

Public History, Knowledge, and Representation of African American Figures in
North Carolina High School Education

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I. Introduction

In 2022, my senior year of high school, I discovered that my lab partner did not know who Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) was. I was astonished because I had been learning about the mother of the Underground Railroad since elementary school and was shocked to find that my partner had no recollection of one of America's most important historical figures. Appalled, I surveyed students in my genetics lab and discovered roughly half were not familiar with her or her contributions to American History. In a very informal manner, I asked random peers and friends about their familiarity with Tubman and found that roughly half of all students did not know who she was, and only half could describe her contribution to American History. As my questioning continued, I discovered that the students I questioned could recall a majority of historically impactful White figures, such as Thomas Edison or George Washington, but significantly less Black figures.

I am concerned that North Carolina high school history curriculum does not convey the significance of Black historical figures in American History. A rich and diverse understanding of all American History and its impactful figures fosters empathy, camaraderie, compassion, and understanding among people. By illuminating the narratives of African American historical figures, education can shed light on modern societal structure and provides representation to a population that has historically been oppressed. A holistic understanding of the contributions of figures from any race or ethnicity, as well as their contribution to history, is essential to fostering unity and understanding within Americans.

The purpose of this study is to address and identify the discrepancy in historical education in North Carolina surrounding important African American historical figures compared to their White counterparts. The purpose of this study is not to be accusatory or

confrontational, but rather to bring attention to issues that may not be recognized within the state education systems. In a state with 2.178 million African Americans, this study seeks to determine if there is a need to better educate and emphasize the importance of Black narratives within the shaping of the United States in North Carolina high school education.

This study combines quantitative survey results from college students with qualitative interviews and research with both public and private high school educators in North Carolina to better understand what discrepancies are evident in African American History education and to identify potential causes for these discrepancies. Important research I have undertaken includes information on state education standards, my survey methodology and results, the overarching themes that emerged from my interview responses, as well as research on relevant textbooks, and supplementary non-curricular sources and ideologies.

II. Literature Review

A. North Carolina Public High School US History Standards

North Carolina public school systems follow state standards for US History set by the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction. The curriculum applies to grade 9-12, and can be taught to students at any point during their high school career. It is meant to build upon Social Studies curriculum taught in years prior, specifically in the 4th, 5th, and 6th

grades. All North Carolina public schools, including Governor,¹ Charter,² and Magnet³ schools require compliance with this curriculum. The North Carolina State Board of Education defines the beginning of US History with the French Indian War in 1763 and continues through the most recent presidential campaign.⁴ State standards recommend, but do not require, providing context from before 1763, including colonial history, origins of slavery, indigenous cultures, and enlightenment thinking. The curriculum aims to create well-rounded, productive citizens with “both the knowledge and the skills to engage with the modern world...” by focusing on “inquiry, behavior sciences, civics and government, economics, geography, and history.”⁵

Representation of African American History is not directly mentioned in the standards, and no historical figure of any race, ethnicity, or nationality, mentioned by name. However, this public school curriculum lightly mentions racism, bias, slavery, racial minorities, and forced migration. This can be seen in standards that require students to analyze economics systems in terms of poverty, social mobility, and affluence, as well as to understand the influence of American expansion, settlement, and movement on national development.⁶ It is also present in evaluating the relationship between American citizens and their government over issues of

¹ A specialized public school where students are nominated or apply and selected from a competitive school of applicants. These schools focus on “gifted” students and provides more academically rigorous curriculum including college-level instruction.

² Tuition free-public school that is granted a financial charter that allows more flexibility in curriculum, staffing and operations, usually in STEM, arts, vocational training, or project-based learning and are often run by independent non-profit organizations.

³ Specialized public schools that attract students from across a school district, focusing on specific programs in diverse and innovative programs to prepare students for higher education or careers. Examples programs include International Baccalaureate (IB), dual language immersion, Montessori education, and specialized arts.

⁴ No specific date is giving for the most recent presidential campaign. It can be applied that this is a moving target that changes with each passing election.

⁵ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina Standards for American History*, NCDPI State Course Code – 4311, Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Instruction, 2021.

⁶ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina Standards for American History*, 2021, 6.

freedom, equality, and power, and in understanding changes in American values, perspectives, and identities through time.⁷

Students at North Carolina public schools are required to take and pass *American History I: The Founding Principles* to graduate under the Founding Principles Act (S: 2011-2073).⁸

These standards were developed in 2010 and approved with revisions in 2011 and are still followed today. Discussion of slavery is recommended as a “clarifying objective” four times, most frequently in relation to reconstruction and abolition. Historically significant White figures are mentioned by name, including Lewis and Clark,⁹ Andrew Jackson, and John Marshall,¹⁰ but no African American figures are included. The curriculum focuses heavily on founding documents, federalism, and “the establishment of political parties, America’s westward expansion, the growth of sectional conflict, how that sectional conflict led to the Civil War, and the consequences of the Civil War, including Reconstruction.”¹¹

Black History Month does not have a mandated state curriculum. It is under the discretion of the district and the educator to whether they chose to emphasize Black history in February, and to what depth of analysis. There is a variation in perspectives by advocacy groups surrounding education and Black History Month. Some advocate that highlighting specific leaders and events trivializes and marginalizes race, and should be instead included in year-round curriculum,¹² while others see it as an opportunity to “dig deeper” into historical figures, movements, and discussions that may otherwise be lost in the curriculum.

⁷ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina Standards for American History*, 2021, 3-4.

⁸ No mention is made if students must also pass American History II, although they are required to take it.

⁹ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina Essential Standards*, NCDPI, Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Instruction, 2011.

¹⁰ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina Essential Standards*, 2011, 7.

¹¹ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina Essential Standards*, 2011, 10.

¹² Southern Poverty Law Center, “Do’s and Don’ts of Teaching Black History,” *Learning for Justice*, 2014.

B. North Carolina Private High School and National High School Standards

North Carolina private high schools are not required to follow public curriculum standards, and they can complete any curriculum they desire. However, for students to be qualified as North Carolina high school graduates, the school must achieve a minimum score on a nationally administered standardized test.¹³ In lower K-8 grade levels, students must maintain “achievement in the areas of English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics and competencies in the verbal and quantitative areas.”¹⁴ History curriculum is not a required test measure for these grade levels, and is not required by private school curriculum unless determined by the district.

There is no mandated national standard on teaching American History, as states are allowed to decide their educational curriculum themselves. However, in 1996 the Federal Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funded the National Center for History in Schools and the National Council for History Standards to develop a high school American and World History curriculum. American History standards under this curriculum include dividing US history into ten eras, beginning in 1620 through 1969/present.¹⁵ North Carolina does not follow this curriculum.

¹³ It is at the school’s discretion to choose which test it would like to enroll its students in.

¹⁴ North Carolina Department of Administration, “Private School Grade K-12 School Requirements,” 2021.

¹⁵ National Center for History in the Schools, “United States History Content Standards,” *UCLA Phi History*, 2025. - educators should seek to cover content up until the present but can stop at 1969 if time does not permit further instruction.

III. Methodology

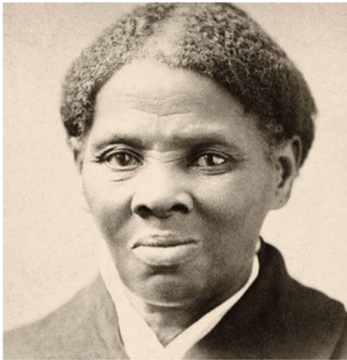
A. Quantitative Survey

This research was conducted to fulfill the East Carolina Honors College Signature Honors Project. It began in December 2024, and continued through December 2025, spanning two semesters and a summer. The survey was developed in the Spring semester of 2025, and distributed both that semester and the following, Fall of 2025. The survey was pushed out to students through the Honors College chain email, reaching over 800 students, as well on social media platforms including Instagram and Facebook, of which 217 responded.

The primary quantitative research conducted for this project consisted of a brief, online survey of 23 questions. The survey was produced through Qualtrics, and data was collected and stored through encrypted ECU servers. Students received a link either through email to their student accounts or through social media and were taken to the survey. The first four questions included demographics, to control for age, college major/s, city and state of high school education, type of high school attended, and racial identification.¹⁶

¹⁶ Participants could also choose not to identify or could select “other” and specify mixed race.

How familiar are you with Harriet Tubman?



Completely unfamiliar		Slightly familiar		Moderately familiar		Very familiar		Extremely familiar	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Familiarity Scale



The subsequent 18 questions asked respondents to rate their familiarity with a historical figure, asking them to move a scale from 1-10, with 1 being “completely unfamiliar” and 10 being “extremely familiar.” The figures included in the survey were American historical figures who might be taught in national American History curriculum; 9 are Black and 9 are White, and the order of individuals was random. Each figure had a racial counterpart, categorized by their influence on American History, with some miscellaneous figures deemed essential under the discretion of me or my faculty advisors. As of October 2025, the survey had received 217 responses, and had been completed by a mix of adults, the majority of which were East Carolina University Honors College students.

ROLE	BLACK	WHITE
MUSICIAN	Louis Armstrong	Elvis Presley
INVENTOR	C.J. Walker	Thomas Edison
SCIENTIST	George Washington Carver	Albert Einstein
POLITICIAN	Thurgood Marshall	George Washington
ATHLETE	Jackie Robinson	Babe Ruth
POLITICAL ADVOCATE	Fredrick Douglas	Susan B. Anthony
POET	Langston Hughes	Edgar Allen Poe
MISCELLANEOUS	Harriet Tubman	Neil Armstrong
	Malcolm X	Marie Curie

B. Qualitative Oral Interviews

Oral, online interviews were conducted with five high school U.S. History educators, two from a public school and two from a private school in North Carolina. Each educator volunteered to be interviewed after being asked by either myself or through my faculty advisor if they had any interest in the project. Interviews lasted around an hour and consisted of a structured, but open discussion and dialogue. Questions were composed prior to the interview and followed a relatively loose structure that allowed for further inquiry or clarification. Each interview began with an overview of the project and discussion of confidentiality. Each educator decided on a pseudonym for themselves: Mr. Spiderman, Mrs. Boleyn, Mrs. Washington, and Mr. Colpepper. The educators then answered questions relating to their familiarity with and opinion of district and state standards, their personal teaching methods, their training as an educator, and their personal opinions relating to curriculum, student experiences, and reflections

on African American History. Oral interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams using an encrypted East Carolina University Microsoft account, and transcripts were collected and saved to this account. The transcripts were then deleted following the completion of the project.¹⁷

Of the four teachers interviewed, Mr. Spiderman and Ms. Washington taught at religious and non-religious private schools respectively, and Ms. Boleyn and Mr. Colpepper taught at public schools. Mr. Spiderman and Ms. Washington were educators in Pitt County in the eastern part of North Carolina, while Ms. Boleyn taught in Guilford County in the center of the state, and Mr. Colpepper taught in Henderson County in the west. Mr. Colpepper teaches at an alternative school with an emphasis on trade and technical education. Time spent in education ranged anywhere from 2-15 years, and across a variety of disciplines, however, only American History was the subject matter of discussion. Each educator currently teaches at least 1 section of American History presently.

C. Potential Methodological Flaws

Potential flaws when considering the composition of this research project and methodology are largely confined to the range of individuals surveyed. The primary student population that completed the survey were members of the East Carolina Honors College, which is a limited sample that does not properly represent the student population of East Carolina University as a whole, nor the primary knowledge of the “average” North Carolina college student. For the sake of time and efficiency, I used the Honors College as it was the most accessible means of reaching a large population in the shortest amount of time, via their internal

¹⁷ In accordance with IRB requirements, IRB number UMCIRB 25-000214.

email listserv.¹⁸ Although East Carolina University's Honors College no longer provides a racial demographic review, it is observably predominantly White. Of ECU's total student body, 37% identify as a person of color. As of Fall 2025, 93.15% (816) of students are in-state, and 6.85% (60) are out-of-state. Were a study such as this to be replicated, I would suggest polling an entire college campus, or multiple campuses, rather than focusing on a specific subgroup of students.

Although this research focuses primarily on overall recognition of historical figures, if one is interested in researching correlations, such as White respondents' familiarity with White figures vs Black, or vice versa, it would be better to focus on polling more diverse populations; my narrow pool of outreach meant that my demographics were not as diverse as hoped, making it more difficult to draw significant conclusions outside the primary goal of the research.

Another area of suggestion would be to not use a sliding scale as a tool of measurement. The system did not always pick up on the student's response when they selected either of the extremes,¹⁹ which would require manual observation and modification of the data. In a future iteration, I would suggest having the students select or type in a value to make computing results more concise and time efficient.

IV. Results

A. Quantitative Results: Student Survey

¹⁸ Listservs are a compiled group of emails that include all members of a group. As an honors student myself, I have access to this Listserv for research-based purposes under the approval of the Honors College Dean.

¹⁹ Value 1 or Value 10

As hypothesized, there was an observable difference between student recognition of White figures versus student recognition of Black figures. The average combined score of the 9 Black figures was 5.7, while the average combined score of the 9 White figures was 7.5. The average difference was -1.8.²⁰ The most identified Black historical figure was Harriet Tubman, with an average score of 7.8, while the highest scoring White figure was President George Washington with an average score 9.3, with a value difference of 1.5. The lowest ranking Black figure was Madame C.J. Walker²¹ at 3.1, while the lowest ranking White figure was Marie Curie at 5.6, with a value difference of 2.5. The four figures that received an average score of 5 or below were Black historical figures,²² while the four figures that received an average score of 8 or higher were White historical figures²³, all of whom related to different disciplines and historical decades.²⁴

The average score for students who had attended high school in North Carolina for Black historical figures was 5.72, while the average score from those who came from out-of-state high schools was a 5.23. The difference in average values, 0.49, suggests that this disparity in African American U.S. History knowledge is not just a North Carolina issue, but rather a nationwide one.²⁵ Similarly, the average score for students who attended high school in urban/suburban North Carolina was 5.09, while the average score from those who came from rural high schools was 5.78. The difference in average values was 0.69, a similarly small variation as compared to

²⁰ The combined 9 Black figures scored 1.8 points lower on the familiarity score than the combined 9 White figures

²¹ The first female and Black millionaire in American History.

²² Lowest to highest: Madame C.J. Walker, Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, George Washington Carver.

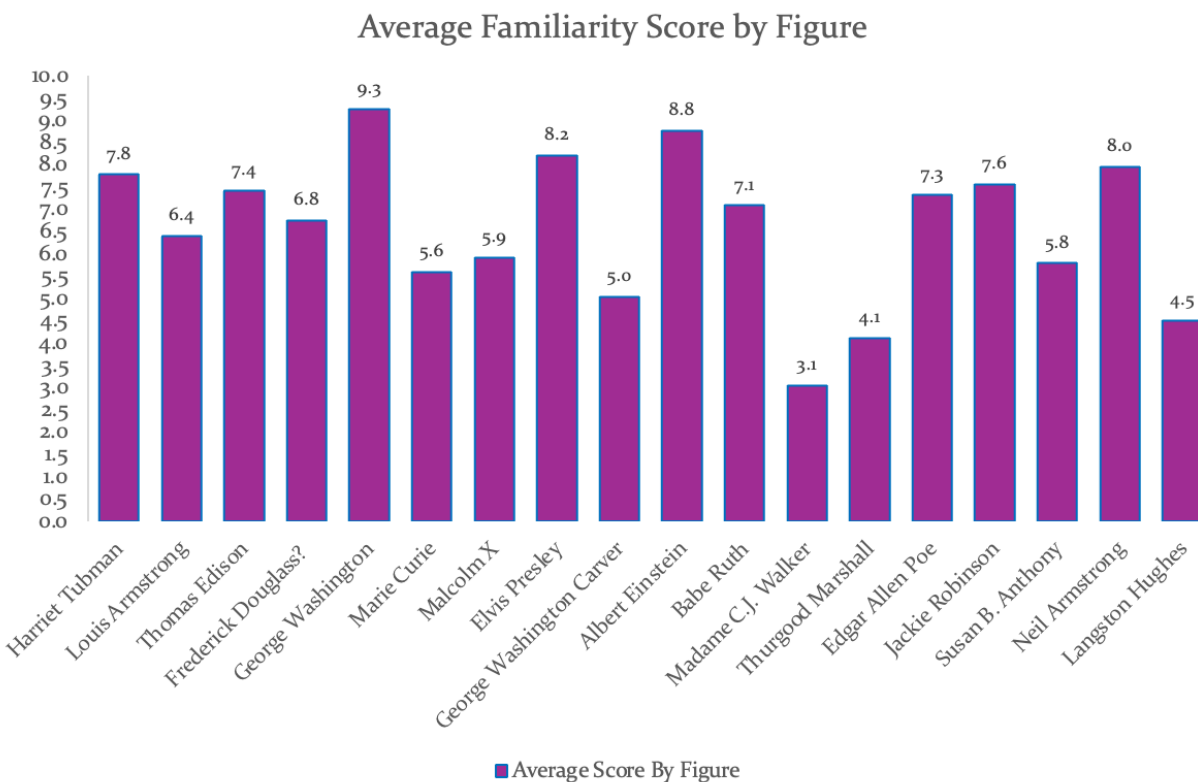
²³ Lowest to highest: Neil Armstrong, Elvis Presley, Albert Einstein, George Washington

²⁴ This did not correlate with specific periods, types of achievements, or other obvious patterns.

²⁵ Of the recorded responses, 147 students were in-state, 30 were out of state, and 12 did not answer (not included in the data)

in versus out of state students and suggests that the educational disparity surrounding African American historical figures is not a regional one either.²⁶

It is important to note that the average score for all historical figures listed was 6.59, meaning students ranked their knowledge of historical figures moderately familiar, implying they recognize the name and/or image of the historical figure, but cannot confidently describe their contribution to American History. There is a clear disparity in students' knowledge of African American historical figures, but there is also a clear disparity in student's knowledge of American historical figures in general.



²⁶ Urban/Suburban cities were determined by a population of _____. 70 respondents were considered urban, 74 were considered rural, and 3 did not answer (not included in the data).

B. Qualitative Results: Themes Emerging from Teacher Interviews

The qualitative portion of my research aimed to understand and explain potential trends in the data gathered from students by speaking to a sample of educators themselves. Although each discussion had unique contributions and experiences, four major trends emerged. They were time, teaching tools, personal teaching style and student engagement, and the current political climate.

1. Time

One of the most difficult aspects of teaching U.S. History in North Carolina schools is the amount of time educators have available to them cover their course curriculum. North Carolina public schools are required to cover all American History starting in 1776 until modern day²⁷ within one academic semester, or around 70 days in the fall and 80 days in the spring. This is a daunting task for public school teachers because it provides little to no wiggle room to explore themes, events, and individuals in depth, especially stories of African American figures. In 2022, North Carolina cut American History from a two-semester course to a one semester course to make room for Civic Literacy and Economics and Personal Finance.²⁸ Nearly every response given by public school educators, including inquiries into whether specific events such as the Harlem Renaissance are taught to students, was met with the response, “We used to, when I had time.”

Public school educators find themselves rushing through content or neglecting African American historical figures and events for the sake of making it through content. They do their

²⁷ Most educators reference the Obama administration as present day.

²⁸ Ms. Boleyn

best to integrate the history into lessons as they go; “if I can find a way to fit in other people, I will... but even then, we can’t go in-depth.”²⁹ Mr. Colpepper explained that “the history that seems to get neglected a lot is anything to do, anything that's not, considered a big rock... And I'm speaking from like an African American History perspective here will be stuff like Nat Turner's rebellion.” Other listed events and historical figures include the trans-Atlantic passage, the slave trade, African Americans in the colonies, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Ida B Wells, and Harriet Tubman. In reference to Tubman, “I kind of just touch on her in relation to her ability to free slaves, but not necessarily her legacy. And that's something that I want to do a better job at.”³⁰

Whether or not an educator makes it through the curriculum is determined by how much time they are willing to dedicate to specific details and depth. Many cannot make it past the Vietnam war, and even then, they often feel they’ve made sacrifices to student learning; “we spend a lot of our time focused on the victimhood [of enslaved people] and how they’ve been failed, which important for understanding modern day, but as a result, I don’t think we focus enough on the success [of African Americans].”³¹

Private school teachers have more flexibility, as they make their own curriculum and do not have to follow state standards. Both Mr. Spiderman and Ms. Washington take two semesters to teach their American History curriculum, which provides them with more time. However, it is still up to them to determine how in-depth and what curriculum that want to cover. Similarly to the public-school educators, they work to integrate African American History into their

²⁹ Ms. Boelyn

³⁰ Mr. Colpepper

³¹ Ms. Washington

curriculum, touching on individual figures as they go and exploring more in-depth themes as they arise. Mr. Spiderman emphasized the big picture rather than specific events and figures and uses them as support for important themes rather than independent lectures. Having the freedom to spend two semesters on U.S. History does not mean that all schools do, however. Mrs. Washington detailed a 6-week period at her school where students work on an alternative project, “History Day,” relating to any history period or problem students hope to explore and then participate in History Day competitions across the state.³² As a result, students in the general American History class taught by Ms. Washington do not study events beyond WWII. Time is less of an inhibitor in private schools but still works as a factor in determining how much and what curriculum is covered.

2. Teaching Tools

The use of teaching tools and materials was another source of discussion among all four educators. The overall theme was that school textbooks are used sparingly and as a contributor rather than a defining feature. As Mr. Spiderman put it, “basically they give us the textbook and we follow the framework, but I don’t always follow the framework.” Most educators feel they have more personal knowledge and background of American History beyond what is discussed in the books or taught to them during their educational training. They use outside, online sources to find resources that reinforces their lecture lessons that may be missing from the text, with an emphasis on primary sources, including from online sites like JSTOR, Stanford History

³² This is a North Carolina history event called “National History Day”. Students at this school do not have to do a project in U.S. History, meaning they have the flexibility to study a world history project for 6 weeks during an American History class.

Education Group, the 1619 Project, PBS Learning, Educating for American Democracy, Facing History and Ourselves, and generic google searches.

The more pressing issue emphasized with respect to textbooks, however, is the quality. Mr. Colpepper, the educator of the group who used his district's textbook the most, felt that "while it does elevate a lot of more diverse voices, which I think is a good thing, I think it also downplays the like atrocities that took place. Like for example, it says almost nothing about the Wilmington riots and massacre. It's a Whitewashed sort of memory." Mr. Spiderman made a similar observation, noting that older editions of his school's Bob Jones University textbooks held more "old-fashioned" views of African American History, including soft undertones of victim-blaming and revisionist historical framing of experiences. This tendency has waned with the most recent edition, which was published in 2025. Many schools don't have up-to-date textbooks and districts cannot afford to purchase new editions with each passing school year. Ms. Boleyn's classroom textbooks, for example, are beaten and worn, do not include 9/11, and still list George H.W. Bush as president.

3. Personal Teaching Style and Student Engagement

All four educators choose to integrate African American History into their curriculum rather than teach figures, events, and themes independently (for example, only during Black History month). Most reference to Black history is in the context of slavery, racism, and Jim Crow oppression, and is taught in parallel to other historical lessons, reminding students that two realities coexisted. Black History Month is not highlighted, as all four educators felt it was unnecessary due to their integrative teach styles but still choose to periodically lecture on stand-out topics. Ms. Washington, for example, takes a day to teach about music development during slavery, the Harlem Renaissance, and Marcus Garvey and the Black Nationalism movement.

However, which event or historical figures chosen to highlight is mostly left up to the educator to decide upon and often comes down to what they personally find interesting or worth discussing. Mr. Colpepper accredits this trend to the lack of state testing for American History, a recent change in the last decade. He explains that the lack of incentive or consequence for educators to ensure students to know certain historical events, figures, and themes, results in greater variation in what topics are discussed and their depth.

It was the general opinion of the educators interviewed that the area most lacking in depth was Colonial America (1493-1776) and Reconstruction (1865-1877). Despite state standards defining the beginning of American History as 1776 with the signing of the Declaration of Independence, most educators both in private and public schools spend a couple days discussing the middle passage, colonial life, imperialism, and context for the founding of the United States. Mr. Spiderman emphasized that American History is difficult to conceptualize for students without discussing the colonial roots, ideologies, and experiences that would guide the nation. Similarly, “Reconstruction is so criminally under-taught. It gets glossed over so quickly like, ‘ok, well the Civil War happened and then we did reconstruction and then it was over and now it’s the Gilded Age and everything sucks.’”³³ To combat this, Reconstruction is often taught separately from the Gilded Age, despite their parallels in history. Emphasis is placed on progressive developments and setbacks, legal and constitutional developments through court cases, and impacts on cultural and lived experiences in a discriminatory system.³⁴

³³ Ms. Boleyn.

³⁴ As someone who received her K-12 education in Wisconsin, part of me wonders if the emphasis placed on reconstruction by these educators is impart due to being Southerners themselves. Does the history feel more relevant and important because of North Carolina’s history as a confederate, reconstructed state? Or is it simply undervalued in American History as a whole?

Another predominant theme is the lack of formal training surrounding how to teach African American History. No educator interviewed could recount a specific lesson or training they received either in their undergraduate degrees, their time as a student teacher, or during a fellowship. Some had attended conferences and district trainings on sensitivity to African American students, but their overall value was considered relatively marginal in terms of applying this kind of workshop to the classroom. Most educators I interviewed found the most value in learning from either their Black peers, or Black students themselves; “a workplace training isn’t going to be the thing that does it... I think engaging with your Black students and letting them just be themselves for a little bit is so much more beneficial [to efficiently teaching African American History].”³⁵ Mr. Spiderman cited learning a lot about African American History through his research in both undergraduate and graduate school and speaking with members of the Black community himself. Black students tend to be more aware of African American History and are sometimes seen as valuable sources in the classroom. When discussing difficult conversations of racial discrimination, Mr. Spiderman explained, “I kept looking and I was like, I was looking at him [an African American student in the class] off and on like, am I doing this right? I want to make sure I do this right. I want to make sure of that.” Mr. Spiderman was not alone in this action; other educators reinforced the need to sometimes defer to their students to ensure accuracy and social sensitivity.

4. Political Climate

A recurring concern among all the educators I interviewed is hesitation and apprehension to discuss more controversial areas of American History. The most concerning to them were

³⁵ Ms. Boleyn.

discussions of Reconstruction and the Civil War. According to these educators, Lost Cause ideologies³⁶ are still reflected in the beliefs of many Southern White households and teachers' fears of student and parental retaliation can cause them to tread lightly when teaching the central motivating feature of the Civil War, which is accepted by historians to be debate over the persistence of slavery. This makes it more difficult for educators to speak freely about the historical events, figures, and experiences of the time because "...that racism and thought process is so deeply backed into certain aspects of life, especially in the South."³⁷

It is not uncommon for educators to receive comments and questions from White students questioning the value of discussing African American History in class because they do not feel it is relevant to them and their experiences. "They're [White students] like, oh, why? Why are we talking about this? Why does this matter? What is it? What does it mean? What does it matter to me?"³⁸ When this disinterest is paired with the rhetoric of Lost Cause ideologies, it can sometimes make for a hostile environment. Ms. Washington explained that students are more likely to "rage-bait" her and ask racist or ignorant questions to get a reaction out of her and recounted instances of students using the n-word, a racial slur for African Americans, during lessons that pertain to Black history. All four educators cited the modern political climate and presidential administration as the reason behind this increased student hostility; "it can get spicy and, with teaching high school kids, they are very opinionated."³⁹ Parents have been known to lash out at these educators for expressing histories that they disagree with, but subjects that provoke these reactions are not limited to African American History. Both Ms. Washington and

³⁶ Discussed in Controversial Non-Curricular Resources and Ideologies; see below.

³⁷ Ms. Boleyn.

³⁸ Mr. Spiderman.

³⁹ Ms. Boleyn.

Ms. Boleyn have experienced heightened tensions when discussing presidential elections, and the latter was even called a “leftist b*****” by a parent when discussing the results of the 2020 presidential election. This fear of retaliation has created a more anxious teaching environment for educators.

When dealing with these confrontational students, educators take a variety of different approaches. Mr. Spiderman, a private school teacher at a religious school, emphasizes that under God’s eye, all people are loved no matter their skin tone. Other teachers, like Ms. Washington, are more likely to shut problematic conversations down quickly, unless they are based in unintentional ignorance. Mr. Colpepper and Ms. Boleyn are supporters of talking out the expressed ideologies to encourage the students to draw their own conclusions through reasoning and logic. Hesitation to teach African American History topics also stems from concerns about how Black students will receive and interpret the lesson. Fears of offending students can make teaching African American History and Reconstruction in particular feel like daunting tasks. While conducting his undergraduate research, Mr. Spiderman “literally had people come up to me and say, you know, what right do you have? To tell me my history and that?”, which has made him more cautious in his approach. To avoid confrontation from parents and administrators, Mr. Colpepper explained there’s an expectation to never teach something not linked to the standards. If anyone is offended or bothered by the content, for career safety, educators can always reference back to the standards in their defense if questioned. In his words, “as long as you’re not causing your school to get on the news, you’ll be ok.”

V. Textbooks as Teaching Tools

A. Contextual Introduction

American History textbooks, historically, have been focused primarily on the contributions of White men to nation building, cultural development, and social movements, with limited celebration or appreciation for women, immigrants, people of color, and other minority populations.⁴⁰ This is the case despite national and state standards from around the early 2000s, “presented national development as the progressive unfolding of democratic policies, with notable exceptions related to a few incidents in the nation’s treatment of people of color; presented people of color sporadically, oftentimes comparing their experiences with those of European immigrants, and minimized and distorted the nation’s legacy of violence and oppression of people of color.”⁴¹ Of North Carolina state standard textbooks, it was estimated in 2008 that 77% of all important figures listed by name who attributed to nation development⁴² in the United States were White men, while 18% were African American; the remaining 5% was composed of Native American, Latino, and Asian figures.⁴³

Textbooks and other teaching tools are important, since they represent a key way student encounter the stories of people who lived in the past. There is a direct correlation between reading and learning about diverse experiences through literature, and the development of empathy. The development of empathy during adolescence is one of the most important elements of a student’s education, as it fosters “social understanding, emotional competence, prosocial and moral behavior, compassion and caring, and regulation of aggression and other anti-social

⁴⁰ Terrie Epstein, *Interpreting National History: Race, Identity, and Pedagogy in Classrooms and Communities*, New York: Routledge, 2008.

⁴¹ Epstein, *Interpreting National History*, 7.

⁴² Includes political, social, scientific, and cultural developments

⁴³ Epstein, *Interpreting National History*, 8.

behaviors.”⁴⁴ These skills, learned within the classroom and at home, are valuable to everyday interactions, future careers, and the personal lives of students; diverse education of historical figures across multiple racial groups encourages empathy, compassion, and camaraderie across students of all ethnic identification.⁴⁵

American History textbooks serve as a guide to educators, and a resource for primary sources; for many districts, they are the required reading for students and serve as a major source of information. Public districts themselves are responsible for the selection of textbook, the maintenance of most recent editions, and supplying them to students.⁴⁶ Districts must choose from a list of state-approved textbooks by the NC Textbook Commission, of which consists almost exclusively of texts written by *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* for grades 9-12 American History classes.⁴⁷ Private schools have no restrictions on the books they choose to implement. Many teachers, however, supplement their textbooks with online sources that provide primary documents, lesson plans, and academic articles including Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), JSTOR, and the Smithsonian Learning Lab. It is also worth noting some educators in North Carolina rely heavily on their textbooks, while others barely use or reference them.

B. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Textbook

Although this textbook was not used or referenced by the educators interviewed for this research, it serves as an example of North Carolina state-endorsed text that frequents many public schools. The 2018 Houghton Mifflin Harcourt American History textbook consists of

⁴⁴ Norma Deitch Feshbach, and Seymour Feshbach, 'Empathy and Education', *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, 2009 & 2013. 89.

⁴⁵ Mayowa Alonge, “*The Role of Multicultural Children’s Books in Fostering Empathy and Understanding Across Diverse Cultures*,” HAL Preprint, 2019.

⁴⁶ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *North Carolina State Adopted Textbooks*, NCDPI. 2022.

⁴⁷ State Board of Education Department of Instruction, *2022 NC Social Studies Textbook Adoption School Price List*, 31-32.

twenty-eight modules, starting with Module 1, “American Beginnings.”⁴⁸ Of the twenty-eight modules, the first ten discuss events, figures, and experiences of the 19th century, and the first six focus on nation building.⁴⁹ The text concludes during the Obama presidency in 2016, with discussions of challenges Americans face today in education, politics, foreign affairs, and social rights.⁵⁰ A brief overview of the 1328-page textbook suggests that the text seeks to integrate African American History, events, and figures throughout the chapters, with an exception being made for Module 17, Lesson 6 (Harlem Renaissance)⁵¹ and Module 24 (Civil Rights),⁵² which focus primarily on African American History, cultural influence, and its impact on American development. African American figures including Crispus Attucks,⁵³ Ida B. Wells,⁵⁴ Gordon Parks,⁵⁵ Jackie Robinson,⁵⁶ Thurgood Marshall,⁵⁷ Alice Walker,⁵⁸ and Jo Ann Gibson Robinson⁵⁹ are highlighted in chapter profiles called “One American’s Story,” while figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks are integrated into the content of the chapter. Many of the modules focus on American politics, policy, and ideology, including specific presidents and their foreign affairs, expansionism, imperialism, industrialization, progressivism, and conservatism, as well as highlighting landmark events such as WWI, the Great Depression, WWII, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War.

⁴⁸ Jose Colon et al., *American History* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2018), 2-185.

⁴⁹ American Beginnings (Module 1), The American Colonies (Module 2), The American Revolution (Module 3), The U.S. Constitution (Module 4), A New Nation (Module 5), Nationalism and Sectionalism (Module 6). Colon et al, *American History*, 2-272.

⁵⁰ Colon et al, *American History*, 1270-1328.

⁵¹ Colon et al, *American History*, 740-748.

⁵² Colon et al, *American History*, 1054-1116.

⁵³ Colon et al, *American History*, 103.

⁵⁴ Colon et al, *American History*, 582.

⁵⁵ Colon et al, *American History*, 752.

⁵⁶ Colon et al, *American History*, 980.

⁵⁷ Colon et al, *American History*, 1059.

⁵⁸ Colon et al, *American History*, 1078.

⁵⁹ Colon et al, *American History*, 1056.

C. Advanced Placement (AP) Textbook AMSCO

This textbook is a relevant example of a national standard for advanced American History curriculum and was mentioned as a tool in interviews with educators, including Ms. Washington who currently teaches the course. Around 80% of public high schools in the US offer students at least five Advanced Placement (AP) courses,⁶⁰ which allows students to receive college credit for a course if they score a 3, 4, or 5.⁶¹ The curriculum is considered more vigorous and advanced, and the textbook is reflective of this. The textbook contains nine units, each with as many as fifteen sub-units and 35-40 question unit exam pair with two short answer questions and one free response essay at the end of each unit.⁶² The textbook starts in 1491 with “Native American Societies before European Contact”⁶³ and concludes with “Challenges of the 21st Century”⁶⁴ or present day, spanning nearly seven centuries. Of the nine modules, the first seven revolve around events, ideologies, historical figures, and primary sources prior to the 19th century, and require an estimated 91 days of instruction.⁶⁵ A brief overview of the 867 page textbook suggests that African American History is dutifully integrated throughout the text; there is heavy discussion of African American figures, events, and texts referenced in relation to slavery, reconstruction, the Civil War, cultural revolutions, White supremacy, the Civil Rights movement, and race riots. African American historical figures are mentioned in significant numbers and sections that I was not capable of quantifying, but many presentations lack depth in explaining their contribution,

⁶⁰ College Board. “AP National and State Data — Fair Access to Advanced Placement.” AP Central. 2023.

⁶¹ This is on a 1-5 scale. Anything below a 3 is considered non-transferable to an accredited U.S. university. Some schools are more selective and may only allow a 4 or 5 to apply as credit.

⁶² College Board, *AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description, Effective Fall 2023*, The College Board, 2023, 25-26.

⁶³ John J. Newman and John M. Schmalbach. *AMSCO Advanced Placement United States History*, 4th ed., 2020, 3-6.

⁶⁴ Newman and Schmalbach, *Amsco*, 726-742.

⁶⁵ College Board, *AP US History Course*, 25-27.

only consisting of a few sentences each. The following is the only excerpt that details Harriet Tubman's contribution to Underground Railroad:

The most famous conductor was Harriet Tubman, a woman who had escaped slavery. She made at least 19 trips into the South to help some 300 people escape. Free Black citizens in the North and abolitionists also organized vigilance committees to protect fugitive slaves from the slave catchers. During the Civil War, African American leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth worked for emancipation and supported Black soldiers.⁶⁶

This textbook relies heavily on primary sources and analysis of documents, letters, legislation, newspaper articles, maps, propaganda, and cartoons. In Unit 4 Section 12, titled "African Americans in the Early Republic," students are required to read a passage from Sojourner Truth's speech to a Women's Convention in 1851 and answer multiple choice questions.⁶⁷ The textbook seeks to teach history through themes, primary sources, and "big picture" take aways rather than specific details.

VI. Controversial Non-Curricular Resources and Ideologies

The following resources were introduced by the interviewed educators as resources and ideologies they have used or encounter while teaching African American subjects. The *1619 Project* is a curriculum resource that provides lesson plans that has been controversial in recent media, while the Lost Cause ideologies is a decades old political, cultural, and ideological approach to framing the Civil War and Reconstruction, and by extension how African American History should be taught in schools.

⁶⁶ Newman and Schmalbach, *Amsco*, 285-286.

⁶⁷ Newman and Schmalbach, *Amsco*, 245.

A. 1619 Project

Launched in 2019, the *1619 Project* seeks to “illuminate the legacy of slavery in the contemporary United states and highlights the contributions of Black Americans to every aspect of American society.”⁶⁸ It serves as an online educational website and tool for educators to find new resources including essays, creative works, anthologies, articles, children’s books, and podcasts. The *1619 Project* proposes that the origins of the United States should not be seen as following the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, but rather with the passage of the first slave ship to Virginia colony in 1619. It accredits that “out of slavery — and the anti-Black racism it required — grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional,” including the nation’s economic strength and industry, culture, health, education, inequality, legal system, hate, and global standing.⁶⁹ The *1619 Project* offers free access to educational curricula for k-12 educators to use in partnership with their schools’ curriculum,⁷⁰ and offers a monthly newsletter subscription as a guide to new resources as they are added to the website.

Supporting curriculum includes units such as “Decolonizing Your Diet,”⁷¹ which allows students to explore world culture through ingredients and food brought to the U.S. during periods of slavery, colonization and migration. Exploring further, the site provides the scope and sequence of the lesson, skills learned, objectives, and performance tasks, as well as a unit overview, facilitation resources, standards, and an example of student work. Another project, “The African Diaspora and the Development of American Culture”⁷² allows students to analyze

⁶⁸ “The 1619 Project: Education Materials Collection, accessed December 9, 2025, <https://1619education.org>.

⁶⁹ Nikole Hannah-Jones, et al. *The 1619 Project: Full Issue of The New York Times Magazine*. New York Times, 2019, 4.

⁷⁰ All resources are digital web links.

⁷¹ “The 1619 Project”, <https://1619education.org/builder/lesson/decolonizing-your-diet>.

⁷² “The 1619 Project”, <https://1619education.org/builder/lesson/african-diaspora-and-development-american-culture>

the diffusion and change of cultural traits with a focus on the impact of African culture on the US through a photo project. This project includes a week-by-week lesson plan breakdown and assessment evaluation as well as the standard elements.⁷³ The *1619 Project* has been highly controversial, however, as some view it as a negative and inaccurate portrayal of American History that downplays the United States' founding principles of democracy; some argue that its major claim, that the United States was founded to protect slavery and that this was a driving motivation in the Revolutionary War, is blatantly false.⁷⁴ This controversy and the fear that history educators would teach children to "hate their own country,"⁷⁵ led to many politicians including President Donald J. Trump, to call for a total ban of *The 1619 Project* and its resources on a state and federal level.⁷⁶ It is unclear what such a ban would look like, but no state or federal action has been taken since his statement in 2020.

B. Lost Cause Ideologies

While "Lost Cause" ideologies refers to a loose collection of related ideas around the nobleness of the Confederate stance during the Civil War and the tragedy of the loss of Southern autonomy, these ideas become relevant to K-12 education following the Civil War, with the expansion of public, state education systems. Former Confederate states adopted statewide policies for textbook adoption, which allowed them to control textbook content through demands or threats of contract cancellations unless publishers agreed to state board terms. The content they worked to change included advocating heroic, sympathetic views of the Confederacy,

⁷³ Eagles Brooks, and the 2022 Cohort of the *1619 Project Education Network*. "*The African Diaspora and the Development of American Culture*." The 1619 Project Education Network. Lesson Plan, 2023.

⁷⁴ Leslie M. Harris, "I Helped Fact-Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me," *Politico Magazine*, 2020.

⁷⁵ In Sarah Schwartz, "Lawmakers Push to Ban '1619 Project' From Schools," *Education Week*, 2021, quote from Senator Tom Cotton (R-AK).

⁷⁶ Sarah Schwartz, "Lawmakers Push to Ban..." *Education Week*, 2021. No state or federal government has banned the *1619 Project* as of November 2025.

“ignore[ing] the experiences of the enslaved and glorify[ing] the actions of Confederate leaders.”⁷⁷ This mindset of teaching American History was not temporary, and spanned decades, from the 1870s to the 1950s, with organized groups including the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Confederate Veterans as significant promoters.⁷⁸ North Carolina has a long history of endorsing Lost Cause textbooks and banning books that did not, and the required statewide adoption policy for textbooks applied in the 19th century is still used today.⁷⁹

Textbooks endorsing Lost Cause interpretations consistently contained six assertions:⁸⁰

- 1) Secession was in response to the tyrannical federal government that sought to limit state rights, not because of slavery.
- 2) African Americans were happy, “faithful slaves” who were loyal to their masters, the confederate cause, and the lifestyle, and were unprepared for the responsibilities of freedom.⁸¹
- 3) The Confederacy fell to the Union militarily only because of the Union’s overwhelming advantages in men and resources.
- 4) All confederate soldiers were heroic and saintly.
- 5) General Robert E. Lee and President Jefferson Davis were the most heroic and saintly of all confederates.⁸²

⁷⁷ Jennifer Rainey Marquez, “Rewriting History: How the South Won the Textbook War,” *Georgia State University Research Magazine*, 2021.

⁷⁸ Greg Huffman, “Twisted Sources: How Confederate propaganda ended up in the South’s schoolbooks,” *Facing South*, April 10, 2020.

⁷⁹ Huffman, “Twisted Sources,” *Facing South*, 2020.

⁸⁰ Caroline E. Janney, “The Lost Cause,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Humanities, December 7, 2020.

⁸¹ Enslaved people were often not referred to as “slaves” in these texts, but rather as indentured servants.

⁸² Some North Carolina textbooks during the early 20th century required Lee and Jefferson be mentioned the same number of times as President Abraham Lincoln and General Ulysses S. Grant. Huffman, “Twisted Sources,” *Facing South*, 2020.

- 6) Southern women were loyal to the Confederate cause and nobly sacrificed their loved ones.

One textbook titled the *Cavalier Commonwealth* commissioned and authorized by Virginia History and Textbook Commission in 1957 said, “...slaves did not work so hard as the average free laborer, since he did not have to worry about losing his job. In fact, the slave enjoyed what we might call comprehensive social security. Generally speaking, his food was plentiful, his clothing adequate, his cabin warm, his health protected and his leisure carefree.”⁸³ This textbook wasn’t removed from Virginia classroom recommendations until the 1970s.

Lost Cause ideologies began to wane following the Civil Rights Movement and progressive social movements, but gained a resurgence in the early 21st century, including in 2010 when the Texas Board of Education “removed slavery as the central cause of the Civil War and replaced it with states’ rights and secession,”⁸⁴ as well as removing the word “slave” from the “Transatlantic Slave Trade.”⁸⁵ This ideology was the underlying influence cited by educators for student and parental pushback surrounding African American History content. The teachers interviewed explained it wasn’t uncommon for Southern households to “still have a few family members,” who accept and advocate for Lost Cause educational thinking.⁸⁶

VII. Discussion and Conclusions

⁸³Quote from *Cavalier Commonwealth: History and Government of Virginia*, F226.H4 1957, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, in Huffman, “Twisted Sources”, *Facing South*, 2020.

⁸⁴ Huffman, “Twisted Sources”, *Facing South*, 2020.

⁸⁵ It is important to note that there is no formal North Carolina curriculum that endorses Lost Cause ideologies, nor are there any websites for educators to reference with the direct goal of promoting its teachings. Inclusion of Lost Cause ideologies within modern day classrooms would be on an educator-by-educator basis, or from generational narratives.

⁸⁶ Mr. Colpepper.

The data collected in my qualitative and quantitative research support the conclusion that there is a disparity among current college students in historical familiarity and knowledge of African American historical figures in comparison to their White counterparts. When asked to rank historical figures on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being complete understanding, college age students across all academic disciplines rank their familiarity with historically significant African American figures at a 5.7, and their White counterparts at 7.5, separating them by a value of 1.8 (in other words, Black figures were only 57% as familiar as White). The difference cannot be attributed solely to the student's background, including an urban vs. rural upbringing, nor to North Carolina vs. out of state students, as the average familiarity scale ranking that separating all African American figures to White figures was .49 and .69 respectively.⁸⁷ The four figures that received an average score of 5 or below were Black historical figures, while the four figures that received an average score of 8 or higher were White historical figures, all of whom related to different disciplines and historical decades. The highest-ranking historical figure was George Washington, a White man, and the lowest scoring was Madame C.J. Walker, a Black woman. It is important to note that the overall average score of all 19 historical figures listed was 6.7, which demonstrates that not only do students not know African American History, but American History in general.

This disparity is not surprising to the North Carolina educators I interviewed. When interviewing 2 public school teachers, Mr. Colpepper and Ms. Boleyn, and 2 private school teachers, Ms. Washington and Mr. Spiderman, the profound agreement was that North Carolina public and private schools do not leave students with a well-rounded and thorough understanding

⁸⁷ Ranked Familiarity Score: Urban (5.09) vs Rural (5.78), and In-State Residency (5.72) vs Out-Of-State Residency (5.23)

of African American History. This is not because educators do not recognize or seek to close the gap, but rather because of a variety of outside factors that inhibit their ability to teach that aspect of American History on an appropriate level. The most relevant and frustrating factors being time, teaching tools, personal teaching style and student engagement, and the current political climate, as discussed above.

Educators in both public and private schools do not have the time to go in-depth on the histories of specific African American figures and histories; public school teachers are often held back by North Carolina public state standards that require teaching from 1776 to present day in only one academic semester, while private school teachers struggle even to finish full curriculum within the year. Educators often find they must choose between depth or a full-length history, which often comes at the cost of African American events, experiences, and figures to meet standard requirements. Some educators choose depth, and as a result cannot make it past WWII or the Vietnam war, while others choose full-length histories, and neglect important narratives and context in American History. Similarly, textbooks are either extremely outdated, lack depth, or have undertones of Lost Cause ideologies that do not reflect the correct historical narratives. As a result, educators often turn to online resources to find supplemental content that is absent from the textbooks and choose not to even use their textbooks as anything more than a guide or rough outline for the content they will cover independently. Areas most neglected by the text are often Colonial History and Reconstruction, which often warrant separate lectures; the rest of African American History is often taught in an integrated style for the sake of time.

Educators are hesitant and wary of teaching African American History in depth, especially the Civil War and Reconstruction, because of the current political climate and fear of parent, community, and student backlash. Since the 2016 presidential election and appointment

of Donald J. Trump to the presidency, students are more likely to question the relevance and importance of African American History, and many White households still repeat Lost Cause ideologies that can result in pushback against curriculum that can seem ‘liberalized’ or ‘radicalized.’ Teachers fear teaching the curriculum incorrectly or insensitively, insulting both White and Black students, and are trained to teach strictly to the state standards (if in public school settings) to avoid pushback or repercussions if they arise. Most educators are not given specific training on how to teach African American History and often find their own personal experiences and Black peers or students as more valuable resources for in-depth histories. By making African American History controversial, the current political climate has made teaching African American History a taunting, difficult task.

In conclusion, students are not receiving a thorough, comprehensive education when it comes to African American historical figures, experiences, events, and contributions. This gap is evident through the quantitative research of students who struggle to recognize important African American historical figures, and the qualitative interviews of educators who identify time, teaching tools, training, and the current political climate as inhibiting factors. Strengthen African American History education helps create informed, empathetic, and well-rounded citizens who engage with their communities. By overlooking essential African American narratives, students have incomplete and inequitable understandings of American History; addressing this disparity is necessary to promote a fair and comprehensive history education that appreciates the diverse forces that shaped American today.

This project has many elements that may warrant further research and investigation. Future investigators could potentially explore subjects such as the relationship between history figure recollection and ethnicity, major of study, or age. The study could even expand to include

important African American historical events such as Nat Turner's Rebellion, the Dred Scott decision, or the March on Washington, or explore different grade levels such as middle and elementary school. A wider, more national investigation could be of similar interest, such as comparing different U.S. regions against one another, or a state-by-state analysis of the different independent variables. Finally, it would be compelling to explore state education funding, school demographics, and socioeconomic backgrounds when scrutinizing data results. The potential projects could influence state standards, educational advocacy, and play a major role in evolving political debates and legislation surrounding race and education.

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Appendix

A: Student Survey Questions

Questionnaire

This survey is entirely voluntary. You may quit at any time.

- 1) What is your age (type in answer)
- 2) What is your college major/s?
- 3) In what city and state did you receive your high school education?
- 4) Did you attend a public, charter, private, or other high school?
- 5) What is your racial identification? (choose)
 - a. Black, White, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Indigenous, other

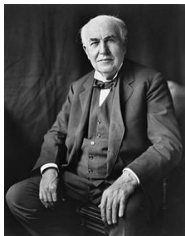
6. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Harriet Tubman?



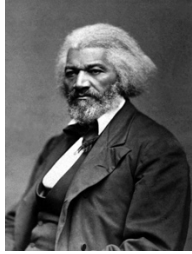
7. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Louis Armstrong?



8. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Thomas Edison?



9. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Fredrick Douglas?



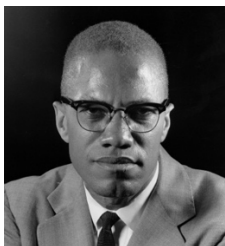
10. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with George Washington?



11. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Marie Curie?



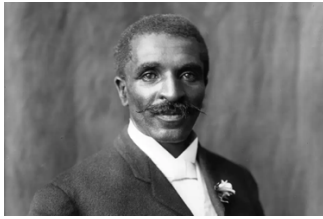
12. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Malcolm X?



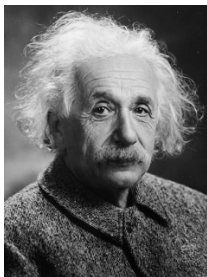
13. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Elvis Presley?



14. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with George Washington Carver?



15. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Albert Einstein?



16. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Babe Ruth?



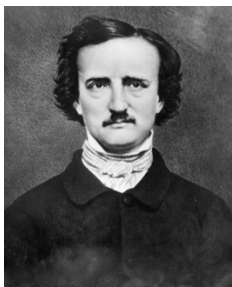
17. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Madame C.J. Walker?



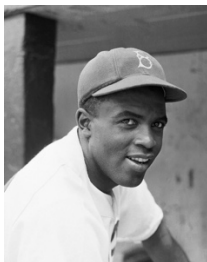
18. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Thurgood Marshall?



19. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Edgar Allen Poe?



20. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Jackie Robinson?



21. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Susan B. Anthony?



22. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Neil Armstrong



23. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely unfamiliar and 10 being extremely familiar, how familiar are you with Langston Hughes?



B: Teacher Interview Questions

Standards

1. How familiar are you with the North Carolina state standards for teaching history, particularly regarding African American history?
 - a. Do you feel the standards provide sufficient guidance on teaching African American figures and events?
2. Are there any local (district-level) standards that add to or differ from the state guidelines?
3. How much flexibility do you have in choosing what content and figures to emphasize beyond what the state mandates?
4. Are there specific African American figures or events that you are required to cover? Which ones?
 - a. How do you decide which historical figures to highlight in your classroom?
5. Do your textbooks and teaching materials provide sufficient coverage of African American historical figures?
 - a. If not, how do you supplement them? Why or why not?
6. Are there particular resources (books, documentaries, digital archives, etc.) that you rely on to teach African American history?
7. If you could make one change to the curriculum or state standards regarding African American history, what would it be?

Personal Teaching Methods

8. When teaching African American history, do you integrate it into the broader U.S. history narrative, or do you treat it as a separate unit? Why?
9. How do you balance teaching well-known figures (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks) with lesser-known African American figures?
10. Much of North Carolina standards focus on racism and slavery when addressing black history—is there any focus on cultural or spiritual black history such as the Harlem Renaissance?
11. What strategies do you use to make African American history relevant and engaging for your students?
12. Do you feel the way textbooks present African American history differs in tone or depth compared to how white historical figures are presented?
13. How would you describe your students' baseline knowledge of African American history when they enter your classroom? Specific figures?
14. Have you noticed differences in how students engage with lessons on African American history versus white historical figures?
15. What challenges do you face when teaching African American history?

Training/Opinion

16. Do you feel pressure (from administrators, parents, or the community) regarding how you teach topics like slavery, segregation, or systemic racism?
17. Are there topics within African American history that you avoid or approach cautiously? Why?
18. To what extent do you feel the curriculum emphasizes African American historical figures compared to white historical figures?
19. How has your own training (college, professional development, workshops) prepared you to teach African American history?
20. In your opinion, what are the most important African American historical figures or events that all high school students should learn about?
21. Do you think students leave high school with a balanced understanding of African American contributions to U.S. history? Why or why not?