

# YOUTHWITHAFUTURE™

## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM YOUTH WITH A FUTURE



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

*Learning from the past to transform our future*

DR. ROBERT FOMER FOR  
YOUNG EMERGING URBAN LEADERS

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Youth with a Future -Transformational Leadership Forum!

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***Peeping into Our Future through the Lens of  
Our Past!***

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***A review of books, movies and the opening  
of the New African-American Museum in  
Washington DC***

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# “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, religious lives, our collective thought processes and our outlook on matters of moral, 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 lives and 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 religious values, 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's 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.

The 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 come 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 pri-

marily 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 United States.

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

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 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.”*

## **UNIT 2: ‘THE BIRTH OF A NATION’ BY NATE PARKER**

# 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 spreads 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 Virgin-



ian Rebellion led by Nat Turner, the enslaved black preacher and his enslaved African-American followers.

The 1915's 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, sub-human 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. 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.

# 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. But it is right then and there, 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.

# 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 Barrack 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 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. And this is also important 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

has been breeding and passing the notion of racism to coming generations. This is the prime reason that deep inside, we are not the United States, we are 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 his fellow black slaves, could not contain the anger that has been bubbling in the black race for centuries.

The rebellion, that 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's is a universal phenomenon that everything comes with its polar contradiction. Just like day and night, happiness and gloom, hope and despair, truth and lie, 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 to put a block the path of the 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 3: ‘HIDDEN FIGURES’- BY MARGOT LEE SHETTERLY**

# ‘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 ever get to see a female name get as much of prominence and fame as John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, or Martin Lutherking 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 Computer Project, Margot Lee Shetterly unveils the inspiring and eye-popping tales of efforts and struggles 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!

*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 talk about the United States’ pursuit of the throne of global space supremacy.

*Margot Lee Shetterly, Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden illustrate present 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 is 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 successfully 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.

## **UNIT 4: THE NEW 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.

This 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 in top cities and 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.

# 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 depositories 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 – 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. But, 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 all the major cities and states of the United States will not just be a cultural landmark to preserve the history, but it 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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, United States into reality.