

LEARNING
from the
PAST

to

**TRANSFORM OUR
FUTURE**



Edited by

DR. ROBERT FOMER

“

History, despite its
wrenching pain, cannot
be unlived, but, if faced with
courage, need not be lived
again.

MAYA ANGELOU

”

Foreword

It is said that a good life and a good book have one thing in common: the element of surprise. Your life may already have given you a few surprises. So will this ebook.

In the many pages that follow this one, you will find elaborate discussions about social cohesiveness, celebrating diversity, issues related to racism, matters of education, and questions about leadership.

Hopefully, some answers, too answers that are left for you to discover. What the book does is it gives you ample evidence and guidance to lead you to these answers. If you pay attention to what the book has to say, you will have no difficulty reaching these answers.

However, these answers may be found on the other side of the experience of reading this book.

That's an easy reward, don't you think? What with only about 50 pages to read? It is built quite interestingly, too. Some of the chapters talk about enticing movies, some others talk about the wonderful National Museum of African American History and Culture, while some others still speak of leadership.

As a reader, your job is to see through the metaphors you are given in a book. You need to understand that whatever the source of a chapter may be, they must all eventually unite to deliver a clear message and lesson that you can take home and use in life.

Going through the book, you will discover it says a lot of things that you have already thought about at some point in life. That is because the purpose and subject matter of this book are the very fundamental problems we face in the American society today.

Recent political developments have done little to make the American society cohesive. If anything, the struggle has only become in some ways more difficult, but it is these testing times that true leaders emerge and become the beacon of hope and action.

While this book may be too short to leave such an incredible impression on the reader, it will surely help you take the first step, which is to understand what lies ahead of you. We encourage young people to take charge of their lives now and put it on the right track through transformational leadership.

May you learn good lessons from this book and may they help you become a leader our society needs.

God bless you.

DR. ROBERT FOMER

Disclaimer

Youth with a Future –Transformational Leadership Forum!
Copyrights Reserved
Dr. Robert Fomer – © 2018

No part of this eBook can be transmitted or reproduced in any form including print, electronic, photocopying, scanning, mechanical or recording without prior written permission from the author.

While the author has taken utmost efforts to ensure the accuracy of the written content, all readers are advised to follow information mentioned herein at their own risk. The author, editor, or publisher cannot be held responsible for any personal or commercial damage caused by misinterpretation of information. All readers are encouraged to seek professional advice when needed. This e-book has been written for information purposes only. Every effort has been made to make this eBook as complete and accurate as possible. However, there may be mistakes in typography or content. Also, this e-book provides information only up to the publishing date. Therefore, this eBook should be used as a guide - not as the ultimate source. The purpose of this eBook is to educate. The author and the publisher do not warrant that the information contained in this e-book is fully complete and shall not be responsible for any errors or omissions. The author and publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by this e-book.

TO OUR FUTURE!

Contents

Five Lessons to Learn from ‘The Queen of Katwe’.....07

It’s How We move the Pieces That Determine the Outcome.....08

It’s the Simple Things When Learned Well, That Bring Hope – and Change!.....09

Mentors – Fostering Dreams, making Lives.....09

‘The Queen of Katwe’: A Story That Compels You to Count Your Blessings..... 10

Honoring Our Past by Transforming Our Future.....11

The African American Museum – A Complete Reflection of American History.....12

The African American Museum – An Effective Platform to Foster Cultural Understanding,
Peaceful Co-existence and Developing Future Leaders.....13

The African American Museum – Providing a Better Understanding
of the Racial Disparities.....14

Benevolence without Transformation is Good Acting in Silence!.....15

Integrity is a Self-Pledge to Do the Right Thing!.....16

Introduction to the Book: The Leader that Sings a New Song!.....17

Racism: Infuriating Sentiments and Polarizing the Nation.....18

Truth When Acknowledged Helps Dismantle the Flow of Evil!.....19

Discrimination Does Not Limit Achievement!.....20

‘Hidden Figures’ –Summary of the Story!.....21

Hidden Figures – The Underlying Philosophy!.....22

Three Things I learned about Leadership from the ‘Hidden Figures’.....23

Lesson 1: Leadership Cannot Be Constrained.....24

Lesson 2: Leadership is Not Defined by a Position or Designation.....24

Lesson 3: Leadership Flourishes Beyond Your Personal Interests.....24

Women during the Civil Rights movement!.....24

It Takes Courage and Commitment to Overcome Evil!25

The Spiritual Theme of ‘The magnificent Seven’.....26

Teamwork, Diversity and the Pursuit of a mutual Goal!.....27

The Magnificent Seven - Three Leadership Takeaways!.....28

Why are They Called ‘The magnificent Seven’?30

"I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past." -Thomas Jefferson	31
"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived; but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." - Maya Angelo.....	32
"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots." - Marcus Garvey.....	33
"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." - Confucius.....	34
"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph." - Haile Selassie.....	35

UNIT 1: THE QUEEN OF KATWE

Five Lessons to Learn from 'The Queen of Katwe'

The life story of Phiona Mutesi, a 9 years old slum girl living in a deprived community of Katwe, Uganda, is an inspiring tale of struggle, hope and accomplishment in the most unspeakable, unfavorable and unimaginable of circumstances one could have. And amidst all the tears and cries of joy, there are certainly some significant lessons that we can draw out of the movie that would make a good beacon of inspiration and guidance for our own individual lives.

Lesson 1: You are never as lost and devastated as you think you are

You will realize this with every passing scene and each uttered dialogue. The movie is an excellent yet heartbreaking depiction of life in Uganda, one of the most deprived nations of the world. It will broaden your horizons, make you count your blessings and realize that even if you are having a hard time in your life, you still have it better than many others on the planet.

Lesson 2: Leaders need to be nurtured – “Every pawn is a potential queen”

Leaders and champions are not born – they are made. The story of Phiona Mutesi makes a good example for this statement; that everyone is blessed with their own super powers that need to be identified, incubated and nurtured.

Lessons 3: It's important to be empathic

The degrees and awards may have their worth, but it is the fine, subliminal qualities that make us human. Even if you have not been valued or treated well in life, this does not in any way mean that you start reciprocating the hate. How you treat people, even when you have the power to avenge, only depicts your moral stature. When you value people and be sensitive towards them, you transcend to the next level of humanity.

Lessons 4: You need a mentor

Everyone is born with their own specific qualities and skills and with a special purpose in life. However, the spark needs to be identified and fueled to be turned into a vigorous flame. And this is why you need a mentor, someone who would be a power house of motivation, inspiration and guidance for you, to keep you pointed straight and propel you towards your goal.

Lesson 5: What might seem insignificant may turn out to be a defining factor for your life

We often tend to neglect, ignore and brush aside certain things that we think are insignificant and unworthy, but in actuality, they might be destiny's call, the defining moment that could change the course of our entire life. Phiona Mutesi missed one such opportunity in the course. Since she was only aiming to qualify for the National Chess Olympiad, she settled on a deliberate draw that could have led her to being the first female chess champion of Uganda.

It's How We move the Pieces That Determine the Outcome

Your luck might make a timely jump in, and your talents might prove as handy; but, it is actually the way you lay down your plan, defy the odds and make your moves, that connects the dots and you excel in game. This is precisely the essence of Disney's Queen of Katwe, a heartwarming story of a slum girl who had never touched a chessboard in her life, and yet, when she was thrown the chance as a curve ball from the bag of life, she took it to her advantage, mastered the art and making slow and steady moves, became the World Chess Queen.

The story – apart from the very obvious and evident message about Phiona Mutesi's struggle to become the ultimate chess champion – carries an excellent metaphorical message that is pretty much relatable to all of us. The story accentuates on the significance of a strategy and a plan of action. It signifies the fact that your attitude does matter. It focuses on the path that you opt and how you decide to progress ahead on it, overcoming barriers, fighting the odds and going on until you make it.

However, you have to realize that you might not be alone in the journey. There will be many ahead of you, there will be many behind you – all aiming for the same goal. If you followed the same pace and kept yourself at the defensive side, you might just fall behind, ending up with the crowd – no great feat.

It is when you calculate the variables that control your situation, sharpen your tools and improvise the trending patterns to evolve your signature move that makes the whole difference. Remember that life itself could be your biggest competitor, trying with all its might to knock you down at every turn.

Playing defensive would barely help you survive. Being proactive and excelling face front, through a smart strategy will make you a winner. It is all in one's own capacity and one's own grip of hand, what one aspires, to be a mere survivor or to be an ultimate champ.

Phiona Mutesi was not the luckiest girl on earth. A slum dweller, selling boiled maize in a colony of the most underprivileged people of Uganda, with no educational qualification to elevate her hopes of a better future - she managed to meet the purpose of her life.

Something similar happens with each of us. Life, with all its uncertainty and unpleasantness, will offer you a chance. It is all up to you what you make out of it.

"Ignoring the rude rook, the boisterous bishop and the narcissistic knight, the pawn took one step at a time and became the queen." - Anon

It's the Simple Things When Learned Well, That Bring Hope – and Change!

Most of us tend to mistake success for being so superficial and so beyond our reach that we think that it is unattainable and that we do not have what it takes to be a winner. We also get trapped in the thought that success demands some reputable degrees and notable accolades, and thinking it would take too much of us to achieve them, we give all our thoughts, ambitions and aspirations a rest and compromise on living an ordinary life – no master stroke!

Had it been true, Phiona Mutesi would have never turned out to be a world chess champion! Success, change and accomplishment of something worthwhile and significant are not necessarily a result of some huge undertaking or great leaps. Sometimes, it is the baby steps, the little milestones and the small things that make a huge difference, as we see in 'The Queen of Katwe'.

What hope, purpose or ambition did Phiona Mutesi have in life before accidentally landing in that local chess club? Caught peeking in through a slit in the wall, Katende, the chess club owner, saw her and called her in, introducing her to Gloria, an amateur chess player. Phiona didn't know that her life was taking an unusual turn – a better one this time.

She barely had a clue about her future, what she was destined to achieve. All she knew was that she wanted to learn the game, how the pieces move, and how a game plan is made. It was the little moves, the basic tactics and the intricacies of the chess board that she learned and eventually mastered. And all of a sudden, she had her way. She knew what she wanted, she knew what she could achieve.

Now that she had complete control over the bishops, rooks and knights and pawns, she knew how she could become the Queen.

Having qualified for the National Chess Olympiad, she never looked back since. She kept on moving forward, excelling in her path, checkmating the odds and finally landed in to become the World Champion. No degrees and qualifications in hand, it was her faith and her consistent little efforts that made her achieve what millions dream and aspire to achieve.

'The Queen of Katwe' is a jackpot of inspiration for all those struggling souls who are having a hard time in life. It is a warm reassurance that motivates us to be consistent in our struggle, focus on the minor things and aim for excellence.

When we learn and master the rules, it is only then that we can ace the game.

Mentors – Fostering Dreams, Making Lives

Living in a colony of slums, with least accessibility to life's basic necessities, where essentials equate luxuries, with no education to make way for a career growth and selling boiled maize among the most unprivileged people on the planet earth – hope had no meaning in the life of Phiona Mutesi. And yet there came a time where the girl who had not seen a chessboard in her entire life, eventually landed to become the World Chess Champion.

What made her do that? Who invoked the dream and fueled her hopes? Who nurtured and leveraged her initially non-existent skills and mastered her in the game to such an extremity that made her trounce all competitors and stand as the one and only champ? It was her mentor!

They say there is more to a good story than meets the eye. And that's true. The Queen of Katwe in itself is a soul stirring story of a struggle in the most unfavorable of circumstances, apparently it concentrates the focus of the audience over Phiona Mutesi, the striving protagonist and getting them all entranced as she paves her way forward, while missing out on giving due credit to the mentor who made her do that, as happens in real life too.

In all success stories, the back stage directors, the power house of motivation and the unsung heroes that keep on pushing the champions ahead in the race are often neglected, lost as the champion and the chanters cherish the winning moments, in the shower of confetti, praises and applause, while kissing the winning trophy. And Robert Katende, the Chess Queen's mentor met the same fate.

The moment Phiona entered the chess club for the first time little did she know that it was the defining moment of her life. It was Katende who identified the spark that she could be the one – and ultimately he had found the purpose of life, not just for Phiona, but for himself too. He introduced her to another player of the chess club, Gloria, who actually was not an expert herself, but was well-versed with the basics of the board.

With his encouragement, motivation and perseverance and through Gloria's patient attempts to bring her to her level of mastery, ready to excel beyond, Phiona made it successfully to where her name was written in the destiny.

Apparently, from another dimension The Queen of Katwe might as well be rendered as the story of a great mentor. It is the inspiring tale of a mentor's sleepless nights, sweat shedding efforts, nerve wracking stress, all cumulated to meet one desired goal, to help someone reach the victory stand.

‘The Queen of Katwe’: A Story That Compels You to Count Your Blessings

Hailing from a community of some of the most underprivileged people on Earth would have sufficed for a lifetime of misfortune for Phiona Mutesi, but, she had to suffer worse. A slum dweller in Katwe, the most destitute locale in the deprived state of Uganda, she had it way worse than the life of an average person.

With no education to invoke a hope, no food, no proper living and a lifestyle that could make even a poor person look well blessed, Phiona Mutesi still had that potential spark that was lurking somewhere within, in oblivion, waiting for the right time and opportunity. And given the opportunity, and the right counseling and guidance by a true mentor, she made it big – so big that the slum girl who had never seen a chessboard in her entire life, rose as the ultimate World Chess Champion.

Disney's 'The Queen of Katwe' is a heartwarming tale of the struggle and accomplishment, of a small slum girl that inspires us all, with hope and optimism for future. It emphasizes on the importance of never losing hope, and that no matter how harsh the circumstances, life always has something better in store for you. It is all but a matter of time. However, more than that all, it triggers a realization about the kind life people lead in far off lands, lives we could not even imagine. It broadens our mental horizons and makes us realize that we do not have a right to cry and moan over what we do not have.

They say that, when you want to realize how blessed you actually are, you should see people who are least privileged, for whom making ends meet and acquiring the basic necessities is no less than a life quest, and a run for survival. And this is where The Queen of Katwe opens your eyes and touches your soul.

UNIT 2: THE NEW AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

Honoring Our Past by Transforming Our Future

In continuation of the series of architectural landmarks, to record and archive the history of the colored-skinned Americans, the new African American museum in Washington DC is all set to open its doors on the great inauguration on September 24th, Americans too, are all ready to witness another groundbreaking milestone in the long haul of history of American racism.

Initially an idea that was endorsed by the Act of Congress in 2003, the series of laying down archival depositaries in the form of museums in all major cities and states, has finally arrived in Washington DC. The motivation and inspiration behind this series of architectural attempts is to preserve the unforgettable history of American racism, acknowledge it in entirety that it should not have happened the way it did and also make a forceful reminder for all Americans, be it whites, the blacks or the browns, to make a pledge to strive with all their might to revoke the effects of centuries of racism and eventually help evolve a truly united United States.

The museum, along with its historic archives, records, emblems and symbols that narrate the tale of the American racism, is a strong acknowledgement of the efforts and a great tribute to the struggle of Martin Luther King, Maya Angelou, Josephine Baker, Alex Haley and many others who contributed to change the darker side of the American society for good through their consistent, tireless and dedicated attempts to make America, as much acceptable and welcoming for blacks as it has been for the dominant whites.

From the period of war of freedom to the civil rights moment and to date, the US history is punctuated with incidents and happenings that make a complete another tale, the catastrophic story of races and racism in the United States. It is a good sign that we are moving on from the past. It is a good indicator that we have acknowledged where we have gone wrong and it is encouraging that we are striving to make America meet its destined faith - the Founder's dream and vision of America.

The Founding Director of The National museum of African American History and Culture, Lonnie G. Bunch, III, holds a high optimism about the purpose and the outcomes of these attempts and states:

"This museum will tell the American story through the lens of African American history and culture. This is America's Story and this museum is for all Americans."

It is essential for us to identify the areas that have tarnished the crux of our society and shattered the idea of American Dream. Racism being one of the major factors driving the divisions, between diversified groups of the United State, it is high time that we learn lessons from our past and aim to construct a future that meets the founders' vision of the United States.

The African American Museum – A Complete Reflection of American History

*From slavery to emancipation, from segregation to diversity, and from Past to Present
– The museum circumscribes all essential areas of American history.*

The African American museum is a series of architectural ventures to collect and record the notable aspects of American history and to preserve it for the future generations to serve as a good reminder and lesson to learn to evolve into a better and more united, United States.

It is ironic that ethnicity and culture-based racism is still very much a part of our society and racism, even in today's open minded, more advanced and progressive global environment, is still a familiar term. The long haul of American history, right from the freedom movement until the period of the Civil rights movement and till this date, the chronology of important events and happenings that took place is frequently punctuated with the blemishes of racism.

Societal segregations and disparities based on something as shallow as the color of your skin and considering someone inferior just because their skin pigment contains a higher amount of melanin is plain ridiculous. However, this is an ironic truth of our society and a hideous fact what we have to live with until the end of the world.

The good news is that most of us refute the idea of racism and race based prejudices. However, the bad news is that we still practice it in one way or the other in our regular lives. A major part of all these condemnations, refutations and cause-based revolutions against racism are merely confined to delivering fiery speeches and gaining media limelight.

Seldom has it happened that someone actually steps up to fight the cause and actually achieve effective milestones. We acknowledge the dedication and committed efforts of Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin, Hosea Williams, Gloria Richardson and numerous other leaders that devoted their entire lives to this cause to eliminate the menace of racism from the roots in the United States and help the nation evolve into a United States that is truly united in all its diversity.

The African American museums being established across the major cities in many states of United States will make a significant emblem and a great memento to store and preserve the tidbits and notable highlights about the history of racism in the United States. However, its purpose and objectives are not just confined and circumscribed to the domain of racism, or particularly to the black race. As stated by Lonnie G. Bunch III, the Founding Director of NMAAHC,

“The African American experience is the lens through which we understand what it is to be an American.”

The museum makes an extensive and elaborate illustration of the overall American history, taking the visitors and history aficionados on a memorable yet enlightening ride into the corridors of the American history. It also serves as a good reminder to all Americans about our roots, where we stemmed from, how we evolved over the centuries and fosters a thought process to ponder over how far we would have gone had we not drowned ourselves in the trench of racism.

The African American Museum – An Effective Platform to Foster Cultural Understanding, Peaceful Co-existence and Developing Future Leaders

Racism in the United States is an age-old phenomenon, much older than anyone living in the present age world. It has managed to creep its way from the past. Over a course of centuries until this date, this makes an ugly blemish on the world's greatest nation, a reminder that it still suffers from the cancer of racism in its society. We may credit it in the account of the mistreatment of blacks and other colored races at the hands of the state and government institutions and the racial profiling that exists at every stage and sphere of our collective and national life.

Yet, it is us, the common Americans, especially the dominant white race that incubates, nurtures and makes flourish the idea of racism and passes it on, poisoning generation after generation of the American society.

A glance at the past indicates that while the menace has turned into an epidemic on one hand, it certainly has shown some optimistic outcomes along the same lines. For instance, the election of Barrack Obama for two consecutive tenures is an encouraging indication that the efforts and struggles of Martin Luther King Junior, the dedicated missionaries of the black churches and the leaders and activists of the civil rights movement have certainly yielded some fruits.

Nevertheless, we still have to go a long way to cleanse our societal physiology from the effects of this venom and foster a culture of harmony, compassion and peaceful coexistence. The chain of African American museums being established in key cities and states of the United States will not just be a cultural landmark to preserve history but will also make a harmonious platform to understand, identify and bridge the crevasses prevalent within the various races of the American society.

It will create a better illustration and understanding of the history that we all mutually share. The museum will incubate a collective and progressive mindset, bringing people of all races, religions, cultures and socioeconomic classes at an equal plane, fostering leadership and a constructive like-minded approach in the young American minds.

The idea behind the chain of museums is not to preserve and record history but to provide an opportunity for the coming generations and future leaders to learn the various facets of the socioeconomic injustice and discrepancies of our societal system from multiple dimensions, and foster their own ideas to construct a harmonious, equal, fair and mutually beneficial American society.

Above all, bringing all young enthusiasts and future leaders under a single roof, the museum will tie the present and future generations to their roots and their past which will further extend to preserve, nurture and revitalize the profound American values, the American ideals and the American philanthropy.

The African American Museum – Providing a Better Understanding of the Racial Disparities

Racial disparities and color prejudices is not an alien concept in the American society nor is it a present age issue. No matter how much we try to turn a blind eye to the issue, we cannot deny the fact that racism runs deep in the American socio-economic system and dates back to not just a couple of decades, but a vast and expansive course of centuries.

Racism, with all its hideousness, has engulfed and seeped into all spheres of our personal, social and national lives. The segregation that starts from the very moment an American is born and stretches over their entire lifetime adversely affects the life of a common American, be it a white or a black. While the whites continue to dwell in their self-assumed superiority of skin color, the blacks, at all stages and spheres of life, are compelled to believe that they are inferior.

It is this racism that has shattered the fine threads which unite American souls. And, as a matter of fact, the dilemma of racism is a more critical issue than the emerging threats of non-state and fundamentalist terrorist regimes. Like cancer, it has been breathing within us, flourishing and spreading its roots and weakening the foundations of the United States.

Despite all the legislative and revolutionary measures to eliminate and impose a ban on the racial profiling and discrimination in the 21st century United States, racism, with all its hideousness, continues to reflect all the prevalent socio-economic disparities in the United States.

It is high time that we take the matter into serious consideration. It is a compulsion to delve into the matter and find the traces and root cause to eliminate it from our collective lives. The United States will continue to prosper in tangible aspects; yet, our own internal issues, like racism, will lead us nowhere but to self-homicide, making all our technological, political and economic advancements go in vain.

The establishment of African American museums is a significant attempt to illustrate a complete history of American racism where it actually stemmed from and flourished over time. While it enlightens us with an intricate understanding of the history of American racism, it also triggers a warning and indication to an alarming situation that we might land into if we don't take measures to resolve and eliminate the issue from the core.

Extrajudicial murders, illicit killings on mere suspicions from none but our own state law enforcement and bigoted treatment in all spheres and institutions lay the foundation for revolutions, like civil rights movement and black lives matter, which have jolted the entire nation and state. The museum is a significant memento to highlight this critical aspect of the American society, reminding us the issue still awaits a solution and that we still have to go a long way to turn the Founders' vision of a truly United States into reality.

UNIT 3: 'THE BIRTH OF A NATION' BY NATE PARKER

Benevolence without Transformation is Good Acting in Silence!

Often it happens that we feel stuck, with all paths closed, no way around and with no means to turn the situation in our favor. We feel as if we have lost it all and that there's no way we will ever be able to make it to that point where we wish to reach. Be it a dream destiny, a career goal or anything that we aspire to be with all our heart, nothing comes easy.

Often, it feels that the more we want something, the more it drifts away from our reach. Lost and drowned in the pool of such irony, we often tend to lose all our hopes and even consider giving up midway through the flight. Often, it happens that we do not even start something in first place. We underestimate what we are capable of doing and this self-devaluation often prevents us from aiming for towering heights and great altitudes.

Instead, we spend our entire lives just, in our contentment, just like all others do in the world – no great feat! Life might be unfair to some, even more than what it is to others; however, it also throws a fair share of opportunities and blessings in disguise. What seems like just a plain ordinary act or just another insignificant gesture might turn out to be the beginning of a full-fledged revolution, as it happened in the case of Nat Turner, who could have been just another of the million African American slaves destined to live a life of hatred and oppression. However, in the midst of all those unfortunate events happening in his life, a silver lining was unveiling itself in the process.

Nat Turner's master, Samuel Turner, used to be his childhood playmate. Samuel's mother used to teach young Nat how to read and write. Little Nat, who had a strong memory and an intelligent mind, grew up learning tidbits from his master's mother since being a black slave, he was not allowed to go to any school or academic institute.

This makes the story all the more interesting; while he was deprived of this basic right to a decent education by the oppressive white race, it was actually a white who made an alternate path for him that paved way for the revolution he was destined to bring in the later part of his life.

As he grew up to be a priest, he traveled across the country, visiting black camps and communities, to teach them the lesson's he had been taught all his life – blacks are inferior to the whites and hence, they should lead their lives bound by their white masters' commands.

While initially he used to preach the lesson of obedience to his fellow black slaves, soon, realization started to take a toll on him as he saw the examples of oppression, violence and brutality being practiced on the enslaved black race. It took him a while to accept and acknowledge this truth and this hideous reality but it was all worthwhile for the great rebellion that ensued in Virginia after the black girl's gang rape incident is still considered as a milestone that turned out to be the cornerstone of the American Civil Rights movement.

Integrity is a Self-Pledge to Do the Right Thing!

There's a voice inside all of us that stays silent most of the time and only makes its presence felt when we are about to do something wrong against our very nature, or something that we should not be doing in the first place.

Psychology may call it your subconscious, but it actually is a key ethical value that is present in all human beings. It is integrity – doing the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, even when you know that no one is there to watch over you. We all perform well and do our best when we know that we are accountable for our acts. It is only when we know that we will have to pay for our misconducts, wrong doings and ill practices that we keep our contradicting temptations aside and stick to the very rules and procedures.

In the absence of a superior command and control, of course, we have a choice to do whatever pleases our instincts and impulse. It is in this very moment that our ethics, values, and morality are tested for integrity.

Integrity is an obligation to nobody but your own self. It demands a greater deal of courage to do the right thing in all circumstances, especially in a world that drives on the notion of 'then end justifies the means'.

In the specific context of Nate Parker's 'The Birth of a Nation', it all makes sense that Nat Turner took it as his moral obligation to resist the injustice, oppression, and brutality that had been suppressing his race for centuries.

It was unfortunate of Nat Turner, the enslaved protagonist, to have been born in a race that was an emblem of inferiority and was despised as if they were some subhuman species. Nat Turner's rebellion was not against the oppression of blacks in the hands of the dominant white race. It was an open and challenging call against the human beings' self-acquired concepts of supremacy and inferiority.

The daunting story of the great black rebellion that ensued following a black girl's gang rape in the state of Virginia in 1831, *The Birth of a Nation* will take you back to those corridors of history that are still haunted by the horrendous racial crimes that took place in that era. And while it illustrates the real life events in quite a realistic way on the big screen, it also leaves one wondering about how racism still haunts and lurks within all spheres of our societal lives.

The struggle of Nat Turner against the white injustice accentuates on the importance of being integral in challenging times. Cherry, the unfortunate girl, was not related to Turner in any way. Yet he took it upon him to avenge the culprits on her behalf and make them pay for their actions. Although the rebellion failed, it is Nat's integral stance that still counts and that has made the story compelling and worthwhile in the truest sense.

Introduction to the Book: The Leader that Sings a New Song!

The history of racism in the United States is as old as the entire US history. Although the foundation of the independent United States was laid on the principle of freedom and equality, yet, our history is testament to the fact that the United States never actually got rid of the racial standards of supremacy and inferiority in the first place, and that we have always been enslaved by these ridiculous and baseless man-made notions of being superior and sub-human.

Since the medieval times of the 18th century to the modern and advanced era of today, racism stands as the core issue that has spread its evil curse in all spheres and domains of the American society. It is because of this that racism has been one of the favorite subjects of authors and movie directors and producers to highlight this pulsating issue and raise awareness.

However, the combined efforts of all those printed and motion picture feats have brought little outcomes in reality. This is maybe because we all are racist to an extent more or less but seldom do we actually realize or accept it.

To commemorate the centenary of the historic yet controversial movie 'The Birth of a Nation', the 1915 motion picture that jolted the foundations of the US society, Nat Parker makes an unconventional and rather contradictory retake on the great Virginian Rebellion led by Nat Turner, the enslaved black preacher and his enslaved African-American followers.

The 1915 edition of *The Birth of a Nation* heavily illustrated the emergence and rise of the Ku Klux Klan, as saviors of the whites, and portrayed the oppressed African American slaves as divinely cursed, subhuman species that were unworthy of freedom and that the primary objective of the blacks' civil right demands was only so that they could marry the white maidens.

It is no wonder the movie, directed by D. W. Griffith, stirred the society and contributed a great deal to strengthen the roots of racism in the United States.

A hundred years later, Nate Parker comes up with a more optimistic and logical perspective on the same incident of the great Virginian rebellion. The story takes one back to the archival pages of history, illustrating the incident from a parallel dimension that actually addresses the issue, with an aim to understand and resolve it, rather than opting for a controversial and violent approach to fan the fires.

The protagonist Nat Turner, who led the slave rebellion, is portrayed as the man who took a definite and unwavering stance and raised his voice against injustice, at a time when slavery was a norm and even a meek voice against the white oppression was brutally crushed. The book actually takes on to address the issue, not just reminding about the unfortunate events that now make an eternal part of our history, but also sheds light on the fact that how racism still prevails and how it is tarnishing the unity of the 21st century United States.

Racism: Infuriating Sentiments and Polarizing the Nation

What else could be more ridiculous than creating intra-societal segregations based on the amount of melanin in one's skin, rendering those with a lighter shade of skin as superior while those with the colored or darker shade left to be ruled over, loathed and enslaved for their lives?

Racism runs deep in the American societal structural. Much older than the 21st century threats that the United States is prone to, the history of our racism dates back to not just a couple of decades but centuries.

Although we have come a long way, punctuating the course of our history with notable achievements like the abolition of the institution of slavery, civil rights movement, legislative reforms and bill of rights and the election of Barack Obama as president for two consecutive decades is an encouraging reminder that we do have attempted to shed the impact and atrocities of racism off our society.

However, this is also a bitter truth that all legislative actions and bills have turned out to be mere superficial acts to ban racial profiling; racism still lurks within our mindsets, breathes within us and is still very much a part of our national mindset and the society.

This is also an important point to note that a major credit for infusing and nurturing racism within the society goes to the dominant white community, whose actions and thought processes have been breeding and passing the notion of racism to the coming generations.

This is the prime reason that deep inside, we are not the United States of America but in fact the United States of Black and White America. And this color based polarization goes deep into the crux of our society.

The Birth of a Nation is the intimidating and compelling tale of Nat Turner, the unfortunate African American slave, who decided to stand against the human's self-assumed concepts of superiority and inferiority and challenged the white supremacy through a rebellion that took place in the state of Virginia in 1831.

To avenge the gang rape of Cherry, the unfortunate teenage black girl, Nat, along with a few fellow black slaves, could not contain the anger that has been bubbling in the black race for centuries.

The rebellion, when later turned into a massacre, caused a massive bloodshed and an emblem of terror for the white community in the South. As much as the rebellion was successful, it did bring a backlash, a fresh wave of oppressing gestures for the camp of white, to counter their anti-abolitionist struggle and to keep them enslaved and deprived of the basic necessities of life and provision of their civil rights.

The rebellion was crushed, imposing more oppressions and this laid the foundation for the Civil Rights movement. The story dates back to the 19th century, illustrating the real events on the Big Screen and while it is quite hard to imagine such events happening in the present age modern society, the theme of the story would leave you restless and uneasy, with this thought that will all its hideousness and brutality, racism still prevails as a dark mark on the face of the US society.

Truth When Acknowledged Helps Dismantle the Flow of Evil!

It is commonly believed to be a universal phenomenon that everything comes with its polar opposite. Just like day and night, happiness and gloom, hope and despair, truth and lies, good and evil too run in a parallel correlation.

The very essence and foundation of humanity is laid on good; however, we also have an impulse and temptation for bad and evil. This is only natural and this is precisely how the universe maintains its equilibrium. There is an old Cherokee Indian legend that elaborates on the dilemma of choices between good and evil. It goes something like this:

Once, an old Cherokee was teaching his grandson about life and the significance of the choices that we have to make. He told his grandson, "A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."

The little boy took a while to give it a thought and understand, and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

We are nothing but the choices we make. The constant battle between good and evil goes on inside all of us. As much as it is convenient for us to surrender to the evil's call, it is a crucial test of our strengths, values and integrity to take a truthful and virtuous stance and resist the impulsive temptations of the evil.

We have a choice to choose any path that we wish to head on. However, the path of evil might appear as smooth and convenient; it takes you away, far from your very fundamental nature and the basic essence of your soul that is laid on goodness and virtues. The path to goodness is definitely exasperating but it keeps you tied to your fine, humane values. The choice is all yours which wolf you choose to feed.

The best way to overcome the ongoing battle and block the path of evil is to keep yourself grounded on the plain of truth and goodness. As the bible says, "Then you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free".

Embracing the reality, realizing what's right and accepting the truth is your ultimate counter attack on the evil's, to prevent it from spreading its roots. This is the very essence of the message conveyed in Nate Parker's *The Birth of a Nation*. It is always easy to follow the bandwagon and turn a blind eye to the evil spread all around you. However, it makes you a bit more of a human when you consume your wisdom and intellect to differ between white and black. When you know what's right and what's not, it becomes your moral obligation to contribute your part to stop and fight off the evil.

UNIT 4: 'HIDDEN FIGURES' BY MARGOT LEE SHETTERLY

Discrimination Does Not Limit Achievement!

At a time when disparities and interracial bigotries had escalated and the unity of the United States was prone to the biggest challenges of its entire history, America was going through the most defining period of its life. The social bifurcation has strengthened its roots so much so that the entire American population was made to stand into two main camps – The Whites and the Non-White Americans.

The American society was on the brink of collapse. The oppressed races had risen up against the societal injustice at the hands of their fellow white Americans, who, in their self-proclaimed glory of supremacy, would not let a single chance go by to torment and make the people of colored origins feel that they were inferior and sub-human beings.

Hence, the oppressed races, deprived of their right to education, equal access to basic civil amenities, and enslaved for generations in the captivity of their white masters, could not contain the centuries of anger and oppression.

Right around the time when the Supreme Court's *Brown versus Board of Education* verdict was yet to be declared, with the Bill of Rights yet to be passed and Martin Luther King yet to deliver his historic speech, amidst all the clashes and chaos, the United States was inching towards a hallmark achievement.

Besides the internal state chaos, the perilous clouds of World War II had started to hover and the United States, badly stuck in a two-dimensional war, needed a breakthrough achievement in its nuclear armaments and aeronautical sector.

Call it irony or coincidence, a group of women, and, more specifically, a group of competent and accomplished African-American female scientists, was successfully running NACA's (NASA's precursor) first ever Human Computer Project.

Founded and led by Margot Lee Shetterly, the Human Computers, beyond the limitations of any gender or discrimination based on race, were efficiently helping the male engineers of NACA through extensive mathematical calculations. Standing by the shoulder of their white male compatriots, the Human Computers were playing a legendary role in the accomplishment of a national cause that was worth writing in the words of gold in the US' historic archives.

However, as racism and sexism have always worked in the US society, little do we know about those superwomen who contributed to uplift the United States to an unrivaled stature of global supremacy. Hidden Figures, from the pen of Margot Lee Shetterly, the founding leader of NACA's Human Computer Project, is an inspiring tale of Katherine Johnson, Eunice Smith, Mary Jackson, Kathryn Paddrew, Dorothy Vaughan, Sue Wilder, and Barbara Holley – the unsung heroes of the US history.

The women grew up facing the cruelest form of brutality that was then considered as the legitimate fate for their race. They grew up suffering from the same humiliation that was a norm for their race back then. Yet, their passion for their homeland, regardless of the societal brutality, made them contribute their sincere services and preserve their names in the list of the unsung heroes of the country.

Hidden Figures –Summary of the Story!

The history of the United States is marred with the tales of efforts, struggles, and contributions that made the United States evolve and grow through medieval times and the uncertain and chaotic eras of civil anarchies, world wars, and economic depressions.

It was the penchant for excellence, passion for success, and sincere commitment of our national heroes towards the homeland that made the United States achieve the stature of an unrivaled global supremacy that it enjoys today.

However, this is a point to be noted that the historic archives of the United States are majorly comprised of the legendary struggles of male protagonists and heroes. Rarely do we get to see a woman's name get as much prominence and fame as John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, or Martin Luther King managed to achieve.

This does not mean that women never contributed a significant share towards national development of the US. As a matter of fact, long before the aforementioned legends made their respective marks, and even before IBM launched its first personal computer, a group of smart and the most intelligent women of that time, equipped with instruments as simple as pencils, simple calculators, and slide rulers, were efficiently programming 'Human Computers' for NASA.

Devising formulae, solving long equations, and recording intricate calculations, these go-getter women were fueling NASA's most critical space and aeronautical project through long hauls of processed raw data. Not giving in to the racial and gender-based biases they had to face during this course, these wonder women dedicated themselves towards a two-dimensional national cause.

Not only were they determined to win the global space war for the country, they were resolute on their stance to break all barriers of discrimination and bigotry that had taken a toll on the US society. What makes them stand out from the rest is that rather than waging rebellion or fueling civil chaos, they went for setting an exemplary path and made themselves an eternal example for generations to come, that 'success and achievement know no discrimination or boundaries.'

Hidden Figures, the New York Times' instant best seller and a breakthrough motion picture in the making, is Margot Lee Shetterly's tribute to the heroic deeds of the female black mathematicians who lead the crucial project from the front and helped the United States win the space race.

Having been the founding president of NASA's Human Computers Project, Margot Lee Shetterly unveils the inspiring and eye-popping tale of effort and struggle of Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, Christine Darden, and herself that have been little known till date.

It hovers through the unknown corners of their happening careers spanning over 3 decades, and reveals stories of courage and struggle that are astonishing, frustrating, frightening, and inspiring and takes one on an epic ride back to the unexplored areas in the corridors of national history.

Hidden Figures – The Underlying Philosophy!

Hidden Figures – The Underlying Philosophy!

Peeking at Racism through the Story's Lens – A Tale of Accomplishments beyond Limitations and Confinements!

Margot Lee Shetterly, Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden might just have been any other women hailing from an ethnic minority in the United States. They might have met the same fate that billions of others of similar ancestry had landed for centuries. They had a fair chance to blame their fate, oppression, and backwardness on the humiliation and mistreatment coming from the camp of the groups which were in majority.

They might have accused it on the societal biases that had been preventing the African-Americans, the Hispanics, and the other oppressed groups from making some groundbreaking feats.

At a time when racial profiling and gender-based stereotyping had become a part of the norms, confining the scope of not just roles, but one's potential and skills as well, they could have surrendered to the humiliation suffered at the hands of those who practiced it. They could have given in to the lack of opportunities for growth and they might have negated the reality of their strengths and could have accepted themselves as the meeker and feeble counterparts to the strong and dominant male gender.

With such odd circumstances, so little hope, no mentor to follow, and no inspiration to lead, anyone would have easily accepted defeat! However, for someone with an average IQ and extraordinary cognitive skills, obstacles like these come as a pushing force, a motivation thrill, and a catalyst for progress.

That is precisely what happened in the case of the aforementioned ladies, the little-known "wonder women" of American history, the unsung heroes whose names never shined whenever we talked about the United States' pursuit of the throne for global space supremacy.

Margot Lee Shetterly, Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden illustrate another picture of the US society, depicting its potential, penchant for vision, and a passion to defy odds and the typical American go-getter approach.

Hidden Figures might strike to you as an inspirational and jaw-dropping story entailing those truths and realities about US history which have never been revealed before. It is actually a depiction of the collective potential of Americans, especially the women, that when they commit themselves to a cause, the sky becomes their limit and nothing can prevent them from landing their dream. When she was asked about how the entire tale reflects back to her on a recent visit to Hampton town, she said,

"The thrilling thing to me about the book and the movie is this is an American story that we're getting to see, through the faces of these women."

This could not be truer! The trailer's release has escalated the hype and at a time when a female candidate has recently conceded in the race for presidency, the story will infuse new life among the masses to look ahead towards the future with renewed hope and optimism.

Three Things I learned about Leadership from the Hidden Figures

Leadership, as a subjective idea, has always been a matter of great debate. While some declare it as purely an inborn trait, others refute this thought and claim that it can be learned too. Whatever the case may be, leadership as a universal phenomenon has always remained under the critic's lens and a subject of great interest for researchers and intellectuals' attempts to figure out what is it in a person that actually compels him to stand out of the hoard of sheep and opt for his own way.

Hidden Figures, Margot Lee Shetterly's account of struggle leading to excellence, might just be another inspiring tale for some. In actuality, it is not just a beacon of awe and inspiration but a treasure trove of concealed lessons and subliminal messages. Here are some key lessons about leadership that clicked to me while going through Margot Lee Shetterly's account of NASA's wonder women and unsung heroes of the US history that made the United States' conquest for space supremacy possible.

Lesson 1: Leadership Cannot Be Constrained

You can constrain or trap a person, but you cannot contain the leader in them. Leadership, in its very essence, possesses a philia towards the unconventional, the unordinary, and the odd. Leadership flourishes in the most unfavorable of circumstances and resists all limitations and boundaries that stand in its path.

This is evident through the struggle of the legendary female mathematicians that brought the US' dream of space and aeronautical supremacy to life. They had to fight against two-dimensional discrimination: first, being a weaker human species, and second, as a result of hailing from a colored race. The biases and bigotries could not stop the leader in them.

By successfully breaking all stereotypes and limitations, they made it to their dream.

Lesson 2: Leadership is Not Defined by a Position or Designation

Leadership stems from one's mindset and perceptions and is defined by the resilience, decisiveness, and the spontaneity of reaction in a particular situation. In retrospect of Hidden Figures, Margot Lee Shetterly, Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden started small, without any name or fame to their claim. However, it was all because of their fight against the tide that they broke the stereotypes and status quo and managed to achieve a national dream.

Lesson 3: Leadership Flourishes beyond Your Personal Interests

The success story of NASA's first ever Human Computers is a great example of selflessness and an unwavering commitment to the national cause. Also, it validates that being self-centered and pursuing to preserve a personal interest is something that can be expected from everyone. It takes a great deal of courage to overlook and push aside your own visions and goals and commit yourself to a bigger cause.

While the rest of the racial groups were busy challenging the state through rebellion and chaos, Margot Lee Shetterly, Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden realized the country's needs in the global perspective and committed themselves to the national cause.

Women in the Civil Rights Movement!

Behind every successful man, there is a woman. This notion might be questionable and disputed for its authenticity in our everyday life, but when it comes to a matter of as great importance as that of the US Civil Rights Movement, it was actually the women devotees that fueled the cause and led from behind, the journey in pursuit of the dream.

Standing by the shoulder of their male counterparts, the women civil rights activists did not gain as much limelight and prominence on the national sphere. However, this could not keep them from committing themselves to the cause with all their heart and soul.

Be it Ella Baker, Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hammer of SCLC and SNCC who raised their voice against the segregation for whites and blacks in the societal sphere, in public transport, counters and schools, or Maya Angelou, who infused magic through her poems and prose, and hundreds and thousands of other women who followed suit.

All were determined and had made it the prime purpose of their life to free the United States from the clasp of inter-racial bigotries. This would not be an exaggeration if we say that had it not been for them and their selfless commitment, the Civil Rights movement might have met a totally different fate.

While the male activists were busy leading processions, delivering fiery speeches and leading the cause from the front, women worked behind the stage to their bones to keep the cause fueled and alive. Daisy Bates, the founding president of NAACP, highlighted the black's points of views through her newspaper publications. Dorothy Height founded the National Women's Political Caucus and worked as the leading activists' right hand.

Diane Nash, a brilliant student leader and activist for women's suffrage cause, Jo Ann Robinson, who initiated the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Septima Poinsette Clark, the 'Mother of American Civil Rights Movement'; there is a long list of women contributors to the movement.

Talking about the era of the civil rights movement, it would be unfair to mention the names of those unsung women heroes who preferred the national cause over the matter of their rights, and committed themselves to make the United States win the global quest for space and aeronautical supremacy. Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden were all engaged in NASA's first ever Human Computer Project led by Margot Lee Shetterly.

The efforts of these wonder women, all hailing from the African-American ethnicity and fighting for the national cause, as well as the aforementioned ladies dedicated to the civil cause, all of them are a testament to the fact that women have always played a vital role in the achievement and pursuit of grand causes. However, why their names and efforts are seldom paid due credit and tribute says a lot about our collective bias and bigoted approach to remembering history and acknowledging our legends.

UNIT 5: THE MAGNIFICENTSEVEN

It Takes Courage and Commitment to Overcome Evil!

Each day is followed by night and, after each dark night, a bright new day comes along. While you will bask in the glorious sunshine on some days, you will be trapped in dark clouds and rainstorms on the others.

This is only natural; it is only when we know what it would be like to NOT have something that we learn to value the good things in our life. Similarly, truths and lies, good and evil, courage and cowardice, compassion and indifference, arrogance and humility, and knowledge and ignorance too run in parallel with each other. It is all a matter of our own choice about what we opt to follow.

While it is always easier to surrender to the negativity and give in to the evil, it is the very testament of our fine humane values when we choose the other and more difficult way. We stand steadfast, resilient, and choose what seems right to us instead of what seems easy! This is why it said that it is only our choices that make us who we are.

However, choosing truth over a lie, good over bad, and right over wrong demands courage, commitment, and resilience on our part. When we choose what's right, we do not merely pick a side; rather, we have to counter the odds. We have to deal with all the parallel negative forces that attempt to shake our faith, weaken our beliefs, and challenge our integrity.

These negative forces try everything to stomp on our ambition and force us away from the virtuous path. Some of us will be lured by the mirages and illusions the evil puts in our way, while some will be afraid of the consequences they might have to bear. However, keeping ourselves grounded on what our heart says is right, committing to it, and embracing it as our moral obligation is the very thing that makes us human, the most superior of all creations.

When we muster up our strength and courage and pledge it in our heart to resist, fight and overcome evil, there won't be many of us who will support others in the cause. We might even find ourselves standing alone. But remember, when you choose to stand up to evil, help, support and guidance happens to come to you from sources you never knew existed.

As we see in the movie *The Magnificent Seven*, the local residents of Rose Creek Town were left with no choice but to fight for their freedom and survival with the bandits sent over by Bogue. Since they had been into farming for centuries, they had little knowledge about warfare and the aggressive and violent means to counter evil. But when they decided that they will not surrender in the feet of Bogue and become a victim of his atrocities, help was sent to them in the face of 'the magnificent seven' who came, saw, and conquered the battlefield, killing Bogue and banishing his bandits in the process.

The Spiritual Theme of The Magnificent Seven

It might be just a story to some or just an action-packed movie to many others. However, if you cast a deeper look into the crux of the plot, you will get lessons in the intriguing, exciting, adventurous and enthralling theme of The Magnificent Seven.

A 2016 remake of the 1960's hit flick, The Magnificent Seven is actually a story of a small village and its inhabitants besieged by a group of bandits who won't settle for any less than their life, property, honor, and freedom.

The poor villagers, who had spent their entire lives growing and farming crops, had never encountered such a situation in their lives and hence, had little to no wits or the ability to blow away the clouds of peril and fear.

However, it is said that when God sends adversity, He accompanies it with help and prepares you first. So, from this perspective, the so-named Magnificent Seven were actually an essential part of God's perfect scheme of things and were bestowed upon the villagers as part of a Divine plan. While this perspective depicts a persona of the Magnificent Seven as saviors to the grievances of the doomed villagers, another perspective reflects a different story.

The brutal bandits sent over by the megalomaniac Bartholomew Bogue to raid and destroy the village had ruined many lives in the past. Their entire lives were marred with evils and atrocities that they had brought to the helpless and the innocent. Bogue himself was involved in mass murders of young girls and women in the past, which was revealed in the closing moments of the movie by Chisholm when he was strangling Bogue to death.

From this dimension, The Magnificent Seven makes an impressive reminder of the ultimate lesson of Karma – what you sow, so shall you reap!

The Magnificent Seven is an intriguing tale that takes us back to the 19th century. The entire storyline is punctuated with strong and subtle references to religion and spirituality. Rose Creek's Church has been depicted as a metaphoric Divine power and a beacon of guidance. A superficial overview of the story will reveal it as a tale of an ongoing fight between the virtuous and the evil but the underlying theme will shake your nerves. It will compel you to broaden the scope of your intellect and question the acts of forgiveness, retribution, and sacrifice.

On many points, it will compel you to ponder over the purpose of life, the Divine plan, and the significance of your role in a situation. It will help you understand the power of sympathy, empathy and sacrifice.

The Magnificent Seven is not solely a religious movie in any aspect, except for the prayers and Biblical references that a character is often seen uttering throughout the movie. However, for those who like to unearth a deeper philosophy from everything, the movie will be good food for thought to question the purpose of your existence, understand the significance of a situation, and God's intentions behind everything that happens.

Teamwork, Diversity and the Pursuit of a Mutual Goal!

When those with different strengths come together and join hands, milestones are achieved and great things are accomplished!

To choose to fight as a lone warrior and emerge victorious might inspire many of us. However, there might be situations where standing alone against the odds might not just be your choice, rather a compulsion upon you.

In a situation where everything you fear losing is put at stake and the only way to survive is to stand against the odds, the need to win becomes an obligation. A situation like this might be nerve-racking, but what is worthy of note is the fact that you rarely lose when all you own is at stake.

However, just like all heroes don't wear capes, you do not essentially have to stand alone to be a hero, especially if you have a cause that concerns many and when it is a matter of life, freedom, and survival of an entire community. A smart approach here is to look for brothers in arms and fight as one. You might idealize and admire Batman's solo approach, but there are often times when circumstances demand more than your capacity to handle. What do you do then?

Learn? Not ideally as time is incessantly phasing out. Give in? Get ready to live a life worse than hell or die like a loser. Fight Alone? But for how long?

It is in situations and circumstances like these that you need a team and some people by your side. Your team does not essentially have to comprise people like you with the same skills as you have. It is when people of different backgrounds, thought processes and a variety of skills of their own come together and join hands that a winning team is formed. A team that is diverse in its composition and is held together by a single and mutually shared goal is more likely to achieve what it has aimed to.

When there is a certain goal ahead of you and achieving it is a matter of life and death, where everyone puts in their best effort, utilizes their cognitive acumen, contributes their own essential part, and takes it as their moral obligation, success eventually becomes your fate.

Though the 'magnificence' of *The Magnificent Seven* might be questionable to many, the movie resonates a strong message through the entire storyline, one which is about teamwork and diversity driven by a mutually-shared vision or goal. It is the message of teamwork and the significance of a combined struggle in pursuit of a mutual goal.

The Magnificent Seven were a group of seven individuals who hailed from different backgrounds, had their own skills and expertise, and barely knew each other before coming together. However, destiny brought them together on a single platform and invoked it in their hearts to liberate the doomed Rose Creek Town from the curse of Bogue.

An individual fighting Bogue's militia alone definitely would not have succeeded. Thus, it was all because of the cumulative effect of their individual contribution that they managed to succeed and bring Bogue a fate that he truly deserved.

The Magnificent Seven - Three Leadership Takeaways!

The magnificent Seven can conveniently be placed into the genre of action and thrill. However, the idea to draw self-help as well as inspirational and leadership lessons out of the movie might not click with many of us due to the way in which it is depicted. In actuality, aside from the obvious theme, plot, and storyline, the movie is an intriguing and fascinating tale of leadership that blooms and nurtures in the most unfavorable circumstances.

It is only after graduating through a series of incidents and consequences that the situation turns in the favor of the protagonists.

- Leadership is Selfless and Empathetic

When Mathew Cullen, the leader of the local villagers, mustered his group to stand against the bandits sent over by the corrupt and power hungry Bartholomew Bogue, they were brutally slaughtered and the entire village was left at the mercy of the bandits. Devastated by this brutality, Mathew Cullen's wife, Emma Cullen, sneaks out to a nearby town to plea to someone.

Destiny brings her to Sam Chisholm, who at first declines her requests and pleas. When she narrates the entire tale of the horrendous crimes that Bogue and his bandits were committing in the village, Sam Chisholm could not contain the leader in him to rise and took it as his moral obligation to do everything in his might to save the poor villages from the brutality of Bogue.

- Leadership Nurtures Beyond any Confinements

While Bartholomew Bogue was causing havoc on earth by exercising his power and illegitimate authority to bring adversities to the innocents by leading raids, invasions, and intrusions to increase his riches and the domain of his authority, a counteracting force was silently breeding in the face of Young Sam Chisholm.

The warrant officer was a kid back then who had little idea about how power can drive a sane mind crazy. Reality hit him the hard way when he witnessed his own mother and sisters being hit, dragged, and murdered by Bogue and his bandits. He was small at that time and all he knew was to keep his cries suppressed and witness the brutality that fate had brought to the poor souls. He could have died, he could have surrendered, and he could have led a paralyzed life by hallucinating about those horrific visions. However, the atrocities of the circumstances fueled his motivation rather than leaving him scarred for life.

Against all odds, he grew up and turned out to be that opposing power that was to rule over Bogue and his brutality. As a result, Bogue eventually died in his hands.

- Leadership Stems from a Strong Self Belief

Faith and belief in oneself is the ultimate ground that triggers the potential of being a fearless leader. Sam Chisholm and the rest of the Magnificent Seven all came from different backgrounds and had their fair share of the atrocities during their life. While they could have opted for a life of fear and oppression just like the villagers and all others who had given in to the power of Bogue, they refused to let his tyranny rule over them.

Not only that, they themselves challenged the authority of Bogue and also emerged as the saviors of thousands of others who had been a victim of the curse of Bogue for their entire lives.

Why are They Called The Magnificent Seven?

Different Backgrounds, Varying Professions – One Single Identity!

Sam Chisholm, the leader of the magnificent Seven, was a young warrant officer of African-American ethnicity serving in Kansas. He was strong, ambitious, and empathic and had it in him to question power and overcome brutality. The circumstances he grew up in refined the key attributes of his personality and nurtured the leader in him.

Goodnight Robicheaux, a part of the magnificent seven, was a confederate veteran and had the inherent precision and expertise in shooting targets right at the mark no matter what the distance was. Goodnight Robicheaux, despite his prestigious position, was often found lost, haunted by his tragic past. Little did he know that Destiny was preparing him for a greater cause, to sacrifice his life fighting the evil of Bogue shadowing Rose Creek town.

The young and carefree Billy Rocks had a liking to knives – knives of all shapes, types, makes, and sizes. Billy Rocks was an East-Asian immigrant and an assassin who liked to invest in his knives. He turned out to be a valuable member for the Magnificent Seven and died fighting Bogue's men.

Joshua Faraday was more of a person of pomp and show. He was a womanizer and was extremely addicted to gambling. However, despite his rather carefree approach to life, when the situation demanded him to contribute against evil, he could not stay back. Leaving behind all his fondness for women and gambling, he sacrificed his life while destroying the Gatling Gun, the most dreadful weapon of Bogue.

Vasquez, another member of the Magnificent Seven, was a fugitive hailing from Mexico. He had been on the run for a couple of months before eventually ending up becoming one of the core members of the Magnificent Seven.

Red Harvest was the youngest of the group and had a deep sense of commitment and responsibility. He had formerly served as a warrior in the Comanche region and was exiled from the corps. He turned out to be one of the three members of the Magnificent Seven who survived and were victorious in their battle against Bogue.

Jack Home was a man of faith and spirituality. He was a native resident of Rose Creek town and had excellent navigation and trekking skills. His firm faith in God and His divine plans kept him optimistic and assured him throughout the course of adversities that the perilous clouds of atrocities would vanish one day and Rose Creek would bask in peace and prosperity once again.

The Magnificent Seven had little in common among one another. They hailed from different atrocities, had unique expertise of their own, and had their own likings and interests. Destiny had kept them apart and brought them up in different circumstances so that their individual skills would cumulate to trigger a forceful impact against the tyranny of Bogue and free Rose Creek town from the clutches of Bogue and his bandits. Rocks, Faraday, Horne, and Robicheaux sacrificed their lives for the cause, while Chisholm, Vasquez, and Red Harvest survived. Having accomplished their mission, they bade farewell to Rose Creek Town, leaving behind the legends of their courage and magnificence in the hearts of the native residents.

UNIT 6: REFLECTING ON THE BLACK HISTORY

“I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.” – Thomas Jefferson

All changes, major and minor, are driven by one prime factor – Time! Effort, perseverance, and resilience might have their own significance, but change paves its way regardless. That is the reason it is said that time heals, changes and mends everything. Whether you are basking in the glory of success or gloom has taken over you, everything is bound by one universal truth: 'This too shall pass'.

It is this universal phenomenon that keeps a tiny flame ignited to warm our hearts - the spark that we call hope! A dream about the future is the by-product of time and hope combined. We all possess this innate philia to look forward to what's coming next and figure out what's hidden behind the mysterious veils of time.

However, as much as it pleases us to imagine where we might be heading in the future, it is equally important to remember where we have come from. It is important to stick to our roots while taking that giant leap forward into the future. An acceptance of our past, no matter how hideous it was, enables us to identify what is it that we do not want to be a part of our lives in the future.

This acceptance, leading to realization, is the key to transform the future not just for ourselves, but also for those around us. And when it is a matter of national interest, the past can become your beacon of inspiration to identify your future goals and to carve your way towards your self-designed destiny. This is an obligation on our part for we are history in the making. 100 years from now, the future generations will look back at us, assess and judge our lifestyle, our collective thought processes and our outlook on matters of social and national interests, the same way we do it while going through history in movies and textbooks.

The idea of reviving the lost American glory and making America great again enthralls and overwhelms us. However, in order to convert the American Dream into a reality, it is an obligation upon our generation to contribute something meaningful and impactful, something that not only transforms our future, but also inspires our coming generations.

In order to make America great again, we need to establish a solid vision for the future and understand that our greatest strength lies in embracing our diversity and making collective efforts towards the future. We have to detest racism in all fragments of society; instead, we should focus on sharing knowledge pertaining to black history and how it significance.

It is an obligation upon us to stay true to our integrity, our moral values and preserve our social and cultural norms. The future stems from the ashes of the past. It is okay to dwell on the dreams of the future, but it is more important to make them happen. This is how we can construct a tomorrow that is better than our past and present. This is how we can revive the American dream!

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived; but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.” - Maya Angelou

Suffering – It is inevitable! The universe maintains itself in a harmonic equilibrium by offering everything with a polar contradiction. Day and night, hope and despair, storms and sunshine, and pretty much everything else. This is a universal phenomenon - that in order to bask in the glory of something, you will also have to face the hideous side of it.

Everything comes as a combo package of good and bad, and you can either accept it entirely or lose it all. This might sound quite distressing, but this is exactly how we learn the value of something – by getting a bitter taste of what it would be like to not have something at all in the first place. This is how we learn the value of something.

If your present is good, there is a good chance you have had your share of suffering in the past. The sunshine always peeps from the silver lining of clouds. No matter how hideous it was, no matter what you had to suffer, and no matter how you made it through, your adversities and tribulations have now become a thing of the past, and a bright new present has dawned upon you.

You cannot go back and change something that should not have happened. You cannot deny it either. Your pain and suffering is a concrete reality that might still make a shiver go down your spine. But, the good thing about it is that sooner or later, it eventually ends. And while you cannot possibly erase its traces from your life, the encouraging thing to note is that you wouldn't have to relive it either.

It is important to accept our past and embrace the darker aspects of our history. This does not mean holding on to bygones and forgetting to live in the present. It means learning from the suffering of your past and constructing a better present and future out of it. The rule applies to our personal as well as professional lives.

On a broader scale, with an understating of the history and past, a struggling nation paves its way toward greatness and glory. It is essential for a nation to stay connected to its roots, and impart its historic legacy and heritage to its coming generations, to remind them where they actually hail from.

The idea is not to repeat the history all over again, or to make the younger ones get a taste of what their ancestors suffered in the past. It is to make them understand the mistakes that were made in the past, and how they can prevent them from happening in the future.

Black History Month is an annual commemoration to learn and recall how we as a nation have survived, grown, and evolved - fighting the menacing challenge of racism, segregation, and acquiring civil rights.

The objective behind the Black History Month is to develop a realistic idea about our history in young minds, and lay the foundation for a future that is secure, prosperous, and brighter than the past.

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.” - Marcus Garvey

Nothing can teach you better than the mistakes you made in past. Looking back on your history, assessing where you went wrong and reflecting on what you might have done better is a good way to prevent the same damage from occurring in future. The only way you can construct a future that is better than your past is by remembering and learning from history itself. No matter how hideous your past was, it is essential to hold onto your roots and accept where you hail from.

In the present-age scenario where the great American divide is more visible than ever, it has become a compulsion upon us to teach our younger generation about how we, as a nation, have evolved. It is important to introduce them to the darker side of our history so that they won't repeat the mistakes made by our predecessors. Racism is as much of a national issue today as it was in the past. To understand it to its core, it is essential to teach black history to young American generations.

The menacing issue of racism might have changed its form, but it is still very much alive and is a part of our society. The incidents of racism have become an inherent part of our lives, so much so that we are slowly becoming insensitive towards it. This is primarily because racism manifests itself in the actions, gestures and behaviors of the people of the majority, while the colored minorities stay at the suffering end.

Imparting knowledge about the history of racism and highlighting the contributions of the colored races to the growth and development of America is a good way to prevent us from evolving into an undivided nation.

Racism is an issue that questions the unity of the United States, something our nation is so proud of that it even carries it in its name. Teaching black history at school will not merely shed light on the suffering the blacks have faced in the form of racial biases and civil rights movements. Rather, it can be used as a significant tool to highlight the contributions of the black people in the spheres of art, science and technology, religion, society, international affairs, business and trade, and public welfare.

This way, we can efficiently infuse it in the minds of the younger generations that we, as Americans, are equal. Even though we might have a different skin color, there is nothing that differentiates us, makes one superior or the other inferior. This will foster multiculturalism, promote inter-cultural harmony and will also create a sense of acceptance and peaceful coexistence. It will help the young minds and future leaders to appreciate our cultural diversity and eradicate the racial phobias that have continually haunted us, standing as the biggest hurdle for us to evolve into a truly united collaboration of the American states.

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” – Confucius

There are two ways you can address an unfavorable situation: Flight or fight! The easiest way out is to flee, turn a blind eye, assume that the problem never existed, and get indulged into self-delusion. The other way requires a tough choice on one's part. It demands courage, willingness, and dedication to stand upright in the face of the adversity and fight it with all your might.

However, even with all these attributes combined, you might not be able to overcome the hardship. With all good intentions at heart and even after putting your best efforts in, you might get knocked hard to the rock bottom. It is right there that you need perseverance and resilience – the ultimate willpower to muster your strengths again, and stand up to test your fate again.

Resilience is the prime element in the equation of success. The entire idea is not about winning at the very first attempt. The idea is to never give up. You must have heard the story of King Bruce of Scotland, who was badly defeated in a war with the King of England. Having lost six consecutive battles, the king could barely save his life and fled towards a deserted place. Dejected and defeated, with many of his men killed and a militia astray, the entire kingdom was put to stake.

The king had lost all of his strengths and hopes and as he sat, injured and in complete despair, he saw a spider trying to weave its web. It tried again and again and each time it would fail and fell back on the ground. The misfortune prevailed for six attempts and finally, the seventh try took the spider to where it was aiming for. Inspired by the spider's resilience, the king called his men and decided to make the seventh try.

Now that the king had learned his lesson, the seventh attempt against the raiders from England went successful, and King Bruce managed to restore his kingdom. The story might sound more like a fable, but our history is punctuated with many such examples of courage and resilience of men and women who never gave up on their vision. No matter how harsh the odds, they stood steadfast on their vision and goals, and with slow, steady but consistent efforts, they too carved the path for a destiny that we are living today.

In commemoration of the efforts of our civil right heroes, and to pay homage and gratitude for their efforts, we celebrate Black History Month, every year in February. The tribute week is a means to inspire our coming generations and future leaders to believe in the power of their dreams, and stay resilient for what they want to achieve. It is to remind us all that:

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph.” - Haile Selassie

How you act and react in a particular situation tells a lot about the kind of a person that you are. That is probably why it is said that an adversity is actually a litmus test that distinguishes your friends from foes, and lifts the veil off many faces that you previously used to count on. Of course, this eye-opening realization might not be a pleasant surprise; it might even be heartbreaking. But, it definitely is a blessing in disguise, for you get to know the reality of not just yourself but also of those around you!

The times of adversities call for some sincere, dedicated efforts and response, from everyone who is a part of the situation, as per their own skills and strengths. This comes as an obligation, especially if the issue or situation directly correlates with a matter of social, communal, or national interest. However, it is during such times that you will be surprised by the strange ways some people reveal their efforts and intents.

There will be some ready to bridge the crevasses and overcome obstacles, and then there will be those who turn all indifferent, as if the issue had never bothered them anyway. And sadly, you will find both of these types inside your own camp.

History stands witness to countless events and incidents that happened not because of the assaults of the nemesis, but because of the silence or deception of the friends. Imagine if Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and all other eminent revolutionaries who changed the world for good, had chosen to keep quiet and stayed indifferent instead.

Imagine what our world would look like, had they not taken it as their responsibility and contributed their worthy roles. You might consider your efforts as insignificant, no worthier than a tiny drop in an entire ocean. However, it is right then and there that you must realize that it is not about how much you contribute; it is about how well you play it. You may choose to rise and stand with your people, or you may choose to go silent.

Whatever path you choose to pursue, it will become a part of history someday. And history has its own ways of taking revenge, and it is all in your own hands, whether you choose to become a hero or a villain worse than the enemies.. It is not about winning or losing, or the successful returns of our efforts. What counts above all is the purity of your intent and how it reflects through your words and actions.

“The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis. In dangerous times, there is no sin greater than inaction.”
- Dan Brown, *Inferno*