



Teaching through Black History: An Overview of Black Historical Consciousness

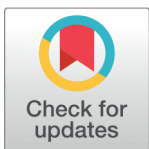
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Keywords Black history education, History, Black students, Race, Education, Social Studies Education

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INTRODUCTION

History is among the most undesirable subjects for students, especially Black students. The reason is not that Black students are apathetic towards the past; it is the lack of curricular and pedagogical nuances of Black history in U.S. and World history courses. Black students clammer to learn Black history, specifically histories that veer from the typical and mundane Black history curriculum involving slavery, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights Movement (Noldon, 2007; Thornhill, 2016; Woodson, 2017). While evidence suggests that Black history knowledge increases Black student engagement and is psychologically beneficial (Boutte & Strickland, 2008; Chapman-Hilliard & Adams-Bass, 2016), these students are left disappointed with teachers incapable of teaching the subject. The positives of Black history do not only extend to Black students; other non-Black students gain essential knowledge, and interest in history increases.

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Teachers, especially White teachers, claim they are scared to teach difficult histories, lack Black history knowledge, and are concerned about classroom climate, especially if Black students get upset over how Black people have been historically treated (Oberg & Kartchner, 2016). Teachers are also concerned about being called racist if they misspeak or make a pedagogical mistake. This is not to say that Black teachers effectively teach Black history; many have the same issues, such as the content knowledge gap, and are not skilled pedagogically. Teachers who proclaim to teach Black history in their classes still teach a small fraction of its history, estimated as less than 10% of classroom time during the year, only promoting surface-level learning (Oberg & Kartchner, 2016). While we underestimate how many teachers do an excellent job teaching Black history, research has shown that those teachers are the exception, not the rule.

My research has identified that Black historical experiences and ways of knowing/doing in the official curriculum are constructed through traditional Western European perspectives (King, 2020). Therefore, the typical Black history narrative is taught through:

1. European contact or colonization. Most students first learn about Black history when Europeans found, enslaved, or colonized. This approach excludes thousands of years of African history and ignores Black people's historical experiences pre-European arrival.
2. Black "firsts." The history curriculum favors the Black people who were the first to break into White society, like Jackie Robinson. This approach to history erases Black people's historical importance before integration. Additionally, very few times does the curriculum explain in detail why they were first anyway or why it took so long to "integrate." Black firsts put a value judgment on White society as something great or as a destination for Black people. The "Black First" curriculum frames these Black people as exceptional without explaining the systemic ways a group of people was oppressed.
3. The triad of historical experiences. Black history is tied to three historical eras, slavery, Civil War/Reconstruction, and Civil Rights Movement. The narratives are usually disjointed and provide little context or contemporary connections. We miss out on other histories that explore the Black experience.
4. Oppression and liberation. The narrative usually centers on Black people fighting for their rights. While oppression and liberation narratives are central and needed, we miss out on Black histories that explore Black people's humanity. In other words, oppression and liberation solely define Black people's historical experience.
5. Messiahs and Black males who are heterosexual, middle class, and Christian. When presenting what some would call exceptional or respectable, Black history is more than Great Man history. To fully understand Black experiences, Blackness must be understood as multidimensional and include all identities associated with those racialized as Black (Alridge, 2006; Journell, 2008; King, 2017; Smith, 2017; Woodson, 2016).

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The typical Black history education lacks nuance and fails to examine race and racism's role and impact on Black people's experiences (Brown & Brown, 2010). Overall, the k-12 Black history curriculum is primarily stale and lacks imagination. The curriculum is not continuously building on itself; the same context and content are regurgitated throughout students' educational careers. These problems contribute to glaring omissions of Black people's historical contributions to society.

Additionally, Black history instructional practice lacks context and rarely provides any contemporary connections. Keffreyn Brown and I (2014) have conceptualized this phenomenon as the typical Black history pedagogy. The typical Black History Pedagogy is exemplified by the limited pedagogical implementation regarding Black history through decontextualized narratives, stereotypical constructs, and unfulfilling images of Black heroes and heroines. For a decade, news stories have highlighted these typical Black history pedagogies through slavery math problems, mock slave auctions, and slavery games, to name a few. These instructional approaches are devoid of any intellectual and practical value; instead, they inflict psychological violence on Black students by emphasizing Black oppression while ignoring the role of White guilt and supremacy.

A significant reason why these curriculum and instructional constructs exist is that we do not have a nuanced definition of or understand the purpose of Black history as a society. History education has been based on two policies that promote what I call historical uniformity (all histories are the same) and historical integration (adding Black people to history without considering their voices and perspectives). These approaches do not recognize that what is historically important to White people might not be historically important to Black people. Therefore, Black history has its entry points, historical timelines, perspectives and voices, and historical figures grounded and related to Black identities and sensibilities. Our history education should be based on a policy of historical contentiousness, a history that is comfortable with competing historical perspectives. Historical contentiousness recognizes that 1) history is not a linear singular history but a series of divergent histories; 2) history is not merely about progress but encompasses cyclical unresolved historical moments from era to era, and 3) historical experiences of racialized individuals (and other identities) are different, sometimes totally different, and rarely are the same.

In other words, if a history that claims to be Black history does not alter the historical trajectory of history, it is not a true representative of Black history, just a symbolic history that favors a Eurocentric narrative featuring Black faces. Ignoring historical contentiousness in history education leaves students with a limited and oversimplified Black history knowledge that favors a particular type of Black history and disregards the many Black historical perspectives that make up Black history or what I call a Black historical consciousness.

BLACK HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Black historical consciousness challenges the assumptions of history. It is an effort to understand, develop, and teach Black histories that recognize Black people's full humanity. It also emphasizes pedagogical practices that reimagine the legitimacy, selection, and interpreta-



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tion of historical sources. Black historical consciousness is to alter our ideology and redefine how we understand Black history. It seeks alternative principles that effectively explore Black people's humanity and dismantle the White epistemic historical logic that has long dominated much of K-12 official social studies policy (King, 2020).

Black historical consciousness challenges how we understand the Black experiences through Black people. Teaching with Black historical consciousness in mind is to teach through Black history and not about Black history. Developing a Black history program asks, are we developing Black history through the proper historical lens? We should question whether our Black histories represent Black-centric perspectives and voices. Do we give space for Black history to highlight the cultural ways of knowing, doing, and longstanding traditions? To be clear, Black historical consciousness is not about essentializing Black people through history; Black people through history are complex and multifaceted. The purpose is to resist Eurocentric thinking about Black people throughout history and accentuate Black people's voices, which is more appropriate and essential for Black historical study.

BLACK HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS (SEE FIGURE 1 APPROACH CONSISTS OF 8 PRINCIPLES:

1. Power, oppression, and anti-blackness highlight the lack of justice, freedom, equality, and equity of black people experienced throughout history. Examples include the institution of slavery, the nadir of race relations, the War on Drugs, and mass incarceration.
2. Agency, resistance, and justice center histories that Black people acted independently, made decisions based on their interests, and fought against oppressive structures. Examples include African resistance to slavery, Black abolitionists, the two Great Migrations, the NAACP and the courts, and Black Power Movement.
3. Africa and the African Diaspora centers on the similarities and differences of Black histories and cultures worldwide. Additionally, Black history should begin with ancient Africa, where various empires and ethnic groups are studied. Examples include African origins of humanity, African civilization, kingdoms, dynasties, The Haitian Revolution, the Caribbean Black Power movement, and defining Blackness worldwide.
4. Black Emotionality centers narratives focusing on Black people's emotions, including joy, fear, rage, sadness, and hope. The key is to normalize Black people's humanity, the emotions that come from generations of oppression, and how we defied those oppressive structures of the time. Examples include family dynamics, Black music, dance, cultural expressions, sports, holidays and traditions, social unrest, and the Black Arts Movement.
5. Black identities center histories consisting of multiple identities that inform Blackness and look at each positionality as necessary to understand Black history fully. Examples include Black and Tribal experiences, Black women, Black LGBTQ+



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- communities, Combahee River Collective, Black political thought, and Black nationalism.
6. Black historical contention is the recognition that all Black histories are not favorable. Black people have often been guilty of all the isms and phobias plaguing global societies. Black histories are complex and complicated histories that should not be ignored. We should recognize the not-so-great aspects of Black histories. Additionally, the principles highlight the differences in Black history. Black people were not a monolithic group. They had various ideas on how to solve issues. Examples include Blacks colonizing Africa, Black Marxism, the reparations movement, and various socio-political-cultural global movements such as Pan-Africanist Movements and the Garvey Movement).
 7. Black social histories teach Black history through "regular" persons who made a difference in their communities and state. This approach to history removes the messiah complex and may not be the most "popular" or "respectable" but those who fought for the everyday person. Examples include histories focusing on community, local, and social histories, including the Baton Rouge and Montgomery boycotts and the 5 cases that made up *Brown v. Board of Education*.
 8. Black Futurism is the concept that uses Black history knowledge to identify long-standing problems or successes and use knowledge of the past to solve contemporary and future problems. The issues include racial inequities, race-based gerrymandering, food deserts, and segregation.

The first three principles are common themes in all reputable Black history programs. The last five themes - Emotionality, Black identities, Black historical contention, Black social history, and Black Futures - are not as widely adopted and might be perceived as controversial in many educational spaces. The eight guiding principles remind us to think of Black folks' humanity while challenging us to present Black history through their eyes, perspectives, and cultural ways of knowing, doing, and via traditions passed down through generations.

DEVELOPING BLACK HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN SCHOOLS

Black historical consciousness is new and developing, so it is continually evolving. I caution that Black historical consciousness is not merely a framework; although it can be used as one, it is a mindset about teaching Black history as holistic and human. I have presented the framework to schools across the United States and Canada to secondary and elementary teachers. I have helped several school districts, and teachers use the framework (or parts of it) to develop and teach their Black history courses. Some of the school districts in the United States include Jefferson County Public School in Kentucky, Olathe Public Schools in Kansas, Francis Howell Schools in Missouri, Columbia Public Schools in Missouri, Kansas City School district in Missouri, Madison Metropolitan school district in Wisconsin, Muskegon Heights Public Schools Academy System in Michigan, the City of



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Philadelphia School district, New York City public schools, and Lockport school district in New York state. In Canada, traces of the framework have been used throughout the Greater Essex County and Ontario school districts.

A few school districts used the principles to construct new Black history courses. Jefferson County School, Francis Howell, and Lockport Public Schools were the school districts that used this approach. Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky is the most advanced of the school districts as the curriculum is developed, and the courses are currently taught based on the ideology. You can see their curriculum here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LGfKLMOWF8UYkFMKaGt28ma4U3I7TGt8gy7gaPH9pQ/edit>

Research is currently being completed through the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial literacy education, of which I am the Founding Director. Early results from different schools indicate that teachers and students find the framework useful and consider it a game-changer in history education. Yet, some teachers remain resistant to fully encompassing the framework. Even with a supportive coordinator in Jefferson County, implementation has been struggling. Jefferson County is not alone; many supportive social studies leaders nationwide have discussed teacher buy-in. Some concerns are guided by politicians pushing back on Black history courses under the guise of anti-Critical Race theory. Yet, questioning Black history is not new. Many claim that Black history is American history (King, 2020) and that separate Black history courses are unnecessary. Yet, no one seems to know Black history. In many cases, the concept of thinking through Black people is intimidating. Instead of taking on the challenge of improving Black history education, the curriculum remains under the guise of being hard and uncomfortable.

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE AND HISTORICAL TEACHING: STEPS INTO A BLACK HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

When I think of why Black history is considered complex to teach for some, the answer extends past the lack of education. Yes, there is a Black history learning gap for most teachers. Most of this learning curve is structural. Most teachers were educated in a Pk-12 educational system that did not teach them Black history. Then these people attended teacher education programs that failed to explore Black history as a pedagogical issue. Yet, teacher education programs are not only at fault when universities do not extend general education requirements to courses such as African American history, Black studies, or Africana studies that allow teacher candidates to explore the Black experience in meaningful ways. When these people become teachers, Black history standards are limited, especially in elementary schools, there is virtually little time in the teaching calendar, and professional development around Black history education is almost non-existence.

The other impediment to teaching Black history is socio-cultural. Researchers have used the mirror metaphor when describing what entices people to learn history. In other words, learning history is closely tied to how a person sees themselves or their identity. History is the first time we learn about ourselves and the first time we know about people who are othered from us. Research has shown that how we are racialized and gendered is closely

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tied to the type of histories we feel are important (Epstein, 2000; Wineburg & Monte-Sano, 2008). With the teaching profession predominately White women, it stands to reason that there is a severe learning gap as to the importance of Black history.

Additionally, historically, the history curriculum has always implied that there is a cognitive dissonance to non-White people in history. The curriculum has implied that White people are the most historically influential people in the world. No matter what history was told, White people were infused in those narratives as historically significant. To effectively teach Black history, teachers, especially those racialized as White, must reimagine and rethink their historical positioning. This requires a belief that 1. White persons are not the most historically important figures in World history; 2. Recognized Black humanity that not only centers their oppression; 3. Begin to think past traditional narratives and always ask if these narratives are teaching through or about Black history, and 4., and it might sound cliché, but do the work of learning Black histories that challenges how Blackness has traditionally been prescribed in school-based history. Can this be done? Yes, as evident with the multitude of White historians who have written salient works of Black history.

Developing Black history programs is important and should not be created in haste. When done with thought and patience, schools and school districts will add tremendous value to their students, local communities, and society. Yet, I understand that some schools and school districts cannot even consider building Black history programs. We have bad-faith political leaders and uninformed parent groups who stifle these efforts. It is sad because these people would learn not only so much about Black people but also about themselves. Black history is not just about White oppressors and Black victims. When taught through Black people's perspectives, White folks are not centered, simply supporting actors is historically important. Yet, Black history exposes the ugly truth about us, no matter what is said, Black histories reveal what we do. It examines our morality and exposes our cowardice. Maybe that is it, the truth hurts, but I challenge resisters to look beyond themselves and realize that different versions of histories exist.

Plus, there is so much we all need to learn about ourselves. History is not about patriotism, history is not about liking or loving a country or a person, and history is not about feeling good or bad. History is about helping us understand our humanity and the decisions we make based on the context of the time. This includes all the good, the bad, and the indifferent. Does history elicit emotions? Yes! Learning history makes you feel good, angry, sad, frustrated, joyful, and maybe, guilty. That is ok for school children to experience those emotions. Emotions also inspire action. Actions that can be positive as well as questionable. We must realize that building Black history programs is more than a curriculum. It is about making citizens. If we continue to teach history uncritically, we become a historically immature society that continues to repeat our transgressions. We will never move forward in society. I believe teaching through Black historical consciousness can help us move toward a more historically mature society or, at the very least, make history less predictable and more interesting.



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BLACK HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

FOR THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATOR

POWER, OPPRESSION, & ANTI-BLACKNESS

Addresses the lack of justice, freedom, equality, and equity experienced by Black people throughout history.

Commitment for Teaching: I will name racism and the impact it has on power and oppression.





AGENCY, RESISTANCE, & JUSTICE

Acknowledges that although victimized, Black people were not helpless.

Commitment for Teaching: I will share the history of Black people's resistance and fight for justice.

AFRICA & THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Contextualizes histories within the African Diaspora, including global Black histories.

Commitment for Teaching: I will expand the narratives of Black history beyond where I live (and beyond the U.S.).





BLACK EMOTIONALITY

Focuses on Black people's emotions, including joy, fear, rage, sadness, and hope.

Commitment for Teaching: I will honor the full range of Black people's emotions.

BLACK IDENTITIES

Promotes the inclusion of Black identities beyond Black, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian men.

Commitment for Teaching: I will include the intersectional identities of Black people.





HISTORICAL CONTENTION

Recognizes that Black histories are complex and should not be ignored, even if they are not all positive. It also highlights highlight Black people's ideas and disagreements.

Commitment for Teaching: I will teach the complexity of Black history, and teach through Black people's diverse experiences, even the not so great aspects.

COMMUNITY, LOCAL, & SOCIAL HISTORIES

Includes histories of "regular" people (especially children) who have made (and are making) a difference in their communities.

Commitment for Teaching: I will research local Black histories within my communities.





BLACK FUTURISM

(Re)imagines, (re)invents, and recognizes the possibilities of Black people in the future.

Commitment for Teaching: I will imagine, dream, and support the futures of Black people and children.

Figure 1



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A PK-12 BLACK HISTORY FRAMEWORK
Black Historical Consciousness
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Power, Oppression, & Anti-Blackness
 Highlight the lack of justice, freedom, equality, and equity of Black people experienced throughout history.



Agency, Resistance, & Justice
 Black histories that explain that although Black people have been victimized, they were not helpless victims.



Africa & the African Diaspora
 African and African Diaspora as Black histories stresses narratives of Black people be contextualized within the African Diaspora.



Black Emotionality
 Narratives that focus on Black people's emotions, including joy, fear, rage, sadness, and hope.



Black Identities
 Black identities as Black histories is a more inclusive history that seeks to uncover the multiple identities of Black people through Black history.



Black Historical Contention
 The recognition that all Black histories are not positive and pristine. It highlights humanity's messiness. Contention recognizes that all Black people do not hold similar views or support other Black people. Some even to the detriment of Black people's freedom and justice. We should recognize the not-so-great aspects of Black histories and that Black people have been guilty of all the sins and phobias that plague global societies.



Community Local, & Social Histories
 Teaching Black history through "regular" persons who made a difference in their communities and state. This approach to history removes the messiah complex and may not be the most "popular" or "respectable" but those who fought for the everyday person.



Black Futurism
 Using lessons from Black histories to reimagine the contemporary and future.



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Figure 2

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Q & A WITH LAGARRETT KING

Question #1

Teacher's Question:

In our current climate, many teachers are handed a curriculum and have little voice in what and how it is taught. Could you share the process the schools listed in the paper used to expose typical Black pedagogy and how they involved their teachers in developing a "mindset about teaching Black history as holistic and human?"

LaGarrett King's Response:

The professional development around the Black historical consciousness principles varied depending on individual schools and school districts' objectives. Most of the schools used professional development for teacher training. The thought was to influence the teacher's historical thinking and culturally relevant instructional practices. School districts like Kansas City, Olathe, and Columbia Public Schools used this approach. The professional development was used with both elementary and secondary teachers. The professional development focused on a detailed explanation of the principles and allowed teachers to react to each principle and how they would infuse the concepts within the curriculum. The principles were used as a teacher guide for teachers teaching history. They intended to use the existing/traditional curriculum and improve instructional and curricular strategies. These types of professional development were usually one session on one day for a few hours ranging from 2- 5 hours.

The city of Philadelphia schools, Olathe, and New York City used the framework as an additional curricular framework for their already established Black history, Black studies, and Africana courses. The city of Philadelphia was the first district to mandate Black history as a graduation requirement. Olathe's Black history course was an elective, while New York City Public Schools added a few principles to their new Black studies initiatives. Here a description of the principles was used. Still, professional development became more of a workshop where the existing curriculum would be revised based on how the teachers understood the principles used for a given topic. While workshops were used for some of the training, many used my work on the principles to help guide them through the process.

Professional development consisted of multiple days based on a series of topics and approaches. These professional developments lasted 5 to 6 sessions over a few months. The first session explained principles and how teachers understood the concepts. The subsequent few sessions centered on curriculum development around the framework with me as a consultant. The local schools always constructed their own curriculum with a local curriculum committee. Not one curriculum looked the same because the principles allow for flexibility over the selected narratives and chosen assignments. For example, Francis Howell focused much on local history with five major units that anchored their Black history curriculum. Jefferson County, on the other hand, was more global, choosing to focus on a broader conception of Black history. After developing the curriculum, two school districts, Francis Howell and Jefferson County, were victims of the anti-CRT movement.

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Francis Howell has since disbanded the curriculum while Jefferson County and Lockport continue with the designed courses.

While each school setting used the principles differently, I devised steps to achieve an equitable process in developing Black history courses. These steps include:

1. Developing a Black history planning committee. As school leaders begin to think about building Black history programs, careful consideration will have to go into selecting a planning committee. It is important for school leaders not to act alone but work collaboratively with several stakeholders. Your committee should be composed of diverse people who support the mission of building strong Black history programs. I suggest that the selection of the committee is transparent and includes representatives from the central office, teachers from the district (if possible from multiple schools from different levels), parents, community members, students, and two outside non-voting consultants, preferably a professional historian and Black history educator versed in instructional approaches. I would say a good committee can range from 9 to 13 people. After establishing the committee, I suggest selecting a chair, secretary, and historian. Again, the planning committee should be transparent in its process, including holding community meetings, sharing progress with the school board, and writing notes about its process. Given the cyclical history of diversity education, the detailed process is about chronicling a history for reflection and documentation for future generations. In some cases, for safety reasons, the identities of the planning committees may need to be withheld, but ideally, the process should be public.
2. Develop a Black history course mission statement. I suggest the committee create a mission or purpose statement and revisit the statements throughout the process. Within this procedure, there are several elements that the committee will have to define. The most important definition is defining Black history. This definition will be the foundation of how the program will be built. I have found that many educators cannot explain or know what history is. In my article, Black history is not American history, I note that Black history is the experiences of people of African descent and their perspectives on what has happened in history. This definition has implications for how schools and school districts build the curriculum. If constructed properly, the Black history curriculums and associated pedagogy will look different from how the traditional curriculum is developed. The purpose statement should also explicitly state the why, who, when, and how of the program development.
3. Conduct a curriculum audit for the existing history programs. A curriculum audit is always a good step in helping decide a needs assessment. For the audit, school districts should examine what Black history courses or associated courses such as African American Studies or Africana Studies are already offered, how they can improve the course, and who teaches the courses. Examine the current history offerings if no Black history courses or associated courses are established. Ask what current courses are available, what's taught, who teaches, level of education and knowledge, resources



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used, and resources on hand. Surveys can also be distributed. Asking students, teachers, administrators, and community members about their ideas about Black history can provide valuable information that can add to its development. Many school districts have found my Black history helpful framework as a guide to check against their current course offerings.

4. Develop a teacher hiring plan. I would argue that the teacher is the most important entity in the process. Studies have noted that a great teacher can improve an average curriculum. Plus, the teacher is the ambassador for the class, especially if it's the first time it is offered. They will be the litmus test for success as the class is viewed through students, parents, and the community.

Most people automatically consider the teacher's race a qualification, with a Black teacher as the most desired. I am not necessarily thinking about the teacher's racialized identity. Yet, I understand the implication of the teacher's race as the face of the courses, especially for schools and districts lacking teacher diversity. If I am being honest, optics do matter in many places. However, just because a teacher is Black does not mean they know or can teach Black history. We should be looking for certain dispositions that include content knowledge, racial pedagogical knowledge, culturally responsive, culturally sensitive/empathetic, and a general aptitude that is student-centered and challenges students academically and their critical thinking. I suggest an interview protocol with a teaching demonstration and interview questions focusing on the above dispositions. Additionally, schools and school districts should hire/have more than one teacher to teach the course. These persons should constantly communicate with each other with strategic P.D. opportunities to enhance the curriculum and pedagogy of the courses.

5. Create a non-traditional Black history course. I challenge the planning committees to think outside the box when developing the curriculum. It is a mistake to take the traditional history narrative, place Black faces there, and expect to teach Black history effectively. In other words, we teach about Black history and not through it. If we are serious about teaching Black history, the committee needs to understand that what is historically significant to White people is not historically significant. Therefore, Black history has its entry points, people, events, and ways of experiencing and thinking through history. For example, Black history should not begin in 1619, it should explore the thousands of years before European contact. This also means questioning who we consider historically important. For example, why the histories of Frederick Douglass are favored over Martin Delany or Henry Highland Garnett? Why do we call Black soldiers during the revolutionary war Black loyalists or patriots? Were they loyal to the crown or the colonists? Why do we only know about one Independence Day for Black people, Juneteenth, when there are several Independence days for different Black communities nationwide? The planning committee needs to suspend Eurocentric thinking that hinders our vision. Our thinking is geared towards the Black perspectives because the historical perspectives are sometimes totally different.



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Question #2:

Teacher's Question:

What work have you done with elementary teachers to develop a curriculum for teaching holistic and humanizing Black history? What advice do you have for involving elementary teachers—the majority of white, middle-class women immersed in Eurocentric ways of knowing and being—in developing the dispositions needed for critical inquiry-based pedagogies in teaching history?

LaGarrett King's Response:

Most of the work done with elementary teachers is helping them gain Black history knowledge. Most elementary teachers I come in contact with struggle with basic history knowledge and have little understanding of Black people's role in history. A big challenge in teaching about the framework is helping them think through what is age appropriate. Being able to help them understand that Black history is not simply about oppression and liberation is a challenge. Most elementary teachers are attracted to the concepts of Black emotionality, especially Black joy. Black joy is an excellent way (not the only way) to introduce Black history.

As an academic community, we have chastised multicultural education's fun, food, festive, and fashion approach, which is a subset of historical joy. What I argue is that if taught appropriately, that approach is acceptable. The key is that elementary teachers need to provide context about why food, festivals, and fashion are essential to learning. Is having students eat soul food ok? The teachers should require students to understand why this food is considered a historic African American staple. In doing so, slavery, racism, food deserts will surface as a result. Is it ok to dance to R&B, hip-hop, jazz, blues, and funk? Yes, but what are the histories of these musical genres? Is it ok to bring/dress in what is considered traditional African attire? Yes, but what did the students learn about these African countries? See, teaching is both joy and history. It becomes problematic if, for Black History Month, the cafeteria says today is Soul food day without context. It becomes problematic when the wrong type of music is played in classrooms, and kids do not understand its significance. There are some no's to this, such as role-playing games based on oppression, Black face simply dressing like "Africans," or making a mockery out of Black history or culture.

Good resources would be a special issue in Social Studies and the Young learner. See Social Studies and the Young Learner January/February 2023 | Social Studies. The upcoming book by Dawnvyn James, beyond February: Teaching Black History, any day, every day, and all year long. Also, note Table: 2 for Elementary Black Historical Consciousness.

Question #3

Teacher's Question:

How do we combat standardization and standards that dehumanize Black and Brown people's voices and experiences that, in the process, promote teaching history in nice, neat unit packages? How can teachers be supported in being comfortable with the messy, compli-



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cated teaching and learning that is needed to understand and redefine the teaching and learning of Black history?

LaGarrett King's Response:

Comfort is the problem. Teaching history is not about comfort; it is about seeing ourselves, our identities, and our realities. We attempt to see into others' lives. As I mentioned above, teachers, especially those racialized as White, must reimagine and rethink their historical positioning to teach Black history effectively. This reconsideration requires a belief that 1. White persons are not the most historically important figures in World history; 2. Recognized Black humanity that not only centers their oppression; 3. Begin to think past traditional narratives and always ask if these narratives are teaching through or about Black history, and 4., and it might sound cliché, but do the work of learning Black histories that challenges how Blackness has traditionally been prescribed in school-based history. This will do wonders for the course that you are teaching.

Question #4

Teacher's Question:

You mention how Black students are often not interested in history courses. How could a U.S. History or World History teacher wish to engage their students better by incorporating the Black Historical Consciousness Approach or elements of it in their class? Or is the approach only intended for Black History Courses?

LaGarrett King's Response:

Be honest with students. So many Black students and all students are frustrated with history because it is stale, and they know that the history they learn is dishonest. They may not have a language, but they understand how the past is weaponized. Therefore, I am a proponent of what I call a Unit zero. This unit happens at the beginning of the school year, where relationships are built, and the history instructor is also teaching about the process of history. In other words, we are not interested in teaching any content in the first weeks, we are interested in speaking about concepts such as manufactured narratives, interpretations, what is truth, what is narratives, voices, and perspectives, and how history becomes history. A good book I reviewed with my teacher education students is *Silencing the Past* by Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Trouillot notes that a crucial understanding of the historical process is interrogating what happened versus what has been said to have occurred. Of course, that requires deep extractions of sources, both primary and secondary. Still, it provides interest to the learning process that hopefully resists how we attempt to influence students' thoughts. It allows them to understand that history is complex, people are complex, and those who promote history (whether professional or not) are storytellers with an agenda. Sometimes the agenda is purposeful and other times, it is innocuous. The point here is to focus on the process of history. That book might be too advanced for elementary and



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secondary students, but teachers can pull out the notes from the book to help teach.

Therefore, Black historical consciousness (BHC) can be used in all classes, even outside social studies education. The point of BHC is for teachers to understand perspectives and question whether this happened the way it was said to have happened.

Question #5

Teacher's Question:

Florida has recently blocked the A.P. African American Studies course and passed legislation restricting what can be taught in the classroom. Still, it is not the only jurisdiction impeding teachers who want to do this work. What advice would you give teachers, such as those in Florida, wishing to implement a Black Historical Consciousness Approach? To what extent do you think such teachers can push the limits when implementing this approach in their classroom without the risk of losing their job?

LaGarrett King's Response:

Do you know what is interesting? BHC is not that radical of a curricular or instructional approach. It is a concept based on teaching about humanity. I get the biggest pushback on Black historical contention in many ways because some people misunderstand the principle. This is an interesting question because I do not support anyone losing their job. So, I am not trying to be irresponsible and say go rogue, particularly at places that are so ready to punish. What I would say, however, is that the responsibility is on many of the educational stakeholders in those places, which means that there needs to be educated about what history is, what black history is, and why these components are essential for us to learn and share.

I will say we need strong administrators and school board members that support teachers' approaches to teaching. There needs to be checks and balances in places where one parent's complaint will not derail a teacher's attempt at teaching history. So, I support policies around the Black history curriculum that locate important concepts that explore Black people's whole selves, not some Whitewashed version of history. When you have those support systems in place, let's teach the full humanity of Black folks. Last, I will vote for persons wanting to restore history education in the classroom.

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