Reading Guide for *The 1857 Project* Essays

8. Looking back: Legacy of slavery limited opportunities at Post-Dispatch and beyond by Linda Lockhart, pgs 62-64

| Excerpt | More than 40 years ago, the American Society of News Editors challenged the news industry to achieve racial parity by the year 2000. Since 1978, an annual survey has shown “that while there has been progress, the racial diversity of newsrooms does not come close to the fast-growing diversity in the U.S. population as a whole,” the organization reported. In September 2018, ASNE found that people of color represented 23 percent of the workforce in U.S. newsrooms that responded to the survey. While the percentage may appear encouraging, the society said the number of newsrooms responding to the survey hit a historic low, with a response rate of about 17 percent, or 293 newsrooms of the 1,700 queried for the survey submitted information. This rate of 23 percent should not be generalized to interpret the landscape of the U.S. journalism industry as a whole, the society noted, because the responses were not drawn from a random sample. The survey has historically relied on a convenience sample from organizations that volunteer to participate. But what happens in newsrooms where there is little or no diversity? Where is the diversity of thought and news judgment when considering what stories to tell and how to best tell them?... Pondering today the legacy of slavery in the United States on the news industry is to consider equally the same legacy on the education of African American children who are undereducated and mis-educated by teachers who continue to pre-judge their abilities. And on the injustice system that perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline that disproportionately leads African American youth and young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds to become incarcerated. That legacy is that all of us continue losing out by limiting opportunities for significant portions of our population. It is a loss not only for African Americans. It is a loss for all of humanity. |

| Key Names, Dates, and Terms | surname, ancestors, immigrants, census data, Anti-literacy laws, African diaspora, Phillis Wheatley, Ida B. Wells Barnett |


Images:
“Lola”

“Tola” on Discrimination.
From the American Baptist.

We bowled about the discrimination practiced by other races, unceasingly telling that we are guilty of the same thing. The spirit that keeps Negroes out of the colleges and places him by himself, in the same room, that serves him in the smoking car, the spirit that makes colored men use depredations with “a separate car for our white friends,” etc., goes separate ways for them when they visit our county seats, exhibitions, etc., in the same way that sends the Negro to separate churches, theaters, and separate waiting rooms; the feeling that prompts colored bodies, he tells us, are the same; the idea of “separate accommodation to their own color” is the same in all places that sends a Negro right about where he goes to himself; at any similar first-class establishment run by white men; the short-circuit that insists on separate Knights of Labor Assemblies for colored men, in the same power that forms them into separate Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges. Occasionally and unconsciously we do as much to widen the breach already existing and to keep prejudices alive to the other race. There was not a separate school in the State of California until the colored people asked for it. To say we wish to be at the apex in a taint, a self-conceitment of the inferiority that they take for granted anyway. The ignorant man who is so short-sighted has some excuse, but the man or man who deliberately yield or barter the liberties of the race for money, position, and/wherewithal to them in any form, is a enemy, and will receive the avernumescence of a race made wise by experience.

Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 28, 1889.

Clay Street School for the "the colored of Memphis," 1873-1892

“I felt that some protest should be made over conditions in the colored schools. The article was a protest against the few and utterly inadequate buildings for colored children ... the poor teachers given us, whose mental and moral character was not of the best. It had been charged that some of these teachers had little to recommend them save an illicit friendship with members of the school board... some took walks and rides with friends of the other race.”

On her article in Free Speech, 1891, The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells
Guiding Questions

What are some legacies of slavery that impact the present experiences of African American families?

Why do those descended from enslaved people have difficulty tracking their
ancestral roots?
How were anti-literacy laws used to control enslaved people?
Why are Black journalists significant to the field of journalism and to our society?
Why are diverse newsrooms important?
What connection does the legacy of slavery have with the news industry, the American education system, and criminal justice system?