Damon Fordham and Michael Allen highlight the importance of Reconstruction and its cultural applicability to today.

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Middle School and Up
Mastery of core subjects and twenty-first century themes is essential for all students in the twenty-first century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history and government, and civics. In addition to these subjects, schools must move forward to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving twenty-first century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects.

**Global Awareness**
1. Use twenty-first century skills to understand and address global issues.
2. Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.

**Civic Literacy**
1. Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
2. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
3. Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

**Work Creatively with Others**
1. Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
2. Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
3. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
4. View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
5. Implement innovations.
6. Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.
Everyone has a story. It’s our place to take a moment to listen. Once you listen, your eyes open. You can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and try to comprehend their experiences. You may be inspired, you may come away with more knowledge, or you may find a bit of yourself in someone else.

“Raising the Volume” is a series of Black stories. Stories about Black entrepreneurs, judges, authors, artists, and leaders in our community. Stories that need to be heard. Led by the Gaillard Center’s Artists-in-Residence, Charlton Singleton and Marcus Amaker, “Raising the Volume” gives a platform to Black community members and opens us all up to honest discussion.

As you introduce this series to your students, follow the bullet points below for discussion. Your students will find that they are challenged to think about uncomfortable things. Those conversations are what will help us change our world. In the words of Judge McFarland, “To break down racial barriers, start where you are.” Let’s start where we are and see what change we can bring to our community.

For each lesson, split your class into small groups for discussion or discuss as a whole. Choose the model that is the most comfortable for your students so they feel free to discuss opinions openly.

Teachers, if you are interested in scheduling a cross-school discussion on Raising the Volume Episode XXXII, please email Kailey Jones at kjones@gaillardcenter.org. Through cross-school Zoom calls, we can offer students from one school a different perspective on the video with students from a second school. We will schedule class-to-class meetings where whole groups can discuss various topics covered in Episode XXXII.
Raising the Volume

Episode XXXIV
Damon Fordham and Michael Allen highlight the importance of Reconstruction and its cultural applicability to today.

(CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH EPISODE XXXII)
LESSONS

To begin, South Carolina historian Damon Fordham discusses the history of Reconstruction, specifically the contributions of prominent figures such as Frederick Douglass and Robert Smalls. Frederick Douglass is best known for his work with the Underground Railroad and later as a politician who rallied for Black and gender equality, while Robert Smalls is best known for commandeering the USS Planter to aid the Union in winning the Civil War, though he similarly went on to support Black and socioeconomic equality through politics. Read the article here about the relationship between Frederick Douglass and Robert Smalls. Research their individual contributions further and list two new facts in your notebook that you learned from your search.

Michael Allen goes on to discuss the importance of Beaufort, South Carolina, as a setting for Reconstruction and his work to establish the Reconstruction Era National Historic Park. Located in the heart of Robert Smalls’ hometown, the national park seeks to uplift the era’s history as well as commemorate all those who worked to establish equality for African Americans in the 1860s-1880s. The presidential proclamation given on the establishment of the Reconstruction Era National Park states:

“Beaufort County became one of the first places in the United States where formerly enslaved people could begin integrating themselves into free society. While the Civil War raged in the background, Beaufort County became the birthplace of Reconstruction, or what historian Willie Lee Rose called a “rehearsal for Reconstruction”....In and around Beaufort County during Reconstruction, the first African Americans enlisted as soldiers, the first African American schools were founded, early efforts to distribute land to former slaves took place, and many of the Reconstruction Era’s most significant African American politicians, including Robert Smalls, came to prominence....In short, events and people from Beaufort County illustrate the most important challenges of Reconstruction -- crucial questions related to land, labor, education, and politics after the destruction of slavery -- and some early hopeful efforts to address them. The significant historical events that transpired in Beaufort County make it an ideal place to tell stories of experimentation, potential transformation, hope, accomplishment, and disappointment.”1

Lesons

Watch the video “The Timeline Introduction: Reconstruction Era in Beaufort, SC with Park Ranger Chris Barr” from the National Center for Preservation Technology & Training.

Fordham later goes on to address the national campaign by the Daughters of the Confederacy to erase the history of Reconstruction from classrooms and replace the history instead with pro-Confederate propaganda. Though there has been great effort to correct this erasure, many Americans still were not taught about Reconstruction in its entirety. Why do you think the Daughters of the Confederacy wanted to change textbooks? If they had been successful in suppressing all Reconstructive history, how might we remember history differently?

At the close of the interview, Allen and Fordham highlight the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution and its relevance to today. “We never think about the 14th Amendment, but the 14th Amendment now is all intertwined in our whole political discourse because the 14th Amendment said that individuals who have been involved with insurrection against the United States should be disqualified from running in office. So now that question is before us in our 2024 election,” explained Allen. Insurrection is defined as “an act or instance of revolting against civil authority or an established government.” Can you think of any example in recent history of insurrection by Americans against the government? Why might our Constitution prevent those who commit insurrection from running for office?

ABOUT MICHAEL ALLEN

Michael Allen has been a community activist for most of his professional life. He has a deep-seeded interest in our nation’s spiritual growth as it relates to our history and culture. He played a major role in the National Park Service Gullah Geechee Special Resource Study, which examined the feasibility and suitability of establishing educational centers and determining ways to increase interpretation and preservation of this valuable culture. The study began in 2000, and the final report was presented to Congress in 2005. Due to the efforts of Allen and Congressman James E. Clyburn, the United States Congress passed the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Act, which established the first and only African American National Heritage Area in the country in 2006. In 2007, Allen was instrumental in the establishment of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Commission, which included twenty-five grassroots members from all four states of the corridor. Allen's primary responsibility was to ensure that this new National Heritage Area became a reality in an effort to provide hope, opportunity, and support to grassroot organizations and the wider Gullah Geechee Community.

In 2009, he was formally elevated to the director's position for the corridor and developed a management plan to guide the operations of the corridor for the future. In 2014, Allen was assigned by the National Park Service to participate as a lead team member on the NPS Special Resource Landmark Study exploring the history and legacy of the Reconstruction Era in American history. Because of this groundbreaking effort, a new National Park Service site, the Reconstruction Era National Monument, was established by presidential proclamation on January 12, 2017.

Throughout his career, Allen has been involved in designing exhibits and presenting interpretive programs that involve local communities and history. These programs were designed to attract nontraditional audiences to the National Park Service and other historic sites. In 1999, he was instrumental in erecting the “African Importation Historic Marker” on Sullivan’s Island. In 2008, he assisted the Toni Morrison Society and the College of Charleston in erecting a “Bench by the Road” commemorative bench at Fort Moultrie to memorialize the island's participation in the African slave trade. Finally, in 2009, he helped in unveiling “African Passages,” an exhibit that highlights the African arrival, presence, and contributions to Gullah Geechee culture and American society. The exhibit looks through the eyes of Africans and African Americans who passed through Sullivan’s Island on their way to be enslaved in Charleston and beyond.

Image courtesy of https://www.africanamericancharleston.com/articles/320/
ABOUT CHARLTON SINGLETON

A native of Awendaw, South Carolina, Charlton Singleton began his musical studies at the age of three on the piano. He would then go on to study the organ, violin, cello, and trumpet throughout elementary, middle, and high school. In 1994, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance from South Carolina State University. Since that time, he has taught music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and he is an adjunct faculty member at the College of Charleston. In 2008, he co-founded and became the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Charleston Jazz Orchestra, an 18-piece jazz ensemble of some of the finest professional musicians in the Southeast and the resident big band in Charleston, South Carolina. Singleton is also the organist and choir director at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Charleston. In November 2016, he was named the inaugural Artist in Residence at the recently renovated Gaillard Center in downtown Charleston. He remained in this position until July 2019; at that point, he was named Artist in Residence Emeritus. In this position, he continues to lead the Summer Youth Jazz Orchestra Camp as well as the “Jazz Through the Ages” assembly, which attracts a capacity crowd of students at the Gaillard Center.
ABOUT DAMON L. FORDHAM

Damon Lamar Fordham was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on December 23, 1964, to Anne Montgomery and was adopted by Pearl and Abraham Fordham of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, the following year. He received his master’s degree in history from the College of Charleston and the Citadel and his undergraduate degrees from the University of South Carolina in Columbia. He is currently an adjunct professor of World Civilizations, United States History, and African American History at Charleston Southern University and The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, and he has taught American History and African American Studies at the College of Charleston. He was a weekly columnist for the Charleston Coastal Times from 1994 to 1998, and he is the author of The 1895 Segregation Fight in South Carolina, Mr. Potts and Me, Voices of Black South Carolina: Legend and Legacy, and True Stories of Black South Carolina. In 2006, he co-authored Born to Serve: The Story of the Woman's Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina.


He has also commented on history and storytelling for numerous radio and television programs in the United States, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom. In May 2022, he accompanied fellow educators on a ten-day educational fact-finding tour of Senegal and Gambia, West Africa, where he toured the Slave Port at Gorre Island and spoke to students at the University of The Gambia. He also appeared on the NBC LX News and CBS Sunday Morning in 2022.

Fordham conducts a walking tour called “The Lost Stories of Black Charleston.” He has been recognized by the South Carolina House of Representatives for his work in education, historical research, and social justice.

His motto is: “Educate yourself to lead yourself, for if you wait on others to show you the way, you will wait for a long time.”
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