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The Power of Self-Representation: William S. Bullard Photographic Collection

Essential Question: How did photographers like William S. Bullard contribute to growth and change within the African American and Native American communities in the USA in the early 1900s?

Materials: Docent leaders responsibility:

The intent of this program compares early W.E.B. Du Bois photographs to William S. Bullard photographs. The W.E.B. Du Bois photographs are part of a Library of Congress collection entitled "African American Photographs Assembled for 1900 Paris Exposition". This collection can be found here: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/about.html>

In this document, there will be a set of images indicated for use, however the program leader is encouraged to add or remove images from this set as they see fit. Additionally a set of Bullard photographs will be indicated in this program. Once again the leader is encouraged to select the photographs from the larger collection that they feel will connect with their students.

Copyright note: The Du Bois Photographs are from the Library of Congress, and have "no known restrictions" on their use. Please see this page from the Library of Congress for more information: http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/res/278_afri.html

Time: On its own, this program should take approximately 30 minutes. This can be adjusted by adding or removing images as discussion points.

If time permits, it is recommended that this program, William S. Bullard Photographic Collection Pt.1, is combined with the following program, William S. Bullard Photographic Collection Pt.2. Together the programs last for approximately 1 hour and allow for a much deeper analysis of the historic era the photographs represent. This is a variant on the original gallery program, which would have included both activities.

Introduction: (5 minutes) This introduction helps students to situate the history of Bullard within the history of the community and art history.

1. *Who was William S. Bullard?* (5 minutes)

- a. William S. Bullard was an itinerant photographer who lived in Worcester during the early 1900s. He photographed local community members including the African-Americans and Nipmuc peoples, the Native American tribe in the area.
 - i. What does itinerant mean? He traveled around and took photographs in many different, unplanned locations, like people's homes or yards.
 - ii. He kept a careful ledger of everyone he photographed. *An image of the ledger is available online in the photographic archive.*
- b. Many of the African Americans in the photographs moved north after reconstruction.
 - i. Why do you think they moved? What were advantages to life in the North? Disadvantages?
- c. What could we learn from his photographs?
 - i. What life was like, average people, clothes, jobs etc.

Main Activity:

Situating the collection in US History

1. *Bullard used dry-glass plate photography. Why is that important?*

- a. Dry-glass plate negatives were a new invention in photography which made it possible to photograph everyday people, making photography accessible to all.
- b. Before this, you used wet glass plate photography, which meant you needed to develop the film immediately after the photograph was taken. Dry glass plate negatives could be developed later, which meant more people could take photographs outside of a studio. It became much cheaper and easier to take photographs and so they became a primary method of self-representation.

2. Why were photographs important in the African-American community?

- a. They could be taken, developed and distributed within the community and with relative ease. This allowed for self-representation.
 - i. Ask the class what 'self-representation' means and why it is important.
 1. The ability to communicate yourself to others in the ways that you chose, highlighting the parts of your life or yourself that you want to highlight
 - ii. Ask the class how African peoples were represented during slavery in the USA:
 1. Who decided how they were imaged? Who paid for the paintings or statues?
 2. Mostly wealthy white citizens – how did that effect representation?
- b. Ask the class if they use Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook etc. (social media) to post pictures.
 1. What kinds of things do you try to tell people on social media with these pictures? What ideas are you representing? What do you see other people posting?
 2. Explain that people have been using images to tell others about themselves throughout history.

How did photography change the African American Community?

1. Present the photographs from the 1900 Paris Exhibition. They were part of an artistic movement called the "New Negro" movement and compiled by W.E.B. Du Bois to show the new lives of African Americans post the Civil War.
 - a. What kinds of things might an African-American in post-civil-war America try to represent?
 - b. What do you see in the photographs that tells you about their lives? How does it compare to images of enslaved peoples?
 - c. In the era after slavery, what would people want to communicate through photograph?
 - d. Using the table below, see how many of these ideas the class can brainstorm, if they need help give them prompting. It is also okay if they do not guess all of them.

Wealth/Middle Class Status/Jobs	Family / Familial bonds
Intelligence or Education	Citizenship in the United States
Beauty (femininity or masculinity)	Pride (self, community, job)

(Note: If you are using William S. Bullard Pt.2 with this program, you can stop here and distribute the profiles rather than using the selection of images with the class)

3. *Analyzing the Bullard Photographs:* Show the students the selected Bullard photographs from the materials section. Ask them to brainstorm what the individual in the photograph wanted to communicate about themselves.
 - a. If the class missed anything from the table above try and push them towards that item in the discussion.
 - b. Make sure they touch in ideas like citizenship and bring up ideas like the 15th amendment and civil rights.

Wrap Up

Ask the class what the key differences are between the Du Bois Exhibit and Bullard and discuss the value of photographs of a small, working class community versus a planned exhibition. Review why self-representation is important in the post slavery era and connect it to the Bullard photos.

Main Goals: By the end of the program the students should be able to explain the following idea:

Dry glass plate photography allowed for the African American community to self-represent for the first time, which meant that photographers like Bullard could show the pride and self-reliance of the African American community.

State Standards: MA State Standards: USI.41.C, USI.41.E, USI.41.G, USII.9.B; History Concepts and Skills Grades (8-12) 7, 8; MA.Arts.5.11, MA.Arts.5.12, MA.Arts.9.6