

# 'Jambo!'

Black heritage comes alive at assembly



Storied past: Highmeadow Common Campus students listen in amazement to one of the stories about African-American contributions to society, served up by Jacqueline Galloway-Blake during Friday's "Black History Alive"

## Guest speaker urges kids to rise above life's obstacles

This story marks another installment of *Today's Lesson*, which chronicles classroom activities in Farmington Public Schools.

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

As soon as Highmeadow Common Campus students were comfortable on the gymnasium floor for last Friday's "Black History Alive" assembly, guest Jacqueline Galloway-Blake welcomed them with a chorus of "Jambo," which is the African word for "hello."

Then Galloway-Blake, an educational consultant for the Romulus-based Brown Sugar & Spice Book Service, asked them to buckle their imaginary seat belts for an imaginary trip to Africa.

"I want you to buckle up," said the tall woman clad in colorful garb from that continent. "... And take a good book with you. Because Africa is a loosing way from Michigan!"

To help the 300 or so youngsters better visualize exactly where they were about to travel to, fourth grade student Matt Peyton came up to the front of the gym to hold up a wooden map of Africa. Several others followed Matt, lifting up more conventional maps, the kind found in atlases.

"We want to know where we're going," said Galloway-Blake, whose entertaining, educational program helped Highmeadow link February's Black History Month with March's Reading Month.

Finally, they arrive in a land of rainforests, mountains and beaches.

"Africa is very diverse," Galloway-Blake continued. "And there are a lot of animals you can't see here. There are ostriches, and what other kinds of animals?"

"Lions," said one youngster. Another said "elephants."

Galloway-Blake noted that Africa also "has a lot of different people, some of the tallest people that ever lived and some of the shortest people."

More youngsters were called to the front to help demonstrate the richness of African life before Christopher Columbus discovered America, before Africans were transported to a strange country in the bottom of slave boats.

### Culture club

One student held up a piece of homemade kente cloth, from the West African country Ghana. Others played some of the hand-crafted instruments, some made out of gourds, such as a maraca-



like "shakero." Or a so-called "talking drum."

"The Africans liked to recycle," said Galloway-Blake, referring to the instruments. "They carved out beautiful designs and attached shells."

There were pieces of art and other artifacts in students' hands and on a long table behind them.

"The Africans had so much going on before Columbus discovered America," she continued. "Now comes the sad part. Some captured Africans and put them on a slave ship."

She next turned on the tape recorder, playing "Kum Ba Yah," a sorrowful song that characterized what the mood of those Africans might have been.

"It was a horrible journey," Galloway-Blake said. "Millions of Africans were taken from their beautiful homes."

In the next segment of the assembly, Galloway-Blake talked about the contributions made by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman in the quest to abolish slavery and help free African-Americans via the Underground Railroad - which passed through Michigan into Canada.

"They (African-Americans) were treated like slaves," she continued. "But Freddie heard about places like Farmington Hills, where you don't have to be a slave anymore, where you can go to school, buy shoes. Freddie said, 'I want to run away.' And when Frederick Douglass grew up, that's what he did. He went all around the country telling people slavery was no good."

But Douglass was so articulate that nobody believed he was a slave. "So he had to write a book to prove that he was," Galloway-Blake added.

The students then heard about an American president who "passed a good law - no more slavery! ... And my great-grandfather was one of those African-Americans who were freed by Abraham Lincoln."

More students came to the front of the gym for the segment about great African-American inventors, such as Garrett Morgan, who created the traffic light and gas mask. Students hoisted cardboard signs with the names

### Workshops available

Jacqueline Galloway-Blake is an educational consultant for the Romulus-based Brown Sugar & Spice Book Service. Brown Sugar & Spice offers one-day book sales for schools and churches, in-service workshops for teachers and a variety of children's programs. Catalogs are available. For more information, call (313) 729-0501.

### 'Everything I told you today are true stories.'

Jacqueline Galloway-Blake -consultant, Brown Sugar & Spice Book Service

of inventors and their inventions.

### Dr. Carson's story

"Everything I told you today are true stories," said Galloway-Blake, who routinely walked into the audience to get her points across. "... And I have one last story, one that happened not too long ago."

It was the story of how one little black child from Detroit overcame obstacles to go on to greatness.

The story revolved around two brothers, Ben and Curtis, and their mother.

"Ben had so much trouble with his math that he got F's. He was teased by his classmates. He was dejected when he went home."

The story teller went on about how Ben's mother tried to lift up his spirits.

"Ben, you're no dummy," she said. "Just because children say you are a dummy doesn't mean you are a dummy."

"Ben, you come from a long line of people who are not dummies. Remember Frederick Douglass? Remember Garrett Morgan?"

Galloway-Blake told the students about how Ben and Curtis were asked by their mom to go to the public library every day after school to pick out two books to read at home.

"The more you read the more you know," she said. "Ben read so much, Ben Carson had so many A's on his report card. The same people who laughed at him said 'Ben Carson, can you help me with my algebra?'"

Ben Carson wound up going to Yale University and then the University of Michigan before becoming a brain surgeon at John Hopkins Hospital in Maryland.

Galloway-Blake then got to the gist of the Carson story. "Boys and girls, whatever you want to do, you can do. Hold on to your dreams, or dreams die."

"They were interesting and cool," Allen said. The message that stuck with fifth grader Elyssa Fielder, 10, stemmed from Galloway-Blake's closing story about a young black child who overcame personal adversity to become a doctor.

"Hold on to your dreams and don't let them go," Elyssa said. "I also liked how she used her hands a lot and how she included everybody."

Both Stephen Bismowski, 10, and Peter Cai, 11, both in the fifth grade, said they enjoyed the use of visual aids and props during the program, sponsored by the Highmeadow PTA.

## Students liked her use of visual aids

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Friday's "Black History Alive" assembly at Highmeadow Common Campus thrilled students who watched, listened and participated along with guest Jacqueline Galloway-Blake.

Fifth grader Kevin Sack, 10, thought Galloway-Blake was "real good." He also "learned about all of the African-American inventors. I didn't know about a lot of them."

For another fifth grader, 10-year-old Allen Brewer, the stories and the songs were the best parts of the assembly.

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