



The Black Intellectual Tradition and the Great Conversation

with Dr. Anika Prather

Lesson 16: How Classics Unify

Outline:

How Classics Unify

- **Martin Luther King Jr.**
 - He connected all of us. The way he sought to bring racial healing in this country was a godly and biblical process.
 - Division is not of God. God commands us to love.
 - He placed a lot of emphasis on the beloved community.
 - What do classics and beloved community have to do with each other?
- ***Letter from a Birmingham Jail***
 - He invokes Socrates in talking about nonviolent gadflies creating a tension in society. His peaceful protests and nonviolent sit-ins were like a gadfly creating tension in society.
 - We should not address injustice in a passive way. We should hold our leaders accountable. We should speak truth to power in love. In this process we make our country a more perfect union.
 - Martin Luther King Jr. was calling everyone to hold to what America should be, a melting pot of different immigrants. Let's all come together for the survival of this country.
- **Why did using these classics help me communicate to people?**
 - This battle should be fought with love and building bridges.
 - Classics can be a bridge. This can be hard with the racist history around classics study.
 - We can look to classics to find the words, logic, and rhetoric in order to get black and white people to understand our plight. We cannot fight this battle divided or we will never win.
 - All of our ancestors read the classics. It is the one thing that is our common ground
 - Greek Mythology
 - We can see ourselves in Odysseus and Achilles.
 - We can see our struggles as a human being in this world.
 - Classics are removed from the color line. The stories and cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome have an intersection of



- humanity. It is not tainted by colonization and American slavery.
- Aristotle's First Cause
 - Socrates created a tension in his society, he was a gadfly.
 - Anyone else who believes in something greater than themselves can look to the First Cause.
 - We all come to classics and we can see how we contributed to the human story.
 - The ancient historians don't hide the diversity.
 - In classics we study what the Founding Fathers studied.
 - America was actually established by the men who wrote the Constitution.
 - The Constitution is what protects us.
 - Slavery has scarred our country, but we cannot let America be defined by slavery. America is "All men are created equal."
 - Thurgood Marshall and Martin Luther King Jr. used the Constitution to hold our leaders accountable for injustice.
 - The classics are our common ground.
 - **Classics reveal our unified humanness because they cover the topics relevant to every human being.**
 - There are so many common themes in the classics.
 - There is no color line, we are one. Classics shows us that unity is possible.
 - **Classics are used to craft more correct political, ethical, religious, and intellectual positions.**
 - Frederick Douglass got his freedom and then studied classics and American documents. This is what made him a great orator.
 - **Classics have paid a huge part in the liberation of the African American people.** It is also a body of knowledge that white people and others that come to this country also value.
 - **When we come together and engage in a discourse with the classics tying us together, we can get closer to the common truth.**
 - **Classics help us to embrace the values that help us to rewrite the narrative of our lives.**
 - **These texts allow us to correct the false thinking of those that think they should be dominate over another people.**
 - Harriet Tubman was inspired by Moses, who set his people free.