



Women in the Liberal Arts Tradition

with Dr. Anika Prather

Lecture 5: Lessons from Anna Julia Cooper

Outline:

Lessons from Anna Julia Cooper

- Why was Anna Julia Cooper classical educated?
 - Anna Julia Cooper found so much inspiration from classical learning.
 - Classical education was the main way that Americans were taught.
 - Segregated schools were steeped in the classical tradition.
 - When slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation, Anna Julia Cooper was enrolled in St. Augustine's Normal School, where she studied classics, Latin, Greek, rhetoric, and oratory.
 - St. Augustine's had a gentlemen's course and the ladies course, which focused on domestic responsibilities. She petitioned the leadership and they eventually allowed her to take the gentlemen's course.
 - Anna Julia Cooper then attended Oberlin (one of the first colleges to desegregate). She comes out of Oberlin ready to teach classically.
- Will isolation solve the problem? Better strategies for students who may be resistant to classical learning.
 - Anna implemented strategies for teaching classically to people who were just coming out of slavery. She learned strategies on how reach troubled people with classical learning so they wouldn't feel intimidated.
 - Anna Julia Cooper came into education around the same time that Booker T. Washington was becoming very popular in white circles. There was a big move to remove classical education from black schools that Abraham Lincoln had set up.
 - Anna Julia Cooper believed in classical education first and industrial education second.
 - Anna Julia Cooper was fighting a losing battle. Booker T. Washington's fame was increasing, in the black and white community. This was a calling to have black people accept their space in society. That thinking made its way into American schools.
 - They did not want Anna Julia Cooper to continue teaching classically. Eventually she loses her job, where she had worked her way up from teacher to principal.
 - Just before she lost her job a priest from France writes a report on Anna's students knowing Latin, logic, and rhetoric. The students went on to Ivy League schools to



- be successful. In his report, published worldwide, he said that Anna Julia Cooper's school had some of the best students he had ever seen.
- The Board of Education got so offended that a black school got this type of recognition that the Board of Education decided to end classical education.
 - Wouldn't our students still need that exercise of the intellect today?
- During the war she worked as director at the war camp community service at a playground in West Virginia.
 - Here, she meets the Berry family. The Berry children did not speak. They were isolated. She wanted to draw them in.
 - Acts 10:34: God is no respecter of persons.
 - Anna recognized that God loved these children too.
 - Galatians 3:28: Neither Jew nor Greek...we are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - As we are teaching:
 - **No one is better than anyone.** How can I make sure that I am relating to my students in a way that they understand that I believe that?
 - **We are all one in Christ.** This is **our** Canon.
 - Schools were created to create citizens, how to serve in our country. Go after the child as the shepherd left the ninety-nine and went after the one.
 - Quintillion wrote about how to teach children to children (from infancy and on) how to speak well. He said the goal of education was to create good statesmen and women.
 - **We teach our students that we are all American, and we are all a part of this democracy.**
 - Isolation is never the answer.
 - Anna loved the children unconditionally.
 - Anna gave grace. She recognized that the children were human beings.
 - She offered that they could make a basket for their mother. She began to build a bridge to their mother.
 - She made them feel safe and comfortable and able to learn.
 - She is building a relationship. She takes the basket to their mother. Her husband had been falsely accused of rape and lynched in front of the wife and the children. This was so traumatize that the children stopped speaking and trusting anyone.
 - Why classical education?



- Anna Julia Cooper's essay on education, on page 251-252: "We must insist on those studies...that will train our people to think...we are building men and women, not chemists."
- We are educating the soul.
- This is for every student. Many of the children you have will be first generation classically educated.
- Is it good for all people? We all need this.
- This is our shared heritage.