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Empowering African American Students to Learn

Kimberly D. Ewing
Vincennes University

This presentation will encourage students to take African American courses and explore other cultures as well.

In today's society, our students are faced with not being important in the past, present, or future. Basically, they have been brought up learning His-story and not correct History. For example, they can tell you all about Thomas Edison and Benjamin Franklin before they can tell you about George Washington Carver and Lewis H. Latimer. Why? Because the European racist male designed the educational system to educate his children, specifically his male children. For years, school systems have been building European male confidence and self-esteem while everyone else took a back seat to being just as important.

This presentation is designed to build African American students' pride, confidence, self-esteem, and willingness to learn. Students are educated about their past beyond just being a slave and ex-slave. They explore Africa and learn that they come from kings and queens, and that their founding fathers are responsible for the pyramids, brain surgery, coffee, mathematics, etc.

Mathematics has been known to be one of our students' weakest subjects, but by presenting information that our ancestors are responsible for algebra, trigonometry, and fractions, our students gain confidence and a reason to strive for excellence in these subjects.

Slavery is another area we touch upon, which helps students to know why it happened and what happened as a result. Because this subject is so important, we try to get the students involved by having them re-enact the journey across the Atlantic on a slave ship. This helps them understand the devastation of what happened to their ancestors. Plus, we discuss the days it took to get from Africa to America and the conditions in which the Africans endured their unwilling travel.

Last but not least, we talk about the African American inventions that had an impact on the United States and the world. Examples include the air conditioner, car, bicycle, brakes, computer, gas mask, toilet, and much more. Students marvel at this information. They cannot believe that the everyday appliances and equipment they use were invented by people like themselves. A sense of pride fills them. Information like this helps them realize that they can achieve at a predominantly White university or anywhere else, no matter the odds.

This presentation is designed to enhance rather than replace African American studies courses already in place. It will encourage students to take African American courses and explore other cultures as well. Students are encouraged to celebrate other cultures and are

taught that it is not necessary to put another culture down to feel good about your own.

It has become a ministry for me to share African American importance at predominantly White universities because I noticed that our young peoples' pride, confidence, and self-esteem was hurting. If they do not love themselves and feel good about themselves, it is impossible for them to learn to their fullest potential.

This presentation has received high evaluations for the information given and the energetic way in which it is presented. Students leave the program feeling good about their culture and are motivated to learn more. The bottom line is, how can we expect our students to press forward to the future if they do not know about their past.

PRESENTER

Kimberly D. Ewing is a motivational speaker who uses a powerful and spiritual message to inspire and educate audiences of all ages and cultures. She believes that education is the key to eliminating ignorance, and that all of us must play a role in hope of healing the ills of human kind.

Ewing does not claim to have all the answers, but knows she must do her part to make a positive difference for the present and future generations. In search of truth, she has traveled to Africa and visited Ghana, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, Senegal, and the Gambia. She has lectured and has been a consultant throughout the United States, addressing a variety of difficult and challenging issues.

Ewing is a native of Indianapolis, Ind. She graduated from the University of Indianapolis with a bachelor's degree in communications and is pursuing a master's degree at Indiana State University. Her memberships include: Indiana Coalition of Blacks in Higher Education (ICBHE); International Black Women's Congress (IBWC); Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists Inc. (ASBS); NAACP; and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. She serves as Coordinator of Multicultural Services and teaches African American history at Vincennes University in Vincennes, Ind.