

## Students study history makers

Written by Elizabeth Varavang & Derartu Ansha  
Thursday, 03 March 2011 15:18

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WE WIN Institute makes a difference in the lives of all children. Whether they are African, Asian, European or Indian, WE WIN creates successes with them. The organization's Afrocentric curriculum teaches all the students served about the great accomplishments of people of African descent. Not just Black children need to know about the triumphs of African people, all students need to know the great feats of Africans including how they built the pyramids, how Africans started the first universities, created astronomy, mathematics, farming, irrigation systems and even developed the ironing board. Elizabeth Varavang, who is of Asian descent, and Derartu (African Ethiopian descent), share their understanding of Garrett Morgan and Granville Woods.

My name is Elizabeth Varavang. I am in third grade. I go to Marcy Open School. When I grow up, I want to be an author or an artist. I am learning how to multiply in math. At WE WIN I am learning about African and African Americans. Miss Kenna is our dance and drum teacher. She teaches us a dance called "Sofa." I like WE WIN because they help me with reading and writing and with tests.

Before I started WE WIN I didn't know anything about all the inventions of African Americans. I'm going to tell you about Garrett Morgan.

Garrett Morgan was a great man. His full name was Garrett Augustus Morgan. He was born on March 4, 1877, in Paris, Kentucky. When Garrett was little, he had a simple little life as a boy. He went to school and worked on his family's farm. His parents used to be slaves.

Morgan left Kentucky to go to Cincinnati, Ohio, to find a job. It wasn't easy to find a job but he finally found one as a handyman. Because he was an African American, he had to work at the age of 14-years-old. Because he had to work, he couldn't go to school. He was smart though, he knew he had to learn so he paid a tutor. Morgan moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1895, to work on broken sewing machines for a clothing factory.

Garrett Morgan was married in 1896 to Madge Nelson, but they got divorced. His skills of fixing things and experimenting spread quickly, which made him want to make more things. He

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invented the gas mask, the traffic light and a hair straightener. His gas mask was used to rescue workers trapped in a tunnel filled with fumes. Morgan was the first African American in Cleveland to own a car!

Morgan decided to make the gas mask after hearing about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire where people died. Three men used the gas mask to save two other men from the 1916 tunnel explosion under Lake Erie. Morgan got an award for bravery. It was the gold Carnegie Medal. Morgan won more medals for bravery. He died in 1963, but he is still an amazing man.

My name is Derartu Ansha. I'm in fifth grade. At school we learn about shapes and figures and measurements. I'm 10-years-old. I like to write and read. I really like WE WIN because I learn about things I never knew. They teach me about Africans. I learned that Egyptians are African people. We drum and dance. I love the teachers at WE WIN because they are nice and very helpful. I want to be a doctor or a writer. One of the people I learned about at WE WIN that I never knew about is Granville T. Woods.

Granville T. Woods was born in Columbus, Ohio. He spent his life creating a lot of inventions for the railroad industry. Granville T. Woods invented more than a dozen tools to make electric railway cars better. He invented many things that controlled the flow of electricity. The invention he is most known for is a system for letting the engineer of a train know how close his train is to another train. This device helped cut down accidents. Woods loved the railroad.

In 1888, Granville Woods created a system for overhead electric conducting lines for railroads. This helped in the growth of the overhead railroad systems that can be seen in cities like Chicago and New York City. When Woods was in his thirties, he was interested in thermal power and the steam driven engines. In 1889, he filed his first patent for a better steam boiler furnace. In 1887, he patented the Synchronous Multiplex Railway Telegraph, which let train stations talk with moving trains. His invention let trains know exactly where other trains were all the time.

Alexander Graham Bell's company purchased the rights to Granville Wood's telegraphony\* patent. This let Woods be a full time inventor. Among his other top inventions were the steam boiler furnace and an automatic air brake which was used to slow down or stop trains. His electric car was controlled by overhead wires. It was the third rail system to keep cars running on the right track.

Thomas Edison sued Granville Woods, claiming that he was the first inventor of the multiplex telegraph, not Granville. Wood's won against Edison, but Edison wouldn't give up. He wanted to have all of Granville's inventions. Edison offered Granville a big job at his Electric Light Company in New York. Wood's said "No," He wanted to stay independent. Granville T. Woods died January 30, 1910. He was 53-years-old.

*\* What Granville called a telegraphony is a combination of a telegraph and telephone, which could transmit both oral and signal messages. Prior to Woods's invention, the telegraph could only send messages over an electrical current utilizing a combination of short and long pulses (commonly referred to as dots and dashes) that represent letters of the alphabet .*