



The Black Intellectual Tradition and the Great Conversation with Dr. Angel Parham

Lesson 2: Phillis Wheatley, Part II

Outline:

The Life and Work of Phillis Wheatley, continued

- Phillis Wheatley was very critical of the slave trade and of the oppression and of what she saw of the living out of Christianity among the white Christians and Europeans that she knew.
- Who was Christopher Snider? Phillis Wheatley wrote a political poem in support of the Revolution.
 - Ebenezer Richardson, “His life would exhibit an atrocious volume.”
 - On market day, there was a non-importation agreement on British goods.
 - The colonists got merchants to agree to not import or export goods to and from Britain.
 - Theophilus Lillie was a hold out with the non-importation agreement.
 - Richardson sees a group of boys gathered at Lillie’s shop trying to persuade him to agree to the non-importation agreement. Richardson tries to take the sign away (the sign marking that Theophilus is a hold out).
 - Richardson is chased down the street, and he barricades himself in his home. Richardson, fired into the mob and killed Christopher.

Phillis Wheatley’s poem about Christopher Snider

- Christopher is compared to Achilles as a hero, a martyr in the cause of the Revolution.
- Wheatley was incredibly supportive of the American Revolution.
- There were Africans who decided to remain loyal to the British.
- She engages in a dialogue with General George Washington in 1775.
 - She talks about Columbia, which is the personification of America, named after Christopher Columbus.
 - She makes reference to the muse, and gives allusion to the genre of Greek poetry. She invokes Aeolus the god of the winds. Aeolus’ winds blow Odysseus back home.
 - Her writing is woven in the classical tradition.



- She invokes Washington and how grand he is. She praises Washington and goal of the Revolution.
- Washington's response in 1776:
 - Phillis Wheatley is very politically savvy. Her British backers published her poetry volume, so she did not include the poem about Christopher Snider in this 1773 volume.