

History and Film Guide Companion

From The Quarters to Lincoln Heights

The Untold Story of Far Northern California's African American History

Note: This film would be appropriate for Grade 11 American History as well as for college classes in American History. The film content addresses the following California History/Social Science Standards for Grades 9 – 12: Analysis Skills in Chronological and Spatial Thinking, Historical Research, and Historical Interpretation. It specifically addresses United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the 20th Century.

The title of the film references the name change of the African American neighborhood in Weed, California from the Quarters to Lincoln Heights. This took place in the late 1960's when residents also changed the names of streets in the neighborhood. In this film the neighborhoods where African Americans were living were all called "the Quarters." One may think of the "Quarters" as a reference to a particular ethnic neighborhood (i.e. the French Quarter or Jewish Quarters)

Resources:

1) In the 1930's In Mc Culleys Quarters, Alabama

<http://library.thinkquest.org/12111/mculley.html>

2) A History of Black Americans in California: The Quarters-Lincoln Heights

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views2h83.htm

Chapter 1. Early California

African-Americans (along with Mexicans and Asians) were the "other pioneers" of the American West. They made their mark as explorers, trappers, cowboys, ranchers, farmers, gold miners, stagecoach drivers, scouts, cavalymen, outlaws, lawmen, schoolteachers, saloonkeepers, and just about everything else a person could be in the "Wild West" of the mid- to late-1800s. California had its share of early African American settlers and pioneers, like James Beckworth and Andrew Coffey. Coffey and many other African Americans came to California during the gold rush.

Resources:

1) James Beckworth

<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aaw/beckwourth-james-pierson-c-1805-1866>

2) ALVIN A. COFFEY by Sue Bailey Thurman

<http://www.sfmuseum.org/bio/coffey.html>

3) 1848-1865: Gold Rush, Statehood, and the Western Movement, University of California

<http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/calcultures/eras/era4.html>

4) African Americans: Gold Rush Era to 1900, University of California

http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/calcultures/ethnic_groups/subtopic1a.html

Chapter 2. Weed, California

This chapter describes the town's founding in 1901 by lumberman Abner Weed and the subsequent purchase of the mill by Long Bell Lumber, a Southern outfit. Long Bell encouraged its African American labor from its closed mills in the South to relocate to its new operation in Weed. The de facto segregation, so entrenched in the South, was also a fact of life in their new home. They had a separate neighborhood, a separate cemetery, separate theater seating and more.

Background Knowledge: African Americans had compelling reasons to leave the South in search of a better life. The Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited racial discrimination had been nullified in 1883. The Black Codes, laws enacted in Southern states to codify racial segregation, robbed African Americans of all means to advance. The Ku Klux Klan, with its terrorist tactics, and the practice of lynching also served to keep Blacks in their place.

The Great Migration – In 1900 about 95% of African Americans lived in the South (former slave states). World War I created major opportunities for African Americans and change; beginning in 1914 war industries provided high paying jobs. African Americans began to move from the rural South to southern industrial cities (Birmingham, Atlanta) and northern cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, etc... From 1910 to 1930 an estimated 2 million African Americans moved out of the South to northern states. Weed and McClouds African American population burgeoned in the 1920's. Additionally factors like racism, poor jobs and schools made it easy to leave the South. World War II provided more of the same opportunities. Industrial jobs of all kinds provided the same attractions through the 1920s, 30s (far fewer), 40s, and 50s. From 1914 to the 1950s four to six million African Americans left the South for better opportunities. The lumber towns of the West are a large undocumented portion of this Great Migration.

Resources:

1) *Great Migration (African American), Wikipedia*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Great_Migration

2) "African Americans in the Shadow of Mt. Shasta:
<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=perspectives/african-americans-shadow-mt-shasta-black-community-weed-california>

Chapter 3. Jim Crow in Weed

Jim Crow – many believe that the name "Jim Crow" was coined in a blackface comedy routine in 1832. ("Blackface"- white actors wearing black face paint was an accepted entertainment form of whites imitating blacks though it was nearly always done disrespectfully.) Eventually "Jim Crow" became a pejorative directed at African Americans. After Reconstruction (post 1877) Jim Crow became the name for segregationist and racially discriminatory laws and customs. During the civil rights movement to fight against Jim Crow; implied the desire to end legal and cultural racism. The Civil Rights Movement was, in effect, a battle against Jim Crow—a battle to end legal and cultural racism.

Resources:

1) *Jim Crow Laws, Wikipedia*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws

Chapter 4. Long Bell Lumber

The reason so many Black workers came to Weed was for the chance to earn more money. However, the kinds of jobs that were available to them in the mill and in the woods were those of unskilled laborers for the most part. This chapter goes into the dangerous and unhealthy aspects of such jobs. The unique story of an African American timber faller is highlighted.

Background Knowledge: After the failure of Reconstruction (post Civil War), Blacks were relegated to the status of sharecroppers, dependent on the plantation owners in a way that perpetuated some of the aspects of slavery, and in the late 19th century maintained a stable, low-cost work force that replaced slave labor; it was the bottom rung in the Southern tenancy ladder. The idea that African Americans were only suited for menial labor permeated the dominant culture.

Resources:

1) Geoff Mann, *Our Daily Bread*, University of North Carolina Press, 2007

2) *Sharecropping-United States*, Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharecropping>

3) *Long Bell Lumber*, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long-Bell_Lumber_Company

4) African Americans: The Struggle for Economic Equality (1900-1950s), University of California

http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/calcultures/ethnic_groups/subtopic1b.html

Chapter 5. *Back to Africa (The Schools)*

Members of the communities of Weed and McCloud recall their school experiences and how these schools were never segregated by race. However, African American students were not completely integrated into the student body because of customs which separated the races in the larger communities.

Background Knowledge: When James Langford was hired as the first African American teacher at Weed Elementary School in 1974, vestiges of racial separation still existed. The interracial friendships that students developed in school and sports rarely carried over to socialization outside of school. However, the enforced separation that is described in the film was gone.

Resources:

1) *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plessy_v._Ferguson

2) *Brown v. Board of Education*. Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_v._Board_of_Education

Chapter 6. *Praise the Lord (The Church)*

This chapter describes the role of the two churches in Lincoln Heights today – The Mt. Shasta Baptist Church and the Wayside Church of God in Christ.

Background Knowledge: “The Black Church” has been an institution in America since 1777. An interesting note is from Jamestown, 1719: Blacks couldn’t be enslaved if they were baptized and had a Christian name. Slave owners looked at religion in two ways: 1) slaves should not be allowed to practice their native religion and 2) slaves should all become Christians and formulate a religion based on the Bible. The Bible was the first book that Black slaves were allowed to read, though very few masters allowed their slaves the right to read. The ability to read was a very important skill, especially if you were a preacher. The preacher had to be a master of the Bible from cover to cover. He had to have the ability to tell biblical stories and jokes. Preaching was one of the few legitimate jobs that Black men could aspire to. Travelling preachers were common. The pay, as food and lodging, was good.

Because they were prohibited from sharing community institutions like schools, clubs, restaurants, and churches in the South, African Americans established community institutions of their own. When African Americans moved to the North and West they encountered similar segregation and thus transplanted their institutions in new locations. In the lumber communities

of the West churches formed a familiar bond and safety net for new immigrants. They were a place for people to meet and socialize, affirm community ties, continue old traditions in the new location, and pass important values on to their children.

Consider that prejudice and discrimination are intended to damage or destroy the soul. Once that is done, it is so much easier to control whatever is left. But, if you cannot destroy the Spirit/Soul, then no matter how bad you treat them in the physical world, you will never have absolute control over them. They will remain absolutely free and independent. That is how you survive under the worst of conditions. The church is the glue that binds.

Resources:

Black Church, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_church

Chapter 7. *The Weed Sons*

Prior to 1945 when Jackie Robinson appeared in a Brooklyn Dodger's uniform, African Americans had their own baseball leagues commonly known as the Negro Leagues. In 1920, an organized league structure was formed under the guidance of Andrew "Rube" Foster—a former player, manager, and owner for the Chicago American Giants. Soon rival leagues formed in Eastern and Southern states, bringing the thrills and innovative play of Black baseball to major urban centers and rural countrysides in the U.S., Canada, and Latin America. The Leagues maintained a high level of professional skill and became centerpieces for economic development in many black communities.

Black players formed their own units too, "barnstorming" around the country to play anyone who would challenge them. Not an African American unit, *The House of David* was a religious community that played baseball and barnstormed the country often times traveling with a Negro team.

After Jackie Robinson's entry into the major leagues many other Black players followed. While this historic event was a key moment in baseball and civil rights history, it prompted the decline of the Negro Leagues. The best black players were now recruited for the Major Leagues, and Black fans followed. The last Negro Leagues teams folded in the early 1960s, but their legacy lives on through the surviving players and the Negro Leagues Baseball Hall of Fame.

Resources:

<http://www.negroleaguebaseball.com/>

<http://www.nlbm.com/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negro_league_baseball

<http://www.houseofdauidmuseum.org/>

<http://www.peppergame.com/>

Chapter 8. *The Black Hawk Club*

Residents of Weed recall the glory days of the Black Hawk Club in Lincoln Heights. African Americans from Klamath Falls, Oregon and the Bay Area would come to Weed to attend events and dances at The Club. During the interviews for the film we learned that many famous entertainers had performed there. Mc Cloud, CA had no such clubs but the town of Quincy, CA had a few.

Resources:

Juke Joint, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juke_joint

Chapter 9. C.O.R.E. Comes to Weed (*Civil Rights Movement*)

In 1966, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was invited to Weed to advocate for better job opportunities for its African American citizens. The community was challenged to hire Black workers in the local Safeway Store, the Weed Mercantile, gas stations in town and more. Despite tensions, the protests were carried out peacefully and achieved the desired results. The story of Sheriff Charles Byrd, California's first African American Sheriff is included at the end of the chapter.

Background Knowledge: The tactics used to achieve equal rights for African Americans in Weed were some of the tried and true methods used by the NAACP, Martin Luther King Jr's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Urban League. These groups all used the courts to change discriminatory laws. CORE, along with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) used more radical tactics to force quicker changes. The local chapter of the NAACP and CORE worked together in Weed to achieve progress.

Resources:

1) Congress of Racial Equality, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_of_Racial_Equality

2) Martin Luther King, Jr. , Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr.

3) Timeline of the African American Civil Rights Movement, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_African_American_Civil_Rights_Movement

4) http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/calcultures/ethnic_groups/ethnic1.html

University of California

5) <http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/browse/keyword/%22Congress+of+Racial+Equality%22>
University of California

Charles Byrd

6) http://articles.sfgate.com/2003-09-25/bay-area/17508237_1_mr-byrd-sheriff-s-department-first-elected-black-sheriff

Chapter 10. Romance

This subject of interracial dating should not be taken lightly. One has to think how African Americans were treated in the recent past (and still today in some places) for mixing romantically whites. Residents of Weed, Mt. Shasta and McCloud recall early taboos and the gradual acceptance of mixed dating that seems to be in effect today.

Background Knowledge: In colonial Virginia, as an example of colonies with large populations of Black slaves, laws were passed to keep Whites and Blacks apart sexually. However, there being few White women when the colony was established in the early 1600's, many White men had sexual relations with Black women, resulting in many children of mixed race. As described in the book, *1001 Things Everyone Should Know About African American History*, compiled by Jeffrey C. Stewart, an act was passed in 1662 that stated: "children got by an Englishman upon a Negro shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother." From such a beginning, any interracial sex in America, especially in the South, became a source of extreme social tension. It was not until 1967, in *Loving vs. Virginia*, that the U.S. Supreme Court overturned all

prohibitions of interracial marriage in America.

Resources:

Emmett Till, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmett_Till

Loving vs Virginia, Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loving_v._Virginia

Miscegenation, Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miscegenation>

Crossing Boundaries of Race, Crossing Boundaries of Love

<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=perspectives/crossing-boundaries-race-crossing-boundaries-love>