

Speaking Up and Speaking Out: Exploring the Lives and Conditions of Black Women During the 19th Century

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Grade Level: Middle/High

Duration of lesson: 1-2 periods

Overview:

This lesson introduces students to the complexity of history by focusing on the diverse activities of Black women in the nineteenth century. Historians have traditionally ignored free black women during this period, and furthermore oversimplified the lives of slave women. Using a variety of sources and documents, students will learn that many Black women, whether born slaves, free, or freed in later life, resisted the system that oppressed them, earned degrees, and became politically active before, during, and after the Civil War.

Related National History Standards:

Content Standards:

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)

Standard 2: The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people

Standard 3: How various reconstruction plans succeeded or failed

Historical Thinking Standards:

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.

B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.

C. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses.

Standard 3: Historical Research Capabilities

A. Formulate historical questions.

B. Obtain historical data from a variety of sources.

C. Interrogate historical data.

F. Support interpretations with historical evidence.

Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.

F. Evaluate the implementation of a decision.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn how to read and interpret various primary and secondary sources and how to use them to draw conclusions about the issues that the authors faced during the nineteenth century.
- Students will read historical narratives imaginatively and in their proper context.
- Students will view evidence of historical perspectives and draw upon visual and literary sources while studying the lives of nineteenth century black feminists, the issues they faced and their methods for solving them.

Topic Background:

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, as slavery and the slave trade were being outlawed in many Northern cities, it was increasingly becoming much more economically entrenched in the South.¹ As a result, by the middle of the nineteenth century, slavery had virtually disappeared from many Northern cities and had been replaced with thriving, successful and economically viable free Black communities. In contrast, with the invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin, the South began to depend heavily on cotton production and on slave labor.² Indeed, historians argue that if the cotton gin had not revived the American cotton industry, slavery might have ended in this country.³ Since the importation of slaves had been outlawed, slaveholders began to realize that their slaves were a type of "stock" that would have to be reproduced rather than simply replaced if they died or ran away. This realization changed the world of Black America and the world of the American slave system forever.⁴

Southern slaveholders were then faced with a dilemma, how could they "create" and maintain a viable slave system within a free and independent nation?⁵ The answer was to create a system that dehumanized Africans, limited their rights, and restricted their movement.⁶ The American slave system, as a result, became the most brutal and

¹ In 1780, eighty-five years before the 13th Amendment, Pennsylvania outlawed slavery; Massachusetts and Vermont in 1783; Vermont, Connecticut and Rhode Island between 1783-1799 and New Jersey in 1804. Three years later, the international slave trade was outlawed in America.

² In 1793, this invention, which made the cotton-cleaning process easier, faster and more efficient, restructured the economic course for the South in four ways: 1) cotton farming moved into northern Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and eventually into Texas; 2) cotton became the "king" of all the crops; 3) Native Americans were driven out of Southern areas so that more plantations could be established and 4) the national slave trade began to thrive as slaves were sold from the east to the south and then to the west. *Creating America: A History of the United States*, senior consultants James Garcia, Donna M. Ogle, C. Frederick Risinger, Joyce Stevos and Winthrop D. Jordan (Illinois: McDougal Littell, 2001), 348-350.

³ Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998), 63.

⁴ Ibid. The end of the importation of slaves coupled with the increased demand for slave labor ended the freeing of slaves (instead of freeing unwanted slaves, owners would now sell them) and increased the number of slave farms (where slaves were stocked, coupled and sold for profit).

⁵ Although slavery had existed since 1619, many slaveholders, after the Revolutionary War and before the establishment of chattel slavery and racism, freed rather than sold their unwanted slaves. By 1790, there were large free Black communities. North Carolina alone had roughly 5,041 (1.7%) free Blacks while Virginia boasted a community of 12,866 (2.8%). <http://freeafricanamericans.com>

⁶ The irony that existed is that even though there was no regulation or code of conduct, there was a Declaration of Independence that declared that "all men were created equal" and a Constitution that talked about forming a "more perfect nation" that was committed to establishing justice and ensuring domestic tranquility. Southern slaveholders created a successful system where slaves were viewed as being less than human and thereby not being entitled to have any rights. Hine writes that they employed a mythology that "incorporated traits for Black Americans that justified everything from beatings to rape to stealing childhood(s)." Hine, 64.

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dehumanizing slave system that had ever existed.⁷ At that time, being enslaved meant that you were Black and that you had no rights. This *precedents sub silentio*⁸ eventually became a part of legislation, when in 1809, the South Carolina judicial system ruled that “slaves...stand on the same footing as other animals.” This ruling laid the groundwork for the case that would eventually strip both the enslaved and free Black populations of all of their rights.⁹

In 1857, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* case that all people of African ancestry -- enslaved, newly freed or free-born -- could never become citizens of the United States and therefore had no rights that whites were bound to respect.¹⁰ These rulings, along with the “dehumanization campaign” that was employed by Southern slaveholders, spread racism throughout the nation and transformed the lives of free and enslaved Black people. In addition, it justified chattel slavery, within a supposedly free country, and allowed inhumane conditions to exist (lynchings, beatings, forced family separations, rape and near-starvation conditions were all a part of the daily lives of enslaved Black Americans). It is important to note that even though slavery existed, the resistance (on all levels) by slaves to this condition existed as well. Slaves were not just passively playing by the rules. Darlene Clark Hine in her book, *A Shining Thread of Hope*, notes that slaves created and maintained a complicated system that was “generally individualistic and aimed at maintaining what the slave master, and overseer had, in the course of their relationship, perceived as an acceptable level of work, shelter, food, punishment, and free time...Slave resistance was aimed at maintaining what seemed to all concerned to be the status quo.”¹¹ Furthermore, she notes that “survival itself was a form of resistance” and “resistance was crucial to the survival of the spirit.”¹²

In the early part of the 21st century, feminists poets said, “America, you can take my body but not my soul...that is not for sale.” Two hundred years before that, enslaved Black women through their open and consistent resistance showed that neither their spirits or certain parts of their bodies were up for sale or for ownership.¹³ This survival of the spirit extended to the one thing that they refused, sometimes to the point of death, to let them (the slaveholders) enslave. Black women, in addition to their field or house work, were routinely subjected to “forcible sexual intercourse” either by their owners, overseers or by “buck” slaves. Their refusal to be sexually owned played itself out in a

⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁸ This term, which is translated as “a silent uniform course of practice, uninterrupted though not supported by legal decision,” is used to describe behavior or actions that are accepted but not legally approved by the court system.

⁹ Before 1809, enslaved Africans were educated (usually by missionaries who taught them to read the bible), allowed to freely marry (and inter-marry), travel and own property.

¹⁰ Dred Scott was able to file a writ of certiorari to the Supreme Court because he and his master were born in different states...this distinction made it a federal versus a state court case.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2932.html>,

¹¹ Hine, 91.

¹² Ibid, 90.

¹³ K.. Wise, *Soulmates and Soulfood* (Washington, DC: Champagne and Grits Publications, 1993), 16.

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number of different ways. Harriet Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* wrote about how she chose to give herself to another white man rather than to her master.¹⁴ Elizabeth Keckley in *Behind the Scenes: Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* wrote about how she resisted her master's advances for close to four years.¹⁵ The Federal Writer's Project, during the 1930s, recorded a number of interviews where former slaves spoke openly about how women (and girls) resisted sexual slavery.¹⁶ Unfortunately, only a few were strong enough, defiant enough and "lucky" enough to succeed...if success is measured only by whether or not they were actually raped. Given the response to this resistance by the slaveholders, which ranged from severe beatings to death, to resist was to take a stand, stake a claim and put your life on the line. Under these circumstances, the very act of resisting was heroic in-and-of-itself. Hine argues that within this climate of fear and violence, Black women resisted, time and time again. In fact, she notes that there are so many accounts of resistance that it seems to have been more common than submission.¹⁷ This resistant, defiant and headstrong spirit was not just prevalent among enslaved women, it extended to their free sisters as well.

In the midst of this Southern turmoil, confusion, and violence, free Black men and women were traveling and speaking abroad, attending and graduating from college, owning property, publishing, and acquiring wealth.¹⁸ This contrast is of particular importance because of the large number of free Black women who were allowed this access and privilege despite the "handicaps" generally associated with gender and color. In addition, the population differences must be taken into account: during the nineteenth century there were roughly about two million Black women enslaved in the South vs. about two hundred thousand free Black women in the North; so, as the scope is narrowed, the number of Black women in question is less than a tenth of the number of Black women who were living and surviving at that time.¹⁹ This is important to note because even though "free Black women were separated from slaves by distance and condition...their lives were linked, and so were their destinies."²⁰ How then, were these

¹⁴ Hine, 94.

¹⁵ Ibid., 94.

¹⁶ In the 1920s-30s, close to two thousand former slaves were interviewed by journalists, writers, teachers and historians. These primary sources, have been used in dozens of books including Norman Yetman's *When I Was a Slave*, George Rawick's *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* and Julius Lester's *To Be a Slave*. Although the validity of the interviews have been challenged (the slaves were too old to remember, the interviewees imposed their own notions on the translations, not enough former slaves were interviewed, etc), they are considered to be the premier source for a glimpse at this true "peculiar institution."

¹⁷ Ibid., 94.

¹⁸ It is important to note that the "wealth" that free Blacks were acquiring was not in any ways equal to the amount of wealth that white Americans had acquired and continued to acquire. Ira Berlin. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), xiii.

¹⁹ Ibid., 135. In addition, the growth of the free Black population was much slower than then number of enslaved Blacks. In fact, by 1865, free Blacks made up about 3% of the Black population. For further tables documenting the numbers of enslaved and free Blacks as well as their rate of growth, see *Slaves Without Masters* appendix section, 396-403.

²⁰ Ibid., 103.

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free Black women, during the height of the antebellum years, able to become successful entrepreneurs, doctors, authors, college students and lawyers? And how were they able to gain access and wield political and social influence?

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions have only begun to be discussed and researched. Until the very recent past, the history of nineteenth century free Black women in America has been overlooked by historians, teachers and scholars. Outside of the familiar figures like Charlotte Forten, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Dr. Sarah Parker Remond, MD, Sojourner Truth, and Ida B. Wells, the lives of everyday free Black women had not been seriously or critically explored.²¹ The questions that should have been asked -- the ones that would have provided answers about this population, their contributions, their struggles, and, their conditions -- simply had not been asked (or answered) by the historians. Slavery, due in large part to the Federal Writer's Project, was a much easier subject to research, write about, and understand than freedom. The re-discovery of this history and its legitimization by historians is finally providing the true balance that is needed for a clearer understanding of the history of Black women in this country; a history that will hopefully raise the curtain and provide some further insight into their lives.

Maria W. Stewart wrote in 1831 that "many will suffer for pleading the cause of oppressed Africa, and I shall glory in being one of her martyrs."²² For a large majority of free Black women this became their rallying cry. In the 1830s, they begin to organize themselves, both individually (by saving money to purchase enslaved relatives, helping them to escape, or through fervent, regular, and consistent prayer²³) and as a collective force. Despite the odds that faced them, odds that would later prove to be a barrier to them holding positions of leadership and authority, they used the "questions" of race and gender to begin (and participate in) movements designed to bring about social change.²⁴ Although Hine argues that this collective effort was not organized, the impact that they had on both the suffrage and abolitionist movements proves that it was at least well-planned.

Throughout history, social progress has usually only been accomplished through great sacrifice, struggle, and enormous resistance. Frederick Douglass, in his 1880 West India Emancipation speech stated, "Let us, then, wherever we are, whether at the North or at the South resolutely struggle on in the belief that there is a better day coming, and that we, by patience, industry, uprightness, and economy may hasten that better day."²⁵ History has shown that free Black women, in an ongoing effort to "hasten

²¹ Although Harriet Tubman is frequently mentioned with these women, because she was a run-away with a bounty on her head, she was technically not a free woman...though the argument has been made that since she was able to travel back and forth to the South - was she still a "slave"?

²² Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 27.

²³ Hine, 104.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave / My Bondage and My Freedom / Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, Henry Louis Gates, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 934.

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that better day," struggled and sacrificed everything they had. As a result, they found themselves in the middle of two different (sometimes interconnected) movements. The first was the movement by Northern abolitionists and anti-slavery groups to end the chattel slave system. This movement, which had steadily grown from the Quaker communities in Philadelphia to cities across the North, became much more "radical" after the 1829 publication of David Walker's *Appeal To the Colored Citizens of the World*.²⁶ Walker, a free Black man who had lived in North Carolina and had relocated to Boston, called for an immediate end to slavery. He wrote, "America is as much our country, as it is yours.--Treat us like men, and there is no danger, but we will all live in peace and happiness" and "The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority."²⁷ The tone and words of his pamphlet inspired Northerners and frightened Southern slaveholders. Historians argue that it may have even inspired Nat Turner's Rebellion and that it definitely led to stronger and more severe laws against teaching slaves to read and circulating anti-slave literature in the South.²⁸

Two years later, with much less fanfare but greater interest, Maria Stewart's pamphlet, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build*, was published. What's interesting to note is that unlike Walker's *Appeal* that only discussed abolition, Stewart also chose to discuss Black autonomy, economic independence and racial pride. She addressed her words to both Black and white Americans when she wrote, "Never, no, never will the chains of slavery and ignorance burst, till we become united as one, and cultivate among ourselves the pure principles of piety, morality and virtue," and,

You may kill, tyrannize, and oppress as much as you choose, until our cry shall come up before the throne of God; for I am firmly persuaded, that he will not suffer you to quell the proud, fearless and undaunted spirits of the African forever for in his own time, he is able to plead our cause against you, and to pour out upon you the ten plagues of Egypt.²⁹

As the first American woman (Black or white) to lecture publicly to an audience of both men and women, she was highly critical of Black men for not being prepared enough to assume leadership roles and she challenged Black women to claim an active role in the struggle for political, social and economic independence.³⁰ Her challenge was met just one year later, when the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, Massachusetts was

²⁶ This pamphlet, published in Boston, is one of the earliest African American authored protests against slavery and racism. <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/walkerhp.html>

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ Hine, 105

²⁹ Maria W. Stewart's *Religion And The Pure Principles Of Morality, The Sure Foundation On Which We Must Build*, http://afroamhistory.about.com/library/blmaria_stewart_religion.htm

³⁰ Hine, 106.

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founded. It was the first women's anti-slavery society ever established and all of the founders were free Black women.

The second movement was around the issue of women's rights. Although this was not a new struggle, it became interconnected with the abolitionist movement when two events happened. The first was the 1837 Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women when Black and white women sat down, declared their independence, and demanded the right to speak out on behalf of the oppressed and be heard by those who were doing the oppressing.³¹ The second event happened in 1840 when delegates of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, which was founded by Black and white women, were excluded from the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London. This event led directly to the 1848 Seneca Falls convention where Black women were unfortunately excluded again. Although Hine argues that this omission was trivial (she notes that not even Susan B. Anthony was present³²), it is important to note because during that time Black women were consistently lifting their voices, their pens, their pocketbooks and their time to further both the agendas of the anti-slavery and the women's rights movements.

In addition, these women were not only furthering both agendas but, in many instances, they were actively developing new ones as well. This group of activists included such notable women as Frances Harper, an author (*Forest Leaves*, a collection of poetry, and *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*) and anti-slavery lecturer who was born free and raised in Baltimore; Mary Ann Shadd Cary, the first Black woman to edit a newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*, which was published from 1853-1859, and who was born free to a family of political activists in Delaware; Sarah Remond, a medical doctor, anti-slavery activist and lecturer with the American Anti-Slavery Society, who was born free in Salem, Massachusetts and in 1853 filed and won a desegregation suit against the Howard Athenaeum in Boston; Fanny Marion Jackson Coppin, an educator and 1865 Oberlin graduate, was born a slave in Washington (her master was her father), purchased and freed by an aunt, and raised and educated in Massachusetts; Isabella Baumfree (née Sojourner Truth), a preacher and an anti-slavery and women's rights activist who was born a slave in 1799 and freed twenty-eight years later by New York state law, and who frequently traveled and lectured with Susan B. Anthony; Anna Murray Douglass, an agent of the Underground Railroad, member of the exclusive East Baltimore Improvement Society, the first of eight children to be born free, and wife of Frederick Douglass; and, Grace Bustill Douglass, a business owner, an anti-slavery and women's rights activist, and Vice-President of the 1837 Convention of American Women. Grace, who was born free and educated in Philadelphia, was the daughter of Cyrus Bustill,³³ the mother of teacher and fellow women's rights and anti-slavery activist Sarah Mapps Douglass, and the great-granddaughter of actor, singer, political activist Paul Bustill Robeson. Such a list is just a sampling of the hundreds of politically active Black women of the era.

For too long, history has failed to give nineteenth century Black women the credit and validity that they earned through their hard work and sacrifice. In the past, it was

³¹ Ibid., 112.

³² Ibid., 113.

³³ Bustill, who was the son of a slave, baked bread for Washington's army during the Revolutionary War and later established a successful bread, cake and biscuit business in Philadelphia.

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easier to oversimplify and make sweeping generalizations about Black women by focusing on a sample of oral history. Fortunately, scholars are beginning to rediscover and analyze a broader spectrum of sources of Black women's history, so that the truth can finally be told more fully. New, in-depth research promises to show how Black women effectively demonstrated, time and time again, how to overcome gender and racial obstacles and become effective participants in the struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

Annotated Bibliography:

Primary Sources:

We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Dorothy Sterling. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, reissued 1997.

This is a diverse, exhaustive collection that consists of letters, speech excerpts, diary entries, poetry, court testimonies, oral interviews, and newspaper articles written by and about Black women during the nineteenth century. The women profiled are from both the North and the South, are middle-class and poor, newly freed and free-born and are illiterate and college-educated. The text provides a very detailed and intimate look at the issues that Black women faced and how they chose to overcome them.

Speak Out in Thunder Tones: Letter and Other Writings by Black Northerners, 1787-1865, ed. Dorothy Sterling. New York: Da Capo Press, unabridged paperback edition 1998.

Speak Out in Thunder Tones is a collection of original papers, documents, memoirs, speeches, poems, songs, advertisements, and official documents that detail the lives and challenges of Black (mostly free-born) Northerners. It is at once an intimate and personal look at the issues (other than slavery) that Black Northerners struggled with...issues as varied as an 1830s debate on what they should be called to an 1840s fight against segregated accommodations. The writings provide a look into the rarely seen, vast and diversified nineteenth century free Black communities.

The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells, ed. Miriam DeCosta-Willis. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

This collection pulls together three different selections from the writings of Ida B. Wells. The selections are from her 1893 travel journal, her 1930 diary, and a collection of newspaper articles that she wrote during the mid-1880s. It provides a detailed insight into her life, how she saw it and how she chose to write and reflect on it.

Black Women in White America: A Documentary History. ed. Lerner, Gerda. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Lerner's comprehensive documentary collection pulls together primary sources written by and about Black women from around 1811 up until 1970. The letters, diary entries, bills of sale, speeches, newspaper articles, and transcribed witness accounts cover

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every topic from slavery to Reconstruction to the civil rights movement and beyond. The work is seamlessly woven together by Lerner's text and provides the type of record that is needed to give weight to the collective history of free-born, enslaved, and freed Black women.

Secondary Sources:

Hine, Darlene Clark and Thompson, Kathleen. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*. New York: Broadway Books, 1998.

Hine and Thompson's book is an extremely detailed chronological narrative story that traces the history and lives of African-American women from the period of indentured servitude through chattel slavery, Reconstruction and into the Civil Rights Movement. It looks at both the successes and failures associated with every movement African-American women have been involved in since the early nineteenth century including detailed accounts of the contributions to the women's rights and anti-slavery movements.

Giddings, Paula. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1984.

When and Where I Enter uses speeches, diaries, letters and other primary sources to detail the lives of Black women dealing with issues of sexism and racism from the seventeenth century up until the twentieth century. Giddings pulls information directly from the sources to comment, compare, and analyze the lives of these pioneers. She focuses her work primarily on the "heavies" of the early Black feminist movement (i.e. Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod and Fannie Lou Hamer). Although this is considered to be a pioneer book, when it is compared against the documentary collectives, it does not add a lot of new information written by the pioneers to the discourse.

Vocabulary:

Abolitionist: A person who favors the abolition (doing away with wholly; annulling; to making void) of any institution, especially slavery. Famous abolitionists include Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, James Forten, Mary Ann Carey Shadd, Charlotte Forten and the Grimke Sisters (to name a few).

Black Feminism: It is the process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to realize a humanistic vision of community. African American women's experiences with work and family during slavery and after emancipation led them to develop a specific perspective on the relationships between multiple types of oppression. Black women experienced not just racism but sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression. This struggle fostered a broader, more humanistic view of community that encouraged each person to develop his or her own individual, unique human potential. Such a community is based on notions of fairness, equality, and justice for all human beings, not just African American women. Black

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feminism's fundamental goal of creating a humanistic vision of community is more comprehensive than that of other social action movements. For example, unlike the women's movement in the United States, black feminism has not striven solely to secure equal rights for women and men, because gaining rights equal to those of black men would not necessarily lead to liberation for African American women. Instead, black feminism encompasses a comprehensive, antisexist, antiracist, and anti-elitist perspective on social change. Black feminism is a means for human empowerment rather than an end in and of itself.

Reconstruction: It is considered to be one of the most turbulent and controversial eras in American history. It began during the Civil War and ended in 1877. The national debate over Reconstruction centered on three questions:

On what terms should the defeated Confederacy be reunited with the Union?

Who should establish these terms, Congress or the President?

What should be the place of the former slaves in the political life of the South?

In the eyes of many, Reconstruction is considered to be a failure because in May 1865, President Andrew Johnson offered a pardon to all white Southerners except Confederate leaders and wealthy planters (although most of these later received individual pardons), and authorized them to create new governments. Blacks were denied any role in the process. Johnson also ordered nearly all the land in the hands of the government returned to its prewar owners - dashing black hope for economic autonomy. Members of the old Southern elite, including many who had served in the Confederate government and army, returned to power. The new legislatures passed the Black Codes, severely limiting the former slaves' legal rights and economic options so as to force them to return to the plantations as dependent laborers. Some states limited the occupations open to blacks. None allowed any blacks to vote, or provided public funds for their education.

Term Distinctions: Enslaved Africans vs. Slaves: Being "enslaved" rather than a "slave" implies that this is a situation that is forced upon someone rather than a natural inherent situation. Black vs. Afric-Americans: At this time in history, people of African ancestry (based only in the North) had been feverishly debating what to call themselves and they had agreed (somewhat) on the term "Afric-American." Since it is used interchangeably with the terms "colored," "Negro" and Afro-American, I chose to use the more recently (within the last 30 years or so) adopted term of Black. Free-born vs. Free(d): In this lesson, as an added distinction, the term "free-born" will be used to help students understand the differences between women who have

never been enslaved nor were they first-generation “free” women and women who are less than one generation removed from bondage.

Teaching Procedures:

1. As a motivational activity students should direct their attention to quotations displayed on the front board. They should be given ten minutes to do the following: interpret both statements and construct a 3-5 line statement discussing whether they think the statements would be more or less true if applied today.

Statement #1: “During my entire life, I have suffered from two disadvantages. First, that I am a woman, second that I am a Negro.” -- Fanny Jackson Marion Coppin, 1869

Statement #2: “Of my two handicaps, being female put more obstacles in my path than being black.” --Shirley Chisholm, 1949

Using a “Think-Pair-Share” structure students should discuss their answers in small groupings.

2. Provide each student with a copy of Resource Sheet #1, “Profile List and Term Distinctions.” They should be reminded to keep the resource sheet on-hand so that it can be used in during the group investigation.

Notify the students that they will be working in groups of four, to conduct a historical investigation into the lives of 19th Century Black Women in order to determine the types of issues they dealt with and the solutions they used to solve them. They will be analyzing primary and secondary sources (if necessary, review the definitions of both) including speeches, diary entries, pictures and poetry.

They should then be instructed to choose a recorder (to record the findings); a reporter (to speak out for the group); a task manager (to handle all disputes or disagreements) and a time keeper.

3. Hand out a copy of Resource Sheet #2, “Conditions of Free and Enslaved Women: Issues & Solutions,” to each group.

Mix copies of the following resource sheets to insure that no group is operating with the exactly the same documents and distribute a different set to each group.

Resource Sheet #3, “The House of Bondage”
Resource Sheet #4, “The House of Bondage Poetry”
Resource Sheet #5, “Autobiography of a Female Slave”
Resource Sheet #6, “Early Spring”
Resource Sheet #7, “Resurgam”
Resource Sheet #8, “Advertisements”
Resource Sheet #9, “Mutual Benefit Societies”

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Resource Sheet #10, "The Literary Souvenir"

Resource Sheet #11, "Practice school teachers at Howard University"

Resource Sheet #12, "Executive board of Women's League, Newport, R.I."

Resource Sheet #13, "Negro homes - homes of poorer classes, Chattanooga."

Resource Sheet #14, "Officers of Tobacco Trade Union, Petersburg, Va."

Resource Sheet #15, "Eva Martin, ex-slave, Beaumont"

Resource Sheet #16, "Old Aunt Julia Ann Jackson, age 102"

Resource Sheet #17, "An African – From A Daguerreotype"

Resource Sheet #18, "Slave Auction in the South"

Resource Sheet #19, "Gordon Under Medical Inspection"

Resource Sheet #20, "NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS 1909"

Resource Sheet #21, "MARY CHURCH TERRELL"

Distribute a copy of Resource Sheet #22, "Investigating Primary Sources," to each student and review it in relationship to the completion of Resource Sheet #2.

4. Provide students 30 minutes to go through each of their primary and secondary sources and complete the following:

- A) Using Resource Sheet #2 and Resource Sheet #22, they should discuss all of their sources;
- B) The recorder should highlight and write down the key arguments from the texts or the key inferences drawn from the photos;
- C) After reviewing all materials, they should then decide which were the three most important issues and have their reporter prepare to present their points (and explanations) to the class.

While the students are working on their historical investigation, circulate throughout the groups to make sure that they pulling out the key information from the primary and secondary sources. Review Resource Sheet #2 to insure that they are reading the sources correctly.

5. After all groups have completed their respective presentation, ask:

Did any group made a point that would either change their position, support it or strengthen it?

If so, this point (stress that they can only add one point) should be added as an addendum to their findings and written on the chart paper.

6. To assess student understanding have each group write on the back of Resource Sheet #2 the positive and negative aspects of the selected solutions employed by the feminists.
7. Extension activities can include:

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- Have students rate the primary sources used from most effective to least effective in giving a full picture about the obstacles that black women faced during the nineteenth century.
- Students can be encouraged to keep a daily journal for the next month so that they can chart what they have learned about themselves, the world around them and each other. These entries could be shared at the end of the month.
- Have the students pretend to be protestors against the Women's Suffrage Movement meeting and create anti-suffrage posters and slogans.
- Students can compare an unabridged entry from a slave narrative (discussing what life was like for a woman on a plantation) and compare it to the speeches written by Ida B. Wells. They can then present a short presentation detailing how life was different for women in the North vs. the South.
- Let the students pretend to stage a Suffrage Meeting with representatives from the North and from the South. They should discuss what type of issues they are facing and how they think the organization should handle it.
- Students can stage a mock debate between Frederick Douglass (who believed that women should only play a limited role in the abolitionist struggle) and Sojourner Truth (who argued that women were the backbone to any successful abolitionist or suffrage movement)

Primary Source Annotation:

Sterling, Dorothy, ed. *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, reissued 1997.

The information culled from transcribed oral interviews, diaries, letters or hand-written notes or papers are easy to read and understand (with some guidance by the teacher). The bulk of the information used is from a number of lesser-known black feminists.

**The Library of Congress. "The African-American Mosaic."
<<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>> (accessed August 2004)**

This website is designed to be used as a resource guide for the study of black history and culture. It offers among other things photographs, articles, advertisements, letters and book titles about the lives of abolitionists and black women during the nineteenth century. It is extremely detailed and students will be able to use these documents to study historical documents and draw conclusions and inferences.

**The University of North Carolina
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/albert/albert.html> (accessed August 2004)**

This university website provides a detailed collection of books of poetry, biographies and essays written by nineteenth century free and freed black women. It is extremely comprehensive and user friendly. Students should be encouraged to use this site as a resource for further information.

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