

## Speech On How American History Can Facilitate Self-Esteem

By Paul Lloyd Hemphill

Our national security ... your personal safety... depends on how history is being taught at your local high school and at most of the 36,000 high schools all across this country.

Two years ago, the National Center for Education Statistics came to a disturbing conclusion: It stated that 88% of all high school seniors have no proficiency in American history.

Two years ago, The American Council of Trustees and Alumni revealed that one-third of US colleges no longer require history majors to take a single course in American history. In other words, the study of this country's birth certificate - Declaration of Independence, and the study of the world's most respected legal document - the US Constitution, are no longer relevant for a degree in history.

Instead, subsumed under the title "American history" are courses with such titles as "the History of Prohibition," or the "History of FBI Counterintelligence," or the "History of Rock and Roll."

Creativity expert, Sir Ken Robinson, a well-known TED Talk speaker, studied the American educational system and concluded that instead of providing a culture of curiosity and free expression, it is actually a culture of compliance, conformity, and standardization. Teachers are administering too many tests for math and science, but not one test for history.

With a national student population of history illiterates - at 88 percent for high school seniors - the teaching of American history has now become an urgent national security matter.

If you do not know what your country stands FOR, how will you stand UP to its enemies, both foreign and domestic? In other words, you cannot defend what you cannot define. You cannot possibly dedicate yourself to the protection of what you don't know.

Because I'm an American citizen and veteran, this is not good news. But I am a marketing specialist. And what do marketing specialists do? We promote and sell products and services to the consumer.

Over the past few years, I have developed a marketing program that is designed to sell history to teenagers, to interrupt the pattern of how history is

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taught in our schools so that we can change the negative attitude that students have toward history. My program allows history teachers and their students to embrace history, not simply as a record of events, dates and statistics, but as a story-telling exercise of individuals who created or participated in those events, from which a student can take away history's important lessons to inspire them to live a better day and a better life.

Why do I use story-telling? Why do we read a novel? Go to the movies? Or watch our favorite TV show? Because we love a good story. In a study done by Spanish researchers in 2012, it revealed that our brains become more active with stories, and the reason is, we think in narratives all day long...when going to a restaurant, for example, we're thinking about the route we'll take to get there, the exact place where we'll enjoy ourselves, and what we might choose from the menu. We simply make up short stories in our heads for every action and conversation.

The other fact is this: we are all emotional creatures, and stories connect to our emotions, which is why we remember facts better when we are emotionally connected to them.

The teaching of history with my program, instead of being boring and impersonal, is now brain-stimulating and very personal. And I use video to engage my target audience.

In just a few minutes I will show you how my marketing plan with stories by video changes a 15-year-old's negative attitude toward history.

Your being here today is the equivalent of my inviting you over to my house for dinner, but I haven't told you what the meal is going to be, but I'm giving you an appetizer and your reaction is so positive that you've just decided that if the appetizer is this good, the meal is going to be good too.

In this food metaphor of meal and appetizer, the meal is American history and the appetizer is a story that took place in a little Pennsylvania town in the year 1863 in what became the battle of Gettysburg.

When someone comes to my program, the first thing they ask is, "What's this about?" In less than 20 seconds, I respond: "It answers one simple question: How can I benefit from what this person did at Gettysburg?"

"I answer the question 88 times with 88 stories that generate over 200 life-lessons we can all use in our daily lives. Tomorrow morning, get your coffee,

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open the program for just 5 minutes, and you will come away thinking, “I got something out of this.” Use the program as your daily inspiration, with no references to religion or politics.”

How did this program come about? you might ask.

Over 20 years ago, I was disgusted with how my sons were being taught history, so I asked them both - as teenagers, if they would read a history book if I wrote it. Their response was “Dad! Of course not! How could you ask such a dumb question?”

Then I asked, “If I wrote a book that showed you in very dramatic ways what you are really capable of, would you read that?” They said, as only teenagers are qualified to conclude, “I guess.”

Their response put me on a mission... to interrupt the way history was and is still being taught in our schools.

My mission is based on the classic pattern interrupt, where you interrupt a pattern for the purpose of making things better. For example, the candle was a pattern for light for centuries until it was interrupted by the lightbulb; the horse was the pattern of transportation until it was interrupted by the locomotive. Books and newsprint were the pattern for news and information until it was interrupted by the home computer.

I want to interrupt the current pattern of how history is being taught, to change the negative attitude that teens have toward learning history. With an illiteracy rate of 88% with high school seniors with American history, I believe it requires us as fellow citizens to change the pattern, which looks like this (show photo of a standard history book): High schools use a history book just like this. It's 13-hundred pages long, filled with descriptions of events, facts and figures, with little or no connection to the lives of the students who are required to read them.

By contrast, my program is filled with nothing but stories, with lessons that the reader can easily relate to and can use immediately.

The end purpose of my program is to be the model after which history teachers can model their own teaching techniques. **Teach history with stories and the lessons we can get from those stories.** After a history teacher talks about the evils of slavery, for example, when he knows his

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students have never seen or met a slave, he can turn the class into a story telling session where he discusses a slave by the name of Harriet Tubman. How she struggled for a life-time to get the one thing she was focused on - her freedom and the freedom of thousands of other slaves she was hoping to save thru the underground railroad.

He can turn to his students and ask, "So what lesson did you learn from the story of Harriet Tubman?" The students will conclude that if you stay focused on your goal, and expect a lot of struggle along the way, you can achieve your goal. What an inspiration, what a life lesson for a teenager to learn!

Because our culture has moved away from print and moved toward video, I had to come up with a formula to capture the attention of teens. Here's the formula that constitutes my program...

Use video. Tell a story. Keep it short. Teach a lesson.

I am now going to show you exactly how a high school teacher presents the video. In advance of his class, he knows he will save the last 5 minutes of his class to play a video. So he does this. "Okay, class, here is today's video...." (Play a 4-min video sample)

The teacher is not burdened with a textbook or notes, and the students are not burdened with homework or worksheets. Watch the video, discover what lessons you can use, and walk away.

Please join me in persuading American educators where you live that **telling stories with lessons by video** can make us more secure because they can inspire the next generation to be better persons and better citizens.