

## **Lesson 25**

**Museum Connection:** Labor and the Black Experience

**Lesson Title:** Isaac Myers

**Purpose:** In this lesson, students will read excerpts from primary sources about Isaac Myers in order to determine the contributions that he made to the African American community. They will use their knowledge of those contributions to create a fundraising flyer for the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park.

**Time Frame:** 2-3 class periods

**Grade Level and Content Area:** Middle, Social Studies

**Correlation to Social Studies Standards:**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| USH 2.10.8.1 | Analyze competing goals of Reconstruction and the effects on the political, economic, and social structure of different regions. |
| PNW 7.2.3.2  | Identify how individuals have contributed to the development of community.   |

**Social Studies:**

4.A.4.d (Grade 8)

**Maryland College and Career Ready Standards**

Describe the economic opportunities and obstacles faced by different individuals and groups of people during this era

5.B.5.e (Grade 8)

Evaluate the impact of the Reconstruction period on the lives of African Americans, such as Jim Crow laws and sharecropping

5.C.4.c (Grade 8)

Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of early industrialization on the economy and society

6.F.3 (Grades 7 and 8)

Synthesize information from a variety of sources

**Correlation to Reading and English Language Arts Maryland College and Career Ready Standards:**

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 3.A.1.a (Grades 7 and 8) | Listen to critically, read, and discuss a variety of literary texts representing diverse cultures, perspectives, ethnicities, and time periods |
| 3.A.1.b (Grades 7 and 8) | Listen to critically, read, and discuss a variety of literary forms and genres   |

**Objective:**

Students will describe the contributions of Isaac Myers to post-Civil War African American society.

**Vocabulary and Concepts:**

**Conflict** – A conflict is a competitive or opposing action resulting from incompatible external or internal demands.

**Diversity** – Diversity is variety.

**Eulogy** – A eulogy is a tribute of praise, usually delivered at the time of a person's death or funeral.

**Labor movement** – An organized effort to attain better working conditions is a labor movement.

**Labor union** – A group of workers who band together to seek better working conditions form a labor union.

**Platform** – A political party's platform is a statement of its principles, beliefs, and opinions on vital issues.

**Materials****For the teacher:**

Teacher Resource Sheet 1 –A Museum's Ship Comes In *Baltimore Sun*, October 1, 2003

Teacher Resource Sheet 2 – Portrait of Isaac Myers (1835-1891)

**For the student:**

Student Resource Sheet 1 – Isaac Myers: Contributions to the African American Community

Student Resource Sheet 2 – Excerpts from Isaac Myers' Eulogy

Student Resource Sheet 3 – Excerpts from Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans

Student Resource Sheet 4 – Proceedings of the (Colored) National Labor Union Convention, December 6-10, 1869

**Resources****Books:**

Berlin, Ira. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Christian, Charles M. *Black Saga: The African American Experience, A Chronology*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995.

- Foner, Philip. *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1973*. New York: International Publishers, 1974.
- Foner, Philip S., and Ronald L. Lewis, eds. *Black Workers: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- Franklin, John Hope. *Black Reconstruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Franklin, John Hope, and Alfred Moss. *From Slavery to Freedom*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2000.
- Fuke, Richard. "Race and Public Policy in Post-Emancipation Baltimore," in *From Mobtown to Charm City: New Perspectives on Baltimore's Past*, Jessica Elfenben, et al., eds. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002.
- Harris, William. *The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War*. New York: Oxford, 1982.
- Lebsock, Suzanne. *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1984.
- Spero, Sterling, and Abram Harris. *The Black Worker*. New York: Atheneum, 1972.
- Towers, Frank. "Secession in an Urban Context: Municipal Reform and the Coming of the Civil War in Baltimore," in *From Mobtown to Charm City: New Perspectives on Baltimore's Past*, Jessica Elfenbein, et al., eds. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002.
- Wade, Richard. *Slavery in the Cities*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

#### **Web sites:**

- Entire Eulogy of Isaac Myers, The Ohio Historical Society  
<http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page.cfm?ID=2405&Current=P351>
- Black Baltimore 1870-1920, Business & Industry, Maryland State Archives  
<http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/1040.html>  
This site discusses African American contributions to business and industry. It includes a short biography of Isaac Myers, as well as a picture and description of the Chesapeake Dry-Dock Company.

#### **Teacher Background:**

At the time of the first census in 1790, there were approximately 60,000 free Blacks in the United States, but by 1865 the number had jumped to about 500,000. Although

some states prohibited the manumission of slaves, the census figures prove that many slaves were able to secure their freedom. Influenced by their religious beliefs, some slave owners deliberately manumitted their slaves. Others freed their slaves because they could not reconcile the principles of the Declaration of Independence with the institution of slavery. Slaves could also earn their freedom as a result of meritorious service or by performing an extraordinary deed, such as fighting in the Revolutionary War. Or, after many years of demonstrated loyalty, their owners might choose to manumit them in their wills. A number of slaves even purchased their freedom, while still others had been born free.

Free Blacks migrated from the South to urban areas in the North, where opportunities were greater. Yet cities frequently offered them a harsh dose of reality. Urban life was segregated, for example, and African Americans were forced to live in separate communities like "Little Africa" in Cincinnati or "Nigger Hill" in Boston. Most northern schools were segregated, as were railway cars, steamboats, stagecoaches, theaters, lecture halls, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, and cemeteries. In addition, free Blacks who moved to the city contended with cold and damp dwellings, malnutrition, and disease. Because they viewed African Americans as troublemakers, thieves, and vagrants, many northern Whites resented the influx of free Blacks. Such attitudes led to explosive confrontations in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Providence, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. Free Blacks who settled in southern cities encountered similar conditions. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 20th century, vibrant, but restricted, communities of free Blacks existed in both the North and the South.

African Americans had been a part of Baltimore's shipbuilding industry since the late 1700s. By the 1850s, free Blacks dominated the caulkers trade and had formed their own trade union: the Caulkers Association. At the same time, however, the economy had turned sour, immigration had increased, and political competition had intensified between the American Party, the Democratic Party, and other political factions. In this increasingly volatile environment, the black caulkers of Baltimore came under attack in the caulkers riots of 1858-1859 and then again in 1865, when white shipyard workers went on strike and demanded that black caulkers be fired. One month after the strike began, shipyards in East Baltimore agreed to fire black caulkers by the spring of 1866. Between 1860 and 1870, emancipation, the shift to a peacetime economy, and the migration of rural blacks to Baltimore only increased tensions. Despite all this, the population of African Americans in Baltimore rose from 27,900 in 1860 to 39,500 in 1870.

Born a free man in 1835, Isaac Myers was a native of Baltimore who became a well-known labor leader. At 16 he was apprenticed as a caulkers. Myers' experiences and contributions were many, including being the founder of the Aged Ministers Home of the AME Church and "chief porter and shipping clerk" for Woods, Bridges, and Co., a wholesale grocery. Myers' business experience included the purchase of a shipyard and railway business from James Muller, where he hired 300 black caulkers and carpenters and, in 1879, opened a coal yard. As a supervisor and administrator, he was appointed special agent of the Post Office Department "where he supervised

aspects of the mail service in the Southern States with headquarters at Washington, D.C." Myers served as secretary of the Republican Campaign Committee of Maryland during the 1888 presidential election, and in the same year organized the Maryland Colored State Industrial Fair Association. As president of the Colored Business Men's Association in Baltimore, he opened the first Building and Loan Association in Baltimore, and was Superintendent of Bethel A.M.E. School in the city. Myers was also Mason and served as a Grand Master. In addition to all these activities, he also found time to author a play called "*The Missionary*."

One of the most notable contributions of Isaac Myers was his involvement in establishing a black labor union. In July 1869, Myers was pivotal in organizing the State Labor Convention of the Colored Men of Maryland in Baltimore. He also served as the convention's president. This convention agreed to inquire into the status of black labor in the United States, to improve labor conditions among black and white workers, and to eliminate racial discrimination against Blacks. The next step came in December 1869 when delegates from across the United States met in Washington, D.C., to form the Colored National Labor Convention. Here for the first time, African Americans representing a variety of trades, occupations, and professions could freely discuss the conditions of Negro labor in the United States and propose improvements. The result of the convention was the creation of the Colored National Labor Union (CNLU), which comprised local and state unions and every class of worker. An important impact of the CNLU was the formation of state labor organizations by African Americans across the country. One of these was the Alabama Negro Labor Union founded by James Rapier. In December 1869, when the CNLU convened, it was Isaac Myers who called the delegates to order. Isaac Myers also served on the Platform Committee, which structured resolutions for the Convention. At the close of the Convention, it was Isaac Myers who was thanked for being the "originator" of the idea to hold a black labor convention.

The organization of a national labor union for African Americans was extraordinary but was in step with the attempts by white labor to organize on a national basis. Isaac Myers also had a role in efforts by Whites to unionize. The National Labor Union was started in 1866 in Baltimore and was the first post-Civil War national labor federation. The National Labor Union was a white labor union and its attempts to align with black labor failed. Other national labor unions founded in this period included the short-lived Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. Both of these labor unions appealed to black labor with varying degrees of success. In August 1869, Myers was one of nine black delegates (out of a total of 142) attending the third National Labor Union convention. Myers represented the Colored Caulkers Trade Union Society of Baltimore. At that convention, Myers gave a speech calling for black and white worker unity. This was probably the first speech to be published of a black union leader.

Myers' success in organizing black workers took place during the historical era known as Reconstruction (1865-1877), when the nation was faced with reincorporating the 11 southern states that seceded and with establishing policies for 4 million newly freed slaves. Many freedmen were drawn to urban centers of the north and south, and

participated in the development of black communities that were beginning to appear prior to the Civil War. A host of black political leaders emerged during Reconstruction, including two United States senators, Hiram Revels and Blanche Bruce, both representing Mississippi. Prominent politicians at the state level included P.B.S. Pinchback in Louisiana and Jonathan Jasper Wright, a Supreme Court Justice in South Carolina. Black educational institutions of higher education (now termed Historically Black Colleges and Universities) were founded, many with white religious funding. It was within this context that Isaac Myers set out to improve conditions for black labor, just as A. Phillip Randolph will distinguish himself as a national labor organizer in the next century.

### **Lesson Development:**

1. **Motivation:** Display Teacher Resource Sheet 1, A Museum's Ship Comes In. Ask: Who are the two black pioneers being honored? What do we know about them? Lead students in a short discussion of the article.
2. Tell students that while most people know about Frederick Douglass, few people are aware of the important contributions of Isaac Myers. In this lesson they will examine the contributions of Isaac Myers to the African American Community.
3. Summarize the information from the Teacher Background and relate it to the students. Make sure that they understand the obstacles faced by African Americans after the Civil War.
4. Display Teacher Resource Sheet 2, Portrait of Isaac Myers. Divide students into three groups. Distribute Student Resource Sheet 1, Isaac Myers: Contributions to the African American Community, to all students.
  - Group 1 should get Student Resource Sheet 2, Excerpts from Isaac Myers' Eulogy.
  - Group 2 should get Student Resource Sheet 3, Excerpts from Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans.
  - Group 3 should get Student Resource Sheet 4, Proceedings of the (Colored) National Labor Union Convention, December 6-10, 1869.

Groups should use their assigned reading to complete the graphic organizer on Student Resource Sheet 1.

5. After groups have completed their assignment, one person from each group should report their findings to the class. As groups are reporting, keep a master list of Myers' contributions on an overhead transparency of Student Resource Sheet 1. Students should insert additional contributions to their own lists.
6. **Assessment:** You are a member of the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park Board of Directors and serve as Chairperson of the Fundraising Committee. Your committee has been having trouble raising funds because very few people are aware of Isaac Myers and his important contributions. Create a flyer describing Myers' contributions and the importance of creating a park to honor him.

7. **Closure:** Have students present their posters to the class. Ask: Why is it important to recognize the contributions that individuals make to their community? Can they think of any other individuals who have made important contributions, yet remain unknown or unrecognized? Discuss.

**Thoughtful Application:**

Have students create a poster that highlights the contributions of an unknown or unrecognized person who has made important contributions to his or her community. Display the posters in a prominent place in the classroom.

**Lesson Extensions:**

- Visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.
- Research other significant African-American labor union leaders (such as A. Philip Randolph, Maida Springer-Kemp, and William Lucy).
- Research the exclusion of African Americans from white trade and industrial unions under Samuel Gompers and John L. Lewis.
- Research Marylanders who have made important contributions to the African American community in other areas (such as Eubie Blake, Lillie Carroll Jackson, Kurt Schmoke, and Reginald Lewis).
- Research the role of African Americans in Maryland's maritime industries.

## Teacher Resource Sheet 1

### A Museum's Ship Comes In

Baltimore Sun, October 1, 2003

Fells Point: Ground is broken for a museum of black maritime history that will be the first of its kind in the nation.

By Tom Pelton  
Sun Staff

Cannons rumbled, a fireboat shot arcs of water, and a marching band thundered as more than 100 people gathered beside the water in Fells Point yesterday to celebrate the groundbreaking for what will be the nation's first museum of black maritime history.

The \$13 million project to convert a more than century-old coffee warehouse into the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park should be complete by the end of next year.

The museum will tell the long-ignored stories of African-Americans who played crucial roles in America's shipbuilding and sailing industries. Featured in the exhibits will be Douglass, a former Fells Point ship caulker who escaped from slavery to become an internationally known abolitionist, and Myers, a founder of one of the nation's first black-owned shipyards.

The center will also include a working 19<sup>th</sup>-century-style ship repair yard, classrooms where children will learn about shipbuilding, and visit a gift shop and a waterfront boardwalk.

"This site is dedicated to two great Americans, Frederick Douglass and Isaac Myers, who provide great inspiration to us because they broke through barriers to succeed," said James Piper Bond, president of the Living Classrooms Foundation, which is heading the project.

"This center will be a beacon of hope for young people as they try to overcome barriers in their own lives," said Bond, who spoke from a podium where he was flanked by officials including U.S. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings and Kweisi Mfume, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People...

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Dr. Patricia Schmoke, wife of former Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke and a trustee of the Living Classrooms Foundation, said she was proud that one of her ancestors worked with Isaac Myers to found one of the nation's first black-owned shipyards, the Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Co.

The shipyard, founded to help provide opportunities for black workers and others in 1868 after white caulkers struck to force shipyards to fire their black laborers, operated until 1884 a few hundred yards from the museum's future site at the end of South Caroline Street. "My great-great-grandfather, John Locks, was one of the founders of this maritime railway, ... and my grandfather was very proud that this project is taking place," Schmoke said...

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## Teacher Resource Sheet 2

**Isaac Myers  
(1835-1891)**



### ISAAC MYERS

*Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* by Theophilus Gould Steward, Phila., Pa.  
Printed by A. M. E. Book Concern [1921?] (p 265)

Images scanned by Andrew Leiter.  
Text encoded by Apex Data Services, Inc., Andrew Leiter, and Jill Kuhn Sexton.  
First edition, 2001.  
ca. 760K  
Academic Affairs Library, UNC-CH  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001.

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html>

## **Student Resource Sheet 1**

### **Isaac Myers: Contributions to the African American Community**

**Biographical Information:**

**Contributions to Maritime Industry:**

**Contributions to the Labor Movement:**

**Other Contributions:**



## Student Resource Sheet 2a

### Excerpts from Isaac Myers' Eulogy

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For a fuller description of his life-work, we submit a sketch which was prepared a year ago for publication:

MR. ISAAC MYERS, of Baltimore, Md., is in every sense of the word a self-made man. Born of poor parents, in a slave State that afforded no school privileges for colored youths, his success in life is a noble example of what push and pluck can accomplish under the most adverse circumstances. He received a common school education in the private day-school of Rev. John Fortie, and at the age of sixteen was apprenticed to James Jackson, a prominent colored man in his day, to learn the trade of ship-caulking; how thoroughly he mastered the business may be inferred from the fact that at the age of twenty he was superintending the caulking of some of the largest clipper ships that were then being built in that once famous ship-building city.

In the year 1860 he entered the wholesale grocery of Woods, Bridges & Co., which became, during the war, the largest establishment of its kind south of Mason and Dixon's line. He acted here in the double capacity of chief porter and shipping clerk, and acquired a knowledge of the grocery business in all its branches that subsequently served a good purpose.

Leaving the above establishment in 1864, he organized and successfully conducted a company grocery store, which, if left to the control of his judgment, would have been to-day one of the great institutions of Baltimore.

In 1865 he resigned the management of the above institution and returned to the ship-yard. In this year the great strike against colored mechanics and longshoremen was inaugurated under the leadership of the notorious "Joe" Edwards. The city was under the control of "Know Nothing" influence, and in sympathy with the strikers, and notwithstanding the bold fight made under the leadership of Mr. Myers, Wm. F. Taylor and Charles O. Fisher, every colored mechanic in the ship-yards and longshoreman, over 1,000, were driven from their employment. It was at this juncture that the executive and great organizing abilities of Mr. Myers were first demonstrated. In December of this year he conceived the idea of the colored people buying a ship-yard and marine railway. The proposition was submitted to a number of merchants who promised their work. He called meetings in all the colored churches of Baltimore, organized a company, and within four months raised \$10,000 cash in shares of five dollars each, exclusively from colored people; purchased of James N. Muller his yard and railway for \$40,000, and 300 colored caulkers and carpenters found immediate employment. For a while they enjoyed almost a monopoly of the business of the city, also giving employment to a large number of white mechanics. He secured a government contract of \$50,000, against the combined competition of ship builders of Wilmington, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Alexandria. The moral influence of this organization restored the longshoremen, but the stevedores, taking advantage

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of the situation and condition of the men, cut their pay. He organized the workmen, prepared a protest and submitted it to the merchants, who ordered the pay restored to \$2.50 per day, upon the penalty of giving their work to Philadelphia stevedores. The entire debt of the ship-yard company was paid off in five years from the profits of the business, after which he left it to enter the political arena. The same year he was appointed a messenger to the Hon. John L. Thomas, collector of customs of Baltimore, being the second colored man appointed to a position under the Federal Government, in Maryland.

In January, 1870, at the suggestion of George T. Downing, of Rhode Island, Fred. G. Barbadoes and the late Rev. J. Sellar Martian, a conference of the leading Republicans of the country, white and colored, was held at the residence of U. S. Senator Pomeroy in Washington, D. C., and it was decided to petition Hon. John A. J. Cresswell, Postmaster-General, to appoint Mr. Myers a special agent of the Post Office Department. The application received the indorsement of the Committees on Post Office and Post-road of the U. S. Senate and House of Representatives—the only indorsement of the kind on record—and on March 7th, 1870, Mr. Myers received his commission and was assigned to the supervision of the mail service in the Southern States, with headquarters at Washington, D. C. About this time the Labor Question, under the leadership of the great champion of labor, Travellick, was seriously agitating the mind of the country, it being their purpose to put in nomination a national ticket, and as a condition precedent, to divide the colored vote in the Southern States by the organization of labor clubs. Mr. Myers grasped the situation, and, to offset the Travellick scheme, issued a call for a National Labor Convention of Colored Men, which met in the city of Washington, January 10, 1871. It is a historical fact that this was the largest and best representative convention of colored men ever held in the United States. The convention remained in session five days, and formed a national plan for the educational and industrial organization of colored people, and elected Mr. Myers president. Within six months a State organization was formed in nearly all of the Southern States, as well as in some of the Eastern and Western States. In August of the same year Mr. Myers appointed Mr. Isaiah C. Wears, of Philadelphia, and Peter H. Clark, of Ohio, as delegates representing the Colored National Union, and the three met the great National Labor Congress at Cincinnati, August 14th, the largest gathering of white labor men ever assembled in this country, their purpose being the organization of the Labor Reform party. The position taken by Myers, Wears and Clark was against the amalgamation of politics with labor. After a careful summing up of the plans and purposes of the congress, on the fifth day Myers made a very characteristic speech in defense of General Grant's administration, and in support of the Republican party as the friend of labor, the only

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speech of the kind made in the convention. It produced considerable excitement and threw the convention into a tumult. It was with the greatest difficulty that he was protected from personal assault on the floor of the convention. He was forced back over the railing, into the space occupied by newspaper correspondents, by the pressure of the excited delegates. The speech was published in most of the leading newspapers of the country, August 18th, 1871. In the State campaign of North Carolina, 1872, he rendered invaluable service, and the success of the national ticket owes no more to any of the political managers of that campaign than to him, of which evidence in his possession will show. In the following year the Hon. Fred. Douglass was elected president, since which time the National Labor Union has ceased to exist.

Myers made many hair-breadth escapes in his extensive travels in the Southern States during the Ku Klux period. He has been an eye-witness to many of the horrible deeds of that organization, and yet he is one of the very conservative men of the race on the Southern question. He says our politics in the South has had too much pulpit in it. He says the pulpit in politics in the South has been the curse of the Negro, and most of our present troubles are traceable to that source.

As a special agent of the Post Office Department and detective, Mr. Myers had no superior in the service. His arrests and convictions are among the most notable in the history of the service. P. H. Woodward, chief special agent, in his book entitled "Guarding the Mails," gives much space to the case of the celebrated English swindler, William Parker, M.D. This case was brought to the attention of the department by Moncure D. Conway, and given to Mr. Myers to "work up," many English noblemen and ministers being swindled through the use of the United States mails. After a six months' search Parker was arrested by Mr. Myers at Connellsburg, Pa., tried, convicted and sent to the Pennsylvania Penitentiary for five years. The celebrated Dead Letter Office case, of which so much was written about at the time, was managed principally by him. One of the most expert letter thieves in the Baltimore Post Office, named Claypole, who had baffled the cunning of the force for years, was detected by him and sent to the Maryland Penitentiary for five years.

The *Baltimorean* of September 5th, 1874, says: "Within the recollection of the oldest citizens, no other robbery or series of robberies have occurred in the Baltimore Post Office which have been so long continued, and which, when discovery has been made, could all be traced to one individual."

Whilst *en route* to Williamsport, Pa., with a prisoner, in the month of July, 1878, the prisoner jumped through the window while the car was in motion. In recapturing him Mr. Myers was accidentally shot in the right leg.

In 1879 he retired from the service and opened a coal yard in

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Baltimore. He was, in 1882, editor and proprietor of the *Colored Citizen*, a weekly campaign newspaper published in Baltimore. In the same year he was appointed a United States gauger, and became one of the most proficient and popular men on the force. He resigned the position of United States gauger February 2d, 1887, the day the Democratic collector took charge of the office, and was the only man in the State who made a voluntary resignation. In the Presidential campaign of '88 he was secretary of the Republican Campaign Committee of Maryland; also rendered valuable service on the stump. In '88 he organized the Maryland Colored State Industrial Fair Association. Their first fair, held in that year, eclipsed any similar one ever held by colored associations in the United States. He organized, and is President of the Colored Business Men's Association, of Baltimore; he also organized the first Building and Loan Association of that city. He has been fifteen years superintendent of Bethel A. M. E. School of Baltimore. It is generally regarded as the leading Sabbath-school of that denomination, and is pronounced by Secretary Smith "the banner Sunday-school of the world." He is also a trustee of said church and secretary of the Board. He is a past grand master of Masons of Maryland, and author of a Mason's Digest, favorably commented on by Masonic writers, is also a prominent Odd Fellow and Good Samaritan.

He is the author of a drama, in three acts, entitled "The Missionary."

Postmaster Frank Brown, of Baltimore, President of the Maryland State Agricultural and Mechanical Association, appointed Mr. Myers manager of the department of colored exhibits in the recent great State Agricultural and Mechanical Exposition at Baltimore. Mr. Brown complimented Mr. Myers and Mr. Malachi Gibson, who was associated with him, as having clearly demonstrated, by the character of the exhibits displayed, that all the colored man wants is a fair chance, and he can make himself as self-sustaining as other races.

Mr. Myers' last experience of national importance is a plan to organize a home for the aged ministers of the A. M. E. Church. The Board of Directors met in the city of Philadelphia, August 1st, 1890, and elected Isaac Myers president, Jas. A. Handy, D.D., and L. J. Coppin, D.D., vice-presidents, J. W. Beckett, D.D., secretary, and Augustine Dunn, treasurer. The home is to be located in Pennsylvania, and \$50,000 is to be raised. He is spoken of as a gentleman of the highest integrity. He has been married a second time; his wife, Sarah E., is the daughter of the late Charles Deaver, a well-known butcher. She is a very estimable and hospitable lady. They live in comfortable circumstances.

## Student Resource Sheet 3a

### Excerpts from Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans

# ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AMONG NEGRO AMERICANS

Report of a Social Study made by Atlanta University, under the patronage of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., together with the Proceedings of the 12th Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, held at Atlanta University, on Tuesday, May the 28th, 1907

EDITED BY  
**W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS**  
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF THE CONFERENCE

The Atlanta University Press  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA  
1907

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<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/dubois07/title.html>

## Student Resource Sheet 3b

### ***The Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Co.***

The Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Co., a company owned and controlled by colored men, was organized in the year 1865. The company was capitalized at \$40,000. The stock was divided into 8,000 shares at \$5 a share. The corporation lived for a period of eighteen years or from 1865 to about 1883. The company was for many years very successful.

Causes which brought the corporation into existence are these: The white laboring classes of Maryland organized a movement to drive all free Negro labor out of the State. The Negroes had for many years done all the caulking, a very profitable employment, and also a business for which Baltimore had become famous. Besides this, they were very successful as stevedores, and naturally had a large monopoly of the domestic work. The whites tried to compel the shipyards to discontinue the employment of Negro caulkers. But the 200 or 360 colored caulkers were the most proficient in the State, consequently the owners of ship yards could not afford to take the less competent white labor. Failing in their effort to get them out of the work by this means and failing to get a bill passed by the State Legislature, compelling all free Negroes to leave the State or choose a master, the whites resorted to brute force. Without police protection the colored men were fast being driven out of the ship yards by the white mobs that attacked them as they went home from work, when further attacks of the mob were rendered unnecessary by the ultimate agreement of the white ship carpenters not to work in any ship yard where colored caulkers were employed. As there were few or no colored ship's carpenters, the colored caulkers were thrown out of the yards.

The movement to procure a yard of their own was started by a number of colored men. Meetings were held throughout the city with the result that finally \$10,000 were raised. Prominent among the promoters of this organization were: John W. Locks, Isaac Myers, George Meyers, Joseph Thomas, James Lemmon, Washington Perkins, and John H. Smith, who paid the first dollar in the organization. Mr. Smith is the only one of the promoters still living. It is he, who just related to me, with a memory green and full as of the events of early youth, the remarkable struggle of this early Negro enterprise.

A ship yard, situated at the corner of Philpot and Point street, said to be the spot where Frederick Douglass sat on a cellar door and studied his spelling book, owned by N. Muller, was bought for \$40,000. The \$10,000 already paid for stock was paid for the property and the balance through a mortgage of \$30,000 to Wm. Applegarth on the yard, etc. At the time the yard was bought the majority of the corporation thought it was fee simple property, but instead there was a ground rent of \$2,000 a year. However, the opinion is, that this was the only available place.

In the first year of the company's existence, it did a much larger business than its most sanguine supporters had expected. In its second and third years it held Government contracts besides many other large contracts. In the fourth year the Government work was lost to the white caulkers because of the fact that the colored company could not compete with the whites, the colored caulkers refusing to work for a lower rate of wages. Nevertheless, business was prosperous and in five years the entire

## Student Resource Sheet 3c

mortgage of \$30,000 with interest at 6 per cent per annum, a bonus of \$1,000 a year, which they had agreed to pay so long as a part of the mortgage was unpaid, \$2,000 a year ground rent, and the wages of from 100 to 200 men earning from \$2 to \$3.50 per day besides other expenses, were paid with the help of a small additional loan.

In the sixth year of the company's history, a stock dividend was declared; that is, the remaining unsubscribed stock was divided among the stockholders in proportion to the amount and age of their holdings. There had been subscribed and paid in all told \$14,000. In the seventh year a 10 per cent dividend was paid, and for four years thereafter dividends of from 4 to 10 per cent were paid.

Wrangling over offices the first two years caused loss. Desertion of the white boss carpenter came next, followed by his men and colored caulkers, together with the loss of a number of patrons; the desertion of the colored manager, Samuel Dogherty, with his followers next occurred, and other minor desertions caused the company loss of money and prestige.

After twelve years a series of mishaps – wearing away of the fixed capital – for which no precaution had been taken, occurred. The larger of two railways used for docking ships wore out. It took one year to repair it at a cost of \$6,000. The white firm that repaired it left a flaw, which later caused the ship yard a loss of much money and prestige. Ships, in several instances, were wedged in the track and were extricated only at a great cost and delay.

The lack of trained managers was also another hindrance. The colored caulkers were most experienced workmen, but none had had any training or experience in the role of manager. But the final and greatest cause was the refusal of the owners of the ground to release the yard to the colored company except at an enormous rate of increase. The ground rent was doubled; that is, instead of \$2,000 they now demanded \$4,000. With the change which had now come about in the construction of ships from wooden bottoms to steel and with the increasing number of ships of larger tonnage which could not be accommodated by the company, the management of the Chesapeake Marine and Dry Dock Co. gave up business.

The stockholders lost outright. It is said, however, that the loss of no one person was great as the stock was very widely distributed.

The organization of the ship company saved the colored caulkers, for they are now members of the white caulkers' union. The failure of the whites in driving out the colored caulkers put an end to their efforts to drive colored labor out of other fields. And although the company failed, it must surely have been an object lesson to the whites as well as to the Blacks of the power and capability of the colored people in their industrial development.

Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans. Report of a Social Study made by Atlanta University, under the Patronage of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, D. C., together with the Proceedings of the 12th Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, held at Atlanta University, on Tuesday, May the 28th, 1907 [1] W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, Ed. [1] Atlanta [1] The Atlanta University Press [1] 1907 (p 152-153)

## Student Resource Sheet 3d

### CHESAPEAKE MARINE RAILWAY AND DRY DOCK COMPANY



Maryland State Archives, The Road from Frederick to Thurgood, Black Baltimore in Transition 1870-1920  
<http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/cmrddc.html>

## Student Resource Sheet 4a

### **Proceedings of the (Colored) National Labor Union Convention December 6-10, 1869**

The Convention was called to order by [President] Isaac Myers, Esq., of Maryland, who read the call for the Convention...

Mr. Isaac Myers, from the Committee on Platform, reported the following as the platform of the Convention...

*Resolved*, That labor was instituted by Almighty God as a means of revealing the rich endowments of inanimate creation to be understood and used by man, and that labor is a duty common to, and the natural heritage of, the human family, each person having a natural right to labor in any field of industry for which he or she is capacitated, the right to be governed and restricted only by the laws of political economy.

*Resolved*, That capital is an agent or means used by labor for its development and support, and labor is an agent or means used by capital for its development and general enhancement, and that, for the well-being and productiveness of capital and labor, the best harmony and fellowship of action should at all times prevail, that "strikes" may be avoided and the workingman convinced that justice is done him and that he is receiving an equivalent for the labor performed. . . .

*Resolved*, That education is one of the strongest safeguards of republican institutions, the bulwark of American citizenship, and a defense against the invasion of the rights of man; its liberal distribution to all, without regard to race, creed, or sex, is necessary for the well being and advancement of society, and that all should enjoy its blessing alike in each of the States and Territories of the United States; that educated labor is more productive, is worth, and commands, higher rates of wages, is less dependent upon capital; therefore it is essentially necessary to the rapid and permanent development of the agricultural, manufacturing, and mechanical growth and interests of the nation that there shall be a liberal free school system enacted by the Legislatures of the several States for the benefit of al the inhabitants thereof.

*Resolved*, That the Government of the United States, republican in form, is a Government of the people, for the people, and by the people, and that all men are equal in political rights and entitled to the largest political and religious liberty compatible with the good order of society, as, also, the use and enjoyment of the fruits of their labor and talents; and that no laws should be made by any legislative body to the advantage of one class and against the interest and advantage of the other, but that all legislation should be for the benefit of all the people of any particular State and of the United States, to the end that loyalty to and love for the institutions and the Government of the United States should be a permanent consideration with all the citizens hereof.

## Student Resource Sheet 4b

*Resolved*, That we feel it to be a duty that we owe to ourselves, to society, and to our country, to encourage by all the means within our reach industrial habits among our people, the learning of trades and professions by our children without regard to sex; to educate and impress them with the fact that all labor is honorable and a sure road to wealth; that habits of economy and temperance, combined with industry and education, is the great safeguard of free republican institutions, the elevator of the condition of man, the motive power to increase trade and commerce, and to make the whole people of this land the wealthiest and happiest on the face of the globe.

*Resolved*, That regarding the labor of the country the common property of all the people, that no portion should be excluded therefrom because of a geographical division of the globe in which they or their forefathers were born, or on account of statutes or color, but that every man or woman should receive employment according to his or her ability to perform the labor required, without any other test; that the exclusion of colored men and apprentices from the right to labor in any department of industry or workshops in any of the States and Territories of the United States by what is known as "Trades' Unions" is an insult to God and injury to us, and disgrace to humanity...

Isaac Myers,  
Henry Lee,  
Harry S. Harmon,  
Rev. Jos. P. Evans.

[https://archive.org/stream/cu31924002226805/cu31924002226805\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/cu31924002226805/cu31924002226805_djvu.txt)

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026753/1871-01-19/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>

From *Black Workers: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, edited by Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 165-175.