Lesson Plan
In conjunction with the exhibition presented
at the California African American Museum
March 20 – September 8, 2019

THE LIBERATOR
CHRONICLING BLACK LOS ANGELES, 1900–1914
Lesson Plan

Race, Representation, and History: Los Angeles & The Liberator

Overview

*The Liberator* is an early 20th century (1900–1914) Los Angeles African American monthly news magazine whose owner and editor, Jefferson Lewis Edmonds, was born enslaved and spent his young adulthood in bondage before Emancipation. Edmonds was educated in Mississippi Freedmen’s Bureau schools and went on to become a farmer, a teacher, and an ardent proponent of voting. In 1875, he testified before a congressional committee investigating violent incursions against the voting rights of African Americans. He moved west to Los Angeles due to threats against his family.

He established *The Liberator* in Los Angeles in 1900 and was an early booster of Los Angeles as a destination for African American migration. He spoke out against racism and injustice in Los Angeles while also proclaiming the city to be a haven compared to the South’s Jim Crow and constant threats of violence. *The Liberator* was one of LA’s earliest African American newspapers along with the California Eagle and the Los Angeles Sentinel in 1933.

In this lesson, students will learn to work with historic sources by reading stories from digitized issues of *The Liberator*. They will examine how the paper portrayed a community that was mostly misrepresented or ignored by larger news publications. They will discuss whether the same issues of misrepresentation and inattention still plague mainstream news outlets today.

Materials:

- *The Liberator*, Volume 9, Issue 5, November 22, 1912
- Video: The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords (available free on Canopy with LA Public Library card)

Theme focus: Representation in the Media

75-90 minute lesson

Recommendation for two shorter 45-50 minute class periods: Do activities 1-3 on the first day. On the second day, begin with revisiting what they learned on the first day before doing activities 4-6.
Activities

1. For background, watch the first 20 minutes of *The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords*.

2. Journal prompt: Consider the quote below. What does Vernon Jarett mean when he says, “we were truly invisible?” Can you explain a time when you felt invisible? Why? Can you identify a time when you felt visible in LA media? In what way did you see yourself represented in the news?

In the documentary, *The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords*, the late journalist Vernon Jarett described the importance of African American community newspapers to the communities they covered.

“We didn’t exist in the other papers. We were neither born, we didn’t get married, we didn’t die, we didn't fight in any wars, we never participated in anything of a scientific achievement. We were truly invisible unless we committed a crime. But in the BLACK PRESS, the negro press, we did get married. They showed us our babies being born. They showed us graduating. They showed our PhDs.”

3. Dive into the newspaper. Have students in groups look closely at one issue of *The Liberator*. What types of news did *The Liberator* cover? Find an example of each of the following:

- Los Angeles political news
- National political news
- News about local businesses
- Local events
- Social news

Group discussion: Within these examples, what picture does *The Liberator* paint of LA identity?

Read the next two stories as a whole class to be able to discuss the questions that follow.

4. In the story “NO COLORED ZONE Undertaker Has Monopoly” on page 3, why were the undertakers denied a lease?

- How does this story show the invisibility of the African American community at the time?
- Why is it important today?
- Have you seen examples of this in your community?

5. In the story, “Heroic Elevator Boy Saves Many Lives,” what does Jefferson Edmonds have to say about the way white-run newspapers depict African Americans?

- The *Los Angeles Times* did print several stories related to the fire at the St. George Hotel, but it did not print any about the elevator operator. What factors might have contributed to the difference in coverage between the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Liberator*?
- How might this story have been covered by other newspapers?
- Do you believe that Mr. Edmonds’ opinions on the way African Americans were represented in the white-owned news media of his day are still true today?
- What other groups might be misrepresented or underrepresented or feel “in visible” in today’s mainstream press?

6. After the group discussion, revisit the initial journal. What did you learn about how *The Liberator* made previously invisible people and experiences visible? What questions or hopes do you now have about LA media today? Optional: Invite students to share some of their thoughts on representation in media after this lesson.

ENDNOTES


Contributions made by:

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FIVE KILLED IN PANIC AT EARLY MORNING FIRE.

St. George Hotel Totally Destroyed by Flames of Unknown Origin.

Guests in Hastily Hurled Themselves from Windows of the Six-Story Building to Death or Injury on Pavements—Heretic Work of Firemen Uncalling in Subduing Blaze, but Many Lives Saved.

At least five persons and perhaps several more were killed and a dozen others seriously injured, some perhaps fatally, in a fire which at midnight destroyed the St. George Hotel on East Third Street between Los Angeles and Main streets. The building lost is $80,000; insurance $18,000; total loss may be $75,000.

The Dead.

Mrs. Charlotte Harrington.

Eliza Moe, 20, actress.

Joseph Martin, 38, single, jewelry dealer, No. 564 South Main street.

Year-old child of Mrs. Moran, body found burned to crisp.

Mrs. —— ARTIUK, burned and crushed on pavement.

Totally Injured.

Julius Malone, 38, engineer St. George Hotel. He was asleep when the fire broke out and is severely burned. Will die.

Frank J. Bock, 21, sprained back. Jumped from fourth floor.

Mrs. Frank J. Bock, 23, broken back. Perhaps will die. Jumped from first floor.

Otherwise Injured.

Miss Fern McAlpin, leading lady of the Century company, sprain of left arm.

R. E. Hess, proprietor St. George: right arm fractured.

Mrs. Alice E. Hess, right arm fractured.

Frank J. Bock, 31, employed in Southern Pacific yards at Sacramento; sprained back.

Mrs. Frank J. Bock, 22; sprained back.

R. E. Harriss, 21, roller skater, contusions of nose and back.

Mrs. Anna Harriss, 21, roller skater, severely sprained back.

Jefferson Osborne, pictured actor, severely burned about face and arms. Harrington baby, slightly burned on right side of face.

Unidentified man, severely burned about face and body; possibly injured internally.

Eddie Webster, contusion of head and slight burns.

Unidentified elevator boy, severely burned about head, limbs and body; in critical condition.

Frank J. Bock, 34, sprained back back.

Petty Blair, actress, Adolphus; right hand badly burned; suffering from shock.

George Fellows, actor; sprained ankle, received in jumping from second story. Slight burns about face and neck.

Lor A. Ward, comedian with New Foole's "Dellertessen Shop" at Empress; slightly burned; was overcome by smoke and rescued by firemen on third floor.

Fred Wells, traveling salesman; jumped from second floor; slightly bruised about head and body.

G. W. Wolfaul, broken leg.

Two of those killed met death by jumping. They missed the outspread firemen's nets and were crushed on the pavement.

A year-old baby was found on the third floor, burned to a crisp. Evidently some mother, blindly groping and but half-conscious, dropped the little one in her flight and was too dazed to know what she did.

Women and men did not wait to use the elevators or fire escapes, but leaped out of windows and some were caught in nets of the firemen.

(Continued on Second Page)
ing ablaze he fought his way to the
open air where he was picked up and
placed in the ambulance.

INCIDENTS OF FIRE.

Patrolman F. E. Walker caught a
baby which was thrown from a blaz-
ing third-story window. The child
was burned about the feet and was
so badly shaken up by the shock that
she is not expected to live.

Frank Bernard, who is with the
Delicatessen company at the Empress
theater is greatly alarmed on account
of his associates who were staying at
the hotel. He was unable to locate
them up to a late hour.

Twelve members of Pan-American's
theater company were stopping at the
hotel. All are said to be accounted
for.

Officer Robinson was one of the
first to arrive and he rescued several
men and women from the third and
fourth floors. He was slightly burned
and almost suffocated. Sgt. Hoover
was the first to turn in the alarm at
Third and Broadway. He rushed to
the hotel and found it a mass of
flames from the second story up. He
rescued three women and helped two
men to the fire escape.

Mort Schaffer, an actor with the
Elonore Ola Company at Pantages,
says he was awakened by cries of fire.
He rushed to the door and saw a
bellboy's clothes ablaze running
along the corridor and yelling "Fire"
and "awakening the guests. Schaffer
escaped down a fire escape and
jumped from the second floor and
was uninjured. He saw the boy fall
as he was making his way upstairs.

RESCUES HIS DOG.

Charles Hepler, a bicyclist appear-
ing at Pantages Theater, was one of
the first to leave the building, com-
ing down the elevator from the fourth
floor. He was fully dressed. Twenty
minutes after he reached the street,
Deaths in Panic.

(Continued from Front Page)

It was a sight of women and men who fled from their upper stories of the building, the flames already well advanced. This was the scene of the fire which occurred in the St. George Hotel, 600 State Drive, Los Angeles, on the evening of September 2, 1924. The hotel is a three-story building with a basement and a fourth floor. The fire started on the third floor, which was occupied by the Café de Nettlé and the St. George Hotel. The fire spread rapidly to the other floors, and the flames consumed the entire building.

The pictures show the panic and confusion that ensued as the occupants of the hotel attempted to escape. The stairways were overcrowded, and the doors were jammed. Many people were trampled and injured in the rush to flee. The firemen arrived on the scene and tried to control the blaze, but the flames were too strong. The hotel was completely destroyed, and many lives were lost.

The victims included a large number of women and children, who were the most vulnerable to the flames. The hotel was known for its opulence and elegance, and its loss was a great blow to the city. The investigation into the cause of the fire is ongoing, and the authorities are seeking information from anyone who may have witnessed the event.
Downfall of the Good Government Administration.

The so-called Good Government administration which was elected a short time ago by false pretenses; or in other words, by claiming to be what it was not, has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Instead of giving the citizens the Good Government, they were led to believe they were to receive, the Good Government administration is one of the most inefficient in the history of the city. It has been a failure in everything except in the propagation of scandal. In this particular, it is without a rival. In order to cover up the scandal, all scandals, the moral sewer scandal, a number of the Good Government's shining lights are charged with attempting to blast the life of officer Lloyd. Although the mayor is said to have known all about the arrangement for Lloyd's arrest, in order to bolster up his tottering administration he fires his private secretary Anderson and officer Choute.

Feeling that the people in their wrath will recall him, the mayor rushes into print with the statement that he does not fear a recall. In fact, he dares any one to start a recall. If the mayor really believes what he says, he certainly does not understand the temperament of the people. If the mayor's friends hope to keep him from being recalled, their success depends upon keeping recall petitions from being started. This whole miserable farce is the attempt to run a great city by placing small men at the head of it and the sooner the whole bunch is recalled and their place filled with broad gauged men of affairs the better it will be for all concerned.

Should a recall be ordered 98 per cent of the colored voters would very likely be registered in favor of putting the whole Lissner-Johnson Goo Goo machine out of business. As the entire Negro voting population has been basely betrayed and humiliated by the said machine. Having inflicted severe punishment upon that machine on Nov. 6th the Negro voters are simply smarting for another opportunity to scourge them.

SOURGES CITY ADMINISTRATION

Genser Williams, City Attorney of Vernon, and a resident of Los Angeles, issued this formal statement regarding the fatal accident last week:

"The direct cause of the killing of Mr. N. Hodge on the 17th street, a well-known citizen and a prominent member of the city of Los Angeles. The accident was due to the negligence of the driver of the car and the carelessness of the pedestrian. The owner of the car is responsible for the accident and will be held accountable for the damages occasioned by the same."

"On the contrary, many accidents are occurring constantly in the city of Los Angeles. The present administration spends the taxpayer's money on moral censors and an attempt to patrol the city against those things which it cannot stop."

"In other words, if less money were spent on tainted women, to entice citizens and purists into roaming-houses, and more on patrolling the streets and suppressing genuine crime, the city would be better off."

HEROIC NEGRO ELEVATOR BOY SAVES MANY LIVES

The burning of the Hotel St. George which resulted in the loss of three lives and the maiming of twenty other persons, is one of those catastrophes that could have been avoided. The fact that the death roll did not reach 50 or more was due to the heroic efforts of the Negro elevator boy, who at the risk of his life, visited each of the floors and ran along the halls, arousing the sleeping inmates by crying fire. Returning to the elevator he kept it in operation rescuing guests until the flames took possession of the shaft. With his clothes all aflame he fled to the streets where the fire of burning clothes was extinguished and he was sent to the hospital suffering from numerous burns.

In recounting the deeds of heroism displayed there, the newspapers have little to say of the heroic elevator boy because he is a Negro. Had he been suspended on a theft of a ring or some trifle, the tale would have been told under big headlines. When a Negro is charged with a crime, the white newspaper men, regardless of section or politics, lose their heads in their eagerness to let the world know about it; but haven't the moral courage to tell the world when the Negro does a commendable thing.
Two

The Liberator

Negroes Building Business Blocks

Until a short time ago the enterprising colored citizens of this city have devoted their attention to purchasing lots upon which elegant modern residences were built. This has been carried on so persistently for the past 15 years that the colored citizens of this city are the best housed of any similar city in the United States.

Now that the colored men have commenced the erection of business blocks a new epoch is being made which means that the Negro here is settling down to business. Following the erection by Mr. R. C. Owens of a splendid business block on Fourth Street near Central Avenue, Mr. Dan H. Adams, a well-known and popular hotel man, is just completing a small but neat block at 845 East 9th Street, which will soon be occupied as a first-class ice cream parlor and delicatessen. Mr. Adams has already had many calls from persons desiring to secure long leases on the property, but has decided to conduct the place himself, thus securing first-class accommodations for all classes of patrons.

Mr. O. E. Brookins Will Build

Mr. O. E. Brookins, for many years custodian of the Germain Building, and who in the meantime has invested his earnings in real estate, will erect immediately a $40,000 business block. With his present real estate holdings Mr. Brookins is amply able to successfully carry his new enterprise to completion. This new departure on the part of the colored men is a movement in the right direction and means that they have decided to make use of their idle capital, which has been used for years by other men in promoting enterprises that passed the word down that Negroes were not wanted. There is a large and ever increasing number of business and professional men who are suffering for permanent locations which should be
THE LIBERATOR

A. M. E. ZION CONFERENCE ADJOURNED

The A. M. E. Zion Conference for 1912 has passed into history, and the pastors have all returned to their respective charges for the coming years work, with the determination to do more and better work for the cause of religion and the advancement of the church.

Rev. W. J. J. Byers, pastor of the Los Angeles church is again at his post of duty for another year. He says that he will carry to the next conference to be held here a better report than that carried to San Jose. The membership reception held last Wednesday evening was a grand success and well attended. Rev. Byers is delivering a series of sermons on the doctrine. The public is cordially invited to hear these sermons.

The only transfers to this conference this year was Rev. Mr. Clarence A. Adams from the North Arkansas conference and assign to the work at Monrovia. Rev. Adams arrived here in the early part of October and with his wife and his man who preceded him about six months are fairly settled in his new field. Rev. Adams is a young man and comes from a family noted for its able ministers, his father is Presiding Elder in the North Arkansas Conference. With his experience as a pastor we are sure that success will attend his labor here on the coast.

Rev. Adams is a constant reader of The Liberator and is lost when he fails to receive it. The Liberator extends its best wishes for his success as pastor here where faithful Christian pastors are greatly needed.

THE PRICE IS 30 CENTS

The price of the Negro year book sent out from Tuskegee is 30 cents instead of 25 cents as announced some time ago in this journal. It is a valuable encyclopedia of the Negro and can be purchased from Mr. Noah D. Thompson 55th and Long Beach Avenue, this city.

Harry M. Mitchell, real estate agent and McDowell & Barnett, lawyers, announce the removal of their offices to rooms 36-37 Canadian Bldg., 432 South Main St. Phone Main 4525.—Advertisement.

NO COLORED ZONE
 Undertaker Has Monopoly

The proposition to create a colored zone for undertakers in order that a firm of colored men could open an establishment at Eighth and San Pedro streets, which is five blocks outside the present general zone for establishments of that kind, brought out a strong protest from property owners in the block affected. After a lengthy debate, the protest was sustained and the colored men will have to find a location within the present zone. The vote was five to three against them.

It was shown during the hearing that there are 20,000 colored people in the city, with but one undertaker to bury their dead. One of the colored men stated that they had been working on the proposition for eight months, during which time they had written three leases for a location within the zone, but when they were presented for signature, neither of the parties would close, having discovered that the leases were colored men. There are two colored churches within one block of the location desired, and a third one within two blocks, and many colored people live in the neighborhood.

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THE LIBERATOR

Published weekly at Los Angeles.

Entered as second class matter June 9, 1911, at the post office at Los Angeles, Cal., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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Office 210 Thames Building

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Subscription rates, $1.50 a year; 20 cents per month.

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Write only one side of your paper.

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NEGRO PRECINCTS TELL THE STORY

That something like 43 per cent. of the Negro vote was cast for Wilson is shown by the Wilson vote in the heavy Negro precincts. In precinct 232 with a registered vote of 290, Roosevelt received 109, and Wilson 80. This same precinct in previous elections never pulled more than one Democratic vote.

In the contest between Mayor Alexander and A. Smith, Mayor Alexander received 2 to 1. In the campaign for woman's suffrage in 1911, the suffrage amendment carried that precinct 3 to 1.

In the campaign between Mayor Alexander and Geo. A. Smith, Mr. Smith beat Mayor Alexander in all of the Negro precincts.

It was only during the last two weeks of the campaign that the ladies in charge of the campaign agreed to assist the editor of this journal, in making a final appeal to the colored voters, to go on record for equal suffrage for every citizen. The ladies announced that the appeals made by The Liberator for woman's suffrage were among the most powerful made during the campaign. These appeals were made through 8000 copies of this journal and sent freely to the homes of every colored person in the city and to the centers of the colored population throughout the State.

Precinct 232 which contains not a single white voter went 3 to 1 for woman's suffrage, this too, in the face of the fact that the leaders there were opposed to the measure. When this is contrasted with a white precinct which contains not a single Negro voter and which went 5 to 1 against woman's suffrage, shows that appeals to the intelligence of the Negro voter is never in vain.

Precinct 232 is no exception to the rule among the colored precincts, it is merely used from the fact of its segregation. The colored voters throughout the city being equally intelligent and equally susceptible.

THE LIBERATOR

BE READY

In another column the attention of the readers and friends of this journal has been called to its financial needs. Therefore be prepared for a call from our agent at any time.
SIX

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SECURITY TRUST & SAVINGS BANK
Oldest and Largest Savings Bank in the Southwest
CAPITAL AND RESERVE $53,200,000.00
RESOURCES OVER $127,500,000.00
SAFES EXCEED VAUING
SECURITY BUILDING
Spring at 14th