New York who refused to leave a white passenger

car and wait for a “colored trolley” to free up; this occurred one century before Rosa Parks planned and executed the Bus Boycott in 1950.⁷³ Teaching about Jennings, shows how connected the various movements and boycotts were in terms of centuries. Jennings did not plan the encounter, she was however prepared to handle racial injustice due to other encounters over the course of her life.⁷⁴ Jennings went to court and fighting for payment of damages, as she was forcibly removed from the trolley, she had tried to ride on.⁷⁵ According to an article in the New York Times by Sam Roberts, “Jennings sought \$500 in damages...The jury decided that amount was too much for an black person and instead awarded \$225...”.⁷⁶ It is important to note, her story received much coverage, as it was written about by Fredrick Douglass.⁷⁷

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman, whose original name was Aminta or “Minty” Ross, was born into enslavement and escaped to freedom in the 1840s.⁷⁸ It would simply be unjust to teach the African American Freedom struggle, without teaching about the contributions of Tubman. Although she is taught in our curriculum, many of the little-known facts about her are not addressed. According to a collaborative article by Facinate named *Little Known Facts about Harriet Tubman*, she gained her freedom but went back through the underground railroad nineteen times to rescue others from slavery; she rescued three-hundred people and never lost one.⁷⁹ Her life’s work was a clear depiction of someone who had experienced the trauma of being enslaved in the United States. Tubman was attacked by an overseer, an experience where she was hit on the head with a metal heap; this left her dealing with issues sleeping and with her head.⁸⁰ Tubman became something of a savior and a legend. She would obtain the name “Moses” for freeing so many and earned the name “General Tubman” by John Brown.⁸¹ Tubman would go on to earn many more titles. By the end of her life, Tubman was a war hero (for her work in leading and rescuing people in the Civil War), she was named a saint, an Abolitionist and a speaker for Women’s Rights and Suffrage.⁸² Harriet Tubman lived a remarkable life of service. She focused on helping other people escape to be free, once she gained her own freedom. There were others like John Parker who focused on this same goal. We must teach about her in full truth. Tubman’s story should be done justice by highlighting her famous acts, but also the little-known facts about her story which highlight so much of her life and works.

Robert Smalls and The Civil War

The Civil War became a defining piece of this century as the South tried to keep slavery, and Abraham Lincoln became President causing much tension leading up to the war.⁸³ During this time, there were individuals doing remarkable things to achieve their freedom.

Robert Smalls was an enslaved man who decided to obtain his freedom and the freedom of his family through a courageous act.⁸⁴ Teaching about stories like Robert Smalls show the bravery and the lengths to which people were willing to go to in order to gain their freedom. Smalls captained a ship called the *Planter* into Naval waters towards a Confederate port with the goal of escaping to freedom.⁸⁵ According to an article from PBS, “the U.S. Congress on May 30, 1862, passed a private bill authorizing the Navy to appraise the *Planter* and award Smalls and his crew half the proceeds for “rescuing her from the enemies of the Government” ...”.⁸⁶ Smalls went on to be noted as a courageous hero for his act to find freedom for himself and others, he acted in many more military operations and went on to become a politician.⁸⁷ It is important to teach the significance in time period of Robert Smalls, to highlight the relentless spirit to achieve freedom.

What is Citizenship? What is Justice? (1900s to Present)

The period of the 1900s will be focused on not only individual figures, but the convergence of ideals and messages of the movement from these figures. We will address the question “What are Justice and Citizenship?” This question will be the focus of many of our discussions of these figures and their connectedness. We will also discuss: “What impact did Education have on these individuals?” and “How do we define social equity, equality and justice?” While this era of the 1900s was filled with so many events, there has been an over-simplification of this era, distorting Civil Rights Movement.⁸⁸ Jim Crow Segregation Laws of 1896 made violence an early theme of the 1900s.⁸⁹ I will be teaching about these figures in order to connect them to the events and milestones of this time period.

W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington: *Fighting to be Educated and Respected*

During this time of racial tension in the early 1900s, two very prominent writers and educated African American men were W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington. There began to be differing ideologies during Reconstruction on how African Americans would achieve true equality.⁹⁰ Both men were highly educated and they motivated people to take part in fighting to obtain an education and equality.⁹¹ There were major differences in the thinking of these two men, in terms of how African American dignity and equality should be achieved for all, not only the prominent. Writing in 1903, W. E. B. Dubois stated, “easily the most striking thing in the history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington”.⁹² This is a highlight of how the two men differed in their outlook and their means of attaining goals and milestones for African Americans, although both should be taught in history.

Booker T. Washington

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) was a man dedicated to furthering his own education and making a place for others to achieve their own.⁹³ Washington was extremely successful in terms of education and accomplishments, he was not however, overly dedicated to challenging white supremacy or racial violence within his writings as much his other counterparts of the era and viewed this practice as extreme.⁹⁴ “The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly...”.⁹⁵ One of the most striking experiences while learning about African American studies is to read *Up from Slavery*, Washington’s autobiography. The reader follows Washington’s journey to receive an education and his creation of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and the foundation of the National Negro Business League.⁹⁶ The narrative is shocking in many ways as it is forgiving of white people, even those who had enslaved him, and seemed to be more condemning of African Americans.⁹⁷ He would even go so far, as to idolize figures such as George Washington.⁹⁸ Booker T. Washington, a famous school developer, educator; also “cultivated white approval”.⁹⁹ It is important to teach historical figures through primary sources to convey their personage and accomplishments. It is also important to teach others during the era, who had differing outlooks, opinions and ideologies; it is important to teach about someone such as W.E.B Du Bois.

W.E.B. Du Bois

“William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (February 23, 1868 – August 27, 1963) was an American civil rights activist and leader, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, writer, editor, poet, and scholar”.¹⁰⁰ This

information from an article by the NAACP, outlines and details the accomplishments and life of Du Bois. He was a Harvard graduate and one of the founders of the NAACP (The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People).¹⁰¹ Although Dubois published many books, his writing in *The Souls of Black Folk* is stunningly beautiful. Throughout the book which is a collection of essays, Du Bois illustrates the pain of African American people, with almost musical writing, and the entire story is packed with truth about the systematic racial oppression enacted upon African American people in the United States since its colonization.¹⁰² It is important to teach this as a part of the unit, to add perspective to these people in history who all are connected across the centuries. Du Bois exuded a sense of dignity in the face of constant opposition and doubt. The NAACP states: “Du Bois was the founder and editor of the NAACP magazine: *The Crisis*”.¹⁰³ Not only would he work and write for the NAACP, but Du Bois was a professor, wrote novels, official documents and was involved in global affairs.¹⁰⁴ Dubois was involved in Pan-Africanism, socialism and traveled as a leader and was responsible for organizing meetings of congress internationally.¹⁰⁵ Du Bois lived a truly remarkable life. “Du Bois died in Ghana on Aug. 27, 1963, on the eve of the civil rights march in Washington, D.C.”.¹⁰⁶ Teaching about figures such as Du Bois, is vital as he illustrated the African American experience and provides with connections to many individuals, activist groups and integral parts of the whole movement.

Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) was the predecessor of the modern-day protestor.¹⁰⁷ Teaching about her life story gives us important links to Elizabeth Jennings and Rosa Parks. According to a women’s history article about her life by Alisha Norwood, Wells had many run-ins with people in power and fought back almost every time.¹⁰⁸ She sued a company that owned a train-car for forcibly removing her from a train-car, for which she had the documented proof she should be able to go on.¹⁰⁹ Wells went on to start the anti-lynching campaign and awareness,¹¹⁰ that we are sadly still discussing as if it is new today in 2020. The story of Wells is highlighted by opposition to oppression, and links to many other influential figures who fought back in a similar way.

Marcus Garvey and the UNIA: *The Rise of Black Nationalism*

Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was the leader of the Black Nationalist movement, who would add a key dimension of this era.¹¹¹ The “*Back to Africa*” movement was built upon the idea that if African Americans could not achieve freedom and equality in the United States among “white” Americans, the best option was to go back to the land their ancestors had been stolen from.¹¹² “Born in Jamaica...he founded his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) there in 1914; two years later, he brought it to the United States”.¹¹³ Garvey lived to promote African American pride and dignity, with his legacy eventually leading to inspiring the Black Power Movement of the 1970s.¹¹⁴ It is important to teach about Garvey in order to showcase the ideology of Black Nationalism and its context, and all the methods implemented to achieve freedom, equality and prosperity.

Ella Baker and Mary Mcleod Bethune: *Women of the NAACP*

Ella Baker (1903-1986) was an influential leader and member inside the NAACP, the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Council) and SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) during her life.¹¹⁵ Baker was an impactful leader connected to and leading various groups during the Civil Rights movement. She carried experience and leadership rivaling many other Civil Rights leaders. According to an article from the Ella Baker Center, Baker was involved in the dismantling of Jim Crow laws through bus boycotts and running campaigns

for voting.¹¹⁶ Not only was Baker involved in leadership positions in the NAACP, and worked with the SCLC, but Baker left to foster student activism for the Civil Rights movement.¹¹⁷ Baker was the coordinator of a meeting for the Greensboro sit-in leaders in 1960, which was the foundation for SNCC as an organization.¹¹⁸ Baker did not always have the recognition she deserved, as she was not seen as capable of being in a position of leadership by people like Martin Luther King Jr....¹¹⁹ She and King had issues as she had more experience within movements and yet she was not consulted due to his views regarding women and the movement.¹²⁰ This would not stop Baker, as she would go on to leave a strong legacy of African American women within the Civil Rights movement and their impact.¹²¹

Mary Mcleod Bethune (1875-1955) was another member of the NAACP who would become the Vice President, and who was largely overlooked.¹²² She is connected with the other African American women of her past and future, who would continue as a major organizing force behind much of the Civil Rights movement. She became the leader of many women's groups, including the National Council of Negro Women.¹²³ She was politically influential and educationally impactful as she went on to establish an HBCU, as well as having major influence as a part of what was nicknamed, the United States president's "Black Cabinet".¹²⁴ Her leadership ties and connection were strong, making her even more influential. Baker and Bethune were just two examples, of women who completely built, ran and changed so much of the movement and the organizations within it during this era. Their exhausting and influential work will be forever remembered as it shaped the United States as we know it.

The Truth about Rosa Parks

It is often conveyed that Rosa Parks was the first African American woman who happened to be on a bus one day in 1950 and refused to give up her seat.¹²⁵ This narrative of the story of the Civil Rights leader is simply untrue on multiple accounts; not only was the bus boycott that day not a random act, but it was in fact planned along with many other protests by the NAACP that Parks was a member and secretary leader of.¹²⁶ Parks is often displayed as unintentional, and a promoter of only non-violence; this is also historically inaccurate, as she was raised knowing the teachings of Marcus Garvey and others involved with the Black Power movement.¹²⁷ "She called Malcolm X her personal hero".¹²⁸ The truth about Rosa Parks is, she was strong and fought back defiantly against injustice systematically.

Malcolm X: The Fight for Dignity

I can think of no one who embodied African American pride more than Malcolm X. No one has quite moved me in the way Malcolm X has in learning about him. Malcolm Little (1925 to 1965), who would later become Malcolm X and eventually El Malik Al Shabazz,¹²⁹ became the most prominent figure of Black Nationalism of this era.¹³⁰ Malcolm X grew up in the middle of racial violence and oppression in the Midwest, where his father, a supporter of Marcus Garvey and Black Nationalism, was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan, and his mother was institutionalized.¹³¹ Malcolm X was involved in drugs and other activities in the inner city of Boston.¹³² He served time in prison and from relationships built within, would go on to join the Nation of Islam, and would become one its most prominent leaders.¹³³ He would dedicate much of his life to the Nation and moved to Harlem in 1954 where he quickly became a leader to the people.¹³⁴ In Peniel Joseph's biographical analysis entitled: *The Sword and the Shield*, he states "...radical black dignity, marked him as a prophetic visionary in the eyes of a global black community and as a dangerous subversive to the American government".¹³⁵ Malcolm X would later separate from the Nation due to internal conflict and differing views about conduct and

would travel to Africa on a pilgrimage for his Islamic faith.¹³⁶ Malcolm X was murdered during a speech in New York in 1965, after multiple threats and FBI surveillance.¹³⁷

Changing the Narrative: Malcolm X

The narrative of Malcolm X in historical education has been distorted in several ways. The most prominent narratives falsified during my own education were that Malcolm X was a violent individual, that he did not collaborate with other Civil Rights leaders and refused to work with them. This narrative does not give truth or integrity to the political, philosophical and personal journey he took as a leader or his complexity of character. It is important to address these false claims with biographical information: first, Malcolm X did not display to be a violent individual as a leader; in fact, he joined the Nation of Islam which taught self-discipline and self-defense.¹³⁸ Malcolm X's true philosophy was: African Americans would need to achieve dignity, self-sufficiency and equality "...By any means necessary".¹³⁹ In other words, he could see the violence, oppression and that justice would not be achieved by waiting and suffering. To address the second: Malcolm X criticized leaders and non-violent opposition,¹⁴⁰ but would go on in his career to work with people like Martin Luther King Jr., as he went through some slight modifications to his ideals after separating from the NOI.¹⁴¹ Joseph notes: "...Malcolm X's sophisticated understanding of the growing areas of political convergence between himself and King remained largely ignored by the public".¹⁴² Teaching Malcolm X with truth is vital to telling the truth about the African American Freedom Struggle and the Civil Rights Movement.

Martin Luther King Jr: The Fight for Citizenship

There is almost no one who comes to mind more quickly in thinking about the way the Civil Rights movement has been told, than Martin Luther King Jr. King (1929-1968). King was arguably the most well-known Civil Rights leader of this era and was the president of the SCLC in 1957.¹⁴³ This young Baptist preacher would go on to become an orator for the entire movement, as well as a leader in many of the most prominent Civil Rights groups of this era.¹⁴⁴ King's work with the SCLC would lead him to Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, where he and the rest of his fellow activists would show the world the true nature of racial oppression and violence taking place in the South.¹⁴⁵ "King traveled over six million miles and spoke over twenty-five hundred times, appearing wherever there was injustice, protest, and action; and meanwhile wrote five books as well as numerous articles".¹⁴⁶ King was killed in Memphis Tennessee, where he went to protest with sanitation workers in 1968.¹⁴⁷

Changing the Narrative: Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the few Civil Rights leaders taught within the educational system. He is often taught, without Malcolm X; this gives a distorted and one-sided viewpoint to this part of the movement. These men represented what Peniel E. Joseph calls: "The Sword and the Shield" in his joint biographical analysis about the two figures.¹⁴⁸ They were battling for the same things, just fulfilling two different aspects of the movement as they went.¹⁴⁹ It is frequently taught, that King had a more virtuous outlook and tactics than Malcolm X and is also the justification for teaching his story more frequently; this is simply not the case. In King's relationships with people like Ella Baker, his ideas about women, became apparent.¹⁵⁰ It is also frequently taught that King believed in and promoted only non-violence and non-violent tactics. Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violent approach and connection with white elites were reasons he became more palatable to people. This is not to say he did not criticize leaders and the U.S. President, which he did regarding the Vietnam War in particular.¹⁵¹ "...efforts to diminish King's stature were a response to his deepening criticism of

the Great Society and, implicitly for the most part, Johnson's Leadership".¹⁵² Near the end his career, King adopted more radical ideas of achieving equality almost never highlighted.¹⁵³ When reading *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by King, extreme circumstances and prevailing indifference and injustice, would require persistent and even more extreme action.¹⁵⁴ It becomes clear that while Martin Luther King Jr. was indeed a prominent and important leader of the Civil Rights Movement, he certainly did not act alone. He also had influential leaders setting up the mic behind the scenes such as Bayard Rustin, who organized the March on Washington where King gave his "I have a Dream Speech".¹⁵⁵ It is vitally important we teach *all* of the sides of Martin Luther King Jr. to teach truth.

Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.: The Uniting of Vision

The narrative ¹⁵⁶ around Malcolm X and King being challenged by people like Peniel Joseph in his book, is the idea that they were opposites who did not agree on anything and never interacted. "Their political worlds and personal fates converged in a shared passion for global human rights".¹⁵⁷ Near the end of their careers, Malcolm X and King began to think more like each other in many ways and they modified their political views to meet the needs of the changing landscape of the movement.¹⁵⁸ "Malcolm X left a legacy of revolutionary politics that, shortly after his death, would galvanize Black Power activists...But his greatest impact may have been on Martin Luther King Jr."¹⁵⁹ Some events would alter their view of the movement and push them to come together, moving past the barriers of violent vs. non-violent action ¹⁶⁰ include: Brown v. Board, Core and Freedom Rides, Birmingham Bombing, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Freedom Summer and Mississippi Burning Murders, March on Selma, Sit-ins and SNCC.¹⁶¹ The shift in ideologies was incredibly apparent in Martin's Letter from a Birmingham jail, with his newly developing thoughts on the movement after being arrested.¹⁶² At this point, King and Malcolm X were being heavily infiltrated by the FBI .¹⁶³ They would both come to understand the goals of the other and finally converse and converge on political, social, and educational ideals for the movement, before they would both meet an early death by the hands of violence.¹⁶⁴ To teach about King or Malcolm X in isolation, and not to their fullest extent, is to do an injustice to the movement. It also allows the "Master Narrative" to prevail.¹⁶⁵ We have an obligation to dismantle this and teach the truth.

Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993), is an important figure in carrying on the work of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, as he worked for so many advancements for African American people through his work with the Justice System.¹⁶⁶ Marshall received his education at Howard University after facing adversity in perusing his education and went on to become a lawyer.¹⁶⁷ He would take over the legal sector of the NAACP and win multiple cases.¹⁶⁸ "Marshall succeeded in having the Supreme Court declare segregated public schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)".¹⁶⁹ Marshall would eventually be appointed as a Supreme Court Justice, and he would be the first African American to do so.¹⁷⁰

Teaching Strategies

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally Responsive teaching, refers to the ability to change, adapt and mold the curriculum and content you teach to the time in which you live and adapting to all current events effecting your population of students. We must be aware of and intentional about understanding the different cultural backgrounds our students carry with them. Culturally responsive teaching is vital; now more than ever in 2020. We must adopt *Culturally Responsive Long-term Practices* rather than just temporary strategies. This practice will be used as the through-line and overall practice of the Unit itself, as it addresses the need for African American Studies as well as Indigenous and Global Studies and a reshaping of Historical Lenses.

Inquiry Based Learning and Teacher Modeling

The strategy of Inquiry Based Learning, is essentially, allowing students in the history curriculum to analyze primary and secondary sources in order to approach the overall lesson. This means instead of starting the lesson each day with just an introduction about the historical figure and biography we will be learning about that week, there will be certain days within the week, the lesson will begin with a primary source, or secondary source students will analyze, along with a guiding, overarching question they will address. This will be modeled by the teacher during the Prerequisite Project and will be used during the project as well as in the teaching of the historical figures each week, over the duration of the year.

Cooperative Learning and Discussion

This portion of Cooperative Learning and Discussion will take place at the end of each biographical week, as well as during the final project of the unit. This will entail students working together to find out more about a topic or person and discussing their learning as a class. Students will utilize this strategy at the end of each week when we have discussed a historical figure; and extend research on the classroom technology to complete a writing assignment which will go through the processes of writer's workshop to engage in cooperative learning as well. One component of the final product is a cooperative learning piece, where students will complete three (mini biographies, with an image, to large collaborative piece as class: "In my family tree, I see me"). This will allow students to use the cooperative learning strategy. Students will also discuss and present their work.

Classroom Activities

A Sample Biography Lesson

Objective:

Students will analyze and write about a historical figure using primary sources in cooperative learning groups.

Materials:

- Biographical Writing Notebook
- Primary and Secondary Sources
- Biographical Information

Procedures:

Students will learn about each historical figure in the unit for approximately one week. Day one will consist of the direct instruction of the most basic biographical information on the person or an “overview”. Days two and three, will be spent analyzing primary and secondary sources on the individual as well as new facts each day, help us go more in depth to the person’s life story. Day Four will entail writing about the individual, as the teacher displays any extra learning material prepared to teach about the historical figure. Day Five will contain writers’ workshop, partner reading and presenting about the historical figure in the writing.

Learning about and Connecting Organizations and Movements: *Ongoing Timeline***Objective:**

The student will complete an ongoing timeline connecting the various activism groups across the centuries and their work.

Materials:

- Individual Timeline Map
- Colored Pencils
- Computer for Typed Write-up

Procedures:

As students learn about the various historical figures being highlighted and connected across the centuries, they will also be learning about the various influential organizations impacting the movement and the history of their works. Some of these groups will include the NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, CORE, NCNW founded by Mary McLeod Bethune, and the OAAU founded by Malcolm X. The students will fill in the timeline as the content is taught and complete a writing assignment where they will write synopsis about each of these groups and their role in history. This writing will accompany the timelines for the final assignment.

Biographical Display Final Project: Display, Timeline and Essay**Objective:**

The student will be able to complete a Final Biography Project based on one of the historical figures learned about during the year, using a display board and composing an essay.

Materials:

- Tri-Fold Display Board
- Research Materials
- Primary and Secondary Source Examples
- Computer, Tablet, Microsoft Word

- Audio-Recording Software
- Padlet

Procedures:

Students will complete a Final Project for the Unit consisting of two phases. The first phase of the project will be a collaborative piece, where each student will complete a short 'expose' on three hidden voices from these era's using their journals of primary source information. The second phase is a display board, where the student will display biographical information about the historical figure of their choice from the year. Students will compose an essay along with the display board and there will be an optional audio-recording piece with an online library archive. These projects will be a culminating display of content and skills from the year.

Conclusion and Unit Product

This curriculum unit will contain a culminating visual display project for each semester for students will display what they have learned in terms of these historical figures in relation to the four hundred years of strength and struggle. Students will choose one of the figures they have learned about to make a visual project. The goal is that students will be use primary sources, inquiry-based learning, discussion and debate, to not only uncover their history in terms of events, but the people who went before them. The hope is that in the lives of these predecessors they will see reflections of themselves, and come to write their own history, in a way that restores dignity, identity, justice and hope.

Adaptations and Extensions

We will also be discussing the following historical figures: Huey P. Newton, James Baldwin, Bayard Rustin. We will also be discussing events leading into the 21st century, the Voting Rights Act, Rise of Black Power, Fair Housing Act, Shirley Chisolm Election. The current events that will be discussed are the Affirmative Action bill, the Los Angeles riots of 1992, the Million Man March of 1995, the appointing of Colin Powell, Barack Obama, the killing of George Floyd and protests of 2020. Discussing these topics will allow us to make connections to the world students are living in today.

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Appendix for District Standards

Information provided by:

VDOE. *Virginia Studies Standards of Learning*. Virginia Department of Education

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/index.shtml

VS.1 (a, e and g): a. Students will analyze and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary sources to understand events in Virginia History; e. Students will compare and contrast ideas and cultural perspectives in Virginia history; g. Students will make historical connections across time. These skills will be addressed within the unit in multiple ways. The students will be using primary and secondary sources and artifacts to learn about the biographical information being presented. Students will also be comparing and contrasting ideas of historical figures.

VS. 3 d. Students will identify the impacts of being forced to the Jamestown Settlement on African Americans.VS.8 b. Students will identify the effects of segregation on the lives of African Americans. Students will be learning about the specific historical events and figures tied to these time periods and will be learning them in truth with primary sources.

VS.9 c. Students will describe the social and political events in Virginia linked to desegregation and Massive Resistance and their relationship to national history. Students will not only be learning about historical figures, but the movements and organizations of resistance they were involved in. Teaching history in this manner will allow for centuries of figures, events and movements to be linked properly. We will also discuss Maggie Walker, Harry Byrd, Oliver W. Hill, Arthur Ashe, Linwood Holton and Douglas Wilder for this standard.

Notes

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