

Sharing, Inc.

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Dear Sharing Friend,

January 21, 2013

NEWS FLASH

Sharing Inc. has distributed 1,006 books among 194 classrooms in 13 elementary schools in rural Alabama. These are not just any books. These books, written by and about African Americans, will inform and inspire students. Many are beautifully illustrated and each one of them has the potential to reach hundreds of individuals over the years.

Students will read about some of the accomplishments of individuals of African descent: not only well known names such as Martin Luther King Jr., Maya Angelou, George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman, Thurgood Marshall, and Ella Fitzgerald, but also lesser-known individuals:

- Bessie Coleman, the first African American female pilot,
- John Blair, a train porter who was the hero of the Great Hinkley Fire,
- Ruby Bridges, the first to attend an all-white school in the South,
- Claudette Colvin, who, when she was fifteen, was actually the first person who refused to yield her bus seat to a white rider in Montgomery AL, and
- Westley Law, a US mail carrier whose leadership resulted in Savannah becoming the first city to end racial discrimination.

"... a very special thank you from the bottom of my heart for your organization's gift of books! When the books first arrived, I had to wait before sending them to the other classrooms. When my classes saw the books, they begged to read them in class. They absolutely loved them!"

Becky Nichols teacher at the School of Discovery in Selma AL

"...We took great care of all of your books. You did not have to send the books to us but you did it out of the kindness of your heart. Thank you so much!!!!"

Some of Becky's students

In my opinion it is vital that African American students have an understanding of the richness of their heritage, which stretches back centuries before their ancestors were brought here as enslaved people. They also need to celebrate those same ancestors' ability to survive in a society that is attempting to demonize them, realizing that they have been able to triumph over that society in many ways, i.e. producing original forms of art, such as jazz music. *

Even today, this historic day when Barack Obama takes the Presidential oath of office for the second time, racism still exists throughout our country. In my experience it is at times more visible in the south. Symbols are so important. A symbol is the visible sign of something invisible. During my most recent trip to Mississippi I saw two such symbols of racism.

"You're going to be staying in Oxford? Oh you must visit the University of Mississippi campus, it's really beautiful". So after checking into the motel and receiving directions I went to see it. As I was driving I noticed a sign for a side road. "What?" I said to myself. "That couldn't be right!" On the way back checked out that sign. I couldn't believe my eyes. It said "Coontown Landing".

The following day on my way to Mound Bayou I stopped in Clarksdale MS and had a similar experience. Above the Clarksdale Public Utilities Building beneath the Stars and Stripes flew the Confederate flag.

On Good Friday, March 29th, I will walk for the 42nd time. How far I walk will not matter. How fast I walk will not matter. What will matter is that my physical efforts will make a connection/communion between my faith and the reality of suffering caused by the dual oppressions of racism and economic poverty, and will ameliorate some of their effects. Sharing came into being and exists today to support groups that are having a positive influence on African American children living in economically poor families in the rural south. At least 94% of sponsors' money goes to such groups.

Walking symbolizes my belief that social justice is fundamental to my faith, a belief rooted in the way Jesus lived.

Christmas Blessings

Thanks to a generosity of time, talent, and treasure Sharing was able to send the following gifts to children in Alabama Louisiana, and Mississippi,

- 200 beautifully dressed Black dolls
- 112 gorgeous baby blankets, beautifully boxed
- 186 basketballs and 12 small balls
- numerous small stuffed animals and baby clothes

Shalom,



*Check our "Our Racial Past" with guest historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad on the Moyers and Company website.