

Culture, Regional Identity, and the Social Studies in South Carolina: A Popular Textbook Considered from a Critical Postcolonial Perspective

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Abstract

The struggle against white cultural supremacy—colonial oppression—is not addressed adequately (if at all) in most social studies textbooks that have been adopted in South Carolina’s public schools over the years. Myths and distorted views sometimes rise from defensive positions—and the South is nothing if not defensive. The mythos of the white planter class as “nobility” descended from European aristocrats, the southern “lady” as pure, saintly, and sacrificial, the slave as loyal and childlike, the Native American Indian as tribal, savage, and a threat in need of removal was perpetuated by southern fiction writers and the popular press.

The purpose of this paper is a critical postcolonial analysis of the Western historicism embedded within the social studies textbook, South Carolina: The History of an American State (Horne, Jr., & Klein, 2000). This textbook is currently used in most middle-level social studies classes throughout South Carolina. Specifically, the sections of the textbook that include: Black Codes/Jim Crow Laws and the Confederate Flag controversy and compromise will be used to illustrate the textbooks disregard for colonial depersonalization, colonial cultural alienation of the “other,” and political oppression. Drawing from Apple (1991; 1993), Bhabha (1990; 1994), Carlson (1997; 2002), During (1993; 2000), Giroux (1994), Hall (1996), McCarthy (1998), McLaren (1997), and Said (1993) this paper addresses the paradoxes of divergent, even conflicting local and global forces that are occurring at the same time, even in the same places, and the resulting hybridity of ideas, experiences, and cultures that increasingly characterize the human experience. The goal of the present study is to acknowledge the complexity and uncertainty of cultural production and to seek avenues to imagine a “hybrid” (i.e., third space) beyond dichotomy in which to lay the groundwork for a transformative ethos of schooling and in this particular case, the social studies.

According to Apple (1991), textbooks signify “particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge” (p. 3). This paper reveals how the textbook, South Carolina: The History of an American State (Horn, Jr., & Klein, 2000) is detached from the real issues of southern life and of the critical curriculum issues that followers of critical postcolonial theory aim to explore. In order to help scaffold our students into ongoing discussions and debates around the complex historical, economic, political, sociocultural, and contemporary issues surrounding the history of South Carolina, it is vitally important that texts address the complex issues within the various debates such as diversity, discrimination, racism, sexism, violence, and prejudice.

Introduction

Traditionally, the social studies narrative presented in American history and government books, is one of progress, peace, freedom, democracy, and prosperity with things just getting better all the time. This is remarkable in view of the fact that a cursory glance at the history of the nation’s expansion both here on this continent and abroad is a litany of unremitting warfare, conquest, colonialism, subjugation, and economic imperialism. Many parents expect their children to be socialized to accept and support the socio-economic and political status quo, not critique it. Embedded within the curriculum of secondary social studies classes is a broad syllabus of topics that teachers are expected to “cover” if their students are to have any chance of “passing” state mandated standardized proficiency tests.

In the American South, keenly contested battles still rage over the notion of “heritage,” deeply unsettling what Cameron McCarthy calls “racially hegemonic groups” (1998, p. xi). As an educator in the South, critical postcolonial theory and cultural studies has led me to approach the Confederate battle flag and other Confederate symbols as signifiers around which a symbolic battle is being waged, as “floating signifiers” tied to diverse political projects and open to rearticulation and reappropriation within the social studies curriculum. As symbols, they represent an extraordinary place in terms of what McCarthy (1998) calls the “ethnicization of culture.” For progressives in education who believe that schools are a major force for social change and social justice, these symbolic battles can expand curriculum to enable young people to become critical readers of their own identity work.

The ideology that stands behind South Carolina social studies textbooks and standards is a combined commitment to white supremacy and patriarchal gender roles. South Carolina schools are still involved in controversies over what schools should teach, who should decide, and what beliefs should guide its educational programs. The cultural history of the region with its lack of participation by many parents in textbook selection or in educational decision making in general are combined with fierce independence, fundamentalist religious traditions, history of economic depression and racial unrest. As Michael Apple and Linda Christian-Smith (1991) noted, the controversies over “official knowledge” in textbooks signify more profound political, economic, and cultural relations and histories and lead to wider questions of power relations. According to Apple and Christian-Smith (1991),

[Textbooks] signify—though their content and form—particular constructions of reality, particularly ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge. . . . They embody what Raymond Williams called the selective tradition—someone’s selection, someone’s vision of legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group’s cultural capital disenfranchises another’s. (pp. 3-4)

From the beginning, the South has not been an autonomous space with its own history and culture, but rather a space constructed in battle (Schramm-Pate & Carlson, 2003). The South is a creation of a double consciousness in the sense that the “double” of the South (the North) is always a visible or invisible presence in southern heritage narratives. In, *The Symbolic Curriculum: Reading the Confederate Flag as a Southern Heritage Text*, Dennis Carlson and I argue:

In order for northern industrial culture to establish its hegemony over the American character, it required its Other, its alterity, always interrupting and slowing down the inexorable march of progress. So the South has been made to assume this role in American public life and public consciousness. It has been unable to establish its own identity apart from its controlling alter ego, the North. (2003, p. 211)

Thus, the construction of a national identity in America historically has occurred by bifurcating Americans into two identity groups, one northern and one southern, one hegemonic and the other subordinate. Within the radical cultural hybridity that is foregrounded in critical postcolonial and cultural studies literatures, there is a space for the exploration of difference, not simply as a problem but also as an opportunity for conversation over curriculum reform and the radically diverse communities we now serve in our public schools. By cultural hybridity, I am talking about what Bhabha (1994) calls “the return of the gaze of the discriminated back on the eye of power” (p. 112). I am talking about what McCarthy (1998) calls the “interactive, developmental, bricolage of postcolonial knowledge production that produces discontinuity and disquiet for the colonizer (p. 149). Hybridization, in this sense, asserts itself in a radical excess of desires and interests and chooses humor, satire, and parody as its preferred strategies of resistance.

Within classrooms, a buoyant play of ideas and vigorous dialogue over themes of authority, privilege, freedom, and culture can enable students to demystify the binary opposition of North/South. Social studies can be far more dynamic and wide-reaching than the ways they normally get conceptualized in textbooks and state standards. Western historicism is embedded in the social studies textbook, *South Carolina: The History*

of an American State (Horne, Jr., & Klein, 2000) (e.g., the textbook is currently used in most middle-level social studies classes throughout South Carolina) and the remainder of this paper is a critical postcolonial critique of this textbook.

South Carolina Social Studies Standards

The parents and guardians of many of our students expect their children to be socialized to accept and support the socioeconomic, racial, gendered, and political status quo, not critique it. Embedded within the curriculum of social studies is a broad syllabus of topics that teachers are expected to “cover” if their students are to have a chance of “passing” state mandated proficiency tests. Among the topics that loom in the traditional middle school social studies class in South Carolina, for example, are state geography, early colonization, the Civil War and Reconstruction Era, classical republican theory, and the Civil Rights Movement. Cognitively speaking, South Carolina’s standards revolve around the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy i.e., factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge—that is remembering, understanding and applying, evaluating, analyzing, and creating. The social studies standards are decontextualized, ahistorical, apolitical, and often mythological regarding people of color and women. Theft of land, denial of religious practices and ceremonial traditions and the exploitation of laborers, such as the mill workers and the operatives who denied unionization are part of South Carolina’s null curriculum; they are not mentioned at all. Also, part of the null curriculum is the reality that social studies teachers are discouraged from discussing controversial issues such as Confederate symbols, social class racial and gender struggles, cultural struggles, and hegemonic political discourses.

The standards do not encourage teachers to discuss white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexuality, and racial hierarchies and how they dominate economic, social, and political relations. Undergraduate teacher preparation programs in South Carolina do not enable pre-service teachers to be aware of how power is embedded in color-blind liberalism. The standards also do not address the notion that some benefited more than others from colonization or the problems with imperialism and nation building such as the Native American removal. As a result, little attention is paid to that “one artifact that plays a major role in defining whose culture is taught—*the textbook*” (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 1).

The Textbook—*South Carolina: The History of an American State* by Paul Horne, Jr., & Patricia Klein

Black Codes and Jim Crow

South Carolina: The History of an American State (Horne, Jr., & Klein, 2000) is currently used in most middle-level social studies classes throughout South Carolina, and it is the focus of this paper since within it there is a disregard for colonial depersonalization, colonial cultural alienation of the “other,” and political oppression. The authors’s resistance to engage the interstices of the hybrid spaces that emerge at the intersections of different cultures, histories and locations is illustrated by their insistence on the “virtues” of white southern culture which dominate the textbook and reinforce the colonizing pedagogical stance of this middle-school social studies textbook. In other words, this indicates that the authors have chosen to ignore the institutionalized racism that Jim Crow laws and Jim Crow etiquette brought on. In fact, the term “Black Codes” is not mentioned at all in the book. By saying that “Jim Crow laws ensured that segregation became an accepted part of South Carolina life,” the authors are in effect reinforcing the historical, geographical, racial, gendered, and class markers that stereotypically typify the South and southern culture as “backward.”

To paraphrase Apple and Christian-Smith (1991), *Whose* knowledge is of the most worth? Clearly, without a visual or written text of the Jim Crow signs (i.e., Whites Only!) that were placed above water fountains, door entrances and exits, and in front of public facilities in the Jim Crow states (i.e., Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and South Carolina)

indicating that there were statutes severely regulating social interactions between the races, is not knowledge worth mentioning according to Horne and Klein (2000). The fact that there were separate hospitals for blacks and whites, separate prisons, separate public and private schools, separate churches, separate cemeteries, separate public restrooms and separate public accommodations and that in most instances black facilities were inferior is also omitted.

So, Why Include the Black Codes and Jim Crow in the Social Studies Textbook?

Since slaves were not viewed as fully human in Athenian society, it was only “natural” that they should be denied human rights and citizen rights, as it was only “natural” that slaves should be denied human rights in the South. The myth of black intellectual inferiority is thus a central theme in Southern heritage narratives, and one that was a subtext in new right discourse throughout the Senator Arthur Ravenel of the so-called Charleston aristocracy gave a speech at a recent Charleston rally staged in opposition to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) boycott of the Confederate Flag that flies on the State House grounds in South Carolina in which he proclaimed”

Can you believe, can you believe, can you believe that there’s those who think that the General Assembly in South Carolina is going to pull its wool, knuckle under, grovel and do the bidding of that corrupt organization known as the National Association for Retarded People? (cited in Stroud, January 11, 2000, A1)

To add insult to injury, when asked to apologize, Ravenel said he wanted to apologize to retarded people for mistakenly associating them with the NAACP. Here we see the all-too-familiar face of Eurocentric racism, the rank ordering of people according to natural or god-given intelligence, from the “normal” white, to the “retarded” white, to the black.

In the Reconstruction Era closely following the American Civil War, three constitutional amendments (i.e., the Thirteenth abolished slavery, the Fourteenth protected former slaves’s constitutional rights, and the Fifteenth guaranteed former slaves the right to vote) and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 were passed to provide rights to former slaves. The Fourteenth Amendment is arguably the most important of the constitutional amendments since it radically changed the definition of the United States citizen and is the source of the cause of due process and equal protection for all citizens. The amendment guaranteed former slaves citizenship and prohibited the states from denying or abridging their fundamental rights by declaring, “All persons born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States . . . No state shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” (Patrick, Pious, & Ritchie, 2000, p. 588). Of course the Fourteenth Amendment did not erase the color line between whites and people of color that was drawn by custom and social mores in a myriad of cultural activities and institutions in both the North and the South known as “Black Codes” and “Jim Crow.”

According to Edgar (1998), historians use the term Black Codes to articulate how Jim Crow etiquette or customs operated in conjunction with Jim Crow laws. According to Kennedy (1959), when most people think of Jim Crow they think of the laws that excluded blacks from public transportation and facilities, juries, jobs, and neighborhoods not of Jim Crow etiquette or customs. In their South Carolina social studies textbook, Horne, Jr., and Klein (2000) state that Jim Crow is often used to describe the segregation laws, rules, and customs. Examples of these customs or etiquette included things such as, a black person could never curse a white person; a black person could never laugh derisively at a white person; a black person could never comment on the appearance of a white female; or a black men could not offer his hand (to shake hands) with a white man because it implied being socially equal. Blacks and whites were not supposed to eat together, black persons rode in the back seat of cars and public transportation,

In 1891, a group of African Americans challenged Jim Crow laws by having Homer A. Plessy, who was seven-eighths white and one-eighth black (therefore, legally black according to the one-drop rule), sit in a

white-only railroad coach. The Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision ruling that the Fourteenth Amendment allowed a state to segregate blacks and whites by providing “separate but equal” facilities for blacks in all institutions including schools. In 1896, the *Plessy versus Ferguson* case legitimized Jim Crow laws and the Jim Crow way of life. These rules of etiquette arose after the Reconstruction Era ended in 1877 and after the *Plessy versus Ferguson* ruling and continued until the mid-1960s. According to the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia (2006),

Jim Crow was more than a series of rigid anti-Black laws. It became a way of life—a racial caste system that operated primarily, but not exclusively, in the South and in border states . . . Under Jim Crow, African Americans were relegated to the status of second class citizens with Jim Crow representing the legitimization of anti-Black racism. (para 4)

Horne and Klein (2000) argue that Jim Crow laws started with whites attempting to challenge the Fifteenth Amendment. They write, “In 1878, Wade Hampton was elected to the U.S. Senate. When Hampton left for the Senate, the Conservatives abandoned his racial policies. They quickly moved to disenfranchise—take the right to vote away from—blacks” (p. 365). They go on to say that the *Plessy* ruling of “separate but equal” reinforced Jim Crow laws that ensured “segregation became an accepted part of South Carolina life” (p. 358). While they acknowledge that the separate facilities were rarely equal, they also argue that because of poverty and rural conditions of the State of South Carolina, “there was little opportunity for mixing” (p. 358). Horne and Klein (2000) find it “interesting” that “southern blacks and whites shared some of the same values” despite segregationist policies such as “family and kinship, dining, entertaining, and visiting” (p. 358).

The Confederate Battle Flag

While Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws are almost non-existent in the Horne, Jr., and Klein (2000) textbook, the Confederate Battle Flag controversy and compromise in South Carolina is completely ignored. On page 307 there is one painting by Conrad Wise Chapman entitled, “The Flag of Sumter, October 21, 1863,” which shows the Confederate Flag and a Confederate soldier at Fort Sumter, otherwise, the Confederate Flag is not mentioned. A progressive textbook aimed at relocating traditional historicism and colonialism would address the controversy in terms of questions such as: Can the Confederate Flag be detached from this original context of usage? How is its historic and contemporary usage implied a connection with that original usage?

So, Why Include the Confederate Battle Flag Controversy and Compromise in the Social Studies Textbook?

One way to contextualize the current battle over the Confederate flag in South Carolina is to trace back its genealogy, to follow-back a path of development that leads to and produces the present. Now, one of the characteristics of genealogy, as Michel Foucault has remarked, is that it teaches us “to laugh at the solemnities of the origin” (1977/1992, p. 143). The genealogist learns that controversies and ideas have no stable origins, that their rhizomes and roots do not reveal a single or even original place at which one can say, here is where it all began, this is the bedrock upon which this history can be written. So there is no unified or stable origin to the idea of Southern heritage in America. Indeed, as we will see, the “South” is really a European construct and cannot even be said to find its first meaning on American soil. Still, the Confederate flag does have something close to an original usage, and it is one that has relevance in the current controversy.

The “original” Confederate Flag approved by the provisional Confederate Congress, it turns out, was not the flag we associate with the Confederacy today, but rather the “Stars and Bars,” a flag consisting of three horizontal stripes, alternative red and white, with a canton of blue emblazoned with a circle of stars

corresponding to the number of Confederate states. In September, 1861, a flag specifically for battle was requested by Confederate General Beauregard because his troops had confused the “Stars and Bars” with the U.S. flag and mistakenly fired upon each other (Dedmond, 2000). Senator William Porcher Miles of South Carolina designed the new banner to purposely look different from the U.S. flag. Miles’ design had a rectangular red field transversed by a blue St. Andrew’s cross which bore seven white stars to represent the states of the Confederacy. Although the “Stars and Bars” remained the Confederacy national flag until 1863, the Battle Flag was used by Confederate soldiers beginning in November, 1861 (Coski, 2000). The Battle Flag went through several revisions before the St. Andrew’s cross – adapted from a banner that was used at sea from 1863 onward called the “Confederate Navy Jack”—became the generally recognized symbol of the Confederacy. This Confederate flag, also commonly known as the Rebel flag and the Army of Northern Virginia banner, has a design composed of a blue St. Andrew’s cross (also known as the “Southern Cross”) with 13 white stars emblazoned on a red rectangular background. For contemporary Americans, this version is most recognizable as the Confederate Flag.

The current controversy is thus partially about this original context of usage, but perhaps more directly about the appropriation of the Confederate Flag a century later to commemorate the centennial of the Confederacy and to signify white resistance to the black Civil Rights movement. In the late 1950s the South Carolina Senate ordered the Confederate flag placed behind the rostrum of the Senate chamber. At the same time, the General Assembly created the Confederate War Centennial commission to plan South Carolina’s participation in the upcoming celebration of the centennial of the Confederacy. A legacy of the Centennial observance, which included parades, battle re-enactments, and marker dedications to Confederate veterans, was a concurrent resolution in the state legislature in February, 1962, that authorized the flying of the Confederate flag atop the Capital dome in Columbia. As a defiant gesture of white power in the face of rising black discontent in the state, the flying of the flag symbolized to many that the Civil Rights movement had not won after all, even as the North had not won a century earlier, that things would not fundamentally change. One might say that taking-on the flag was thus “unfinished business” for the NAACP, a way of letting the new right know that it had not and would not “win.”

Although the NAACP has, since the 1960s, opposed flying the Flag on the Capital dome, it was not until the 1990s that civil rights leaders began to seriously lobby state legislatures to do something. Twice in the mid-1990s lawmakers considered bills to remove the Flag, but each time the issue proved too politically volatile to get too far. In 1996, Republican Governor David Beasley called for the removal of the flag. Although six former governors, many of the state’s major religious leaders, and the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce joined Beasley, the House rejected the proposal. Furthermore, Governor Beasley’s efforts to remove the Flag from the capital dome alienated those on the right and was widely credited with costing him re-election. He was replaced by a Democrat, Governor Jim Hodges, who was less politically vulnerable, so the NAACP stepped-up its demands. In July, 1999, the NAACP called for the removal and relocation of the Confederate Flag to a place of “historical rather than sovereign context” (cited in Warthen, 2000, D2). This time the NAACP backed-up its demand by calling for a national tourism boycott of the state until its primary goal of removing the flag from atop the capital dome was achieved. More immediately, civil rights progressives, like their counterparts on the new right, were beginning to mobilize public opinion. As the South Carolina General Assembly convened in the year 2000, 46,000 anti-flag marchers surged through Columbia, where they were met with 6,000 pro-flag marchers, many in Confederate regalia and waving Confederate Flags.

On January 19, 2000, in his state of the state address, former Governor Hodges called for the removal of the Confederate Flag from the state capital dome. He asked both sides to “take a deep breath and talk,” and immediately launched a series of meetings with business leaders to work out a “compromise.” The plan they worked out was to keep the flag on the state house grounds but fly it on a 30-foot pole behind a monument to Confederate General Wade Hampton. The South Carolina senate voted 36-7 in April, 2000, to remove the

flag from the capital dome, and the House of Representatives followed suit in May, 2000. On July 1, 2000, 38 years after it was raised, the Confederate flag was finally lowered from the capital dome.

I am arguing that the textbook's null curriculum of the Confederate Flag controversy and compromise is problematic in South Carolina social studies classes. The SC state standards for social studies, as I mentioned earlier, do not encourage teachers to discuss white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexuality, and racial hierarchies and how they dominate economic, social, and political relations. I am arguing that in order for teachers to be prepared to enable children to be aware of how power is embedded in texts, such as the "flag," then BOTH standards and the textbooks that align with them also do not address the Confederate flag issue.

Conclusion

The South and southern culture is no more homogenous than the North or the Midwest and yet this textbook communicates to children that identities, locations, and cultures are fixed. In *The Uses of Culture*, Cameron McCarthy (1998) claims that because cultures are interwoven and interdependent, the definition of "culture" depends in part on the existence and interaction with the "other." Thus, in order to understand relationships between cultures, we must recognize the ongoing conversation between cultures. As Richard Quantz (1988) aptly observed when studying culture we must place the "group into its historical situation enmeshed in asymmetrical power relations" (p. 3). To understand this, he argues we have to understand history as located in the present. Bhabha (1994) suggests that there is a "third space" within cultures that he calls "cultural hybridity" (p. 37). In this sense "hybridity" is the site of resistance, a strategic reversal of the process of domination that "turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (p. 37). As I wrote in, *Grappling with Diversity* (2008),

The process of cultural hybridity thus gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. Hybridity, then, not only displaces the history that creates it but sets up new structures of authority and generates new political initiatives. (p. 148)

By moving beyond a simplistic either/or dichotomy, we can move into a "third space," or an in-between space that "carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). The importance of the third space lies in the ways in which the "politics of polarity" can be explored in order for us to emerge as the "others of ourselves" (p. 39). In order to cross what Bhabha (1994) calls, "discursive liminal space," we must first deconstruct the false oppositions (p. 39). Discursive liminal space does not separate but rather mediates mutual exchanges and relative meanings. Following this model of liminality into the third space, we can deconstruct the gaze of power and its norms and assumptions.

The blatant decisiveness on the part of authors Horne, Jr., and Klein (2000) to avoid controversial topics in their popular social studies textbook implies a number of things pedagogically. To begin with, it implies that we should not look at classrooms, other school spaces, and various sites in the public as what Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (2005) call "safe spaces," educational sites in which young people can feel safe to express their beliefs and feelings openly in dialogue with others. Of course, as Weis and Fine maintain, it is important that we not romanticize spaces in schools, classrooms, and the public as ever "innocent, uncontaminated, or 'free'" (2006, p. xii). They are, at best, sites in which privilege can be questioned even as it continues to shape discourse, in which identity can be affirmed even as it is troubled and reconstructed, in which it is possible to engage in new social realignments even if these realignments are constantly undermined in the broader culture.

Second, it implies a resistance to what Henry Giroux has aptly observed, "a critical pedagogy for democracy does not begin with test scores but with questions" (1993, p. 74). For Giroux, these questions cannot be of the variety that require "yes" or "no" answers, or that have a "correct" answer. Rather, they must be questions that open dialogue and establish some of the parameters for discourse. Of course, teachers

and other educators have an important role to play in helping guide and direct this dialogue. It is important, for example, that the dialogue address issues of social justice, equity, and the meaning of democratic public life. But progressives also need to resist a doctrinaire “politically correct” form of pedagogy that would, for example, censor all uses of Confederate history. That, I believe, would only foster more resistance and resentment. By shifting toward dialogic pedagogy, the teacher is de-centered as the keeper of an objective, final, authoritative truth and young people are made much more active subjects in the production of truth, values, and identity. Dialogic pedagogy thus creates the conditions for the development of the discursive virtues and ethics associated with democratic public life, and for this reason it is subversive. In the dominant discourse of citizenship education the emphasis is on “normalizing” young people to fit into the dominant social order, and this has resulted in a de-emphasis upon dialogue, with its openness and poly-vocality.

Finally, the avoidance of controversial subject matter in the Horne, Jr., and Klein (2000) textbook implies that southern heritage is fixed and that it is not the teacher’s role to challenge what McCarthy (1998) calls “racially hegemonic groups” (p. xi). In order for teachers to organize curriculum and pedagogy around critical postcolonial theory they need a point of departure to enable students to participate in a critical reading, deconstruction, and reconstruction of various cultural “texts” such as Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws, and the Confederate Flag. These topics around which an essential southern heritage is stitched together, through which “whiteness” is performed and deployed, are socially-constructed and they can be contested in order to enable students to break through the dominant discourse of the textbook’s reification of them in which they appear either as subjects and/or objects with an already-given meaning or as non-existent. This is consistent, I believe, with a *genealogical* method of study, as Foucault has used that term, a method of tracing back the contemporary usage of a term, or an icon, through its various rhizomes of development, revealing all the time the power relations and interests organized around it, the aims behind its deployment within discourse, the ways it produces and regulates difference, and so on. Such a pedagogy cannot offer an “undistorted” or unified truth about Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws, or the Confederate Flag, but it can offer the hope that young people will become critical readers of their own identity work, and become more skeptical of heritage narratives that promise a return to a pure, essential, foundational sense of self.

Social studies is the perfect venue for challenging the masternarratives of a patriarchal, Eurocentric view of United States constitutional development as essentially the product of farsighted White forefathers who very wisely wrought upon this continent a new nation conceived in liberty. There was liberty, of course, but for whom and to what purpose?

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