The Mackey Family

After the Civil War, slavery began to come to a halt. As slaves were released from their bondage, African-Americans immediately sought after ways to grow economically. An African-American couple Lovina Mackey and Guy W. Smith decided to get married. This is significant because during that time under Kentucky law, their marriage was not legally recognized. This was just one amongst many laws and unspoken rules that were in place to discriminate, the practice of differential and unequal treatment of other groups of people, against the African-American community (Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations, Parrillo). Before and even after slavery education for African-Americans was difficult to obtain due to the lack of schools and resources. However, both Lovina and her husband were educated, meaning they could read, write, and speak English fluently. With this information I was able to form two questions: How did Guy’s occupation help to improve his social mobility and how did Guy’s success affect his children?

When I began to research more about Lovina, I was not able to find much about who she was and what she did. However, I was able to find out some information about her family. Her and her husband lived in Louisville on 13th street near the factories downtown in the low poverty area. This area was considered to be low poverty because the factories were in and nearby the residential areas. The main reason people came to live by these factories were because they were providing jobs for African-American even though the positions did not provide much in wages. Guy thought of a way to improve his life despite the economic determinism, structural barriers and discrimination, which came in the form of discrimination. Guy created a moving and packing business that would go on to be extremely successful (Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations, Parrillo). According to a newspaper The Madisonian, “Guy W. Smith, a negro from Louisville, who recently died is known as one of the wealthiest Negro’s of that city. He was in the moving and packing business for many years, and he left an
estate value of $60,000” (The Madisonian, 1914). In order to understand the value of his estate, I went to U.S Inflation Calculator and $60,000 in 1913 is equivalent to $1,444,339.39 today, which means that Guy was a fairly successful African-American for his time (USInflationCalculator.com). Therefore Guy’s occupation helped improve his social mobility, the ability of individuals to move up or down in social status based on wealth, education, and occupation, because he went from being low-income to being wealthy (Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations, Parrillo).

Guy and Lovina were married for 34 years and ended up having seven kids. Although Lovina did not work, her children were culturally transmitted, when each generation transmits its culture to the next generation and learn those cultural definitions at an early age, to be educated individuals (Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations, Parrillo). On the 1900 census it showed that three of their seven kids were still alive and that two of the three were employed. Rochelle attended Berea College Grammar school and the first year academy but his grades were not all that great (Academy 1 and 2 and Foundation School, 1893 to 1899). However, despite that information, Rochelle Smith went on to be married and later became the manager of his father’s business. Another son, William Smith, went on to be a bell boy in a hotel. Therefore, Guy and Lovina paved the way for their children to succeed by being role models who were educated, working individuals.

Guy Smith and Lovina Mackey are rare examples of African-Americans who grew to be successful despite the many restrictions during their time. Being born during a time of slavery and then growing up being discriminated against did not set up those two for a life of achievement, however, with their determination for a better life they were able to obtain more than enough. Now it is apparent how big of an impact of race and ethnicity have on culture and the ability of people to be successful. Guy went against the norms, a culture’s rule of conduct, of the current culture in Louisville by doing what he thought he probably would not be able to (Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations, Parrillo). In conclusion we can see that the key to success is getting an education and being able to do what is best despite the obstacles society and the culture have in the way.
Works Cited

“Academy 1 and 2 and Foundation School.” 23 September 2015.

http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/about/
