

ESL Students Reflect on Race

Kathy Budway

When I was teaching ESL at Shoreline Community College in Seattle, I discovered that many of my students were unaware of the sacrifices and contributions of African Americans to U.S. society. I decided that for one quarter, my students would study African American History. I asked them to reflect on how their attitudes and prejudices changed during their studies, and I made a short film about it. You can watch the 8-minute film called "Who Paved the Way?" here: <vimeo.com/40630589>. More teaching materials at <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-42>.

Before Studying African American History



JASON: My stereotype about African Americans was negative.



AMAR: The media shows you that black people are gangsters and they carry guns.



JANE: My white real estate agent told me [that finding] a location without black people was the most important factor.



MILA: When I came here, I couldn't understand blacks. I thought, "Why are they talking about racism too much?"

After Studying African American History



ALEX (studied the prison system): I was shocked when I was doing research.



ASTER: Black people contributed to America. [They] are doctors, scientists, professors. I was so surprised.



JACKIE (studied black wall street): What [black people] have done—they never talk about in history.



SARINA: If you want to live in the U.S. or study in the U.S., I think [you] must study the history of African Americans.

Kathy Budway is the Civics and Student Leadership Coordinator for Pima College Adult Basic Education in Tucson, AZ.