

Why the Colored American Is Not In The World's Columbian Exposition

By David J. Cope

Overview

In this lesson, students will study primary and secondary sources to discover the problems that African Americans faced during the Jim Crow era when protesting their exclusion from the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Students will also research the effectiveness of pamphlet writing today. This lesson serves as a great complementary lesson to the beginnings of the Jim Crow era and can easily be adapted for upper elementary through high school students.

Time Required

Two to three days for background readings and discussion.

Materials Needed

- Internet access to this site: <http://minneapolisfed.org/research/data/us/calc/>
(If school Internet access is unavailable, you can print and distribute the necessary information.)
- Copies of:
 - "Issue" pamphlets collected from local resources
 - "The Reason Why ... Quote Sheet" (below)
 - Image of "In the Shadow of Justice" (below)
 - World's Fair Grade Sheet

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

Collect multiple pamphlets from a variety of resources and distribute one to each student. Be sure that the pamphlets deal with an "issue" and are not advertisements. Instruct the students to determine the goal of their pamphlets and list five major supporting points to that goal. Have the students identify whether the supporting points are facts, statistics, or opinions. Discuss with the class as a whole the purpose of pamphlets. Create a list of those elements that help a pamphlet makes its point and write the list on the board. Using the list, determine each pamphlet's effectiveness.

Procedures

1. Instruct the students to read the "**African Americans and 'The White City'**" essay and review the roles of Ida Wells and Frederick Douglass at the Exposition. Ask students the following:
 - Why did they decide to write the pamphlet?
 - Why did certain African Americans object to the printing
2. Divide the class into six groups. Give the members of each group the list of quotes and assign one section of the pamphlet to each group. Ask them to:

- Identify their passages as facts, statistics, or opinions.
- React to each statement.

Using the class' criteria on what makes an effective pamphlet, have the group make a judgment on the Wells-Douglass effort.

3. Have the class establish two concentric circles with their chairs or desks, with the center one having only enough chairs for one group. Tell the groups in the center circle to sit in the order that their chapters appeared in the pamphlet. The students in the center circle are the only ones allowed to speak for five minutes, discussing the quotes from their chapter, and their meanings and effectiveness. After the five minutes are up, anyone from the outer circle may give an opinion or ask a question, and the inner group should have a chance to respond. Then, have the next group enter the inner circle and continue the process until all groups have participated.
4. After the circle exercise, have the class determine whether the pamphlet did what Wells and Douglass set out to do. Make sure students address these issues:
 - Why do you think Wells and Douglass wanted to print the pamphlet in languages other than English?
 - Do you think that printing it in any other languages, as they originally intended, would have helped their case?
 - Would this pamphlet be effective today or would the length of it be a hindrance?
5. Explain to students that *Puck* was a weekly humor magazine of the era and that many of its printed jokes and cartoons contained horrendous racial stereotypes, typical of the day. Because of its popularity, *Puck* constructed its own building at the Exposition and printed a special fair edition. Using either a transparency, slide, or individual copy for each student of the "In The Shadow of Justice" cartoon, ask students whether the cartoon or the pamphlet would have more impact and why?
6. Using the <http://minneapolisfed.org/research/data/us/calc/> web site, ask students to convert the cost of the pamphlet to today's currency rate. Then, assign a limited number of students to investigate local printing options of 10,000 copies of an 81-page pamphlet today and compare the results.

Assessment

The teacher should assess the students through observations made during the class discussions outlined in the Procedures section.

Related Works

Appelbaum, Stanley. *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 -- A Photographic Record*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1980.

Interdisciplinary Links

The pamphlet discussion exercise allows for a great interdisciplinary link with the English curriculum.

This lesson was submitted by David J. Cope, Honors teacher at Titusville Senior High School, Titusville PA.

"THE REASON WHY ... QUOTE SHEET"

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS

"Those who do this (believe that there was an increase of African-American males attacking white females) would make the world believe that freedom has changed the whole character of the Negro and made of him a moral monster."

a.

b.

"The man in the South who says he is in favor of the Lynch Law because he honestly believes that the courts of that section are likely to be too merciful to the Negro charged with this crime, either does not know the South or is fit for prison or an insane asylum."

a.

b.

"Not less absurd is the pretense of these law breakers that resort to Lynch Law is made because they do not wish the shocking details of the crime made known."

a.

b.

"We know we shall be censured for the publication of this volume. The time for its publication will be thought to be ill chosen. America is just now, as never before, posing before the world as a highly liberal and civilized nation, and in many respects, has a right to this reputation."

a.

b.

"The enemies of the Negro see that he is making progress, and they naturally wish to stop him and keep him in just what they consider his proper place."

a.

b.

CHAPTER TWO: CLASS LEGISLATION BY IDA WELLS

"Out of 44 states, only 23 states and territories allow whites and Negroes to marry if they see fit to contract such alliances."

a.

b.

"In 1884, the United States Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Bill (of 1875) unconstitutional."

a.

b.

"Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Kentucky have each passed a law making it punishable by fine and imprisonment for colored persons to ride in the same railway carriage with white persons unless as servants to white passengers."

a.

b.

"Aside from the inconsistency of class legislation in this country, the cars for colored persons are rarely equal in point of accommodation. Usually, one half of the smoking car is reserved for the 'colored car.' Many times, only a cloth curtain or partition run halfway up, divides this 'colored car' from the smoke, obscene language, and foul air of the smokers' end of the coach."

a.

b.

"The railroad fare is exactly the same in all cases."

a.

b.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CONVICT LEASE SYSTEM BY IDA WELLS

"These companies assume charge of the convicts, work them as cheap labor, and pay the states a handsome revenue for their labor."

a.

b.

"Nine-tenths of these convicts are Negroes."

a.

b.

"To have Negro blood in the veins, makes one unworthy of consideration, a social outcast, a leper, even in the church."

a.

b.

"In the Georgia convict force, only 15 were whites among 215 who were under sentences of more than ten years."

a.

b.

"Every Negro so sentenced not only means able-bodied men to swell the state's number of slaves, but every Negro so convicted is thereby *disfranchised*."

a.

b.

CHAPTER FOUR: LYNCH LAW BY IDA WELLS

"Col. Wm. Lynch (Virginia) drafted the constitution for this combination of citizens, and hence 'Lynch Law' ..."

- a.
- b.

"He [the African American] is now charged with assaulting or attempting to assault white women. This charge, as false as it is foul, robs us of the sympathy of the world and is blasting the race's good name."

- a.
- b.

"Over 1,000 black men, women, and children have been thus sacrificed the past ten years."

- a.
- b.

"Three human beings was (sic) burned alive in civilized America during the first six months of this year (1893)."

- a.
- b.

"In 1892 there were 241 persons lynched. Of this number, 160 were of Negro descent."

- a.

b.

**CHAPTER FIVE: THE PROGRESS OF THE AFRO -- AMERICAN SINCE EMANCIPATION BY
I. GARLAND PENN**

"In 1890, we find that within a fraction, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the eligibles are reported in school."

- a.
- b.

"It has been alleged that he is acquiring too much professional training for the support which conditions among the race offer him."

- a.
- b.

"Since and prior to the organization of schools for training of Afro-American physicians, 417 graduates in the practice of Medicine have come forth."

- a.
- b.

"The total amount of property owned by the race is \$263,000,000."

- a.
- b.

"With most meager incentive, our race has many amateur artists who possess great native talent..."

- a.

b.

CHAPTER SIX: THE REASON WHY BY F. L. BARNETT

"Theoretically open to all Americans, the exposition practically is, literally and figuratively, a 'White City,' in the building of which the Colored American was allowed no hand, and in its glorious success he has no share."

a.

b.

"...they hoped that the Nation would take enough interest in its former slaves to spend a few thousand dollars in making an exhibit which would tell to the world what they as freedmen had done."

a.

b.

"...it was the refinement of irony to set aside August 25th to be observed as 'Colored People's Day.'"

a.

b.

"Those, who were present [at Colored People's Day], by the faultless character of their service, showed the splendid talent which prejudice had led the Exposition to ignore..."

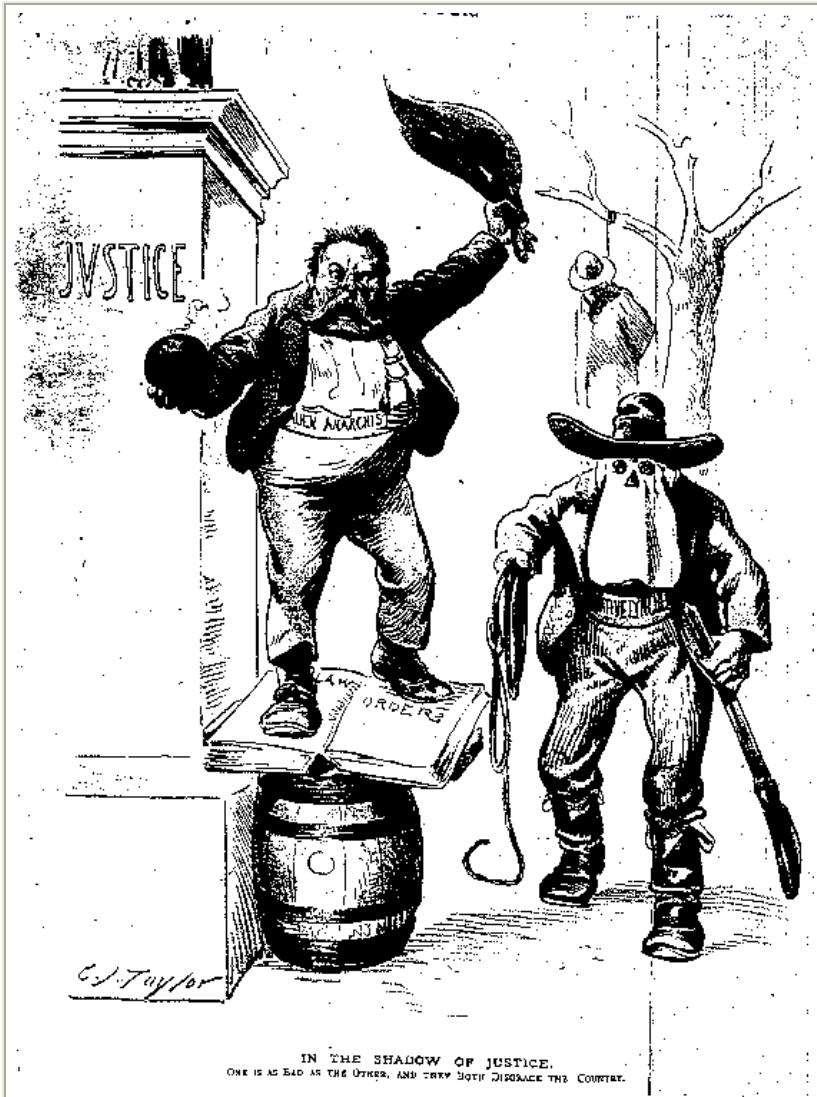
a.

b.

"Our failure to be represented is not of our own working, and we can only hope that the spirit of freedom and fair play of which some Americans so loudly boast will so inspire the Nation that, in another great national endeavor, the Colored American shall not plead for a place in vain."

a.

b.



In the Shadow of Justice.

One is as bad as the other, and they both disgrace the country.

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