**Introduction**

The documentary, *Octavius Catto: A Legacy for the 21st Century*, was produced as a complement to *Octavius Catto: Remembering a Forgotten Hero*, a biography of Catto geared toward middle and high school students.

What follows is a series of quotations taken from the statements made by experts in the film. Following each quotation are three types of questions:

-Evidence Gathering asks students to recall factual information presented in the film.

-Quotation Analysis invites students to consider word choices, to evaluate the validity of statements, and/or to come up with their own interpretation of the speaker’s meaning.

-21st Century Connections provokes student to compare Catto’s world to their own milieu and to consider the on-going struggle for social justice and equality.

These questions can be answered using information from the film or from both the film and biography.

**Suggested Options for Using this Guide**

* Put students in small groups, each with a different quotation. Have them share their quotation and responses with the whole class.
* Copy the quotations onto pieces of chart paper.
  + Have students stand by the quotation that they find the most impactful and then have a few students share why they made this choice. Then, continue by having them go to the most interesting, the least accurate, the most confusing, etc., stopping each time to take responses from different students. Afterward, have them answer the questions for one of the quotations they selected in the activity.
  + Give students post-it notes to answer questions about the quotations of their choice. Share responses with the whole class.
* Use the quotation(s) and question(s) most relevant to your class as the basis of a whole class discussion, an “exit ticket” prompt, a homework writing assignment, a digital discussion board prompt, or a “bell-ringer” activity at the beginning of the next class meeting.

**Important Note**

There are violent scenes including a fatal shooting depicted in the film. Consider the impact that viewing gun violence may have on your students before showing it to your class.

**Quotations & Questions**

**NAOMI NELSON**: “Octavius V. Catto exemplified the best qualities of his generation. He excelled in sports, he excelled in academics, he excelled in community leadership. He was the future perfect for the African American community.”

Evidence Gathering:

*How did “Octavius V. Catto exemplify the best qualities of his generation”?*

Quotation Analysis:

*What do you think Naomi Nelson means when she states that “He was the future perfect for the African American community”?*

21st Century Connections:

*What do you think are the best qualities of your generation?*

*Who exemplifies these qualities in your school, neighborhood, or on the national or international level?*

**NAOMI NELSON**: “There was this urgency for not just enjoying the trappings of freedom, but the urgency to participate in the process. The urgency to rise above all expectations, the urgency to break down the barriers. And that’s why many people call this period of Catto the first Civil Rights Movement. This desire to exercise your freedom is just so human that why not? Why not?”

Evidence Gathering:

*What actions did Catto and other black activists of his era participate in that could be considered part of a civil rights movement?*

Quotation Analysis:

*What do you think Ms. Nelson means by the phrase “trappings of freedom”?*

*This quotation ends with Ms. Nelson twice asking “Why not?” What do you think she means by this question?*

21st Century Connections:

*Do you think that young people today still feel a sense of urgency to participate in the struggle for freedom (equal rights for all, expanded access to educational and economic opportunity, social justice etc.) or do you think that they are more interested in enjoying the “trappings” that these freedoms can provide?*

**ERICA ARMSTRONG DUNBAR**: “In many ways, Philadelphia is one of the most precarious cities of the north, at least for free black Philadelphians.”

Evidence Gathering:

*In what ways was Philadelphia a precarious place to live for black Philadelphians?*

Quotation Analysis:

*Why do you think Erica Armstrong Dunbar specifies that Philadelphia is particularly precarious for “free” black Philadelphians in the mid-19th century as compared to other northern cities?*

21st Century Connections:

*Do you think Philadelphia is still a precarious place to live for black residents? Why or why not?*

*From what you have heard on the news or learned from friends, family, and/or in school, where do you think might be the most precarious place to live for African Americans today? What are some of the most safe and secure places?*

**DAN BIDDLE**: “Mob was a verb in that era. It was a verb that described what white men and boys quite often did if there was an anti-slavery lecture or meeting in town. They would mob that event.”

Evidence Gathering:

*What instances of mob activity are you aware of that occurred during Catto’s era?*

Quotation Analysis:

*Why do you think Dan Biddle chose to focus on the word “mob”?*

*Are there synonyms he could have used that would have been equally or more powerful?*

21st Century Connections:

*What are some examples of mob-like activity that have occurred in recent months or years?*

*Why do you think people tend to behave differently in a mob than they would on their own or in a small group?*

**REVEREND MARK TYLER** : “In a lot of respects he was the Jackie Robinson of his day. Like today, sports is kind of like the last frontier, if you can break the barrier in sports, then the rest of society kind of follows suit.”

Evidence Gathering:

*In what ways was Octavius Catto similar to Jackie Robinson?*

Quotation Analysis:

*What do you think Reverend Tyler means when he describes sports as “the last frontier”?*

21st Century Connections:

*Who might be called the Jackie Robinson of our day and why? Can you think of a “Jackie Robinson” who is not African American? Not male? Not American?*

*Do you agree with Reverend Tyler that “if you can break the barrier in sports, then the rest of society kind of follows suit”?*

**ALLEN GUELZO**: “The one thing that keeps this from going lethal is the fact that blacks cannot vote. So blacks are, for all practical purposes, politically powerless.”

Evidence Gathering:

*What group of people lived in proximity to the center of the elite black community? Why did they feel threatened by African Americans?*

Quotation Analysis:

*Can you make Allen Guelzo’s quotation more clear by filling in the blank:*

*“The one thing that keeps this\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from going lethal is the fact that blacks cannot vote.”*

21st Century Connections:

*Are there groups in the United States today that, like poor whites and African Americans in Catto’s Philadelphia, compete for the same economic and social opportunities leading to tension and even violence? What might be effective ways to resolve these conflicts?*

**MURRAY DUBIN**: “On Election Day, in an organized fashion, police and Moya hose men physically beat and took black voters out of line, accosted black men in the street. It was a day filled with terror if you were African-American.”

Evidence Gathering:

*What indication was there that the anti-black violence on Election Day was an organized effort and not just a series of random acts by individuals?*

Quotation Analysis:

*What inferences can you make about the race, social class, and/or ethnic origin of the police in Philadelphia during this era based on what Murray Dubin describes?*

21st Century Connections:

*Why do you think tensions between police and African American communities remain high?*

*What might be a solution to the on-going distrust that many communities of color have for police forces?*

*In Catto’s time, there were no African Americans in the police force; do you think that having black officers has improved relations between the police and communities of color in Philadelphia? Why or why not?*

*Philadelphia is approximately 47% black, but only about 18% of the city’s police officers are African American. Do you think the city should prioritize recruiting more black officers? What strategy do you think would be most effective? What would you include in a training program for new recruits for the police force to improve interactions with the public?*

**ERICA ARMSTRONG DUNBAR**: “What will be the direction for the lives of people of color? How will black men and women live in a nation where slavery no longer exists, but it's very clear that equal rights, that citizenship, that these very ideas will continue to be contested and are contested for centuries to come?”

Evidence Gathering:

*What strides toward equal rights were made during Catto’s lifetime?*

Quotation Analysis:

*What are synonyms for the word “contested” in this quotation?*

21st Century Connections:

*The writer William Faulkner is credited with the statement that “the past isn’t dead, it isn’t even past.” In what ways does the legacy of slavery remain a part of 21st century American life?*

*What ideas related to equal rights and citizenship are currently being contested within your community, in Philadelphia, or on the national level?*

**Expert Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

**Dan Biddle** is a co-author of *Tasting Freedom: Octavius V. Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America.* Until 2016, he was a reporter and editor and the *Philadelphia* *Inquirer* and is a winner of Pulitzer Prize. Currently, Biddle is teaching journalism at the University of Delaware.

**Murray Dubin** is a co-author of *Tasting Freedom: Octavius V. Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America.* He wrote for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for over three decades and is also the author of *South Philadelphia: Mummers, Memories, and the Melrose Diner.*

### Erica Armstrong Dunbar is the Charles and Mary Beard Professor of History at Rutgers University and the Director of the Program in African American History at the Library Company of Philadelphia. She is the author of *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City* and *Never Caught: The Washingtons’ Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge.*

**Allen Guelzo** is the Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era and Director of Civil War Era Studies at Gettysburg College. He is the author of several award-winning books about Abraham Lincoln and is a non-resident fellow of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute at Harvard University and a research scholar at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Naomi Nelson** is a longtime museum educator and historian. She taught art history at Lincoln University and served as executive director of the Belmont Mansion in Philadelphia. Previously, she was a vice-president of the National Underground Freedom Center in Cincinnati.

**Reverend Mark Tyler** is the senior pastor at Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia. In addition to presiding over this historic church, he is also a scholar and prominent activist and community leader. Reverend Tyler earned his PhD in Educational Leadership at the University of Dayton.