Developers

Nakesha Faison, research associate I, the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

Marney Dorsey, master’s of science degree candidate in agricultural extension and education, Penn State

Dr. Patreese Ingram, associate professor of agricultural extension and education, Penn State

Contributors

Shameera Simmons, past participant of Temple University’s Math and Science Upward Bound Program

Curriculum Reviewers/Consultants

Gary Abdullah, writer/editor, Information and Communication Technologies

Cindy Arblas ter, 4-H youth development agent, Westmoreland County

Brack Barr, 4-H youth development agent, Allegheny County

Christy Bartley, youth program coordinator

Deno Deciantis, county extension director, Allegheny County

Bryan Dickinson, youth development agent, Lawrence County

Dr. Catherine Lyons, assistant to the dean for minority affairs in the College of Agricultural Sciences

Lynda Moss McDougall, program advisor, 4-H youth development, Mercer County

Mary Miller, 4-H youth development agent, Montgomery County

Dr. Claudia Mincemoyer, assistant professor of agricultural and extension education

Donald Tanner, 4-H youth development agent, McKean County

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Leader’s Guide

Introduction

Diversity means differences among people. It includes all of us in our rich and infinite variety. In recent years, diversity has become a popular topic. As the demographics of the U.S. population become more diverse, the need to provide multicultural educational experiences in organized youth programs increases. Additionally, today’s global market continues to grow, and technological advances make communication around the world easier. The need to prepare youth to function in a diverse society and world is becoming more important. Both formal and nonformal education programs are adding diversity-related topics to their curricula.

Youth development leaders have the opportunity to help our youth understand, appreciate, and value the many different cultures that make up America. Leaders can play an important role in teaching youth to live together and care for each other. Through guidance and critical thinking, leaders can open up new worlds for youth to discover. Leaders play a role in helping youth become comfortable in our ever-changing society. The Guide to Exploring African American Culture was designed with both youth and adults of all races and both genders in mind. The suggested age-group is 10 years and older. This guide can also be adapted to adult learners as well.

This leader’s guide serves as a tool for leaders, assisting them in the process of using the activity guide. This curriculum has several goals, all of which are described in the objectives.

Objectives

The activity guide was developed with the goal in mind to encourage youth to:

1. Develop an understanding of African American culture and its importance in U.S. society.
2. Learn about the individual contributions of selected African Americans to American history.
3. Reflect on one’s own culture and the similarities and differences between cultures.
4. Develop life skills that allow youth the opportunity to value diversity, think critically, process information, learn to learn, practice creativity, complete a project or task, and more.

Leader’s Guide Side Note

Before you get started with the activities provided in the activity guide, it is important to reflect on your own comfort as a leader in presenting these activities to youth. As a leader you have the opportunity to introduce new ideas and satisfy the curiosity of youth pertaining to the African American culture. Remember, if you are unsure or have questions regarding the subjects in this guide, there are many people who are willing to share answers with you. In fact, most African Americans are willing to discuss their heritage with you if asked. One of your challenges as a leader is to utilize resources. African American friends and acquaintances can be good resources. Discussing topics with them can also help better prepare you to facilitate discussion with your youth group. Try not to be too concerned about being politically correct. The best way to become comfortable with this curriculum is to use it and share it with others.
Overall Design of the Guide

The *Guide to Exploring African American Culture* provides learning experiences for both traditional and nontraditional audiences. It encourages educators to use creativity and ingenuity to bring this curriculum to life. The activities are arranged in a given order, however, the guide is developed so that the leader has the flexibility to select and choose topics of interest to the participants. Activities do not have to be completed in any specific order. This guide can be used as a “stand alone” curriculum, or it may be used as a resource to supplement other multicultural education programs and activities.

You need not be an expert on the subject matter in order to teach the activities in the guide. However, it is essential that you enjoy working with young people. It is also good to keep an open mind and to think of yourself as a change agent who will be sharing experiences that may be new for many youth.

The activity guide provides ideas and information to help make the process of valuing diversity fun for both the leader and youth. Use your own creativity and unique talents as a leader to deliver the curriculum and provide an environment that will build on youth’s curiosity. Questions regarding the activities and content should be directed to the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county.

How Each Section Is Organized

The lessons and activities in this guide are designed to enhance youths’ knowledge of African American culture as well as build their life skills. Designed with both the leader and youth participant in mind, each section of the activity guide includes various combinations of the following:

• **Life Skills**—Each section opens with a brief introduction, which supplies background information needed to complete the section. Life skills are those skills that youth will gain by participating in activities.

• **Activities**—Next are the activities that correspond with the list of life skills. Refer to the Chart of Skills Gained (Figure 1) at the end of the leader’s guide for a quick reference that matches each life skill to the corresponding activity.

• **Reflection**—Located at the end of each section is the reflection component. There, questions are provided to extend learning. This component also encourages youth to relate what they have learned to their own or others’ cultures.

• **More Challenges**—This section follows the activities and offers participants a way to learn more about the subject through exploring other resources. This component may suggest visiting the library to search for specific books, or it may suggest topics to spark further discussion among youth. This area may also include videos on the topic as well as other supplemental educational materials that can be obtained through the public library or the cooperative extension office.

• **The More You Know, the More You Grow**—This section offers additional information on each topic in an easy-to-follow format for increased awareness on related topics.

Life Skills

This section will explain the many goals of the guide. Definitions are adapted from *Targeting Life Skills* by Patricia A. Hendricks, Iowa State Extension youth development specialist.

• **Value Diversity**—recognizing and welcoming factors that separate or distinguish one person from another. It also involves being aware of the many similarities and differences among people and their cultures. In valuing diversity, one must be willing to accept that differences are okay and learn to value one’s own uniqueness.

• **Think Critically**—talking things over with oneself in one’s mind, deciding what to think or do, improving the quality of decision making. The critical thinking process can be stated as a set of questions one asks and answers oneself.

  — Observe the situation carefully: “Do I agree with what is being said or done?”

  — Examine your reaction: “How do I really feel about what is being said or done?”

  — Consider alternative responses and opposing viewpoints: “Based on what I know, is the statement true?”