



2021 SPECIAL ISSUE:
DISRUPTING CURRICULUM HEGEMONY THROUGH COUNTERSTORIES

Guest Edited by: Lakia M. Scott, Sarah Straub, & Gwendolyn Webb

Recommended Citation: Magill, K. R. (August, 2021). Race as class construct: The hegemony of racism in the United States. *Journal for Social Studies & History Education*, 5 (1), 1-18.

Race as Class Construct: The Hegemony of Racism in the United States

Kevin Russel Magill

In this paper, I argue that race is a class construct designed to power the social antagonisms that might otherwise allow for solidarity across social class. I further argue social studies educators often unknowingly continue to maintain the hegemony of whiteness ensuring that race and class structures are, at best, minimally considered within their curricular and pedagogical choices. I proceed by first discussing race, class, and whiteness and their situation in education and society. Next, I provide historical examples that reveal how moments or eras are narrativized to obscure the realities of race, class, and power. I then provide analyses related to current class antagonisms and curricular expectations that situate social studies teaching and learning. Last, I offer implications, recommendations, and conclusions for social studies teachers and teacher educators hoping to teach a more critical, complete, and accurate history.

Key Words: Race, Class, Whiteness, History, Hegemony, Social Studies, Teaching, Learning, Social Relations
The US is a free and open society. However, since its founding, whiteness has served as a colonizing force permeating how power and access are bestowed. White ideology justifies the maintenance of oppression by legitimizing many of the racial antagonisms that perpetuate class exploitation. We can examine historical eras to see how whiteness establishes class divisions that exist today. How class constructs in history are generally read ensures justification of white privilege through representation, bias, normalization, the benefit of the doubt, reasonable access, and accumulated wealth and power (Collins, 2018). The privileges offered ensure social interactions will exist within a racial hierarchy and that most of those who receive privileges will psychologically and ideologically align with elites - those who have power - rather than with others that share their socioeconomic reality- the working or middle classes.

Whiteness also ensures racism is continually reaffirmed by establishing how race and class are understood in schools. Though race and class are present, history presentations preclude teacher or student analyses of how whiteness functions, or how race and class relations are connected. Therefore, students and teachers miss or do not understand how and why of historical causation, or how race and class conflicts inform current conditions. For example, students and teachers commonly discuss the horrors of slavery. However, its presentation often has people thinking that slavery was the result of racism. Rather, racism was a concept created to maintain the conditions through which wealthy elites maintain inexpensive and controllable labor (Anderson, 2016; Williams, 1994). Racism and its influence on society continue to function today. Class relations are similarly obscured to ensure the hegemony of whiteness and burgeoning and new forms of exploitation.

Whiteness also permeates schooling systems and interpersonal relationships. It situates teacher understandings of historical narratives, how they are taught or understood, their social critiques, and informs how whiteness, race, and class are negotiated by students and ultimately, the public. The degree to which whiteness is evident might be observed through a teacher's approach to pedagogy and their negotiation, presentation, and interrogation of the curriculum (Magill & Salinas, 2019). The historical narrativizations and disciplinary cannon, like society, are not always overtly racist but are limited in ways they reveal privilege. Furthermore, they oversimplify complex historical events.

It is unrealistic for people to understand current social conditions if they do not see and understand how the complexities and historicity of race, class, and whiteness converge and if they do not

possess the skill of critique that can help them consider the reasons and ways current social conditions exist. My claim is not that race and class are excluded topics, but first, that they are not understood together, and second that the very ideology that ensures these limited narrativizations is most often not understood by teachers and historians that present them. Moreover, students are not adequately afforded skills of critique, ensuring they naturally fit the dominant narrative of US whiteness, progress, and altruism endorsing whiteness as a transcendent and universal truth (Lyotard, 1979/2000). Helping students understand the complex histories and intersections of race, whiteness, and class can clarify the above-mentioned *how* and *why* social constructionism and the further development of critique. Given this perspective, I will argue in this paper, first, that race is a class construct designed to power the social antagonisms that might otherwise allow for solidarity across class. I provide illustrative examples from particular points in US history that reveal how these ideas become narrativized to obscure the realities of class and power relations, guaranteeing students accept dominating narratives. Second, I will argue that social studies educators, often unknowingly or unwittingly, continue to maintain and be affected by the hegemony of whiteness ensuring that race and class structures are, at best, minimally considered within their curricular and pedagogical choices. Within these discussions, I provide analyses related to class antagonisms in the historical period and ways that curricular expectations situate social studies teaching and learning. Last, I offer implications, recommendations, and conclusions for social studies teachers hoping to teach a more critical, complete, and accurate history.

WHITENESS AND RACE

Whiteness is an ideology or class antagonism that legitimizes the racial order through historicization and discursive and institutional practices (Leonardo & Manning, 2017). It functions as an oppressive “regime of knowledge” (Leonardo, 2009, pp. 108) ensuring norming, entitlement, domination, and privilege are reenacted in politics, economics, and culture (Ansley, 1997). The material and cultural manifestations of class and race must be addressed and understood if we hope to transform how it situates schooling (DeLissovoy & Brown, 2013). Some scholars have argued that teaching racism should be replaced with teaching whiteness because it describes how it situates the everyday interactions between actors rather than allowing for inaccurate interpretations of social constructions used for exploitative purposes (Cole, 2009; hooks, 1989). Racism might instead be understood as a symptom of the disease of whiteness or, the ideological antagonism created by an exploitative society (Matias & Mackey, 2016). The idea of whiteness as class antagonism is also helpful because it can be understood as the ideology which situates race and human relationships through its colonizing force.

More accurate and complete historical inquiries can help reveal how whiteness functions in contemporary society. However, revealing these antagonisms require teachers understand what whiteness is, how it functions, and how it is perpetuated through social, educational, and institutional practices (Crowley, 2019; Magill & Rodriguez, 2015 & Rodriguez & Magill, 2016). Optimistically, teachers have frameworks for introducing the realities of whiteness in their classroom by articulating the importance of learning difficult histories (Epstein & Peck, 2017), engaging in critical historical inquiry that reveals how whiteness

unfolds within the current moment (Blevins, Magill & Salinas, 2020; Crowley, 2019), examining how it informs their pedagogy (Crowley & Smith, 2020; Matias & Mackey, 2016), and discussing how social justice movements run counter to white ideology (Martell & Stevens, 2020).

RACE, CLASS AND CURRICULUM

The promotion and demotion of particular social groups based on social status is a means of developing a classed labor force tied to hegemonic economic, political, and social realities. Within schooling, curriculum exists as a tool of hegemony in that it is used to demonstrate the logic of alienating socio-historical constructions through narrative manipulation (Omi & Winant, 2014). In this way, whiteness is produced and reproduced through the curriculum. Historical inquiries have examined how white and Western ideology informs the ecology situating historical analysis. For example, the repositories and sources deemed appropriate and available are limited by a Westernized logic resulting in limited possibilities for scholars, students, and teachers to consider. Furthermore, ideologies are informed by presentist¹ thinking. So too, then, omitting, obscuring, and marginalizing certain knowledge or what is understood as legitimate will ensure Orientalization (Said, 1979) of particular historical persons, events, and periods. Further, the narratives that are chosen for textbooks tend to obfuscate class relations which allows for a more benign and favorable presentation in which the West continues to progress and overcome (Barton & Levstik, 2004). The narrative limits our ability to see the historical class antagonisms

¹ The anachronistic introduction of present-day ideas and perspectives into depictions or interpretations of the past

that affect cross-cultural interactions in the US and abroad (Lowe, 2015; Said, 1979).

Other historical inquiries have illuminated ways curriculum, or the absence of curriculum have situated class relations used to solidify whiteness (and maleness) as hegemony. Federici's (2004) study reveals how the fall of feudalism led to both the rise of capitalism and the theft of woman's labor in Europe. Because the labor force had been depleted by the plague, the new system, capitalism, would gender work in ways that would inspire a repopulation of the workforce. Homosexuality was similarly marginalized to encourage repopulation. The ruling class employed capitalism to keep people tied to the land, as they had been in feudal society. Simultaneously, the hegemony, which included the ruling class and clergy, would condemn those living outside these established social conditions and structures denouncing them as heretics in efforts to force the adoption of the hegemonic ideology. This illustration demonstrates how class antagonisms shift social ideology and thinking about social and cultural groups.

Similar inquiries have been taken up in US History that demonstrates how white ideology transforms what and who are considered white and how race influenced the social relations of production and economic conditions (Roediger, 1999; Takaki, 2008; Zinn, Emery & Reeves, 2003). Consider that Jewish, Italian, and Polish Americans became white through their social alignments, labor movements, New Deal reforms, and home-buying when they were previously considered undesirable (Roediger, 2006). Unsurprisingly, the demographic shift in the US population has led to this bestowing of "whiteness" on Latinos to maintain a white majority on the US census. Latino is now a sub-designation of white.

Despite efforts and calls to trouble these antagonisms through the teaching of Social Studies, teachers and curriculum tend to maintain, rather than transform them. Under these conditions, the teaching of race and class is, at best, superficial, more likely, problematic, and at worst, actively misleading. Though not intended to be misleading, hegemonic ideology continues to inform the inaccurate and limited teaching of race and whiteness, actively maintained through inaccurate curriculum and its textbooks (Foster, 1999), state standards (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012), and educational materials (Kumashiro, 2015). Even when social studies curricular materials acknowledge non-white histories and experiences (Sleeter & Grant, 2011) they often lead to an "illusion of inclusion" (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012). Furthermore, when minorities are presented, minoritized bodies are often acted upon, shown without agency, or used to demonstrate how far we have come (Brown & Brown, 2015), normalizing these conditions through teaching, learning, and mutual recognition (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019; Crowley & Smith, 2020; Hegel, 1977).

Class relations are rarely taught, at least their complexities, other than to support the neoliberal discourses of upward mobility, access to social influence, education, extracurricular activities, physical places, and social networks or to demonstrate how to provide paths to job opportunities (Christopher, 2009; Ball, Maguire & Macrae, 2000). Similarly, conversations or pedagogy typically do not reflect working-class ways of understanding the world or pedagogies that support students from these groups (Jones & Vagle, 2013). Class presentations or omissions often promote misconceptions of work (Rose, 2005), lived experiences of social classes (Reay, 1998), and/or socio-economic class realities in the US and internationally

(Hayes, 2012). Discussions of what class is or how it functions are rarely part of the curriculum. Class relations and work are often presented in History classes during units on the Gilded and Progressive Eras, which demonstrate how developments to factory safety have improved conditions for the working class. Its presentation implies that the working class should be grateful to live in a nation that no longer has sweatshops.

However, we need not look further than Amazon®, meat processing factories, and other corporations that are not significantly better amid historical exploitation in the US. This is particularly true for people of color and immigrants, where inhumane conditions and poverty unquestionably and similarly persist. The justification is that laws have yet to catch up with the innovations. Unions, and many of the rights they fought for which might provide a living wage, insurance, and pride in certain forms of labor, are gone. Non-factory work in the gig economy and other employers become incentivized to work outside the rules to enrich the corporation and its shareholders. These jobs are populated primarily by the working class and persons of color and the exploitation of these industries is discarded because they include new technologies and forms of labor (Dyer-Witheford, Kjosen, & Steinhoff, 2019).

When ideas related to class are presented, teachers often receive pushback from parents and many ideas are marginalized as communist or socialist (Queen, 2014). Some have argued that teachers are unwilling to discuss concepts because they deem these ideas too controversial for discussion (Hess, 2002 & 2004; Magill & Blevins, 2020). They may also not resist or question the hegemonic curriculum because it might affect their jobs or because they become too overwhelmed

by the social relations of teaching (Rodriguez & Magill, 2016 & 2017). None of this is to say that teachers or curriculum planners are intentionally obscuring historical and social realities, but that hegemony supports ideological perspectives that create historical and curricular narratives that align with white and neoliberal ideologies.

EXAMINING RACE AS A CLASS ANTAGONISM IN HISOTRY

The history of the United States is connected to class struggle (Marx & Engels, 1968), class creation, (Durkheim, 1951), and their negotiation. These histories are unquestionably tied to race. The common narrative for the founding of the nation reveals that the Revolutionary War was fought because of British oppression and a colony striving for freedom. While true, part of wanting to break with Britain was that wealthy landowning colonists like George Washington wished to extend their sphere of economic and political influence. English Colonists actively worked to cultivate a War with England following the Proclamation of 1763 because the English forbade them from moving into the Ohio River Valley. This demonstrates how the U.S. American capitalist ideologies led to a war that would promote the economic interests of those in power. In this way, the Revolutionary War was a way to become self-determined politically but also became a means of advancing one's social class by claiming the valuable land west of the Appalachian watershed (Hudson, 2003; Konkle, 2008; Magill & Talbert, 2020). Furthermore, laws, labor, and power maintained and continue to maintain a white majority power structure and particular race relations that ensure economic domination. Over time these mechanisms, ideologies, have largely remained the same but are continually

reinvented in service to power. Unfortunately, they are rarely discussed in these terms within the history curriculum.

Race as Armament of Power

Race and class relations in the British North American colonies included indentured workers who were initially brought from Europe and Africa to fill a labor shortage. Indentured servitude had been the predominant labor system until it was eventually overcome by slavery (Tatum, 2017; Tomlins, 2001). This occurred because laborers began to outnumber the ruling class and clamored for better pay and land. Race became a means of maintaining class and power relations. As indentured servants outnumbered landowners, race, surfaced as means of creating class antagonisms through which whiteness might ensure racial rather than class solidarity. Working-class whites sided with white landowners, because of the marginal privileges it afforded them, rather than with Black laborers that shared their social class.

Elite landowners initially dismissed the class solidarity of the indentured workers as opportunists playing up the hopes and fears of slaves, poor whites, and blacks (Breen, 1973). However, uprisings like Bacon's Rebellion and a similar Maryland rebellion disturbed the upper class enough to respond with the Virginia Slave Codes of 1705 (Foner, 2013) and began a social and ideological re-ordering of class consciousness based on race. Bacon, who was a non-elite, but wealthy landowner, tried to use rebellion to promote his economic interests by aligning them with that of the government. He called on the colony to protect the common good by going to war with the regional Indigenous persons on whose land colonists had begun to infringe (Thompson, 2006). The rebellion

would unite working-class whites, blacks, and freedmen with landowners like Bacon who were living on the frontier. The economic elite then witnessed the problems that class solidarity could cause.

The economic elite orchestrated the working class to turn on each other by separating providing white privilege to some while stoking white rage. This became a tactic used thorough US history to promote economic interests. As Williams (1994) points out, "A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery. Unfree labor of the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow" (p. 7). However, instilling these ideas required shifts in racial ideology and material segregation. As Anderson (2016) writes,

Initial legal attempts of the elite to separate the lower class along racial lines and mitigate class antagonism did not work...racist ideology started with the elites and was only accepted by working-class whites once slavery separated black workers from white workers materially...(p. 1)...Colonial elites responded to the growing solidarity by treating whites and blacks differently in order to inhibit class-consciousness and promote racial separation...in the face of growing class-based resistance, the elites used racist justification to create legal racial distinctions" (p. 7).

Political and legal decisions and policy cemented white ideology after the white working class was sufficiently propagandized and convinced of its utility. The Naturalization Act of 1740 excluded Papists, Indigenous persons, indentured servants, slaves, and free blacks though it

included workable immigration policies for those deemed white. Later the Naturalization Act of 1790, ensured a limit to naturalization for “free white person[s] ... of good character” continuing to exclude persons from the previously mentioned groups and eventually Asians, though certain states extended membership to certain othered persons (Lemay, Barkan, & Lemay, 1999).

Numerous examples demonstrate how Anti-Black racism still functions today but consider the identity politics associated with Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the Capital Riots. BLM is called a terrorist group for their audacity to fight for basic human rights and protection under the law, committing no serious crimes, while white, right-wing rioters kill police, yet are presented as sympathetic figures in the public discourse (Dicker, 2021; Kurtscher, 2020). This serves to stoke anti-Black racism ensuring and perpetuating their existence as a caste-like minority.

Examination of Bacon’s rebellion also reveals the colonial ideology that would also serve as a racial antagonism through which exploitation and territorial expansion would be justified, not to mention the genocide of Indigenous persons for white economic gain. We still have this rhetoric as right-wing politicians and pundits who side with the ruling class by blaming immigrants and internal others for the class relations created by capitalists. Politicians and pundits continue “driving a racial wedge between working-class Americans” (Tatum, 2017, p. 653) by discussing policies that affect people of color as dog-whistle politics. The in-group thinking caused people to be significantly more likely to believe in the altruism and truth of a member of the group they identify with and frightened of the motivations of the “out-group” (Molenberghs et. al., 2013). The hegemony of whiteness continued to further disenfranchise and colonize people in in and

out-groups as pseudo-sciences were created to legitimize race as a social construct and institutions that function in ways that provide whites, but more accurately, the wealthiest class, with additional social privileges. The additional privileges, such as social and cultural capital made white an aspirational category for those who might achieve it, situating who and what would be valued in the society (Fanon, 2008). As more people were brought into the in-group, they were bestowed aspects of white membership.

Antebellum South, the Civil War, and White Domination

Throughout US history, the nation has searched for opportunities to exploit other nations through neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism is an effort to extract the maximum value of labor, acquire inexpensive natural resources, and create a favorable balance of trade, surplus value (Marx, 2019). Consider that this resembles the British colonial model that was successfully implemented around much of the world. However, it features greater forms of economic occupation than physical occupation. Also consider the numerous governments the US has overthrown or colonized to this end (Hudson, 2003). Within the model, colonies provide resources to the colonizer, who would produce goods sold back to the colonies or other colonized nations, at an increased price. The US rejected being a colony within this model while countries like India and others were forced to accept it for many years.

The Civil War was a fight over economic hegemony in which race would be used by both sides to support its cause. Major industrial shifts were occurring in New England and the agrarian realities of economic output on Southern plantations positioned the wealthy factory-owning elite

in New England against the plantation elite in the South. During the Civil War New England factory owners successfully took the economic power of the South by overthrowing the oligarchy of plantation owners. The Northern states imposed taxes on Southern goods during a recession and as Charles Dickens wrote, “The Northern onslaught upon slavery is no more than a piece of specious humbug disguised to conceal its desire for economic control of the United States.” Abolitionist currents certainly existed, but, as President Lincoln stated, “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so ... If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it” (Stanley, 2011). Instead, the Civil War represented a clash between the neo-feudal oligarchy in the South and the capitalism of the North. In the Antebellum South, the material living conditions of poor whites, blacks, and slaves were often similar, however, white privilege extended many legal and social benefits (Craven, 1930; Otto, 1980). We see the South attempting to play this game now in its race to the bottom austerity where corporations flee California to populate Texas.

RECONSTRUCTION AND POST-RECONSTRUCTION: FURTHERING AND BESTOWING WHITENESS

The Civil War and Reconstruction brought new changes to how race was written as a class antagonism. The labor market understandably declined during and after the Civil War. Many immigrant groups were, generally, welcomed in certain parts of the country because of the labor shortage. However, as more people came, these groups were blamed for social ills and changes to heritage. Much like African

Americans, who had seen an increase in power following the war, groups of people were met with new forms of disenfranchisement. Racial antagonisms caused fear, intimidation, and institutional marginalization. The nadir period of race relations from Reconstruction through 1877 was as racist a time for African Americans as any in the nation’s history. Jim Crow and other laws ensured a host of oppressive relations would exist, which were designed to ensure whiteness and its attending social hierarchy.

The US began to construct the Transcontinental Railroad, which opened large economic possibilities for capitalists. Chinese immigrants were invited to help finish the project on the West coast of the US and were initially welcomed. Once stateside and working on the railroad, they were paid 50% less than white workers, were assigned the most dangerous work, and faced legal inequality, among other inequities. When the workforce of the railroad eventually became 90% Chinese, they eventually went on strike in 1867. In response, the railroad cut off food, transportation, and other supplies. Though subsequent working conditions improved slightly, race was used to exploit this group of workers (Chang, 2019). In 1882, the US instituted the Chinese Immigration Act to placate white worker demands to maintain white racial purity in the US. In reality, the labor force had grown and was affecting the wages of white laborers generally and those searching for wealth in the Gold Rush. The Act restricted Chinese immigration and continued the anti-immigration invasion rhetoric still used today (Staff, 2018). The economic, political, and social status of different groups of people is in constant flux especially as we situate class relations. Consider the annexation of the Philippines and Hawaii. Hawaii asked to become a state 50 years before its annexation, but it was not

until it would benefit sugar companies that this occurred; a benefit largely to white male capitalists. At this point, Hawaiians were not in favor of annexation.

Anti-Asian oppression and its situation within society extend to the current day. Examples like the Watsonville riots in the 1930s against Philippine persons, Japanese internment in the 1930s and 40s, the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982 by former Detroit Auto Workers who accused him of taking their job, and currently, calling COVID-19 “The China Virus,” demonstrates how public attention turns to racism rather than to those who are in power responsible for failing to attend to political and economic issues (Kurashige, 2016). These events happen in times of political and economic hardship and offer a scapegoat for the failings of those in power they lead to violence against racial minorities. We can observe this interpersonal violence through US history as well, like, but not limited to, the violence seen leveled against Iranian Americans during the Iranian hostage crisis in the early 80s, Muslim Americans following 9/11, Asian Americans in San Francisco and around the country in 2021 in response to COVID-19, or what we have just seen in 2021, where several Asian/Asian American women were murdered in Georgia. The responses to these events further reveal the historical and material misunderstandings within US society; whiteness, race, and class relations of production (Marx, 1989).

In addition to blatantly racist laws and violence, whiteness fomented arguments about who could be understood as white and how recipients would receive privilege. In the US, before, during, and after the Civil war persons of Irish, Jewish, and Italian descent experienced Hibernophobia, Italophobia, and Anti-Semitism, respectively as many of these immigrants were blamed for taking American jobs and changing

American culture. Taking on a white identity was a big question for the Irish and Italian (and other) people in the US. These groups were not considered white and were not eligible for the white privilege it bestowed. The Irish were seen by many Anglo or Native whites as Negroes turned inside out while African Americans were at times called smoked Irish. The term mulatto first appeared in the US census of 1850 largely because of intermarriages between the two groups. However, despite the solidarity and potential for solidarity between the Irish and African Americans, many Irish did not support abolition, seeing it as a threat to their position within the dog-eat-dog job market. Many also pointed to the Naturalization Laws of 1790 (that free white persons of good moral character were eligible for citizenship) as part of their oath of citizenship to the US. While some supported African Americans in class solidarity, more attacked them in riots, which politically served to help to suppress the debate over abolition, which led to gaining their whiteness as they eventually became understood as a lower-class member of the white majority (Ignatiev, 2009).

Anti-Semitism and economic conditions similarly inform the debate on who was to be granted whiteness. Under the Naturalization Act of 1790, persons of Jewish descent were considered free white persons who could become citizens, however, they were also seen as ambiguously white and later laws limited the immigration from certain countries to restrict Jews from entering the country. During the Civil War, General Grant issued General Order 11, which expelled all Jewish persons from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi leading to the loss of property, civic standing, and rights. Many Jewish persons were invested heavily in the cotton trade and the Union was finding it difficult to enforce laws prohibiting illegal

smuggling. While many people were smuggling, Jews were singled out as the cause and scapegoated, with smuggler becoming an interchangeable term with a Jewish person. White Jewish persons were also considered a particular class of white. In a letter to President Lincoln, Jewish organizations protested the order stating it, “deprived [them] of their liberty and injured them in their property *without* having violated any law or regulation” (Karp, 1991). Anti-Semitism has continued through the country's history and is now casually emerging in discussions of secret cabals against the US and are being used to legitimize Right Wing rhetoric policies, such as white nationalist chants of “Jews will not replace us.” It is clear from this rhetoric that chanters see race (or culture) tied to economic opportunities.

Italians were recruited as planters to work in the South because of the labor shortage following the Civil War, but "encountered waves of books, magazines, and newspapers that bombarded the new Americans with images of Italians as racially suspect” in the North. Later they were blamed for their culture (in part Catholicism) and for being surplus labor in several places (Guglielmo & Salerno, 2012). One of the largest mass lynchings in the US included eleven Italians in New Orleans in 1881. Teddy Roosevelt said the lynching was “a rather good thing” and the organizer John M. Parker was later elected Governor of Louisiana (Moses, 1997). In 1882, President Harrison eventually tried to help stop the violence against them by inviting Italians to write their origin story on US curriculum and social thinking by establishing Columbus Day (Staples, 2019). This improved conditions to a degree, the legacy of which is a reason Italian Americans are currently resistant to changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Persons Day. Racism persisted after the

holiday was created, particularly for Italians from the South of Italy and Sicily because of their darker skin, which implied race mixing with North Africans. Identity politics would continue to include Italians, especially when they could inform social class relations. For example, Sacco and Vanzetti, Italian Americans labeled “Bolsheviks” and “anarchistic” demonstrated the type of social and legal standing that could be taken away to promote racial and political hegemony (Rappaport, 2012).

Though this is discussed in history classes, ideas are not presented that demonstrate how events inform historical and current racial and class realities. These and countless other historical examples exist related to how race is, and was, constructed and manipulated to affect economic conditions and to maintain hegemonic power relations. These conditions persist, particularly for people of color, through the above-mentioned socio-historical interactions. The white hierarchy and the race hierarchy still function; a result of these and other historical racial antagonisms.

Robber Barons: Laying Capitalist Ideology on Race Relations

Discourses of modern class relations and resource allocation are also not adequately discussed in the history curriculum. Consider Andrew Carnegie, who is often discussed in Social Studies Curriculum as a borderline Robber Barron, but also a model philanthropist. During the Civil War, he helped open the rail lines into Washington D.C., supervised the transportation of defeated forces, and efficiently organized the telegraph to help the Union win the war (Wall, 1970). These demonstrated his economic and political worth to the Union. He is, of course, better known for expanding the U S s t e e (a) l ² i n d u s t r y .

² steel and steal

The social narratives that he put forth are still part of today's social discourse. It helped determine how he would be discussed historically and continues to provide rhetoric for justifying labor theft in the US. He argued for several tropes related to labor and class relations (legitimate economists largely disagree) still used to justify unfettered capitalism and obscene wealth for some. His ideas included: the best way to help poor people is to give them a job and they will get out of poverty, socialists are lazy and resent the rich for their success, wealth is created by the organization and intelligence of the people at the top, giving aid directly to the poor will make them dependent on the state and further hurt them (Carnegie, 2006; Spencer, 2018). Consider how whiteness that working-class whites and working-class persons of color or wealthy whites or wealthy persons of color (and Black versus Latino women versus men and so on) become clear but under-considered social class relations (or conversely racial distinctions) are understood and normalized distinctly within US society though often unacknowledged through the myth of meritocracy. The myth provides a foundation for theories of cultural deficiency and the successful functioning of social and legal systems.

These ideas aligned with whiteness, making them seem like the natural order. Carnegie and many others used the pseudo-science of the time to suggest that success was determined by pure intelligence and that value to society is determined, not by privilege and power, but hard work. His arguments make it easy to explain class relations as a social inevitability when you forget that the labor of so many is and was stolen. Carnegie made these harmful tropes seem like kindnesses. He hid the fact that profit comes from labor and not ownership and the idea that ownership cannot produce

wealth without subjugation (Marx, 2019; Žižek, 2012).

A particularly insidious aspect of his ideology, his philanthropy was offered as an example of why cutthroat capitalism was good since he gave some of it back to the public through public buildings and other philanthropic efforts. However, his decisions to support the public were based on his analysis of the public good and therefore, was informed by the wealthy white ideology, whiteness as beneficence, and not the public welfare. Though described by some as an agent of the poor, he was more a technocrat, believing the most competent people naturally had control. At issue is that whoever has the wealth and power can decide what competent means (Thorn, 2020). We continue to see Zuckerberg, Bezos, and Gates' foundations functioning similarly. They invest in things that make them appear model citizens but ensure hegemony maintains a particular order and class realities outside public control. Through these legitimizations of class, racial hierarchies are also preserved as a natural part of the social order. These are colonizing efforts that ensure whiteness is an economic savior from on high and that the historical social class relations created to ensure racial class systems will remain.

RECOMMENDATIONS: THE NEED FOR CRITIQUE IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

These and other historical examples are often limited to those students and teachers that seek them out or have an interest in understating how socio-historical relations inform the present. However, frameworks of analysis revealing race as a class antagonism provide a foundation for understanding how race, whiteness, and class situate work and power. Teachers who see the antagonisms might be better able to demonstrate how to

address them as a society, and articulate how arguments of justice and solidarity are of paramount concern in the social studies discourse. History critique can help clarify how and why hegemonic influence and reproduction function. Consciousness to these relations can help establish intellectual solidarity along race, class, and humanizing lines (Magill & Rodriguez, 2021). We can then have the types of discussions that allow us to live our democratic values.

Understanding race as a class antagonism can also help teachers understand their responses to different cultures and races and contend with how whiteness has situated their experiences. Teachers are primed, through whiteness to see certain persons as disposable populations, whose existence is, unofficially intended to serve white interests. More than that, conscious teachers understand how race informs hegemonic, economic, and political interests and how they teach social stratification by teaching students of color the language of whiteness and funneling them toward vocational options like trade school (Rose, 2005).

Understanding how and why they have read history and how the histories of race and class in the US have led us to the present are then vital to the project of teacher/students and humanization. Through humanization, we gain recognition in a cognitive and metaphysical sense. The ability to achieve this within a society dominated by a hegemonic ideology of whiteness depends on critique. Critique becomes a means of listening to a politician like Trump, Cruz, Gaetz, or Greene, noticing how the argument and laws they are making promote white supremacy and racism and how similar tactics and rhetoric have been used throughout US history. When they rally against other vulnerable populations, like immigrants, we can see how the immigration debate is a vehicle for

distracting and dividing the population who share more class interests with immigrants and people of color than they do Jeff Bezos.

Furthermore, critique requires vulnerability, or willingness to recognize how we have come to understand the world. More specifically related to this essay, teachers must learn to see that curricula are constructed within whiteness, and have worked to create, situate, and manipulate class relations despite what we have been taught in our high school classes. Therefore, our thinking and becoming are fundamentally affected by whiteness and class regardless of race. We must recognize that when we see race as a class antagonism in history and think this was limited to a particular historical era, the ideology that created those material realities continues to permeate systems, relations, and thinking in the US. It is not enough to simply talk about the progress and exceptionalism of the US without acknowledging how the curriculum is designed to limit critique and our ability to see how race is still being used as a class antagonism in curriculum and society. This is not to say that the country is bad or that all people are racist, but rather that for a more free and equitable nation, our ideas and how they inform society and human interactions must be considered.

The catalyzing principles of society are present in our schools (Bowles & Gintis, 2011, Rodriguez, 2008). Who is allowed to know and how they are supposed to understand history is reflected in curricula and deeply linked to the larger society. These realities continue to be how domination and social control are mediated and reproduced (Apple, 2018). Domination and control are not homogenously applied across schools. Similarly, other frames of analysis are valuable for understanding their social concerns. However, the skills students are taught as historians and as civic actors and ideas they are taught about justice, have

been developed within white ideologies. Therefore, whiteness permeates critique, framing, and explanations provided, which will shape how students will come to understand race and class. When students and teachers reject these structures and ideologies, they are situated as defiant, difficult to work with (Willis, 1984), and in the case of students of color, demonstrating the racist stereotypes that the ideology puts forth.

Ultimately, critique is needed in social studies education to adequately address injustice in curriculum, pedagogy, and society. Many possibilities exist to help teachers and teacher educators achieve the needed critique, personally, and with their students. First, teachers and teacher educators might use frameworks that center intersectionalities such as race, gender, sexuality, and other class antagonisms, by pairing these frames with inquiries which illuminate the historical realities of social constructs and how they are understood in contemporary society. Consider, Federici's (2004) analysis of class, gender, and sexuality, Roediger's (1999) analysis of class and whiteness, or the many examples provided in this piece. Further, teachers can focus on the agency of these groups rather than purely their oppression. These conversations are vital if social studies educators are to adequately prepare students for the realities of civil society. Second, teachers and teacher educators must consider the ways they, themselves, exist within the social relationship of production and teaching. This means being self-critical about how one's pedagogical posture is informed by issues of race, class, and whiteness and other antagonisms. Third, teachers and teacher educators can ensure curriculum and instruction are focused on justice, even in the face of power (Magill, 2021). An extension of this idea, fourth, teachers can be supported to teach what they

know to be the ideological and historical realities in the U.S. and the world by working in intellectual solidarity with other like-minded teachers (Magill & Rodriguez, 2021). Together communities of intellectuals can work past what they may understand to be controversial social issues to engage in good faith, transformational dialogue (Hess, 2002; Journell, 2013; Magill & Blevins, 2020) to transform knowledge and contemporary instances of injustice and deficit perspectives. Social studies teachers should be supported in developing pedagogical content knowledge, political and ideological clarity, and the skills and justifications to apply criticality to their teaching and inquiries (Blevins, Magill, & Salinas, 2020). Further, we can demonstrate how social studies education can exist in and beyond classrooms (Magill, Smith, Blevins, & LeCompte, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The alienation of racial (and other) groups creates class antagonism that promotes working-class exploitation across race. Subsequently, jobs that cannot be shipped overseas and traditional working-class labor has made the shift to service, gig, and part-time labor, an effective tool of austerity. Race relations continue to manifest as class antagonism because white ideology continues to precede class solidarity and consciousness as an effective tool of social control (Magill & Rodriguez, 2021). Racism continues to be re-affirmed because of white ideology and the power structure that situates meaning. People must be willing and able to have a conversation about how race and whiteness function as class antagonisms.

Historical presentation fundamentally shapes how we see and understand the present. Naming race as a construct within class struggle is a powerful

way to teach about the ideological undercurrent that has permeated the entire history of the US. Social studies teachers have been charged with this task but have been trained to see their discipline through factual trivia, wars, and narrativizations that leave little room for the complex power relations that inform history and society. Identity politics in curriculum and society continue to ensure the class relations for a neoliberal society are intact. White neoliberal and white Nationalist ideology functions as two sides of the same coin in that they continue to use race as a class antagonism to situate the economic interests of political elites.

Education is foundational to the type of cultural exchange and critique needed to transform race as a class antagonism. True education is part of the educational practice of freedom because it includes critique, cultural exchange, and praxis (Duarte, 1999; Freire, 1976 & 2000). It includes cultivating our mind and values, our epistemologies, and ontologies. When we read history, it helps us read the world. When we read the world, we can change the world. Developing our historical consciousness allows clarity when approaching alienation and helps us announce a more beautiful world as an essential part of the project of humanization and social transformation (Freire, 2000; Hegel, 1977; Marx & Engels, 1968).

REFERENCES

- Anderson, C. (2016). *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*. Bloomsbury.
- Ansley, F. L. (1997). "White supremacy (and what we should do about it)". In (Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J.) (Eds.). (pp. 592–595). *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror*. Temple University Press.
- Apple, M. W. (2018). *Ideology and curriculum*. Routledge.
- Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Macrae, S. (2000). Space, work, and the "New Urban Economics." *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3, 279–300.
- Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. Routledge.
- Blevins, B., Magill, K., & Salinas, C. (2020). Critical historical inquiry: The intersection of ideological clarity and pedagogical content knowledge. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 44(1), 35-50.
- Borsheim-Black, C., & Sarigianides, S. T. (2019). *Letting go of literary whiteness: Antiracist literature instruction for white students*. Teachers College Press.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2011). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. Haymarket Books.
- Breen, T. (1973). A changing labor force and race relations in Virginia 1660-1710. *Journal of Social History*, 7(1), 3-25.
- Brown, A. L., & Brown, K. D. (2015). The more things change, the more they stay the same: Excavating race and the enduring racisms in US curriculum. *Teachers College Record*, 117(14), 103-130.
- Carnegie, A. (2006). *The "gospel of wealth" essays and other writings*. Penguin.
- Chang, G. H. (2019). *Ghosts of gold mountain: The epic story of the Chinese who built the transcontinental railroad*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Christopher, R. (2009). *A carpenter's daughter: A working-class woman in higher education*. Sense.

- Cole, M. (2009). Critical race theory comes to the UK: A Marxist response. *Ethnicities*, 9(2), 246-269.
- Collins, C. (2018). What is white privilege, really?. *Teaching Tolerance*, 60, 1-11.
- Craven, A. O. (1930). Poor whites and negroes in the Ante-Bellum south. *The Journal of Negro History*, 15(1), 14-25.
- Crowley, R. M., & Smith, W. L. (2020). A divergence of interests: Critical race theory and white privilege pedagogy. *Teachers College Record*, 122(1), 1-24.
- Crowley, R. (2019). White teachers, racial privilege, and the sociological imagination. *Urban Education*, 54(10), 1462-1488.
- De Lissovoy, N., & Brown, A. L. (2013). Antiracist solidarity in critical education: Contemporary problems and possibilities. *The Urban Review*, 45(5), 539-560.
- Dicker, R. (2021, January 7). Ivanka Trump calls rioters 'American patriots,' Then deletes Tweet. *HuffPost*.
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ivanka-trump-american-patriots_n_5ff6ebc0c5b6ef6b1583ddcc.
- Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide, a study in sociology*. Free Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, N., Kjösen, A. M., & Steinhoff, J. (2019). Inhuman power. *Artificial intelligence and the future of capitalism*. Pluto Press.
- Epstein, T., & Peck, C. L. (Eds.). (2017). *Teaching and learning difficult histories in international contexts: A critical sociocultural approach*. Routledge.
- Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the witch*. Autonomedia.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks*. Grove press.
- Foner, E. (2013). *Give me liberty! An American history*. (Seagull 4th Edition). W. W. Norton & Company.
- Foster, S. J. (1999). The struggle for American identity: Treatment of ethnic groups in United States history textbooks. *History of Education*, 28(3), 251-278.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum Intl Pub Group.
- Freire, P. (1976). *Education: The practice of freedom*. Penguin.
- Guglielmo, J., & Salerno, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Are Italians white?: How race is made in America*. Routledge.
- Hayes, C. (2012). *Twilight of the elites: America after meritocracy*. Crown.
- Hegel, G., Miller, A. & Findlay, J. (1977). *Phenomenology of spirit*. Clarendon Press.
- Hess, D. E. (2002). Discussing controversial public issues in secondary social studies classrooms: Learning from skilled teachers. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 30(1), 10-41.
- Hess, D. (2004). Discussion in the social studies: Is it worth the trouble? *Social Education*, 68(2), 206-212.
- History.com Staff. (2018, August 24). Chinese exclusion Act. Retrieved March 18, 2021, from <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/chinese-exclusion-act-1882>
- Hooks, B. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. South End Press.
- Hudson, M. (2003). *Super imperialism-new Edition: The origin and fundamentals of US world dominanc*. Pluto Press.
- Ignatiev, N. (2009). *How the Irish became white*. Routledge.
- Jones, S., & Vagle, M. D. (2013). Living contradictions and working for change: Toward a theory of social

- class-sensitive pedagogy. *Educational Researcher*, 42(3), 129-141.
- Journell, W. (2013). What preservice social studies teachers (don't) know about politics and current events and why it matters. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 41(3), 316-351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2013.812050>
- Karp, A. J. (1991). *From the ends of the earth: Judaic treasures of the Library of Congress*. Library of Congress.
- Konkle, M. (2008) Indigenous ownership and the emergence of U.S. liberal imperialism. *American Indian Quarterly*, 32 (3), 297-323.
- Kumashiro, K. K. (2015). *Bad teacher! How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture*. Teachers College Press.
- Kurashige, L. (2016). *Two faces of exclusion: The untold history of anti-Asian racism in the United States*. UNC Press Books.
- Kurtscher, T. (2020). *PolitiFact - No, black lives matter is not a terrorist organization*. @politifact. <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/jul/30/facebook-posts/black-lives-matter-not-terrorist-organization/>.
- Liotard, J. F. (2000). The postmodern condition. *Sociology of Education: Theories and methods*, 1, 362.
- LeMay, M. C., Barkan, E. R., & Lemay, M. R. (Eds.). (1999). *US immigration and naturalization laws and issues: A documentary history*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. Routledge.
- Leonardo, Z., & Manning, L. (2017). White historical activity theory: Toward a critical understanding of white zones of proximal development. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 20(1), 15-29.
- Lowe, L. (2015). *The intimacies of four continents*. Duke University Press.
- Magill, K.R. (2021). Identity, consciousness, and agency: Critically reflexive social studies praxis and the social relations of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 104(1).
- Magill, K. R., & Blevins, B. (2020). Theory-praxis gap: Social studies teaching and critically transformational dialogue. *Teachers College Record*, 122(7), 1-38.
- Magill, K.R., & Rodriguez, A. (2015). Hope, rage and inequality: A critical humanist inclusive education. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 11(1), 6-27.
- Magill, K. R., & Rodriguez, A. (2021). Teaching as intellectual solidarity. *Critical Education*, 12(1).
- Magill, K.R. & Salinas, C. (2019). The primacy of relation: Social studies teachers and the praxis of critical pedagogy. *Theory & Research in Social Education*. 47(1), 1-28. DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2018.1519476
- Magill, K., Smith, V., Blevins, B., & LeCompte, K. (2020). Beyond the invisible barriers of the classroom: iEngage and civic praxis. *Democracy and Education*, 28(1), 1-11.
- Magill, K. & Talbert, T. (2019). *Taking sides: Clashing views on US History: Volume 1: The Colonial Period to Reconstruction*. McGraw Hill Education.
- Marx, K. (2019). *Capital: volume one*. Courier Dover Publications.
- Marx, K. (1989). *Contribution to the critique of political economy*. Int'L Publishers Co.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1968). *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected works*. International.

- Martell, C. C., & Stevens, K. M. (2020). *Teaching history for justice: Centering activism in students' study of the past*. Teachers College Press.
- Matias, C. E., & Mackey, J. (2016). Breakin' down whiteness in antiracist teaching: Introducing critical whiteness pedagogy. *The Urban Review*, 48(1), 32-50.
- Molenberghs, P., Halász, V., Mattingley, J. B., Vanman, E. J., & Cunningham, R. (2013). Seeing is believing: Neural mechanisms of action-perception are biased by team membership. *Human Brain Mapping*, 34(9), 2055-2068.
- Moses, N. H. (1997). *Lynching and vigilantism in the United States: An annotated bibliography*. Greenwood Press.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.
- Otto, J. S. (1980). Race and class on antebellum plantations. *Archaeological Perspectives on Ethnicity in America: Afro-American and Asian American Culture History*, 3-13.
- Rappaport, D. (2012). *The Sacco-Vanzetti trial*. StarWalk Kids Media.
- Reay, D. (1998). *Class work: Mother's involvement in children's schooling*. University College Press.
- Roediger, R. (1999). *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*. Verso.
- Roediger, D. R. (2006). *Working toward whiteness: How America's immigrants became white: The strange journey from Ellis Island to the suburbs*. Hachette UK.
- Rodriguez, A., & Magill, K. R. (2017). Beyond a value based education. In A. Rodriguez & K. Magill (Eds.) *Imagining education: Beyond the logic of global neoliberal capitalism*, 1.
- Rodriguez, A., & Magill, K. R. (2016). Diversity, neoliberalism and teacher education. *International Journal of Progressive Education*.
- Rodriguez, A. (2008). Toward a transformative teaching practice: Criticity, pedagogy and praxis. *The International Journal of Learning*.
- Rose, M. (2005). *The mind at work: Valuing the intelligence of the American worker*. Penguin.
- Queen, G. (2014). Class struggle in the classroom. In E.W. Ross (Ed.), *The social studies curriculum: Purposes, problems, and possibilities* (4th ed.) (pp. 313-334). SUNY Press.
- Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (2011). Race, class, gender and disability in current textbooks. In E. F. Provenzo, A. N. Shaver, & M. Bello (Eds.), *The textbook as discourse. Sociocultural dimensions of American schoolbooks*, 183-215.
- Spencer, H. (2018). *The Principles of Biology, Volume 1 (of 2)*. Litres.
- Stanley, T. (2011). The American civil war: A North-South divide. *History Today*. 61(9).
- Staples, B. (2019). How Italians became 'White'. *The New York Times*, 14.
- Takaki, R. (2008). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Back Bay Books/Little, Brown, and Co.
- Tatum, D. C. (2017). Donald Trump and the legacy of Bacon's rebellion. *Journal of Black Studies*, 48(7), 651-674.
- Thompson, P. (2006). The thief, the householder, and the commons: Languages of class in seventeenth-century Virginia. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 63(2), 253-280.

Race As Class Construct (Magill, 2021)

- Thorn, A. (2020, December 18). Work (or, the 5 jobs I had BEFORE YouTube) | Philosophy tube. Retrieved March 26, 2021, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_X-812q_Jc
- Tomlins, C. (2001). Reconsidering indentured servitude: European migration and the early American labor force, 1600–1775. *Labor History*, 42(1), 5-43.
- Vasquez Heilig, J., Brown, K., & Brown, A. (2012). The illusion of inclusion: A critical race theory textual analysis of race and standards. *Harvard Educational Review*, 82(3), 403-424.
- Wall, J. F. (1970). *Andrew Carnegie*. Oxford University Press.
- Williams, E. (1994). *Capitalism and slavery*. The University of North Carolina Press.
- Willis, P. (1984). *Learning to Labour*. New Society.
- Žižek, S. (2012). The revolt of the salaried bourgeoisie. *London Review of Books*, 34(2), 9-10.
- Zinn, H., Emery, K. & Reeves, E. (2003). *A people's history of the United States*. New Press.