**Lesson Plan #11 for Genius of Freedom: Octavius Catto and Streetcar Desegregation by Amy Cohen**

**Grade Level:** Middle or high School

**Topics:** Civil rights, Fifteenth Amendment

**Time period:** 1865-1881

**Pennsylvania History Standards:** 8.2.9 A, 8.2.9 B, 8.3.9 D

**Pennsylvania Core Standards:** 8.5.6-8 B, 8.5.9-10 B, 8.5.11-12 B, 8.5.6-8 D, 8.5.9-10 D, 8.5.11-12 D

***African American History,* Prentice Hall textbook:** page 440

**Overview:** Students will watch excerpts of a film about Octavius Catto in order to understand and analyze two primary sources from the *Genius of Freedom* exhibit. One source underscores the importance of the 15th Amendment in shifting the political balance in the North; the other illustrates the appearance of a civil rights hero who, until recently, had faded into obscurity.

**Materials:**

* *NEGROES TO RIDE IN CITY RAILWAY PASSENGER CARS*
* Octavius Catto portrait
* “The Floodgates Open” available at [www.historyofphilly.com](http://www.historyofphilly.com)
* Floodgates Note-Taking Sheet
* Optional: Primary Source extension activity

**Procedure:**

1. Say or show the following statement:

*A famous civil rights protest was sparked when an African American woman refused to get up from her seat when told to do so by a white driver. Brave leadership by a respected African American community leader eventually led to the desegregation of public transportation their city.*

Ask students to guess the era, the individuals, and the city being described. Although students will probably assume that this scenario is describing the actions of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. during the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56, it is actually meant as a description of events that took place in Philadelphia during the 1860s.

2. Indicate that they will be watching an excerpt of an episode from the *Philadelphia: The Great Experiment* series entitled *"The Floodgates Open: 1865-1876.”* Distribute the Note-Taking Sheet and begin the film at 12 minutes, 15 seconds; end it at 23 minutes. You may want to explain that William McMullen, aka the Squire, was a ruthless leader of the Irish Catholic community.

3. After showing the film and reviewing the Note-Taking Sheet if needed, project the image “Negroes to Ride Streetcars”. Ask students to predict who Morton McMichael and Daniel M. Fox were. As a hint, you can indicate that both men held the same position but at different times. Once they determine that both men were mayors of the City of Philadelphia, ask who the writer of the handbill supported.

4. Explain that Morton McMichael was a Republican (the party credited with emancipating slaves and thus favored by black people; wealthy white businessmen also tended to vote Republican) and Daniel M. Fox was a Democrat (a party that got much of its support from Irish immigrants, many of whom competed for low-skill jobs with African Americans). In 1866, the year this was published, Morton McMichael narrowly won the election and served until 1869 when he was defeated, again in a close vote, by Daniel M. Fox. Fox, however, lost his mayoral seat to William Stokely, a Republican in 1871—the election in which Catto was assassinated. Stokely went on to serve three successive terms. Ask students if they can explain why the results in 1871 were different than the results in 1869. Emphasize that part of the reason Fox lost was that many African American men, in spite of extreme voter intimidation, voted and supported the Republican candidate. They were able to do so because the Fifteenth Amendment went into effect in 1870. You may want to recreate this table on the board:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Party** | **Years Served** | **Terms Served** |
| Morton McMichael | Republican | 1866-1869 | 1 |
| Daniel M. Fox | Democrat | 1869-1871 | 1 |
| William Stokely | Republican | 1872-1881 | 3 |

Ask how this table reflects the importance of the Fifteenth Amendment. *(Black votes likely enabled a Republican to serve three consecutive terms.)*

5. Next, show the image of Octavius Catto. Ask students to list adjectives describing Catto’s appearance in the drawing. Explain that the drawing was based on a photograph, the only one known to exist of Octavius Catto. Then, ask students to list adjectives describing Catto’s actions and character that they learned about in the film clip.

6. Tell students that after years of nearly being forgotten in the city in which he lost his life, there has been a lot of recent interest in Octavius Catto. There are even plans to erect a statue next to City Hall. Ask students to write a speech that they could give to explain to an audience at the statue’s unveiling why Catto is worthy of such a significant tribute.

7. **Extension:** Have students complete the primary source activity that follows below. Give half the students Primary Source 1 and the other half Primary Source 2 along with the appropriate worksheet. Notice that questions 4 and 5 are the same for both sources. Remind them that William Still **was a** leader and recorder of the Underground Railroad and, like Catto, an activist on behalf of black freedom and equality.Once completed, have students share what they learned aloud or assign this as homework.