

Title of Session: Social Studies Forum: PBS African American Lives

Moderator: Michael Hutchison

Guest Speaker: Jenny Bradbury

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DavidCar: Yes, I am taking the curriculum way out of order to focus on the elections

JennySB: Good for you, David. It's such an exciting time.

MichaelH: Hi, David

MichaelH: David, I just caught the tail end of what you were saying... so you're doing an election unit?

DavidCar: yes, my civics course is a semester course so 1st semester just finished with it but the new students wouldn't get it until May which is too late so I am taking the scope backwards.

MichaelH: cool... are you familiar with C-SPAN Classroom?

JennySB: You might want to check out NewsHour Extra, too. They just re-launched their site and have some good election-related lesson plans.

DavidCar: yes, I use those video clips to emphasize the differences in the candidates. Too bad they are dropping out like flies. The more the easier to show political differences

DavidCar: Thanks Jenny I haven't been out there in a while.

MichaelH: there's another site in the C-SPAN family, called "Campaign Network".. they keep a lot of those old candidate commercials

MichaelH: good idea about Newshour Extra, Jenny

MichaelH: David, you might check the new issue of Cable in the Classroom magazine, too... there's several stories about campaign resources that might be helpful

DavidCar: That is one of my favorite parts of the campaign cycle Michael.

JennySB: The folks at NewsHour are also working on a site called the.vote. It will launch in the spring and have an array of news stories created for students.

JennySB: The news stories will be in video clip format.

DavidCar: Wow, I have a lot more help now. Where were you two months ago :)

MichaelH: Welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum.

MichaelH: Tonight's topic should be of great interest, especially with the climax of Black History Month, as well as the recent discussion about the historical civil rights movement that has been going on in the presidential campaign

MichaelH: Tonight's topic deals with the PBS series, African-American Lives II, which we'll discuss resources, ways to use it in the classroom, and the impact it can have on our students

MichaelH: But...

MichaelH: before we start our session, let's do some introductions. Would everyone tell us who you are, what you teach, and where you're located geographically?

BJB2: I'm in Pennsylvania and teach remedial communication

MichaelH is a social studies teacher in southwestern Indiana, and the newly elected President of the Indiana Computer Educators

DavidCar: I teach civics and computer science in Cadillac, Michigan

DavidW: I'm David Weksler. I'm support teachers using technology especially for math education. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

JennySB: I'm in Virginia and work at PBS. Before this, I taught HS English and Humanities in Brooklyn, New Delhi and western Mass.

DavidW cheers for the new President of Indiana CUE

MichaelH: see you at NECC, David!

DavidW smiles

MichaelH: Before we start our discussion, a couple of quick housekeeping notes...

MichaelH: First, does everyone know how to DETACH the chat window?

DavidCar: done

MichaelH: cool

MichaelH: next, Jenny will be showing us some web-based resources. You can click on the links, and those resources open in a new web window

MichaelH: if you are using a pop-up blocker, you should disable it, or hold down the CTRL key while you click the link

JennySB: So, I guess I should start by finding out if any of you watched the first season of African American Lives and/or used the associated online resources.

MichaelH: I'm a bit familiar with the series, Jenny, but that's about it

DavidW remembers watching some of the programs from the first season

DavidCar: watched a couple episodes but haven't used the web resources

JennySB: Okay, here's an overview. The program is hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. who works with 12 African Americans (11 celebrities and one "average Jane") to trace their roots using DNA and historical documents

JennySB: The celebrities this season include Maya Angelou, Morgan Freeman, Chris Rock, Tina Turner...It's a great group, and by all accounts the stories are even more compelling than those revealed last season.

JennySB: One interesting addition this season, besides the average citizen, is an individual whose father "passed" as White and who didn't realize until she was an adult that she had African American roots.

MichaelH: Wow!

JennySB: In terms of classroom use, the show can be a great way to introduce a unit on genealogy or DNA analysis, and it also offers great opportunities to teach about the value of material culture and primary sources.

JennySB: Of course, it also helps students examine African American history and culture.

JennySB: I told Michael earlier that I'm very glad we didn't host this forum yesterday, because the web site just launched this afternoon!

JennySB: The URL is <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/index.html>

DavidW: First episode of the program is on tonight in the NYC area

JennySB: Are you sure? I think they might be rerunning last season. The first episode of the new season is supposed to air on the 6th.

JennySB: The second episode airs on the 13th.

MichaelH: it's not on here, Jenny

DavidCar: I hope more stations replay the last season

MichaelH: America's Ballroom Challenge, Eden at the End of the World, and American Masters

DavidW: Sorry...they are doing the episode with Oprah, tonight

JennySB: Gotcha. On the 6th and the 13th, they'll be airing two back to back episodes; the program is 4 hours in total

JennySB: My favorite resource on the web site is the "Analyzing the Evidence" interactive which challenges users to test their skills at analyzing primary sources. It's a great "game" for your students to use.

JennySB: There's also a terrific timeline that highlights important events in African American history.

JennySB: And there are 3 lesson plans.

JennySB: The first lesson plan, entitled "Gift to the Future" is designed for use with middle school students and focuses on material culture and strategies for preserving important documents and artifacts. It engages students in designing time capsules to preserve the material culture of today for future generations.

JennySB: The second lesson plan, entitled "Freedom to Fight," is designed for use in grades 9-12 and focuses on the role African Americans played in the Civil War.

JennySB: One of the most moving portions of the film is Chris Rock talking about discovering that his ancestry fought in the Civil War.

JennySB: He said he never realized before that anyone in his family had done anything that important and if he'd known he might be a different person today.

MichaelH: Jenny was the segment with Chris Rock featured in a promo on the film? I think I've seen that segment (or part of it)

JennySB: Pretty powerful stuff.

JennySB: Chris Rock was on Oprah talking about the program, so there's been a lot of buzz around that.

MichaelH: maybe that's where I saw it... Suzie made me watch it :)

JennySB: Sure...

JennySB: The third lesson plan, entitled “Rationalizing Race in US History,” is designed to help students in grades 10-12 understand the nature and use of race-based categorizations and their impact over time.

MichaelH: o O (she's not on the computer, so I can blame her)

JennySB: That one is really interesting, and I can say that since I didn't write it. Actually, all 3 lesson plans are really good.

JennySB: And I'm thrilled to say that they incorporate video clips from the show, all of which are downloadable.

DavidCar: I like the celebrity chosen. I think my students will relate to them and the three lessons will help them understand better.

JennySB: I totally agree that the celebrity angle is a great way to invite kids into this content.

MichaelH: Jenny, who wrote the lessons?

JennySB: Three curriculum developers at Thirteen/WNET, the producing station.

JennySB: If you go to the site, each lesson plan tells you precisely who wrote it.

MichaelH: thanks

JennySB: Thirteen is also collaborating with other public television stations across the country to host a series of professional development workshops for teachers.

JennySB: Participating stations include WVIZ in Cleveland (Jan. 31), WHYY in Philadelphia (Feb. 2), WTVI in Charlotte (Feb. 5), WJCT in Jacksonville (Feb. 8), KETC in St. Louis (Feb. 9) and GPB in Atlanta (Feb. 13). For details, please contact your local station.

JennySB: I know this is a lot to process. Are there any questions or comments?

DavidW: It's interesting that Henry Louis Gates has founded a company that offers DNA testing and genealogy reports to the public

MichaelH: Jenny, do you know if there will be any professional development workshops in the central/southern Indiana region?

JennySB: Yeah. Ancestry.com is also a sponsor on this program. If you all aren't

familiar with their site, I highly recommend checking it out.

JennySB: No, only the ones at the stations I listed, Michael. Sorry!

JennySB: You can still get all of the educational resources on the site, though.

JennySB: I also encourage you to visit our Media Infusion blog – <http://www.pbs.org/teachers/mediainfusion/> -- in February, where Carmenita Higginbotham, a professor in the Art department at UVA, will be sharing some excellent resources to broaden students' appreciation and understanding of African American culture and history.

DavidCar: It's too bad they couldn't put the PD online for anyone who couldn't make it to the other cities :(

JennySB: She offers some really interesting insights from her own teaching experience about the challenges and rewards of addressing issues of identity and race in the classroom.

JennySB: David, I totally agree. I've been talking to them about the possibility of taking video of the sessions and posting it online, but I'm not sure whether or not that will pan out.

MichaelH: Actually, David, they could even use TAPPED IN to do some of the P.D. stuff

MichaelH: I don't know about video streams, but they could easily do the discussion.

JennySB: Yes, I invited the folks from Thirteen to join us here tonight, but they're on the road. My guess is they're in Cleveland tonight prepping for tomorrow.

DavidCar: either way would be fantastic if it could be pulled off.

JennySB: One of our goals for the PBS Teachers site is to include more of these types of informal PD resources, so stay tuned...

JennySB: Are there any more thoughts on AA Lives 2? Would you like to hear about other sites that are great for teaching African American history?

MichaelH: Jenny, just curious, is the first season available from PBS Shop?

MichaelH: . o O (or Shop PBS?)

JennySB: Both seasons are available from Shop PBS and Shop PBS for Teachers. Educators can also record the programs and show them for free in their classrooms for 1 year.

JennySB: And there's a lot of video on the site, beyond what's incorporated into the lesson plans.

JennySB: There are some very interesting clips on the genealogy and DNA page that didn't make it into the final cut of the program.

MichaelH: and the site will be up for a long time, right?

JennySB: Yes, for a very long time.

BJB2: Jenny, are you familiar with www.understandingrace.com ?

JennySB: Yeah, that's a great site.

BJB2 agrees

JennySB: I also recommend the site for Race: The Power of an Illusion -- http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm

JennySB: It's got some awesome interactives that let students, and the general public, test their own assumptions and biases.

JennySB: The sorting people activity has a really powerful impact on kids.

DavidCar: what age group? I wonder if my 8th and 9th graders would be able to process the info

JennySB: The Eyes on the Prize site has great resources too -- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/>

JennySB: I think your middle school kids could definitely learn a lot from the sorting people activity. You'd want to put it in context, of course. It really helps to make the point that race is a social construct.

JennySB: At least to some degree...

DavidCar: I agree, Cadillac is 97% white so the kids sometimes have trouble with race issues.

JennySB: The lesson plans on the Race: The Power of an Illusion site are designed for high school kids and up, so I'll leave it to you to figure out whether other portions of the site are appropriate for your students.

JennySB: There's also a site called African American World -- <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/> -- which offers resources from both PBS and NPR.

JennySB: It's a portal to all kinds of great web content.

JennySB: To get back to African American Lives 2 and in response to David's comment, I think one of the things that's cool about the program is that interest in one's roots is really universal.

JennySB: Although the program focuses on African Americans, it encourages all of us to use historical documents to get in touch with our own families' histories.

BJB2: Jenny, do you have anything new being done by : Teja Arboleda?

JennySB: I'm not familiar with Teja. What else has s/he done?

BJB2: He worked on understanding race

BJB2: does a lot with ethnic comedy

JennySB: Not that I know of. We had a cool program a while back with George Lopez called "Brown Is the New Green," which looks at how Latinos are becoming a major force in the new economy. Funny guy, but serious subject.

BJB2: <http://www.entertainingdiversity.com/CrossingTheLine>

JennySB: I'll check Teja out.

JennySB: I see we're reaching the end of the hour. I'm sorry if this has been more of a lecture than a dialogue. I'd love to answer any questions.

MichaelH: We certainly always enjoy having you here, Jenny... we learn a lot, and you have a lot of great resources to share

JennySB: Thanks.

BJB2 applauds. Thanks, Jenny.

DavidCar: ditto, thanks so very much Jenny

JennySB: My pleasure. Thanks for sticking around for so long!

SusanR: Thank you ever so much, Jenny. Lots to explore!

DavidW: Great topic for discussion, Jenny

MichaelH: Jenny, a non-related question... will PBS Teachers have a site/resources for the election campaign?

MichaelH . o O (besides NewsHour Extra?)

JennySB: Well, I hope you'll check out the resources and let us know what you think. We're always looking for feedback from teachers about what they want.

MichaelH: that might be a good topic for an upcoming session

JennySB: Michael, I'm working on a number of elections resources right now.

MichaelH: I don't think anyone can keep up with the way this presidential race changes nearly daily

JennySB: We're putting up an elections page shortly that aggregates lesson plans, etc. around the election.

MichaelH: cool... would you want to do a session on that?

JennySB: We're also creating a teacher's guide focused on information and media literacy skills related to elections.

JennySB: And we're creating an interactive tour of a bunch of cool tools being created by PBS and NPR around the election. I'd love to come back and share those when they launch.

DavidW: that would be a superb topic

MichaelH: great! If you'll let me know, I'll schedule a session date

JennySB: Will do!

MichaelH: I'm going to be at another conference at the end of Feb., but we should be good about any time.

MichaelH: Of course, you're getting to be a TI professional, and could do a session on your own, too!

JennySB: Sadly, I don't think our resources will be ready that quickly. I think we're aiming for late spring.

DavidW: Michael, do you know about FactCheck - www.factcheck.org ?

MichaelH: Yep, I do, David

DavidW: they have an education branch - factchecked.org as well

MichaelH: I thought I'd used them in a story I wrote recently, but I didn't... I used "opensecrets.org"

JennySB: Cool! I didn't know about the ed. branch. I'm psyched to check it out.

DavidW . o O (<http://www.factchecked.org/>)

MichaelH: Thanks for joining us tonight, Jenny! AA Lives 2 looks like a great film. I'm looking forward to it

JennySB: Thank you! It's been a pleasure, as always. Goodnight, all.

MichaelH waves goodnight, and goes to dig out the snow shovel... 5 inches tomorrow night into Friday...