

Tell the Truth

... About the History of the United States and its
Black People

Week 4: February 19 - 25, 2018

Joanny 200
Today was not a good learning day
blah blah blah I only wanted to hear you not
talking. You said something wrong and I can't
listen when I hear lies. My mom said that the
only Christopher who acknowledged is Wallace.
Because Columbus must find our country the
Indians did. I like to have Columbus day
off but I want you to not teach no
lies. That is all. My question for the
day is how can white people ~~teach~~ teach
black history? King Johnson
King I am very disappointed in
your Journal today.
ok

Articles Compiled and Arranged by Rann Miller
Original Content Written and Developed by Rann
Miller

Disclaimers

This text is a compilation of history articles related to Black people in the United States found from various online sources. These sources primarily comprise of traditional news outlets i.e. Washington Post, NPR and New York Times; also non-traditional online-based journalist reporting outlets i.e. Vox, Alternet, Huffington Post and Slate. These articles, and the information found in them, are not the original content of Rann Miller. All articles included in this text compiled from online sources will include the name of the original author and the online address for where the original article can be found. These various articles are not for resale.

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This text is not for resale. While original content is included within this document, this document is of no cost and is available for public consumption. The purpose of this text is to provide educators with a text to teach and instruct students. Also, this text is for any lifelong learner who desires to increase in their knowledge of truth about the history of the United States and the Black people who have contributed greatly to it.

- Rann Miller

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Introduction

Growing Up, Black History Month was a major part of my cultural curriculum. At the conclusion of my elementary education, stories and lessons on Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King were apart of my cultural, and academic, lexicon. However, as I got older, I realized there was much more information to build my knowledge upon.

As a middle and high school social studies teacher, I took pride in sharing the same lessons imparted to me to, my students during Black History Month. I taught Black history all academic year. During Black History Month, I taught the more concealed aspects of Black history. The history of Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King are a part of American history and in the context of the way we teach American history, educators should include these people and events in the curriculum. Some would argue that educators do; I do not believe that to be the case.

Eight-year-old King Johnson wrote in his journal that he did not want his teacher to teach him lies. He specifically was referring to the lies taught to him about Christopher Columbus “finding” the New World. I believe that King Johnson’s sentiment is indicative of all students, particularly students of color — students who, historically, have had the truth of their history withheld from them. They are tired of teachers lying to them. This text compilation of articles is to serve as a teaching resource for teachers to teach the unadulterated truth of American history to their students during the month of February, and throughout the year. The articles offered in this document can be used to create lessons and projects for students to increase in their knowledge of American history. Whether in high school or kindergarten, teach all students the history and not HIStory. TELL THE TRUTH!!!!

- Rann Miller

Bloom's Taxonomy Framework

This rubric is designed to provide educators with a framework to provide tiered questions to track student understanding. This rubric is based on the Bloom's Taxonomy of Higher Order Thinking. These questions are simply a guide to develop your own questions – they are not specific for each article. This is only to serve as a guide. You are welcome to develop your own questions for each article. For more information on Bloom's Taxonomy, please visit <https://www.unthsc.edu/center-for-innovative-learning/blooms-taxonomy-learning-objectives-and-higher-order-thinking/>

| | Happening / Event | Famous Person(s) | Black Tradition | Popular Culture |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Level 1 - Remembering | What are the major facts presented in this article: (1) who are the individuals involved, (2) what are the details of what took place according to the article, what is the setting, what is the date and why did it happen (what were the reasons it happened)? | | | |
| Level 2 - Understanding | Explain the main idea and the major details of the article in your own words. Please include 2 to 4 major details in your paraphrased explanation. | | | |
| Level 3 - Applying | Think about the details of the article and tell what you would do if you were living at the time facing similar circumstances. | Think about the details of the article and tell how your life would be similar or different if presented with similar circumstances as this person. | Think about the details of the article and demonstrate how you would apply this tradition with your family, friends or peers. | Think about the details of the article and interpret the meaning of this happening in popular culture. |
| Level 4 - Analyzing | Why do you think what happened was able to happen? Could a similar thing happen today? | What are the similarities and difference between this individual and a similar famous figure; past or present. | What criticisms do you have of this particular tradition? How to reconcile your criticism with someone who holds this tradition in high esteem? | Distinguish the meaning of the contents of the article between its impact on many people versus its impact on an individual person. |
| Level 5 - Evaluating | Appraise the value of this moment in culture. Evaluate the impact and results of what happened. | Defend the actions or decisions of this individual someone may consider to be risky, harmful or controversial. | Defend this tradition to someone looking to remove it from social and/or cultural significance. | Select an antithesis moment/trend to counter this moment in popular culture. |
| Level 6 - Creating | Develop a hallmark card that celebrates this event yearly. | Write a letter to this famous person explaining what you think of their life and the decisions they've made. | Either create new details to add to this tradition to make it better or create a brand new tradition to replace the tradition in this article. | Design an advertisement to promote this particular cultural moment to expose its impact on society. |

Part One

Online Articles Of History

What the Civil Rights Movement Has to Do With Denim

By **Marlen Komar**, www.racked.com

October 30th, 2017

The rugged Marlboro Man. Brooding James Dean. Dusty gold miners and slicked-hair greasers with cigarette boxes rolled up in their T-shirt sleeves. The history of blue jeans is about as American as apple pie, coming from working-class origins with a pioneering spirit.

But do you know what else is all-American? Having the weekday lunch special hurled at you during a counter sit-in, facing a raised baton during a protest march, and walking a mile to work because your civil rights boycott has reached the bus, all while wearing those same cuffed jeans. The only difference is that while history likes to recount the Americana-heavy scenes of gold rush camps and Route 64 drives when discussing denim's past, it's not often that you hear about the freedom fighters who, in large part, helped bring the look to the mainstream.

While Elvis Presley and the cast of *Rebel Without a Cause* helped spark a new appreciation for bootcuts among the Youthquake culture, most people considered them too closely linked with the working man to wear them. For example, in 1969 nearly 200 students got suspended from their high school for wearing dark blue pants because they too closely resembled blue jeans. They were mostly something you wore while cleaning out the garage, not something you put on for cocktails.



But the revolutionaries on the front pages of newspapers helped denim become a staple in everyday people's wardrobes. "It took Martin Luther King's march on Washington to make them popular," wrote Caroline A. Jones, author of *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*. "It was here that civil rights activists were photographed wearing the poor sharecropper's blue denim overalls to dramatize how little had been accomplished since Reconstruction."

While at first activists snapped on their overalls out of practicality — they were tired of mending tears from attack dogs and high-pressure hoses, and jeans could withstand the abuse — they also put them on to bring back a not-too-distant past. They used to be referred to as ‘Negro clothes’ — slave owners bought denim for their enslaved workers, partly because the material was sturdy, and partly because it helped contrast them against the linen suits and lace parasols of plantation families — and their inclusion in the civil rights movement suggested that pointed societal divide. For much of the black community, the activists’ symbolism was obvious. Separate then; separate now.

“There were some African Americans who felt that to wear jeans was disrespectful to yourself,” says James Sullivan, author of *Jeans: A Cultural History of an American Icon*. “For many African Americans, denim workwear represented a painful reminder of the old sharecropper system. James Brown, for one, refused to wear jeans, and for years forbade his band members from wearing them.” Sullivan points out that if you look at pictures of the sons and daughters of the sharecropper generations of the early 20th century who moved north to get away from the fields, you’ll notice that they wore suits, ties, and hats to their factory jobs, partly to create that distance.

Although some protestors knew their white neighbors would chafe against seeing them walk the streets in sharecropper clothes — and used that to their advantage — the strategy wasn't promoted by all Freedom Fighters.

Respectability politics was still a popular tactic for gaining support. In 1965, before gearing up to drive down to three hard-core segregationist states in the Deep South to register people to vote, a NAACP representative went to the front of the room during a secret civil rights meeting in New York City, and flatly declared, “We don't want any girls in blue jeans. We don't want any boys in beards.” They wanted people’s hair pressed and collars crisp, knowing how quickly the evening news would misrepresent them if they came in anything less than their Sunday best.

But the responsibility to always look respectable wasn't just a strategy move, but a burden forced on activists in order to keep white supremacists away from their front doorsteps. As Dr. Tanisha C. Ford explains in her essay "SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress," white supremacists would specifically attack the moral character of black women as a reason to keep their neighborhoods separate and their voting boxes white. Black women had to go above and beyond to prove their respectability in order to protect their characters, and the men and children in their communities. By looking like the type of woman who could bake a bundt cake in a French twist, black women were able to show their Christian propriety and manners, contrasting themselves against the racist stereotypes their white neighbors tried to pin on them. Jeans were not an option.

But as more and more groups headed south for registration projects, more volunteers started to trade in their bobby socks for bootcuts.

It wasn't just for comfort and durability. To register to vote as a black person was to risk losing your job, or worse, your life by inviting the Klu Klux Klan to your backyard. The fear was evident in the statistics — in Mississippi, fewer than 7 percent of the eligible black population was on the voters list, and in many rural Southern counties there were none at all. And here were these student groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee trying to convince black farmers to risk everything, handing them a clipboard while wearing penny loafers. It created a class divide, and blue jeans were not only the language that would bridge the gap between them, but their show of solidarity.

Even more than that, by putting on the working man's uniform, revolutionaries showed they didn't have to dress in a way their white peers deemed "acceptable" in order to gain the rights that were theirs to begin with. Even if activists showed up in banker's pinstripes, that wouldn't convert segregationists into allies. "No matter what the whites' sense of justice tells

them needs to be done for Negroes, are they going to let themselves to be bulldozed into doing it?" asked the *Missouri Springfield Leader and Press* in 1967. Whites refused to be "pushed" toward equality. The movement's clothes weren't the issue, and having their appearance policed was just another way of being controlled.

Denim was very much the look of the black freedom struggle, but like most nonconformist messages — from the anti-establishment punks with their queen's tartan to the anti-capitalist beatniks with their berets — it was co-opted by the mainstream; taken out of its original context in order to fit into people's wardrobes. But unlike those well-known and heavily referenced underground movements, most people aren't aware which of their denim styles were copied from civil rights protestors. Instead, those same styles were lauded as "new."



“The Trucker code that Levis introduced in the '60s at the height of the hippie heyday was basically a throwback to the denim bond jacket style that the working and sharecropper class has been wearing for decades,” Sullivan explains. What we think of as the classic Levis jacket today was introduced as a new style in 1962, but poor sharecroppers in the Deep South have been wearing it for decades. “If it was cold enough to wear jackets, they would wear overalls or jeans, and then a barn jacket on top. The connection to the rural, back-to-the-land working class of the sharecroppers inspired, in some part, the all-denim, top-to-bottom look that hippies ended up wearing.” Hippies aimed to be “salt of the earth” with their communes and community farms, but for black sharecroppers, the style was a function of poverty, not fashion — it could not be so easily removed. But the look hit the mainstream, and soon every high school kid and suburban dad was wearing the style.

While the history of blue jeans has roots in dude ranches and rockabilly dance halls, it also winds through the struggle for equality and racial justice. It's an era as important and American as the Wild West. Not only ranchers wore denim jackets, but also black tenant farmers; not only cowboys lived in their jeans, but bondmen in fields; and it wasn't only truckers in overalls driving through the night down to Dixie, but Civil Rights icons with registration lists. They should be remembered as clearly and loudly as the rest.

Labor Day: For blacks, a day on — not a day off

By **TheGrio**, thegrio.com

September 1st, 2013

For many Americans, Labor Day is simply a day off from work that marks the ending of summer, celebrated with barbecues and spectator sports. But its purpose is to pay tribute to American workers and their insistence on humane working conditions and fair pay. What cannot be lost in all the revelry is the activist spirit that underpins this holiday. It is a day that honors action and political demands, not calls for national conversations and periods of reflection.

As such, Labor Day this year should resonate especially well with African-Americans fresh off the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In fact, the events that led to Labor Day, fed into the development of the March on Washington.

TheGrio | Voices of the March: A multitude hungry for history and empowerment

These historical ties should have special meaning for black America today as it continues to face unacceptably high unemployment rates. The ongoing fast-food workers strike for better wages is also instructive for black America, especially as blacks make up a significant amount of the nation's low-wage earners.

These past, present, and future links captured in the African-American relationship to Labor Day provide a modern-day timeline of the black worker's American experience.

How Labor Day was born

Labor Day was nationally established after the Pullman Strike of 1894 when President Grover Cleveland sought to win political points by honoring dissatisfied railroad workers. This strike did not include porters or conductors on trains, but for the black porters, racism fueled part of the workers' dissatisfaction, and was never addressed.

Pullman porters were black men who worked in the trains' cars attending to their mostly white passengers, performing such tasks as shining shoes, carrying bags, and janitorial services. During this period, this profession was the largest employer of blacks in the nation and constituted a significant portion of the Pullman company's workforce, yet blacks were not allowed to join the railroad worker's union.

Being excluded from the right to even fight for fair work and wages, the Pullman porters formed their own union called the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, the first black union, **and A. Philip Randolph was its first president.** That name should sound familiar: the first planned March on Washington was Randolph's brainchild. Set to take place in the 1940s, this demonstration was called off weeks before its kick-off date because President Roosevelt met with Randolph and other civil rights leaders in 1941, and signed an order barring racial discrimination in the federal defense industry.

Roosevelt did so to stop the march from happening.

Black porters: Prime movers in labor history

When black workers were excluded from the railroad union, and thus not honored in the creation of Labor Day or the fleshing out of the strike-ending agreement by President Cleveland, they formed their own union.

This directly set the wheels in motion for what would become the 1963 march, the largest political demonstration in American history. A. Philip Randolph was also intimately involved with the planning of the march in '63, along with the main leader, Bayard Rustin.

TheGrio | Partner of Bayard Rustin, shares memories of the 1963 march organizer

Though Labor Day was created at the exclusion of the black worker, it was that lack of recognition that propelled black America to become active and make demands of the government — one of the greatest leaders in labor movement history being spawned by this exclusion in Randolph.

This spirit is still needed today.

Remembering the labor demands of '63

During the 50th anniversary of the march, many leaders recounted the ten demands made in 1963. Of those ten, half of them were directly related to ensuring living wages, barring racial discrimination in all employment practices, and creating programs to train and place unemployed workers in dignified jobs.

TheGrio | March on Washington: 20 things you didn't know

Yet, black employment today remains twice the national average, and has been at this level for decades. Though the national unemployment rate has dropped significantly since the recent recession, black unemployment is still so high, it

is as though black America is in a perpetual state of recession. For those blacks that do work, their household income is about 40 percent less than that of whites. And racial discrimination is still prevalent in hiring practices in a number of ways, as evidenced by one study that showed resumés with black-sounding names are 50 percent less likely to receive callbacks.

Even though more of black America is college-educated and more are in high-paying professions, the overall state of the black worker today is in poor shape. Labor Day should be a time when we remember the demands of '63 and insist that those goals finally be realized.

Labor activism, looking forward

Looking forward, the fast food strikes that will continue through Labor Day are in the same vein of activism as shown by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. These workers are not in a union, but they have come together to demand a living wage — which the national minimum wage of \$7.25 is not.

This strike is exactly the sort of activism that Labor Day commemorates as a fundamental American right.

TheGrio | Fast food workers strike for a living wage to support their families

For these reasons, perhaps black America should view Labor Day in much the same way it views Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: as a day on, not a day off. Whereas the King holiday represents a day for the nation to reflect and often provide service to others, Labor Day is the perfect time for black Americans, and all Americans interested in fair hiring practices and living wages, to spend a day in solidarity with workers

Instead of viewing Labor Day as just another day off, perhaps we should view it as a day of symbolic strike in support of those fighting for employment rights, remembering that the fight started in '63 for jobs and freedom is still ongoing.

For black America, whose enslaved people labored under the harshest and most inhumane conditions imaginable, a proper appreciation for the continuing struggle of workers is the least we can do to honor them on Labor Day.

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Hip-Hop and the FBI: A Little-Known History

www.esquire.com

June 4th, 2013

Occasionally, Rap Genius takes to The Culture Blog to educate us about developments in hip-hop and music generally.

"He's a pro like COINTEL" — Vic Mensa, "Cocoa Butter Kisses"

Up-and-coming Chicago artist Chance the Rapper's recent mixtape *Acid Rap* was, at least amongst Rap Genius staffers, extremely highly anticipated. We all listened with eagerness as it came out, and were blown away — it was on rotation heavy in the office for a few weeks straight. (It's already one of the most acclaimed albums of the year.)

In the middle of the tune "Cocoa Butter Kisses," Chance's buddy Vic Mensa showed up for a guest verse. Right in the middle of it was nestled the above lyric. COINTELPRO, short for Counter Intelligence Program, was the overarching name for the FBI's secret plans to, in their words, "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize" groups who challenged the status quo from 1956 through 1971. Those same activities continued both before and after that timeframe, of course, but the COINTELPRO name was attached during those years.

Hip-hop culture, despite often being set in direct opposition to the "civil rights generation," is all too aware of the toll the Feds' destructive (and sometimes murderous) tactics took on the black liberation movement of the 1960s. In

particular, the politically and socially conscious rappers of the Golden Era, Public Enemy in particular, rhymed powerfully about this history.

"J. Edgar Hoover, and he coulda proved to you/He had King and X set up/Also the Party with Newton, Cleaver, and Seale/He ended, so get up" —Public Enemy, "Party for Your Right to Fight"

Chuck D was right. The Feds had it in for MLK from the start. They'd been following his movements since at least 1960, but it was the news that he would be receiving a Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 that really ratcheted up the pressure. As soon as they found out that was imminent, they sent him an anonymous letter that attempted to get him to commit suicide (they threatened to reveal alleged audiotapes of sexual indiscretions if he didn't).

As for Malcolm X, the FBI was playing dirty there as well. Check out this 1969 memo that shows the Bureau taking credit for starting the split between the leader and the Nation of Islam that would quickly lead to Malcolm's assassination. There is no indication that they considered this anything other than a successful outcome.

But most of the Feds' ire was reserved for the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. This 1967 document lays out the plan they would follow for the next several years to destroy the Party and, with it, the entire black liberation movement. Planting false stories in the press, starting and exacerbating conflicts between different groups (which would eventually turn bloody, while the Bureau watched), and more — all these strategies were laid out in careful detail by the Director for local field offices to follow.

"Free John now if we can/From the clutches of the man" —John Lennon, "John Sinclair"

It wasn't only activists who were caught in Hoover's clutches. One of the most famous people in the world, John Lennon, was ensnared as well. Lennon became radicalized in the late 1960s, and the combination of New Left ideas and his star power shook even the president. After the former Beatle freed activist, poet, and MC5 manager John Sinclair from a harsh jail sentence with the single song above, and started making noise about wanting to register young voters to turn out against Nixon, our government leapt into action. J. Edgar Hoover himself wrote to the Nixon administration about his plans to harass and deport Lennon. While the deportation part ultimately failed, the constant surveillance wrecked Lennon's political plans, his art, and even briefly his marriage.

"See me with a bodyguard, that means police is watching" —Jay-Z, "Streets Is Talking"

The FBI, though, weren't the only ones with designs on popular musicians. After the collapse of the black liberation movement, hip-hop rose up as the most visible expression of African-American culture. So naturally, police presence followed. The whispers started in the 1990s of a special unit within the New York City Police Department devoted to watching rappers. It wasn't until a 2004 *Miami Herald* story that it was actually confirmed. There was indeed a special group of cops devoted to watching rappers and anyone affiliated with them.

Even the game's biggest stars weren't immune. There were files on Jay-Z, 50 Cent, Cam'ron, Busta Rhymes, and tons more. A quick look at problems rappers have run into with the law in NYC reveals an interesting pattern. An officer finds some pretext to search a vehicle — it's double-parked, he or she claims to "smell marijuana emanating" from the inside, whatever — and weapons, drugs, etc. are then found. This pattern, repeated over and over with

some of the genre's biggest stars, is the natural outcome of the profiling and surveillance of the "hip-hop cops." After all, what justifies your job more than a high-profile arrest?

"Exported Marcus Garvey cause he tried to spark us/With the knowledge of ourselves and our forefathers" — The Wu-Tang Clan, "I Can't Go To Sleep"

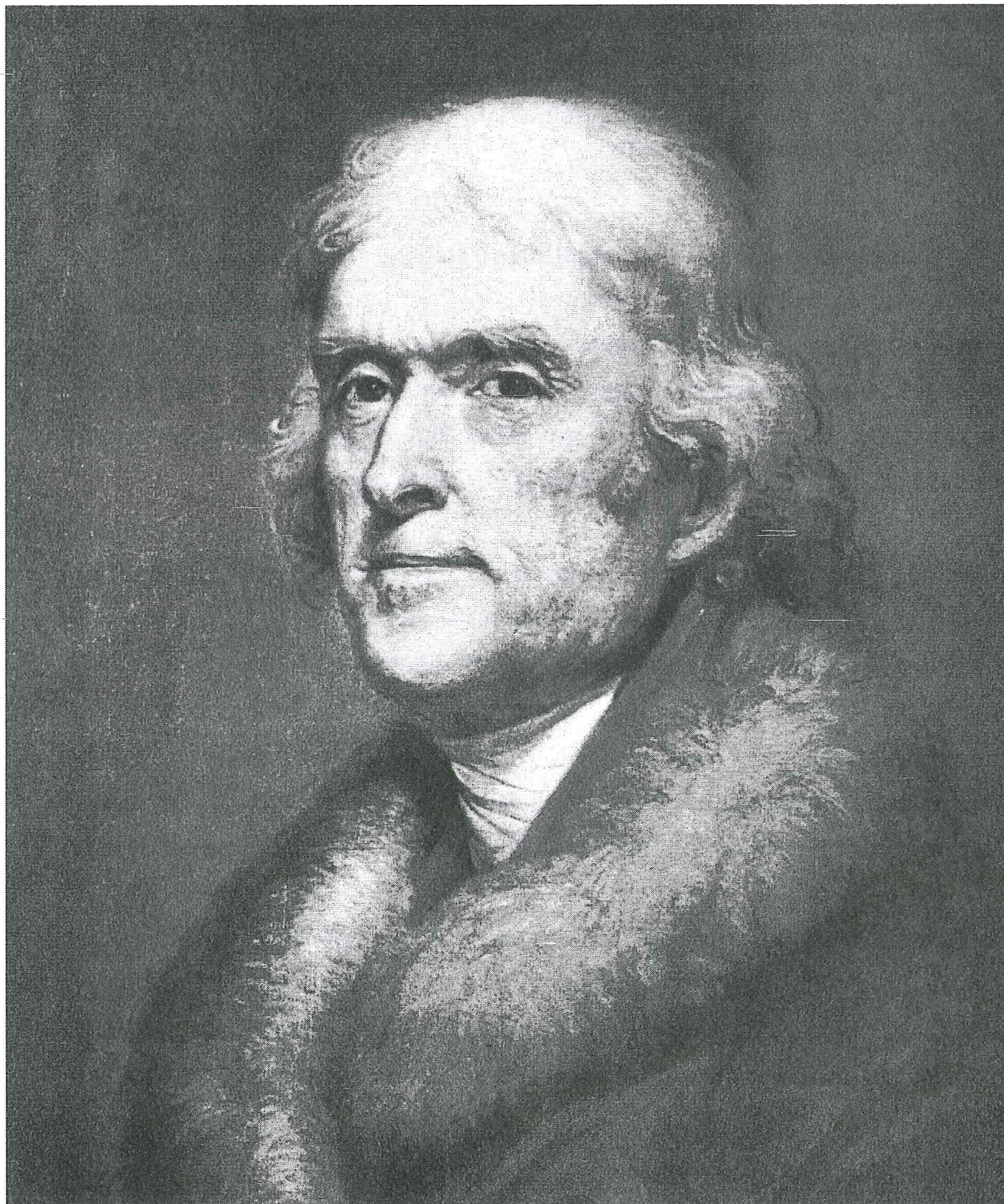
As a community, hip-hop needs to become more aware of this history of targeting and neutralization — a history that dates all the way back to Marcus Garvey in 1919. J. Edgar Hoover may no longer be with us, but the police are going to keep watching, and hip-hop needs to teach, organize, and fight back in order to avoid the fates of their cultural and political forebears.

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How did we lose a president's daughter?

www.washingtonpost.com

January 25th, 2018





Thomas Jefferson is shown in a painting by Rembrandt Peale. Jefferson was the father of several children born to Sally Hemings, an enslaved woman at Monticello, one of whom chose to pass as white rather than claim her relation to the president.

Photo by: AP/New York Historical Society

Many people know that Thomas Jefferson had a long-standing relationship with his slave, Sally Hemings. But fewer know that they had four children, three boys and a girl, who survived to adulthood. Born into slavery, Sally's daughter Harriet boarded a stagecoach to freedom at age 21, bound for Washington, D.C. Her father had given her \$50 for her travel expenses. She would never see her mother or younger brothers again.

With her departure from Monticello in 1822, Harriet disappeared from the historical record, not to be heard of again for more than 50 years, when her brother told her story. Seven-eighths white, Harriet had "thought it to her interest to go to Washington as a white woman," he said. She married a "white man in good standing" in that city and "raised a family of children." In the half-century during which she passed as white, her brother was "not aware that her identity as Harriet Hemings of Monticello has ever been discovered."

So how did we lose a president's daughter? Given America's obsession with the Founding Fathers, with the children of the Revolution and their descendants, why did Jefferson's child disappear? As it turns out, America has an even greater obsession with race, so that not even Harriet Hemings's

lineage as a president's daughter was sufficient to convey the benefits of freedom. Instead, her birth into slavery marked her as black and drove her decision to erase her family history.

Harriet Hemings passed as white to protect her fragile freedom. Jefferson had not issued her formal manumission papers, so until the abolition of slavery in 1865, by law she remained a slave, which meant her children also inherited that condition. But in a society that increasingly associated blackness with enslavement, Hemings used her white skin not only to ensure her children's freedom, but to claim for them all the rights and privileges of whiteness: education, the vote, a home mortgage, any seat they chose on a streetcar. To reveal herself as the daughter of Jefferson and his slave would have destroyed her plans for a better life for her descendants.

Since Harriet's time, science has proved there is no difference in blood as a marker of "race." As a biological category, racial difference has been exposed as a sham. Even skin color is not a reliable indicator of one's origins. As one study calculated, almost a third of white Americans possess up to 20 percent African genetic inheritance, yet look white, while 5.5 percent of black Americans have no detectable African genetic ancestry. Race has a political and social meaning, but not a biological one.

This is why the story of Harriet Hemings is so important. In her birth into slavery and its long history of oppression, she was black; but anyone who saw her assumed she was white. Between when she was freed in 1822 and the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, she was neither free nor enslaved — yet she lived as a free person.

She does not comfortably fit any of the terms that have had such inordinate power to demarcate life in America. Her disappearance from the historical record is precisely the point. When we can so easily lose the daughter of a

president and his slave, it forces us to acknowledge that our racial categories are utterly fallacious and built on a science that has been thoroughly discredited.

Yet as political, economic and social categories, racial difference and its consequences remain profoundly real. White privilege has been much on display in our own day, as armed white men proclaiming white supremacy marched unmolested in the streets, while unarmed black men are shot down by police who are rarely held to account. Politicians run successful campaigns on platforms of racial hatred.

This is why, by one estimate, between 35,000 and 50,000 black Americans continue to cross the color line each year.

As I poured through hundreds of family genealogies, searching for more details about the life of Harriet Hemings, I saw that all families have invented stories: details that have been embellished over time, or perhaps altered by accidental errors. Descendants of immigrants Anglicized their names; information in census records is inconsistent from one decade to another; genealogies are altered because of confusion with recurring favorite names over multiple generations.

Those families who pass as white most definitely have such invented stories. It is what they had to do to authenticate a white lineage, to be recognized as fully human and fully American, with all the rights and privileges thereto — rights and privileges not even a lineage as honored as Jefferson's can match.

Nations, as well as families, invent stories about themselves. In both cases, we will run into characters we would rather not admit as being one of us, and stories we would rather not tell about ourselves. That the president's daughter had to choose between her family and living a life with the dignity only

whiteness can confer is one of those stories. But without them, we will never truly know where we've come from; and without them, we will never be able to chart out a path for a better family and national life.

Which of the 11 American nations do you live in? Look at this map to find out.

Martin Delany, 'Father of Black Nationalism'

www.post-gazette.com

February 6th, 2011



Martin Delany

First of a weekly series on history makers in Pittsburgh for Black History Month

In 1846, the famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass came to Pittsburgh.

His purpose? He wanted to persuade a fellow African-American, Martin Delany, to become co-editor of his new newspaper, *The North Star*.

The editorial alliance of the two young men lasted only 18 months. But from the time of that meeting, Douglass and Delany would remain lifelong friends -- and often bitter rivals.

Today, Frederick Douglass remains well-known to many Americans. Every year, schoolchildren are assigned to read his autobiography, and his face, framed by a shock of white hair, is a familiar visage.

Except to history buffs, though, Martin Delany has largely disappeared from view. Even most Pittsburghers who work Downtown have undoubtedly walked right past the historical plaque dedicated to him next to PPG Plaza.

Yet Delany played an important role in the anti-slavery movement from before the Civil War until afterward, and is known as the "Father of Black Nationalism."

Why isn't he more visible?

Historians who study the anti-slavery movement say a lot of it has to do with the two men's "story lines."

Douglass is known as an assimilationist -- a champion of blacks being freed from slavery and then being given full rights and opportunities in America.

Delany, for much of his life, championed emigration of blacks as a way of achieving equality, first to Central or South America, and later to Africa.

"Delany argued that blacks should leave because in order to achieve their rights, they had to form a majority in society," said Richard Blackett, the Andrew Jackson professor of history at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

That's not a message that resonates with most white Americans or even many black Americans, said Laurence Glasco, a professor of black history at the University of Pittsburgh.

"There is a dominant theme of Americans, whether black or white," he said. "That theme is that America is a great land and the story of your life is how you fit into that great story.

"And anybody like Martin Delany, one of whose dominant themes is 'To hell with this place, I want out; it's not heaven, it's hell,' doesn't fit that paradigm and people don't like to hear it. It makes the person sound like a crank -- somebody who's not that serious."

Yet Delany was serious -- and brilliant, contradictory and hard to pin down, Dr. Glasco and other historians said.

He lived in Pittsburgh for nearly 25 years, later emigrating to Canada, traveling to Africa, moving to South Carolina after the Civil War and ending up near Wilberforce University in southwestern Ohio, where his gravesite is.

And throughout all those years, he and Douglass stayed in touch, debated the issues of the day, and remained linked by their ambition and competition.

Where Douglass was born a slave and escaped to freedom as a young man, Delany was born as a free black male in 1812 in Charles Town, W.Va. (which was then Virginia).

But that freedom had severe limits. When his mother, Pati, taught him and his siblings to read and write, they were cited for violating state laws against literacy instruction for black children.

Mrs. Delany quickly moved the family to Chambersburg, Pa., 130 miles east of Pittsburgh near the Maryland border, where young Martin could continue his studies without interference.

In 1831, at age 19, he headed for Pittsburgh, walking the entire way.

When he arrived here, he became a student at a school operated by the Rev. Lewis Woodson of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Rev. Woodson, who would go on to help establish Wilberforce University, was a strong advocate of black economic independence and was active in the Underground Railroad, which helped slaves escape to freedom in Canada.

Delany was soon involved in the Underground Railroad himself, and later established an abolitionist newspaper, *The Mystery*. It was published for four years in Pittsburgh, and as one of the only papers to survive a devastating fire in 1845 that destroyed a third of the city, it is still cited by historians of the period.

He also was trained in medicine by two of the leading white physicians of the city, and by 1837, ran this ad in the Pittsburgh Business Directory: "Delany, Martin R., Cupping, Leeching and bleeding."

It was a year after the great fire that Douglass came to the city from his base in Rochester, N.Y., to recruit Delany as co-editor of *The North Star*.

They never worked in an office together. Instead, Delany went on a "western tour" to Ohio and Michigan to recruit subscribers, and sent a series of travelogue-style letters that were printed in *The North Star*.

In one of them, he recounted how he and a companion were chased by a white mob in Marseilles, Ohio, northwest of Columbus. Retreating to their hotel, they watched as the mob started a bonfire and threatened their lives.

"Then came the most horrible howling and yelling, cursing and blasphemy, every disparaging, reproachful, degrading, vile and vulgar epithet that could be conceived by the most vitiated imaginations," Delany wrote, "which bedlam of shocking disregard was kept up from nine until one o'clock at night ..."

With the hotel's proprietor refusing to let the mob in, Delany was able to wait the crisis out and slip away the next day.

By the end of his tour, it was already clear that Delany and Douglass were about to part ways on *The North Star*. Robert Levine, a University of Maryland English professor who wrote a book about the two men, said that by the late 1840s, Delany was accustomed to being a leader, but "as co-editor of *The North Star*, he was suddenly cast in Douglass' shadow."

The decisive break came when Delany began to advocate black emigration at a time when Douglass was still preaching the need for free blacks to continue the anti-slavery battle in America.

Pitt's Dr. Glasco thinks a personal crisis that struck Delany in 1850 played a big part in his anger toward the country of his birth.

That year, he was accepted into Harvard Medical School to complete his physician's training. He was one of three black students at the time, and the faculty embraced them.

Most of the white students, however, did not. They approved a motion that read: "Resolved: That we have no objection to the education and evaluation of blacks but do decidedly remonstrate against their presence in college with us." Even though he had invited the African-American students to the school, dean Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. caved in to the pressure and expelled Delany and the other black students.

In the same year, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed slave owners to pursue and capture escaped slaves in any part of the country and set up fines for any law enforcement officer who refused to make such arrests.

Because slave owners needed only an affidavit to accuse someone of being a runaway slave, many free blacks were conscripted into slavery by the law, which outraged Delany and contributed to his support for emigration.

In his book, "The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States," written during his Pittsburgh years, Delany said:

"Let no visionary nonsense about habeas corpus, or a fair trial, deceive us; there are no such rights granted in this bill, and except where the commissioner is too ignorant to understand, when reading it, or too stupid to enforce it when he does understand, there is no earthly chance, no hope under heaven for the colored person who is brought before one of these officers of the law.

"We are slaves in the midst of freedom, waiting patiently and unconcernedly, indifferently, and stupidly, for masters to come and lay claim to us, trusting to their generosity, whether or not they will own us and carry us into endless bondage."

Over the next 15 years, Delany argued strongly for emigration, first to Central or South America, later to Africa.

Despite two trips to Africa to negotiate for possible land for settlements, though, none of his plans for blacks to leave the United States came to fruition.

He did take such action in his own life, though. In 1856, he moved to Canada, where he would stay until after the Civil War began.

By that time, Douglass had solidified his position as the leading black spokesman for abolition. He had already rewritten his popular autobiography once, and had renamed his newspaper for himself, calling it Frederick

Douglass' Paper.

Douglass' careful self-marketing is another big reason his reputation has lasted, said the University of Maryland's Dr. Levine. "He took a lot of care in presenting himself to the world."

Delany was not able to do that as successfully because he did not have his own newspaper and never published an autobiography, said John Stauffer, a history professor and anti-slavery expert at Harvard University. "Delany hasn't persisted in public view primarily because he was not nearly as elegant a writer or eloquent a speaker," he said.

Despite those handicaps, "I believe Delany is second only to Frederick Douglass in significance and impact as a black leader" during the Civil War period, Dr. Stauffer said, and because of that, his name is still known among many African-Americans.

There is one other very personal arena where Douglass and Delany battled -- their appearance.

As a mulatto, Douglass was much lighter-skinned and Caucasian looking than Delany, who said he was a "full-blooded African" descended from royalty in two different tribes.

"It may be apocryphal," Vanderbilt's Dr. Blackett said, "but Frederick Douglass is quoted as saying, 'I wake up each morning and say, thank God I am a man, whereas Delany wakes up and says thank God I am a black man.'"

Delany even "attempted to use [his black heritage] rhetorically to say to black people that 'I would be a better leader because people can't say about me that my intelligence has anything to do with my white blood,'" Dr. Levine added.

After the Civil War began, Delany once again confounded people's expectations by returning to the United States and recruiting blacks to join the Union Army.

And toward the end of the war, he scored a coup by persuading President Abraham Lincoln to make him the first black major in the Union Army, a post Douglass had lobbied for.

After the fighting ended, Delany continued on his idiosyncratic path by joining the Freedman's Bureau in South Carolina, where he helped emancipated slaves get jobs and encouraged some of them to emigrate to Liberia in Africa.

He then abruptly switched to the Democratic Party, which was the party of the Confederacy, and worked to help poor white farmers in the region.

"This was inconceivable to someone like Douglass," Dr. Glasco said, "but Delany felt at that point that the issue was not race but class, and that these poor white farmers had legitimate grievances and he was going to help them."

Near the end of their lives, Douglass and Delany had one more meeting, and at that event, they reverted to their central messages.

On New Year's Day in 1883, about 40 black leaders gathered at a restaurant in Washington D.C. to mark the 20th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and honor Douglass, Dr. Levine wrote.

In a speech, Douglass thanked his colleagues, and said "nothing has occurred in these 20 years which has dimmed my hopes or caused me to doubt that the emancipated people of this country will avail themselves of their opportunities, and by enterprise, industry, invention, discovery and manly character, vindicate the confidence of their friends and put to shame the gloomy predictions of all their enemies."

Most of the men then offered toasts to the future of blacks in America.

Martin Delany stood, raised his glass and said: "The Republic of Liberia."



Delany died of tuberculosis at 72 in southwestern Ohio. In 2006, a grave marker was dedicated to him, showing Delany in his majors uniform for the Union Army.



For a brief period in the 1840s, Douglass and Delany were co-editors of *The North Star*, the anti-slavery newspaper started by Douglass.



Martin Delany, who lived in Pittsburgh most of his life, was one of the most important black abolitionists in the Civil War period, but most people cannot remember his name today.

Resources

- National Museum of African American Museum History and Culture—<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/educators>
- Smithsonian Education—http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/resource_library/african_american_resources.html
- National Education Association—<http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/black-history-month.htm>
- National Archives—<https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/black-history.html>
- PBS.com—<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/2015/01/black-history-month-resources-for-the-classroom/>
- WHYY—<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/black-history-month-facts-and-films/#.WnDa8KinE2w>
- Zinn Education Project—<https://zinnedproject.org/?s=black+history>
- Atlanta Black Star—<http://atlantablackstar.com/category/global-black-history/>
- Library of Congress—<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/african-american.php>
- Anti-Defamation League—<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month>

Thank You

To the Ancestors,

For your relentless pursuit of freedom and for your righteous struggle for justice. The African Diaspora in the Americas is in debt to you for our strength, courage and resolve

To My Ancestors,

Thank you for enduring the whip, acres in Attapulgus, escape to the North and for South Jersey.

Thank you for America



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