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Civic Reasoning and Discourse

***From the Diffusion of Knowledge to the Cultivation of Agency:
A Short History of Civic Education Policy and Practice in the U.S.***

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine multiple historical attempts to address the challenge of educating future publics for pluralist democracy in the face of repeated violations and contestations of democratic ideals. We begin by posing four central problems of civic education. We then proceed to analyze seven historical examples of how particular historical actors have understood and engaged those problems in their own lives and times. We show how diverse people fought to create more inclusive civic education and more just and robust visions of what it means to sustain a pluralist democracy that recognizes and protects the rights of all. A critical analysis of past examples of civic education and activism, we argue, will help us cultivate the powers of civic reasoning and civic agency necessary to confront both the ongoing legacies of injustice and the current critical issues of our time.

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7

8 **Section One: Introduction—**
9 **The Necessity of Civic Education; Challenges of Civic Education; and the Importance of History**

10 I. **The Necessity of Civic Education**
11
12

13 Civic education is a necessity of life. It is at least as important as education in science
14 and technology, or literacy in language and math. As the climate crisis, the ongoing crisis of
15 police brutality, and the recent global pandemic make plain, scientific knowledge and humanist
16 understanding may improve and enrich human life, but they are not enough to ensure justice or
17 human survival. Until we as citizens find ways to make our governments more effective in
18 confronting crises such as climate change, pandemic preparedness, anti-Black violence, and
19 public health, many lives and even the human species will remain gravely imperiled. Meeting
20 that imperative requires human agency and civic efficacy. In this sense, we are in the midst of
21 an acute civic crisis.

22 Since at least the American Revolution, a central purpose of schooling in the United
23 States has been civic education. As conceived by those who declared independence from Great
24 Britain for what they understood to be violations of their civil and property rights, an education
25 in knowledge and civic virtue was essential to equip citizens to bear effective witness to truth
26 and right in the face of corruption and abuses of power. Yet, as we know, truth itself is multiple
27 and right is highly contested. Nor do either speak for itself. Both depend, instead, on the voices

28 and actions of those who have been educated to them. For these reasons, civic education must
29 also be concerned with the cultivation of civic agency.

30 In this paper, we examine multiple historical attempts to address the challenge of
31 educating future publics for pluralist democracy in the face of repeated violations and
32 contestations of democratic ideals. We begin by posing four central problems of civic
33 education. We then analyze select historical examples of how particular historical actors have
34 understood and engaged those problems in their own lives and times, from the early national
35 period through the late twentieth century. To conclude, we identify how historical knowledge
36 and reasoning can inform education for civic agency in our own time.

37

38 **II. Four Challenges of Civic Education**

39 Four central problems challenge civic education.

40 **A. Civic Education Implicates both the Powerless and the Powerful**

41 Civic education implicates both the powerless and the powerful. Although the history of
42 civic education is intrinsically intertwined with the history of “citizenship,” the principle of
43 access to such education extends beyond citizens. Most of the provisions of the U.S.
44 Constitution delineate rights and privileges of “persons” under the jurisdiction of the U.S.
45 government, not citizens (Bosniak, 2010). Even the 14th amendment, which begins by defining a
46 federal standard of citizenship, ends with clauses that: 1) explicitly forbid states from depriving
47 any “persons” of fundamental rights without due process of law; and 2) that extend “equal
48 protection of the laws” to all “persons” within U.S. jurisdiction. In *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the U.S.
49 Supreme Court affirmed that the constitution protected access to public education for all
50 children under the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment, regardless of citizenship or

51 documented legal status. The court explained its decision with reference to the pivotal role of
52 public education “in maintaining the fabric of society” and “sustaining our political and cultural
53 heritage,” as well as to the necessity of education for individual well-being and the “ability to
54 live within the structure of our civic institutions” (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). In this sense, the civic
55 value and necessity of education transcend long-running historical debates over definitions and
56 eligibility for citizenship, to encompass all persons residing in the U.S.—the powerless as well as
57 the powerful.

58 At the same time, citizenship confers certain substantive imperatives and
59 responsibilities on those who have it. The recognition, enforcement and protection of civil
60 rights depends on the civic knowledge, dispositions, and agency of those who exercise power in
61 the U.S. They depend, in other words, on the education of citizens. As both a policy project and
62 a curriculum project, then, civic education must aim at educating citizens to the rights, powers,
63 and protections that are guaranteed to *others*, as much as to themselves, and to the limitations
64 of official power with respect to *all* persons under U.S. jurisdiction, whether citizens or not.

65 This point about **civic education as the education of those who already exercise power**
66 bears repeating in light of both history and current crises. As argued more fully below, civic
67 education in the U.S. has often been hobbled by the presumption that its target audiences are
68 those who wish to *become* citizens. In the early twentieth century, for example, the central
69 lessons of cultural pluralism, political tolerance, and minority rights supposedly encoded in U.S.
70 constitutional law and American culture were most often taught as lessons of
71 “Americanization” directed to immigrants and minorities, rather than lessons taught to citizens
72 who already enjoyed political power.

73 The legacy of that history continues to this day, when those who actively seek U.S.
74 citizenship through naturalization must pass “citizenship tests” that many birthright citizens
75 cannot pass themselves. More profoundly, those persons whose civil rights are most routinely
76 violated—that is, Blacks, Native Americans, Latinxs, LGBTQ persons, and members of other
77 racialized and stigmatized ethnic and religious groups—have been forced to learn the basic
78 terms and meaning (or meaninglessness) of constitutional rights and protections in a way that
79 dominant members of society have not. A civic education equal to the challenges of our own
80 time, then, must aim at the education of those who already presume to hold and exercise
81 power, as much as at those who do not.

82 **B. Civic Education Is Itself Political**

83
84 Civic education is itself political. The fact that it implies citizenship means that it has
85 always been embedded in conflicts over who should be accorded the status of citizens and
86 recognized as having civil and political rights. Paradoxically, it is precisely because so many
87 people see the answers to such questions as important that civic education is often a neglected
88 priority. A convergence of interest in support of civic education across such differences can be
89 difficult to effect.

90 The very concept of citizenship has a problematic history. Throughout European
91 colonization and state formation in the Americas, it has been used to mark distinctions
92 between settler and Native, between those who could lay claim to “own” land and those who
93 could not. Under this “logic of elimination” (Wolfe, 2006) Indian identity and U.S. citizenship
94 have often been constructed as mutually exclusive categories—a double bind that Native
95 Americans have repeatedly sought to overcome and that in many ways remained unresolved

96 even after the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act granted U.S. citizenship to “all non-citizen Indians
97 born within the territorial limits of the United States” (Lomawaima, 2013).

98 Ideas of citizenship and civic education have also been highly racialized. The formal and
99 informal education of elite leaders, soldiers, settlers, and ordinary laborers have often included
100 direct lessons in white supremacy. Such lessons both constructed and justified the forced
101 expropriation of territory from indigenous peoples and the capture and enslavement of
102 Africans that enriched European individuals and nations. They undergirded the eventual
103 creation of the U.S. as an independent nation founded in part as a league for further violent
104 expansion, labor exploitation, and appropriation of land and resources. They continued into the
105 history of the U.S. nation itself and structured basic norms and ideas about who should be
106 included in social and political institutions, including schools, and for what purposes
107 (Hannaford, 1996; Malik, 1996; Wolfe, 2002; Gould, 1981; Stratton, 2016).

108 During much of the nineteenth century, most whites opposed the idea of citizenship for
109 African Americans, their admission to public schools, and their education at public expense.
110 Similarly, California excluded Chinese and other residents racialized as non-white from public
111 schools. In the 1880s Congress excluded Chinese immigrants from the U.S. entirely, a policy it
112 later extended to other Asian immigrants. Conflicts over immigration and “Americanization” in
113 the 1910s and 20s led to laws further institutionalizing such restrictions and limiting immigrants
114 from many countries to very low numbers, even when—as in the case of Jewish refugees from
115 eastern Europe in the 1930s, their lives were in mortal danger. Versions of these same
116 questions still stimulate opposition and conflict today.

117

118 **C. Legacies of injustice undermine our capacity to support civic education.**

119 Legacies of these and other injustices undermine civic education. To recognize such
120 legacies involves much more than acknowledging past exclusions. It means confronting the
121 ways that the very concepts and institutions fundamental to civic culture are infused with that
122 history, which continues to put stumbling stones in our path. For example, the American
123 experiment with republican “self-government” from the beginning was predicated upon
124 genocidal violence against Native Americans, appropriation of Native American lands, and
125 elimination of Native sovereignty, languages, and life-ways. Schools, moreover, were deployed
126 as a major weapon in that dispossession and colonization process. How can American Indian
127 students be engaged citizens in a nation whose existence is predicated upon indigenous
128 erasure? Shouldn’t all students confront this fundamental contradiction of American ideas of
129 self-government and pluralism? How is that contradiction engaged in civic curriculum?

130 Ongoing realities of racial segregation also challenge the efficacy of civic education. The
131 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 confirmed that school segregation was anathema to
132 American democracy. A decade later, civil rights legislation swept in a Second
133 Reconstruction as the federal government enforced African American civil rights and oversaw
134 the desegregation of public facilities, including schools, that created much higher levels of
135 interracial contact. From the beginning, however, there were limits to change. Right away, in
136 1955, in *Brown II*, the Supreme Court delegated issues of enforcement to the same state
137 jurisdictions that it judged had historically violated constitutional principles. This decision in
138 turn produced a huge number of subsequent court cases seeking clarification of the Court’s
139 original decision. Then, starting in 1974, a series of U.S. Supreme Court rulings scaled back the

140 Court's support for school integration. (Bowman, 2015; Frankenborg and Orfield 2012; Hannah-
141 Jones, 2019; Ryan, 2010).

142 Yet, scholars have demonstrated that teaching students to engage in critical, measured
143 reflection and discussion with those whose perspectives are different than their own, will
144 prepare future citizens who can do the same (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). For example, a recent
145 study found that students who participated in organized deliberation over political issues had
146 better perspective-taking abilities than those who did not. The authors concluded, "The ability
147 to identify rationales for positions with which one disagrees, in particular, is critical in a
148 democracy. If students can identify legitimate rationales for positions in opposition to their
149 own, they have at least started to understand the nature of the controversy, to understand that
150 reasonable people can disagree (Avery et al., 2014, p. 853)."

151 How do we cultivate civic agency that is politically efficacious in a context in which many
152 students—especially white students of privilege-- have little regular contact with people whose
153 race and class background and experience is substantially different from their own?

154 **D. Civic education requires deliberate teaching and teachers require support.**
155
156 Civic education requires deliberate teaching. We cannot expect the knowledge and skills
157 of responsible civic engagement to be transferred by osmosis. A recent examination of
158 knowledge of civics administered in 2011 found that the majority of American citizens do not
159 understand such foundational concepts as checks and balances and the importance of an
160 independent judiciary. Only one-third of Americans could name all three branches of
161 government; one-third couldn't name any. Just over a third thought that it was the intention of
162 the Founding Fathers to have each branch hold a lot of power, but the president has the final

163 say, a concept closer to a monarchy than a democracy (Jamieson et al., 2011). Given these
164 conditions, we cannot expect sound civic education to occur through passive, informal learning.

165 The challenge of producing an educated and engaged citizenry has also proven to be
166 more complex and complicated with the emergence of social media and digital learning. This
167 has made it much more difficult for high school students and the general population to possess
168 the tools necessary to sort fact from fiction and become informed citizens. In 2018, Soroush
169 Vosoughi, Deb Roy and Sinan Aral investigated the differential diffusion of all of the verified
170 true and false news stories distributed on Twitter from 2006 to 2017 (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

171 The data comprised 126,000 stories tweeted by 3 million people more than 4.5 million times.

172 Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper and more broadly than the truth in all
173 categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than
174 for the false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial
175 information. They found that contrary to conventional wisdom, robots accelerated the spread
176 of true and false news at the same rate, implying that false news spreads more than the truth
177 because humans, not robots, are more likely to spread it. These and other findings suggest
178 strongly that we need civic education to equip students to become a more knowledgeable and
179 engaged citizenry.

180 To do this, schools and educators require support. Precisely because civic education is
181 political, teaching it is challenging. Even the teaching of pedestrian democratic dispositions and
182 skills like critical thinking and toleration for diverse cultures and beliefs is often controversial. It
183 is not uncommon, even today, for teachers who try to create engaging, hands-on lessons about
184 the Holocaust or slavery to run into trouble with parents and administrators who find the

185 lessons insensitive, inappropriate, or threatening to their sense of entitlement. When these
186 teachers are publicly reprimanded—or fired—it serves as a strong disincentive for their
187 colleagues to take a similar risk (Burkholder, 2011). Today, very few teachers encourage robust
188 deliberations of civics issues in American K-12 schools. Teachers cite a lack of content
189 knowledge, ability to “control” spirited discussions, lack of time to dedicate to items that are
190 not covered in standardized tests, and potential parent complaints as key reasons. Writing in
191 2016, Thomas Fallace imagined that only a crisis of epic proportions could create the social
192 context for change needed to revise our current practices. It seems that crisis is now (Fallace,
193 2016; Goldstein, 2019).

194
195 **III. Four Ways of Conceptualizing the Importance of History for Civic Education**

196 History is central to civic education. It is important *both* for the design and
197 implementation of civic education as policy *and* for the content and pedagogy of civic education
198 as curriculum. What follows are four ways of thinking about the significance of history for civic
199 education policy and practice.

200 **A. History as a Form of Civic Reasoning**
201

202 Important as historical understanding is to effective civic agency, history does not
203 repeat itself. Historical learning is not utilitarian in this sense. We cannot study the past in order
204 to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. History is not a roadmap. Even more, history is not
205 a sacrosanct set of warnings that we are obligated to obey. None of which is to say that history
206 does not serve a crucial purpose in a democracy. History is a category of civic reasoning. If
207 taken seriously as a discrete mode of thinking, history helps people navigate the complexities of
208 democratic citizenship.

209 History is critical to civic reasoning because it engenders contextual thinking. An
210 essential historical concept, *context* is an explanation for how and why things happened in the
211 past. Things happened, in part, because sets of circumstances—context—allowed them to
212 happen, or even caused them to happen. Circumstances inevitably change. Historical thinking is
213 a disciplined way of thinking through that change in context. This is an essential skill of
214 democratic citizenship and governance. Moreover, it is an essential responsibility for us as we
215 contemplate issues of civic education in our own time. How well we think through our current
216 context will shape the consequences and significance of any actions we take now.

217 **B. History as Confronting Legacies of the Past**

218 Although we are strong advocates of historical learning as integral to civic education,
219 the main point of this essay is a bit different. In what follows, we look at history in order to
220 understand better how civic education has been shaped by power dynamics that have excluded
221 certain peoples and ideas. Our aim in this discussion is to **confront that history**. We argue that
222 it is essential to confront that history in order to meet the central problems that challenge civic
223 education. That is because the idea of civic education that guides this project—one of
224 cultivating civic reasoning—assumes a “we” of civic discourse that cannot simply be assumed.
225 The politics of civic education, the legacies of injustice, and the diffusion of falsehood all
226 challenge that assumption. In this context, it is only by “working-off-the-past” that the “we”
227 necessary for civic discourse can be forged (Neiman, 2019).¹ That includes both the “we” of

¹ For an in-depth discussion of the concept of Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung (“working-off-the-past”) as understood and practiced in Germany and reconsidered in the context of the United States, see Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

228 civic education as policy and the “we” of civic education in the classroom. Our goal is to
229 advance the kind of transformative civic education that scholars like James A. Banks argue helps
230 all citizens—including those from marginalized groups—become efficacious and participatory
231 citizens (Banks, 2017).

232 **C. History as a repertoire of evidence and examples.**

233 History provides evidence and examples of how real people engaged crucial civic issues
234 in the context of crisis, conflict, and injustice. In May 1944, thirty-two Black high school seniors
235 in Julia Brogdon’s “Problems of Democracy” class composed and sent individual letters to the
236 College of Charleston requesting information about entrance requirements and admission to
237 the school (Baker, 2006). These actions challenging violations of the 14th amendment arose out
238 of the class’s comparative analysis of racially restricted admission policies at municipal colleges
239 in the U.S.. In this sense, they also provide evidence of how a certain model of civic education
240 was enacted in certain classrooms during the WWII and immediate post-war era.

241 By 1933-34, according to Thomas Fallace, about a third of all U.S. high schools had
242 adopted some version of the “Problems of Democracy” course (Fallace, 2016). As Fallace
243 recounts, the idea of the course derived most immediately from progressive curriculum
244 planning in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, as represented by the report of the National Education
245 Association (NEA)’s 1916 Committee on Social Studies. The case of Julia Brogdon in turn
246 illuminates how a teacher enacted the idea in a particular classroom in the context of
247 totalitarianism not only abroad, but at home under Jim Crow. As educators, scholars, and
248 policymakers, we can learn from this model of civic education.

249

250 **D. Historical Understanding and the Cultivation of Agency**

251 The origins of Julia Brogdon’s “Problems of Democracy” course were not only in the
252 NEA, however. Brogdon graduated from Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina and
253 received her master’s degree from Atlanta University, where she studied with Horace Mann
254 Bond and W.E.B. DuBois (Baker, 2006, pp. 66-7). Both Allen and Atlanta were historically Black
255 institutions founded during Reconstruction, as was Avery Institution in Charleston, where
256 Brogdon taught. Her education and teaching at those institutions connected her with deep
257 traditions of western thought **and also** with a trans-generational network of educational
258 leaders and political activists **who knew where they were in history** and who **understood**
259 **themselves as historical agents**. Cultivating a sense of historical agency is a crucial component
260 of civic education. It is important for us as scholars and educators as well as for students. To
261 become engaged citizens we must believe that engagement matters.

262
263 **Section Two--Legacies: Seven Historical Examples**
264

265 An historical perspective reveals how power dynamics in the past shaped civic education
266 in ways that simultaneously mobilized concerted civic effort and excluded or discriminated
267 against certain people and ideas. In this section, we consider some of the ways that these
268 forces shaped the practice of civic education and changing definitions of democracy and
269 citizenship. We show how diverse people fought to create more inclusive civic education and
270 more just and robust visions of what it means to sustain a pluralist democracy that recognizes
271 and protects the rights of all. A critical analysis of past examples of civic education and activism,
272 we argue, will help us cultivate the powers of civic reasoning and civic agency necessary to
273 confront both the ongoing legacies of injustice and the current critical issues of our time.

274 First, a word about definitions. From a historical perspective, there are no “a priori”
275 definitions of civic education. The idea of “civic education” as a “course in government” was an
276 invention of the twentieth century. For much of U.S. history, by contrast, the notion of civic
277 education was more broadly conceived as “education for citizenship.” The central problem of
278 civic education in that context was a problem of "diffusion." It was about increasing access to
279 the relatively undisputed content in reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and geography
280 presumed to prepare people for citizenship. The point of this essay is to examine the history of
281 civic education--broadly conceived as "education for citizenship"--in order to recognize the
282 historical tensions and contradictions that have attended that project in the United States and
283 to learn how diverse people have mobilized their own resources, civic traditions, and ideas to
284 address those contradictions. In the process, we also highlight factors that shaped the
285 emergence in the twentieth century of ideas of “civic education” that involved specific
286 dedicated curriculum in Americanization, government, tolerance, and “problems of
287 democracy.”

288

289 **I. Historical Agency and Civic Education in the American Revolution: The Uses of History**

290 Civic education was essential to the agency and activism of participants in the founding
291 of the United States as an independent nation and the (re)formation of colonies as states
292 during the revolutionary and early republican eras. Those participants included not only famous
293 “founding fathers,” but ordinary men and women engaged in a variety of formal and informal
294 governance and learning contexts, from local churches, town meetings, and common schools to
295 workingmen’s associations, guild-like clubs, such as the Freemasons, and a wide range of

296 learning and literacy societies. Together with formal schools and literary institutions such as
297 colleges, academies and seminaries, these self-governing and often independently incorporated
298 organizations formed the combined reservoir of social and political capital that constituted civic
299 education and culture in Anglo America (Beadie, 2010).

300 A practical education in this culture involved initiation into a number of ordinary tools of
301 associational life, such as the circulation of petitions, the drafting of articles of association, the
302 writing of constitutions, the practice of basic parliamentary procedure, the presentation and
303 voting of resolutions, minute-taking, and the raising of funds through pledges of joint
304 responsibility and self-taxation. An intellectual education in this culture, meanwhile, included
305 familiarity with the principles of government articulated in various traditions of political
306 philosophy along with historical knowledge of prior experiments with different models of
307 governance, political economy, and trade. As Benjamin Franklin explained in his famous
308 “Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth,” published in 1749:

309 History will...give occasion to expatiate on the Advantage of Civil
310 Orders and Constitutions, how Men and their Properties are
311 protected by joining in Societies and establishing Government;
312 their Industry encouraged and rewarded, Arts invented, and Life
313 made more comfortable: The Advantages of Liberty, Mischiefs of
314 Licentiousness, Benefits arising from good Laws and a due
315 Execution of Justice, & c. Thus may the first Principles of sound
316 Politics be fix'd in the Minds of Youth (Franklin, 1749, p. 22).

317 To achieve these ends, Franklin recommended reading not only ancient history and
318 classical authors, but “the best Modern Histories, particularly of our Mother Country; then of
319 these Colonies; which should be accompanied with Observations on their Rise, Encrease, Use to
320 Great Britain, Encouragements, Discouragements, &c. the Means to make them flourish, secure
321 their Liberties, & c.” (Franklin, 1749, p. 25). Writing as a loyal British subject and counsellor a
322 full generation before the events that would eventually precipitate the American Revolution,
323 Franklin nonetheless specified the value of learning about the historical benefits that the
324 colonies had conferred on Great Britain, the policies that either encouraged or discouraged
325 their flourishing, and the means of securing their liberties.

326 The diffusion of such practical and intellectual civic knowledge proved essential in the
327 conflicts with Great Britain that ensued. Colonial protests against the Stamp, Townshend, and
328 Intolerable Acts of the 1760s and 70s took the form of joint resolutions and non-importation
329 agreements forged and enforced by local associations of ordinary households on the model of
330 other voluntary associations and self-governing bodies (Gross, 1976). Moreover, as Pauline
331 Maier has shown, it was not only colonial representatives to the Continental Congress, but
332 ordinary participants in many town, county, and colonial-level conventions who drew on
333 principles and precedents from British and colonial history--including especially the Declaration
334 of Rights of 1689--in drafting their own local declarations of independence in the Spring and
335 Summer of 1776. Important was knowledge not only of specific prior cases of resistance to the
336 Crown, but of the form, principle, and practice of “declarations” as legal instruments by which
337 claims of wrongdoing on the part of a King and his counsellors were publically declared, the

338 legitimacy of his authority disputed, and public support for his removal solicited (Maier, 1998,
339 pp. 47-96).

340 Civic agency during the American Revolution thus drew on history in at least three ways:
341 1) as a sense of shared identity as a people with a common set of expectations, norms, and
342 prerogatives regarding good government established by tradition and law; 2) as a repertoire of
343 historical examples and precedents for understanding current predicaments; and 3) as a
344 tradition providing a toolkit of practices and templates for action in current circumstances. All
345 three of these uses of history remain resources for civic reasoning today.

346

347 **II. Visions and Dilemmas of Civic Education in the Early Republic: The Power of Context**

348 The next generation sought to institutionalize the education necessary to sustain this
349 understanding of common history, legal prerogatives, and principles of good government. In
350 1795, the American Philosophical Society--which included among its members the nation's first
351 presidents, leading scientists, and other political and cultural leaders--sponsored a prize contest
352 for the essay proposing the system of education "best calculated to promote the general
353 welfare of the United States" (Justice, 2013). A close look at the submitted essays reveals the
354 logic and the dilemmas of civic education in the early Republic.

355 With regard to curriculum, the two winning essays by Samuel Knox and William Harrison
356 Smith differed in their emphasis on classical language learning versus modern languages and
357 content. This difference illuminates the significance of history as a way of envisioning the
358 expansion of citizenship and self-governance during the early Republican era. In the late
359 eighteenth century, an emphasis on history and geography as subjects of study provided a

360 means of surmounting the obstacles to liberal learning that had long been constrained by an
361 insistence on reading Latin and Greek texts in the original language. Reading such texts in
362 translation or as summarized in histories by ancient writers like Livy and Plutarch or by more
363 modern writers such as Charles Rollins became a popular and even standard element of English
364 language curricula. Perhaps even more importantly, English-language translations and histories
365 became widely available in print for those pursuing self-education.

366 Exemplifying this more accessible approach, Samuel Harrison Smith echoed Franklin
367 before him in making history central to the curriculum, especially with respect to civic content.
368 Higher grades of primary education should include “the concise study of General History and a
369 more detailed acquaintance with the history of our own country; of Geography; of the laws of
370 nature, practically illustrated in agriculture and mechanics; and to commit to memory, and
371 frequently to repeat, the constitution and the fundamental laws of the United States.” (Smith,
372 1797, in Justice 2013, p. 213).

373 Even as Smith presented an inclusive educational vision by grounding it in English
374 education rather than classical languages and literature, however, his vision was constraining in
375 other ways. For starters, Smith’s proposal, like the other submissions, focused explicitly on the
376 education of boys. In delineating the basic principles of his proposed system, Smith stated “that
377 every male child, without exception, be educated.” (Smith, 1797, in Justice 2013, p. 213).

378 This gender exclusivity is surprising in two ways. First, as Margaret Nash points out in
379 her essay on the topic, it cut against the grain of current trends in intellectual thought at the
380 time (Nash, 2013). Female education was a common topic of discussion at the end of the
381 eighteenth century among many of the same political and cultural leaders who comprised the

382 membership of the APS. Indeed, several members—including Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin
383 Rush, and even Thomas Jefferson in his 1785 *Notes on the State of Virginia*--were on record as
384 favoring the systematic education of women. Second, the exclusion of women from Smith's
385 plan contradicted existing practice. Girls and young women quite commonly attended school in
386 many areas of the country in the late eighteenth century. Largely due to this widespread school
387 attendance, female literacy rates rose significantly during the last half of the eighteenth
388 century, becoming virtually equal with that of males by the 1820s. As the pool of literate girls
389 and young women widened, so did the demand for female schooling beyond the elementary
390 level, a demand that by the end of the eighteenth century was met not only by private tutors or
391 schools held in women's homes, but by increasing numbers of academies and seminaries
392 (Kerber, 1980; Nash, 2005; Norton, 1980).

393 Ordinary practice, in other words, already substantially exceeded the principles of
394 school access with respect to sex stated in essays submitted to the APS contest in 1795-7. To
395 some degree, though to a lesser extent, the same was true of school access with respect to
396 race. Free Blacks and some enslaved persons did attend school during the early Republican era,
397 particularly in northern cities but also in some border and southern cities such as Baltimore,
398 Raleigh, and Louisville(Horton and Horton, 1997; Nash, 1991; Mabee, 1979; Moss, 2013; Tolley,
399 2005; Lucas, 2003). Typically, such education occurred in charity or church schools organized
400 specifically as “colored” or “African free” schools or in pay schools organized by independent
401 teachers, including some established and taught by African Americans. In Philadelphia
402 specifically, as Hilary Moss points out, publically advertised Black schools date back to the
403 1720s, including an influential school for free and some enslaved Blacks founded by Anthony

404 Benetzel around 1750 which operated continuously well into the nineteenth century (Moss,
405 2013; Nash, 1991; Hornick, 1975). Given that context, Samuel Harrison Smith's stated principle
406 "that every male child, without exception, be educated," *could* have been intended to include
407 Black boys, though it is far from clear that it did.

408 Such explicit and implicit exclusions by race and sex in proposals for a system of
409 education "best calculated to promote the general welfare of the United States," may not seem
410 surprising to anyone not already familiar with common practices of female schooling and the
411 existence of schools for Blacks in this era. To most modern readers, and even most other
412 historians, such exclusions by race and sex may be so taken for granted as to hardly bear
413 examination. However, recognizing the *reasons* that stated principles of access to education
414 were more narrow than existing practice is essential to understanding the history and
415 appreciating the ongoing significance of civic education in society.

416 It is important to recognize that it ***was precisely because of the public and civic purpose***
417 of the educational system they were proposing that Samuel Harrison Smith and other
418 proponents of public education were so circumspect about the inclusion of women and African
419 Americans in their plans. To appreciate this point it helps to look closely at how Smith himself
420 stated that civic purpose. At the end of his very long (90 pp.) "Remarks on Education," Smith
421 summarized the importance of education for the "individual citizen:"

422 The citizen, enlightened, will be a freeman in its truest sense. He
423 will know his rights, and he will understand the rights of others;
424 discerning the connection of his interest with the preservation of

425 these rights, he will as firmly support those of his fellow men as
426 his own. ” (Smith, 1797, in Justice 2013, p. 216).

427 Here we have as clear and simple a statement of the importance of an educated
428 citizenry for the preservation of republican government as existed at the time. “Knowing one’s
429 own rights” and “understanding the rights of others” seems an obvious and innocuous
430 statement of enlightenment logic in support of the value of public education for civil society.

431 Yet, the statement also reveals how the language of citizenship (as distinct from that of
432 “personhood”) imposed limitations on the educational vision proposed. What rights, exactly,
433 did a woman or an African American have in eighteenth century society? To what extent could
434 one imagine including either in the term “freeman”? What would it mean to “understand the
435 rights of others” when those others were women or African Americans?

436 What these questions highlight is the political nature of the document Smith created
437 and the limits that politics imposed. Any document that answered the question posed by the
438 essay contest--which was essentially to propose a national system of education--was of course
439 a political document. That in turn meant that in order for the essay to have a prospect of
440 winning the contest; and more ambitiously, for the proposed plan to win a hearing with a
441 broader audience; it had to take that larger political context and audience into account.

442 Precisely because contemporary debate connected the issues of female education and
443 women’s rights, Smith could imagine nothing he could say on female education that could win
444 broad assent. For that reason, he said nothing and thus in effect, limited his principles to
445 something much less than existing practice.

446 This problem of political consensus at the heart of the civic education project was even
447 more salient with respect to African Americans. Slaveholder power, land speculation, and the
448 pursuit of wealth were essential to the Revolutionary movement and to the confederation that
449 successfully prosecuted the U.S. War for Independence. That coalition was institutionalized first
450 in the Articles of Confederation and eventually in the U.S. Constitution. Maintaining that
451 coalition through ongoing challenges to national independence remained a central
452 preoccupation of federal government through the early national period, up to the Civil War,
453 and arguably to this day. In that context, any ostensibly “national” program that challenged
454 slaveholder power was politically untenable. Certainly, a proposal for a national public
455 education system that explicitly proposed to educate Black males as citizens who “knew their
456 rights” would have represented such a challenge. It is not surprising that no such direct
457 challenge was made by APS essay contest participants.

458 More than that though, and somewhat more difficult to apprehend, is the point that
459 Eric Foner made decades ago in his study of Thomas Paine. Paine recognized the fundamental
460 moral contradiction embedded in a movement that cried for liberty even as it countenanced
461 legal and political systems of bondage. “With what consistency, or decency,” he asked in a
462 newspaper piece published March 1775, could the colonists “complain so loudly of attempts to
463 enslave them, while they hold so many hundred thousand in slavery?” (Foner, 2005, p. 73) Yet,
464 as Foner argued, slavery was essential to the Revolution precisely because it removed a large
465 portion of the laboring population from the prospect of political rights, and thus from the
466 potential to challenge a landed gentry who never would have endorsed the Revolutionary
467 movement otherwise. “By eliminating altogether the question of political rights for the laboring

468 population, slavery enabled the wealthy planters for whom Madison spoke to embrace
469 republicanism and representative government." (Foner, 1976, p. 89).

470 Understood from this perspective, the very convergence of interests that made the
471 republican experiment of the United States possible assumed the categorical denial of
472 citizenship and basic human rights by race. A proposal for a national system of public education
473 that depended on those in power agreeing to the principle that all laborers should be educated
474 as citizens with political rights was not politically viable in a context where the coalition of
475 confederated states had to be maintained in order to withstand external challenges.

476 Understanding the significance of that context is essential for understanding the concept of
477 liberty itself (Davis, 1999; Berlin and Hoffman, 1983; G. Nash, 2006). It is also an example of
478 how contextual thinking is essential to civic reasoning. For indeed, the legacy of the
479 Revolutionary Era context of confederation is with us still.

480 Of course, the fact that officially promoting the education of Blacks for "citizenship"
481 proved politically problematic did not mean that Black communities did not themselves
482 cultivate civic knowledge, agency, and activism. Enslaved persons pursued self-education and
483 participated in clandestine schools and informal learning (Williams, 2005; Franklin and
484 Higginbotham, 2011). Meanwhile, free Black leaders and communities increasingly drew on
485 their own social and religious organizations and ideas to establish schools, confront anti-
486 Blackness, challenge slavery itself, and assert equal rights and equal citizenship (Baumgartner,
487 2019b; Jones, 2018; Rael, 2002; Moss, 2009). As racist legal exclusions and anti-Black violence
488 increased in the nineteenth century, these leaders and communities responded with civic-
489 minded efforts to call Americans back to founding principles. In Connecticut, for example, Black

490 women and girls seeking education stood up to violence against them and publically asserted
491 an alternative moral vision (Baumgartner, 2019a). In Boston, David Walker issued his *Appeal to*
492 *the Colored Citizens of the World* (Walker, 1829) calling out hypocrisy in the land of ‘liberty.’ In
493 Philadelphia, the Rev. Richard Allen organized the first Colored or Negro Conventions while the
494 businessman James Forten helped fund establishment of the abolitionist newspaper, the
495 *Liberator*, and published a series of essays laying a foundation for the abolitionist movement
496 that followed (G. Nash, 2006). This was civic education too--and in the fullest sense.

497

498 **III. Civic Education and Sovereignty in the Common School Era: Tensions & Contradictions**

499 Civic education became the leading rationale for promoting public schools at municipal,
500 state, and territorial levels in the nineteenth century. While education sponsored by private
501 groups at private expense could aim at many things—whether vocational, religious, social, or
502 cultural--education at public expense required a justification in terms of the common or public
503 good. Until the 1820s, schooling in Anglo-America developed in highly decentralized ways,
504 primarily through local initiative, though occasionally supplemented by state or municipal or
505 tribal funds on an institution-by-institution basis. Systematic development of schools at public
506 expense at the state or territorial level began occurring in a major way during the 1820s and
507 1830s. Education for citizenship provided the central justification for this systems expansion.

508 This movement to expand schooling on a systematic basis included the sovereign
509 nations of Indian Territory after the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Looking at the common school
510 movement in comparative perspective with a focus on Indian Territory highlights the
511 possibilities as well as some of the tensions and contradictions of education for self-

512 government among sovereignties that sometimes conflicted with each other—tensions and
513 contradictions that would come to a head in multiple ways during the Civil War.

514 An important fact to recognize about civic education and school system development in
515 the U.S. during the common school era is the extent to which they depended directly on the
516 expropriation of Native American lands. This dynamic had roots in the early Republican Era.
517 Beginning in 1785 and 1787, with the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance, the federal
518 government dedicated portions of newly acquired federal lands for support of education, a
519 model it elaborated in subsequent territorial acquisitions and acts. From the beginning,
520 Congress framed the justification for such provisions in terms of civic purpose: "Religion,
521 morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind,
522 schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." (Tyack, 1987, pp. 20-42).

523 Essentially a by-product of land policy, these federal provisions for school support used
524 lands appropriated from Native Americans as a means of promoting white settlement. School
525 lands offered settlers a benefit that incentivized the kind of family formation and institution-
526 building necessary to occupy and hold the territory, while they also promoted the formation of
527 citizenry and leaders who would establish and sustain Anglo-style systems of self-government,
528 thereby converting the territory from Indian to white settler control (Beadie et al., 2016;
529 Beadie, 2016a; M. Nash, 2019; Lee and Ahtone, 2020). Thus, Native dispossession and white
530 citizenship education were directly connected in the common school era. Together they
531 operated as a central dynamic of settler colonialism in North America.

532 This dynamic became particularly relentless in the Jacksonian era of the 1820s and 30s
533 when, not incidentally, the elimination of property qualifications for voting and the expansion

534 of white male suffrage in U.S. states increased the demand for additional Native land
535 expropriation, racially exclusive laws, and racially restricted definitions of citizenship. As rights
536 increasingly came to be seen as inhering in the person rather than in wealth or position, the
537 question of which persons had inherent rights became more salient and more explicitly
538 exclusive by race and sex (Berthoff, 1989). This was a period of escalating anti-Black, anti-Indian
539 racism, including the passage of widespread anti-literacy laws in the South and the Indian
540 Removal Act of 1830, all reinforced with vigilante violence, some of it directly threatened and
541 encouraged by the Andrew Jackson administration. Meanwhile, these new repressions of
542 slavery and violations of Native treaties were justified by a new, specifically American, racist
543 “science” of phrenology (Gould, 1981).

544 It was in this context that U.S. states established systems of common education and it
545 was under this relentless pressure that some Native nations developed systems of schooling as
546 well. Indigenous leaders at various stages of the settler colonial project promoted and
547 facilitated certain forms of western education for their children and future leaders in a
548 deliberate effort to enable them to be effective in advancing and protecting tribal interests with
549 and against white settlers and the U.S. federal government. Thus, in the early nineteenth
550 century, tribal nations such as the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek of the Southeast
551 developed academic institutions that in many ways paralleled, imitated, and rivaled academies
552 intended for white social and political elites (Mihesuah, 1993; Castelow, 2002; Snyder, 2017).

553 One of the most influential of these institutions was Choctaw Academy. Founded in
554 1825 in Great Crossings, Kentucky under a special joint agreement between the Choctaw
555 Nation and the U.S. federal government, Choctaw Academy actively recruited and enrolled

556 nascent leaders from 17 different Native nations, extending from the Ojibwe to the Seminole,
557 the Osage to the Shawnee.² At Choctaw Academy, students pursued a standard western
558 academic curriculum on a model much like that articulated previously by Benjamin Franklin and
559 William Harrison Smith, including English language studies, history, and classics. As detailed by
560 the historian Christina Snyder (2017), that curriculum led cadres of nascent Native leaders to
561 articulate visions of national sovereignty for Indian nations replete with historical examples
562 from ancient Greek city states, the US Revolution, and Irish independence movements. As
563 interpreted and taken up by Native students, in other words, the curriculum at Choctaw
564 Academy amounted to a civic education for Native sovereignty.

565 This vision of education for sovereignty was cruelly betrayed with the Indian Removal
566 Act of 1830 and the actions that followed. As Tsianina Lomawaima (2015) has argued, the
567 federal government under the Jackson administration directly violated the federal Constitution
568 and sacrificed Native sovereignty in order to facilitate the expropriation of Native lands by the
569 states and white residents of Georgia and Mississippi and thereby preserve the Union under
570 threat of southern secession.

571 For a decade or more after removal, surviving Indian migrants and leaders continued to
572 send some of their most promising youth to school under prior arrangements, including at
573 Choctaw Academy in Kentucky. In the 1842, however, after repeated reports of deteriorating
574 conditions at Choctaw, the General Council of the Choctaw commissioned one of their

² Choctaw Academy students came from the tribal nations and homelands of the Ojibwe, Ottawa, Menominee, Dakota, Mesquakie and Sauk, Omaha, Iowa, Potawatomi, Miami, Shawnee, Osage Quapaw, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole. Snyder, 2008, p. 15.

575 members, Peter Pitchlynn to take their demands to Washington D.C., seize control of tribal
576 school funds, withdraw Choctaw students. Other nations of Indian Territory soon followed the
577 Choctaw example, often with Pitchlynn as representative, with the result that Choctaw
578 Academy closed in 1848 and Native nations within Indian Territory established their own
579 schools and school systems. Carrying forward practices and in some cases transplanting existing
580 institutions from their original reserved territories in Georgia, Mississippi, and elsewhere in the
581 South, Indian nations such as the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek and the Choctaw initially
582 concentrated tribal resources, including federal annuities intended for education, in a small
583 number of institutions intended to educate tribal leaders, (Castelow, 2002; Mihesuah, 1993;
584 Snyder, 2017; Steineker, 2016 but soon expanded schooling on a common school model to
585 include a wider range of students .

586 Importantly, a number of Choctaw alumni went on to take up leadership roles as
587 promoters of developing school systems during the 1840s, and 50s. As detailed by historian
588 Rowan Steineker with respect to the Creek Nation and by Christina Snyder with respect to the
589 Choctaw Nation, the resulting systems in Indian territory focused on making basic or common
590 education more universal among ordinary households, as well as on educating promising
591 students as teachers and leaders. According to Snyder, in the Choctaw Nation these schools
592 hired mostly Native teachers and taught children and adults in both English and Choctaw. Much
593 like developing common schools systems simultaneously being established in other states and
594 territories such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois, they matched central funds with local
595 initiative and funding (Steineker, 2016). In this respect, the school systems of Indian Territory in
596 the common school era effectively provided civic education, or education for citizenship, in self-

597 governing sovereignties with the potential to operate as states-within-a-state on a parallel with
598 (though still distinct from) those of other states and territories in the federalist union of the U.S.
599 (Lomawaima, 2015).

600 Though such a possibility of course presented its own tensions and potential conflicts,
601 they were not entirely different from those that attended other territories with linguistically
602 and/or culturally distinct populations, particularly after U.S. aggression and acquisition of
603 territory in Mexico in the 1830s and 40s. Most communities in New Mexico, and many in Texas,
604 Arizona, and Colorado, continued to employ Spanish-speaking teachers in their schools (or
605 German-speaking teachers, as the case required) and to reflect Catholic tradition and teaching
606 (or Lutheran or Mormon teaching), for decades after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and
607 the 1846 admission of Texas to statehood (Blanton, 2004; Getz, 1997; Lozano, 2018; McDonald,
608 2004). For that matter, German communities and Catholic communities throughout the United
609 States, with a variety of ethnic backgrounds (French, Welsh, Czech, Belgian) continued to hold
610 school in their home languages taught by teachers who shared their ethnic, religious, and
611 linguistic backgrounds through much of the nineteenth century (Tyack, 2003; Justice, 2005;
612 Vinyard, 1998).

613 At the same time, territories and states before the Civil War maintained considerable
614 autonomy over who was defined as a “citizen” and (thus) also, what “education for citizenship”
615 looked like. Paradoxically, perhaps, this condition of semi-autonomous sovereignty allowed
616 both for a degree of cultural pluralism and for multiple forms of racial exclusion. This kind of
617 racialized citizenship occurred in the Nations of Indian Territory as well. Thus, Choctaw, Creek,
618 Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Seminole, who had brought enslaved Blacks with them to Indian

619 Territory from the Southeast and increased their slaveholding for cotton farming in the
620 Territory, practiced a racially repressive regime of law and education that paralleled in some
621 respects the rest of the slaveholding South. With schooling more directly under tribal authority
622 and subsidized more directly by tribally-held central funds (albeit from federal sources), the
623 systems increasingly defined access to such funded schools in terms of a racially exclusive idea
624 of tribal membership. Specifically, most tribally-run schools in Indian territory excluded African
625 American residents, many of whom were currently or historically enslaved by tribal members
626 (Steineker, 2016; Snyder, 2017). In this regard, too, the school systems of Indian Territory
627 paralleled those of common school systems established in other U.S. states and territories in
628 the 1830s, 40s, and 50s, almost all of which explicitly specified their school constituencies and
629 inhabitants eligible for citizenship as “white.” (Beadie, 2016; Thorpe, 1909).

630 Thus, on the eve of the Civil War, civic education and public schooling in the U.S. was
631 simultaneously pluralist and racially exclusionary. This fundamental tension between collective
632 sovereignty and equal citizenship was endemic to the common school project and endures
633 today. It continues to challenge attempts to shape a civic education policy that extends to all
634 regions and populations with equal justice.

635

636 **IV. Antebellum Black Activism and Postbellum Educational Reconstruction: Contingency
637 and Consequence**

638 Founded during the era of slavery, America’s first public schools were neither designed
639 nor intended to serve African Americans. To the contrary, most whites viewed it as logical to
640 prohibit Black access to antebellum public schools, as they did not view free Blacks as eligible
641 for American citizenship. This is why even in northern states with relatively robust systems of

643 public education, whites routinely barred Black youth from public schools before 1865
644 (Anderson, 1988; Davis, 2011; Douglas, 2005, pp. 12-60). Common schools taught citizenship
645 explicitly through a curriculum of Protestant morality, American civics and history, American-
646 style grammar and spelling, the geography of the young nation, and enough reading, writing,
647 and arithmetic to prepare adults to read a newspaper and pay their taxes. At the same time,
648 common schools taught citizenship implicitly by refusing to include many African Americans,
649 Native Americans, Chinese Americans, and Mexican Americans, among other students of color.
650 In this way, public schools were one of many institutions that constructed an explicitly
651 racialized conception of American citizenship (Kaestle, 1983, pp. 38-9, 171-9; Litwack, 1961, pp.
652 113-52; Moss, 2009, pp. 1-13; Mabee, 1970, pp. 139-84; Rael, 2002, pp. 1-5; Woodson, 1968,
653 pp. 229-55).
654 African Americans viewed education as essential to emancipation, self-sufficiency, and
655 political equality. When they were denied entry to the new common schools, Black northerners
656 petitioned local governments for admittance, but were met with fierce resistance from whites
657 who either ignored these please or created segregated schools for Black students. Such schools
658 sprouted in Boston, New York, Rochester, Trenton, Philadelphia, Newark, Hartford, Portland,
659 Providence, Portsmouth, New Haven, and Detroit, as well as smaller towns like Nantucket and
660 Salem. Faced with the grim choice of total exclusion from the common schools, or access on a
661 segregated basis, many northern Black families accepted the latter. In some cases, white school
662 leaders sweetened the deal by hiring Black teachers and administrators for the “colored”
663 schools of the North (Burkholder, 2021; Douglas, 2005, pp. 1-60).

664 As racial tensions intensified and civil war loomed, a growing number of Black leaders
665 began to question the wisdom of state-sponsored school segregation. Like other Americans,
666 they saw plainly the relationship between public schools and citizenship. To advance their
667 argument that African Americans deserved equal rights, Black leaders insisted that the public
668 schools accept Black students on a nondiscriminatory basis (Baptiste, 2014, pp. 343-97; Lubat,
669 2010; Mabee, 1979, pp. 183-87; Murphy, 2014; Moss, 2009).

670 African American campaigns to abolish segregated schools appeared in Nantucket and
671 Salem in the 1840s and spread to Boston, Rochester, and beyond as a defining feature of
672 northern Black political protest. Speaking on behalf of integrationists in Boston in 1849,
673 Benjamin F. Roberts argued that “exclusive schools” were an obstacle to their “common rights”
674 as citizens, and furthermore that segregated schools created “the odious distinction of caste”
675 that was anathema to American democracy (Bigelow et al., 1849, pp. 24-48).

676 Led by Black abolitionists and their white allies, the school integration movement was
677 joined by Black students and parents, especially mothers, who viewed race-based school
678 assignments as demeaning, discriminatory, and unjust. As Black school integrationist William C.
679 Nell wrote from Boston in 1855, “In the dark hours of our struggle, when betrayed by traitors
680 within and beset by foes without, while some men would become lukewarm and indifferent,
681 despairing of victory; then did the women keep the flame alive, and as their hopes would
682 weave bright visions for the future, their husbands and brothers would rally for a new attack
683 upon the fortress of color-phobia. Yes, Sir, it was the mothers (God bless them!) of these little
684 bright eyed-boys and girls, who, through every step of our progress, were executive and
685 vigilant, even to that memorable Monday morning (September 3, 1855,) the trial hour, when

686 the colored children of Boston went up to occupy the long-promised land (Meeting of Colored
687 Citizens, 1855, emphasis in original)."

688 Nell added that Black mothers accompanied him to persuade white school
689 administrators that Black families wanted to attend "white" schools. Black women visited the
690 homes of white teachers and school committee members and pledged to have their children,
691 "punctually at school, and neat in their dress," and to aid their instructors in all other ways
692 (Abolition of Caste Schools, 1855). Black women participated in political actions, visited with
693 white school teachers and administrators, and encouraged children to recognize their presence
694 in previously all-white schools as a form of patriotic protest. In this and many other instances in
695 antebellum era, Black girls and women made claims on the public as education activists
696 (Baumgartner, 2019).

697 Struggles for school integration in the North gained the support of prominent civil rights
698 leaders who insisted that state-sponsored segregation represented a dangerous form of state-
699 sponsored discrimination. In 1859, Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass made the provocative
700 argument that African Americans should prioritize school integration over the most prized of
701 citizenship rights—equal suffrage. Douglass argued that children would get to know each other,
702 thus breaking down prejudice and creating a new social context where Black Americans would
703 be treated equally. He concluded, "Contact on equal terms is the best way to abolish Caste: *it is*
704 *caste abolished* (Douglas, 1859)."

705 The primary goal of early Black school integrationists like Douglass was not to equalize
706 educational opportunities for Black youth (although many hoped it would do so), but instead to
707 transform the civic function of public education by symbolizing black equality and reducing anti-

708 Black prejudice. They were joined by Black families who realized that segregated schools
709 engendered an unequal distribution of state resources. As a result, a growing and diverse
710 chorus of Black northerners recognized school segregation as a terrible weapon of oppression,
711 and school integration as a powerful force for equality.

712 This call for equal citizenship to some degree pushed against powers of self-government
713 and state sovereignty. As outlined in the previous section, civic education and school system
714 development in the U.S. operated on a pluralist model on the eve of the Civil War. Citizenship
715 and civic education were defined by largely independent sovereignties on a state-by-state,
716 territory-by-territory basis. The resulting systems paralleled each other morphologically, but
717 also differed from each other in important ways, including forms of cultural membership and
718 racial exclusion. In New Mexico, for example, a large non-English speaking population organized
719 schools, selected teachers, leaders, and other public officials who shared those language and
720 cultural traditions (Lozano, 2018, pp. 89-110; Getz, 1997). Similarly, in Mormon Utah,
721 alternative traditions of household formation, property ownership, religious authority, and
722 government informed the cultural content and leadership of schools and school systems (Esplin
723 & Randall, 2014; Limerick, 1987, pp. 280-88). The nations of Indian Territory, in this respect,
724 were not wholly different from other territories of the West where a pluralist approach to
725 cultural and political sovereignty persisted. Meanwhile, many states and territories nations
726 exercised their sovereignty in racially exclusive ways. The Oregon state constitution of 1857, for
727 example, explicitly excluded free Negroes and mulattos from residing in the state and from all
728 rights of property or access to courts of justice. It further specified that “no Negro, Chinaman,

729 or mulatto shall have the right of suffrage." On what basis could such racially exclusive
730 definitions of citizenship—and of citizenship education—be challenged and changed?

731 During the Civil War, the multiple sovereignties that composed the country came into
732 direct conflict with each other and with the federal government. That conflict resulted in a
733 consolidation of federal power. It also produced attempts to define a common standard of
734 citizenship and civic education. Through Reconstruction amendments to the federal
735 constitution and other acts, Congress redefined citizenship and civil rights to include African
736 Americans (Anderson, 2007). In this context, the African American movement for school
737 integration in the North achieved some success. Between 1866 and 1877 every northern state
738 except for Indiana that had previously required or permitted school segregation outlawed
739 segregated schools.

740 This was a crucial victory that compelled white school leaders to permit Black students
741 to attend public schools, and it opened new opportunities for Black educational, economic, and
742 social advancement. It did not, however, end racial discrimination and segregation, and in fact
743 school segregation increased as white school leaders found ways to gerrymander school
744 assignments and isolate Black students well into the twentieth century. Since racially
745 segregated schools permitted school leaders to not only hoard the best resources for white
746 children, but also symbolically deny African Americans equal citizenship, the struggle for school
747 integration would become a defining feature of the twentieth century Black civil rights
748 movement (Davis 2011, pp. 72-96; Douglas 2005, pp. 68-83; Du Bois, 1955, p. 158; Painter, 177,
749 p. 49).

750 From the 1860s through 1880s, Congress also considered a series of proposals that
751 would have established a federal system of funding and basic regulation for common schools
752 (Beadie, 2016b). The explicit rationale for such a system rested solidly on the idea that the
753 survival of Republican government required universal education for citizenship (Black, 2017).
754 Meanwhile, under state Reconstruction governments, African Americans themselves organized
755 common schools and school systems and established many important institutions of Black
756 higher education, sometimes affiliated with church denominations or missionary organizations
757 (Butchart, 2010; Green, 2016; Span, 2009; Williams, 2005; Favors, 2019). After two decades of
758 “educational reconstruction,” however, the federal government abandoned the sponsorship
759 and protection of such institutions and the enforcement of constitutional principles, allowing
760 for the violent suppression of Black civil and human rights by explicitly white supremacist
761 governments under Jim Crow state constitutions. Despite the 14th amendment, the power to
762 define citizenship and civil rights essentially returned to a state-by-state basis in the U.S. South.
763 As the historian James Anderson succinctly summarized the ensuing history, “Both schooling for
764 democratic citizenship and schooling for second-class citizenship have been basic traditions in
765 American education (Anderson, 1988, 1).”

766 In the West, however, the Civil War had different, and in some ways, opposite effects.
767 Whereas the federal government essentially withdrew from responsibility for enforcing
768 common standards of citizenship, civil rights, and education for African Americans in the South,
769 it actively deployed its consolidated power to force assimilation through education for Indian
770 nations and, to a lesser extent, other religious and language minorities in the territorial West.
771 There the federal government used its consolidated power to exclude Chinese from

772 immigration and naturalized citizenship while violently seizing control of most Native land and
773 resources for national railroad, timber, mining, and manufacturing interests and development
774 (Beadie, 2016a, 2019a; Anderson, 2007; Adams, 1995; White, 2011; Cronon, 1991;). It was at
775 this point that U.S. education policies for settler populations and for Native Americans
776 fundamentally diverged. Despite the pre-war existence of common school systems in Indian
777 territory and serious proposals in the 1890s for an independent state of Sequoya created from
778 Indian territory, Indian nations and peoples were not accorded the same dispensation as
779 former white confederate powers, or even as the persistently Spanish-dominant territory of
780 New Mexico (Burton, 1995, p. 249; Lozano, 2014; Meinig, 1998, pp. 174-5, 301-5; Wickett,
781 2003, p. 171). Instead, in the 1880s and 1890s the federal government imposed a system of
782 forced land allotment and assimilation through a federal Indian boarding school system
783 (Adams, 1995; Gram, 2015; Lomawaima, 1994; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). More
784 specifically, through the Curtis Act of 1898, the federal government actively abrogated land and
785 treaty agreements with nations in Indian territory and destroyed existing school systems in
786 favor of the federal system of Indian boarding schools. Thus, the U.S. implemented two
787 fundamentally divergent education policies at the end of the nineteenth century: one policy
788 that allowed for maximal state prerogative with respect to education under white control, even
789 in the face of fundamental violations of federal law; and one that assumed maximal federal
790 authority with respect to education for subjugation of Native Americans, even including a
791 distinct federal system of schools.

792 Federal education policy in the aftermath of the Civil War thus demonstrates the
793 fundamental contingency of history. For a twenty-year period following the Civil War, the

794 possibilities of equal citizenship and citizenship education for African Americans seemed open.

795 The potential for plural sovereignty for Native education also persisted. At the end of the

796 1880s, however, both windows of opportunity closed. They remained so for another 50 to 80

797 years. Those consequential collective choices have had legacies that cannot be undone. They

798 foreclosed alternative realities that cannot be recaptured. To confront that history is to share

799 recognition of that loss. It is also to realize how collective choice matters in our own time. In

800 this way, history as civic reasoning is essential to the cultivation of civic agency.

801

802 **V. Civic Education, Nationalism, and “Americanization” in the Early Twentieth Century:**

803 **Lessons and Limits**

804 In the nineteenth century, schools promoted good citizenship through basic education

805 in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and history. An examination of textbooks in those

806 subjects would quickly reveal a version of geography, history, and English language rhetoric that

807 valorized white Anglo-Saxon Protestant political institutions, religious traditions, and economies

808 as superior (Stratton, 2016). Nonetheless, that emphasis was more a general reflection of

809 dominant prejudices than the product of an orchestrated plan to promote a singular vision or

810 catechism of “American” ideals. By comparison, versions of civic education developed in the

811 early twentieth century became more deliberately nationalist, and hence more contested.

812 Immigration, labor conflict, and World War I shaped this shift in the content and aims of

813 civic education. After 1890, U.S. corporate agriculture and industry significantly expanded their

814 recruitment of displaced and laboring populations from around the world--including Japan,

815 Eastern and Southern Europe, and Mexico. In this context, an array of federated non-

816 governmental organizations developed to address immigrant issues. Different organizations
817 represented different views about immigrants and immigration. Some ethnic, religious, and
818 mutual benefit societies such as the Knights of Columbus and various Jewish Federations
819 offered immigration services for newcomers with whom their members shared a common
820 identity. Other groups like settlement houses and the YMCA sought to address immigrant issues
821 as matters of social welfare, including child labor, housing, public health, youth education, and
822 recreation. Explicitly nationalist organizations such as the Daughters of the American
823 Revolution, sought to initiate youth into certain patriotic rituals and ideas of American history.
824 More nativist organizations, meanwhile, such as the American Protective League, the
825 Immigration Restriction League, and the Ku Klux Klan sought to restrict the rights of immigrants
826 and the criteria for immigration and naturalization. These diverse views came to a head in the
827 1910s and 20s, especially with U.S. entry into World War I (Mirel, 2010).

828 Although the U.S. government had traditionally exercised little direct authority with
829 respect to education in the states, officials in the Department of Labor and the Bureau of
830 Education in the Department of Interior began implementing “Americanization” policies
831 indirectly in 1914 and 1915. In doing so, they followed a model of “hidden” government long
832 pursued at the federal level, especially with respect to education (Beadie, 2019c; Steffes, 2012).
833 Specifically in 1915, the Bureau of Education established a Division of Immigrant Education in
834 close cooperation with a non-governmental organization that became the National
835 Americanization Committee (NAC). The NAC aimed to coordinate the various Americanization
836 and immigrant service activities of chambers of commerce, corporations, patriotic societies,
837 fraternal orders, and educational institutions at local and national levels. Meanwhile, in 1914,

838 the Bureau of Labor's Department of Naturalization began working with public schools in
839 certain cities to sponsor citizenship education. Then in 1916, in the context of war
840 preparedness, Congress established a National Defense Council and commissioned it, among
841 other things, to work with state-level defense councils on war information and Americanization.
842 Once the U.S. entered the War in 1917, those councils became involved with activities of the
843 War Industries Board; focusing, for example, on rooting out labor "radicalism" and "alien
844 sedition." (Van Nuys, 2002, pp. 33-69).

845 Educators, for their part, variously created, participated in, and responded to, these
846 demands for explicit Americanization. Many progressive educators of the 1890s and early
847 1900s—for example, Jane Addams, Ella Flagg Young, and John Dewey-- were "internationalists"
848 who—though not without racial prejudices of their own--nonetheless favored pluralist
849 approaches to education, and tended toward pacifism. By the mid-1910s, however, schools
850 came under increasing pressure to adopt more explicit "Americanization" policies and
851 practices. Among the practices widely adopted in response to such pressures were English-only
852 instruction; daily flag salutes; pledges of American allegiance and loyalty; explicitly nationalistic
853 textbooks in American and state history; and an extra-curriculum of (usually sex-segregated)
854 clubs that made membership dependent on the exhibition of certain kinds of behavior, beliefs,
855 and personal characteristics (Fallace, 2015; Tyack et al., 1987, pp. 154-76).

856 Still, education for citizenship continued to take multiple and various forms across time,
857 and sometimes simultaneously. In Los Angeles, for example, according to Zevi Gutfreund's
858 account, public schools various promoted five different models of Americanization from 1910
859 to 1940. The first model, rooted in the settlement house movement's work with the families of

860 immigrant laborers, pursued a broad approach to Americanization that included women as well
861 as men, and adults as well as children. This model relied primarily on white women teachers
862 and social welfare workers who visited immigrant laborer families to teach English language
863 skills and social norms, with an emphasis on maternalist notions of housekeeping, health, and
864 hygiene. As in many other cities and states, these networks of women teachers and social
865 reformers lobbied successfully at both district and state levels for funding to make their version
866 of home-based settlement work an official responsibility of public schools, resulting in passage
867 of the California Home Teacher Act of 1911 (Gutfreund, 2017; Raftery, 1992).

868 A second model, rooted more in the Department of Immigration and Naturalization,
869 focused more narrowly on education of immigrant adults for naturalized citizenship. Founded
870 in 1912, the program focused almost exclusively on European immigrants, especially after the
871 passage of the 1917 and 1924 immigration acts, which reinforced Asian exclusion. Identifying its
872 target audience as “foreign born white men and women of voting age,” the program also
873 largely excluded Mexican immigrants (Gutfreund, 2017, p. 16). In fact, leaders of the program
874 and within the Department of Immigration and Naturalization actively coordinated with nativist
875 political groups in the state of California seeking revisions of federal law that would exclude
876 Mexican immigrants from naturalization as well (Molina, 2014).

877 Partly in response to these exclusions and to the nativism apparent in much
878 Americanization programming in the early twentieth century, Japanese and Mexican
879 communities developed their own approaches to language learning, acculturation, and
880 citizenship education. Those included Japanese language schools and Mexican Consulate
881 schools (Asato, 2014). The first Japanese language schools emerged in Hawaii in the 1890s and

882 in California and Washington State in 1902, becoming widespread on the Pacific Coast by the
883 1920s. Conceived from the start as supplemental to public schools, they provided instruction
884 that paralleled and responded to Americanization, including lessons in Japanese language,
885 history, culture, and moral training. Similarly, Mexican consulate schools, founded in the 1920s
886 and modeled in part on Japanese and Hebrew language schools, taught Spanish language and
887 Mexican history and culture in a supplementary, after-school format. Ethnic educational
888 institutions such as these effectively offered a notion of citizenship and civic education that was
889 not singular or exclusive, but potentially multicultural and multinational, with multilingual
890 students potentially serving as bridges of transnational understanding (Sanchez, 1993, pp. 108-
891 25).

892 Finally, the fifth model identified by Gutfreund, which he ascribes largely to teachers
893 and students themselves, represented yet another vision of civic education in the form of
894 “World Citizenship” clubs in the 1920s and 30s. Modeled in some ways on the League of
895 Nations, the clubs celebrated diverse membership and focused on learning about other nations
896 and cultures of the world through study, but also through visits from consulate officers or
897 travelers with experience in other countries and familiarity with current international events.
898 This shift in some LA schools reflects broader shifts from the loyalty-focused programs of the
899 WWI period to more intercultural models of the 1920s and 30s (Selig, 2008). At the same time,
900 as Gutfreund points out, intercultural models of citizenship education thrived most prominently
901 in the few schools and neighborhoods with truly diverse populations at a time of increasing
902 local and federally-reinforced ethnic and racial segregation.

903 Beyond organizing and implementing particular programs of Americanization in schools,
904 educators also occasionally asserted leadership in the civic education of the broader public. In
905 1924, for example, the principal and teachers of at least one elementary school in Seattle with a
906 historically diverse population deliberately chose to cast a Japanese American boy in the role of
907 George Washington in the annual President's Day school play, itself probably an artifact of
908 Americanization programming. The school staff also actively and publically defended their
909 choice in the face of the considerable white backlash that followed. Interestingly, this casting
910 decision occurred in 1924, the year that the highly restrictive Johnson-Reed Immigration Act
911 passed, with Washington State's Albert Johnson its lead sponsor. It is likely that educators acted
912 in part to address that context. As conceived by these educators and leaders, civic education
913 was not merely a matter of socializing newcomers to existing norms. It was about challenging
914 students, parents, and dominant society to re-examine exclusionary assumptions and practices,
915 thereby educating the public at large (Lee, 2011, pp. 105-41).

916 The Seattle school district provides other examples of this kind as well. They include the
917 District Superintendent's resistance to adoption of the Daily Flag Ritual promoted by the
918 Daughters of the American Revolution in the 1910s. They also include explicit lessons about
919 civic equality on the eve of U.S. entry into World War II. In 1941-2, after the bombing of Pearl
920 Harbor and on the eve of Japanese-American internment, several principals chose to hold
921 school assemblies on the subjects of inter-ethnic friendship and tolerance (Nelson, 1988, Pak,
922 2002). It should be noted, however, that these examples of resistance to nativism and
923 affirmation of civil rights seem to have been most explicitly taught at schools with large non-
924 white, or ethnically diverse populations. Evidence suggests little comparable programming at

925 the vast majority of schools in the city which were predominantly white. In other words, the
926 notion of civic equality supposedly represented by the U.S. model of government seems to
927 have been **least taught where it was most needed**: that is, in the segregated schools of white
928 middle class students. This reality of race and class segregation continues to limit the potential
929 of civic education today.

930

931 **VI. Creating an Antiracist Civic Education: Advancement and Backlash**

932 The crisis of World War II made it possible for teachers to critically investigate problems
933 of American democracy in the classroom. Spurred by a global war that pitted brutal fascist
934 regimes against American ideals of democracy and “fair play,” civic education expanded to
935 include a new expectation—racial and religious tolerance, an ideal that evolved through the
936 changing contexts of the postwar and emerging Cold War eras. At the heart of this movement
937 was the nation’s first explicitly antiracist pedagogy.

938 At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Americans tended to be both racist and anti-
939 Semitic and whites used the power of the law, judiciary, and the police to enforce racial
940 inequality (Brilliant, 2010; Dudziak, 2011; Gordon, 2015; Marable, 2007; Myrdal, 1962;
941 Southern, 1987; Sugrue, 2008). When reformers realized that Nazi racism and American white
942 supremacy presented a dire threat to the war effort, they recognized a truly extraordinary
943 educational challenge (Kendi 2016; Smedley and Smedley, 2018).

944 Anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University sought to battle American racism by
945 changing the way that Americans understood the concept of race. A German-born Jew, Boas
946 was the leading scientific authority on racial egalitarianism. He believed Americans were

947 prejudiced because they did not know the scientific facts about human race. He asserted that
948 accurate information would effectively reduce American prejudice, and that these lessons
949 would be most effective with young people. The best way to reach large numbers of American
950 youth with new scientific information was, of course, in the public schools (Boas, 1939, 1939,
951 1941a, 1941b, 1941c).

952 Thus began an unprecedented antiracist education campaign by Boas and other social
953 scientists to combat false Nazi racial doctrines through American K-12 schools, an effort that
954 ultimately transformed the function and purpose of civic education. The movement took off
955 when it became clear the war was destabilizing race relations at home. As the *New York Times*
956 reported, “The tense atmosphere created in the world at large is reflected in the classroom.
957 The pupils, reading the newspapers and hearing it discussed at home, are aware of the ill
958 feeling between the Jews and the Germans, the Chinese and the Japanese, and other
959 nationalistic groups.” (Baker, 2010; Barkan, 1992; Fine, 1938; Selig. 2008; Williams, 2006).

960 Teachers seized the opportunity to nurture patriotism and support the war effort.
961 During the 1930s, many schools had adopted an approach to civic education promoted by the
962 National Education Association (NEA) known as the “Problems of Democracy” course (Fallace,
963 2016). A central idea of this approach was that students should conduct their own
964 investigations of public policy issues in dialogue with each other. In certain contexts such as
965 diverse urban districts of the North and Black urban high schools in the South, curriculum
966 leaders and teachers pursued this approach by examining contemporary issues of race and race
967 relations. Many of them understood this work as civic in nature, as it was intended to bolster
968 and protect democratic norms. As one extolled, “Now that the daily headlines have invaded the

969 American classroom with reports of national rivalry and race hatred, we should not barricade
970 ourselves behind routine dictionary work but launch a counterattack for the coming victory of
971 democracy.” A rash of new textbooks, teacher training programs, and intercultural curricula
972 helped educators understand that human diversity resulted from learned cultural differences,
973 not innate racial ones (Anonymous, 1939; Bellafiore, 1941; Giordano, 2004; Pak, 2002).

974 In a curriculum developed primarily with reference to northern whites, anthropologist
975 Ruth Benedict authored teaching materials so educators could explain scientific concepts of
976 race and culture to American youth. In 1946 she published “Racism Is Vulnerable,” writing,
977 “English teachers have a strategic position in helping to create a new world able to free itself
978 from the curse of racism.” Building on Boas’ work, Benedict asked teachers to do two things to
979 “inoculate” children from racism and fortify democracy. First, they needed to talk about race in
980 scientifically accurate and egalitarian terms. She cautioned that the goal was not to “make
981 everybody ‘love’ everybody else,” but instead to learn to judge people as individuals, without
982 reference to racial identity or national origin. Second, she believed teachers could expand
983 children’s worldviews by using literature to introduce cultural relativity, or the idea that all
984 cultures were of equal worth. She wrote, “Good novels and plays and poems are generally
985 better material on cultural conditioning, even for the serious anthropological student, than
986 formal books on the ‘American way’ or the ‘Italian people’ or ‘Poles.’” Benedict asked teachers
987 to discuss how ingrained assumptions about etiquette, cleanliness, and family relations created
988 biases, and encouraged teachers to discuss how minorities in America lived differently than the
989 white majority because of cultural differences, not racial ones (Benedict, 1942a, 1942b, 1943,
990 1946, 1948).

991 Under the extraordinary pressure of war, it became more common for white teachers to
992 introduce texts by and about African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and
993 Chinese Americans with the explicit goal of combatting racism. Black teachers, mostly restricted
994 to Black students in both the South and the North, had been teaching “Negro history” for at
995 least a decade, but wartime pressures to teach tolerance created an opportunity to expand
996 these lessons.

997 Citizenship education now required instruction in the science of racial egalitarianism
998 and the history and culture of minority groups. In many areas of the country, teachers
999 compelled their young charges to study the science of race, sing “Negro” spirituals, talk to
1000 Native Americans and Chinese Americans, read novels about the immigrant experience, and
1001 research their own family’s ethnic heritage. Students at all grade levels put on plays, read
1002 poetry, studied local race relations, and sampled food from around the world, all for the
1003 purpose of learning racial tolerance and cultural appreciation in order to be better democratic
1004 citizens (Burkholder, 2011).

1005 Black teachers expanded lessons on Negro history, racial equality, and race pride inside
1006 of all-black schools (Burkholder, 2012; Dagbovie, 2007; Woodson and Greene, 2007). As college
1007 professor Merl Eppse put it, teaching “Negro History” was at times “like sitting on a ton of
1008 dynamite” in the Jim Crow South. Echoing anthropologists, Eppse suggested that Black
1009 educators had a special role to play, writing, “If prejudice is based on misunderstanding, then it
1010 is the Negro’s duty to be armed with facts and attitudes to show the prejudiced person the
1011 other side of the controversy (Eppse, 1938).” The President of the Virginia Teachers Association
1012 agreed, “the Negro teacher not only can conscientiously but should wholeheartedly share in

1013 the current rise of Americanism. We cannot inculcate in our pupils too great love for the
1014 American principles of religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and
1015 freedom of assembly (God Bless America 1939, 2)."

1016 Black educators insisted that racism could be transcended through effective classroom
1017 instruction, thus lending their voices and ideas to the expanding antiracist education
1018 movement. "The false smoke screens that have been made to place Negro Americans in a
1019 derogatory position can be removed through the process of education," wrote Chicago teacher
1020 Madeline Morgan (Morgan 1944, 7). From Virginia, Flora Bassett added, "All America is not blind
1021 to the fact that democracy does not sanction race superiority, as a few mis-educated people
1022 would have us believe (Bassett 1940)."

1023 Over the course of World War II, expressions of racial prejudice would be labelled
1024 ignorant and uneducated. In contrast, knowledgeable democratic citizens were expected to be
1025 tolerant of diversity and accepting of racial difference. As the *Negro History Bulletin* reported in
1026 1943, "Among the youth of both races in the South it is considered evidence of scholarship to
1027 be able to say that they have studied the Negro scientifically and can speak intelligently on the
1028 background and present status of the race. Those who once prided themselves of considering
1029 any thought of the Negro as beneath their notice are now classified as the ignorant and
1030 backward members of the community (The Eighteenth Annual Celebration of Negro History
1031 Week in Retrospect 1943, p. 164). Writing from Missouri, Black educator James Scott added,
1032 "Another lesson which we as a nation should learn from the experiences of this war is the
1033 disastrous consequences of racism. We are now witnessing in the case of Hitlerite Germany a
1034 dramatic demonstration of the fact that in a world of many races adherence to a doctrine of

1035 ruthless racism is as suicidal as adherence to a doctrine of ruthless individualism would be in a
1036 society composed of many individuals (Scott 1944, 8)."

1037 By contextualizing the American battle against white supremacy as part of the global
1038 struggle against fascism, Black teachers created bold new lessons during the height of Jim Crow.
1039 This explains why teachers like Julia Brogdon in Charleston could ask Black high school students
1040 to write letters to white college presidents challenging discriminatory admissions practices and
1041 calling on them to embrace democratic ideals. Black educators situated this work in long
1042 traditions of Black political and educational activism, but the War and the example of Nazi racial
1043 totalitarianism gave their work a new sense of moral urgency and authority.

1044 At first, the conclusion of World War II made antiracist education more important than
1045 ever. As one educator put it, "In the face of the intergroup tensions that disturb the peace of
1046 our schools, communities, and country, what shall we regard as the necessary qualities of a
1047 good citizen for public education? How shall he act when faced with a problem involving racial
1048 or religious prejudice? How can we educate our children for participation as good citizens in the
1049 typical mixed community?" A small, but vocal, number of educators insisted the time was ripe
1050 to eradicate racism through classroom instruction. A truly effective postwar civic education
1051 would have to consider "American ideals and American practices in housing, in education, in
1052 employment, [and] in political rights." (Cole et al., 1946; Smiley, 1946; Quillen, 1945; Van Til,
1053 1945). A Black teacher from Virginia added, "Because bias, prejudice, and discrimination come
1054 only through learning, the public is becoming aware of a need for a preventative and remedial
1055 type of intercultural education. The public naturally looks to the school as the chief agency to

1056 correct many evils. In order to be well informed, intelligent, and worthy citizens, all children
1057 regardless of the color of their skin have to be taught to live well together (Lewis 1954, p. 113)."

1058 In 1946, a Teachers College professor surveyed K-12 teachers, asking, "What are
1059 American boys and girls learning of sound attitudes toward relations between Christian and
1060 Jew, Negro and white man, 'old American' and those more recently come to America? What are
1061 they learning about the American way of life?" In response, dozens of teachers described civic
1062 curricula stretched out over weeks or even months. Many moved from discussions of the Nazi
1063 persecution of Jews to discrimination against African Americans at home. Students responded
1064 to prompts like, "What Is Democracy?" "What America Means to Me." One teacher explained,
1065 "Readings on race, culture, prejudice, and American constitutional freedoms, and reports on
1066 outstanding members of minority groups and on community housing projects for Negroes
1067 followed. The unit closed with a 'Town Meeting' re-examining, in the light of knowledge and
1068 insight gained during the month, the topic 'To Get the Kind of World We Want'—a world in
1069 which American institutions would be in harmony with American ideals (Smiley, 1946)."

1070 After the War, the social context for these lessons shifted quickly (Burkholder, 2011).
1071 Within two years administrators pressured teachers to scale back lessons that examined the
1072 science of racial equality or the problems of American democracy. In the emerging McCarthy
1073 era one of the markers for communism was whether or not an individual supported racial
1074 equality, and teachers as public employees faced close scrutiny (Fallace, 2018; Hartman, 2008;
1075 Taylor 2011). As one social studies teacher wrote in 1952, "The atmosphere of fear and
1076 uncertainty has penetrated all strata of the system, not only the teaching ranks, but as high as
1077 the new Board and as low as the staff employees. None are certain, none are secure

1078 (Anonymous, 1952)." The teacher noted that colleagues had abandoned lessons on racial
1079 equality and the United Nations. "Once, free discussion of controversial political issues was
1080 permitted, even encouraged. Now, for the probationary teacher, such as discussion is
1081 tantamount to declining tenure (Serviss, 1953)." Another teacher reported, "Many educators
1082 and publishers are worried as they see censorship and attack becoming more widespread each
1083 day (Fine, 1953)."

1084 Thus, even as the Civil Rights movement entered what some have called its "classical"
1085 phase, marked by the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954,
1086 countervailing movements attacked and undermined anti-racist pedagogy and activism, both
1087 directly and indirectly. During the War, of course, in 1942, the U.S. federal government had
1088 rounded up tens of thousands of residents of Japanese ancestry, most of them U.S.-born
1089 citizens, and incarcerated them in concentration camps—based on a long history of racist Asian
1090 exclusion. At the same time, the Federal Bureau of Investigation created files on academics of
1091 color who worked on race issues, including the leading Black intellectual, scholar, and activist
1092 W.E.B. DuBois. Immediately after the War, leading white academics like the Harvard-based
1093 historian Arthur Schlesinger in 1947, labeled the National Association for the Advancement of
1094 Colored People (NAACP) a "communist organization," an act that aided white southern state
1095 governments in the political persecution of educators at all levels who participated in the civil
1096 rights movement (Lewis, 1994; Morris, 2015; Williamson-Lott, 2018; Urban, 1992). Explicit
1097 antiracist education retreated after 1948. In this new context, teachers faced a new dilemma:
1098 how to promote racial egalitarianism without talking about the science of race or racial
1099 injustice. In response, teachers developed a colorblind approach to civic education. This

1100 embodied the ideal that scientists like Boas and Benedict had articulated—teachers and
1101 students would judge everyone as an individual without reference to racial or national identity,
1102 but left enduring legacies of racism largely untouched. Although it is commendable that some
1103 teachers opposed racial prejudice, it is also clear that this colorblind pedagogy masked racial
1104 oppression and did little to dismantle student biases or help them understand how the larger
1105 structures of social injustice violated democratic ideals (Burkholder, 2011, pp 168-70; Gordon,
1106 2015).

1107 The way in which McCarthyism became intertwined with white supremacy after WWII--
1108 suppressing Black teachers, professionals, and academics in particular, and transforming anti-
1109 racism work more generally—is a lesson in the simultaneity of opposing movements in history.
1110 That reality in turn contradicts popular American assumptions of “progress” as the inevitable
1111 direction of historical change. With respect to the Civil Rights movement specifically, the
1112 historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (2005) warned that just as the movement to recover and realize
1113 black civil rights had a long historical trajectory, so did the “so-called backlash against it.” At
1114 the same time as anti-racist pedagogy and Black civic education gained momentum in the 1930s
1115 and 40s, for example, the U.S. government also enforced New Deal housing, home loan,
1116 transportation, and relief policies that actively constructed a racial apartheid in American cities
1117 and agricultural districts (Rothstein, 2017; Donato, 2007; Erickson, 2016; Erickson and
1118 Highsmith, 2018). As we are being reminded now, efforts to combat false presumptions of
1119 white supremacy are never safely in the past, but ongoing historical trajectories that we are
1120 part of as actors in history, one way or another. It is up to us to decide what kind of historical
1121 agents we want to be.

1122 **VII. Struggles for Self-Determination in the Civil Rights Era:**

1123 **Toward Pluralist Visions of Civic Education**

1124 African American and Mexican American educational activists challenged educational

1125 discrimination in movements that dated back to the common school era. Beginning in the

1126 1920s, civil rights organizations representing African Americans and Mexican Americans

1127 executed a series of successful legal campaigns against segregated public schools (Tushnet,

1128 1987; Valencia, 2008). These legal attacks culminated in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954,

1129 which profoundly altered the relationship between public schools and citizenship education.

1130 Even if the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors of white and “colored” schools were

1131 equal, the Court reasoned, segregating Black students on the basis of racial identity violated the

1132 equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

1133 The U.S. Supreme Court determined that public schools had a duty to prepare all youth

1134 for citizenship and that this could only be accomplished in desegregated schools. Identifying

1135 public education as “perhaps the most important function of state and local governments,”

1136 Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, “Compulsory school attendance laws and the great

1137 expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education

1138 to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public

1139 responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship.”

1140 This included awakening children to American values, preparing them for professional training,

1141 and helping them adjust normally to their environment. “In these days, it is doubtful that any

1142 child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an

1143 education.” Warren concluded, “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal (*Brown*
1144 *v. Board of Education*, 1954).”

1145 School desegregation was a contested policy, but the idea that integrated schools were
1146 the “very foundation of good citizenship” persisted, echoing claims by Frederick Douglass and
1147 other Black educational activists over the previous century. Both Douglass and Warren
1148 recognized that mixed schools were a powerful symbol of equal citizenship, and that, in
1149 contrast, segregated schools institutionalized white supremacy and violated the democratic
1150 ideal. Many Black educational activists had advocated school integration since the 1840s, but
1151 after World War II the vast majority of Black citizens refused to countenance the insult of state-
1152 sponsored discrimination (Bell, 1980; Klarman, 2007; Kluger, 2004; Minow, 2010; Ogletree,
1153 2004; Patterson, 2001). The *Brown* ruling affirmed the relationship between school integration
1154 and equal citizenship and marked the start of a sweeping Second Reconstruction where the
1155 federal government enforced the civil rights of African Americans (Bunche, 1951, pp. 215-16;
1156 Marable, 2007).

1157 The Black civil rights movement intersected with long-term struggles for educational
1158 equality by other marginalized groups, including Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans.
1159 Mexican American families and organizations had been fighting their own battles against illegal
1160 school segregation in California and elsewhere in the Southwest since the 1910s. A series of
1161 cases in Texas, California, Colorado, and Arizona, including *Romo v. Laird* (1925), *Del Rio ISD v.*
1162 *Salvatierra* (1930), and *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931) resulted in crucial victories. The historic
1163 *Mendez v. Westminster* case in 1947 established a legal precedent for *Brown* by finding the
1164 segregation of Mexican American students in California to be illegal, and *Delagado v. Bastrop*

1165 *Independent School District* (1948) reached a similar decision in Texas. Latinx educational
1166 activism evolved in the post-war era alongside the rising militancy of the Mexican American and
1167 Puerto Rican civil rights movements (Behnkin, 2011; Bernstein, 2011; Blanton & Sanchez, 2014;
1168 Brilliant, 2010; Donato et al., 2016; Garcia, 2018; Gonzalez, 2013; Lee, 2014; McDonald, 2004;
1169 Morales, 2018; Munoz, 2011; Ortiz, 2018; Powers, 2008, Sanchez, 1993, Strum, 2010).³

1170 In the early 1960s, Latinxs launched a renewed offensive against exclusionary,
1171 discriminatory, and subtractive practices in the public schools. This movement unfolded among
1172 Puerto Rican communities in the northeast and Mexican American communities in the
1173 southwest. All demanded the right to cultural and political self-determination in education, a
1174 demand that was distinct from the struggle for integration.

1175 Movements for self-determination in education by Latinxs and other minority groups
1176 reshaped the civic function of public education. For more than a century, schools had pushed a
1177 deliberately assimilationist agenda designed to compel immigrants and racial minorities to
1178 confirm to white, middle-class, Protestant norms (Kliebard, 2004; Mirel, 2010; Molina, 2014;
1179 Noboa-Rios, 2019; Selig, 2011; Beadie et al. 2017). Teachers unapologetically emphasized
1180 “lessons in English and patriotism” in order to “weld the many peoples of any community into
1181 one body politic and create throughout the nation the unity and power that come from
1182 common ideals, a common language, and a uniform interpretation of citizenship (Cody, 1918).”

1183 Compulsory lessons on English language and patriotism, long contested by Mexican
1184 American and Puerto Rican communities, came under new scrutiny in the civil rights era

³ The term Latinx recognizes a preferred gender-neutral term embraced by many younger Americans who are either from, or who have family from, Latin America (Morales, 2018; Ortiz, 2018).

1185 (Farber, 1970; San Miguel, 2013; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2008; Valenzuela,
1186 1999). In a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1963, John F. Mendez explained, “The
1187 Mexican community is not concerned with ‘integration’ or ‘assimilation,’ but with ‘bi-
1188 culturalism.’ We very definitely would like to retain the best of the Mexican culture and also the
1189 best of the Anglo-Saxon culture.” He concluded, “I honestly believe this would make the
1190 Mexican-American a better citizen of his community and country (Mendez, 1963).”⁴

1191 Latinx educational activists agreed that the public schools played a key role in fortifying
1192 American democracy, but rejected discriminatory practices including forced assimilation.

1193 Puerto Ricans complained they were “treated as inferior” by teachers in New York and other
1194 cities, where Anglo teachers looked down on students who spoke Spanish (Kihss, 1964, p. 1).

1195 Interviews with teachers and school administrators revealed these sentiments were not
1196 misplaced. As one elementary teacher explained, “The Spanish that these little Mexican kids
1197 know is just a poor combination of English and Spanish slang. Actually, these kids have no
1198 language at all, because they speak bad English and bad Spanish.” A principal reported, “We try

1199 to discourage the use of Spanish on the playground, in the halls, and in the classrooms (U.S.
1200 Commission on Civil Rights, Report III: The Excluded Student, pp. 19-20).” An Anglo school
1201 leader in Texas added, “I think they [Mexican Americans] want to learn English. And I think that
1202 they want to be full Americans. And since English is the language of America, I believe that they

⁴ In 1971, The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights documented “slightly more than 2 million Spanish sur-named pupils” in American public schools, or 4.6% of the total enrollment. Approximately 1.4 million, or 70%, attended public schools in the five Southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. See U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report 1: Ethnic Isolation of Mexican Americans in the Public Schools of the Southwest (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 15.

1203 want to learn English (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report IV: Toward Quality Education for
1204 Mexican Americans, 1974, pp. 3-5)." Latinx students resented these bigoted assumptions and
1205 demeaning practices. "Schools try to brainwash Chicanos," complained one. "They try to make
1206 us forget our history, to be ashamed of being Mexicans, of being Spanish. They succeed in
1207 making us feel empty, and angry inside (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report III: The
1208 Excluded Student, 1972, p. 3)."

1209 Anglo educators punished Mexican American children for speaking Spanish with fines,
1210 spankings, and standing in the corner, among other humiliations. These rules applied not only
1211 in classrooms, but in the hallways, on the playground, and in the cafeteria. One student
1212 recalled, "When I was in elementary school they had a rule not to speak Spanish but we all did.
1213 If you got caught speaking Spanish you were to write three pages saying, 'I must not speak
1214 Spanish in school' (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report III: The Excluded Student, p. 18)."
1215 The stated purpose of these rules was not to torment Spanish speaking children, but to
1216 encourage them to learn English and assimilate as quickly as possible. Teachers viewed English
1217 language proficiency and adjustment to dominant white cultural norms as essential
1218 components of citizenship. Accordingly, in 1971 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found,
1219 "grades given to Mexican American students in citizenship subjects such as 'work habits' and
1220 'cooperation' were consistently lower than those given to non-Mexicans (U.S. Commission on
1221 Civil Rights, Report II: The Unfinished Education, 1971, p. 40)."

1222 Anglo school leaders resisted Latinx demands for educational reform, until finally
1223 students forced the issue. In March of 1968, Mexican American students at Los Angeles' Lincoln
1224 High School organized a massive school boycott. Marking "the beginning of a revolution,"

1225 thousands of Mexican American students in East Los Angeles walked out of school to protest
1226 English-only language policies, discriminatory I.Q. testing, racist teachers, a white-washed
1227 curriculum, and the lack of Mexican American teachers and guidance counselors (Torgerson,
1228 1968; p. B1).

1229 The 1968 East Los Angeles “blowouts” represented a new and more radical youth-based
1230 activism. Part of the Chicano movement, these young activists took pride in their “brown” racial
1231 identity and scorned assimilation in favor of pride in *la raza*. School strikes, speeches, demands,
1232 picketing, and sit-ins spread from school to school. Students demanded more respectful
1233 teachers, the right to speak Spanish, the opportunity to study Mexican history, more Mexican
1234 American teachers and administrators, bilingual education, and increased student rights
1235 (Bernal, 1997; Briegel, 1974; Garcia & Castro, 2011; Petrzela, 2015, pp. 39-68; Rosales, 1997,
1236 pp. 175-95; San Miguel, 2013, pp. 24-32). Echoing cries of “Chicano Power,” school blowouts
1237 erupted in Denver, Chicago, and in dozens of towns and cities in Texas in the late 1960s. Puerto
1238 Rican activists in cities like New York, Boston, and Springfield made similar demands for
1239 educational equality, often working together with African American activists to generate
1240 meaningful reforms. These movements gained national attention and alerted Americans to the
1241 dilemmas and concerns of Spanish speaking students (Garcia, 2015, pp. 25-7; Massachusetts
1242 State Advisory Committee, 1972; Navarro, 1998; San Miguel, 2013; San Miguel, 2001).

1243 In 1968 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Bilingual Education Act into law,
1244 encouraging “new and imaginative programs” to aid students with limited English language
1245 proficiency. Although modest in scope, it signaled the federal government’s rejection of
1246 English-only laws and provided federal funds to support English language learners. Four years

1247 later, *Lau v. Nichols* strengthened federal support for bilingual education. For many Latinx
1248 citizens, bilingual education signaled a more inclusive form of citizenship education. As New
1249 York's first Puerto Rican Congressman Herman Badillo explained, "Second-class status must no
1250 longer be imposed on those persons who do not speak English and we must not prevent such
1251 persons from sharing in the rights and privileges of citizenship. We exist in a multilingual and
1252 multicultural environment and all segments of the community must be afforded full respect
1253 and equal participation." (Pasquariello, 1973, pp. 27-43).

1254 Concurrently, Native Americans also fought for a more pluralist vision of education,
1255 seeking community control of schools in both traditional public schools and federally run
1256 reservation schools. A growing number of Native American college and graduate students
1257 pursued education degrees so they could work as teachers in their own communities. In 1972
1258 the Indian Education Act provided federal funding for indigenous bilingual and bicultural
1259 education materials development, teacher preparation, and parent involvement in schools.
1260 Even more importantly, three years later, the Indian Self-Determination and Education
1261 Assistance Act empowered Native American communities to operate their own schools and
1262 social services. This offered the first opportunity for Native communities to control their own
1263 schools in a way comparable to the control exercised by some Nations in Indian Territory in the
1264 1840s and 50s before the Civil War. The era saw a tremendous growth in indigenous-controlled
1265 schools, like the Rough Rock Demonstration School in Chinle, Arizona that emphasized Navajo
1266 language and culture in the school's curriculum and pedagogy. By 1970, there were 34
1267 indigenous-controlled schools with bilingual and bicultural approaches to empowering Native

1268 youth (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, 114-33; Lomawaima, 1994; McCarty, 2010), though

1269 together these schools enrolled only a fraction of all Native children.

1270 Many African American educational activists in the North also expressed an interest in

1271 community controlled schools in the late 1960s. Supporters wanted Black parents to make key

1272 decisions related to curriculum and instruction, teacher hiring, community relations, finances,

1273 and administration. This movement built on a long tradition of separate, Black-controlled

1274 schools known for training generations of leaders, including the Historically Black Colleges and

1275 Universities (HBCUs) (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 1996; Cecelski, 1994; Baker, 2006; Green, 2016;

1276 Favors, 2019). A community controlled public-school experiment in New York City put this

1277 reform to the test in 1968, to mixed results. Frustrated by the limitations of community control

1278 within the public schools, hundreds of Black families abandoned public schools to attend

1279 independent, Afrocentric schools (Rickford 2018; Perlstein, 2004; Podair, 2002; Taylor 1997,

1280 176-207).

1281 Meanwhile, these experiments with Black community control in the urban North

1282 occurred just as many southern African American communities lost influence over their schools

1283 in the wake of school desegregation. Although many African American leaders and youth had

1284 agitated over decades for school equalization and eventual desegregation through a

1285 combination of social protest, political activism, and legal action, in the end southern white

1286 politicians and administrators retained control over many aspects of implementation. As a

1287 result, many Black schools closed, tens of thousands of Black educators lost their jobs, and most

1288 Black parents found themselves significantly alienated—if not outright excluded—from the

1289 schools their children attended (Walker, 1996; Cecelski, 1994; Baker, 2006; Fultz, 2004). Many

1290 displaced teachers and educators in turn migrated to expanding black urban communities in
1291 the North and West. Some pursued new careers in federal service, including as teachers with
1292 the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which offered some federal benefits and guarantees of non-
1293 discrimination and which actively recruited them after WWII. As documented by Kahlil Anthony
1294 Johnson (2019; 2016), this historical migration to reservation and off-reservation schools in the
1295 era of self-determination marked a strange inverted echo of earlier historical moments when
1296 Blacks and indigenous peoples interacted in colonial institutions and contexts. In this new
1297 historical moment, Black teachers played dual and perhaps conflicted roles in Natives' own
1298 efforts to realize community controlled schools.

1299 These overlapping movements for community control of public education in the late
1300 1960s emphasized Black, indigenous, and Latinx citizens as powerful agents of educational
1301 reform. Elected representatives and school leaders began to make substantial changes to
1302 educational theory and practice. Over the next two decades, bilingual education was
1303 strengthened through key court rulings, executive actions, and vocal Native American, Chinese
1304 American, and Latinx educational activism (San Miguel, 2004). Although bilingual education
1305 programs eventually drew the wrath of conservatives, they thrived and eventually contributed
1306 to a more plural vision of civic education (Petrzela, 2015, pp. 19-38; Banks, 1996; Jefferson,
1307 1979; Hartman, 2019, pp. 200-21).

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1312 **Section Three: Conclusion and Recommendations**

1313 **I. Current Context and Demands to Confront History**

1314 On June 7, 2020, an interracial group of high school students in Montclair, New Jersey
1315 organized a protest to affirm that Black Lives Matter in schools and the broader community.
1316 More than 4,000 students and families showed up in support of the students' demands to make
1317 the local public schools more fair and equitable for Black students. They listened to Black
1318 students at Montclair High School describe the pain they suffered at this high-performing,
1319 integrated high school, and demanded desegregated classrooms, a more diverse faculty, and an
1320 explicitly antiracist curriculum (Martin, 2020).

1321 The Black Lives Matter at School rally in Montclair was part of a global movement
1322 protesting the violent murder of George Floyd, a Black man in Minneapolis, by a white police
1323 officer. These grassroots social movements seek to identify and challenge systemic racism not
1324 only in policing and public education, but also in virtually every other area of social and political
1325 life, including health care disparities laid bare by the coronavirus, which disproportionately
1326 affects communities of color (Burch et all., 2020; Covid-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups,
1327 2020).

1328 In many ways, the current context of protest and challenge is a moment of hope.
1329 Speaking at a virtual town hall meeting in support of Black Lives Matter, President Barack
1330 Obama explained, "in some ways, as tragic as these past few weeks have been, as difficult and
1331 scary and uncertain as they've been, they've also been an incredible opportunity for people to
1332 be awakened to some of these underlying trends. And they offer an opportunity for us to all

1333 work together, to tackle them, to take them on, to change America and make it live up to its
1334 highest ideals” (Obama, 2020).

1335 At the same time, protesters demand a confrontation with history. Such a
1336 confrontation is necessary, we argue, in order to reimagine and reconstitute the “we” that
1337 makes civic discourse and reasoning possible. The NAEd civic reasoning and discourse project
1338 seeks to awaken Americans to the long history of systemic racism and inequality and to help
1339 the U.S. live up to its highest democratic ideals. A history of civic education in the U.S. reveals
1340 strategies to remake public schools as potent sites of democracy building and community
1341 empowerment that ensure civil rights for all. In conclusion, we reflect on the lessons of history
1342 for the future of civic education in the United States.

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1344 II. **Learning from the Past: Four Lessons and Challenges**

1345 Fortunately, history provides a repertoire of examples to draw upon in pursuing the
1346 project of revitalizing civic education. Educators in the past have stepped forward both within
1347 and beyond the classroom to play roles in the civic education of youth and the public at large.
1348 They have challenged common narratives and assumptions about who is and should be
1349 included in the American story. They have created public lessons designed to help students,
1350 teachers, and members of the public to recognize and articulate principles of tolerance, due
1351 process, and equal citizenship. They have challenged Americans regarding their treatment of
1352 immigrants, their ideas about race, and their violations of Native sovereignty and principles of
1353 federalism. They have led teachers and students in protesting totalitarian structures at home

1354 as well as abroad. They have helped communities take charge of their schools and their
1355 children's education. We can learn from their strategies and experience.

1356 Even as we draw on a repertoire of past examples of civic education, however, we must
1357 also think through important issues of context in our own time. How well we think through
1358 those issues of context will shape the consequences and significance of any actions we take
1359 now. For example, we must consider how we construct the purpose and constituencies of civic
1360 education and the effect of those conceptualizations for who is recognized as having rights and
1361 who is included in our vision of the public. Knowing that the idea of "education for citizenship"
1362 allowed leaders of the early republic to ignore the schooling of women and African Americans
1363 and narrow their vision of civic education to white males, we must consider how far our vision
1364 of civic education encompasses all "persons," including both the powerful and the powerless,
1365 the undocumented and the homeless, not just the citizen and the taxpayer.

1366 Similarly, we must consider how the problem of consensus will shape civic education in
1367 our time. Knowing that the challenge of maintaining a confederation of states in the face of
1368 foreign threats and internal rebellion led leaders to sacrifice Native sovereignty, the rights of
1369 African Americans, and the U.S. Constitution during Indian removal and Jim Crow, we must
1370 consider how far civic education will challenge dominant narratives even in the face of
1371 resistance. More fundamentally we must consider at what scale or level of government we
1372 promote the goals and negotiate the content of civic education. How will we recognize plural
1373 sovereignty without sacrificing the principle of equal recognition and participation in civic
1374 discourse and reasoning? Correspondingly, we must consider the simultaneity of advancement
1375 and backlash in the promotion of civic education and civil rights. Knowing that anti-racist

1376 educators in the North and Black educators in the South developed their most creative lessons
1377 challenging racist ideas and structures of education and access even as new federal policies
1378 further institutionalized racial segregation in housing, education, and welfare, we must be
1379 aware that new racial structure are likely to take form even as—or because-- old ones are
1380 destabilized. How do we develop the capacity for continued engagement with such systemic
1381 injustices?

1382 Cultivating civic agency is a crucial component of civic education. To be effective
1383 citizens we must *understand where we are in history, understand ourselves as historical agents,*
1384 and *believe that engagement matters.* When Peter Pitchlynn of the Choctaw Nation in Indian
1385 Territory successfully took the fight for Native control of tribal school funds to Washington D.C.
1386 in 1842, he understood himself as an agent of his tribe's General Council involved in a broad
1387 project of nation-building for his own tribe and more broadly, for all the Nations in Indian
1388 Territory. In 1944, when Julia Brogdon designed a lesson at Avery Institute that led the
1389 students in her "Problems of Democracy" class to challenge racial exclusion at the municipally
1390 owned College of Charleston, she understood herself as an educator working in a multi-
1391 generational tradition of African American civic education reaching back to Reconstruction and
1392 before. At the same time, both Pitchlynn and Brogdon understood that in confronting
1393 injustice they were calling the U.S. back to its own constitutional principles. In this sense they
1394 acted as citizens even as the broader American society did not fully recognize that citizenship.
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1398 **III. Looking to the Future: Four Recommendations**

1399 **A. The Curriculum of Civic Education Must Confront History**

1400 In order to re-imagine and reconstitute the “we” of civic discourse and reasoning, the
1401 curriculum of civic education must confront history. In the past, civic education has often
1402 functioned as a program of forced assimilation and violence against native, Black, and Latinx
1403 communities. State-sponsored education for Native Americans was a component of settler
1404 colonialism aimed at the eradication of native peoples and cultures to secure the material gain
1405 of their land and resources. Schools were part of this strategy, and later, the curriculum was
1406 part of this effort—American Indians are covered in colonial era, then removed from story as if
1407 they ceased to exist—or vanished—from the land. In a similar vein, African American and Latinx
1408 students have experienced very high levels of segregation and discrimination that have created
1409 unequal educational opportunities and a corresponding achievement gap. Efforts to correct the
1410 racist portrayal of African Americans and Latinx in the curriculum have been only partially
1411 successful. A history of civic education shows that discrimination against students of color in
1412 American public schools is not an aberration or an accident, but instead is the logical result of
1413 citizenship education in a nation founded on racialized slavery and settler colonialism. This
1414 history must be confronted.

1415 And yet, history also shows that civic education has been contested, fraught with
1416 multiple meanings, and vulnerable to resistance, reform, transformation, and even sabotage.
1417 The intimate nature of schooling means that teachers like Julia Brogdon and scholars like Ruth
1418 Benedict have the power to awaken potentially revolutionary political thought in young people,
1419 and that students like those in Los Angles can use civil disobedience, political pressure, and

1420 lawsuits to substantially improve educational equality. This history can help students
1421 understand themselves as historical agents. It must also be part of civic education.

1422 **B. The Country Must Recommit to the Civic Purpose of Public Education**

1423 A civic education renaissance will require more robust popular support for the civic
1424 function of public education, an ideal that has been lost in the current emphasis on high-stakes
1425 testing and college and career readiness. Following decades of neglect for the civic purposes of
1426 education, it is now apparent that a majority of Americans do not understand such
1427 foundational concepts as checks and balances and the salience of an independent judiciary.
1428 Public trust in government is at only 18 percent, and voter participation is at its lowest point
1429 since 1996. Scholars and educators need to persuade Americans that citizenship education is
1430 essential to bolstering democracy in the twenty-first century. An educated public, in turn, can
1431 support state laws mandating vigorous civic education, including not only courses in
1432 government and politics, but also courses that emphasize national and global struggles for
1433 human rights. Explicit instruction in U.S. government and politics helps students understand the
1434 constitutional framework of American governance, while studying historical examples of human
1435 rights violations serves as both a cautionary tale of what happens when democratic norms are
1436 violated, but also how everyday people have triumphed over brutal, state-sponsored regimes of
1437 tyranny and injustice. Today, only twelve states require public schools to teach about anti-
1438 Semitism and the Holocaust, and only four require instruction in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and
1439 Transgender (LGBT) history. Without these kinds of laws in place, most teachers will skip what
1440 they see as difficult or controversial subjects. Once these state laws are passed, in contrast,
1441 universities and nonprofit organizations can offer professional development to augment

1442 classroom instruction, and teachers and administrators have more authority to teach inclusive
1443 histories that emphasize core democratic ideals (Anderson, 2019; Vosoughi et al., 2018; Shapiro
1444 & Brown, 2018; Schwartz, 2019; Povich, 2019; Burkholder, 2019).

1445 **C. Teachers Must Be Supported to Lead Effective Civic Education**

1446 To begin, fortifying civic education requires a massive infusion of resources to teach
1447 stronger and more effective history education in K-12 schools. History is a category of civic
1448 reasoning that helps people navigate the complexities of democratic citizenship. It is essential
1449 for civic reasoning because it engenders contextual thinking, requiring people to investigate
1450 *how and why* things happened in the past. This process, in turn, generates a more critically
1451 informed citizenry that understands how to think through issues in context. Citizens that
1452 recognize how this process has worked historically are better positioned to dismantle
1453 educational inequalities in the present. This is especially imperative in the current moment
1454 when social media and false news stories have made it much more difficult for Americans to
1455 sort fact from fiction. Civic education must cultivate the skills of historical analysis, reflective
1456 inquiry, and critical thinking so that all of us can evaluate competing claims, deliberate with
1457 others, engage in civil dialogue, and advocate effectively for justice. More effective civic
1458 education means stronger and better history education, an objective that will require new
1459 approaches to teacher education and professional development (Fallace, 2016; Hartman, 2019;
1460 Parker, 2019).

1461 **D. Civic Education Pedagogy Must Be Reimagined to Advance Racial Justice**

1462 Twenty-first century civic education must offer meaningfully integrated curricula,
1463 pedagogy, and practice with the explicit objective of advancing racial justice. This means we

1464 must transform existing pedagogy and curricula by welcoming the voices and critiques of
1465 scholars and educators of color. Justin Kreuger argues that settler colonial narratives are
1466 pervasive in social studies curriculum, writing, “There is a consistency to their delivery and
1467 presentation that creates clear lines of delineating concerning indigenous people and ‘actual’
1468 Americans (Krueger, 2019, p. 295).” U.S. history textbooks portray Native Americans in biased
1469 ways, for example, by disproportionately speaking of them in colonial and early American
1470 history, but failing to recognize their continued contributions in recent history and
1471 contemporary society, reinforcing the stereotype of a “vanished race.” Scholars have
1472 established that African Americans, and Latinx, likewise, are portrayed inaccurately in
1473 contemporary K-12 curricula (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Loewen, 2007; Ortiz, 2018; Takaki, 2008;
1474 Zimmerman, 2002; Zinn, 2015). Bettina Love argue that radical new pedagogies are necessary
1475 to achieve true equality. She writes, “Abolitionist teaching is the practice of working in
1476 solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal,
1477 (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and
1478 subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice inside and outside of schools (Love, 2019,
1479 p. 2).”

1480 The answer is not simply more African American, Native American, or Latinx history, but
1481 instead a smarter and more critical approach to teaching these essential components of U.S.
1482 history. Indigenous scholars have developed a range of anti-colonial and antiracist strategies
1483 designed to support self-determination, center indigenous cultures and knowledge systems,
1484 and inspire Native American students. African American and Latinx scholars have also
1485 developed emancipatory curricula and pedagogy designed to advance liberation and racial

1486 justice. These programs have tremendous value for educators committed to reimagining civic
1487 education. This integrated approach must be delivered in racially, ethnically, and
1488 socioeconomically mixed classrooms that treat all students, educators, and families equally. The
1489 astronomical rates of segregation and inequality in American public schools are inherently anti-
1490 democratic and unsustainable. They cement educational inequality into place and provide a
1491 terrifying object lesson in state-sponsored, institutionalized racism that takes place with either
1492 the tacit acceptance or active encouragement of those in power. This must change, as
1493 segregated and unequal public schools cannot function as sites of effective citizenship
1494 education in a modern democracy (Brayboy, 2005; Frankenborg et al. 2019; Locke & Lindley,
1495 2007; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Payne & Strickland, 2008; Steineker, 2019).
1496 American public schools have always espoused civic education, but they have never
1497 successfully prepared all students to act as agents of history in realizing a more just and plural
1498 democracy. An historical analysis provides some suggestions on how to critically interpret civic
1499 education in the past, so that we can reimagine a new kind of civic education for the future.
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