



Project Description

Observations &
Results

Connections

Return to WS 381
Projects

Ballard Community Center Experience

by Emily Black



The Ballard Community Center is a non-profit organization that provides a high quality, affordable early education program and essential basic life assistance for families and individuals in need.



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Motivated by Black History Month and Ms. Ravi's curriculum, my presentation and project celebrated the lives of prominent African American women such as Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks. I read a brief story about the life of Harriet Tubman and discussed Rosa Park's bold actions on the bus. Great conversation was generated about equality, slavery, and discrimination. My presentation also evoked dialogue about gender and race issues. After my presentation, we created lanterns, similar to the ones that Harriet Tubman used to free other slaves, which allowed her to fight for equal rights. The lantern symbolized both Tubman's and Park's efforts, as they lit the way for gender and racial equality.

I noticed that the students enjoyed learning about prominent African American women and were comfortable discussing race/gender stereotypes. By using examples such as, "What if all blonde boys were not allowed to ride at the front of the bus", the students were able to gain knowledge about the effects of gender/racial discrimination. By focusing on women who were vital for the fight of equality, the students became aware of the women who were involved and led civil rights movements. The students also generated similarities between Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman, while also acknowledging and praising them for their actions. By explaining and presenting the lives of Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman, I felt that we broke down gender and race stereotypes while also celebrating black history month.



Carson (girl in blue stripes) and Myles begin by tearing tissue paper to make a lantern for Black History month. The lantern was to represent Harriet Tubman's struggle to help free the slaves. I used the activity to help teach the kids about Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and other prominent African American Women. This activity evoked dialogue about gender and racial differences.



Tristan, a Native American student, applies the torn tissue paper onto the contact paper for his lantern. A minority student, Tristan's interactions with the other students helped me develop conclusions about racial differences between students in a classroom setting. While observing the Tristan, I found that he was not treated any differently than other students in the class. Ballard Community Center has several students of many ethnicities in attendance; therefore, students are exposed to a variety of cultures and diversity.



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Ray proudly holds his completed lantern. After the activity we used our lanterns to talk about the African American Women's lives such as Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks as they 'lit' the path for gender and racial equality.

When reflecting back on the students' reactions to my presentation about women figures of Black History month, I recognized that the students became more aware about confident females who go beyond the traditional role of a woman. The female students were enthusiastic about my activity and kept stating that, "I want to be like Harriet Tubman and help others, like my brother or friends". Also the male students found both Tubman's and Park's actions daring or comparable to a superhero. The male students pretended to be helping slaves in the Underground Railroad with their completed lanterns. The comments and actions displayed by the students made me feel confident that they are now more knowledgeable about gender and racial differences, while also gaining a greater appreciation for Black History month and their own rights as an individual. My experience with the students has shown me that kindergarteners are much more open both culturally and socially than most adults. By being exposed to classmates of different ethnicities and economic backgrounds, Ms. Ravi's class promotes racial and gender equality.



As the students sit with their lanterns, I am telling the students about prominent African American Women and reading a brief story about Harriet Tubman. The male students especially were impressed by Tubman's daringness and confidence. The female students also were excited to hear about a leading African American Woman.



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When relating my experience with Ms. Ravi's class to theoretical feminism learned in the course a variety of topics come to mind: child development, ethic of care, identity, and trauma.

During my most recent visit with the class, I helped the students create a shield or crest that described their family heritage or origin of family name. Ms. Ravi was motivated to do this project in order to help create an understanding of family background and creating a sense of identity. When the students learned about the origin of their name, I could tell that the students took on different roles and utilized the countries as a way to define them. For example, a boy said that he was German, not from Lawrence. This activity reinforced the idea that our cultural, social, and economic conditions mold us to be a certain individual. The students walked in as citizens of Lawrence and left as Germans, English, French, etc. This activity evoked readings about the Autonomous Self and personal identity and that our identity accounts for our cultural and social conditions. Also, this activity created different social groups for the students to subscribe, allows the students to recognize that these groups are built into the fabric of society.



Aiden, Matthew, and Quinton display their completed lanterns after they pretended to lead slaves through the Underground Railroad.

My observations also evoked ideas about the ethic of care as described by Kohlberg's Theory of moral development. Kohlberg's theory reinforced my observations such as that children conform to rules that they see should be obeyed and test those rules to ask for justification or question moral law. I found Kohlberg's theory in action when observing the class, since the children would abide by the same rules, but also test those rules on a daily basis. Also, Baier's challenges of the ethic of care poses similar observations. As Baier finds the emphasis of equality problematic, I also found it impossible to give all students the same treatment. Some students did need special care or instruction. If not given special instructions, the student would be disconnected from the activity or the group.



Ray's sister and I help read to the students a story about Harriet Tubman.