

PURPOSE: Elimination of myth of Negro docility

INTRODUCTION: A closer look at the history of the Negro protest movement, which unknown to most goes back to the beginning of the slave trade. Slaves protested their bondage in many ways. Africans of every social background from princes to slaves were sold, or captured by kidnapping and put up for sale. There were many African leaders aboard the slaveships.

Onboard the ship, they rebelled and committed suicide; insurrections often took place at sea -- hence the need for chains. In the New World they planned and executed revolts and uprisings, often successfully fleeing North or to refuge among the Indians. If they couldn't, they deliberately worked slowly and poorly, wilfully destroying tools and their own work. They ran away temporarily to spite their owners and killed many of their newborn rather than see them grow up in slavery. Stupidity was feigned as a means of protest. Rebellion was never far from their minds.

MOTIVATION: (Junior High Group)

Draw up a list of what the students think the slaves were like. Then compare it with the historical facts.

MAIN LESSON

As the colonies developed, so did the hope of freedom. The names of Gabriel Treason, Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey became synonymous with insurrection.

DENMARK VESSEY, a carpenter, who had bought his own freedom the year of Gabriel's (failed) rebellion, planned one of the greatest revolts against the slave system. It did not reach the proportions of Nat Turner's rebellion, but it was well planned and highly organized.

Because he was well travelled and educated, he knew of the slave revolts in Haiti, the French Revolution, and the furor over the Missouri Compromise. In other words, he knew the power of common action even among slaves.

After agitating and planning among the slaves, around Charleston, for five years with the help of a fellow carpenter, Peter Poyas Vesey recruited all the slaves ~~to~~ to fight for their freedom, but avoided the house servants who had less to lose.

NOTE

AIM: To understand the role of the Underground Railroad in gaining and preserving freedom for men of color.

INTRODUCTION:

Many Negroes before the Civil War were born free. Others were given freedom by their owners or bought the freedom of their families. The Underground Railroad served the slaves of the South (and North) who were willing the risk their lives in exchange for freedom. Many of the women abolitionists used their homes as way stations on the routes of the Underground Railroad. Perhaps the best way to find out how the Underground Railroad operated is the through the lives of Harriet Tubman and other famous conductors. Some were white, some were free Negroes - all were abolitionists.

QUESTION PERIOD: This period should be as brief as possible, but should cover any questions students might have about the previous paragraph.

LESSON: - Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad.

Born a Slave, Harriet Tubman fled from a Maryland plantation, leaving her husband and family behind. When she left, two of her brothers came with her. Because fear overcame them they went back to slavery. This caused Harriet Tubman to carry a gun with her on all her trips to the South so that if any slave faltered she would draw out her pistol and say, "You'll be free or die." The alternative chosen was always freedom.

The slaves who chose freedom had a long and dangerous journey out of the south. To use the open road meant almost certain capture, so the way to freedom was always in the dark of night and far from the beaten path.

"Up creek bed, through swamps, over hills in the dark of night, on nineteen secret trips into the dangerous South, Harriet Tubman guided more than 300 slaves to freedom, including her aged parents."
(Taken from p.129 "A Fictorial History of the Negro in America" by Langston Hughes)

The Underground Railroad stretched South, North, and West. The way stations were any place friends and sympathizers could provide hiding places. For the fugitive slave or free man of color who were fleeing illegal capture, these way stations were often their only source of refuge. Farms, cellars, churches, woodsheds, caves, treetops, wagons with false bottoms, - all served their purpose. White abolitionists and friends were invaluable as they often passed as slaveowners to gain freedom for their "slaves".

Harriet Tubman declared that as a conductor of the railroad, she never ran her train off the track or lost a passenger.

In the South most slaves didn't have any guides to help them. They followed the streams to keep the bloodhounds off their trail and headed for Delaware or Cincinnati, the Western escape route. The Quakers were always willing to help them from then on. William Still, a free Negro, and secretary of the Vigilance Committee, kept a record of all the "passengers" or "merchandise" who came through his way station in Philadelphia. Later he wrote a book called the "Underground Railroad".

It is interesting to note that the Quakers who believed in "non-resistance" which is similar to non-violence, were the only conductors who did not carry arms for defense against the slave raiders and police, who were constantly searching for slaves and free Negroes to capture for reward.

Other famous conductors were Charles Ray, Gerrit Smith, Stephen Meyers, Rev. J. W. Loguen, Frederick Douglass, and Susan B. Anthony. Some like John Palfield were killed. William Whipper, a free Negro of Boston, Samuel Chase, later Lincoln's sect of the Treasury and Samuel Burris, a fearless Negro conductor all added to the widespread network of way stations along the Underground railroad.

REVIEW:

Discuss the Fugitive Slave Law and its effect on the Underground Railroad.

1. It no longer was safe to just flee North.
Canada had to be the goal for the conductors and their human freight.
2. These refugees had to be helped in Canada and Harriet Tubman begged for food, clothes, homes and jobs for her charges on unfamiliar soil.
3. Free men of color couldn't testify in court if slavers or constables took them for the fee they could get from the Federal court. By 1851, widespread disobedience to this Federal law caused Southern slave holders to lose faith in the Compromise of 1850 which included the Fugitive Slave Law.
4. Boston played a leading role in the defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law. Although they failed to save the freedom of a fugitive slave, Anthony Burns, The Boston Vigilance Committee which protected the rights of colored persons, highlighted the cause of the slave with the help of Robert Morris, the leading Negro attorney, Richard H. Dana, Jr. and Charles M. Ellis. The rallying place was Faneuil Hall.

The question of free or slave is still with us. Until all Americans have access to all of their rights and related responsibilities no American is free.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Is there any comparison of the Underground Railroad and the Freedom rides, sit-ins, pray-ins, wage-ins and work-ins of today?
2. Is it an extension of the same fight?
3. Do you think the non-resistant approach of the Quakers is still good?
4. Compare the resistance to the fight to end segregation and discrimination in the South with the resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law. Are bad, unfair or unethical laws effective?
5. Do you think disobedience of the Federal Fugitive Slave Law gave assistance to the fugitive slaves? If yes, Why?
6. In what way do you think this contributed to the events leading up to the Civil War? John Brown's raid?
7. What laws in South Africa cause people to resist their enforcement? Why?

BOOKS TO READ:

"A Pictorial History of the Negro in America" Langston Hughes, p.52, 102, 129,
"Life & Times of Frederick Douglass" by Frederick Douglass

Lesson Plan: The Ancient History of Africa

Sam Bowles

AIM: The aim of this lesson is:

1. To point out the existence of ancient civilizations in Africa.
2. To demonstrate that Africans were "civilized" long before their contact with Europeans, and
3. To dispel the myth that Negro Americans and African are peoples without a history.

Approach: The approach is not to elevate all African history to exaggerated heights, but to present objectively the strengths and weaknesses of an ancient civilization of Africa (Mali) as a representative of the many other ancient kingdoms. The existence of the other kingdoms will be documented. No attempt should be made to teach the students a large body of facts.

Before beginning this lesson, review briefly the main points of the last history lesson, so as to establish continuity and to reinforce last week's lesson.

Suggested opening: It is important that the students realize the importance of African history to themselves, and the importance of studying it in the Freedom Schools.

A suitable opening for the class should be developed which stresses the relevance of the subject matter and attempts to increase the motivation of the students. While each teacher will obviously develop his own approach to this problem, it is hoped that each one will draw out the reasons why the study of African and Negro history is important.

Body of the Lesson:

I. Does Africa have a history?

- a. Discussion and criticism of the often heard statement that Africans and Negro Americans are a people without a history.
- b. Brief reference to the growing interest among scholars and others in the Ancient History of Africa.

II. a. Locate the following empires on a map (draw one on the black board if maps of Africa are not available.)

Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Benin, Zimbabwe. Other important empires could be located.

- b. Date the important empires in reference to familiar U.S. or European history dates. e.g. Zimbabwe and Mali flourished before Columbus discovered America. Ghana reached its peak about the time that Leif Erikson and the Vikings crossed the Atlantic. Songhay had reached its peak before the first settlers arrived in America.

APPROACH:

Looking back on the approach for a moment, to provide motivation it might be useful to open with a reference to the T.V. or movie image of the African "native." Then ask, "Are Africans really like that?" (It might be rewarding to clarify the word "native" and to explain both its real meaning and its derogatory usage.) "Are they civilized?" "What does it mean to be civilized?" Then develop the meaning of "civilized" through questioning. As the word is often understood it has connotations of a high level of technology or the development of European-type art. When it is thus defined in terms of European and North American society the implication is that non-Western people are uncivilized, and that to become civilized they must become like us.

Having clarified the meaning of civilization or civilized, one can lead into the body of the lesson by returning to the African native image and asserting that the study of African history will demonstrate how fallacious the image is.

III. The Empire of Mali (1200-1400 approx.)

(This section can be cut down if time is running short.)

1. This is presented as an example of the other empires. Obviously there were great differences between all the empires, but it is better to devote the few available minutes to one empire than to try to deal with all of them for a few seconds each. For your reference on Mali the following are useful (see below for fuller information); Oliver and Page, pp 85-90 Fage, pp 24-27; Davidson, pp 90-98.

- A. Mali's highly developed political system.
They had a civil service, judges, territorial governors, advisers to the King and other members of an elaborate governmental system.
- B. The Influence of Islam.
 - a. Most of the governing classes of Mali were Muslims. Islam influenced the cultural, social, and legal aspects of the society.
- C. The University, other education and cultural life of the empire.
The centers of learning and the university at Timbuktu during this era attracted students and teachers from all parts of the world. Leo Africanus, a historian who visited Mali wrote, "In Timbuktu there are numerous judges, doctors, and clerics, all receiving good salaries from the king. He pays great respect to men of learning...More profit is made from the book trade than from any other line of business." (The last sentence is probably an exaggeration, but it does indicate an avid interest in education.
- D. Mali's prosperity through trade.
Mali traded gold and slaves (which they captured from neighboring tribes) with the North Africans in return for salt. The salt was mined in the northern part of the Sahara Desert, south of the Atlas Mts. and was controlled by North African Arabs. The gold was mined in the Mali empire. The goods were carried in camel caravans across the desert. Despite the existence of gold, and other evidence of wealth the common citizens of Mali were undoubtedly poor. They engaged chiefly in farming. While the rich lived in brick houses, the poor lived in huts of clay and mud.

- E. The decline of Mali.

(cont on Page 3)

THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM (cont)

E. The Decline of Mali (cont)

1. Disunity of tribal differences
2. Overdependence on military rule which could last only as long as the generals remained loyal.

IV. Review:

(Each teacher is free to develop his own approach to the review section of this section of the lesson)

One example of a suggested review question:

"What evidence do we have that civilizations existed in ancient Africa?"

- V. The Total lesson plan covers 30 minutes. If possible at least ten minutes should be reserved for the students' questions and discussion of the following questions which the teacher would like to introduce for discussion.

SUGGESTED POINTS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What relations are there between the ancient kingdoms of Africa and ourselves? (e.g. the kingdom of Dahomey and the kingdom of Benin provided a large number of slaves for the American and West Indian plantations, etc.)
2. Why are present-day Africans proud of their past? (Three African nations have named themselves after the ancient kingdoms: Ghana, Mali, and Dahomey)
3. What light does the study of African history cast on how racial attitudes influence the writing and teaching of history? (e.g. the willingness of some historians to accept the fact that Africa has a long history of civilization; e.g. the until recently pervasive view that the beautiful Ife bronzes and African works of art could not have been the work of the African people.)
4. Why is it important for us to learn about African history?
 - a. Is it important for all Americans or only for those of African descent?
 - b. Why should African and American Negro history be taught in the Public schools?

These are just a few questions that are merely intended to start the ball rolling.*

SUGGESTED READING FOR TEACHERS AND DISCUSSION LEADERS:

E. Oliver and J.D. Page, A Short History of Africa, Penguin (paperback) Ch.4-7 pp 44-77

H. Oliver, The Dawn of African History

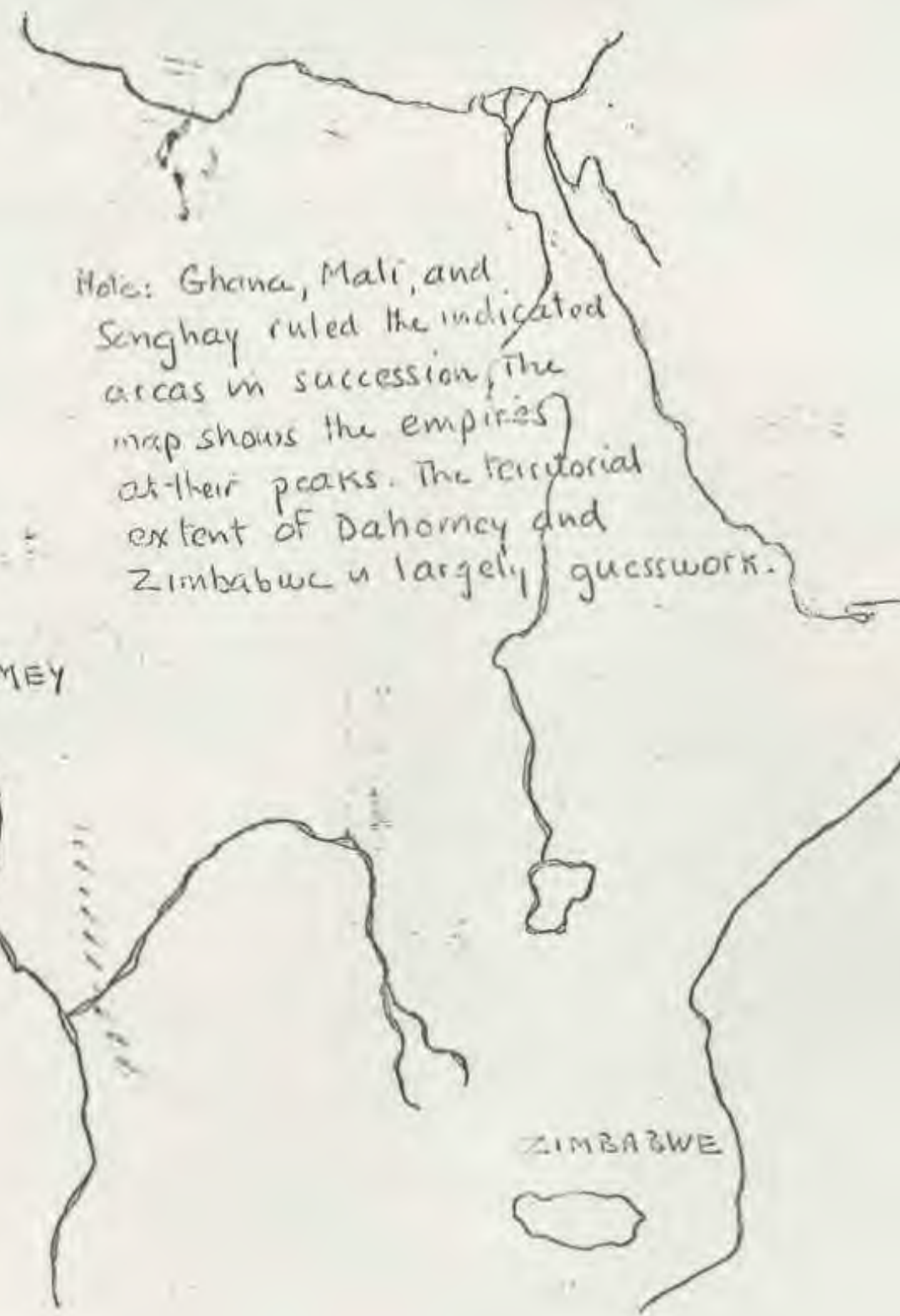
B. Davidson, The Lost Cities of Africa (Boston, 1959, Little Brown & Co.) Introduction, Chapter 3 (p. 51-117) Chapters 9 & 10 (pp 241-313.)

*Before closing the lesson introduce the subject of the next lesson and motivate the students to "tune in next week."



Note: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay ruled the indicated areas in succession. The map shows the empires at their peaks. The territorial extent of Dahomey and Zimbabwe is largely guesswork.

MAP OF AFRICA
 showing places
 mentioned in the lesson
 plan on the
 Ancient History of Africa



ZIMBABWE