

Colored Conventions Project Teaching Guide for K-12

EXHIBIT:

Working for Higher Education: Advancing Black Women's Rights in the 1850's

Prepared by Nakisha Whittington

Reviewed by Denise Burgher and Janel Moore Almond

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[*Working for Higher Education: Advancing Black Women's Rights in the 1850's*](#), curated by Sharla Fett, Occidental College, and David Kim, University of Delaware, in consultation with Kabria Baumgartner, University of New Hampshire

A. RESOURCES

Keyword Definitions (minimum 2 to 5)

1831 National Colored Convention---This convention first introduced a manual labor college for African American male youth.

1853 National Colored Convention--- At the 1853 National Colored Convention in Rochester, a plan was introduced for a manual labor school that served African American men and women.

Gender Politics---Ongoing debate about the roles and relation of men and women in society. These roles are based on assumptions underlying the expectations of gender performance.

Manual Labor College--- A type of school launched during the antebellum period in the U.S. (1825-1860) designed for men to engage in mechanical and agriculture trade skills.

National Council of Colored People---was an institutional body that met every six months to continue the work of the Colored Conventions. Similar to how U.S. senators were appointed during this time, two representatives were chosen by each state's delegates from the delegates in attendance; however two representatives were also elected by the Black citizens of each state, so a state was represented by four people. As part of the Council, different committees were tasked with separate agendas, which they ultimately reported back to the Council.

The American Industrial School---Proposed by the Committee on Manual Labor School in 1854 to serve students of both sexes in manual labor skills, similar to the Manual Labor College.

People (minimum 2 to 5)

[Peter H. Clark](#)

[William Howard Day](#)

[Prior Foster](#)

[Amos Noë Freeman](#)

[Milton M. Holland](#)

[Charles H. Langston](#)

[Mary Leary Langston](#)

[Caroline Richards Morel](#)

[Junius C. Morel](#)
[Charles Lewis Reason](#)
[Lucie Stanton Day Sessions](#)
[Susan Paul Smith](#)
[Barbara Ann Steward](#)
[George B. Vashon](#)
[Frances A. Williams](#)

Places (minimum 2 to 5)

Athens County, OH---Site of The Albany Manual Labor Academy which was founded in 1847 in Athens County, Ohio. Following the closing of the Albany Manual Labor College University in 1862, Black educator and activist Thomas Jefferson Ferguson and other prominent Black Ohioans came together to establish the Albany Enterprise University in Athens County, Ohio.

Philadelphia, PA---Site of the 1831 National Colored Convention where a manual labor college was proposed for Black boys and men.

Rochester, NY---Site of the 1853 National Colored Convention. A manual labor college for both Black men and women was proposed during this convention.

Whitestown, NY---Location of the Oneida Institute which was founded in 1827. The Oneida Institute was one of the original schools founded upon the idea of manual labor and higher-level education for men.

Woodstock, MI---Site of The Woodstock Manual Labor Institute which was established in 1844.

Key Texts (minimum 2 to 5)

“Colored National Council,” *The Liberator*, July 27, 1855---Written by William Nell, this text provides an account of the National Council proceedings that affirmatively adopted the Industrial School report (but with only seven of thirteen in favor) in the July 27, 1855 edition of *The Liberator*.

“From Our New York Correspondent,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 10 August 1858---This document shares insight into the oppositional arguments regarding the Manual Labor College .

“Industrial College,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 25 May 1855---This article explores the advantages and disadvantages of building a school of manual labor in the form of a report on a committee discussion. *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*.

“Letter to Mrs. Stowe,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 2 December 1853---In this March 1853 letter to Mrs. Stowe, Frederick Douglass lays out the argument for an Industrial College meant to elevate the economic condition of free African Americans.

“Progress of Equality”--- Written by William H. Day in response to the Manual Labor College plan proposed at the National Colored Convention held in Rochester a year earlier. This article sheds new light on the Rochester convention proceedings.

“Resolutions of the Rhode Island State Council,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, April 28, 1854--- Editorial written by John Waugh and H.W. Foster of the Rhode Island Council with regards to the Industrial College.

Predominant Themes (minimum 2 to 5)

Black Male Activism in Antebellum U.S.- African American men spearheaded the Colored Conventions, they were aware of the dominant trends in men’s and women’s higher education, and they were almost always in dialogue with African American women thinkers.

Black Organizing-Discussions about African American education dominated national Colored Conventions in the pre-Civil War era. African American activists believed that basic and advanced schooling would bring about social, political, and racial equality.

Gender Politics Regarding Higher Education for Women- Sex-segregation was the norm in American higher education in the antebellum era. White men benefitted from the growth of colleges and academies while white women enjoyed the expansion of female seminaries and academies. Colleges in New England occasionally enrolled a few African American men just as female seminaries in the free states and territories occasionally enrolled a few African American women. Though the manual labor school foundered, it was not because of the question of educating women, but rather the question of resources and the idea of racial self-segregation. Though the education of women was by no means settled by the 1850s, this shift reflects the ever-evolving nature of gender politics in free Black communities in the antebellum Northeast. At the same time, Black leaders were increasingly encouraging Black women to attain an education and engage in community activism rather than emphasizing domestic roles.

Manual Labor System and Economic Advancement-African Americans often linked the pursuit of higher education on the manual labor platform to economic prosperity and racial equality.

Points of Interactivity

Exhibit Page Name + Link	Data Visualization Name	Visualization Type
Delegate Roll and Call Signers	Call Signers by City and State	Interactive and annotated map
News Coverage in the White Press	Coverage in White Newspapers	Interactive map with news clippings
Biographies	Life Maps of Key Delegates and Associated Women	Interactive piktochart and annotated map

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, and American history:

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 section of the 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 [News Coverage in the White Press](#) in the section of the exhibit for documents.

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 choose one data visualization in the exhibit and narrate the story it tells, or teachers may encourage students to create their own visualizations based on their own research or the data provided.

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. [Letter from Frederick Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe](#) arguing for the establishment of an Industrial College.)
- Secondary documents within the exhibit (eg. Text in exhibit that discusses [News Coverage in the Black Press](#) regarding Manual Labor College initiative.)

C. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

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

The main idea of [*Working for Higher Education: Advancing Black Women's Rights in the 1850's*](#) is to show how Black women asserted their place in the manual labor movement during the antebellum period. Discussions about African American education dominated national Colored Conventions in the pre-Civil War era. African American activists believed that basic and advanced schooling would bring about social, political, and racial equality. Yet these schools often only targeted African American men. A manual labor college for African American male youth was proposed at the 1831 National Colored Convention in Philadelphia. At the 1853 National Colored Convention in Rochester, a plan was introduced for a manual labor school that served African American men and women. Although many manual labor schools closed due to lack of resources, Black men and women continued their educational activism and created other avenues for other African Americans to gain an education.

2. Who are the subjects of the exhibit?

The subjects of the exhibit include Frederick Douglass, primarily, [“Promotion of the Industrial Collegiate Initiative”](#), William Howard Day [“William Howard Day’s Response to the Manual Labor College Plan”](#), [Peter H. Cark](#), [Prior Foster](#), [Amos Noe Freeman](#), [Milton M. Holland](#), [Charles H. Langston](#), [Mary Leary Langston](#), [Caroline Richards Morel](#), [Junius C Morel](#), [Charles Lewis Reason](#), [Lucie Stanton Day Sessions](#), [Susan Paul Smith](#), [Barbara Ann Steward](#), [George B Vashon](#), [Frances A. Williams](#).

3. What are the topics of the exhibit?

The exhibit explores the [Colored Conventions Movement](#), [Black Gender Politics and Higher Education](#), Antebellum Black Activism, [Manual Labor Initiative](#), [Black Print and Media Coverage](#).

4. What is the timeline of the exhibit?

The exhibit captures events from 1827-1853. The earliest primary source included provides images from the [Oneida Institute of New York](#), founded in 1827.

5. What are the major events of the exhibit?

The major events of the exhibit are the [1853 National Colored Convention in Rochester](#) and the [Proposal of Co-Ed Manual Labor Colleges](#).

6. Where do these major events take place?

The events take place across the northeastern states within the United States.

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

The Black Press, [Autobiographical Depiction of Advocates Supporting Blacks and Higher Education, Debate and Dissent within Black Organizing](#)

D. QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

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

This exhibit matters because it reveals in detail maps that show cities where convention committee members and call signers resided and their travel routes to conventions. A survey of news coverage reflecting the debate over the 1853 committee's proposal for a manual labor college and Frederick Douglass' proposal for the American Industrial School. Biographical entries on people and institutions related to Black educational activism and antebellum manual labor schools. These biographies highlight the centrality of education in antebellum Black activism during a time of systemic segregation, inequality, and outright denial of education in northern and midwestern urban public schools.

9. Why do these events matter?

It is important to understand the progression and plans involved in social justice movements that occurred during the 1850's. The American Industrial School plan implicated both African American men and women in the struggle for black uplift. Instead of being confined to menial employment, African Americans had to become producers and skilled workers. What characterized Douglass' plan, then, was the potential for African American economic growth made possible by educating African American men and women to enter the marketplace despite the dissent that was voiced during the Conventions. As the Civil War drew to a close, new colleges, academies, and institutes were established that borrowed some of the tenets of Douglass' plan such as coeducation and the industrial curricular model. A new era of African American higher education emerged.

E. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The prompts below in purple are from the Exhibit, [Working for Higher Education: Advancing Black Women's Rights in the 1850's](#)

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

- Gender Politics in relation to Higher Education
- Documentation of Black history
- The Colored Conventions movement

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

- Black print culture
 - The Black Press
 - Black intra-community dynamics
3. How does this exhibit address or intervene in the historiography of the following themes?
- Women's participation in the Colored Conventions movement
 - Black Political Activism
 - Black Press
 - Black Educational leadership

E. 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. Why was education such a significant part of Black political and social reform during the 19th century?
5. How do the arguments in support of manual education provide a foundation for the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the later work of leaders such as Booker T. Washington?

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

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Teaching Guide for K-12 - *Working for Higher Education*

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.