

Slavery, Education and Upward Mobility

Shirley Teagle McMillan
Fondren Middle School

Like the Phoenix, Blacks rose from the ashes of slavery to a renewed life

INTRODUCTION

While growing up in rural East Texas, education was held in high esteem by my family and other Black families in the area. It was thought to be the way to a better economic and social life. My parents taught us to have high aspirations and to work hard to achieve our goals. They took an interest in our academic and extracurricular activities at school. My mother, who was a housewife, would ask us what we learned in school almost daily. My parents applauded our successes and encouraged us during our failures. I never felt the weight of their dreams for me on my shoulders, only my own. We had little money, but loving parents. We had old books, but caring teachers.

It is from this background that I meet those students, who have no dreams, with dismay. They must be dreamers and seize every opportunity to realize their dreams. Blacks, and other minorities, have a long history of dreamers who achieved under the direst of circumstances. It is my hope that I will inspire my students to become dreamers and embrace the essence of the following poem by Langston Hughes with vehemence.

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is like a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow

(Langston Hughes, *Dreams*)

As African American students, it is imperative that they know the history of how Blacks and others struggled and persevered for education so they could have better lives. The current educational freedoms they enjoy came through many sacrifices and even death in some instances. In addition, I hope they will come to the realization that they too, not only have an opportunity but a responsibility to grasp their economic and social places in this society as high functioning citizens. They must work hard to overcome the barriers they have to actualize their dreams. My Hispanic students must also take advantage of the educational doors opened to them.

This unit is intended to instill a sense of pride in cultural history and motivate students to set goals and establish realistic plans of action for achieving them. It will be taught during the first six weeks of school in my language arts classes – utilizing Project Clear, model lessons and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills objectives.

Initially, students will be administered personality and interest inventories to create self-awareness and clarify interests. Each student will be required to set short-term (three-week progress report and six-week report), and long-term goals. After each period their goals will be reassessed. A discussion of their inventories will be followed by a brief lesson on study skills. A variety of community and four-year college catalogues will be made available for discussion. They will then be placed in the classroom library for perusal at any time. Information on grants and fellowships and qualifications will be reviewed briefly.

BACKGROUND

This unit will examine the issues and struggles Blacks experienced during and after slavery in order to gain educational opportunities in the United States. There will be an exploration of how education for Blacks evolved from being illegal during slavery to prevailing equality laws enacted to insure equal education for minorities, and controversies surrounding contemporary affirmative action issues.

Africans Before Slavery

The influence of African culture and education has far reaching affects. Some researchers have documented that human civilization had its origin in Africa. Parts of North Africa such as Egypt were settled by Africans from the south who brought an established culture which included commerce and the religious concept of monotheism before the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome (Morgan 1).

African education during earlier times did not adhere to present formal structures. Children were educated through oral directions, rituals, families and kinship groups. An existing example of such a ritual is the “Boys Rites of Passage,” which is prevalent today in many Black churches. This is a program that facilitates transition from boyhood to manhood. It addresses such areas as religion, African and African American history, male etiquette, respect for womanhood, economics, civics, leadership training and life skills. Boys have mentors and there is usually a culminating African celebration and feast to recognize the boy’s transition. The primary purpose of earlier education was to enable children to assume their roles in society.

The African tradition of oral storytelling and its folktales are widely used today. It is believed that the author of Aesop’s fables was a slave from Phrygia, Anatolia. He lived around 560 BC. His fables express simple wisdom regarding trust, honesty, cooperation, and individual frailties in their plots. They also explore issues such as ethics, morality and justice (Morgan 11-12). These were all values necessary for survival and harmonious living in groups. African literature in general has laid a foundation for a plethora of invaluable utilitarian stories for African Americans.

African American storytelling emerged in the last two centuries. Many Blacks have nurtured the rich legacy of Black stories and storytelling. Their works reflect the influence of Africans and Black Americans in the United States.

The Black oral tradition has manifested itself in many ways and has served numerous functions, e.g. through songs, both religious and secular. It has been used to teach morals; to maintain culture values, pass on methods of survival and to praise God. They have also been used to celebrate freedom and condemn Black enslavement. African Americans have used storytelling to protest injustices and gain political leadership. Virtually every area of the Black experience in America has been influenced by the oral traditions of Africans (Young 7-8).

African Education During Slavery

Education for Blacks during slavery seemed to have rested on three basic principles: 1) education for Bible reading and to embrace the Christian ideals. Many slave owners supported these reasons as slavery was predicated on biblical principles; 2) the Quakers supported slave education because the Christian principle was that all people should be free; and 3) for reasons of fairness and individual freedom because the country was founded on these premises. Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Harriet Beecher Stowe and other prominent Americans were proponents of this view. Education for slaves began on plantations with mistresses and their children as well as in churches.

It should be noted that during the 1800s in such areas as South Carolina and Virginia there were free Blacks who owned land and property and were considered wealthy for their time and place. Blacks helped to finance their own education when they were economically sufficient enough to do so.

Slavery was an economic issue in this country especially when the industrial revolution changed it from a patriarchal to an economic institution. Slaves were brought from Africa to become a laboring class and were thought to be inferior to Whites. In general, masters thought that slaves would be more valuable if they had some concept of the language and civilization, but to what extent was the question. They were not opposed to them knowing skills in order to become more useful and valuable but were fearful they would become rebellious and take their freedom if they learned to read and write. These fears were proven to be true when such slaves as Nat Turner, who learned to read the Bible and found contradictions or opposing precepts to the philosophy of slavery, orchestrated a slave revolt in 1831 in Southampton, Virginia. As a result of this revolt there was a strengthening of the "Black Codes" which were laws that forbade slaves to assemble, own property, testify in court, strike a White man, buy and sell goods, conduct religious services without the presence of a White man, beat drums or learn to read and write (*Civil Rights*). Therefore, the train of thought forbidding the education of slaves prevailed for the most part.

Many African traditions, skills and crafts such as cloth weaving, basket weaving, gold works and carving ivory were lost during slavery. The Gullah people of North Carolina, however, still retain their craft in basket weaving and it is taught from generation to generation (*Gullah Heritage*).

While many masters forbade their slaves to learn to read and write, there were those who wanted to increase their economic efficiency and continued to allow their slaves to be educated. They were actually the most viable means of education for slaves because they were the law unto themselves. They disregarded laws disallowing education of slaves in order to increase their economic wealth.

In spite of the oppressive conditions of slavery in the United States, a relatively large population of slaves could read, write and had specialized skills.

Free Black families living in northeastern areas had education equal to the average White family. Whites living in those areas were more liberal with their slaves. In New York, they were taught to read and write after their daily work was completed and by 1708 as many as 200 slaves were being educated. Blacks in the north were being educated much earlier than those in the south even though Jim Crow laws were prevalent (Morgan 36).

Formal education of the Black population began with the Church of England and The "Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" whose primary function was to Christianize Native Americans in the colonies, but Blacks were educated as well. In 1695, Thomas Bray of the Church of England was sent to Maryland to promote the education of slaves.

By 1696, Reverend Samuel Thomas was inviting slaves to his church to learn to read and write in South Carolina. South Carolina was a main point of entry for the slave trade and its population grew rapidly. In 1755 Hugh Bryan opened a school for slaves in Virginia (73).

Advocates for Education

Seeds of the abolitionist movement began with the idea that education was not only necessary to instill biblical principles, but it was the right of all men to become enlightened. As abolitionist societies began to germinate, some southern states like Georgia and South Carolina reenacted its Act of 1740, which imposed a penalty to anyone who taught slaves or caused slaves to be taught (Woodson 65).

The Quakers were the most significant group to uphold education of slaves. By 1735 they organized schools for African slaves in the South even though there was a tremendous opposition to teaching them to read and write. Slave owners asserted it would be useless to teach slaves because they were mentally inferior and would be content with their present existence just as they were. Any attempt to educate them might make them aware of their real conditions and provoke them to unrest. The Quakers began a reactionary movement. They wanted them to be men and women who were capable of being active citizens. George Fox, a prominent Quaker and advocate for Black education, spoke boldly about teaching Blacks and Indians...*how Christ died for all men*. In addition, George Keith and William Penn supported religious training, opportunity for improvement and preparation for emancipation (Morgan 11).

The Quakers were so adamant about the dissolution of the slave trade that they developed a plan for free slaves to return to Africa as missionaries. As a result, they were persecuted in slaveholding communities for their beliefs and actions. There was strict opposition to their ideas and laws were enacted to prevent them meeting with Blacks and excluding them from the teaching profession by creating a proclamation they could not sign for religious reasons (44, 46).

Ironically, Quakers were vocal proponents of educating slaves even though they were slave owners themselves. In 1774 John Woolman published *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, where he admonished Quakers who founded and funded schools, but had slaves of their own (Ploski 5). The Quakers continued to open schools for Black children in areas such as Rhode Island in 1773 before it became a free state. Then they opened other schools for Blacks.

The Quakers formed the Manumission Society to protect slaves from bounty hunters (*manu* was a term used interchangeably with abolish). In 1787 the manumissions group established the New York African Free School to empower Blacks to protect themselves through education. The school began with forty pupils whose parents were slaves. Four years later a female teacher was hired and girls were admitted. The first building was destroyed by fire and a second was erected in 1820 with land contributed by the City of New York to accommodate an additional five hundred students. Even though this school was an important milestone in the lives of Blacks it was not widely supported by Whites. Even in the northeastern areas Blacks were not thought to be equal to Whites. In order to receive support, scholars from around the world were invited to observe their program. Students performed such skills as reading, essays, poetry and prose for invited guests (48).

The mission of empowerment for Blacks took the form of direct instruction in reading, writing, natural history, arithmetic, astronomy, navigation and moral education. The African Free School gave rise to the term “gifted,” (termed merit) classes and pupils tutoring other students. Later the school offered classes in globe use, composition, map reading and linear drawing. There were many famous graduates of the African Free School who went on to become leaders in African American and White communities, like Ira Aldridge for example, known worldwide as the *Negro Tragedian*. Aldridge was recognized in Europe as one of the greatest Shakespearean characters. James McCune Smith became the first Black pharmacist in New York City. Edward A. James completed studies at Amherst College and became the first Black to graduate from college in the United States. Yet another was John B. Russwurn who graduated from Bowdon College in Maine and became the editor of the first African American newspaper, *Freedman’s Journal*. Also Martin Delaney graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1852 and practiced medicine in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He served as medical officer in the Union army during the Civil War (44, 45).

In southern states such as North Carolina, efforts of the Quakers were considered successful if schools were opened one or two days a week. Instruction took place in mostly churches. The North Carolina Manumission Society opened a Sunday school to teach Blacks to read and write. Slaveholders supported such ventures as long as the education was solely biblical. Schools were closed immediately when owners realized slaves were learning more than reading and writing skills for Bible study. As for plantation Blacks, access to education was not available to them at

all. Black children had few opportunities for any organized consistent school in the south. Black children too young to work in the fields learned through sharing books and schoolwork with White children of the plantation owner. This kind of education did not occur very often for them.

After graduating an increasing number of skilled and competent Blacks, White resistance grew among workers and employees. Whites did not want to work alongside Blacks. White businesses that hired Blacks suffered severe losses. Although seven hundred students were enrolled, average daily attendance was three hundred. Students graduating from school were not more successful in getting jobs than those who did not attend school. Their prospects were not any better than those who had not been trained. In addition, parents did not support the school as they should because they could not appreciate the value of an education they never had nor see the positive results – neither did they have enough money to support the school (71).

Prominent Whites such as Benjamin Franklin and John Jay supported educating Blacks because the character of the country was established from the concept of individual freedom and Blacks should be able to take their “rightful place” among other citizens. Thomas Jefferson suggested a plan for instruction that provided training, under the supervision of Whites, in agriculture and handicrafts to prepare slaves for liberation, colonization and to care for themselves (Morgan 59-60).

The atmosphere among those contemplating liberation of the Blacks thought slaves were not to be emancipated until they understood the meaning of liberty and had been educated to survive as comfortable citizens. Churches were still the main focus of education and the shift expanded to such areas as mechanics, agriculture and useful handicrafts. If they were not educated enough to support themselves, they might become involved in undesirable activities. Parents and children alike were taught. Many trustworthy slaves were managers in agriculture under the supervision of their masters. As children were educated, the Indentured Committee of the Abolition Society found jobs for those trained in industrial arts.

Anthony Benezet was a religious refugee from France, who immigrated to Philadelphia and began teaching White children. He soon recognized the plight of slaves was much like his own. He held that Blacks were as teachable as Whites and opened a school for Blacks in his home in 1750. He continued to teach Blacks for twenty years and after his death he bequeathed funds to build a school for Blacks. By 1787 the school was completed (63).

Free Blacks in part of the South were promoting their educational interests. In Charleston, South Carolina the Brown Fellowship Society, a society composed of wealthy individuals, held its first meeting in 1790 to seek funds from sympathizers for the construction of schools for free Black children. In 1810 the Minor Moralist Society was successful in providing academic foundation for several children from free Black families. Their effort was stopped across the South by strict legislation against Blacks as a result of the insurrections of Turner, Cato and Versey (48).

Whites began to believe that small schools and churches were centers of subversion. However, they felt that the problem existed mostly in churches. Daniel Payne was educated in one of the schools and afterwards taught himself Greek, Latin, French and mathematics from borrowed books including the Bible. In 1829 a free Black hired him to tutor his children in his home for \$50.00 a month.

Payne's efforts were thwarted by "Black Codes," after which he went to Philadelphia and became a Lutheran minister. He continued to encourage Blacks to pursue education and support scholarship among their people. His beliefs in and dedication to education for Blacks led him to participate in the purchase of Wilberforce University as a site for educational expansion for Blacks in higher education. Land for Wilberforce had been bought through an agent in Ohio. It was incorporated as an institution of higher education whose population was primarily Black. When the Civil War began the students did not return to the university because the state was at war. Wilberforce eventually became the first institution of higher education to be under the complete control of Blacks in 1863. Payne became the president of the university. His main focus was religious education. While emancipation was in progress the main building was set fire, but he persevered and rebuilt the facility (50, 51).

During that time the African segment of the Methodist Episcopal Church began the Union Seminary for Black students in Columbus, Ohio. Its primary goal was to train Blacks in vocational education.

In 1810 Christopher McPherson, a free Black, hired a White teacher to open a school for free Blacks and slaves who got permission from their owners in Richmond, Virginia. The school opened with two dozen students who were charged \$1.25 a month. Classes were held after the workday. The curriculum included such courses as astronomy, geography, arithmetic, and grammar. The students were so successful that McPherson solicited other communities to do the same. He sent an advertisement to a Richmond newspaper, but was met with severe opposition by Whites. The newspaper editor succumbed to the pressure of the community and did not print the advertisement. Herbert Hughes', a White teacher hired by McPherson, statement supporting education for Blacks brought about police harassment and court action. McPherson was brought before the court and committed to the Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum for his efforts (49). Whites were equally determined to deter education for Blacks as Blacks were to acquire education.

After the Emancipation Proclamation

The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863; however it was two years later on June 19, 1865 before slaves in Texas were freed. Lincoln was assassinated because of his humanist ideals by John Wilkes Booth who disagreed with his liberal political viewpoint. After Lincoln's death, Andrew Johnson succeeded him and moved quickly to reintegrate the South. Congress passed laws in support of the South but Andrew Johnson vetoed them. They felt he had given himself too much authority and the House of Representatives voted to impeach Johnson – but was not successful. He was acquitted by one vote. In 1875 he returned to the Senate (*Biography of Andrew Johnson*).

Reconstruction

After the emancipation slaves faced a hostile environment. They did not know how to be free and slaveholders did not know how to communicate with them as free people. Actually, the nation as whole was unprepared to deal with the newly freed people but especially in the South. Congress implemented the Reconstruction for the purpose of reorganizing southern states after the Civil War as a means for southern states to be readmitted to the Union. It was meant to facilitate Whites and Blacks living harmoniously together. Southerners were humiliated and citizens as well as government officials began to take the law into their own hands. Blacks were terrorized and murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. Whites were offended that they were being told to live with individuals that they once felt were not human beings, but property to be bought and sold. They were unwilling to accept Blacks as citizens and took any means possible to prevent these changes. Another problem that existed after the proclamation was the transition from slave labor to a new market economy. Whites no longer had the benefit of free labor to increase their personal wealth.

The Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, was passed in 1865 just eight months after the Civil War and was the first reconstruction law. In response to this amendment, various southern states enacted the “Black Codes” which were designed to limit the rights of the newly freed slaves. The Fourteenth Amendment, which gave Blacks equal protection of the law, was passed in 1868 to counter the Black Codes. It was under this amendment that the Freedmen’s Bureau was created to oversee the assimilation of the recently freed Blacks into society (U.S. Const. 13th & 14th Amend.). By 1866 the emphasis of the Freedmen’s Bureau was primarily education.

While southerners were fighting to keep Blacks where they were, in the North the proclamation had an unusual side effect; neither Blacks nor Whites wanted to be educated together. Free Blacks were accustomed to the alternative educational system and thought their children would be taught by uncaring teachers in a system that had previously rejected them. They felt their children would be more prone to failure in an environment with Whites.

Many Blacks were free in the North but they were not considered equal. Jim Crow laws existed in Massachusetts as early as 1841. These laws upheld schools for White children and schools for Black children conducted separately and books should not be interchanged between White and Colored schools, but used by the race having them first. Even though these laws were initially passed to prevent Blacks from using public facilities, they eventually generalized to education. Jim Crow laws permeated the legal system.

Jim Crow was a character in a minstrel show who was made up as a Black man. The term “Jim Crow” evolved to mean Negro – and Jim Crow Laws became euphemism for legal separation. They were used to control Blacks who were no longer enslaved. The Supreme Court and local courts supported these laws. The case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was one of a combination of rulings passed by the United States Supreme Court after reconstruction which supported the “separate but equal” doctrine. Home Plessy who was one-eighth Black and seven-eighths White, refused to sit in

the “Colored” only car on a train in Covington, Louisiana. He was sent to jail and tried by Circuit Court Judge Ferguson. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1896. This is a significant case of how segregation was endorsed in the South (Bos).

Some states like Mississippi had no schools for Blacks nor Whites prior to the Civil War. The federal government had granted certain lands to the state of Mississippi – from this land, proceeds were to be used to develop public schools, but monies were embezzled. The first public school in Mississippi was established when federal troops came after the Civil War. In 1865, when the federal troops were assigned to the state Joseph Warren, a Black army chaplain was appointed superintendent of schools by the Freedmen’s Bureau in Corinth, Mississippi. White teachers refused to teach Black children and Blacks had no education to teach themselves. White teachers came from the North to teach the children in the South. The legislature passed a law in 1870 requiring that both Blacks and Whites have the benefit of public education. The Ku Klux Klan began to permeate the South with violent activities. They were trying to discourage Blacks from owning property or getting an education. The Klan consisted of not only uneducated Whites, but law enforcement officials, judges and other persons in authority; therefore, these criminal activities were ignored by law enforcement. They destroyed Black schools and intimidated White teachers from the North. Federal troops were not a great deal of help for they felt that was a way of life in the South (Morgan 62).

Reconstruction created some positive changes for Blacks. Black children in schools rose from 25,000 in 1850 to 149,581 in 1870. Former slaves took advantage of the opportunity to become literate. Generations of families learned the survival tools of freedom together. Parents and children learned in the same classrooms. They were eager to become educated. But *Plessy v Ferguson*, which supported the Jim Crow laws was the final step in eradicating policies established during Reconstruction. Separation of the races was different from state to state. Each state had its own way of segregating Blacks. By 1890 Jim Crow laws were enacted throughout the nation to discourage integration and continue the social system that had existed hundreds of years earlier (61). Later, the separate but equal doctrine prompted many court cases in education.

Separate but equal doctrine was commonplace. In 1862 Justin Morrill of Vermont sponsored the Morrill Land-Grant College Act. The act purchased 30,000 acres of land for each senator and representative in state legislatures. The land was purchased to establish colleges of engineering, agriculture and military science. The stipulations were that there could be no discrimination with regard to race, however, separate colleges could be established for Whites and Blacks. This is how the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical System was created with Prairie View Agriculture and Mechanical College for Colored students and Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University for White students. The schools were to be established equally (*The First Morrill Act*).

During this time Blacks served in the Texas Legislature. They introduced many bills that did not pass, but the creation of the Texas Agriculture and Mechanical College System was the major accomplishment of the biracial legislature in support of public education. In 1879 eight young men enrolled in what is now known as Prairie View Agriculture and Mechanical University. The Blacks who served in the legislature at that time were farmers and ministers (Woolfolk).

At the turn of the nineteenth century it was still the desire of Whites in the south to keep the Black population illiterate and ignorant. In North Carolina ninety percent of Whites opposed compulsory education of Black children. Blacks were not idle, waiting for others to provide education for them. They proved to be resilient under Jim Crow. An example of their efforts is the Rosenwald School Community Project. Julius Rosenwald was a Jewish businessman who helped create an alliance between White liberals and Black communities throughout the South. He offered matching grants to Blacks who would raise some monies themselves for schools. Blacks gave more than 4.7 million dollars to build schools in the South. Between 1912-1932 these schools educated more than twenty-five percent of all African American school children in the south. Blacks reduced their illiteracy rate from ninety percent after the Civil War to half that before World War II. This was primarily through dedication to school spending in spite of their meager economic resources (Zeit 23-26).

Segregation of Blacks in schools continued. In 1938 *Missouri ex rel Gaines v Canada* was a case that denied Lloyd Gaines admission to the School of Law at the State University of Missouri. He contended he was denied equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. A statute provided, “he may arrange attendance at any university of any adjacent state--tuition free.” Attorney Hamilton of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) persuaded the Supreme Court that Missouri refused to provide legal education for Blacks within the state and it denied them equal protection of the law. This case began the NAACP’s assault on the “separate but equal” doctrine upheld in *Plessy v Ferguson*. Hamilton focused his efforts on segregation in public education.

Later in 1946, Herman Sweatt challenged the “separate but equal” doctrine by attempting to enroll in the University of Texas Law School in Austin – *Sweatt v Painter*. The university registrar rejected his application. Although he lost his case in state court, Thurgood Marshall argued it before the United States Supreme Court in 1950 and won. The University of Texas was ordered to integrate not only the law school, but the graduate school as well.

In response to the Herman Sweatt’s suit the state officials sought to satisfy the “separate but equal” doctrine by establishing what is now Texas Southern University Law School in 1947. The Texas State University for Negroes included a law school for Blacks. The school opened in Austin where C. McCormick served concurrently as dean of the University of Texas Law School and the Texas State University for Negroes Law School. The school changed its name to Thurgood Marshall after he successfully argued Sweatt’s case.

The NAACP did not want to consider elementary and high school cases because there were too many to be successful in winning integration for all of them. But in 1949 when five groups of plaintiffs approached the association for help, Thurgood Marshall and his fellow lawyers agreed to help. Collectively these cases were known as *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware and the District of Columbia*. Each was a case involving a class action suit against state-imposed segregation in public schools. African American teachers were afraid to be too assertive for fear of losing their jobs.

The NAACP used the same strategy it used with the Sweatt and McLaurin victories. Its team of lawyers argued that there was no valid reason for segregation – no matter how equal facilities – it causes psychological damages to Black children, and that “restrictions or distinctions based upon race or color” violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka* was a landmark victory upsetting the early *Plessy v. Ferguson* – separate but equal doctrine. Despite the victory, desegregation was not complete. In a separate decision as *Brown II*, guidelines for dismantling segregation had no definite timelines, but... “with all deliberate speed,” was too ambiguous. Consequently, southerners reacted violently.

A battle began early in the twentieth century to bring education for Blacks in the south. Martin Luther King led peaceful demonstrations for integrated schools in the North and South. There were many protests against unequal conditions and opportunities in segregated schools. Congress pondered whether to cut federal funds to districts not complying with Supreme Court directives. The struggle was not a desire to mix with Whites, but for economic reasons, justice and opportunity for upward mobility in the social structure of the democratic society in which they were citizens.

The federal government took little action to enforce civil rights after 1900. Congress considered civil rights bills every year from 1945 to 1957, but they failed to pass. During 1955-56, Black parents in the South boycotted local businesses, but White merchants retaliated by refusing to sell to politically active parents – their numbers were not strong enough to win. White employers fired Blacks who were active in civil rights activities. Federal courts handed down rulings that were ignored by local school boards. Black parents petitioned their state and local courts as private citizens, but the costs were prohibitive and they could not prevail. Bills were introduced to help relieve the cost of litigation by Black parents, but they were defeated (Morgan 140). Congress needed to take more affirmative action after *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka* to make civil rights a reality for Blacks.

Medgar Evers of Jackson, Mississippi applied to the then all-White law school at the University of Mississippi and he was denied admission. He then became a leader in the NAACP to try to bring about changes through the legal system. He was murdered for his efforts on June 12, 1963 (Pettus). The social climate was conducive to a major civil rights act. Blacks were becoming more vocal and persuasive in their demands, as well as more politically active. Many Whites saw the need for civil rights laws too. Sit-ins and boycotts were staged. Martin Luther King’s demonstration in Montgomery, Alabama was dramatic. There were months of confrontations and violence. Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas was another site of violence when nine Black students tried to enter the school. Then Governor Faunas ordered the National Guardsmen to keep the students from entering the school. Even though they were able to enter three days later by an injunction from Judge Davis, they were not allowed to stay because the mob of townspeople prevented them from doing so. President Eisenhower sent troops and anyone interfering with school desegregation was ordered to “cease and desist” (*Little Rock Nine*).

In 1960 Black students staged a sit-in at a department store counter in Greensboro, North Carolina – it spread to more than hundred communities. Blacks were beginning to unite in efforts to ensure their equality.

The fall of 1962, James Meredith attempted to enroll as the first Black student in Mississippi University at Oxford. As a result two men were killed and many others were injured as the state rejected his admission.

As protests became more prevalent, many organizations gained strength to lessen the pressures of the social climate, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Urban League.

Social pressures for civil rights increased more when Medger Evers and William Moore were killed. In addition, that same year four young girls were killed when a church was bombed while they were attending Sunday School in Birmingham, Alabama. Protesters were targets of water hoses, police dogs and electric cattle prods. The media brought the scenes of these atrocities into the homes of the American people and some Whites felt it was time for a major civil rights act. By the early 1960s the present state of social issues in the country contributed to a pressing need for a comprehensive civil rights act. Reaction to the atmosphere of civil rights seem to be largely determined by the president of the United States at that time. President Kennedy took steps to ensure civil rights by executive action. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 authorized the withdrawal of federal funds from programs that practiced discrimination. At that time ninety-eight percent of southern Blacks were still in segregated schools (*Civil Rights*).

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act laid the groundwork for the Equal Employment Commission (EEOC), which prohibits discrimination in the workplace. The term affirmative action was first used by President Kennedy in the 1961 executive order designed to encourage contractors on projects receiving federal funds to integrate their workplaces. Affirmative action was a proactive measure to increase equality.

This has become a very controversial issue. Its opponents argue that it is unfair to reverse discrimination. Proponents believe that discrimination is unfair treatment of people.

The Equality Opportunity Act of 1972 expanded Title VII protection to educational institutions leading to the expansion of affirmative action to colleges and universities. The Supreme Court ruling in *Regents of the University of California v Bakke* in 1978 declared it was unconstitutional for the Medical School of the University of California at Davis to establish a rigid quota system for places in their classes (Finkelman).

The University of Michigan uses affirmative action in its admission policies. On April 1st of this year the United States Supreme Court heard the case of *Gutter v Ballinger*. President Bush's stance on affirmative action is that it is unconstitutional and a fundamentally flawed system. He

filed a brief stating his opposition to the university's affirmative action program which helps Blacks, Hispanics and Native American students enter under proactive measures (Finkelman).

The University of Michigan has stipulations for undergraduate admissions that include extra points for minority applicants, children of alumni, residents of rural areas and a category referred to as "provost discretion" for students whose families make large donations to the school (Thomas).

In *Gutter v Ballinger*, the Supreme Court ruled that universities can give minority students a boost in admission, upholding affirmative action policies. Supporters wanted to ensure that there will be a diversity of future leaders from every race and ethnicity.

Associate dean of the University of Texas Law School, Douglas Laycock, stated, "Hopwood is dead. Colleges and professional schools in Texas can now consider race." The University of Texas Law School policies were thrown out in the 1996 decision in the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, which banned racial preferences (Reinert). Equality is still a work in progress but many doors have been opened since slavery.

Justice Clarence Thomas, the only Black Justice and a recipient of affirmative action at the prestigious Yale Law School, voted against the measure – while Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, a White female justice, voted for the measure asserting it will be a way to expand equality over the next twenty-five years. Justice Clarence Thomas seems to be out of touch with the present state of race in education in our country, and has an exceedingly short memory (Greenhouse).

Achievements Before the Emancipation Proclamation

In spite of the oppressive state Blacks have continually found themselves in, they have persevered and made great strides in almost every area before and since emancipation. Listed below are a few of the many accomplishments they have made through their own efforts and those of sympathetic Whites.

1746 - Deerfield, Massachusetts, slave poet *Lucy Terry* pens "Bars Fight," a commemorative poem recreating the Deerfield Massacre. She is considered the first Black poet in America.

1750 - Framingham, Massachusetts, *Crispus Attucks*, later to become one of the first heroes in the American Revolution.

1754 - Baltimore, Maryland, *Benjamin Banneker*, a 22-year old free Black was the first person in North America to build a clock, though he had never seen one.

1760 - New York City, *Jupiter Hammon*, a Black poet, published *Salvation By Christ_With Penitential Cries*.

1767 - Boston, *Phyllis Wheatley*, a 14-year old slave, authors “A Poem,” and “A Negro Girl, On the Death of Reverend Whitfield.” It was printed by Cambridge in New England.

1783 - Massachusetts, *Deborah Gannet*, disguised as a man, served in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment and later was cited for bravery.

1787 - Philadelphia, Black preacher *Richard Allen* and *Absalom Jones* organized the Free African Society. *Prince Hall* organized the first Black Masonic Lodge in America - African Lodge No. 459.

1790 - The Western Territory, *Jean Baptiste Point du Sable*, established the first permanent settlement of what is now Chicago.

1791 - District of Columbia, *Benjamin Banneker* is appointed to the commission charged with laying out plans for the city of Washington.

1826 - London, *Frederick I. Aldridge*, a Black actor, makes his London debut in playing Othello at the Royal Theater.

1837 - Florida, *John Horse*, a Black commander of Seminole Indians in their victory over American troops at the Battle of Okeechobee.

1837 - New York City, *James McCune Smith*, established a medical practice after studying medicine in Scotland.

1841 - Massachusetts, *Frederick Douglass* begins his career as a lecturer with the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.

1844 - California, *Jim Beckworth* discovers a pass through Sierra Nevada Mountains to the Coast of the Pacific Ocean.

1845 - Worcester, Massachusetts, *Macon B. Allen* becomes the first Black formally admitted to the bar in the United States.

1850 - New York, *Samuel R. Ward* becomes the president of the American League of Colored Laborers, a union of skilled Black workers who developed Black craftsmen and encouraged Black own businesses.

1853 - London, *William Wells Brown* published *Cotel*, the first novel written by an American Black.

1854 - Ohio, *John Mercer Langston* was the first Black nominated for a statewide office.

1855 - New York, *Frederick Douglass* was the first Black nominated for a statewide office.

1861 - Boston, *William C. Nell* was appointed a post office clerk. The first Black to hold a federal civilian job.

1862 - Charleston, South Carolina, Black pilot, *Robert Smalls*, later congressman, sails the *Planter*, confederate steamer, out of Charleston harbor and turns the ship over to Union forces as a war booty (Polanski & Williams 1-18).

Since the Emancipation Proclamation, there have been many more Blacks who have made significant contributions to this country. Blacks have been able to go from the slave quarters to the grandest house in the United States, the White House such as Colin Powell, Secretary of State to President George W. Bush, Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor all in the same administration. The late congresswoman Barbara Jordan dedicated her life to public service, Ruth Simmons (of Houston), the first Black president of Brown University, Carol Surles is the first Black woman president of Texas Women's University. These are just a few who have made noteworthy achievements.

Almost half a century after the Supreme Court concluded that school segregation was unconstitutional and "inherently unequal," school census statistics from the 1998-99 school year reveal that segregation continued to intensify throughout the 1990s. This trend is particularly true for Blacks in the south. Some Supreme Court decisions have aided the return to segregated schools such as the voucher system and school choice.

Richard Nixon's election was a turning point and a change of position in which the Justice Department urged the Supreme Court to slow down or reverse desegregation requirements. By 1974 it was obvious there was no way to provide desegregated education for millions of Black and Latino children attending minority city schools.

During the Carter's tenure in office, education officials attempted to revive school desegregation enforcement Congress had dissolved.

The Reagan years brought an increasing decline of federal desegregation assistance and the Justice Department had strong opposition to desegregation litigation (*Civil Rights*).

CONCLUSION

African American children can sometimes have negative feelings about slavery and its ramifications if it is not fully understood that slaves were strong, determined people. Some risked their lives to get an education and obtain their freedom. They should be portrayed in a positive manner as courageous and important people who laid the foundation for educational opportunities Blacks have today. Black students should view their heritage with a sense of pride and responsibility to make their own imprint in this country as highly functioning economically and socially adept citizens. This unit is meant to give hope to my students and motivate them to become dreamers.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1

Objectives

- ELAW.7.7a Collaborate; focused interactions
- ELAL.7.4a Communication; interpersonal
- ELAW.7.5a Generate ideas, brainstorming
- ELAW.7.5b Develop draft on “Why Equality is Important”

Setting

Cooperative Groups

Introduction

Teacher will ask two questions to be explored and answered by groups:

1. What is a democratic form of government?
2. What are the advantages of living in a democratic society?

Activity I

Students will be given time to discuss and derive an answer for both questions in their various groups. All reference books and the classroom library will be available for research.

Activity II

Each group will report its answers to the questions. The teacher writes answers from each group on the chalkboard. When each group has responded – the answers will be compared for similarity. A discussion will ensue.

Activity III

Students will brainstorm synonyms for equal (equality). It is assumed that these words will be brought out in the previous discussion. Teacher writes responses on the chalkboard. Teacher tells students they are going to write a draft of a narrative on “Why Equality is Important,” using the writing process.

Guided Practice: Guide students through the components of the writing process. Teacher models various types of prewriting strategies.

Activity IV

Students begin their prewriting strategies.

Assessment

- Informally assess students as they work in groups by circulating through the classroom monitoring students’ input in groups.
- Assess the concept formally in the written narrative.

Closure

Ask each group to give one synonym for equality.

Resources

- Classroom Library
- Houghton-Mifflin English Text
- Handout on “The Writing Process”
- Project Clear Model Lesson 1

Lesson Plan 2

Objectives

- ELAR .7.2d Narrative text structures, elements
- ELAR.7.1b Fluency grade level
- ELAR.7.3 Interpret vocabulary; read aloud
- ELAR.7.5b Strategies during reading; critical thinking

Setting

Cooperative Groups

Introduction

List on the board the following terms for students to see as they enter the classroom. Tell the students they will be reading a novel that include the words on the left, and ask them to make a prediction about the story. Slavery unit has already been introduced.

Scribble	Elements of Narrative
Trough	
Pallet	Setting
Smack	Plot
Squat	Character
Squint	Point of View
Pinch	Theme
Baying	Novel
Fetch	Fiction

Activity I

Ask the following questions:

- What are your expectations in life?
- Why is education important?
- What memories do you have from elementary school?

Elicit students’ own stories they have from elementary school. Point out to students they have just been telling stories and how storytelling is a natural form of communication we frequently use. Teach mini-lesson on narrative elements.

Activity II

Vocabulary and Context.

Define story vocabulary on chalkboard.

Ask students to read their predictions they made in the introduction.

Introduce and read *Night John* aloud. Teacher begins reading by modeling comprehension (predict, visualize, clarify).

While reading, point out vocabulary and model finding meaning from context

Activity III

Have students take turns reading story aloud. Ask individual students to determine meaning of various words from context while story is being read. Have students justify meaning by stating specific context clues.

Activity IV

Before leaving class, have students make A T-chart listing character details about the character studied.

Assessment

Assess how students use context clues as they read aloud.

Circulate room and assess students' character T-charts.

Closure

Suggest that elements can be used as comparison within a story.

Resources

Night John by Gary Paulson

Project Clear Unit1: *Comparing Narrative Text*

- Appendix A5, *Elements of Fiction/Narrative Structures*
- Appendix A6, *Elements of Fiction Chart*
- Appendix A8, *Reading Strategies/Think Aloud*

Houghton-Mifflin English Text

Lesson Plan 3

Objectives

ELAW.7 Use resources for spelling and word choice

ELAW.7.4c Employ standard English usage, editing

ELAW.7.4f Use verbs appropriately and consistently; tense agreement, active voice

ELAW.7.6b Engage in conferences, teacher conferences

Setting

Cooperative Groups

Introduction

Check to see that students have completed the drafts assigned in the previous lesson. Students will need their drafts for further work using revision strategies. Mini-lesson on subject-verb agreement.

Activity I

Ask students to take out their drafts on equality and underline or highlight subject and verbs. Have them check to see if subjects and verbs agree.

Activity II

After students have completed the exercise on subject verb agreement. Students exchange papers and have peer checks.

Assessment

Monitor students at work.

Closure

Ask students to tell what kinds of revisions they made on their draft, possibly citing examples.

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