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8th Grade Enriched Social Studies

1/30/16

How Education Has Helped Our African-American Heroes Change America

“Education is the key to unlocking the golden door of freedom.”-George Washington Carver. Education for many influential African Americans has not been a privilege, but something they had to earn through will and discipline. The lessons they had learned through the challenges they faced set them up for a lifetime of selflessly helping others. Many household heroes like Martin Luther King Jr and Muhammad Ali had to fight through tough adversity, even if that meant swallowing their pride. Even some people that you might not have known, such as Langston Hughes, have changed not only the United States of America, but the whole entire world through their poetic use of words and speech. As they have taught us many things that we not have not known or refused to learn, many famous African Americans have had their start in an valuable education, however conventional or unconventional it may have been.

For African Americans who were born from around 1860 through 1960, life was full of discrimination and racial inequality. If you were an African American around this time, you most likely were sent (if you were lucky enough) to an all African American school, or a “Blacks-Only” school. So, many young African American children were faced with a complex of being inferior to the “Superior White” race, as their parents or grandparents might have been owned as slaves by your neighbor’s parents or grandparents. One such case is Martin Luther King Jr, who as a young boy suffered from severe depression and even tried jumping out of a

window at the age of twelve. As he grew older and refined his public speaking, even winning an oratorical contest, he realized that he could do something to stop the injustices he saw in his everyday life. He eventually led the Montgomery bus boycott, and delivered many speeches to hundreds of thousands of people, all promoting peaceful equality between the races. All his legacy stemmed from the fact that he did not have an easy childhood at all. His path was not laid out for him, actually it was torn up and there robbers on the way. However, his education as a child motivated him to strive for greatness. He did not learn this all from school, but also from the people who cared for him, like his parents and friends, and the cruelty he saw.

Education for many African Americans, in the past and in modern times, was not and still is not a birthright. But, the people we know today would not have been written down in our history books if they sat down and gave up. No, they chose to take those lessons and mold them into the beliefs that made them stand out among the rest. Any person, African American or otherwise, can do great things if they had had a meaningful and fulfilling education.