
VICTOR AND CONSTANCE DANIEL AND EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION AT THE CARDINAL GIBBONS INSTITUTE

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From 1924 to 1934, Victor and Constance Daniel practiced emancipatory education at the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, a Catholic high school for African Americans in Ridge, Maryland. The purpose of emancipatory education was to liberate Black and White Americans, both mentally and morally, from the vestiges of slavery that created and perpetuated racism in the United States. Emancipatory education placed the study and appreciation of African American history and culture at its center. The Daniels rooted their development of emancipatory education in their experience as Catholic educators, the racial uplift movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and African American scholarship.

Most Americans regard New Year's Day as the time to resolve to change for the better. For African Americans, it holds additional significance. On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which freed all slaves living in states in rebellion against the Union. Since that time, African Americans have celebrated New Year's Day as a time of thanksgiving for liberation. In the 1920s and 1930s, Victor and Constance Daniel, African American Catholic educators, examined the history and legacy of American slavery to articulate and practice a philosophy of education they called emancipatory education. This philosophy of education was rooted in their experience surrounding Catholic education, the racial uplift movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the work of African American scholars in Black history and culture (Higginbotham, 1993; Moore, 1997; Woodson, 1998).

Victor and Constance Daniel believed the legacy of slavery continued to enslave Americans mentally and morally. The Civil War began the process of African American emancipation but by no means completed it. Slavery's

legacy perpetuated false beliefs about African Americans that served to keep them socially, politically, and economically oppressed and enslaved to the notion that they were inferior to White Americans. These false beliefs also convinced White Americans that they were the intellectual and moral superiors of African Americans and as such it was their duty to control Blacks. The Daniels contended that education was the solution to the mental and moral emancipation of all Americans. At the heart of their theory of emancipatory education was an appreciation of the richness of African American history and culture and in 1924 they applied their philosophy at the Cardinal Gibbons Institute.

Before 1924, high school was but a dream for most southern Maryland Blacks. Neither public nor private schools for African Americans existed at this time in St. Mary's County, Maryland. African Americans who attended high school had to leave home to do so, usually going to Baltimore or Washington, DC. Southern Maryland African Americans tended to be very poor, so sending children away to school was not a possibility for most families. They therefore welcomed the opening of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute in October 1924 (Moore, 1998). Located on a farm in Ridge, Maryland, the Cardinal Gibbons Institute was an industrial and agricultural Catholic high school open to all African American youth regardless of religious affiliation. Father John LaFarge, S.J., led a group of African American and White Catholics in creating the Cardinal Gibbons Institute. The school had a twofold mission: 1) to respond to the Great Migration of African Americans in the early 20th century from the rural South to the industrial North by providing industrial education to youth who wished to enter the industrial labor force and agricultural education to those who wished to make their living off the land; and 2) to prepare a new generation of African American Catholic leaders (Moore, 1998).

Institute organizers wished to combine industrial and agricultural education with Catholic education. Such education would invest students with the skills they needed to establish successful lives for themselves in the cities or in the rural areas. It would also give them an understanding of the Catholic faith that would preserve them from evils such as materialism, atheism, and communism (LaFarge, 1921) and prepare them to become leaders in their communities and in the Church. Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner and Eugene Clark, leaders of the Federated Colored Catholics, advised that the school should employ the most talented African American Catholic lay teachers and principals (Clark & Turner, 1922). Such men and women would model African American Catholic leadership and instill in the students a love for the Catholic faith.

The Board of Trustees listened to this advice and hired Victor and Constance Daniel to serve as the school's principal and assistant principal, respectively. Victor and Constance Daniel possessed all the qualities the

Board of Trustees required. They were African American, Catholic, and graduates and former faculty of Tuskegee Institute. The Daniels brought expertise in industrial and agricultural education; a creative curriculum that emphasized African American history, art, and music; and a philosophy of emancipatory education which relied upon a true knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

According to the Daniels, African Americans who possessed a true knowledge of their history and culture would have a new and authentic story to use in their own liberation and their minds would be free. The Daniels contended that African Americans who knew and appreciated their history would have a solid foundation upon which to build their characters and contribute to society. White Americans' emancipation also lay in a proper understanding of African American history and culture (Daniel & Daniel, 1930a). As African Americans had been miseducated about their history, so too were White Americans miseducated about theirs (Woodson, 1998). They had received false teachings about the moral and intellectual inferiority of Blacks, which was used to justify their oppression of African Americans. Victor and Constance Daniel believed that if Whites truly understood how their history enslaved them, they would recognize their shared humanity with African Americans, cease the oppression, and liberate themselves. The Daniels committed themselves to emancipatory education, and regarded the Cardinal Gibbons Institute as a grand opportunity to promote this work. However, the Daniels' pursuit of emancipatory education did not go uncontested by members of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute Board of Trustees.

Scarce financial resources prevented the Cardinal Gibbons Institute from delivering the industrial education it touted in its promotional literature. Without funds to purchase industrial equipment, the Daniels focused on providing a solid agricultural program and a liberal arts education that placed the African American experience at the center. Arthur Monahan and Admiral William S. Benson, key members of the school's Board of Trustees, opposed the Daniels' emphasis on the liberal arts and resented their efforts toward emancipatory education. Monahan and Benson regarded industrial education as the most important mission of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute and demanded the Daniels' dedication to it. In a letter to Archbishop Michael J. Curley, the head of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, Benson wrote, "the trouble is that both Daniel and his wife are intent upon the purely academic phase of the institution" (Benson, 1927). He also expressed his displeasure with the Daniels' efforts to instill in African Americans a positive self-image. He said the Daniels had in mind "the idea of raising the Negro race to a higher plane—which of course, is well enough in its own way, but not exactly the idea the institution started out with, nor would it be suited to this section of the country at this time" (Benson, 1927).

Benson's letter to Archbishop Curley was but one effort lodged by mem-

bers of the Board of Trustees to control the Daniels' teaching authority at the Cardinal Gibbons Institute. In this case, Benson and Monahan wanted the Daniels to function as Black Catholic figureheads, not as principals with authority to make decisions and lead the school. As long as the Daniels followed Monahan and Benson's directives, they received praise; but when they dared to employ their philosophy of emancipatory education they came under fire. Benson and Monahan did not have the archbishop's ear in 1927, but this exchange revealed the Daniels' struggle with the Board of Trustees for authority and respect. And, as the years progressed, the Board stripped more and more power from the Daniels (Moore, 1997). Unable to rely upon the Board for support, the Daniels had to create a new forum in which to gain support for their work in emancipatory education. They created such a forum in *The Cardinal's Notebook*.

Five times a year, Sadlier Publishing Company printed *The Cardinal's Notebook* free of charge for the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, and members of the Board of Trustees distributed it to persons they hoped to interest in the school's work. *The Cardinal's Notebook* showcased student essays like "Uncle Sam Helps Us To Cure Our Meat" by Henrietta Jones and published articles about the Institute's community education programs such as "From a Charles County Cabin," the story of local farmer John Thomas, who used Institute lessons to improve his yield of turkeys. The journal also featured essays and poetry by prominent African American scholars and writers like Carter G. Woodson and Langston Hughes and served as a thank you to Institute benefactors.

For Victor and Constance Daniel, *The Cardinal's Notebook* served a purpose that was crucial to their philosophy of emancipatory education. It formed a nexus of African American social, political, and cultural concerns and served as a rhetorical vehicle that Victor and Constance Daniel used to introduce their philosophy of emancipatory education and to reeducate their supporters and detractors about the relevance of African American history and culture. Each year the Daniels produced an "Emancipation" issue of *The Cardinal's Notebook* in conjunction with the celebration of Negro History Week (Daniel & Daniel, 1930b). Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, inaugurated Negro History Week in 1926 as a time to celebrate African American history and culture. In the 1930 "Emancipation" issue, Victor and Constance Daniel published their most powerful statement of emancipatory education in the essay "1863-1930." This essay analyzed the evil consequences of slavery and racism (Daniel & Daniel, 1930a).

Victor and Constance Daniel intended this essay to be a moral history lesson that would call the Cardinal Gibbons Institute "friends" to examine the racist underpinnings of their attitudes and actions toward African Americans. The friends the Daniels addressed were White Catholics, the primary audi-

ence that received and read *The Cardinal's Notebook*. The Cardinal Gibbons Institute had many White Catholic friends, patrons who committed their time, service, and financial support to the school. For the most part, these men and women were well-meaning and wanted to make life better for African Americans. But, as the Daniels found from experience, these friends were often enslaved to false notions about African Americans that they received from their culture. Such friends thought African Americans were to be helped, to be saved, to be taken care of, and to be controlled, but not to be accorded respect. Lacking a sense of respect for African American humanity, sympathetic Whites could be friends in the sense of patrons to African Americans but not friends meaning those joined by a mutual benevolence and intimacy (Daniel & Daniel, 1930a).

The Daniels suggested to readers that as African Americans looked back to their history at New Year's Day it was necessary for all Americans to look back at the history of slavery in the United States in order to understand the situation of African Americans in 1930. The Daniels (1930a) admonished:

before we turn over a new leaf, let us turn back a few old leaves to the one hundred and thirty Negro slave owners of 1860. It is our opinion that the most vicious consequences of slavery are exemplified by these one hundred and thirty Negroes. (p. 15)

To the Daniels these African American slave owners were the quintessential exemplars of the power of slavery to ensnare minds. Slavery permeated American society in such ways that descendants of slaves and former slaves themselves learned to devalue their own humanity to the point of buying and selling their Black brothers and sisters. The Daniels' decision to use this extremely small group of Black slave holders as the exemplars of "the most vicious consequences of slavery" was ingenious for two reasons. First, it allowed them to teach their White and African American readers a historical fact of which most were unaware. Second, their decision to use Black slave holders as their primary example of the destructive nature of slavery served to deracialize what they said about slavery and its evil consequences. The Daniels did not seek to place all the blame for slavery and racism on White Americans but sought to show how thoroughly it infected American society and culture. Blacks like Whites possessed moral agency and could choose or resist evil. If Whites could believe that African Americans were their inferiors, then it stood to reason that African Americans could believe in their own inferiority as well.

Having introduced their friends to the 130 Black slave owners, the Daniels (1930a) asked them "to use history to correct...beliefs about African American moral and intellectual inferiority" (p. 2). In particular, the Daniels addressed those who accepted as true "dissertations on the unmoral tenden-

cies of certain members of the group [African Americans]" (p. 15). The Daniels suggested that what passed as accurate teachings about African American moral inferiority were projections to cover up the evils done to African Americans during slavery. When listening to dissertations on African American inferiority, the Daniels urged their friends to "remember the homes deliberately broken up, the children who were the property of the slave-parents' owner, the half-castes inventoried by their own fathers together with the household furniture" (p. 15). The Daniels also addressed the commonly held belief that African Americans were innately dishonest. Again, they referred their friends to the history of American slavery, saying, "remember that supplied with the most meager and unpalatable food, he [the slave] was frequently forced to steal to supply his needs" (p. 15). For over three centuries, America denied the sanctity of Black families, trespassed against Black women's virtue, and forced African Americans to engage in immorality in order to stay alive. All of these abuses of African Americans were done in the name of preserving the rights of American citizens to own and sell human beings. The Daniels wanted their friends to remember all of these facts before they judged African Americans.

Victor and Constance Daniel (1930a) argued that African Americans and White Americans still needed to be emancipated from slavery's legacy. They wrote:

Emancipating the Negro's mind is a greater task by far than emancipating his body ever was. And emancipating the mind of his white brother is still harder. Hand-me-down teachings die hard. Inter-racial movements have some slight effect. Sociological surveys are helpful. But the real weight of the burden rests squarely where it has always rested since Emancipation, on the shoulders of education, and particularly on the shoulders of Negro institutions of learning. (p. 15)

The Daniels believed the burden of African American emancipatory education was on Black schools and Black teachers because they prepared African American youth for the future. When African American youth learned to value themselves, to be responsible for their own moral actions, and to appreciate the truth about their own history and culture, they would be educated and emancipated. They would be young men and women of strong character inculcated with "a love of high principles" (Daniel & Daniel, 1930a, p. 15). By their lives young African Americans would defy racist teachings about themselves. Their lives would cause White Americans still enslaved to racist ideas and actions to take a critical look at the "hand-me-down teachings" (p. 15) they had received and accepted.

In addition to publishing their own essays about emancipatory education, the Daniels were dedicated to making their students and supporters aware of the ideas and work of other educators and scholars who supported emancipa-

tory education. One of the most important essays of this nature published in *The Cardinal's Notebook* was "History?" by Woodson (1930). Woodson argued that most European and American history was written and taught in such a biased manner that the result was "downright propaganda" (p. 2) which supported the status quo of White privilege and domination in the United States and abroad. Such historians and teachers did not necessarily falsify history, but they selected from history "those facts which are creditable to their particular race to which most Americans and Europeans belong" (p. 2). The result of this work was a racist and nationalist cultural mindset which exploited "the disadvantages suffered by others" (p. 2). Woodson wanted readers to understand that he was not criticizing a healthy appreciation of one's race, nation, or culture. However, he did hold responsible historians and teachers who manipulated historical facts to keep White Americans in a positive light, while at the same time creating a modern world charged with "race hate" and "national prejudice" (p. 2).

In order to correct the evils created by this history, Woodson (1930) advocated that historians and teachers abandon selective, racist, and nationalist history; seek to learn "the story of all"; and "evaluate each contribution as it really is rather than as certain individuals like it" (p. 2). History and civilization were not the results of one race or nation but of the contributions of all races. Woodson acknowledged that most regarded his notion of history as heretical and that those who attempted to write and teach history as he advised "would not be tolerated two weeks in one of our accredited universities" (p. 2). However, he was willing to be a heretic to change the face of history and make it reflective of the experience of all Americans.

Woodson was not alone in his heresy. He enjoyed the company of other historians and teachers who wanted to save American society from the destructive forces of racism and nationalism. He believed this could happen if people expanded their understanding of history beyond themselves and their beliefs were true and inclusive of ideas, events, and people previously left out of history. In particular, Woodson (1930) was concerned with the omission of Africans and African Americans. He explained:

We say hold onto the real facts of history as they are, but complete such knowledge by studying also the history of races and nations which have been purposely ignored. We should not study less the achievements of Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome; but should give equally as much attention to the internal African kingdoms, the Songhay empire, and Ethiopia, which through Egypt decidedly influenced the civilization of the Mediterranean world. We would not study less the rise of Christianity and the development of the Church; but we would at the same time give honorable mention to the persons of African blood who figured in these achievements, and who to-day are endeavoring to carry out the principles of Christ so long since repudiated by so-called Christians. (p. 3)

In this essay Woodson engaged in historical reeducation and challenged these commonly held historical assumptions: There was no such thing as African civilization, Africa contributed nothing of cultural or intellectual significance to western civilization, and Christianity was a preeminently White European religion that was brought to Africa by Europeans. By introducing readers to the Songhay Empire, Ethiopia, and African Christianity, Woodson did two things. He demonstrated an appreciation of African history and culture and he helped to expand the mental horizons of his Black and White readers. He did not cast aside European history or culture or try to show that it was inferior to African history; he simply introduced readers to the idea that it was important to understand African history along with the histories of others.

Woodson (1930) called readers to look at American history in the same way by arguing for the inclusion of African Americans in United States history. Making a special appeal to White scholars and teachers, he urged them to acknowledge the sacrifices of African American soldiers who fought in the American Revolution when they discussed George Washington's patriotism; consider Phyllis Wheatley's poetry and Benjamin Banneker's genius when they wrote about Thomas Jefferson's work; and recall the 200,000 African Americans who dedicated their lives to preserving the Union when they remembered Abraham Lincoln's accomplishments.

Victor and Constance Daniel were uniquely situated to engage in Woodson's heresy. In addition to being the Cardinal Gibbons Institute's principals, the Daniels also taught the majority of the history and literature classes and exercised judgment over the subject matter and the manner of instruction (Moore, 1997). They used their own studies of African American history, art, music, and culture and their professional contacts with scholars and educators at other African American schools, colleges, and universities to enrich their teaching at the Cardinal Gibbons Institute (Moore, 1997). The Daniels also had the responsibility for setting standards for African American education in southern Maryland since their school for African Americans was the only one in the area. Despite their struggles with the Board of Trustees over the educational emphasis of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, the Daniels held firm in developing and delivering a liberal arts curriculum. Fortunately, they had the advantage of not having to contend with a local school board that could force their compliance with specific curriculum content and instruction. The result was an extensive liberal arts curriculum that included Negro history, ancient history, Church history, United States history, literature, spirituals, liturgical music, religion, civics, and Latin (Moore, 1997). It was through such a curriculum that the Daniels believed that their students would not only come to know and appreciate their history and culture but would also advance to the mental and moral freedom that characterizes true emancipation.

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