

Paseo YMCA: Serving the Needs of a Growing Community in the Face of Segregation

In these activities using primary sources related to the Paseo YMCA, students will examine the strength of community in meeting its growing needs in the face of segregation in Kansas City's 18th and Vine neighborhood during the early years of the 20th C.

National History Standards:

- United States Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930) Standard IC
 - Examine the perspectives of various African Americans on Progressivism and their alternative programs.

C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

- Civics
 - **D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions/ effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.**
 - D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
 - D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
- Geography
 - **D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.**
 - D2.Geo.5.9-12. Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.
 - D2.Geo.7.9-12. Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and the distribution of human population.
- History
 - **D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.**
 - **D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influence the perspectives of people during different historical eras.**
 - D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.
 - D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

Setting the Stage

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was founded in London in 1844 to meet the need of providing a safe place for young men to live and meet away from the dangers of life on the streets. From the beginning, the YMCA was unique in that it offered its services across class and religious lines. In 1851, the first YMCA was formed in Boston to serve the same goals.

In the United States, the YMCA became embroiled in the debate over slavery that eventually tore the nation apart, causing the Confederation of North American YMCAs to disintegrate. While northern branches continued to strengthen during the war, often providing services to those who served, only two southern branches continued to operate during the war. During Reconstruction, the YMCA began to encourage African Americans to form their own branches, but as with many other endeavors during this time period, there was little money available for assistance. While many in leadership positions with the YMCA decried the unchristian-like nature of segregating blacks from whites in the Ys, the practice continued. Jim Crow policies pervaded, and the success of the African-American YMCAs became measured by an increase in black leadership, funding and control of their community YMCAs even as segregation persisted.

To meet the growing needs of the black YMCA associations for buildings that would function for their programs, a variety of fund-raising campaigns were launched. Those campaigns received a much-needed boost when philanthropists began to contribute money in the early 1900s. Among these philanthropists was Julius Rosenwald who had earned his wealth with Sears and Roebuck. Greatly influenced by the social gospel movement and Booker T. Washington's book, *Up from Slavery*, Rosenwald had a specific interest in social justice and helping others help themselves. To this end, he challenged those wanting to build a YMCA for African Americans to raise \$75,000 to which he would add a donation of \$25,000. While gaining praise from many for the donation, others such as W.E.B. DuBois still criticized the donation which perpetuated the dangerous act of segregation.

Rosenwald's donations spurred the building of 25 YMCAs between 1913 and 1933, including the Paseo YMCA in the 18th and Vine area of Kansas City, Missouri. This area, significant in the black social history of Kansas City, was a center for business, entertainment, social services and clubs. The rapid increase in the city's black population after 1900 led to the construction of several major buildings to house social agencies and fraternal organizations. Prominent among these was the Paseo YMCA, completed in 1914 after a seven year funding campaign. The Paseo YMCA would meet the needs of the black community in Kansas City until it closed its doors in the 1970s.

Locating the Site

Essential Questions: How can a map reflect continuity and change in a place over time? How does a map reflect the dynamic relationships between people, places, and the environment?
1909 Sanborn Maps of the 18th and Vine area, and updated through 1950.

- Sanborn Map A - <http://www.kchistory.org/u?Sanborn,1203>
- Sanborn Key - <http://www.kchistory.org/u?Sanborn,1179>.
- Sanborn Map B - <http://www.kchistory.org/u?Sanborn,1204>

These maps not only locate the Paseo YMCA within its neighborhood, but the area is also clearly marked with notations including "Negro Section", "Colored" in reference to hotels and churches, and "The less desirable colored district in Kansas City is confined to an area between 12 St. and 27th St. and from the center of the city to about 30 hundred block east". The maps thus provide a clear awareness of segregation at the time, as well as a snapshot view of the many economic and social endeavors taking place in this vibrant community at the time the YMCA was built. A PowerPoint on using the Sanborn Maps can be found at the Kansas City Public Library online at <http://www.kchistory.org/cdm4/files/UsingSanborns.pdf> . Use the National Archives map analysis

worksheet online at

http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/map_analysis_worksheet.pdf to analyze the Sanborn maps.

Readings

- [*Social Buildings and Organizations in the 18th and Vine Area, 1914-1941*](#) – This one page reading is extracted from the National Register application and describes the growth of social organizations, including the YMCA, in the 18th and Vine Area during this time period. In particular, it describes many of the functions served by the YMCA building over the years.
- [*Black Ethnic Heritage in the 18th and Vine Area, ca. 1885-1941*](#) – This one and a half page reading is extracted from the National Register application and places the 18th and Vine area in its historical context in Kansas City, Missouri. It describes the growth in population and businesses over this time period.
- [*Julius Rosenwald: Building Partnerships for American Education*](#) - This two page reading is excerpted from an article by the same name written by Russell O. Mays for *Professional Educator*. It provides a brief biography of Rosenwald, his success with Sears and Roebuck, the influences on his philanthropic mindset, and his role in providing challenge grants for the building of YMCAs.
- [*History of the YMCA, 1844-1910*](#) – The information in this two page reading is excerpted primarily from two sources: *History: The YMCA in the United States* from the YMCA website and *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* by Nina Mjagkij. This reading provides a brief history on the YMCA with a focus on African American YMCAs.

Visual Evidence

- [*The Paseo Y.M.C.A. Made New*](#) (brochure); Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) of Greater Kansas City Records (KC0332); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City – A tri-fold, two-sided brochure from @ 1920 with photographs and descriptions of various rooms and services provided at the YMCA along with membership rates.
- [*A Building for Colored Men in Kansas City*](#) (brochure); Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) of Greater Kansas City Records (KC0332); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City – an 8 page brochure from @ 1907 used for fund raising to build the Paseo YMCA. It includes the names of the fund raising committee members, photographs from existing YMCAs in other locations, and suggestions of how the building will be used.
- [*What the Y.M.C.A. is Doing to Save Boys and Young Men*](#) (flyer); Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) of Greater Kansas City Records (KC0332); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City – This 2-sided flyer has a letter from C.R. Westmoreland, Chairman of the Paseo YMCA, soliciting financial support to continue their work on one side. On the other side is an article describing the purpose of the Central Y.M.C.A. in Kansas City, also soliciting support, with the name of H.M. Beardsley, President of the Kansas City, Missouri YMCA. The Central YMCA was for whites.
- [*Paseo YMCA Architectural Plans 1913*](#) - Paseo Y.M.C.A. Building, 1913; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City – these plans provide the elevation drawings from each side of the building along with the floor plans for all four floors indicating the intended functions of each of the rooms in the building

- [*Kansas City Negroes Aid Themselves*](#) – an article from the Kansas City Star newspaper in 1915 that provides narrative about the benefits of the Paseo YMCA that provides insight into white perspectives of the time.

The National Archives document analysis worksheet can be found online at http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf.

Putting it All Together

Activity 1: Meet the People of 18th and Vine

The Paseo YMCA was part of a multiple property application for the National Register. Have students discover the rich heritage of the 18th and Vine area by researching some of the people who helped to define this vibrant community. The Kansas City, MO public library has a database of local biographies to use as a starting point at <http://www.kchistory.org/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=/Biographies>. These biographies can be easily printed off for classroom use.

Arthur Bryant	Horace M. Peterson III	Mary Lou Williams
Bennie Moten	Jackie Robinson	Minnie Lee Crosthwaite
Bernard Powell	James Scott	Nelson C. Crews
Bettye Miller	James Wesley Hurse	James Crews
Charlie Parker	Jay McShann	Newt Allen
Chester Arthur Franklin	Jeremiah Cameron	Phillip Curls
Claude Williams	Joe Turner	Samuel W. Bacote
Earl Thomas	John A. Jones	Richard T. Coles
Felix Payne	John Edward Perry	Roy Wilkins
Florynce R. Kennedy	John F. Ramos, Jr.	Samuel U. Rodgers
Frank Duncan	Josphine Silone Yates	Satchel Paige
Harold Holliday, Sr.	Julia Lee	Daniel Arthur Holmes
Hazel Browne Williams	L.C. "Speedy" Huggins	Theron B. Watkins
Henry Perry	Lafayette A. Tillman	Bruce Watkins
Herman A. Johnson	Leon Jordan	Thomas C. Unthank
Dorothy H. Johnson	Leona Pouncey Thurman	Tom Bass
Hilton Smith	Lester Willis Young	Wilber Rogan
Hiram Young	Little Hatch	Count Basie
Homer B. Roberts	Lucile Bluford	

Have each student choose a different biography for this activity. After reading the biography, each student should create a "business card" (using a 3x5 notecard) that shares pertinent information about their person such as name, when they lived, career or occupation, significant contribution, etc. using a business card format.

Fundraising for the Paseo YMCA was crucial to its success. Taking on the character of the person they have chosen, students will simulate being at a fund raising activity for the Y. Have some jazz music playing in the background. When the music stops, have students introduce themselves to each other in pairs, using their business cards for information as needed. Start the music again and have students

continue walking around the room until the music stops again. Students will introduce themselves to each other, but this time when the music starts again, they will walk as a pair. When the music stops, have each pair introduce their partner to the other pair. This foursome will now work together (remaining in character) as a group to use the primary sources from this lesson plan to convince each other that donating to the YMCA is a good investment (note: the people highlighted in the list above are actually listed on some of the sources. Josphine Yates was the wife of W.W. Yates) Use information from your biographies in synthesis with evidence from the sources to “sell” each other on the value of making a donation to the YMCA.

Have each group introduce the members of their group and provide reasons why they would choose to invest in the YMCA. Conclude with noting that the Paseo YMCA closed in the 1970s. As a whole class, bring the conversation to the present by discussing similar community needs that exist today. Would a YMCA help solve your community’s needs today? How would you change a YMCA of today from the YMCA of the early 20th C. to better meet the present needs of your community? Would you propose a different solution?

Activity 2: A Typical Day in the Neighborhood

The Sanborn Fire Insurance map collection consists of a uniform series of large-scale maps, dating from 1867 to the present and depicting the commercial, industrial, and residential sections of some twelve thousand cities and towns in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The maps were designed to assist fire insurance agents in determining the degree of hazard associated with a particular property and therefore show the size, shape, and construction of dwellings, commercial buildings, and factories as well as fire walls, locations of windows and doors, sprinkler systems, and types of roofs. The maps also indicate widths and names of streets, property boundaries, building use, and house and block numbers. This information and more on the Sanborn maps can be found at the Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn/san4a1.html>, and an online tutorial on using the Sanborn maps can be found at <http://kchistory.org/cdm4/files/UsingSanborns.pdf>. Students will use a Sanborn map to create an historical fiction narrative of a typical day in a neighborhood where a place on the National Register is located based on information from a Sanborn map and the National Register nomination and/or documentation forms.

Have students select either the Paseo YMCA or another place on the National Register of Historic Places. Read the nomination and/or documentation forms to understand the historical significance of the place. Examine a Sanborn map for that location. Sanborn maps can be found online through the Library of Congress and often through the local public library. Have students use information from the maps and documentation to create a diary entry for a typical day in that neighborhood during the time period of significance for the location. Set guidelines for the diary entry to include such information as where they went, what errands they might have run, who they might have seen, what kind of activities did they do, what did they see as they went from one place to another, etc. Their details should be able to be substantiated from the maps and/or documentation.

Activity 3: Washington or DuBois?

The disagreement between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois on how best to solve issues related to race is an excellent case study on understanding different perspectives. Julius Rosenwald was inspired in part by Washington's *Up from Slavery*, and while DuBois appreciated Rosenwald's contributions for black YMCAs, he also criticized the continued need for segregated facilities. Both *Up from Slavery* and DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk* are in the public domain and can be read online for free. After analyzing the different perspectives of DuBois and Washington, have students read the 1915 *Kansas City Star* article, "Kansas City Negroes Aid Themselves at the Paseo Y.M.C.A." In an essay, have students make a claim as to whether or not this article might have been written from the perspective of Washington or DuBois, supporting that claim with evidence from the article. Then have students write a new article, about the same event at the same time that could have been written from the other's perspective.

Social Buildings and Organizations in the 18th and Vine Area, 1914-1941

Historic Resources of the 18th and Vine Area of Kansas City, Missouri National Register of Historic Places application, Section E, p. 23. 1991. Retrieved online 11/23/2015 at <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/64500294.pdf>

The 18th and Vine area is significant in the black social history of Kansas City. In addition to being a center for commerce and entertainment, the 18th and Vine area was also the home of important social services and clubs. Agencies such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and social and fraternal organizations like the Railway Men's Club, Masons, and Elk's Club occupied buildings and offices at 18th and Vine. These agencies and organizations were important to the social welfare of black residents in the early 20th century.

The rapid increase in the city's black population after 1900, led to the construction of several major buildings to house social agencies and fraternal organizations. One of the earliest of these was the construction of the Masonic Lodge at the southeast corner of 18th and Woodland Avenue (razed). This three-story brick building was the home to area Masons throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The lodge hall on the third story was the center for masonic activity and served as the local hall until after the 1940s.

One of the largest and most significant buildings constructed in the 18th and Vine area was the Paseo YMCA completed in 1914. Located at 1824 The Paseo, this four-story brick building was the culmination of years of efforts to establish a branch of the YMCA in the black section of the city. The local black YMCA chapter was begun in 1900 but it took a seven year funding campaign to construct the present building. Upon completion the building held a gymnasium, swimming pool, and conference rooms. The building was open 24 hours a day and provided social services and lodging.

In addition to regular YMCA services, the building also served as a community center for the meetings of neighborhood organizations and social clubs. In 1941, the YMCA recorded community service to 162 groups, totaling 3,650 meetings with attendance of 76,650 persons. The YMCA was the only meeting place for clubs, study groups, and singing groups available to the general black population before the construction of the Carver Community Center in 1944. One of the most notable meetings which took place at the YMCA was the formation of the Negro National League in February 1920. The Kansas City Monarchs and seven other teams from across the country were included in the league which was in operation until integration of baseball in the 1950s. The Paseo YMCA continued to provide services to the black community until consolidating and closing its doors in the 1970s.

- 1.) How did the Paseo YMCA meet the needs of the local community?
- 2.) What was significant about the location of the Paseo YMCA?
- 3.) What was the role of social agencies and fraternal organizations in the early 1900s?

Excerpt from the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation for the Historic Resources of the 18th and Vine Area of Kansas City, Missouri, Section E, p. 2, 4, 7, 10-11. 1991.

Retrieved online 11/23/2015 at <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/64500294.pdf>

Black Ethnic Heritage in the 18th and Vine Area, ca. 1885-1941.

From the earliest days of settlement in the Kansas City area white settlers were accompanied by their black slaves. Missouri was admitted to the Union in 1821 as a slave state and by 1860, Negro slaves totaled 190 of a total city population of 4,418. The majority of blacks in these years were scattered through the residential area of the city living in close proximity to their owners. With the abolition of slavery in 1865, blacks were forced by law into segregated sections of the city. Between 1860 and 1870 the black population soared to 3,770 as former slaves left farms and plantations to seek jobs in the growing industrial and manufacturing areas of Kansas City. During these years the major center of the black population was along the riverfront in an area known as the North End and an area known as West Bottoms.

Between 1880 and 1890, Kansas City experienced an unprecedented boom with the population doubling from 55,785 to 132,716. The black population also doubled during this decade and represented 10% of city residents in 1890. Development of the riverfront areas for warehouses and manufacturing facilities led to the relocation of many blacks to the southeast and east sections of the city. Major black population centers which developed in these years were "Belvidere" at Troost and Independence Avenues and "Hick's Hollow" at Prospect and Independence Avenues.

Another major black settlement was an area in the southeast section of the city below 12th Street. This area became known as "The Bowery" and was the home to several thousand black residents by the turn of the century. The 1896 Sanborn Map of the city shows the area from 12th Street south to 19th Street to be a heavily developed residential section of the city. Dozens of commercial buildings housing grocery stores, drug stores and other businesses were interspersed throughout the area but it was overwhelmingly residential in character. This section of the black community had its center at the intersection of 18th and Vine Streets....

Between 1900 and 1910, the black population of Kansas City increased by 54% to over 23,000 residents. Much of this growth occurred in the blocks surrounding the 18th and Vine area and led to increased demands for housing and commercial space. In 1913, the 22 blocks in the vicinity of 18th and Vine contained a population of 4,295 residents and in response to the increasing demands for housing several developers razed existing single family dwellings and constructed multi-family units within the 18th and Vine area.

The Growth and Development of Black Commerce in the 18th and Vine Area, 1886-1941

The 18th and Vine area evolved in the late 19th century as the center for black commerce in Kansas City and it retained this prominence until the mid-20th century. Within two blocks of the intersection of 18th and Vine were office buildings, stores, theaters, nightclubs, and other businesses which supplied most of the shopping needs of Kansas City's black neighborhoods. The area was also the home for black

professionals such as doctors, dentists, and lawyers. No other concentration of businesses rivaled the 18th and Vine area as a commercial center for the black community in the late 19th and 20th centuries....

In the two decades from 1900 to 1920, the black population of Kansas City almost doubled from 17,567 to 30,719 and the area around 18th and Vine Street increasingly became a commercial center for black business....By 1910, the area was no longer just a collection of small neighborhood businesses but instead was the major shopping area for blacks in southeast Kansas City. During these years ownership of the buildings in the area remained primarily in white hands but black ownership increased steadily over the next several decades...

Shops and stores in the 18th and Vine area benefited from traditional segregation practices in the Kansas City business community. Although blacks were allowed to purchase items at most downtown stores they were often restricted in trying on clothes prior to purchase, getting credit, and other both subtle and obvious forms of discrimination. Although most businesses in the 18th and Vine area were owned by whites prior to 1930, the majority of managers, clerks, and sales staff were black, which welcomed and encouraged black shoppers.

Many of the businesses in the 18th and Vine area were owned and operated by Jewish merchants including prominent stores such as the Joseph Friedman Grocery Store at 1513 E. 18th Street and the Max Hoffman market at 1725 E. 18th Street. For the most part this relationship was harmonious with Jewish leaders providing assistance for black businessmen and supporting the black community on social issues. The Kansas City Call editorialized in 1924, "We have never been in sympathy with those Negroes who speak harshly of our Jewish neighbors who live among us, whose stores we patronize, and whose money we borrow." Black leaders such as Chester Franklin urged blacks to learn good business skills from their Jewish neighbors and these efforts met with success.

- 1.) What factors impacted the choices that blacks made in where to live in Kansas City in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?
- 2.) How did the 18th and Vine neighborhood change over time from the 1880s through the mid-1900s?
- 3.) What characteristics of the 18th and Vine neighborhood made it ideal as a location for a YMCA building?(reference Rosenwald reading)

Excerpts from *Julius Rosenwald: Building Partnerships for American Education* by Russell O. Mays, *Professional Educator* 28 (Fall 2006).

Retrieved online 11/20/2015 at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ773850.pdf>

Julius Rosenwald was born August 12, 1862, in Springfield, IL, to Samuel and Augusta Rosenwald, German-Jewish immigrants. His father was a merchant. At the age of 17, Julius Rosenwald went to New York to apprentice with Hammerslaugh Brothers (his mother's family business), a wholesale clothier. Rosenwald's initial business ventures involved making lightweight men's summer suits.

At about the same time, Richard Sears moved his small mail order company, which originally specialized in watches, from Minneapolis to Chicago. Sears shared the company with Alva Roebuck, a former watch repairman. Sears had a talent for marketing but was not as effective in completing orders. In fact, Ascoli (2003) reported that it was common practice during the early days of the firm's existence to take large orders without having the inventory at hand. When Sears received overwhelming orders for men's suits in response to advertisements in his catalog, he sought out Rosenwald and Company and commissioned 1,000 suits (Ascoli, 2003).

Mr. Roebuck left the company and in looking for a new partner, Sears contacted Aaron Nusbaum. Nusbaum was an inventor who had made a great deal of money at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and had recently become known in the pneumatic tube business. Sears offered Nusbaum one-half of Sears and Roebuck for \$75,000. Nusbaum did not want to enter the venture alone and contacted his brother-in-law, Julius Rosenwald. The two became partners in the fledgling firm, Sears and Roebuck (Ascoli, 2003).

Sears excelled in marketing, and Rosenwald excelled as a manager and organizer. Between Sears' marketing with the popular Sears Catalog, Rosenwald's organizational abilities, and the beginning of Rural Free Delivery in 1902, the firm became the leading mail-order company in the world. In 1901 Rosenwald bought out his brother-in-law, Nusbaum. Seven years later, in 1908, Sears left the company he had founded. Julius Rosenwald became the chief executive officer, and he eventually became chairman of the board. Rosenwald's wealth increased until he was a multi-millionaire. Rosenwald wrote in an article titled, "*The Burden of Wealth*," which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "Fortune smiled on me in a big way and no one was more surprised than I was myself" (Rosenwald & Tobenking, 1929, p. 12).

Personal Influences

Julius Rosenwald was generous and compassionate. A number of individuals influenced his conception of social justice, which led to his philanthropy. Rosenwald spent the first 17 years of his life in a small town where he had the opportunity to witness the dedication and work ethic that his father, Samuel, demonstrated. In Springfield, he also learned of the history and tradition of both sides of the family in the clothing industry.

Another factor that influenced Rosenwald was the model and message presented by his Rabbi, Emil Hirsch. Hirsch led Chicago's Sinai Congregation from 1880 until his death in 1923, and he emphasized the responsibility of those with means to assist those without means. His teaching, combined with the traditional "tzedakah," which is a word most often used to mean charity, but literally means an act of righteousness or justice. Hirsch was among many to interpret this as "a commandment to act in ways that make the world a fairer place, or to do *tzedakah*. Thus, *tzedakah* is not selfless giving, but commanded righteousness" (Karesh & Hurvitz, p. 529).

Still another influence Rosenwald described as having a tremendous impact on his beliefs and actions was the receipt and subsequent reading of two books, given to him by Dr. Paul J. Sachs, a former partner in Goldman, Sachs, and Company, who had taken an interest in the Urban League and wanted to enlist Rosenwald's support for African Americans. The books were *Up from Slavery*, the autobiography of Booker T. Washington (1901), and *An American Citizen: The Life of William H. Baldwin Jr.*, by John Graham Brooks (1910). The reading of both of these books had profound effects on Rosenwald.

Booker T. Washington was the eminent educator and advocate for African Americans who founded The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which was providing educators for many private schools for African Americans. Rosenwald experienced some degree of discrimination as a member of the Jewish community and no doubt observed blatant discrimination of Whites toward African Americans. He was also committed to social justice and to assisting those in need. Booker T. Washington had been born a slave just before the Civil War and had lifted himself up, with the help of many, to a position of influence. He used that position, however, to help provide a better future for others. Washington's selflessness and his expression of hopefulness and the rewarding of merit were consistent with Rosenwald's personal beliefs.

After reading *Up from Slavery* and *An American Citizen: The Life of William H. Baldwin Jr.*, Rosenwald wrote to his daughters, Adell and Edith, who were attending school in Germany. He wrote, "I just finished *An American Citizen*, and it is glorious. A story of a man who really lead a life which is to my liking and whom I shall endeavor to imitate or follow as nearly as I can" (Rosenwald as cited in Ascoli, 2003, ¶13). Rosenwald valued education and seemed to regret his failure to complete high school and attend college. These feelings were evident in the next lines of his letter to his daughters "[Baldwin and I] have a great many views in common. But he, being college bred and much of a student, had powers of analysis of which I lack" (Rosenwald as cited in Ascoli, 2003, ¶13).

Rosenwald, the YMCA, and a Chance Meeting

In 1905 Rosenwald had a new plant built for Sears and Roebuck. The plant included many new conveniences including conveyor belts and escalators. Rosenwald's intent was to streamline processing of mail orders, which was 100% of Sears and Roebuck's business at the time. He also wanted to have excellent working conditions for his employees. Rosenwald's concern for employees' working conditions was revealed by Peter Ascoli through a story about Rosenwald as CEO of Sears and Roebuck. Rosenwald's colleagues purchased a Persian rug for his office, thinking that the office was too plain to be the office of the CEO of a major firm. After several weeks of seeing it still rolled up and standing in the corner, they asked him about the rug. Rosenwald asked them to return it, stating that his employees did not have Persian rugs to work on, and he did not need one either (Ascoli, 2004).

His concern for employees also led him to conversations with local YMCA officials. Rosenwald had supported the YMCA near his home but also asked to have one built near the new Sears and Roebuck plant so that his workers could have access to recreational facilities. Shortly after their conversations, Rosenwald hosted a lunch meeting with some of the leaders of the area YMCA organization. With them came Jesse Moreland, an African American who was with the International Division of the YMCA. During the meeting, Rosenwald was asked to assist in funding a YMCA for African Americans in Chicago that would be part recreational facility and part lodging. The need was great as there were no fitness or recreational facilities that would accept African Americans, not even existing YMCAs. There were also few hotels for African Americans who were coming to Chicago to find work. Rosenwald listened and then astonished his guests by offering to donate \$25,000 to any YMCA in the United States that could raise \$75,000 on its own. With that offer, the concept of the challenge grant was born. According to Ascoli, the room became silent leaving it to Rosenwald to break the silence by saying, "Well, I guess you can't build more than one a month, but I hope you can" (Ascoli, 2003). As a result of this innovative donation program, 25 YMCAs and 2 YWCAs were built between 1913 and 1933 in Chicago (Ascoli, 2003). All of those facilities were for African Americans. The first one completed was the Wabash Avenue YMCA on 37th Street, which eventually became the birthplace of the Harlem Globetrotters (Siegel, 2001). The dignitaries invited to participate in the opening of that YMCA included Booker T. Washington.

When Rosenwald spoke at the opening of the YMCA he paraphrased Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. He said, "We should here dedicate more than this building. We should dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work, to the great task before us of removing race hatred of which unfortunately so much

exists and of bringing about a universal acceptance that it is the individual and not the race that counts” (Rosenwald as cited in Ascoli, 2003, ¶13).

- 1.) How was Rosenwald’s approach to life informed by the beliefs and ideas of others?
- 2.) In what ways did Rosenwald’s concept of the challenge grant reflect his philosophy?

History of the YMCA, 1844 – 1910.

The information below is excerpted primarily from two sources:

History: The YMCA in the United States, retrieved online 11/20/2015 at <http://www.ymca.net/history>

Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946 by Nina Mjagkij, The University Press of Kentucky, 1994.

Information from the YMCA website is provided in standard text. Information from *Light in the Darkness* is provided in *italics* and is added to the YMCA chronology to provide additional details specifically about the African American experience with the YMCA.

George Williams founded the YMCA in 1844. In 1844, industrialized London was a place of great turmoil and despair. For the young men who migrated to the city from rural areas to find jobs, London offered a bleak landscape of tenement housing and dangerous influences. Twenty-two-year-old George Williams, a farmer-turned-department store worker, was troubled by what he saw. He joined 11 friends to organize the first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), a refuge of Bible study and prayer for young men seeking escape from the hazards of life on the streets. Although an association of young men meeting around a common purpose was nothing new, the Y offered something unique for its time. The organization's drive to meet social need in the community was compelling, and its openness to members crossed the rigid lines separating English social classes. Years later, retired Boston sea captain Thomas Valentine Sullivan, working as a marine missionary, noticed a similar need to create a safe "home away from home" for sailors and merchants. Inspired by the stories of the Y in England, he led the formation of the first U.S. YMCA at the Old South Church in Boston on December 29, 1851.

In 1853 in Washington, D.C., the first YMCA for blacks was founded by Anthony Bowen, a freed slave. Welcoming and engaging newcomers and immigrants has always been part of YMCA work. In 1856, the nation's first-known English as a Second Language (ESL) class was held for German immigrants at the Cincinnati YMCA. The first "student YMCA" was started in 1856 at Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tenn. Dedicated to the leadership development of college students, student Ys remain active on the campuses of major universities such as the University of Illinois.

At the same time, the Confederation of North American YMCAs was plagued by the debate over slavery. Even before the Civil War, the Canadian associations withdrew from the confederation because of the leadership's continuing avoidance of addressing the issue through fear of alienating white southerners. With the Civil War, the association fell apart. The northern branches strengthened their ties during the war, while only two southern associations continued to operate throughout the duration of the war.

YMCA housing was started in the 1860s to give young men moving to cities from rural areas safe and affordable lodging. Facilities included gyms, auditoriums and hotel-like rooms. Chicago's Farwell Hall, the first known YMCA dormitory, was completed in 1867. Between 1922 and 1940, YMCA accommodations grew from approximately 55,000 rooms to more than 100,000, more than any hotel chain at the time. Among those who stayed at YMCA residences: journalists Andy Rooney and Dan

Rather, black leaders Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., novelist Jack Kerouac and U.S. Ambassador Andrew Young.

During Reconstruction the YMCA began to encourage African Americans to organize their own branches. However, this goal was difficult to accomplish because of the limited financial resources in most black communities. Little funding was available from the national organization as it served primarily as an umbrella organization or autonomous, self-supporting associations. It did not provide financial assistance to local branches – black or white. As new branches were being formed, YMCA members were encouraged to cooperate with local ministers, but were to remain interdenominational and involve the community at large. Following Reconstruction, the YMCA began to actively assist the formation of YMCA branches in black communities. Chairman of the YMCA's Executive Committee, Cephas Brainerd, hoped that blacks and whites would eventually work together "without controversy or debate as to the question of race".

During this time, the work of establishing new YMCAs was done under white supervision. Black colleges and universities were seen as the ideal recruiting ground for future YMCA leaders, but the fact that most students needed to work while going to school left them little time for YMCA work. Thus many of the twenty-eight YMCAs established on college campuses in the 1880s survived only a short time.

The first YMCA buildings constructed with gymnasiums opened in 1869. In 1881, Boston YMCA staffer Robert J. Roberts coined the term "body building" and developed exercise classes that anticipated today's fitness workouts.

In San Francisco, YMCAs serving Asians were established in 1875 to serve the large Chinese population there, and a Japanese YMCA was founded in 1917. U.S. Native American Ys started in 1879 with the founding of a YMCA by Thomas Wakeman, a Dakota Indian, in Flandreau, South Dakota.

In 1891, William Hunton became the first African-American secretary employed by the International Committee of the YMCA. While a victory in that there was now black leadership for black associations, it also provided for the complete separation of blacks and whites in the YMCA. While challenging the associations' racial policy of accommodationism and gradualism, as called for by Booker T. Washington, as disgraceful and un-Christian, Hunton was unable to end the YMCAs Jim Crow policies. Instead, he focused on building a sense of community among African-American YMCAs. Through his leadership, and that of Jesse E. Moorland, a nationwide network of black-funded and black-controlled YMCAs grew through the early part of the 20th century.

In answer to a YMCA campaign "to teach every man and boy in North America" to swim, George Corsan arrived at the Detroit YMCA in 1909 to teach swimming using radical new methods: group swimming lessons and lessons on land as a confidence builder. In Newark, New Jersey, alone, he taught 800 boys to swim in just four weeks.

As the membership in black YMCA associations grew, so did the need for their own buildings. Most black YMCAs lacked the funds to purchase their own buildings and so operated in other facilities not necessarily suited for YMCA programs. Fund-raising campaigns were launched to purchase land and erect buildings and these efforts received a boost when philanthropists began to contribute money in the early 1900s. In 1910, Julius Rosenwald offered to contribute twenty-five thousand dollars to every community in the country that raised seventy-five thousand toward the erection of a black YMCA. His offer was met with a range of response from praise from many like Booker T. Washington, who called it "one of the wisest and best-paying philanthropic investments of which I have knowledge", to the criticism of W.E. B. Du Bois, editor of the Crisis, who praised the contribution, but charged that "it is an unchristian and unjust and dangerous procedure which segregates colored people in the YMCA...We may be glad of the colored YMCA movement on the one hand, on the other hand we must never for a single moment fail to recognize the injustice which has made it an unfortunate necessity."

- 1.) The Y today has three areas of focus: Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. How has the focus of the Y changed and/or stayed the same from its origins in 1844?
- 2.) How does the history of the YMCA illustrate or reflect the context of the times in which it grew?
- 3.) In regard to the Rosenwald YMCAs, do the ends justify the means? (reference the Paso YMCA article)