

# Study Guide for Teachers



**TAHIRA**  
in  
*Freedom Stories*  
presented by

Young Audiences  
(866) 500-9265  
[www.yanjep.org](http://www.yanjep.org)



## **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

Gifted storyteller TAHIRA shares tales of freedom fighters in this dramatic performance. A compelling look at the people who took extraordinary risks for freedom, the program can be tailored to highlight such topics as the Civil Rights Movement, Black women in history, or the Underground Railroad. Music and song are interwoven with storytelling captivating students' attention. This program emphasizes the importance of having courage in the face of inequality and injustice.

TAHIRA can tailor the subject matter of Freedom Stories to such topics as:

Civil Rights Movement, which includes biographical narratives about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Harry and Harriette Moore, educators and NAACP members whose assassinations sparked the movement.

Black Women in History, such as human rights activist Ella Baker, as well as Ruby Bridges, the first African-American child to desegregate an all-white elementary school in Louisiana during the New Orleans school desegregation crisis in 1960.

The Underground Railroad includes freedom songs, such as "John the Rabbit," which contained coded messages used by enslaved Africans to devise a plan of escape. Also, includes the story of Henry "Box" Brown who escaped enslavement by mailing himself in a box from Richmond, Virginia to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

Racial inequities have existed in America since its founding which was predicated on the genocide of the Indigenous people that inhabited this land before the Europeans arrived. When exploring the history of America and its treatment of people of African descent, it at times may be difficult information to digest. The stories tell of horrible, yet deliberate actions that were codified in laws and systems of government. It is equally important to remember that despite this oppression and trauma exacted upon African Americans they successfully resisted, survived, and thrived, which speaks to their resilience, tenacity, intelligence and innovativeness. As you experienced these stories and songs of African Americans remember they have been and still are inventors, scholars, artists, craftspeople, athletes and so much more.

## **LEARNING GOALS**

Through story and song TAHIRA takes students on a journey through African American history. Students will hear stories from African American history. Students will retain the story of someone in African American history that fought for freedom.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

Discuss the following questions with your students:

Investigate the stories, spirituals and work songs used by enslaved people. Talk to students about how the stories and songs were used and how the meaning of the stories and the lyrics of the songs might have been interpreted differently by whites than by enslaved Africans. Let students know that songs were also important during the Civil Rights era. Come up with a list of reasons that songs might have been used (to show solidarity, to rally the people to the cause, to point out injustice, etc.).

## **VOCABULARY WORDS**

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Confederacy              | Segregation / Desegregation |
| Union                    | Civil rights movement       |
| Abolitionist             | Civil Disobedience          |
| Underground Railroad     |                             |
| Thirteenth Amendment     |                             |
| Constitutional Amendment |                             |

## **ARTIST INFORMATION**

TAHIRA is a multi-talented storyteller, relating African and African American stories while drawing upon her cultural background and personal experiences. She is filled with passion and enthusiasm for the content of her stories and their inherent cultural messages. Whether performing her original works, or her vast repertoire of stories from the African oral traditions, TAHIRA brings to her audience messages of courage, hope and spiritual strength. Blending song, poetry and story, her high-energy performance delights listeners of all ages. TAHIRA is an advocate of using the arts to bring about social change. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Temple University's School of Communication and Theatre. She was awarded a fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts for her significant contribution to oral literature. TAHIRA is the Past- President of Keepers of the Culture, a Philadelphia Afro-centric storytelling group, and a lifetime member of the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc.

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM**

1. Talk with students about the songs of the Civil Rights era. Look back at the list of reasons for using songs that you created with the class. Can you add any more now?
2. Have students create a list of messages that are important to them (e.g., help your neighbor, keep your neighborhood clean, be peaceful, etc.), and create lyrics to a song using a tune that they are familiar with.
3. Have students paint or draw images depicting their message. Students may also use these images to enhance the written version of their lyrics.
4. Get the music teacher involved! Work with them in having students listen to and perform more spirituals and songs of the civil rights movement, and later music influenced by these songs.
5. Get the visual art teacher involved! Work with them in exposing students to visual art of the time, and have students create their own artwork as influenced by these artistic expressions and messages and the performance of *Freedom Stories*.

## **RESOURCES**

The 1619 Project

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>

The National Museum of African American History & Culture Talking About Race:

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>

Videos:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_66nY81jHx8OsvfjhFydZw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_66nY81jHx8OsvfjhFydZw)