



National Urban League

The Division of Education & Youth Development

The National Urban League's evidence-based and scalable signature programs are professionally implemented by local Urban League affiliates to enhance the economic and educational status of our constituents.

# Project Ready: Historical & Cultural Literacy

A SIGNATURE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE



## Our Purpose.

*Project Ready's* Historical & Cultural Literacy (the ability to investigate and think critically about the past in order to intellectually and creatively engage with the present) program seeks to provide youth with accurate, culturally relevant, and resonant curricula on the Black urban experience in America. In doing so, *Project Ready: Historical & Cultural Literacy* (HCL) empowers youth participants with positive images of themselves grounded in a historical legacy of commitment, leadership, and service that continues to positively shape the social, economic, intellectual, political, and cultural development of their community and the nation at large.

Through this dynamic National Urban League enhancement, Urban League affiliate staff expose youth to an important part of their history by investigating and documenting The Great Migration and the ways that it led to the founding of the Urban League in their community and across the nation. As participants in *Project Ready: HCL*, youth become knowledgeable about how they can be active participants in shaping service, scholarship, and progress in their community as a part of the next generation of civil rights leaders.



### 2025 EMPOWERMENT GOAL

Every American child is ready for college, work and life.

# 6 Million

African Americans journeyed from the South to the North during The Great Migration between 1910 and 1970

# 110 years

ago, the National Urban League was created as an organized response to the plight of Black Americans in urban cities who needed assistance seeking work, housing, social services, and political representation

# 75,000

Black-owned businesses came to fruition just 4 years into The Great Migration, up from only 5,000 on record in the U.S. prior to 1910

## FOSTERING PERSONAL, SOCIAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

As an instructional tool, *Project Ready: HCL* empowers youth participants by:

- **ENGAGING** them in real-life historical and cultural literacy activities such as oral history projects where they critically read historical and primary source documents, write strong interview questions, and develop public speaking skills via their presentations
- **ENCOURAGING** them to interact with peers and adults as well as to participate in robust, independent learning
- **TEACHING** them to question and explore in multiple contexts, to analyze information, and to draw meaning from resources
- **CONNECTING** them with civic engagement activities in their own local community
- **COACHING** them to be critical thinkers and creative problem solvers

## WITH GRATITUDE



We respectively dedicate our Historical & Cultural Literacy enhancement to our ancestors, "on whose shoulders we stand," and thank them for all they accomplished, strived for, and endured, which paved the way for the rich and poignant history we share.



## Our Approach.

The opportunities we put forth in *Project Ready* encourage youth to make an investment in themselves, their communities, their peers, and their future. We do this through program activities that have an asset-based focus on leadership development, intellectual and academic development, and peer learning.

### AS A PART OF OUR ONGOING INTENTION,

we continue to replicate our *Project Ready* standards and approaches throughout all the Urban League postsecondary success programs, thus paving the way to break ground for additional high-quality programs, curricula, innovations, and professional developments that are both effective and impactful for participants and staff alike.

To this end and due to the ever-growing need to address the lack of culturally relevant and historically accurate curricula on the African American experience and the larger African Diaspora, the National Urban League partnered with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, supported by State Farm, in order to develop an approach that would

meaningfully prepare youth for the 21st century via an historical and critical examination of the Black experience in America throughout centuries. The curricula would not be as vibrant or impactful without the guidance and support of Vie Kaufman, the National Urban League's Historian.

Lessons from *Project Ready*: HCL afford youth the opportunity to learn more about their communities, to tie the challenges of the past to the present circumstances that they face, to develop solutions to long-standing and emergent problems, to work on intergenerational projects, to develop service and oral history projects, and to deepen their commitment to the principles of leadership, service, and community.

## The 5-Part HCL Curriculum.



### HISTORICALLY, STORYTELLING HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR CULTURE, AND WE WANT TO GET BACK TO THAT!

Through the National Urban League's *Project Ready* enhancement, *Project Ready*: HCL, our goal is for youth participants to deepen their knowledge, appreciation, and skills via a project-based learning and asset-based approach. Specifically, we want youth to better connect with the legacy of service, leadership, and sacrifice of their ancestors and elders, via oral history projects, video and audio storytelling, photo essays, and art projects as they develop their own lines of inquiry and research and explore how they will make their own contributions to the community's story.

**How will they make their community, the nation, and the world a better place than they found it?**



## Professional Development.

**THE WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR. CENTER FOR URBAN LEADERSHIP** is the nonprofit educational institute of the National Urban League that exists to foster positive social and economic change through effective urban leadership development.

Its mission is to cultivate and enhance the leadership capabilities of individuals and organizations that serve urban communities. Its role is to serve as a convener to link those entities to practical leadership development tools and resources to help them address capacity issues and various leadership challenges.

"At first, Omaha to me seemed a little bit dull because there wasn't that much going on. But now I look at it differently from how I used to."

—DARRICK SMITH, *Project Ready* student, HCL Video Project, Urban League of Nebraska



SCAN OR CLICK TO VIEW VIDEO

The philosophy is that through the enrichment and/or development of urban leaders, urban communities can be improved and empowered, thereby helping to create a society whereby all people have equal opportunity to be positive contributors.

Through this institute, the National Urban League's Division of Education and Youth Development presents a series of professional development sessions in-person and virtually on a continuous basis. Our goal is to provide a full range of educational and youth developmental services to *Project Ready* managers across our affiliate family to ensure that they are fully prepared to take advantage of the opportunities ahead as we work towards our goal of having every American child ready for college, work, and life by 2025.

**“** This program grounds youth not only in what has come before them, but in the kinds of opportunities they can craft for themselves to make an impact in their communities today.”

—HAL SMITH, Ed.D., Senior Vice President, Education, Youth Development & Health, National Urban League

## Our Hope.

In the tradition of the scholar-activists who founded and those who now lead the National Urban League, we are passionately committed to helping youth enrolled in the program become the next generation of leaders who will help grow not only the National Urban League but also other similarly-focused organizations, resulting in the promise of a better tomorrow. Many of our Urban League affiliates were founded by people with dreams similar to those of the youth of today and it is our hope that THE *PROJECT READY* HISTORICAL & CULTURAL LITERACY MANUAL will indeed be a launchpad for dreams and futures that we can scarcely imagine.





Every day we aspire to help *Project Ready* students to begin to see themselves as the new generation of pioneers destined to lead our country.”

—DARLENE MARLIN, MEd., *Vice President, Education Access & Opportunity, National Urban League*

## Success Stories.



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### THE URBAN LEAGUE OF ROCHESTER'S

*Project Ready*: HCL program empowers their youth participants through a four-pronged focus:

(1) exposing them to what the state of education was before and during the Civil Rights Movement and after the ruling in the landmark civil rights case

*Brown vs. Board of Education*; (2) examining the current educational climate in Rochester and picturing how it should evolve in the future; (3) strengthening their youth's advocacy skills, critical thinking, and creativity by coaching them to use their voices to positively affect and energize the Urban League Movement; and (4) helping them to gain an understanding of what they can do to bring positive change to their community.

These objectives are certainly exemplified in the HCL Legacy Video produced in 2018 by this league's *Project Ready* youth, which focused on the impact of The Great Migration, the National Urban League, and the Urban League of Rochester. The students interviewed their league's founder, Dr. Walter Cooper as well as other legacies involved in their community from the 1960's until now.



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### THE KNOXVILLE AREA URBAN LEAGUE

has passionately created two Historical and Cultural Literacy videos since the launch of the National Urban League's *Project Ready*: HCL enhancement program. The first, in 2014, was entitled EMPOWER YOURSELF! EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY!

EMPOWER THE NATION! It highlighted 8+ minutes of narrative and footage developed by this league's youth who participated in the *Project Ready*: HCL Legacy Project that year.



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The second was created in 2018 by a group of this league's National Achievers Society scholars and was pivotal in helping these youth learn about the Civil Rights Movement and its impact on Knoxville.

In preparation for developing this documentary, the students did a great deal of research in order to identify which individuals they wanted to interview for their video. These scholars prepped for and then passionately interviewed local leaders in

order to gain their perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement, past and present, and how the Urban League played a role. The local leaders interviewed were: Dr. Harold Middlebrook, a civil rights activist and Urban League board member; Phyllis Nichols, President/CEO of the Knoxville Urban League; and Gwen McKenzie, Knoxville City Council Representative and Urban League board member.



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### THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER HARTFORD'S

*Project Ready* Empowers project celebrates and chronicles their league's history via a 2018 documentary produced and directed by their youth participants. Through the development of this HCL Legacy video, these young Urban League

of Greater Hartford (ULGH) scholars came to understand the grand contributions made by their league's past and present local heroes, which helped them to recognize the necessity of building on the legacy they have inherited.

Interviews conducted by the youth included: Patricia Kelly, a community activist, pioneering cow girl, entrepreneur, Vietnam veteran, and pillar in their urban community; Kyle Anderson, an employee of the CT Department of Consumer Protection, former City Councilman, and lifelong Urban Leaguer; descendants of William "Bill" Brown, 'Father' of the ULGH; and David Hopkins, current President/CEO of ULGH. These youth now know more about the Hartford community and its pioneers. More importantly, they see the role they can play in shaping, contributing, and impacting their community.



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FOR YOU!