History Lessons

Multiculturalism and the Teaching of Slavery in the United States

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by

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Abstract

The thesis examines how African American slavery was taught in American schools in the previous century and how it is done today. This is achieved by researching the depiction of the institution in numerous history textbooks published throughout the twentieth century and the modern methodologies that integrate the topic in different ways. The results show a huge contrast since the teaching of slavery in the previous century was influenced by white supremacist views in order to promote the idea of American Exceptionalism, while now the emphasis is made on encouraging students to see the issue from multiple perspectives and helping them to develop critical and analytical thinking. In addition, the findings present the 1970s as the turning point in the portrayal of slavery, challenging the assumptions that many scholars have made.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

_The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this; nor is it in the nature of the human intellect to become wise in another manner._

- John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

In 1999, Colonial Williamsburg, known for its unsuccessful attempts to include the stories about African American slaves in stage performance, decided to show slave life in order to present the black population of the town that was usually left out of the historical skits. This time they tried to represent the whole story from the runaway slaves’ perspective, showing the brutality used against them. Even though the feedback was positive, there was still tension between the visitors. While some of them found the skits emotionally intense, others “expressed longing for the historically sterilized Williamsburg of thirty years ago, a colonial fantasy town that was clean, cheery, and white.”

Multiculturalism has always been a big challenge for how national identity and patriotism are understood in the United States. Some firmly believe that promoting multicultural education by having racially mixed classrooms, including the history of minority groups in the subjects taught in schools, and shedding light on the flaws of American nation is unpatriotic. Their main argumentation is that multiculturalism will destruct unity of the nation. On the other hand, those who actively defend the benefits that multicultural education can bring argue that it is indeed patriotic to criticize for the sake of improving previously made mistakes and creating better society for the future generations.

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2 Nash, _History on Trial_, xiv-xv.
The roots of multicultural education go back to the civil rights movement of the 1950s, when oppressed groups, among them African Americans, began to protest against the established institutions, especially against the educational ones. These roots can be traced even further back in history when African American ethnic studies arose in the beginning of the twentieth century. The first scholars who tried to bring the role of African Americans into debate were Carter G. Woodson, Charles H. Wesley, George Washington Williams, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Their main aim was to change the negative stereotypes about African Americans by openly questioning the reliability of historical knowledge. Carter G. Woodson’s contributions to this process are especially remarkable. His name is connected to the establishment of the *Association of Negro Life and History*. However, it was during and after the turbulent 1960s, that the demand for including the role of African Americans in the making of American history became stronger. The 1970s saw new waves of changes, such as publishing of *Curriculum Guidelines for Multietnic Education* by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) and new guidelines, by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), in order to evaluate teacher education. Nevertheless, these changes seemed to be insufficient for the historically oppressed groups who considered the school curriculums to be merely “edited,” rather than “changed.” It was in the 1980s, when some scholars seriously took the matter into their hands. They kept working on reconstructing the school curriculums and developing new approaches to multicultural education in order to establish equality in society by teaching students democratic values free from racism. As Ovando and McLaren say: “As long as we continue to operate within the existing capitalist social relations of the larger society, there is good reason to believe that racism and social injustice will continue to pose a serious threat to democracy and that the dream of social equality will remain largely

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In this regard, the main focus of multicultural education should be on reconstruction the educational system in order to establish democracy and prevent discrimination in society.

To understand how multiculturalism has been implemented in education, I will look at the integration of the topic of slavery in American schools. I structured my research question in the following way: What are the main changes in how slavery has been taught historically? In order to answer this question, I set three sub-questions: How was slavery portrayed in history textbooks in the twentieth century? How is slavery introduced in the classroom today? What do the results of changes in classroom methodologies indicate? This way I will be able to observe the impact of the absence and the presence of multicultural approaches on the teaching of history.

The History of History: Facts, Interpretation, and Culture Wars

To analyze the role of multicultural education in teaching history, it is essential to have a look at the field of history, its evolvement, and the heated debates around it in the United States.

The representation of history has always been a controversial issue. Ever since historical writing became an established discipline, historians have been arguing about how and why history should be written. During the medieval period, historical writing was seen as God’s will because “human history was the playground of supernatural forces of Good and Evil.” This perception changed in the Romantic era, when the past, being romanticized, was seen in a different way. “The purpose of history was seen not in providing examples for some abstract philosophical doctrine or principle, but simply in finding out about the past as something to cherish and preserve.” Modern methods of historiography were developed mostly in France and Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The German historian Leopold

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8 Evans, In Defence of History, 16.
von Ranke played the biggest role in this process in the nineteenth century. First, with his help, history was detached from literature and philosophy and became an independent discipline. Second, he promoted the idea that the past should not be understood from the perspective of the present day. And third, he gave rise to the study of texts in order to examine their accuracy. Ranke’s attitude toward history continues in the twentieth century, which is known as a period when history as a field was no longer defined as an art, but rather as one of the disciplines of social science. Many of those historians, who consider history a social science, combine it with other branches, such as geography, economics, psychology, political science, archaeology, and other disciplines.

It is important to understand how historical knowledge is gathered and comprehended. There has been a big debate over whether or not understanding of the past should be based only on facts or interpretation of these facts. The simplest definition of a historical fact is something that happened in the past. However, in order to know why things happened in a certain way and what the possible impacts were, as E.H. Carr states, interpretation of facts unfolds and explains misunderstandings. As for Ranke, he compares interpretation to “interconnectedness” of historical facts. Dominick LaCapra points out that we are biased as long as we do not realize that any document represents somebody’s opinion, directed to a particular group of people. Therefore, it is an obligation for all historians to look at their sources not only in terms of simple facts that happened in the past, but to consider them from different perspectives in order to draw more transparent parallels between the past and the present. Otherwise, the presentation of history based only on facts is just “an ideological position of traditionalists and the political Right that particular facts, traditions, and heroic personalities, all untainted by “interpretation,” represent the “true” and “objective” history that citizens ought to know.” Thus while the right-wing considered factual history to be the main contributor to promoting patriotic and nationalist beliefs, a lot of scholars were

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10 Evans, In Defence of History, 76.
11 Evans, In Defence of History, 80.
12 Nash, History on Trial, 10.
concerned about the objectivity of this kind of approach to history and its outcomes for society.

During the last century, history became “a hot topic.” There has been a huge debate over reconstructing the school curriculum in America. As studies show, at the end of the twentieth century, historical knowledge of American students was not satisfactory. According to Gary Nash, the famous social historian and the creator of national standards for teaching history, the main reason is as follows: for a long time American history was predominantly white and represented a way to plant the idea of America’s uniqueness into students’ minds by providing facts without proper interpretation and emphasizing national and patriotic virtues of the country while ignoring the role of minority groups. In his book, *History on Trial: Cultural Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (2000), he writes about the development and importance of history as a field. Nash argues that the past needs to be reexamined continuously and discussed from different perspectives. Americans need to accept their historical weaknesses and flaws and not idealize their country at the expense of other nations and cultures. The author quotes Charles A. McMurry: “Americans have enough to be proud of without belittling those who chance to be their opponents, and without extravagant boasting as to their own deserts.” The role of historians is to analyze not only what happened, but also to consider various viewpoints of the historical events. Even after the civil rights movement’s efforts to make the voice of the people of color and other oppressed groups heard, together with the rise of multicultural education, American history was still taught from a single point of view, emphasizing white men’s contributions. As a result, new guidelines for history were introduced in 1992 so that history as a field would gradually become more inclusive. This change was followed by “culture wars.” The new standards were continuously attacked by the right-wing, arguing that interpretation of history and including the role of the none-white people meant “History Hijacked,” which would threaten national unity. This was despite the fact that they were merely guidelines. In his book, Nash tried to answer the criticism of the right-wing and defend the importance of interpretation of history and multiculturalism in education. For him

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13 Nash, *History on Trial*, xxi.
14 Nash, *History on Trial*, 35.
and all the other scholars who stand on the side of multicultural education, teaching multicultural history among the young generation helps to deepen their historical knowledge and develop skills for critical thinking instead of creating myths about “dead, white heroes” and interpreting history from only one perspective. However, not only the right-wing, but some scholars also view the multicultural approach to history as a challenge for national identity since considering minority groups while rewriting history supposedly might cause the deconstruction of shared cultural values and in the end, lead to the collapse of national unity. The historian Arthur M. Schlesinger is among those who see multiculturalists as extremists, but at the same time he chooses to take a moderate position in this discussion. In his book *The Disuniting of America* (1992), he argues that cultural awareness definitely has positive impacts on national unity and development of the democratic values, admitting the mistakes that have been made in the historical past. However, according to him, an exaggerated emphasis on the minority groups’ experience might represent a threat to a multiethnic country like the US. To strengthen his argument, he brings the example of Yugoslavia from his book. Apart from countries like Yugoslavia, he believes that even economically strong and successful nations are in danger of breaking because of ethnic crisis. To answer the question “if one of the top developed nations on earth can’t make a federal, multi-ethnic state work, who else can?,” Schlesinger states that it is the United States since the country managed to unite people with racially different backgrounds together. In order to explain the reason for this success, the author goes back to the formation of America, when Europeans saw the New World as a hope and future, so they left their past and culture behind and “became Americans.” Thus he states that instead of embracing their cultures, minority groups should adjust to “unique national character” America has to offer. Even though Schlesinger does not deny the shameful oppression of the non-white population and underlines their role in the making of American history, he still fears that one day America will face the same problem as Yugoslavia did. As for teaching multicultural history, Schlesinger is all for it but at the same time he sees

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16 Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*, 11.
the role of history in “promoting not group self-esteem, but understanding of the
world and the past, dispassionate analysis, judgment, and perspective…”18

Evidently, interpretation of American history has been seen as the opposite
force of representing the United States as the unique and exceptional country by the
right-wing and some scholars. For them, seeing historical events from different
perspectives would water down the contributions of white Americans. The most
important words in the Declaration of Independence that cherish equality regardless
of race, class, and gender, introduced the American nation as a country built on
democratic values. However, the very same words of the Declaration of
Independence have always been forgotten when it comes to minority groups and
their rights.

In order to answer my research question and analyze the portrayal of African
American people and the depiction of slavery, it is essential to look at American
Exceptionalism that is the core of how American history has been represented.
Therefore, I am going to provide critical analysis of the theory of American
Exceptionalism. In addition, I will go through the Myth and Symbol School since it
is the literary interpretation of American cultural past and thus overlaps with
American Exceptionalism at some extent.

**American Exceptionalism**

The term American Exceptionalism has been used as the indicator of political,
cultural, and moral contributions America has made, not only for itself, but for other
nations as well. The widespread idea that America has a unique role in the world
among other countries is present in all periods of American history. In American
Exceptionalism, Deborah L. Madsen traces the origins of American Exceptionalism,
affecting the strong formation of American identity, all the way back to Puritanism.
She discusses that America, being a special place, was seen as God’s blessing to

18 Schlesinger, The Disuniting of America, 99.
“fallen humanity.””\(^{19}\) Therefore, it was a duty of the new settlers to turn the land they inhabited into a shining example of being “a redeemer nation.”\(^{20}\) As a result, after new colonists established New England, they promoted the idea that the town would be an example for the forthcoming inhabitants since as John Winthrop says “‘eyes of all people are upon us.’”\(^{21}\) In the eighteenth century, Thomas Paine defines the role of America as a model for equality and liberty. He writes: “‘Freedom hath been hunted round the globe… Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.’”\(^{22}\) In the middle of the nineteenth century, after traveling in America, Alexis de Tocqueville gives the following description: “the “position of the Americans” is quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one.”\(^{23}\) In Thomas McCarthy’s book *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, America is compared to “new Israel” and the settlement of the new world to “exodus to the promised land.”\(^{24}\) This kind of comparison explains why America is thought to be the only nation that based itself on the ideas of human rights and therefore, became the leading country, promoting the same values worldwide.\(^{25}\) Even though many other countries saw themselves as unique for different reasons, when it comes to the United States, there are two main reasons that McCarthy lists for this assumption: showing its military strengths and abilities and acquiring more territories.

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\(^{22}\) Friedman, “American Exceptionalism: A Short Story.”

\(^{23}\) Friedman, “American Exceptionalism: A Short Story.”


after the Louisiana Purchase. That led many public figures to believe in American Exceptionalism. 26

During and after World War I and World War II, the perception of America being the leading country became increasingly stronger. After the United States proved its political and military strengths and defeated the Nazi regime in Europe, American nationalism began to rise. The US, being a democratic country, was seen as a defender of western civilization. America became a country where “the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” was supposed to be shared equally with all people, no matter which race or culture they represented. 27 Terms like the “American century” or America being the “powerhouse” were used to emphasize “those ideals that are ‘especially American.’” 28 As we can see, the ideology of American Exceptionalism has been a dominant force to present the uniqueness of American nation throughout all periods of American history. However, Heike Paul considers that the usage of the term “exceptionalism” is vague. According to her, American Exceptionalism is a “fuzzy conglomerate” consisting of religious, political, and economic exceptionalism, all of them continuously repeating themselves over time. 29

When it comes to religious exceptionalism, Paul stands with Madsen in the discussion of American Exceptionalism, representing the evolution of American character from the first days of the colonial era to the present day. She quotes the Puritans while comparing America to the “promised land” and Americans to “chosen people.” 30 As for political exceptionalism, it refers to the successful political establishment of America as a democratic nation, which is why Thomas Paine confidently wrote that “[w]e have it in our power to begin the world over again.” 31 In order to explain economic exceptionalism, Paul presents America as the land of personal success, which is expressed in economic ways. The author uses the term

28 Friedman, “American Exceptionalism: A Short Story.”
30 Paul, The Myths that Made America, 15.
31 Paul, The Myths that Made America, 15.
“immigrant myth” implying that anyone who comes to America will be able to make their “American dream” come true by achieving economic well-being.

Racism and white supremacy represent the biggest challenge in the discussion of American Exceptionalism. The idealization of America turned into racial tensions that were expressed through the Native American removal issues, as well as through covering up African American slavery. In a word, American Exceptionalism was manifested in white supremacy that “whitewashed” American history. Michael J. Sainato strongly emphasizes the existence of racism in the formation of the American nation and how white Americans used “pseudo-exceptionalism” to justify killing or forcing Native Indians to leave their territories, enslaving millions of Africans, and the existence of the institution of slavery. In his article, he also discusses that Americans have the tendency to deny their past full of racism and dominance of white power. He quotes James Baldwin in order to explain “historical obliviousness or refusal to accept responsibility for this history.” In *Unnameable Objects, Unspeakable Crimes*, Baldwin writes:

One wishes that Americans, white Americans, would read, for their own sakes, this record, and stop defending themselves against it. Only then will they be enabled to change their lives. The fact that Americans, white Americans, have not yet been able to do this- to face their history, to change their lives- hideously menaces this country. Indeed, it menaces the entire world.

As a result, according to Baldwin, the negation of unbiased historical truth has a big impact not only on America, but on the rest of the world as well. In this regard, ignoring the presence of racism, discrimination, and other mistakes in the historical past presented a way to promote “pseudo-nationalist” emotions that had devastating results on how American Exceptionalism was understood.

The idealization of American nation became the inspiration for Myth and Symbol School which represents the illustration of American Exceptionalism, when

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34 Sainato, “The Racism at Charlottsville is a Symptom of a Nation Built on White Supremacy.”
literary scholars began to look for myths and symbols that they believed created American character and numerous books around this topic were published. It also led to the establishment of American Studies as a discipline, examining American history and culture. According to Philip Gleason, the standard view of the development of American Studies is that it began in the 1920’s when scholars of history and literature tried to give rise to a new approach in order to study national culture and develop broader academic interests by setting history, philosophy, literature, sociology, and other disciplines in an American context. The foundation of the journal “American Quarterly” in 1949 and the American Studies Association in 1951 confirmed this attempt. In her book, Paul discusses that by the time American studies was in the process of establishing, American Exceptionalism represented the dominant force that had a big influence on academic life. Therefore,

> [h]istorians and political theorists [as well as scholars from other disciplines, HP] approached the past in search of historical confirmations of the nation’s unique mission and destiny. Examining the past became for scholars who were steeped in exceptionalist convictions a personal quest whereby they would understand the meaning of their “American” identity by uncovering the special significance of the nation’s institutions.\(^{35}\)

Being one of the most important authors in Myth and Symbol scholarship, Leo Marx in his *The Machine in the Garden* describes the rapid shift from agrarian America to the massive use of technology. This is done by the sudden appearance of the machine in the garden that is the symbol of how technology becomes an important part of rural life. By idealizing pastoral life, the author draws the parallel between nature and man and argues that “the farther man strays from his natural home, the farther will his spirit be debased and corrupted.”\(^{36}\) Through admiring the pastoral life, the author presents the USA as a rediscovered Eden that was once lost, calling it “paradise regained.”\(^{37}\)

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\(^{35}\) Paul, *The Myths that Made America*, 18.


Among the Myth and Symbol scholars, R. W. B. Lewis also studied the nature of the historical characters of the American culture. He presents “American Adam” as a hero of the new beginnings. The author describes him in the following way: “an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling…” 38 He notes that there is no wonder why people with strong religious ideologies connect the “new hero” to Adam. By using the Myth and Symbol approach to compare Americans to Adam and America to Eden, Lewis gives an image of Americans being naive settlers, searching for new opportunities on a new land.

Alongside Leo Marx and R. W. B. Lewis, Henry Nash Smith is also one of the prominent scholars of the Myth and Symbol School. Smith gives a strong idea of the myths, created by the Europeans, about the American West. Throughout the book, the presentation of the American West is done in terms of social and political relations. The author does not base his book on historical events, but rather on what Americans think is their historical past, especially when we are talking about the idealized West as a national symbol. As Paul discusses in her book *The Myth that Made America*, the representation of the West in *The Virgin Land* can be understood in several ways. First of all, she agrees that the West bears nationalistic character for Americans as an untouched place being rediscovered. Quoting Barry Lopez, Paul uses the term “‘homogenized national geography’” to explain her assumption. Secondly and most importantly, by romanticizing the West, the author supports the rural way of life. In this regard, Smith stands with Leo Marx while idealizing more traditional approach to life, rather than the modern one ruined with the machines. 39

Overall, Myth and Symbol School, being considered as the literary interpretation of American cultural past, overlapped with American Exceptionalism. Since the 1960s, different kinds of movements criticized the Myth and Symbol approach. The women’s movement, concerned about women’s rights and their participatory roles in the society, viewed American Adam as a symbol of the country’s patriarchal structures. As for the civil rights movement, the fact that people

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of color were either ignored or not treated equally as white people, was not accepted, as well as the idealization of the untouched wilderness since this wilderness was created and constructed by the Indian removal. The approach was also criticized for supporting American Exceptionalism by promoting the superiority of the United States. However, in order to affirm the uniqueness of the nation that considered itself predominantly white, the treatment of the people of different racial backgrounds had to be covered up. For a long time, the “bad past” had been justified by the theory of Social Darwinism that presented minority groups as inferior races who needed to be under the dominance of the ones who were “superior.” Since according to this theory, only the strong could survive, the weak supposedly could get the protection in exchange of obedience.

**Social Darwinism**

The theory of Social Darwinism, implying the “survival of the fittest,” coined by Herbert Spencer, was introduced in the nineteenth century and maintained its influence until the first decades of the twentieth century. Based on the theory of natural selection by Charles Darwin, the supporters of Social Darwinism argued that the differences in the society were determined by biologically inherited intelligence and therefore, only the superior and stronger could win in the battle of dominance. Spencer’s “survival of the fittest” had its roots in laissez-faire liberalism, allowing governmental involvement in society if it was needed in order to provide the defense for those who were the inferiors. McCarthy compares laissez-faire liberalism to “the relations between children and adults.” In this regard, the imbalance between different races, genders, and classes were justified by arguing that the non-white people, women, and the poor were benefiting in some ways from their superior groups by being “protected.” Thus the theory of Social Darwinism was used by

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imperialists, the Nazis, and the eugenics movement, which was a more radical form of Social Darwinism.\footnote{McCarthy, Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development, 74.}

If Social Darwinism was about “pseudo-protection,” eugenics suggested “perfecting the human race by getting rid of its “undesirables” while multiplying its “desirables.”\footnote{Daniel J. Kevles, “In the Name of Darwin,” PBS, \url{http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/darwin/nameof/index.html} Accessed on 16.01.2018.} The term eugenics was formed by Francis Galton who was influenced by his cousin, Charles Darwin’s theory. Galton strongly believed in the power of inheritance. Therefore, according to him, the poor, criminals, or the weak would reproduce only low societal groups. On the other hand, no social or economic situation would affect a person with good genes in a negative way.\footnote{Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America, (Oxford University Press, 1997), 156. \url{https://books.google.no/books?id=WUucYTW6ug0C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false} Accessed on 09.02.2018.} With its ideology, the Nazis used eugenics as a scientific excuse to kill lots of people because of their racial background.\footnote{Kevles, “In the Name of Darwin.”} In addition, the ideology of the movement led to the sterilization of many men and women in the United States during a couple of decades of the twentieth century, in many cases without informing the subjects.\footnote{Lisa Ko, “Unwanted Sterilization and Eugenics Programs in the United States,” PBS, 2016, \url{http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/unwanted-sterilization-and-eugenics-programs-in-the-united-states/} Accessed on 09.02.2018.} The target groups were the “inferiors,” such as women giving birth out-of-wedlock, those who had a medical history of mental illness or living in poverty, and people with “unwanted” racial background. As the research shows, a lot of girls were sterilized even before they reached their teen years. While using science as a justification for getting rid of the “undesired” population of the country, arguing that this “inferior” people would pass their genes to the future generations, in reality, the sterilization program was empowered by the racist ideology.

However, before the theory of Social Darwinism was developed and popularized, the racial ideas about the biological differences between humans based on skin color or even the form of the skull were already dominant in American reality. Expanding its territories successfully and spreading the gained power had a
considerable influence on establishing the racial ideology in America.\textsuperscript{48} In \textit{Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development}, McCarthy uses the example of Mexican War in 1848. Since it was assumed that Mexicans were unable to govern the land they possessed because of biologically determined abilities such as being “‘half-breeds’” and “‘mongrel race,’” America allowed itself to spread “more developed civilization” even further that ended in the annexation of Texas.\textsuperscript{49} The idea of Americans being the superior and exceptional race was expressed through believing that they had “to shape the destiny of the world and others, innately inferior, races as biologically destined to be subjugated or annihilated.”\textsuperscript{50} Samuel George Morton’s research played a big role in spreading this ideology. In his \textit{Crania Americana}, he presented the results of his study on the skulls of American Indians to confirm that their biologically inherited abilities stood in a big contrast with the superior, white race. His idea of racial differences was successfully adopted by Dr. Josiah C. Nott, justifying slavery by believing that African Americans had to be under the dominance of white people.\textsuperscript{51}

Evidently, Social Darwinism provided a valid argument for those who doubted the rightfulness of America’s political moves. According to American understanding of the Darwinian theory, it was “‘the white man’s burden’” to take care of his “‘little brown brother’” when it comes to black Latinos and African Americans because of their supposedly inferior race.\textsuperscript{52} In the greater part of the previous century, the homogeneity of America was expressed through teaching American history from supremacist, racist, and imperialistic points of view, promoting the ideas of “natural order.” As a result, in the next chapter, I am going to present the research on the depiction of slavery in the textbooks published throughout the twentieth century. In my analysis, I look at how the ideology of American Exceptionalism influenced the representation of one of the most controversial parts of American history, namely slavery and how the theory of Social Darwinism was used to justify discriminatory approach toward African American people.

\textsuperscript{49} McCarthy, \textit{Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development}, 72.
\textsuperscript{50} McCarthy, \textit{Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development}, 73.
\textsuperscript{52} McCarthy, \textit{Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development}, 81.
The research was done by using the qualitative method, specifically document analysis since it was the most effective way to track the changes of the teaching of slavery in the twentieth century. History textbooks were very useful sources to present these changes as most of the time, they were directly corresponding to what was happening in the country. On the other hand, it should be noted that while doing the research, I had to keep in mind the balance of the diversity of authors and the places of publication. As I decided to look at the depiction of slavery from the very early years of the twentieth century, there were certain kinds of limits, for example, the number of textbooks that could be accessed. However, with the careful search of the sources, I managed to go through at least two history textbooks per decade, collected mainly from online libraries.
Chapter 2

Slavery Justified

What did you learn in school today,
Dear little boy of mine?
I learned our government must be strong.
It’s always right and never wrong...
That’s what I learned in school.53

-Song by Tom Paxton

The theories discussed in the previous chapter had a lot of impact on the depiction of slavery in the textbooks published throughout the twentieth century. Most of the textbooks introduce students to nationalistic and patriotic history of their country, promoting the idea of the righteousness of America. Since slavery has always been one of the most controversial topics in American history, the issue is treated in different ways in different decades of the previous century. Based on the textbooks I researched, the turning point in depicting social and political history of the institution is the 1970s, standing in a disagreement with the assumptions that have been made by some scholars. After this decade, the results of the civil rights movement and later, the impact of culture wars are noticeable in the publishing industry. Since social history developed in the 1970s, I expected to find only political history of the institution in the greater part of the twentieth century. But to my surprise I came across to broad descriptions of slave life since the 1930s. In addition, the institution is discussed in a social context in the earlier years as well. Social history published before the 1970s is mostly influenced by the theories of Social Darwinism and Eugenics, supporting the ideas of biologically determined knowledge and abilities that justified slaveholding. Besides that, the reader can find various descriptions of the happy life African Americans supposedly had on plantations.

53 Nash, History on Trial, 25.
Political history published before the 1970s is based on the idea of American Exceptionalism and the myths that would maintain a good reputation of the United States. Most of the textbooks mainly introduce famous white figures playing a crucial role in the making of American history and contributing to democratic values of personal liberty, rooted in the ideas of American Exceptionalism. Mostly discussed topics are the Middle Passage, the differences between the Southern and the Northern states, and abolitionism. Another discovery is that even though I assumed there would be only facts without any interpretations, many books provide a significant amount of explanations. However, the assumptions are one-sided and coming from a white man’s perspective.

Whose Fault is It?

Almost all of the textbooks published in the twentieth century stand in an agreement that “slavery was destined to become the grave national issue.”\(^5^4\) Since textbooks from the previous century had the tendency to sharply divide historical figures into “good” and “bad,” someone had to be blamed for the existence of the institution, whether it was the British Empire, colonists, or abolitionists. The “Blame-Game” is applied to every aspect of slavery, such as to the Middle Passage, the Northern and the Southern approaches to the institution, and abolitionism.\(^5^5\) Regarding the Middle Passage, many textbooks raise their voices against the British Empire. In this way, slaveholding is presented as a burden for the colonists who got involved in the issue by the “high authority.” As for the Northern and the Southern conflict, the reader is torn between the agricultural South and the industrial North. This discussion turns into “economy versus morality” while depicting abolitionism as one of the most controversial topics in the “Blame-Game.”


The standard story tells how Dutch ships brought Africans to America despite strong attempts from the colonists to stop the process of spreading slavery.

The slave hunters kidnapped the Negros in Africa, chained them together in gangs and packed them closely into the stifling holds of their narrow wooden ships, to suffer torments on the tropical voyage from the African coast to the West Indies. When the hatches were battened down in bad weather a dozen of the poor wretches often suffocated, and their bodies were unceremoniously flung overboard. The brutal ship captains even threw sick Negros overboard deliberately, because they were insured against the loss of their “cargo” by drowning, but not by death from disease. This awful voyage was called the “middle passage.”

After describing the horrible experience slaves had on their way to America, a lot of emphasis is made on the British role in all of this, depicting the Virginia colonists’ shock at the inhuman treatment of the imported Africans and their protests to pass specific laws only to be turned down by the British Empire. These contradictory statements make the research significantly difficult. Despite making the colonists sound innocent for slavery and blaming it on Britain, the book mentions that “Yet it is true that there was almost no sentiment against Negro slavery in the colonies.” This passage practically abolishes the assumption about the innocence of the colonists and questions their attitude toward slavery. These kinds of contradictions are present in every textbook published in the beginning of the century, specifically in the 1900s and the 1910s. After the United States got involved in global political tensions, the name and the prestige of the country mattered even more. That explains why history textbooks focus on the British role in bringing Africans to America, whereas the colonies were against it. “Twisting the British lion’s tail” is still present in textbooks published in the first decades of the twentieth century. However, while condemning the slave trade and highlighting the suffering of Africans during this process, the same books give insufficient information about

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what slaves had to endure on plantations. In his letter to Thomas Cushing (1775), Samuel Hopkins discusses the double standards that were used by the colonists.

But if the slave trade be altogether unjust, is it not equally unjust to hold those in slavery, who by this trade have been reduced to this unhappy state? Have they not a right to their liberty, which has been thus violently, and altogether without right, taken from them? Have they not reason to complain of any one who withholds it from them? Do not the cries of these oppressed poor reach to the heavens? Will not God require it at the hands of those who refuse to let them go out free? If practicing or promoting the slave trade be inconsistent with what takes place among us, in our struggle for liberty, is not retaining the slaves in bondage, whom by this trade we have in our power, equally inconsistence?60

In my research, I have found that these types of assumptions are totally omitted from textbooks published in the first half of the century. Students are introduced to only one side of the issue that focuses only on the fault of the British Empire and not admitting the role of the colonists in the process. This approach toward teaching history would have prevented the development of critical thinking, which is one of the most important skills for being able to evaluate one’s own thinking and go deeper into the issue.

Abolitionism is the topic that is constantly under discussion by different authors and publishers in different decades. The description of the movement varies significantly since it represents a very controversial issue and reflects on diverse opinions. The reader can find a lot of conflicting views among authors. While some of them treat abolitionism positively, others call the activists national enemies. By focusing on the depiction of the movement and the heated discussions around it over the decades, provides better understanding of the gradual change that occurred in the interpretation of slavery.

America: A Short History of Our Country (1923) regards slavery as a “challenge to the American people” and gives a negative assumption about abolitionism.61

Hardly was peace established when abolitionists exploded a bomb under it. Slavery in these territories was but a branch, he (William Lloyd Garrison) declared. The root of evil was in the South, and must be destroyed by national authority. That was startling to a country which had never dreamed of interfering with slavery in Southern states. Around Garrison gathered a band of reformers, some fanatic, who began by denouncing slavery and ended up by calling slaveholders bad names. To the South it was irritating enough to have its institution denounced; In the North such abolitionists were regarded as dangerous agitators.62

According to this passage, slavery would not have been a big issue if not for abolitionists, whose activities are compared to the “explosion of a bomb.” It is clear that the book approaches slavery as a problem since it was the major reason for the disagreement between the states. But at the same time, those who tried to protest against the institution are considered as “fanatics” who caused even more trouble. As a result, the reader could assume the following: The institution represented an issue introduced by the British Empire to American people and when colonists finally made peace with the existence of slavery, abolitionists stepped in and made the situation worse. Promoting the innocence of America in slavery helped to maintain the status of an exceptional country.

While some books obviously take one side regarding abolitionism, others do not have the same tendency. In The United States in the Making (1946), the reader may get mixed feelings about the depiction of the topic. It is clearly stated that the movement served to protect slaves’ basic human rights that were violated under the institution. The book presents William Lloyd Garrison’s opinion in the following way: “From Garrison’s point of view, slavery was a ‘national sin,’ which neither economic profit nor political expediency could excuse. If the Constitution protected slavery, then to his mind the fundamental law of the land was ‘an agreement with

HELL.”63 After openly showing Garrison’s negative assumption about slavery, the book offers the Southerners’ opinion of slavery being a “positive good.”64 Thus the reader gets contradictory statements about the institution.

A lot of textbooks focus only on the negative causes of the movement, such as the terrible massacre of white people organized by an African American called Nat Turner. The topic is concluded by saying that “the abolitionists served only to widen the gulf between the North and the South.”65 However, this “gulf” seemed to be existing between the states even before the abolitionist movement. While discussing the differences and the conflict between the Southern and the Northern states, almost every book states that the South was agricultural, basing its economy on the labor of slaves and on the other hand, the North was industrial. “The South had grown aristocratic and fond of leisure, of power, and of good living, while the North, largely influenced by New England, had grown democratic, industrious, rich, and intolerant of the Southern social system.”66 This kind of description is very typical throughout the whole century. However, the “Blame-Game” starts with presenting slavery either from the Northern or the Southern point of view, depending on the author and the place of publication. The most usual arguments found in the pro-Southern textbooks are that the Northern states were damaged by evils of the machine and thus “the slave was almost always better off than free laborers.”67 This assumption makes the South look an appealing place, hiding the horrors of the institution. Thus the most popular phrases such as “necessary evil” and “positive good,” that are used to describe slavery in most of the textbooks throughout the twentieth century, are justified by economical arguments. “However much the enlightened men of the South deplored the existence of slavery from the point of view of ethics and humanity, they found themselves part of an industrial system which seemed to demand the Negro slave for

64 Canfield, Wilder, The United States in the Making, 328-329.
65 Canfield, Wilder, The United States in the Making, 329.
its very existence.”68 Besides that, the North is presented as the main reason for the rise of the abolitionist movement, threatening the economy of the South. On the other hand, the pro-Northern textbooks denounce the South as the place where the evil is rooted and thus the blame for the existence of slavery is put on the South. It should be noted that not all the Southern textbooks promote pro-slavery arguments and not all the Northern textbooks are anti-slavery and pro-abolitionists. That explains why for some textbooks published in Boston call abolitionists “rabid” and “fanatics.” However, students were not introduced to critical approach of the issue, such as to economic and political ties that existed between the South and North. When it comes to political connection between them, the North and the South needed each other to defeat two world powers. In order to discuss the economic aspect, it is important to have a look at how the “triangle trade” is depicted in textbooks. After describing the route of the trade, textbooks focus mainly on the investment the British Empire made in it and how much Queen Anne benefited from it. The same textbooks avoid presenting the active involvement of the North, the South, and Africans. The “triangle trade” started from Britain, carrying goods all the way to Africa to exchange them for slaves. It is worth highlighting that the ships Europeans used were built with pine trees, produced in the North. Thus the Northern economy was, in a way, dependent on ship building, serving to transport slaves. Another fact that is usually skipped in the textbooks is the role Africans played in capturing hundreds of people only to be sold as slaves.69 The last step was to bring Africans to America and take goods produced by them to Europe again. Considering these facts, the North benefited from slavery just as much the South did. In fact, one would assume that if the North had the same climate conditions the South had, they would have different attitudes toward slavery. Overall, according to the researched textbooks, the answer on the question “whose fault is slavery?” would be either side of the issue, while in reality, this complex phenomenon involved the South, the North, the British Empire, and Africans themselves.

Since the 1970s brought a lot of changes in terms of the depiction of history, students could get a completely different picture of abolitionism and its activists. The

69 Gates, “Ending the Slavery Blame-Game.”
*Adventure of the American People* (1970) presents the following description: “Of all the reformers, none were more devoted to their purpose than the abolitionists, who were determined to cleanse the country of slavery.”\(^7\)

In comparison with textbooks published earlier, this one simply describes Garrison’s activities in the process, without denouncing him as “fanatic.” Even though *A History of the United States* (1983) deems Garrison’s plan “terribly impractical,” while presenting “the bloodiest revolt” of Nat Turner, Garrison and his activities still are treated with more understanding than in textbooks published before. The following statement is provided about the issue:

The abolitionists thrived on martyrdom. In 1835 Garrison was stoned and dragged through the streets of Boston by a howling mob. Two years later Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist editor in Alton, Illinois, was killed, defending his press against a mob. Yet, every defeat seemed to win more converts. Many who had sympathized with the abolitionists’ right to free speech came to sympathize with their cause as well.\(^7\)

Thus the difference between the depictions of abolitionism published before and after the 1970s is that earlier textbooks approach the issue as a threat to white people, presenting mainly negative outcomes of the movement and not taking into consideration the suffering of African Americans under the institution. Even though the 1900s and the 1910s are exceptions, while writing about abolitionism in a positive context, it is done very briefly and slavery is still described as a “necessary evil.” However, after the 1970s, the textbooks present both the activists who based the abolition movement on moral grounds and those who represented political abolitionists in the following way:

The program of the political abolitionists was at least more practical than Garrison’s, but it did encourage further compromise. To some, slavery was becoming tolerable in the South, so long as it remained there. The antislavery

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forces, they thought, should concentrate on preventing the expansion of slavery into the West.72

This passage gives the reader a fuller picture of the issue. After presenting pros and cons of Garrison’s activities and political abolitionists’ approach, students would see the necessity of both sides. As political abolitionists were choosing the middle ground in order to avoid conflict, they were actually serving to stop spreading slavery, rather than completely eliminating the institution. On the other hand, those who viewed slavery as evil were the ones who raised their voices, even though they did not have a clear plan of action. Considering various angles of the issue would engage students in a critical discussion that would help them to analyze abolitionism, being one of the most important historical events in American history, more deeply. Generally speaking, the discussed description of abolitionism is found in most of the textbooks published after the 1970s.

Overall, the “Blame Game” represented a way to cover up shameful historical mistakes in order to affirm American Exceptionalism and defend the political moves of the nation. This approach was believed to strengthen nationalistic and patriotic views among student for many decades. The changes that occurred since the 1970s shed light on many aspects of slavery that lacked attention before. However, besides the depiction of the institution, the treatment of African American people, who were described merely as slaves or “Negros,” is also important to analyze the attitude of the educational system toward slavery. In the following section, I will discuss how Social Darwinism was used to present African Americans as the inferiors to justify slaveholding.

The Inferiors and the Superiors

The main theoretical frameworks that are characteristic to social history of slavery published before the 1970s are Social Darwinism and Eugenics. The ideology of both of these theories advocated for the existence of the institution by supporting the ideas

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of natural selection and the superior race winning over the inferior one because of supposedly strong genes. Eugenics, being more radical form of Social Darwinism, promoted the theory that granted “the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.” Therefore, according to the descriptions provided by history textbooks published between the 1930s and the 1970s, African Americans were unable to develop further based on the limited capacities they possessed and thus it was believed that the life they had on plantations was the maximum they could achieve. As a result, students would read numerous assumptions about the inability of African Americans to learn new tasks linked with biologically determined lack of intelligence. However, the very first mentioning of slaves in terms of Darwinian theory can be found as early as in 1911, stating that “labor fitted his intellect” (slave’s intellect), as if slaves were underdeveloped people without further abilities in life.

*American History: from the Discovery of America to the Present Day* (1933) offers the following statement:

> The slaves, too, usually led a happy life. Although they were educated only in the work they had to do, almost never traveled beyond the home plantation, and seldom developed into anything but mere working machines, they were usually treated humanely and with great consideration.

According to this passage, slaves were taught just a few skills to do their jobs. This paragraph does not show much of the widespread ideology of Social Darwinism directly since it does not present whether or not African Americans could learn more. On the other hand, a lot of books provide the same kind of assumption about slaves’ education, that they were taught only specific things they needed to work and thus we can consider two possible hypotheses. First, Americans actually believed that African Americans were not able to progress in terms of their knowledge and second, the promotion of this idea served the purpose to justify slaveholding not only at the

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73 “Social Darwinism.”


75 Muzzey, An American History, 305.

time of its existence, but further on in the twentieth century when students were taught about American Exceptionalism. However, if we approach it even more critically, no textbook mentions the reason slaves were kept from education that white people had access to. Since education is one of the most powerful elements for human development, it was not in white society’s best plans to have well-educated slaves. Literate African Americans represented the biggest danger to slaveholders and specific laws were passed that forbade anyone teaching slaves reading and writing. Everyone knew that knowledgeable people would be difficult to keep under such a degrading system as slavery. Of course, students were not taught of this side of the issue in the twentieth century as it would have questioned American values among the young generation. Instead, the authors of textbooks embraced the racist ideology of presenting African Americans as the inferiors.

The influence of the theories of Social Darwinism and Eugenics is present in terms of the social division of slaves that is provided by *A History of American Government and Culture: America’s March toward Democracy - Volume IV* (1931):

> Among the slaves as among the whites there were social distinctions. A lady’s maid, a “mammy,” a butler, a coachman, and a cook held the highest positions. They had better meals, better clothing, less work, and, on the whole, better treatment than the field hands. Often they were endeared to the family and held positions of confidence.77

This passage states that slaves had different social roles like white people. Ironically, the division between African Americans did not spread beyond working in the household or on plantations, while white Americans could consider various career paths if they wished so. Teaching students that slaves were incapable of learning new things and still were employed, provided with good food, clothes, and shelter, would make them think that African Americans did not deserve all the advantages they received since they could not even do their jobs properly. The division of races in terms of their biological abilities contributed to justifying the idea that African American people had to be in the service of white population for the good of both sides. White Americans were assumed to be more developed people and therefore, as

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it was believed, they had moral duty to govern over “underdeveloped, savage people.” In return, African Americans supposedly benefited from this as well since they were better off under slavery than in Africa.

Some books provide other reasons for the inefficiency of slaves, such as laziness. *Cavalier Commonwealth. History and Government of Virginia* (1957) gives the following description:

Colonial observers also pointed out that most Negros did not learn well the most skilled types of labor – carpentry, bricklaying, nail making, tanning, weaving, and so on. But there is abundant evidence that many of them were employed in such occupations with satisfactory results.\(^{78}\)

*The United States in Making* (1946) shortly mentions the issue: “the slave usually was not a good worker; he lacked initiative and interest, and required much supervision.”\(^{79}\) Adding slaves’ laziness and low desire to work to already spread assumptions about their limited abilities to acquire knowledge, served as a strong defensive argument to make the institution sound less evil. Besides that, the reason why many textbooks described slaves’ laziness was the popular idea of the theory of “Dysaethesia Aethiopica.” In 1851, American physician Samuel A. Cartwright presented Dysaethesia Aethiopica as a mental illness with physical symptoms, stating that it mostly affected African Americans. According to him, one of the main characteristics of the disease included skin insensibility. Therefore, he concluded that those slaves, who had the disease, did not feel the pain of whipping.\(^{80}\) In fact, he suggested the following method to cure them: “The best means to stimulate the skin is, first, to have the patient well washed with warm water and soap; then, to anoint it all over in oil, and to slap the oil in with a broad leather strap; then to put the patient to some hard kind of work in the sunshine.”\(^{81}\) Another symptom that Dr. Cartwright


\(^{79}\) Canfield, Wilder, *The United States in the Making*, 327.


thought accompanied the disease was absent mindedness that supposedly turned African Americans into lazy, inefficient, and irresponsible people.

From the careless movements of the individuals affected with the complaint, they are apt to do much mischief, which appears as if intentional, but is mostly owing to the stupidness of mind and insensibility of the nerves induced by the disease. Thus, they break, waste and destroy everything they handle,--abuse horses and cattle,--tear, burn or rend their own clothing, and, paying no attention to the rights of property, steal others, to replace what they have destroyed. They wander about at night, and keep in a half nodding sleep during the day.\textsuperscript{82}

Given the provided assumptions, there is no wonder why twentieth century textbooks published before the 1970s promoted the idea of slaves having lack of will, while justifying whipping as a “cure” for skin insensitivity and the feeling of sleepiness. Above all, the theory of Dysaethesia Aethiopica suggested that the reason slaves escaped was the disease itself, not the desire of freedom. This idea represented an additional advocacy for the institution being a positive aspect in African Americans’ lives since as implied, it was only the disease that made them flee.

The 1970s brought many changes to depicting slavery. \textit{American Spirit: A History of the United States} (1985) describes African American slaves in the following way: “Black slaves came from many different regions of Africa. They brought with them their special skills as farmers, toolmakers, and traders. They also brought their customs, languages, and cultures. Their work helped the colonies, and their culture enriched American life.”\textsuperscript{83} The reader would not find the old way of presenting slaves as lazy people and incapable of learning new tasks. Instead, students would get the knowledge that slaves were contributing to the development of America not only economically, but culturally as well, and therefore, young learners could conclude themselves that African American people represented an active part of American society. \textit{Why We Remember: United States History through Reconstruction} (1998) offers cultural background information about African Americans even in more details:

\textsuperscript{82} Cartwright, “Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race.”
African religious beliefs, are still followed in many parts of the Americas. African rhythms can be heard in styles of American music ranging from Dixieland jazz to Delta blues and from rock and roll to reggae. Many of our most inspiring public speakers – leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Marian Wright Edelman, and Jesse Jackson – have drawn on a tradition that places great value on the power of the spoken word. 84

Besides that, on the same page, students could read about how art was made in African kingdoms. This way, students would be able to have awareness that African American people were not cultureless at all, as it was always described in previously published textbooks. Instead, they had a very good insight in art, culture, and music. If students were taught before that slaves were from a distant, savage part of the world, at the end of the twentieth century, some books started including information about ancient civilizations of African kingdoms. Apart from describing plantation life, textbooks continue to highlight cultural contributions of African Americans to the American society, such as presenting musical instruments and everyday tools that slaves made and used. 85

On the whole, the theory of Social Darwinism provided a justification for white supremacist and racist attitudes toward African Americans. Seeing them only as slaves with biologically determined lack of abilities and thus assuming that the institution of slavery was the best choice for them, represented a valid argument to defend slaveholding. This applies to not only the description of African Americans, but to the depiction of their everyday life as well.

**Pursuit of Happiness**

The myths about the happy life slaves had on plantations were dominant in most of the textbooks published between the 1930s and the 1970s. A significant amount of attention is dedicated to describing how African Americans enjoyed good food,

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clothes, and shelter, nice treatment, warm relationship with their masters, and even social security. The image of the United States had a lot of importance, not only internationally, but among the young generation of the country as well, especially during the Great Depression. Therefore, authors were very careful in order to not lead students to doubt the “greatness” of their country. With the ongoing global and local political situation, American authors would never view slavery as a shameful past of the United States since it would be a big threat to national identity. The country’s exceptional role of being a model for equality and liberty would not focus on the real, unbiased truth of slave life as it would question the democratic values of America. By reading history textbooks published between the 1930s and the 1970s, the reader gets an impression that slaves would have never had as many benefits back in Africa as they had under the institution since, as described, they were considered as family members by their white owners.

Even though social history of slavery appears since the 1930, there are some exceptions that were accessible for students earlier than the 1930s. The description of ship experience is the only topic every author from every period agrees was horrible and did not fit in the tales of the happy life slaves had. The reader could get the following statements about the “Middle Passage” in An American History (1911):

The slave hunters kidnapped the Negros in Africa, chained them together in gangs and packed them closely into the stifling holds of their narrow wooden ships, to suffer torments on the tropical voyage from the African coast to the West Indies. When the hatches were battened down in bad weather a dozen of poor wretches often suffocated, and their bodies were unceremoniously flung overboard. The brutal ship captains even threw sick Negros overboard deliberately, because they were insured against the loss of their “cargo” by drowning, but not by death from disease. This awful voyage was called the “middle passage.”

It is true that David Saville Muzzey is considered as one of the few progressive historians of his time and thus one would assume this description of the “Middle Passage” is the result of his approach toward writing about slavery. However, I came
across the same assumptions of the topic from other authors as well. Here is what
*Fearon’s United States History* (1990) wrote about the same topic:

> Slaves were brought to America on large ships. The cruel way they were
treated began the moment they boarded the ships in Africa. Slaves were
crammed in below deck. They were so close together they could hardly
breathe. Usually slaves were chained to each other. Diseases spread, many died
on board ship. If the slaves tried to rebel, they would be beaten and sometimes
even thrown overboard.\(^{87}\)

According to these passages, the hardships started from Africans’ journey to
America. They were not going to have better life at all, as it was a widespread
assumption in the textbooks published throughout the twentieth century. However,
the “Middle Passage” is the only topic that is openly admitted to be unbearable.
Other than that, textbooks published before the 1970s promote the idea of the
carefree life slaves had.

The reader can find the first descriptions of happy African Americans as early
as in the 1920s. In *America: A Short History of Our Country* (1923) students could
read: “The Negros were naturally musical; many had good voices; all were fond of
singing and dancing. Much of their music was weird croonings brought from savage
Africa, and melodious songs were composed here for religious meetings.”\(^{88}\) The
image of dancing and singing slave has always been very popular since it hid the
horrors of slavery by claiming that African Americans were happy under the
institution. In fact, only few knew that their songs were not dedicated to their good
life but instead, sometimes it was the best way to get away from the sorrow slaves
had to carry every day. Since students were not informed about this side of slave
life, they would imagine a different picture of slavery.

*A History of American Government and Culture: America’s March toward
Democracy-Volume IV* (1931) offers the following information about the food and
the clothes provided for slaves:

> On some plantations the slaves cooked their own meals and tended their little
gardens in such spare time as they had. On other plantations a cook prepared

\(^{87}\) Joanne Suter, *Fearon’s United States History*, (Belmont, California: Fearon Education, 1990), 38.

the meals for the field hands in order that the workers might have more rest and better food. Clothing, of course, was very crude – in summer, cotton jackets and trousers for the men and calico gowns for the women. In winter woolen jackets, hats, and shoes were usually added.  

*Alabama History for Schools* (1961) also describes what slaves ate for dinner:

Slaves occasionally sold chickens and vegetables, and with the money thus earned, bought special luxuries, such as candy, coffee, tea and sugar. Christmas and other holidays usually brought special feasts. When crops were laid by, faithful workers were often rewarded with a particular treat, such as a barbecue. Charles Lyell, the British geologist, told of a party that certain slaves gave for their friends at which they served roast turkey, jelly, ice cream, and cakes. Such feasting was unusual, however.

Based on these assumptions, slaves were provided with good care that would include clothes suitable for the season and proper food that was sometimes served for them so they could have time to work. African Americans could even afford “luxuries” on special occasions. All these descriptions created an idyllic picture of slave life that would be a perfect defensive argument against those who doubted the beneficent attempt of white “civilized” people to contribute to the welfare of African Americans, who would not be able to afford the same advantages in their homeland.

Other passages depict slaves’ supposedly carefree life in more general way. *The United States in the Making* (1946) gives the following depiction:

On the whole, the slaves of the South were considerately treated; in fact, they were too valuable to be dealt with over-harshly. They were, in most cases, adequately fed and cared for, and they submitted in general to their lot without protest. They probably did not work any harder than the northern “hired man,” and at least they had fewer worries about unemployment and the insecurity of old age. House servants were better treated than field hand, though conditions varied in different localities and even on neighboring plantations.

*America, Land of Freedom* (1956) seems to be avoiding describing what it was like for slaves to live in the South. The reader comes across just a paragraph about slave life in the sub-chapter “Plantation Days in the South:”

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Most of the work on the plantations was done by Negros under the direction of overseers. In addition to raising crops each plantation had to furnish practically everything its owner needed. There were little shops where Negro shoemakers and carpenters worked. The women slaves spun and wove the cloth that was needed. There were vegetable gardens and poultry yards. Butter was made in the dairy from cream kept in the little spring-house near by.  

The life slaves had on plantations is pictured as peaceful way to live. African Americans were engaged in different activities besides working in the fields, while women were busy making clothes that would be adequate for the weather. In addition, they could enjoy fresh food. This assumption is highlighted in This is America’s Story (1961) as well. The textbook presents the Southern point of view about slavery and focuses on the benefits Africans got under the institution:

Was he not better off on a well-run plantation than as a savage in the jungles of Africa? And was he not happier than many of the white workers in the northern factories? When there was no work, the northern factories closed down. Workers were out of a job and had no wages to support their families. “At least,” said the Southerner, “the average slave is fed and clothed. Some attention is given to his health. And he has no worries about losing his job.”

Comparing African Americans to “savages” and their homeland to “jungles,” made slaves look like primitive people. The myth about the agrarian South being much better place for African Americans to enjoy the benefits offered to them stood in a big contrast with the industrial North that could not be trusted. According to the passage, people were left unemployed because of the lack of work in the factories. By highlighting this fact, the presentation of the South is even more appealing. Some textbooks also mention that slaves were provided by social security. Cavalier Commonwealth. History and Government of Virginia (1957) gives the following information:

Of course the slave was not free to change employers, to go and come as he wished, to keep what he earned, or to stand on an equal footing before the

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law. Yet his condition had its advantages. He usually worked the accepted workweek of the colony – from sunrise to sundown daily except Sunday. He enjoyed long holidays, especially at Christmas. He did not work as 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 collective social security. Generally speaking, his food was plentiful, his clothing adequate, his cabin warm, his health protected, his leisure carefree. He did not have to worry about hard times, unemployment, or old age. 94

The main focus in this quote is on claiming that not only were slaves better off under the institution, but they enjoyed life more than free workers did. This claim diminishes the importance of the slavery issue by depicting it almost idyllically. Basically, African Americans supposedly had a “guaranteed job” even though they were not equal to the rest of the society. *Alabama History for Schools* (1961) also highlights the social security offered to slaves:

In one respect, the slave was almost always better off than free laborers, white or black, of the same period. The slave received the best medical care which the times could offer. There are plantation records which show large sums spent on doctors' bills for the care of slaves. The ill health of the slave meant a loss of working time to the master, and the death of a slave was a great economic loss.95

In addition, we read that the stories about the cruel treatment of slaves were invented by the Northerners and in fact, African American workers were considered almost like family members by their masters:

We know, furthermore, that on many plantations masters and servants lived in close touch and with warm friendliness. The wiser slave-owners – and there were many such – were considerate of the family relations of slaves. There are many records of planters who refused to sell the members of a family separately; there are other records of those who refused to buy slaves because the slaves had expressed a dislike for them as owners.96

These kinds of descriptions of the relationship between the master and the slave painted a sentimental picture of the plantation life. The owner is presented almost

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94 Hamphill, Schlegel, Engleberg, *Cavalier Commonwealth*, 120.
like a father for his slaves. Since the widespread idea about slaves was the following: “…indolent, playful, sensual, imitative, subservient, good-natured, versatile, unsteady in purpose, devoted, and affectionate,” it was assumed that they needed to be under the guidance of “mentally superior” people. The descriptions of the paternal bond between them helped to keep a good reputation of white slaveholders. This approach provides a strong advocacy for enslaving millions of people and keeping the institution.

As for slaves’ lives published in the last three decades of the twentieth century, we get a radically different image, describing the hardships of the daily work while not having enough food and proper clothes. Students could get full picture of the institution by reading about how slaves were punished, the sadness of separating family members from each other, and the reasons for escaping from masters.

In *The Free and the Brave: the Story of the American People* (1967), we read more varied information about slave life. The author even quotes Frederick Douglass while describing slavery:

> In law, the slave has no wife, no children, no country, and no home. He can own nothing, possess nothing, acquire nothing, but what must belong to another. To eat the fruit of his own toil, to clothe his person with the work of his own hands, is considered stealing. He toils that another may reap the fruit…he eats unbolted meal, that another may eat the bread of fine flour; he labors in chains at home, under a burning sun and biting lash, that another may ride in ease and splendor…he is sheltered only by the wretched hovel, that a master dwell in a magnificent mansion; and to this condition he is bound down as by an arm of iron.  

*A History of the United States* (1983) also pays considerable attention to the issue of slavery and offers information about the food provided for slaves, written by Solomon Northup who was a field worker.

> The hands are required to be in the cotton fields as soon as it is light in the morning. With the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be idle a moment until it is too dark to see. When the moon is full, they often times labor

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till the middle of the night. They do not dare to stop even at dinner time, nor return to the quarters until the order to halt is given by the driver.99

These descriptions stand in a contrast with what textbooks usually told about slave life in the previous decades. From these passages, it is clear that field workers were provided only with enough food to barely survive. Getting a different perspective and realizing that African Americans did not enjoy the life portrayed before, students would be introduced to the new reality that was hidden from them. There are many other examples of the struggle slaves went through. One of them is about living conditions.

The softest couches in the world are not to be found in the log mansion of the slave. The one on which I lay year after year, was a narrow plank. My pillow was a stick of wood. The bedding was a coarse blanket with not a rag or shred extra.

The cabin is constructed of logs, without a floor or window. The latter is altogether unnecessary, because the crevices between the logs admit sufficient light. In stormy weather the rain drives through them, making the cabin comfortless and extremely disagreeable. The rude door hangs on great wooden hinges. In one end is constructed an awkward fireplace.100

Based on this passage, after extremely difficult schedule of the day, not getting the right amount of food and rest, slaves would go to the place that would hardly even be called shelter. The book also presents very openly the punishment African Americans got if they did not do their job the way their master wished.

When a new hand, one unaccustomed to the business, is sent for the first time into the field, he is whipped up smartly, and made for that day to pick as fast as he possibly can. At night it is weighed, so that his capability in cotton picking is known. He must bring in the same weight each night following. If it falls short, it is considered evidence that he has been lazy and a greater or less number of lashes is the penalty.101

Overall, students are introduced to a very different side of slave story from what they used to hear before. The previous descriptions of slave life saying that African Americans were almost like family members and they enjoyed good food

and clothes, offered by the earlier textbooks, disappear at the end of the century. Instead, the following quotes clearly show the tense relationship between the owner and the slave: “Slaves had no rights. To their owners, they were property. And like property, they were bought and sold. Many of the owners worked their slaves like animals.”102 “The owner of slaves, not the slave father, completely controlled the lives of all members of a slave family. This weakening of family patterns among slaves was one of the slave system’s most inhuman aspects.”103 Since the law was not on the side of slaves, their lives did not belong to them, but instead, to their masters. The condition of the family bond was completely up to white owners since every family potentially faced separation. Even marriage between African Americans could not happen without the permission of their masters.104 By having total control on important decisions of slaves’ lives, the owners expressed white supremacy. Generally speaking, “African slaves were the only group unable to share the opportunities of freedom and equality that were open to most of settlers.”105 The most important words of the Declaration of Independence that many Americans know by heart today - “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness,” were ignored not only during the existence of slavery, but throughout the greater part of the twentieth century as well. It was Martin Luther King Jr. who highlighted these words again, influencing the civil rights movement.106 Promoting the idea that freedom and equality had to be celebrated by every human being regardless of race, class, and gender, had a lot of impact on the ongoing situation and thus it explains the changes that occurred in publishing of history textbooks.

White supremacist attitude is also expressed by ignoring or belittling the role African Americans played in the formation of the nation, while emphasizing the contributions of white Americans. Therefore, the following section will provide an

102 Suter, Fearon’s United States History, 37.
105 Todd, Triumph of the American Nation, 4.
insight into what American students used to learn about their heroes in the twentieth century.

**Heroes**

Focusing on white politicians in important historical events of the United States is characteristic for textbooks published in the first half of the twentieth century. Writing about famous African Americans who also contributed to American history was very unusual for the first decades. Since social history develops later on, it is not uncommon that we come across only names of prominent people and dates of events. However, these names are predominantly white, omitting the role of minority groups. For example, while writing about abolitionism, if it is mentioned in the positive context, such as “an act by which four millions of slaves were brought from the night of bondage to the sunlight of the freedom,” it is done only to highlight the heroism of Abraham Lincoln who set slaves free.107

This was the monumental event of the war, perhaps the wisest thing President Lincoln ever did or ever could do. In after years it will perhaps be regarded as the greatest event of the country. Few men in all history have had an opportunity of doing a deed of so vast and far-reaching importance.108

Alongside with Lincoln, students could find the pictures of Thomas Jefferson, as well as information about his contributions to ending slavery in case textbooks were open to the topic of slavery. However, no textbook mentions his contradictory attitudes toward the institution and especially his personal life. Instead, he is only portrayed as one of the founding fathers, a hero, or a national icon for freedom. For a long time his opposing views about his contemporary issues were ignored in order to preserve his fame and let him remain an idol in the eyes of Americans. Condemning slavery based on the argument of personal liberty and supporting abolitionism, while keeping slaves for himself and believing that African Americans represented an

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“inferior race,” made him, on the one hand, one of those few people who raised their voices against the institution but on the other hand, one of those many people approving the ideas later theorized as Social Darwinism. The article, “Jefferson the Contradiction,” published in The New York Times, provides a good explanation why historians did not pay enough attention to this before: “the way Americans viewed themselves, their heritage and their times has been dominated by a simplistic vision that sharply distinguished between good and evil, freedom and slavery, heroes and villains, the noble character and the hopelessly flawed.”

Therefore, in the period of creating myths about white heroes and constantly emphasizing the exceptional role of the United States, Jefferson’s opposing views stayed behind the curtains.

There is no doubt that Jefferson, Lincoln, and many other white people played a huge role in the making of American history. However, while not giving any information about well-known African Americans who were part of the ongoing situation and just highlighting Ned Turner’s bloody rebellion, students were introduced to the history of their country that included only white heroes dealing with troublesome African Americans.

The roots for the change in history writing go back to the 1950s and the 1960s, when civil rights movement became stronger and people started demanding protection for minority groups. However, the noticeable transformation is seen in the 1970s and in the following decades, both in political and social history of slavery. Later on, culture wars played a huge part in this process as well. On the other hand, the right-wing was strongly opposing these changes by using the terms like “the end of history”, “political correctness”, and presenting history as “grim and gloomy.”

In response, Gary Nash and his supporters argued that these changes were meant to encourage students being engaged in discussions about important topics, among them about slavery that was not analyzed or interpreted critically by young learners before. Textbooks started presenting the names of African Americans that actively took part in the ongoing political situation.

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Many blacks elected to Congress and to state office were well educated. Among them were Francis Cardozo, of South Carolina, who was educated at the universities of Glasgow and London, and Jonathan Gibbs, of Florida, a graduate of Dartmouth College.\textsuperscript{111}

This information stands in a big contrast with what is provided in social history of slavery published before the 1970s since slaves are described as intellectually limited, while this passage proves the opposite and one would assume that with the proper opportunities African Americans could acquire knowledge, get educated, and even be engaged in politics. However, not all kinds of information published after the 1970s prove the change in depicting objective story of slavery. \textit{The Adventure of the American People} tells about African American soldiers fighting for the Confederate:

The first black soldiers were three regiments of free blacks of Louisiana and two of former slaves (the Fist South Carolina and First Kansas Colored regiments). The first unit formed of northern blacks was the 54\textsuperscript{th} Massachusetts Infantry, under the command of Colonel Robert G. Shaw, of Boston. Frederick Douglass, the leading black abolitionist, enthusiastically recruited for the 54\textsuperscript{th}, telling his audience: “We can get at the throat of treason and slavery through Massachusetts.”

Years later Shaw’s deputy commander said of the black troops: “We called upon them in the day of our trial, when volunteering had ceased, when the draft was a partial failure...Fortunate indeed it is for us, as well as for them, that they were equal to the crisis; that the grand historic moment which comes to a race only once in many centuries came down to them, and they recognized it...” Some 38,000 black troops died in army service – about a fifth of those enrolled.\textsuperscript{112}

According to Truman R. Clark, a professor of American history, there are several explanations for circulating this kind of claim. The biggest reason for spreading the idea of African American Confederate soldiers is that it makes it sound as if there was nothing wrong with the institution since slaves chose to defend the South, which supposedly should not have been that terrible place for African Americans.\textsuperscript{113} Clark also highlights in his article that calling slaves soldiers does not depict the whole

\textsuperscript{111}Graff, Krout, \textit{The Adventure of the American People}, 300.

\textsuperscript{112}Graff, Krout, \textit{The Adventure of the American People}, 280.

truth, especially when there is no mention that slaves were taken to army either by
force, since there was a constant lack of solders in the South, or they had to
accompany their owners.\textsuperscript{114} The information provided by the website Civil War
Trust confirms Clark’s assumption of forced military service and in addition, we can
read that “Black men were not legally allowed to serve as combat soldiers in the
Confederate Army-they were cooks, teamsters, and manual laborers.”\textsuperscript{115} In fact, it
was only in 1865 that a new law let African Americans officially serve in the
Confederate army. However, the war ended after a short period of time and there is
no existing documentation that would prove African American combats in the
army.\textsuperscript{116} The claims provided by \textit{The Adventure of the American People} would not
have been surprising in the early twentieth century when textbooks, especially
published in the South, actively highlighted the social and political benefits slaves
received under the institution and therefore, as an act of gratefulness, African
Americans would fight to defend the slaveholding South. The truth behind African
American participation in the Southern armies is that many free African Americans
pretended to be slaves and joined the Confederate Army as spies to gather necessary
information that would help ending slavery. Since no one assumed that they could
read or write, “Black Dispatches” could access a lot of documents that were left
carelessly.\textsuperscript{117} However, their names and stories about their bravery are omitted from
most of the textbooks, even after the 1970s.

Other than that, textbooks published in the late twentieth century, are focusing
not only on famous white people, but on African Americans, as well, who
contributed to the history of the United States. They mention the names of famous
activists like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman and their role in the ongoing
situation around the issue of slavery. These two figures are especially highlighted in
the textbooks published after the 1970s. Students could read: “She was born a slave,

\textsuperscript{114} Clark, “History Gives Lie to Myth of Black Confederate Soldiers.”
\textsuperscript{115} “Black Confederates. Truth and Legend,” Civil War Trust
\textsuperscript{116} “Black Confederates. Truth and Legend.”
\textsuperscript{117} P. K. Rose, “Black Dispatches: Black American Contributions to Union Intelligence During the Civil
on 19.02.2018.
but she had escaped to the North, promising to return one day to help others. She made good on her promise. Harriet Tubman went back to slave country 19 times. She helped lead more than 300 black people to freedom.”118 The same applies to Frederick Douglass who is presented as a smart African American man determined to achieve his goals towards freedom, as well as helping others: “When Frederick was caught reading, his master was angry. When the master caught young Frederick teaching other slaves to read, he was furious. He took Frederick to a ‘‘slave breaker.’’ There, Frederick was beaten again and again. But the cruel slave-breaker only made Frederick’s beliefs stronger.”119

Since the 1970s, in comparison with textbooks from the first half of the twentieth century, students were taught not only white history of their country, but also the fact that African Americans were part of making the history of America. The purpose was not to over-sentimentalize the depiction of slavery. In fact, the aim of the new approach of history writing was to bring up the topics that were hidden from students before. In order to analyze the role of those people who contributed to American history, it is the obligation of each writer to present all sides of the issue, including every figure in them.

Based on the analysis of textbooks, the period before the 1970s is characterized by teaching students about white supremacy. Racist assumptions that are provided in every chapter served to promote the idea of American Exceptionalism. This is done by claiming the innocence of America in the existence of slavery, highlighting the contributions of only white Americans, and ignoring the role of African American people, while presenting them as the inferiors. After the 1970s, the attitude toward the issue takes a shift. Authors are more and more willing to give a real image of slavery by writing openly about it at the end of the century. The hardships African Americans went through and their role in important political events of American history start to appear on the pages of school textbooks. The improvement in terms of the coverage of slavery in history textbooks led to the increased attention toward the issue that resulted in introducing new national guidelines for history in the 1990s.

118 Suter, Fearon’s United States History, 164.
119 Suter, Fearon’s United States History, 166.
Therefore, in the following chapter, I am going to analyze the ways slavery is taught in schools today and their impact on students’ understanding.
Chapter 3

Decolonizing American History

The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present....
We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.\textsuperscript{120}

- Abraham Lincoln,

Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862

As discussed in the previous chapter, the topic of slavery is multidimensional and complex. It is evident through the research that a vast majority of the twentieth century textbooks provided students with biased and one-sided information. Today, not only textbooks, but methodology of teaching has improved as well. Teaching the history of slavery and its aftermaths to the younger generations requires both factual accuracy and a certain delicacy, given the sensitivity of the topic.

In order to implement multicultural education, first, we should have a multicultural class. Therefore, in this chapter, I am going to discuss how segregation laws were challenged in the middle of the twentieth century and what kind of impact this process had on the educational system. For that, I will present two experiments that were conducted among children, as well as students in the 1940s and the 1960s, depicting the damaging effects of segregation laws. Furthermore, I will discuss the results from these experiments and connect them to the educational issues of that time. Afterward, I will go through five dimensions of multicultural education listed by American educator Jams A. Banks and present how these dimensions are used today in teaching multicultural history. The research was conducted on The K-12 Learning portion of SLAVERY AND THE MAKING OF AMERICA, analyzing how these plans are integrated in elementary, middle, and high school, what are the main aspects they focus on, and what kinds of sources and methodologies are used. In

\textsuperscript{120} Nash, History on Trial, 223.
addition, the case studies that were conducted in high school will be used to present teachers’ reports about the ongoing situation in their classrooms and see how students understand and respond to the topic. This will enable the reader to compare the results of the teaching of the institution by implementing different modern methodologies in schools today with the outcomes of using textbooks discussed in the previous chapter.

From Racial Segregation to Multicultural Education

In 1890, Jim Crow Laws were introduced in the American South. The segregation laws required the strict division of the public space between the blacks and the whites. The argument behind these laws was the so called “separate but equal” that was supposed to be beneficial for both African Americans and white Americans. However, the theory of “separate but equal” was continuously ignored since the facilities African Americans could access were in no way equal compared to those of the whites. Furthermore, African Americans were not allowed to vote in various parts of the South. Segregation laws affected the educational system as well since schools were not allowed to have racially mixed students. Since the 1950s, segregation laws were challenged by the civil rights movement and various cases that became highly debated.

In 1951, the Board of Education of Topeka was confronted by Oliver Brown when his daughter was not allowed to go to any school in Topeka because none of them accepted African Americans or other students who were not white. In order to convince the court, the Brown’s side used psychological and sociological evidences of negative effects of segregation on children. They based their argumentation on the results from “The Doll Test” conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the 1940s. The goal of this experiment was to identify how children viewed race. Four dolls were used for the experiment that looked same but had different colors. Children, aged between 3 and 7, had to choose the color of the doll they liked. Most of the children picked the white doll since they thought of it as more beautiful and
preferable, while the brown doll was the least desirable for them because they considered it ugly. But what was touching for the authors of the experiment was the following response of an African American child when he chose the brown doll: “That’s a nigger. I’m a nigger.”\textsuperscript{121} According to Kenneth and Clark’s analysis of the results, considering the white doll prettier by children represented “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation.”\textsuperscript{122} As for choosing the brown doll, the authors viewed it “as disturbing, or more disturbing, than the children in Massachusetts who would refuse to answer the question or who would cry and run out of the room.”\textsuperscript{123}

While discussing the test and the results in an interview with PBS, the authors concluded that segregation had a direct effect on how children even from the early age understood the concept of race and how they viewed themselves in the racial framework. The widespread idea of being inferior because of darker skin had a big impact on the confidence and self-esteem of African American children since they did not think of themselves to be equal to white people. This experiment was successfully used in the Brown v. Board of Education case to prove how damaging segregation could be for the future generation as it was based on the racist ideology that affected not only black children, but the whites as well. The final verdict was made in 1954, stating that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place,” as segregated schools are “inherently unequal.”\textsuperscript{124} Despite the victory, the decision was compared to “the evils of jure segregation” in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{125} Thus the court decision received criticism from some scholars, among them from Derrick A. Bell Jr. who questioned the true intentions behind the decision. As a counterargument, he wrote:

“[The] principle of “interest convergence” provides: The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{122} “Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark and “The Doll Test.””
\bibitem{123} “Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark and “The Doll Test.””
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the interests of whites. However, the fourteenth amendment, standing alone, will not authorize a judicial remedy providing effective racial equality for blacks where the remedy sought threatens the superior societal status of middle and upper-class whites. . . . Racial remedies may instead be the outward manifestations of unspoken and perhaps subconscious judicial conclusions that the remedies, if granted, will secure, advance, or at least not harm societal interests deemed important by middle and upper-class whites.”

According to this passage, Bell stated that the main motive was not to achieve equality in the society. Instead, white Americans would never stand for anti-racism and social justice as long as they did not get any benefits from them. He summed up his argument under the term “interest convergence.” Nevertheless, Brown v. Board of Education influenced the process of improving the race relations in America by emphasizing the dangerous outcomes of segregation and the significance of racially mixed and equal society. This victory did not belong to a single case. Together with the civil rights movement and the rise of multicultural education, it had a considerable impact on the educational system as well.

Another experiment that contributed to popularizing the heterogeneity against racism was “Blue eyes-Brown eyes” by Jane Elliot. In 1968, right after Martin Luther King was shot, Jane Elliot decided to help her students to understand the power of discrimination on people’s behavior by conducting a very controversial experiment that caused heated discussions for many years. She divided the classroom between the students who had brown eyes and those who had blue eyes. The first part of the experiment included telling brown eyed students how smart they were because of the color of their eyes since they had more melanin that indicated the level of their intelligence in comparison with blue eyed students, who were supposedly weaker. Besides, she also told them that they were cleaner, which led students with brown eyes to separate themselves from the rest of the class so they would not catch anything from them. Later on, Elliot observed how confident brown eyed students became and how they started insulting blue eyed students. On the other hand, those who had blue eyes felt like they were outsiders and even apologized for

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things they did not have to. When Elliot reversed the experiment, blue-eyed students behaved in the same manner as their brown-eyed classmates had done. As Elliot’s experiment became popular, she received many mixed comments. While some applauded her for teaching students about racial discrimination from the early age, others felt offended and criticized her for traumatizing children. Elliot responded in the following way: “‘You have to put the exercise in the context of the rest of the year. Yes, that day was tough. Yes, the children felt angry, hurt, betrayed. But they returned to a better place—unlike a child of color, who gets abused every day, and never has the ability to find him or herself in a nurturing classroom environment.’”  

She also added: “‘We give our children shots to inoculate them against polio and smallpox, to protect them against the realities in the future. There are risks to those inoculations, too, but we determine that those risks are worth taking.’”  

These experiments are perfect examples of the interconnection between segregation laws and a failed educational system. Racial division, segregated classes, and a biased teaching of American history popularized white supremacist ideology and Social Darwinism. Because of this, prejudices about white and black students’ abilities, knowledge, or talent were spread among students themselves. The results from the experiments directly corresponded to the established stereotypes against African Americans whom children, among them black children themselves, considered less smart and clean. This shows how destructive the racist ideology was for personal development and self-esteem that in the long run made the existing gap between white Americans and African Americans even bigger. The discussed experiments are still used today and according to studies, the level of racial bias has dropped. The biggest influential factor in this process was multicultural education.

One of the biggest goals that multicultural education tries to achieve is giving every child the possibility to receive education regardless of racial or social backgrounds. Scholars of multicultural education focus on groups that represent different cultures. Therefore, their main goal is to create a more inclusive educational environment by reconstructing school curriculums to provide comprehension and

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128 Bloom, “Lesson of a Lifetime.”
awareness of a multicultural world. That is why James Banks views school as a social system - a system that prepares students to be citizens with analytical thinking so that they will defend the democratic values of the nation. He lists five different dimensions for multicultural education: Content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering of school culture and social structure.¹²⁹

Content integration, within multicultural education, can be defined as integration of various aspects of different cultures in the subjects that are taught. This would mean including stories about Mexican-Americans, Afro-Americans, and Asian-Americans in the school programs. In doing so, the students expand their awareness and become more open to the diverse world. The roots of content integration are connected to the rise of ethnic studies and to George Washington Williams who was the first African-American to become a historian in America.¹³⁰

Knowledge construction process means understanding the influence of social, racial, and class aspects over the construction and implementation of knowledge. This helps students to analyze the process of creating knowledge by individuals with certain kind of background. Multicultural education not only introduces the cultural and racial aspects to the school curriculum, but also reconstructs the whole school system that produces specific knowledge. This enables both students and teachers to be critical and analytical towards the knowledge that is introduced in the classroom.¹³¹

Prejudice reduction process, as the name suggests, means helping children to get rid of the racist viewpoints and positions that they might develop. With this dimension of multicultural education, students acquire more inclusive characteristics that help to shape and construct the values that deal with the justice and equality in a multicultural world.¹³²

Within equity pedagogy, which would stand for “fair teaching,” teachers develop specific methodology that helps them to encourage students with different racial and social background reach their goals in an academic life. Logically, equity

pedagogy confronts the cultural deprivation paradigm that was introduced in the 1960s. According to this paradigm, “not so desirable” background kept some students away from getting the same knowledge others would get. Therefore, more emphasis was made on shifting those students’ attitudes and behaviors, rather than viewing them as equals to the rest of the students in terms of their abilities.133

The fifth dimension of multicultural education, namely empowering school culture means creating more inclusive culture in schools in order to avoid categorizing students by cultural and racial differences. Recognition and awareness of variable identities benefit the school as a social establishment and develops mutual understanding among students.134

Evidently, multicultural education is all about creating a more inclusive environment in schools. It helps every student to have equal rights to education, regardless of social, racial, or class background. In addition, this process contributes to developing critical thinking among students, as well as awareness of the diversity that exists around them, and setting strong democratic values even from the young age. In order to reach these goals, a lot of changes are needed such as revision of the curriculum, materials, and teaching methodology. A mission as important as this requires a smooth and gradual transformation process. As researcher Donna Y. Ford states: “Transformation includes that the basic goals, structure and nature of the curriculum are changed to enable students to view concepts, events, problems and themes from the perspective of diverse groups. Students become more empathetic by viewing events from multiple perspectives.”135

After the end of racial segregation and the triumph of the civil rights movement, representing the turning point in American educational system, the nation managed to fulfill one of the most important aspects of multicultural education, namely giving equal rights to every student. Having multicultural classes was one step forward to teaching multicultural history. Racial diversity of the classroom allows students to embrace each other’s culture that in return, helps them to open up

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to a range of topics to discuss with an open mind. Below, I will represent the research on how heterogeneity of American history is implemented in the classrooms today by teaching slavery with the modern methodologies and analyze the results of this approach.

## Elementary School

Historians started to use the word “multiperspectivity” more frequently since the 1990s. This is connected to the development of the new approaches that history as a field started to use.\textsuperscript{136} Dr Robert Stradling highlights the importance of teaching history with this methodology as being crucial for critical thinking. In *Multiperspectivity in History Teaching: A Guide for Teachers*, he discusses the topic by bringing in various views from the works of other scholars in order to shed light on it. Quoting K. Peter Fritzsche, multiperspective approach to teaching history is presented as “‘a strategy of understanding.’”\textsuperscript{137} This indicates that the mentioned methodology requires understanding historical events not only from the point of view of “who? what? when? how?,” but analyzing these events from the standpoint of different figures in different circumstances.

Elementary school lesson plans aim to introduce the institution of slavery from multiple perspectives. In “Criminal or Hero, Runaway or Freeman,” meant for grade level 5-6, students are introduced to the beginning of slavery and the role of slaves in the American Revolution. In order to gain better understanding of that period, the experience of Titus, a slave who ran away from his master and ultimately joined the British army, is used in the classroom. This way, students are able to look at slavery from different sides. Based on the life of Titus, they can analyze slavery from various points in the context of the American Revolution. The listed learning objectives mostly focus on applying multiperspective approach to discussing the role of African American soldiers in the American Revolution and what made them “choose


\textsuperscript{137} Stradling, “Multiperspectivity in History Teaching.” 13.
different sides” in the Revolution.138 This way, students can evaluate the aspects of slavery that were not discussed during the greater part of the last century. The role of slaves in a crucial historical event such as the American Revolution was completely ignored before, not only in textbooks I researched, but generally in the twentieth century as well. As Gary Nash discusses in his book The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of the Revolution, “the treatment of black history in general is so paltry that it would appear that the British and the Americans fought for seven years as if half a million African Americans had been magically whisked off the continent.”139 Since African Americans were not viewed as well-deserved citizens of the society back then, their role and participation in the revolution was considered trivial. Thus their contributions were forgotten as well. Textbooks published before the 1970s mirrored the same tendency of disregarding the fact that the American Revolution was not the revolution of only white people, but it involved everyone who was affected by the ongoing political situation. By bringing up this topic today and teaching of it from the perspective of African Americans will enable students to see African Americans not only as slaves who were previously presented as barbarous and uneducated, but as active members of American society.

As for “choosing sides” in the Revolution, there are several aspects to be taken into account. First of all, it is important to understand what the Revolution meant for African Americans. Nash perfectly sets up the following argumentation about the influence the Revolution had on slaves:

It marked the first mass slave rebellion in American history, initiated the first civil rights movement, produced the first reconstruction of black life, brought forth the first written testimonies from African Americans who wanted the world to hear of their strivings and their claim to freedom, and involved the first budding of what W. E. Du Bois would call “the talented tenth.”140

Since the American Revolution was a once in a lifetime chance for African Americans to get away from “heritable slavery,” they favored the best way to gain

140 Nash, The Forgotten Fifth, 1.
the personal liberty.\textsuperscript{141} Usually, this assumption used to be omitted if African Americans were even mentioned in the Revolution. Being the first historian to depict the role of slaves in the American Revolution, William C. Nell wrote extensively about African Americans fighting for the independence of America, while he skipped the fact that many slaves actually joined the British army for their own independence.\textsuperscript{142} Nash highlights in his book that it took a lot of time for the educational system to successfully implement different stories about African Americans fighting in the American Revolution and therefore, he characterizes the last centuries by “historical amnesia.”\textsuperscript{143} However, today, primary sources and various viewpoints on the history of slavery will give students a better chance to analyze one of the most important historical events in American history more critically. Even though the traditionalist approach to teaching history goes against multiperspectivity by accusing those who support the latter of neglecting the “truth” and turning the main topic into vague assumptions, in reality, a certain objectivity can only be achieved by presenting the argumentations from each side of the issue and letting students analyze, discuss, ask more questions, and see what kinds of connections and impact the institution of slavery had on slaves, slave owners, or soldiers.

Elementary school lesson plan “A Wolf by the Ear” offers even more sides of the issue. This time, students analyze Thomas Jefferson’s approach toward slavery, especially as written in the Declaration of Independence. The main emphasis is made on comparing his political and personal views of slavery. Students will be able to look at the issue from Jefferson’s standpoint, as well as from the American society’s point of view. This way, they will draw the parallels between American independence and slavery in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{144}

In comparison with the assumptions provided in the textbooks from previous century, today, Jefferson’s contradictory approach toward slavery is openly introduced to students. Besides describing him as a hero, who played a significant

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\item \textsuperscript{141} Nash, The Forgotten Fifth, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Nash, The Forgotten Fifth, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Nash, The Forgotten Fifth, 2.
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role in American history, his personal views of slavery that influenced his political ones to some extent are taught as well. In doing so, one of the most famous historical figures, the author of the famous words in the Declaration of Independence promoting freedom and equality for everyone, is presented as an important political figure, as well as a slave owner. In this regard, students will be able to analyze Jefferson’s previously hidden character, a man who was considered only as a promoter of liberty, now, besides his historical contributions, is presented as the “paradox of liberty.” Students have the chance to look at the issue of slavery from many angles and meet the learning objectives that will help them to establish more critical understanding of the institution in the eighteenth century.

As we can see from elementary school lesson plans, today’s teaching methodology helps students to get used to learning about history from different viewpoints. Since historical knowledge starts to form from the early age, it is important to tell the story from various perspectives, rather than introducing only facts that can be biased by the author, leading students to develop only one-sided approach, especially when it comes to a controversial topic, such as slavery. Giving students multiple choices to look at the issue enables them to expand their own understanding of the topic with the help of critical thinking. In this respect, multiperspectivity stands in an agreement with one of the dimensions of multicultural education, specifically with the knowledge construction process. By understanding how much pressure social, political, or other intruding factors can have on creating historical documents, the solution is reading the history from different viewpoints in order to avoid misconceptions.

Besides multiperspectivity, elementary school lesson plans mostly focus on providing historical knowledge in a simpler way, for example prioritizing heroes, whether it is Thomas Jefferson or African American heroes. It is not an easy task to tell about all the hardships that the institution brought upon slaves to an eleven year old student, especially when these hardships can include topics such as rape. 5-6 graders usually look for idols that make history classes more interesting, motivating,

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and enjoyable, rather than reading about terrible experiences slaves went through that can stress children easily and make them lose attention and curiosity. The importance of teaching history in a proper way in elementary school classes is crucial since this is the time in children’s life when they develop affection for learning about their country’s history.

**Middle School**

The use of historical empathy in the classroom has been a topic of discussion many times as it can be a controversial method of teaching. In *Energizing the History Classroom: Historical Narrative Inquiry and Historical Empathy*, Sherri Rae Colby analyzes how historical empathy can be understood, implemented, and connected to the development of critical thinking.

The simplistic definition of historical empathy is “being able to imagine yourself in someone else’s shoes.” According to Colby, historical empathy represents one of the most important methods to engage students into deep analytical thinking about historical events and the participants in those events. Using the empathetic approach while going through the past, students acquire awareness of the experiences of historical figures and thus it becomes easier to understand why and how those figures did certain things.\(^{146}\) However, this kind of methodology of teaching history has gotten a considerable amount of criticism from the scholars, stating that integrating empathy in the classroom will lead students to attach sentimental and exaggerated feelings to the stories they read. In response, Colby highlights that the purpose of historical empathy is not to overdramatize the events of the past. In fact, reading history from the empathetic perspective helps students to get less biased knowledge of what happened that clears up previously caused misconceptions.\(^{147}\) By

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\(^{147}\) Colby, “Energizing the History Classroom,” 62.
quoting Bruce VanSledright, Colby links historical empathy to encouraging the development of democratic values among students.

“It [historical empathy] makes possible the reconstructions of past events in a way that helps us appreciate the significant differences between the present world and the world being described…it makes us less quick to judge them [our ancestors] as short-sighted dimwits with idiotic beliefs and stupid customs. By extension we therefore would be less quick to judge those in the contemporary world who do not share our sentiments and sensibilities. In this idealized form, one could say that historical empathy is essential to the health of pluralistic democracies.”148

Given this passage, historical empathy helps the individual to get acquainted with the past from an unbiased point of view free from superstitions. By understanding the past as it truly was, students understand the present better.

The main aim of middle school lesson plans that I researched is to promote the feeling of empathy among students in order to get a different historical perspective. “What We Leave Behind,” for the grade level 7-8, focuses on the primary documents that slaves left in the nineteenth century. Students will specifically go through the autobiography of Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. The lesson plan offers teachers some advice how to bring the main message in the classroom. The students can volunteer to sit in a rectangle and pretend that they are in the wooden box. They will be asked one by one how it would feel to spend the whole day, a week, or even a year in that limited space. This way, students will be able to imagine themselves in the place of a runaway slave in order to understand the reasons why the slave might have escaped and how it would have felt to hide in the space of the size of a rectangle. In addition to reading and role-play, materials like videos and virtual museum are used to help students to visualize the whole story. The learning objectives focus on discussing Harriet Jacobs's life during and after slavery and the importance of documents that represent primary sources for getting more objective knowledge of the past events.149

Integrating role-play in the classroom can provide additional support for students to acquire better awareness of the topic by being able to imagine themselves

148 Colby, “Energizing the History Classroom,” 62.
in the shoes of historical figures. This way, they can express different opinions and views. By personalizing the story, students will manage to develop more empathy and look at slavery from the perspective of African Americans. In order to grasp the whole meaning of the ongoing situation in the period of slavery, not only political/economical depiction of the institution, but individual narratives of slaves will also help students to analyze the issue more critically. In this case, Harriet Jacobs’ astonishing story will provide a perfect example of what slaves had to endure. By using historical empathy, students are able to connect to the past even more deeply. They can understand what slaves must have felt and thought. In addition, students get better awareness of what influenced slaves to take some crucial decisions, such as escaping.

The importance of primary sources is specially highlighted in the learning objectives. Not only do they provide unbiased stories of the past, but they also help students to develop personal relations to the people whose memoirs or records they read. In addition, primary documents can motivate students to conduct their own research on the topic. Last but not least, these types of sources lead students to question their prior knowledge and compare it to other sources that present the same issue from different side.

Another lesson plan, “Torn from Each Other’s” Arms also focuses on primary sources like personal narratives of Emanuel Driggus. By going through his life and family relations, students will examine the hardships slaves had to endure since family members were constantly separated from each other. The lesson plan offers teachers to start the discussion by getting students talk about what family means for them. This way, they will manage to get a personal connection with the issue presented in the classroom.150

This kind of approach toward engaging students into a discussion differs tremendously from the teaching methodology from the previous century. According to my findings, throughout the greater part of the twentieth century, the family bond of slaves and the relationship between a slave and a master were pictured in a sugarcoated way as if slaves enjoyed the life on plantations. Hiding the fact that

African Americans suffered from being parted from their loved ones and only emphasizing that they were welcomed to their owners’ homes as family members, provided a valid argument for a seemingly “charitable” attitude of white masters toward their slaves. Realizing that slaves were feeling the sorrow of being treated inhumanly and being separated from their families just as much as any other person would have felt regardless of race or class, will lead students to ask more controversial questions, think more critically, and elaborate the impact of the institution of slavery on society not only during the past centuries in the United States, but in today’s world as well. Even though the real stories of separating slave families were accessible since the 1970s, the present day coverage of the issue and the methodology used in the classroom provide students with unbiased stories of family struggle among African Americans.

To sum up, middle school lesson plans mostly offer personal narratives of African Americans that help students to get the knowledge of slavery in the United States from the perspective of slaves themselves. As for the credibility of the sources used, they can be considered more trustworthy than textbooks discussed in the previous chapter since the stories presented in the lesson plans are written by people who actually went through all the hardships of that period. Clearly, today’s approach of depicting history differs considerably from the twentieth century history textbooks that would teach the history of slavery only to justify the existence of the institution, while the authors of the textbooks were mostly biased and evidently took one side of the issue. Since objective historical knowledge is known to help students to have dispassionate analytical approach toward slavery, instead of viewing historical empathy as a sentimental attitude to reading history, it actually presents one of the significant dimensions of multicultural education, namely prejudice reduction process. This way of learning is the key element to make sure that the future generation is free from racist beliefs and opinions by teaching students the importance of being inclusive in order to value justice and democracy in the world.

In addition, middle school students represent the age group who are mature enough to hear more sensitive details of slavery and get the broader picture of the whole situation. Instead of teaching factual history that includes only dates and names of the events, which students are going to forget soon enough, providing them
with hard but objective knowledge will turn them into conscientious adults. Even though historical facts are essential for argumentation, finding the personal connection with the historical figures and understanding their life experiences more deeply will enable students to be more aware of the present day issues. In doing so, school prepares the basis for the young generation to develop passion and enthusiasm for social justice, democracy, and equality.

High School

After building necessary knowledge of the history of slavery from every side of the issue, high school lesson plans, for the grade level 9-12, aim to give students statistical information.

“Slavery by Numbers” focuses on drawing the parallels between geography and statistics when it comes to slavery by using the census information available online. The suggestions for teachers include first, helping students to identify the important locations on the map, second, connecting these places to the names from the period of slavery, such as Thomas Jefferson, David Walker, and Harriet Jacobs, and third, going through the statistical data.151

The importance of statistical analysis of slavery is essential. It enables the learner to gain better awareness of the scale of the issue. By correcting the miscalculations and flaws in data from before, the statistical information about slavery sheds new light on the issue. Statistics can provide students with additional credibility to their historical knowledge of the institution by connecting their prior understanding of slavery to specific numbers and data. This way, students get used to thinking in a logical sequence, being able to evaluate the sources more objectively and critically, and in addition, it can lead students to more investigation that will expand their knowledge.

Besides statistics, another high school lesson plan “Knowledge is Power” offers information about the circulation of different kinds of knowledge and its connection to education among slaves. One of the most important learning objectives is to discuss the knowledge African American people had before coming to America and how they developed it.152 If the twentieth century textbooks published before the 1970s actively popularized the idea of African Americans being enable to learn and produce specific type of knowledge, today students can get completely different picture. They can learn that not only were slaves engaged in the physical activities they were required, but they also possessed diverse cultural knowledge that they mixed with the American culture. By teaching about the intellectual side of African Americans, students are able to look at them as more than slaves, as people with rich cultural background which they contributed to the development of American society.

Based on the lesson plans presented above, the most important aspects that I found are the following: In comparison with the assumptions provided in textbooks discussed in the previous chapter, today’s methodology of teaching has different aims. Instead of giving students facts with biased interpretations and presenting only one side of slavery, today, the main focus is on enabling students to engage themselves in critical thinking. This is done by letting them see all the sides of the issue. In this case, they can look at slavery from multiple dimensions, such as discussing it from the point of view of a slave, an owner, a soldier, the president, or generally the society. Since students have access to primary sources, it is up to them to form their own understanding and make the conclusions themselves. These lesson plans built up information gradually suited for the target grade. Elementary school lesson plans offer multiperspective history of the institution, while middle school lesson plans include personal narratives and let students look at the issue from empathetic approach. As for the high school lesson plans, they mostly focus on practical knowledge, such as statistics. This way of teaching meets important dimensions of multicultural education created by James Bank. Content integration that encourages teachers to include culturally diverse topics in the classroom helps students to become more open to the multicultural world; and knowledge

construction that enables students to understand the impact of the society or individuals on creating the knowledge, so they can look at the sources and historical events provided by these sources from different perspectives. All these contribute to another dimension of multicultural education, namely the reduction of prejudices, which prevents students from developing racist ideas that in the long run prepares them to go out into the world with proper education and values. In order to see the actual results of teaching the history of slavery with the discussed methodologies, teachers’ observations and reports will provide a lot of explanations.

Case Study 1: Multiperspectivity

In this section, I am going to discuss the use of multiperspectivity and its effects on the ways students see slavery. Even though I presented this method in elementary lesson plans, it was successfully used among high school students as well. Since in the previous chapter, I paid a considerable attention to how textbooks blamed the existence of the institution on the North, the South, or any other side of the issue, it will be helpful to research the present day coverage of the same topic and see who are the “protagonists” and the “villains” in this discussion today.

The widespread idea has been that the Southern people did not fit in moral frames as they were supposedly the only ones contributing to the existence of slavery, while on the other hand, the Northerners represented the side that bravely fought against the institution. Therefore, students’ awareness of the whole issue was divided between the Southerners being “bad” and the Northerners being “good”. This kind of division can be explained by the following assumption, published by The New York Times: “the way Americans viewed themselves, their heritage and their times has been dominated by a simplistic vision that sharply distinguished between good and evil, freedom and slavery, heroes and villains, the noble character and the hopelessly flawed.”

While discussing who is a good and who is bad and considering the fact that the North was involved in slavery just as much as the South,
teaching of it by using popular culture can be very helpful. The movie *12 Years a Slave* is used very often today to show the real picture of the institution. The film is based on one of the most famous slave narratives. The main character Solomon Northup is a free African American living in the North. After being tricked, he is kidnapped and taken to the South to be sold as a slave. Besides showing everyday brutality of slavery, such as separation of families, rape, and hard life on plantations, the film also provides a very good insight into the complexities of the institution and that it did not stay solely in the South. After the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, runaway slaves were haunted down and captured in the North. According to this law, those who interfered in the process were punished strictly. The punishment also included 500 dollars of fine. Although, not only runaway slaves, but free African Americans were captured as well, like in Solomon Northup’s case. In this regard, the North was involved in the horrors of slavery by assisting the South in getting slaves back to plantations. However, if we consider the Northern point of view, one can assume that political issues turned into personal issues because of the fear of punishment. It is not an easy decision to make whether to risk your own life or hand in slaves when you are threatened by high authority. The goal of this argument is not to justify anyone’s actions, but to consider each side of the problem and see the bigger picture of the issue. Overall, the bottom line is that the institution involved both the South and the North equally, either because of economic, political, or personal reasons.

In order to understand how the topic is taught today and how students respond to it, I will go through case study “Not a Peculiar Institution: Challenging Students’ Assumption about Slavery in U.S History” by Nancy Ogden, Catherine Perkins, and David M. Donahue. These history teachers wanted to motivate high school students to think about slavery in a broader context, namely discussing the topic in an economic aspect. According to the teachers, the goal was not to make students stop thinking about the issue from a moral point of view, but instead, to let them link slavery to the economic aspects that upheld the institution for so long in the United

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States, connecting not only the Southern people to slavery, but the Northerners as well.\textsuperscript{155} The main findings the teachers were trying to focus on were the following:

- How do high school students make sense of primary source documents presenting a complex economic analysis of slavery, one that departs from the more clear-cut moral presentation of slavery as evil and limited to one section of the United States?

- How does students' understanding of race and slavery as a racial institution shape their reading of and learning from documents about the economic aspects of slavery? \textsuperscript{156}

Students were asked to read David Christy on slavery as an economic issue and then pick a couple of sentences that would express the author's assumptions. According to the findings, classroom can be divided between the students who chose sentences that indicate their understanding of slavery from moral point of view, from economic perspectives, and from global outlook.

The most popular sentence was the following: ""KING COTTON cares not whether he employs slaves or freemen. It is the cotton, not the slaves, upon which his throne is based."" \textsuperscript{157} According to Ogden and Perkins, choosing this sentence shows that students failed to grasp the true meaning of Christy’s argument since they used their knowledge about slavery learned from moral perspective. Other students who had the similar focus, wrote: ""This reveals to me the closemindedness of the people back then. People were so cruel and do not consider people's feelings, only money.""\textsuperscript{158} ""This quote shows how people were fooling themselves into believing slavery was OK' or acceptable. They claim it's for the better of the economy. It's surprising because what they say is opposite to reality. King Cotton was who he was because of slavery….""\textsuperscript{159} As teachers explain, looking at slavery only from moral viewpoint means that students are used to dividing historical figures in “good” and

\textsuperscript{156} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 471.
\textsuperscript{157} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 474.
\textsuperscript{158} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 475.
\textsuperscript{159} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 475-476.
“bad” and historical events in “right” or “wrong.” That is why most of the students failed to understand what Christy was trying to say while presenting the economic aspects of the institution. Instead of perceiving the intended meaning of the author’s argument, implying that not only the Southerners, but the Northerners were also involved in slavery and actually benefited economically, students started discussing if Christy was supporting the existence of the institution, as teachers report.

One of the explanations, according to the teachers, is that students based their argumentation on collective memory, rather than on historical memory. Maurice Halbwachs defines collective memory as information that is provided by the group of society is encoded into people’s memories. Therefore, the knowledge of individuals is influenced by a continuous reproduction of the past. On the other hand, historical memory is based on specific facts and documents. In a word, Halbwachs compares historical memories to “‘dead’” memories, while collective memories are represented as “‘living’” ones. In this regard, moral perspective of slavery is the result of contemporary depiction of the institution, mostly influenced by media, as a bad event in American history. Of course teachers approach this kind of response from students positively as it shows their empathy and understanding of basic human rights of African Americans that were violated under slavery. However, the main goal was to show them other sides of the issue, in this case economic aspects.

Students who managed to understand the economic perspectives of the institution chose the following quotes: ""King Cotton controls the majority of the economy in America and England and no matter who you are, abolitionists and slaveowners alike, you support cotton and the slavery that supports it."" 163 ""Anyone who buys products that had to do with cotton are supporting slavery, including abolitionists."

As reported by the teachers, among those who saw Christy’s point of view, the following student’s comment explained the whole issue in the best way:

160 Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 474.
162 Olick, “Collective Memory,” 7.
163 Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 474.
164 Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 474.
Slavery is heavily involved with economics for a number of reasons.... The institution provided the south with ample hands to pick cotton and grow sugar. As slavery grows, so does the output of cotton, until the U.S.A.'s main export is cotton. This cotton is not only used by the abolitionistic north to power their businesses and supply their needs, it also goes to England where although abolitionist policies are prevalent, there are no qualms about taking the slave grown cotton to feed the endless hunger for the English textile mills. Back in the U.S., slavery was an important factor in states such as Virginia where the most money was made by raising and selling slaves.... Thus, without the slaves, the economy would have fallen into a heavy depression.165

Evidently, while some students misread the author’s argument because of their prior knowledge, other students managed to see the institution beyond moral frames based on the same prior knowledge that their classmates possessed and the last quote is a valid evidence for this.166 Introducing multiple sides of slavery to students stands in a big contrast with the methodology used in the previous century. As we have seen in chapter 2, the assumptions provided in textbooks told the story either from the Northerners or from the Southerners point of view, turning the discussion into a “Blame-Game.” On the other hand, today’s school children can learn about the complexity of the institution, in this case how economics played one of the biggest parts in the existence of the institution, involving the South, the North, abolitionists, and England. In the report, teachers highlight continuously that the purpose was not to push away the moral side of slavery, but instead, to understand every facet of slavery.

There were a couple of students who saw even more complex aspects of slavery by looking at the issue from political and geographic points of view:

Slave owners thought slavery merely dealt with cultivating crops and getting work done, but it affected the entire world. The U.S. wasn't united because slave states and free states fought for political power. It also affected the economy because it increased the amount of cash crops that could be exported. It influenced politics because political parties emerged with different views on slavery. It inhibited expansion because of the struggles over which new states would be slave and free. Industries flourished because availability of cotton

165 Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 478.
166 Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 476.
harvested by slaves allowed the growth of textile mills leading to industrialization.\textsuperscript{167}

Given this passage, students managed to understand the immensity of the issue. According to their discussion, slavery had a huge impact on national unity, political and economic situation of the country.

The main findings according to the responses that the teachers collected from the classroom are the following: the major aspect that played a crucial role in this process was the connection between the knowledge of slavery that students already had and the new information they got under a new perspective. While this mix of old and new knowledge led some students to misinterpret Christy’s argument, others used it as a tool to grasp the intended meaning. Several students managed successfully to combine their prior and present knowledge and thus provided the following comments on the issue: "Slavery was an economic institution that affected the entire U.S. and world. . . but it also affected it by having people do manual labor and back-breaking word for sacrifice of something as simple and complex as money."\textsuperscript{168} As we can see, this comment includes both economic and moral perspectives of slavery. According to the teachers’ report, many students expressed these kinds of ideas by interconnecting several aspects of the issue at the end of the process. Last but not least, one student even drew parallels between slavery in the past and present day slavery: "This continues today, except it is not slavery we support, but rather things such as child labor."\textsuperscript{169} Evidently, presenting the complexity of the institution helped this student to understand the crucial part of the interconnection between different sides of the issue. By seeing how slavery got the South, the North, and abolitionists involved, he managed to become more aware of how today, individuals contribute to child labor on daily basis by buying the products produced by children. As a result, teaching of the institution with multiperspective methodology and approaching the issue critically not only gives students proper analytical insight in the history of slavery, but it also encourages them to be more

\textsuperscript{167} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 476.
\textsuperscript{168} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 479.
\textsuperscript{169} Ogden, Perkins, Donahue, “Not a Peculiar Institution,” 479.
conscious of the present day issues, such as twenty-first century slavery that we do not usually pay enough attention unless it happens right in front of our eyes.

Based on the discussion, two main conclusions should be highlighted: the benefits of primary sources in comparison with textbooks and the importance of multiperspectivity. The abovementioned research has shown how this combined approach can be beneficial to tackling a complex topic such as slavery in the classroom.

Case Study 2: Historical Empathy

This case study serves to gain better awareness of the effects that historical empathy can have on students. Implementing the methodology of using first-hand slave narratives in the classroom is a practical method to give in-depth knowledge about African American experiences under the institution. Below, I will present Susan Arpajian Jolley’s report on using fiction and nonfiction slave narratives in the classroom and the responses she got from her high school students.

According to Jolley, the idea of teaching nonfiction slave narratives came after students became interested in the historical background of slavery while reading the fiction story Beloved by Toni Morrison. The plot includes a runaway slave Sethe who decides to kill her own child before they get caught.170 Students became eager to find out information about the person the author based his novel on. After conducting some investigation, among many students, a girl, originally from Pakistan, related the experience her family went through to the story presented in the classroom and thus commented that Sethe’s story is an example for “‘us each how fortunate we are not to have our hands tied, our mouths held by iron bits for months, not enough space to rid ourselves of human waste…how lucky we are to breathe in free air.’” 171 The impact of teaching slave story and looking at slavery from the point of view of

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171 Jolley, “The Use of Slave Narratives in a High School English Class,” 34.
African Americans is revealed by the fact that she managed to personalize the narratives in a way that she realized the basic human needs slaves were missing. By encouraging empathetic emotions in her, she came to understand the link between the past and the present. Reading about the main character’s terrible experience under the institution, the student started to appreciate the benefits of the accessibility to human rights today. This is similar to what Colby mentions as “self-understanding developed through historical investigation.” 172 Another student made the following comments:

As a student, I have always been taught the watered down account of slavery. [These readings] all provide a profound and detailed account of slavery’s tribulations. I tremendously enjoyed reading the novel and learning the important history that need to be known, to help me proceed into the future. 173

Both of these comments show the influence of slave narratives on students as they successfully combined fiction and nonfiction stories and understood the hardships African Americans had to go through by reading the story of one slave. According to the last quote, the student realized what the common mistakes were in terms of teaching slavery and how much information of the institution he/she was missing. This happened after reading just one story. Therefore, it can be assumed that slave narratives have a lot of influence on gaining comprehensive knowledge of slavery.

Jolley collected many other empathetic and compassionate responses after introducing the narratives by Frederick Douglass, Olaudah Equiano, and many others. One of the most touching writings from the student is the following:

Of all human beings, these incredibly smart and driven African American authors are the last people you would expect to give up the fight for life by wishing for premature death. But in the instances of Douglass, Equiano, and [Margaret] Ward, what we need to understand is that for a slave there is no life…one who is enslaved does not prefer death over life, but the heaven of freedom over the hell of slavery. 174

The twentieth century textbooks would hardly mention former slaves who gained recognition from writing about their personal stories and African American struggles,

172 Colby, “Energizing the History Classroom,” 63.
173 Jolley, “The Use of Slave Narratives in a High School English Class,” 35.
while today’s methodology openly presents the dark side of slavery by introducing slave narratives that helps students to get more critical opinions. Another student who also highlighted his admiration for the bravery of African American writers wrote this:

During this time intelligent, strong-willed men not only broke free from their physical and mental bondage, they succeeded in life. They did not have any formal education, yet they expressed natural intelligence. These men either skillfully escaped from their masters, or they won their freedom some other way. They wrote their accounts of life as slaves, not as a reflection on their terrible past, but as an account of their triumphs over atrocious hardships. All of these stories have an element of pride, in which the author delivers his story as a proud free man who overcame the mental and physical shackles of slavery.  

In the last two quotes, students mention African American writers as “incredibly smart” and “intelligent.” These responses stand in a contrast with what teachers would have gotten by teaching slavery with the textbooks published in the greater part of the twentieth century. By presenting slaves with biologically reduced skills and lack of abilities, students would never have assumed the same as they did in their writings provided in the report.

Altogether, in this chapter, I tried to show the differences between teaching slavery before and now by highlighting the damaging effects of the implementation of the racist ideology in the society and the benefits that multicultural education can bring to the young generation. After discussing segregation laws and white supremacy that did not allow the existence of racially mixed classrooms and multicultural teaching, the conclusion is that these kinds of approaches were devastating for children and were linked to low self-esteem and racial biases. As a result, students lacked the sense of acceptance of people different from them. This could cause hindrances for establishing equality and democracy in society. On the other hand, the modern methodology of teaching slavery is more effective since it enables students to see slavery as one of the most important events in American history from various sides. As teachers’ reports show, students become critically engaged in the discussions after being introduced to the institution from different

175 Jolley, “The Use of Slave Narratives in a High School English Class,” 38.
perspectives. Following the case studies, students start to understand the complexity of slavery and are willing to connect the effects of the institution to the global issues. In this respect, they think out of the box by expressing open-mindedness. Instead of viewing African Americans as uneducated people from savage countries who were supposedly like family members for their owners and thus were well-off on plantations, today, students can read about the tragic part of slavery that was previously glossed over. In doing so, they develop a sense of justice after being taught about how basic human rights were violated under slavery. All these are achieved by mostly using primary sources to teach political, economic, and social history of slavery that contribute to getting less biased interpretations. Given the results of the research, the assumptions about disintegration of national unity by implementing multiculturalism in the teaching of history are completely disproven. True development of democracy that is the core of what makes America exceptional, does not come from covering up the dark chapters of the past, but from providing the young generation of the nation with proper and unbiased historical knowledge so that the same shameful mistakes will not be repeated.
Chapter 4

Conclusion

One of the jewels in democracy’s crown is an educated citizenry that welcomes new harvests of information, unsettling questions, and fresh visions that illuminate our past as well as our present condition.\(^{176}\)

- Gary Nash

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze how multiculturalism was implemented into the educational system. This was done by researching the gradual change that occurred in the teaching of African American slavery in American schools. The differences between the integration of the topic in the classroom before and now are huge. The benefits of multicultural education stand in big contrast with the outcomes of the teaching of slavery earlier.

The research was conducted on approximately twenty history textbooks, studying the depiction of slavery in the twentieth century, compared to the modern methodologies of teaching. The main findings to be highlighted are the correspondence of textbook contents with both local and global political situations, the impacts of the absence of multicultural classes and multicultural education on students’ behavior, as well as the effects of multicultural approaches on the teaching of slavery.

Textbooks published in the first couple of decades are influenced by imperialistic ideas, proudly emphasizing American heroes and their contributions to spreading democratic values not only in America, but in other countries as well. Textbooks from the 1930s and the 1940s aim to affirm the “uniqueness” of the United States, especially during the Great Depression, to uphold the new generation’s glorified views of their country. American Exceptionalism gains even more power during World War II, presenting America as the role-model for freedom and democracy. The rise of protest and the civil rights movement in the 1950s and the 1960s had only an insignificant impact on the textbooks that were researched

\(^{176}\) Nash, History on Trial, 277.
from the same period. However, a lot of questions are raised regarding the objectivity of teaching history since the 1970s.

Gary Nash defines the “post 1950s” as the period that “took some sharp turns, created vibrant debates within the profession, and triggered conservative counterattacks, but withal, it enormously enlarged the store of historical knowledge in the U.S. and world history.”\textsuperscript{177} Therefore, I assumed that this would have affected the teaching of slavery as well. However, the researched textbooks indicate that the big shift does not occur before the 1970s, standing in contrast with my expectations. Even though the assumptions about the institution alter depending on the political climate of the United States in each decade, the findings can be presented as the depiction of slavery before and after the 1970s. Despite the fact that there is a lot of time before and after the 1970s, it is evident that the turning point is precisely the decade that saw the actual results of the civil rights movement followed by culture wars later on. In addition, presuming to come across to only political history of slavery before the 1970s, since social history was not a well-established discipline prior to that period, it was surprising to find descriptions of slave life as early as in the 1930s. Furthermore, despite the theories of Nash and other scholars, stating that historical knowledge provided to students in the previous century mostly include facts without any interpretations, the textbooks actually give a lot of explanations on the topic of slavery. However, these explanations are one-sided and biased. In this respect, my research fills in some gaps in previous researches and my expectations, based on reading Nash and other scholars.

The research on textbooks shows the failure of the educational system regarding the teaching of history in the twentieth century. Before the 1970s, every single chapter in textbooks teaches students about white supremacy. Depending on the place of publication and the author, with only some exceptions, textbooks clearly use a racist approach in order to present the American nation as exceptional and exemplary. Every textbook mentions slavery as a negative event in American history. However, the concept is used to highlight the damage caused to only white Americans by the institution.

\textsuperscript{177} Nash, \textit{History on Trial}, 63.
While promoting the idea of American Exceptionalism, the shameful past is covered up in various ways. In order to preserve the fame and name of the country and encourage nationalistic and patriotic beliefs, most of the textbooks have the tendency to blame slavery on different actors, either on the British Empire, the South, the North, or the abolitionists. This way America is never fully responsible neither for the institution of slavery, not its crimes. The British Empire is condemned in all of the textbooks for bringing Africans in the country, seemingly “burdening” the colonists. This way, students are taught of the innocence of America. As for the North and the South, the question of morality is the dominant topic in the discussion. While pro-Northern textbooks accuse the South on moral grounds, pro-Southern arguments usually involve describing slavery as “necessary evil” and “positive good” for both, slaves and white, wealthy Americans. To strengthen the argumentation, first, textbooks published in the South emphasize the economic aspects that got the Southerners involved in the industrial system and thus increased the demand for slaves. Second, slavery is justified by the fact that African Americans were supposedly much better off in the South with their “kind” masters than in the North, lacking the opportunities to be employed. In addition, textbooks claim that African Americans did not have the same prospects in their countries as in America. These assumptions are supported by the theory of Social Darwinism. Slaves are described as savage and uneducated people from distant, underdeveloped countries. This approach toward African Americans is based on racial division regarding the abilities and knowledge they possessed. Above all, they are presented as lazy workers not fulfilling their duties, but still stating that they had the chance to enjoy happy life on plantations with good food, clothes, and shelter. Therefore, students are taught about troublesome African Americans being a burden for their masters and thus it is assumed in most textbooks that slaves needed to be under the guidance of the white people for their own sake. “Whitewashing” students by teaching them about the superiority of white Americans, putting African Americans in the context of Social Darwinism, and presenting slaves as the inferiors, provided a defensive argument for the existence of the institution. Nash uses the term “pseudoscientific racism” in order to explain how African American history is treated in textbooks.178

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178 Nash, History on Trial, 59.
Abolitionism is another controversial topic in textbooks, presented not as the movement that granted freedom and equality to African American people, but as a threat to white Americans. The emphasis is made on negative aspects of the movement, such as the slaves’ bloody rebellions putting white people in danger. At the same time, in almost all the textbooks, abolitionists are treated as “fanatics” who are claimed to have widened the gap between the South and the North even more. Providing these assumptions without focusing on what abolitionism really meant for African Americans, once again proves the fact that students were exposed to a whitewashed history of America lacking objectivity.

In addition, textbooks mainly highlight white heroes and their contributions, while not mentioning the role of African Americans in important events of American history. No textbook that I researched acknowledges the involvement of African American soldiers in the crucial moments of forming the nation, such as the Civil War. The only time their participation is discussed is when one of the textbooks gives misleading assumptions and promotes the idea of African Americans fighting to defend the South. This is just another attempt to argue that the institution of slavery was supposedly so beneficial for slaves that they chose to fight on the side of the slaveholding South.

The twentieth century America failed to teach citizens about their nation’s past objectively and honestly. Focusing solely on white history where the “ignorant negro” has no place shows a supremacist approach of the educational system for many decades. What is even more astonishing, slavery is never associated with race relations, but it is rather viewed as an issue for white people. The idea that America is a unique country has influenced the treatment of slavery in the last centuries. The reason is that exceptionalism has been applied to America as a country of predominantly white people. Therefore, instead of promoting equality and freedom regardless of racial, cultural, and religious differences, American Exceptionalism, being full of contradictions, put a blind spot on the existence of the non-white people who also played an important role in the making of American history. This ideology has had a huge impact on the publishing industry and the ways the topic of slavery was taught in American schools in the twentieth century since at least half of American history was covered up by either completely glossing over African
American slavery or presenting misleading assumptions about the institution and slaves.

The analysis of “The Doll Test” and “Blue eyes-Brown eyes,” conducted in the middle of the twentieth century, shows that the absence of multicultural education in addition to the non-existent multicultural classes had a significant influence on the behavior of students. Children of different ages failed to comprehend what race meant and thus they expressed racist opinions based on widespread ideas of the inferiority of African American people. Racist ideology also affected the self-esteem of African American students who did not see themselves as valued members of the society. As a result, the myth of American Exceptionalism is destroyed as its original concept contradicts the outcomes, such as racial suppression and racial exploitation of African American people not only during slavery, but in the twentieth century as well.

Since the 1970s, with the rise of multiculturalism, a lot of stereotypical views of slavery are corrected in textbooks and therefore, more varied assumptions about the institution are given. Understanding not only slavery, but African American people and their historical background becomes a topic that school textbooks dedicate a fair amount of pages to. Pseudo-scientific excuses are replaced by African American contributions regarding the cultural and economic development of the country. In addition, abolitionism is treated with more sympathy. Textbooks present the movement from different viewpoints in order to let students analyze the topic more critically. However, there are some things that never changed even after the 1970s. The term “Negro” is still used in textbooks published in the last three decades of the twentieth century. As a result, textbooks published after the 1970s are valuable since they reflect on American history more objectively, but not good enough as they still manifest the racist ideology.

The difference between the period after the 1970s and today is that thanks to the use of specific and effective teaching methodologies, the focus is on not only what to teach students about slavery, but how to approach the issue as well. Today’s methodology is inspired by presenting one of the most important parts of American history, such as slavery from multiple perspectives while using mainly primary documents. Films, documentaries, fictional and non-fictional slave narratives, online
sources, and role-plays are the main “tools” to integrate the topic of slavery successfully in the classroom in order develop critical thinking and encourage empathetic approach to history among students. The lesson plans are created in a way that they provide the knowledge of slavery gradually, fitting the target age. Case studies show the influence of the new teaching methodologies. The research demonstrates that implementing multiperspective approaches to the teaching of slavery is a successful and effective way to help students to broaden their understanding of the institution by reading the history of slavery from the point of view of the Northern states, the Southern states, the British Empire, soldiers, slaves, and masters. Students manage to connect their prior knowledge to new information and in addition, draw the parallels to the present day forms of slavery. The empathetic approach toward the teaching of history appears to be one of the best ways to encourage students to imagine themselves in the different historical situations. The purpose of this methodology is not to lead students to over-dramatization of the historical events, but to help them to understand the impact of the institution on African Americans more deeply.

Overall, there is a huge gap between how slavery was taught before and how it is done today. The findings from chapter 2 clearly indicate that textbooks had racist and white supremacist approach toward the institution of slavery, mainly influenced by the misleading myths of American Exceptionalism. That explains why Nash stated in his book that the knowledge of the U.S. history among American students was very poor at the end of the twentieth century since they were provided with one-sided and biased assumptions. Based on the analysis from chapter 3, with the new approaches to the education, the situation has changed. Multicultural education provides objective historical knowledge and thus encourages critical thinking and fair-mindedness among students. In addition, students are more motivated to conduct further research on their own and expand their understanding of the topic.

Instead of viewing multiculturalism as the biggest threat to patriotism, it is important to realize that the real collapse of national unity will happen if future generations do not know the unbiased truth about their country’s past. Is it patriotic to criticize one’s own country, point to its flaws and furthermore – teach about its
It is often said that one aim of history is to teach patriotism. It might better be said that history should aim to clarify and purify the sentiment of patriotism. The crude feeling of patriotism is very strong and demonstrative in this country.... True patriotism, by common consent, does not consist in magnifying our own country at the expense of England, the North at the expense of the South, or America, right or wrong, at the expense of the world. To cultivate fair-mindedness and honesty, to see clearly both sides of an historical controversy, is, in this respect, the true standard of historical study.\textsuperscript{179}

Thus the answer is yes, it is patriotic to be judgmental, ask questions, and criticize in order to correct all these flaws for the future generation. It is essential to teach about multiculturalism at schools because America is multicultural. Denying to view the modern American society as diverse will only pose further problems. Today’s America is heterogeneous when it comes to race, religion and culture. Standing united under differences is precisely what makes the United States a remarkable country. America was founded on the ideas of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” that must be shared by all. However, in the previous century, the educational system failed to provide students with the unbiased historical knowledge that should have taught them democratic values. The aim of multicultural education is not to lead students to doubt the Western idea of personal freedom, but to clarify that multicultural approach to education is not the reason for the destruction of the nation. Balkanization of America will happen if the country continually excludes, ignores, or discriminates against those who are part of the society. As Sam Banks says: “To argue that multicultural education will bring about balkanization just cannot be sustained. The concepts of ‘liberty and justice for all’ should be shared by all. But reality has not squared with that promise. To argue now that including the history of all will somehow disrupt the body politic is … balderdash.”\textsuperscript{180}

There is still a lot to be studied to improve how slavery can be integrated in the classroom. First of all, the fact that textbooks published since the 1970s are much better than the ones published before does not mean that they uphold modern

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\textsuperscript{179} Nash, \textit{History on Trial}, 35. \\
\textsuperscript{180} Nash, \textit{History on Trial}, 161.
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standards of unbiased education. Second, there is a constant lack of professionalism among teachers. Third, even if teachers are fully qualified, there are some forces that might be preventing teachers from using multicultural approaches in their teaching strategies. Therefore, I will present the suggestions for further research below.

The selection of history textbooks is a very complicated process. Each state in the United States has its own board of education that votes and selects textbooks for schools. The process is different in every state. In Texas, for example, after the approval of the new standards in 2010, new textbooks were selected for the first time in almost a decade. However, the objectivity of American history in new textbooks has been highly criticized because of racist assumptions. The biggest reason was the depiction of the Civil War where slavery is deemphasized. As an explanation, Pat Hardy, a member of board of education, stated that slavery is “‘a side issue of the Civil War.’”181 Thus, it is quite clear that despite a lot of changes since the last century, the problem of how history is taught is still present. Based on the example of Texas, if new textbooks are not selected for another decade, students will be studying the whitewashed history of their country for the next decade. The issue can be even more complicated as after the state board chooses books, the schools have the final word in deciding which one of them will be used. Therefore, the selection of textbooks by school districts can have even more bias since those who are making decisions might not be qualified enough to judge the objectivity of history textbooks and their importance. Overall, this is how one state is handling what is taught in its schools. Knowing that the decision-making process will vary considerably from state to state, we can assume that historical knowledge provided in classrooms across America may vary as well. In addition, it should be taken into account that minority groups are represented in different numbers in different states, which can affect the multicultural teaching. In order to study the depiction of slavery more effectively, further research could be done on how slavery is depicted in various textbooks across the country as evidently, the United has yet to fully reform the history classes and its teaching materials.

Apart from the issue of objectivity and the selection of textbooks, it is hard to avoid the fact that America is still facing the problem of untrained teachers. The results published by The United States Department of Education in the mid 1990s are quite alarming. According to the study, the number of untrained teachers is the following: Louisiana 88 percent, Minnesota 83 percent, West Virginia 82 percent, Oklahoma 81 percent, Pennsylvania 73 percent, Kansas 72 percent, and New York State 32 percent. The problem stays the same even after two decades. A lot has been done to improve curriculums and change the approach that history textbooks have had for many decades. However, these changes will not have a sufficient effect if the classrooms are led by unqualified teachers. The consequences of having a lot of teachers who do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching can be crucial. Even if they use contemporary methodologies of teaching history, the lack of professional background or training based on outdated ideas and resources will lead them to be highly dependent on the readymade lesson plans or textbooks without being engaged critically in the topic. Therefore, it will be easy for students to mirror their teachers’ attitude. The problem of unqualified teachers has been one of the most controversial issues in the educational field during the last couple of decades and a considerable amount of research has been done in this area. However, in order to fully understand the concerns connected to the teaching history of slavery and the issues and the benefits of multicultural education, it would be helpful if more investigation and research were conducted on teacher education, specifically in the field of social studies and history. Teachers play a huge role in the lives of students as they contribute to their professional and personal development. Teachers represent the bridge between school children and society and thus have a lot of power to transform students into responsible citizens who will value democracy, freedom, and equality in the world. If the young generation does not have sufficient knowledge of the past in order to understand the importance of these qualities, we might as well be concerned about the future since youth is the future.

However, even if teachers are highly qualified and eagerly implement multicultural approaches in their classes while teaching history, there is still the

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reason to be worried about the future of multicultural education in the United States. Despite documented evidence of how multicultural education positively influences students’ understanding of the past and the present, their critical and analytical thinking, and the development of compassion and empathy, culture wars are still challenging American society. There are a lot of questions that arise regarding the treatment of minority groups in American history. Multicultural education still has a long way to go until it provides fully adequate knowledge. Furthermore, teachers should be re-qualified with further training to modernize both their methods and their knowledge. This will hopefully lead to a more harmoniously coexisting multicultural society with no minority groups being treated with disrespect. If America allows undemocratic values to have power over education, students with different cultural and racial backgrounds are bound to lack the opportunities that white students have. This way, the United States is risking to go back to a predominantly white society, where racism and suppression represented the core of American Exceptionalism.
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Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


