



## ***Black History IS American History***

### ***Lesson Plan***

Adapt this one-period **lesson plan** for any grade level and follow it with a simple and powerful **service project** on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The **reflection** brings learning and service impact together.

#### **Anticipatory Set:**

**For older students**, ask, "What are the stories from American history that define who we are?" Brainstorm a list of major historical events like Native American history, the Revolutionary War and Declaration of Independence, the Civil War, The Civil Rights Movement, the Suffragist Movement, and more recent events like 9/11 and mass shootings.

**For younger students**, say, "Our country is made up of people from all over the world whose families settled here, were brought here or were already here. Just like our families tell stories of our past, people in our country have histories, and together the stories are all of OUR histories."

**Part One:** (10 minutes) Our history is philanthropic.

Tell the students one of the things that is shared in American culture is *philanthropy*. From the Native Americans' ethic of community, to the Pilgrims collaborating to survive, to suffragists advocating for women's rights, to survivors helping victims of disaster, our instinct is to come together for the common good.

- Define philanthropy as "giving time, talent, or treasure and taking action for the common good."

People from all faiths, economic levels, and ethnic backgrounds in America have a desire to work together for the common good and help others.

#### **Variation for older students:**

Look for attitudes and actions of philanthropy in the brainstormed list of history above. Discuss examples of ways people have acted for the common good.

**Part Two:** (30 minutes)

Some American historical events, like the events of The Civil Rights Movement, are our shared stories that are primarily told African American voices. Students learn about an influential black American philanthropist and teach the story to others.

The students select one person from the following list or other prominent African Americans. They work in small groups to research the person and then share what they learned and have a discussion as a whole class. What is the contribution, impact, and role they played in the civil society sector in history?

Note: Younger students learn about the same person as a class. Older students each choose a different person for their group to research.

1. John Lewis
2. Martin Luther King
3. Thurgood Marshall



4. Shirley Chisholm
5. Madam CJ Walker
6. Ruby Bridges
7. Langston Hughes
8. Maya Angelou
9. James Weldon Johnson
10. Henrietta Lacks

Students research and highlight one act, impact, or achievement of the individual, especially one that benefits the common good. Each group will share information and a picture of the person.

Reflect as a whole class on what they learned while reading about black philanthropists in history:

1. How these people impacted society and helped us all.
2. Why their stories are our stories as a country. Black history is our history.
3. Why the stories of diverse Americans considered OUR stories, even when they don't share my faith or ethnicity?

## Service Project

*This service project may be started in class and completed in subsequent days, either with the class or with friends and family.*

### Project Overview:

The students create a pop-up museum with stories of different African Americans illustrated visually and with facts. A pop-up museum is an informative multimedia illustration of events, people, or things that occurred around a theme or time. The pop-up museum may be shared with others to teach our story of people working for the common good in our shared history.

### Procedure:

1. Students work in groups to create one piece for the pop-up museum.
2. They collect and create illustrations using a variety of media, like a 3-D collage. These may include headlines, artifacts, articles, pictures, short stories and activities to tell the story of their person in African American History.
3. In small groups they put the pieces together to create a display for the museum in poster form or in a diorama, or other creative display.
4. The pop-up museum will be flexible enough to travel to different venues for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
5. Senior citizens, elementary, middle school, and high school students are all great audiences for the pop-up museum.
6. The students may be docents who describe their parts of the pop-up museum.

### Extensions

- Read and report on the graphic novel *March* by John Lewis (or online accounts)
- Read and report on *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles (or online accounts)

## Reflection:

Follow the project with a brief reflection.

- Why are the stories of diverse Americans considered OUR stories, even when they don't share my faith or ethnicity?
- How does the civil society sector act as a tool for change?

**Follow-up:** Discuss what they'd like to do next to continue impacting their community.

