

## Colored Conventions Project Teaching Guide for K-12

### EXHIBIT:

## What Did They Eat? Where Did They Stay? Black Boarding Houses and the Colored Conventions Movement

Prepared by Marc Blanc

Reviewed by Denise Burgher, Janel Moore Almond, and Takiyah Jackson

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[\*What did they eat? Where did they stay? Black Boarding Houses and the Colored Conventions Movement.\*](#)

curated by Anna Lacy, Jenn Briggs, and Psyche Williams-Forson, University of Maryland

### A. RESOURCES

#### **Keyword Definitions (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Black Boardinghouse**---Black-run residences where conventions delegates would lodge, eat, discuss, and network with each other.

**Conviviality**---An atmosphere of lively camaraderie and conversation, often around meals. Women's work in boarding houses made this atmosphere possible. Conviviality at boarding houses meant that conversations and connections took place even outside of the convention halls.

**Humility of Things**---Describes the social phenomenon of certain objects, people, and actions being confined to the background of our social lives and cultural memories. Cooking and cleaning equipment and the people who use them often appear marginally in the background of narratives while other work, such as the political activity in conference halls, takes up the foreground.

**Women's Domestic Labor**---the work of running boardinghouses, including cooking and cleaning, was usually done by women. This labor is often "invisible" and sparsely documented, but it was vitally important to the conventions and to Black political and cultural life. Women's domestic labor was not removed from the political debates at convention halls, for female hosts and chefs could use their menus for political expression, and women almost certainly participated in political conversation in their dining rooms and refreshment halls.

#### **People (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Thomas Dorsey**---Born a slave, became one of the most successful restaurant owners in Philadelphia thanks to his refined pallet and skills as a host and businessman

**Lewis Hayden**---Born a slave, went on to own a clothing store in Beacon Hill. His business and home were centers of Boston abolitionist activity and Black political and cultural life. Hayden was active in politics, as well.

**Harriet Hayden**---Ran a boarding house from the Haydens' home, which brought the Haydens into deeper contact with many influential Black figures who would stay at their boarding house where they developed existing activist and social networks

**Amie Long**---Ran a refreshment room out of her home near one of the convention halls. Long's menu exemplifies how female cooks could use their culinary skills as a form of political expression.

**The Still Family**---William and Letitia Still ran a boarding house that was also one of the most active Underground Railroad stations in Philadelphia. Their house was well known and highly regarded in the abolitionist community, and Letitia Still was especially commended for her tireless work caring for her lodgers and taking in Underground Railroad passengers.

**Mary Ann Shadd Cary**---The first Black woman newspaper editor in North America. A journalist and activist, she wrote endorsements and editorials about Black boarding houses, including articles calling for the prohibition of alcohol at boarding houses.

#### **Places (minimum 2 to 5)**

**African Meeting House**---Also in Beacon Hill, it is the oldest Black church edifice in the United States and was one of the most active sites for the free Black community.

**Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts**---Vibrant Black neighborhood and site of 1859 & 1865 conventions and the Haydens, whose boarding house was a center of Black political activity.

**Cleveland, Ohio**---location of 1848 and 1865 conventions

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**---location of the Still family's boardinghouse.

#### **Key Texts (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Amie Long's Menu**---advertised in the *Delaware County American*.

**Boarding House Advertisements**---Often appeared in the Black Press, especially around convention times. Advertisements tended to include endorsements from Black public figures and sometimes menu samples like Amie Long's.

**Contending Forces (1900) by Pauline Hopkins**---This novel describes the experience of boarding house labor, especially cooking and cleaning.

#### **Predominant Themes (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Women's Domestic Labor**---care-work that women did in boarding houses, often traditionally overshadowed by the political work of men. However, the exhibit shows that domestic labor was not only vitally important, but also political.

**Travel and Geography**---Delegates traveled far distances to participate in conventions. This necessitated Black boarding houses where delegates could reserve short-term stays at affordable prices in a community environment.

**Private Spaces and Public Spaces**---We often think of the private and public spheres as separate, with the former being the location of domestic work and the latter the location of politically and economically

productive labor. However, the border between private and public space is blurry if such a border even exists at all. Women cooks and hosts entered political discussions through their domestic labor in the private space of the boardinghouse. Political debate and networking did not only occur at the public space of the convention hall, but also in women-run boarding houses and refreshment rooms, with the active participation of female domestic workers.

**Food as Expression**---Menus at Black boarding houses were full of political and cultural meaning. Cooks like Amie Long selected specific foods in order to express Black identity, and they prepared food in ways that connected them to their ancestral past. Through food, the women who could not formally participate as delegates in the conventions found ways to enter the political discussion and claim their space in the African American tradition. Food also exposed individuals to meals that were unique to certain regions as well as represented status . These meals reflected the diversity amongst African Americans as well as their solidarity and commitment to one another.

**Points of Interactivity**

<b>Exhibit Page Name + Link</b>	<b>Data Visualization Name</b>	<b>Visualization Type</b>
<a href="#">Where Did They Travel From?</a>	“Attendees” maps	Interactive and annotated map
<a href="#">Where Did They Stay?</a>	Boardinghouse Advertisements	Interactive and annotated map
<a href="#">Where Did They Stay?</a>	Inside the Boardinghouse	Interactive story map
<a href="#">What Did They Eat?</a>	Mrs. Amie Long’s Interactive Menu	Interactive story map
<a href="#">The Haydens and Boston</a>	Beacon Hill Neighborhood	Interactive and annotated map

**Further Reading on the Stills and the Haydens**

[Underground Railroad: The William Still Story \(PBS\)](#)

[William Still: An African American Abolitionist \(Digitized archival material, Temple University\)](#)

[Lewis and Harriet Hayden House \(National Park Service\)](#)

[The Harriet Hayden Albums \(Digitized archival material, Boston Athenaeum\)](#)

## B. METHODS

To successfully teach these exhibits we strongly encourage teachers to explicitly teach the following methods used to tell more complete stories of African American, African Diaspora history and American:

### Historiography

1. What is **historiography**?

*Historiography can be understood as the history of history. A historiographical piece or essay discusses how history has been written over time and tracks the debates historians grappled with in a certain field. (Included is a link to video by Study.com; the first two [2] minutes of the video are free.)*

2. How can students practice historiography as they study this exhibit?

3. How does historiography get written? Who gets to write history?

*Suggested Exercise: Have students discuss the historiographical contributions of each exhibit.*

### Primary Documents

1. What are **primary documents**?

2. How do we **research and analyze** primary documents?

3. Is there a **tool** that we can use to help us think about primary documents?

4. What is the proper MLA **citation** practice for primary documents?

*Suggested Exercise: Students must locate, review and use the following primary documents:*

- See the [Boardinghouse Advertisements Interactive](#) for resources.

### Data Visualization

1. What is **data visualization**?

*The act of showing data (information) using images such as pictures, maps, graphs, drawings. This [infographic](#) is a good example. (Source: Simon Rogers. *The Guardian* newspaper, International Edition. Friday, March 7th, 2014)*

2. What does **digital data visualization** allow you to see and analyze differently than data presented in textbooks?

*Suggested Exercise: Have students create an interactive menu representing the importance of certain foods within another era or context.*

### Attribution and Citation

1. Why is it important to cite sources?

2. What information does citation communicate?

*Suggested Exercise: Students will learn to accurately and appropriately cite this exhibit and the works referenced within, including:*

- [Primary documents](#) within the exhibit
  - (eg. [Advertisement](#) for groceries tailored to African Americans)

- [Secondary documents](#) within the exhibit
  - (eg. Map and place descriptions written by the creator of the exhibit)

## C. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

### 1. What is the argument or main idea of the exhibit?

The main idea of [What did they eat? Where did they stay? Black Boarding Houses and the Colored Conventions Movement](#) is that boardinghouses and the invisible labor that kept them running were politically significant aspects of the Colored Conventions movement. While biases and lack of documentation have resulted in the marginalization of boardinghouses and the largely female labor that went on inside of them, this exhibit shows that these supposedly private spaces were vibrant centers of Black political discussion and cultural practice. The contributions of Black women are legible in their culinary labor and the conviviality that their boarding houses provided.

### 2. Who are the subjects of the exhibit?

Boarding houses owners, primarily, the [Hayden](#) and [Still](#) families, as well as cooks and restaurateurs such as [Amie Long](#) and [Thomas Dorsey](#).

### 3. What are the topics of the exhibit?

The exhibit explores: the [Colored Conventions Movement](#), Black boarding houses, women's domestic labor (especially [cooking](#)), the Underground Railroad, women's political engagement, Black business ownership

### 4. What is the timeline of the exhibit?

Roughly 1848-1930. The earliest convention mentioned is Cleveland 1848, and the exhibit extends to boarding houses in the [1920s](#) and 1930s.

### 5. What are the major events of the exhibit?

The Underground Railroad, [developments in cooking technology in the mid-nineteenth century](#)

### 6. Where do these major events take place?

These events take place in the northern United States, specifically Cleveland, Boston, and Philadelphia.

### 7. What are other places/things of significance discussed in this exhibit?

The Black Press, [Black churches](#), Pauline Hopkins' novel *Contending Forces* (1900), Technological advancements like the stove

## D. QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

**8. Now that you have learned more about these events, why does this exhibit matter?**

This exhibit expands the sites of political engagement at the Colored Conventions from the convention hall to the boardinghouse. This expansion of physical space from public spaces to private spaces allows us to expand our knowledge of who participated in the conventions. This expansion reveals the critically important roles Black women played as boarding house owners. These entrepreneurial women contributed to the political discussions and cultural legacy of the Conventions movement through their domestic labor. The Colored Conventions movement tracks the development of American citizenship as Black Americans who were disenfranchised demanded, shaped and defined who an American citizen was and why. Simultaneously, African Americans developed parallel political practices and structures which intervened in the systems barred them by race while creating independent Black controlled institutions. This exhibit on boarding houses demonstrates that we must be vigilant of who and what gets erased or marginalized even, or especially, in research that seeks to foreground people who have been historically relegated to the margins.

**9. Why do these events matter?**

These events matter because without Black boarding houses, delegates would not have been able to travel to the Colored Conventions. Moreover, boarding houses contributed to the work of the conventions by providing spaces where delegates could further discuss and network with each other as well with the people who were not able to participate in the conventions as formal delegates, particularly the women who ran and worked in the boarding houses. Black women also utilized their skills as homemakers to influence policy and ideas, a tactic that will continue to be used later on.

**E. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

The prompts below in purple are from the Exhibit, [\*What did they eat? Where did they stay? Black Boarding Houses and the Colored Conventions Movement.\*](#)

**1. How does this exhibit help fill gaps in the following?**

- Black women's contributions and political engagement
- Documentation of black history
- The Colored Conventions movement itself

**2. How does this exhibit create a richer context for the following?**

- Black political practice
- The Black Press
- Black intra-community dynamics

- Black culinary labor/food
- The Underground Railroad

**3. How does this exhibit address or intervene in the historiography of the following themes?**

- Women's participation in the CC movement
- Black business and property ownership
- Advertising and consumer culture (think the section on food preparation)

## **F. REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- 1. What stood out for you the most in reviewing and studying this exhibit?**
- 2. What did you find most exciting about what you learned from this exhibit?**
- 3. Why does this exhibit matter?**
- 4. How is food important to your family or culture? Are there specific meals that hold significance in certain contexts?**

## **G. STANDARDS**

Standards are taken from the [Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies](#) and [Writing](#) in grades 11 and 12. *Note: Teachers should use these standards as a guide and align their lessons with the specific standards for their individual state.*

### **Key Ideas and Details:**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3**

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### **Craft and Structure:**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5**

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6**

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7**

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8**

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9**

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.