When this project was first announced, I was admittedly hesitant. I am socially anxious, so going to college campuses and interviewing people I didn't know about such a contentious topic made me a bit uncomfortable. However, I took this class to have these conversations and be uneasy. This is so I can have these conversations later without feeling the same sense of awkwardness.

The idea of creating a project based around the recent 'attack on DEI' was a group decision. While it had the potential to be a touchy topic, we agreed that it would also be a topic that many HBCU students held closely to them. Additionally, this topic had the potential to open our eyes to a conversation that is not often engaged in at NC State and is especially relevant with the recent presidential inauguration and executive orders. While still nervous, as I know what an explosive topic this could be if not handled eloquently, I was also very excited. As a member of the Pride Center on campus, I knew the impact that DEI orders could have on individuals and institutions. I was especially eager to hear the perspective of students from institutions with such a large emphasis on DEI.

It turned out to be much more difficult than originally thought to find students available for interviews. Only one person in our group could directly contact a student at an HBCU. We managed to find two others through coworkers' friends, but because we were not close with any of these students, we hesitated to push them to have this controversial conversation. They requested to send a voice memo instead of an actual interview because of scheduling conflicts, and because we had so few options, we agreed.

I was disappointed that we wouldn't be able to have interactive interviews with these students. I think we did miss an aspect of the project: the ability to have a conversation or ask questions with those students. However, as the voice memos began to roll in and I began to review them to edit the video, I realized that these students - if you'll excuse my slang - understood the assignment. It was really like someone was asking the questions. You could tell their answers were not rehearsed; we heard their thoughts as they considered the questions for the first time. While the interactive portion of the interview was not there, I am confident that we were hearing the genuine viewpoints of these students.

Hearing those interviews repeatedly in my editing, I realized a few key things about these students. The first is that they were not just attending the HBCUs they were studying at: they were living through them, exploring and understanding Black culture, and feeling strong attachments to their universities. While some noted flaws in the universities - such as few options for off-campus community building - there was a deep respect for the environment their HBCU created and a deep, genuine connection to these institutions. This was one of the most substantial revelations of the project. While I understood that HBCUs existed, I had always thought of them as just other universities with a smidge of interesting history. This project made me realize the deep importance of these institutions to the Black community, and how radically different their environment is from PWIs.

I also realized that diversity, equity, and inclusion principles are a cornerstone of the universities that these students attend. One of my favorite quotes from this video is Taylor Key saying "We welcome inclusion and diversity on this campus. We live and breathe it." The other students interviewed held similar views: the ideas of diversity, equity, and inclusion are integrated so deeply into their campuses and help provide opportunities and support that they are confident they would not receive at a predominately white institution. For these students, the end of DEI does not just mean they may struggle to find a job; it's an attack on their way of life and the environment they cherish.

My contributions to the group included planning, recording audio, sourcing stock video, and editing and compiling the video. At the beginning of our project, I was present and participated in the group meeting, where we discussed our options for the project topic and chose the DEI initiatives. This meeting also saw my role as video editor take hold. Later, I created the rough draft for many of the scripts for the video. During one of our workday class periods, some of our group met and I recorded and cleaned up the audio for the interviews.

After that, I began to edit the video with stock footage for the voiceovers. As I received the interview audio, I incorporated these and compiled the video. I have a newfound respect for video editors. Editing was an incredibly challenging task. Video editing software is not intuitive, and the learning curve is steep. I did the math, and I think I spent around 30 hours editing the video. This is partially because we did not have footage to use during the interviews and I had to create a visual representation for this portion. Overall, I was proud of the final product and felt I did the topic and my team justice.

It is worth noting that because of my extensive work on the video portion of this project, I have contributed very little to the print piece. I discussed this with my group, and we all decided this was fair. For these forthcoming group dynamic analyses, I am working on my knowledge of their effort on the video and what little I have seen of the print piece. If someone has put forth great effort for the print piece, I may be unable to speak fully to that effort.

My attitude towards race has changed as a result of this project, as it formed an increased understanding of HBCUs and the Black experience. I have a more full respect for the experiences of Black students, especially with the recent administration changes and times of uncertainty that they are facing. I also have a better understanding of the importance of institutions such as HBCUs for Black culture and the impact they have on the students who attend them.

The end of many DEI programs in the government and corporations does have the potential to impact me as a member of some minority groups. However, listening to the responses of HBCU students made me realize that for them, an attack on DEI is something more profound: a systemic deconstruction of their spaces and support systems in a society that is often unwelcoming. Unfortunately, this tracks with the historical trend of the white ruling class' disassembly of the culture and organization of people of color.

This project also made me realize the deep importance of HBCUs to the Black community and the Black students who attend them. As I discussed earlier in this reflection, this environment with an absolute commitment to Black education and excellence is difficult for many Black people to find, and one that the students who attend them admire. These are not simply universities with a Black history; these are universities actively forging Black history through their unique environment and commitment to Black students.

Humans are inherently biased beings. Our development is highly dependent on learned skills and ideas. From society and trusted sources in our lives, we pick up stereotypes that we are hard-pressed to acknowledge and much more difficult to unlearn. I had one stereotype challenged during this project that I did not realize I had.

I believed, though I could not have put it into words, that Historically Black College and Universities were exclusively liberal arts colleges that focused on Black history. While I cannot place where this stereotype came from, I was harboring the idea that HBCUs weren't concentrated on student success, especially in STEM. I could not have been more mistaken. From my research on HBCUs for the historical part of the video and the print piece, I realized that many HBCUs offer and are known for their science, engineering, math, and technology

degrees. This was a fully debunked myth upon learning that two of the students we interviewed attended NC A&T, where they were studying biomedical engineering.

I am glad that this stereotype was challenged. I now feel as though I have a more complete understanding of what HBCUs offer their students and how they benefit the Black community and the academic community at large.

The most substantial challenge for me during this project was the difficulty in finding students to interview. This was particularly challenging for me because while I tried my best to help, I only knew one student who went to an HBCU from my high school. I reached out to her, but she never responded. I genuinely did not know how I could help.

While I was prepared to go to a campus, as mentioned earlier in this reflection, I am also a socially anxious person. It would not have been good for my mental health to approach random students and ask them such deep questions about diversity, equity, inclusion, and the state of the world.

If I could do this whole thing again, I might have reached out to the professor or perhaps some other friends to see if I could help find more Black students who would have been more comfortable doing an interview. I also might have pushed harder to visit a university, even if we did not talk to students and instead just saw the campus. However, I am proud of the final result that our team created with the resources that we had.

Overall, this project opened my eyes to the importance of HBCUs and DEI to the Black community, and made me realize the magnitude of the effect of the executive orders and shift away from DEI is having on these students and their communities. While I was disappointed by not being able to interact with these students, I feel this project equipped me with new skills and perspectives to engage in dialogue on racial topics eloquently and respectfully.

Do you think there is a link between race and intelligence? Elaborate.

I do not think there is a link between race and intelligence. I think the social systems that we have created around race, however, make a system where students of color are less likely to be categorized as "academically gifted" and pursue higher education.

Empirical data shows a disparity between races on standardized test scores in most states. For example, in Virginia, 80% of white students were within the 'proficient' level for reading, while 52% percent of Black students and 59% of Hispanic students met the same benchmark. An oblivious outsider looking at these reports would likely conclude that white students are inherently more intelligent than Black or Hispanic students. However, they'd be ignoring the most vital contributing factor to success on these tests: education.

Studies have shown that as many as 3 in 4 Black students who would qualify for gifted programs in public schools are not identified or referred to these programs. These students genuinely do not have access to programs designed to boost these scores and challenge students to their full potential. Whether they do that or not is up for debate, but the considerable issue here is that Black students simply are not receiving the same level of education as their white peers, even in our desegregated, non-discriminatory public school program.

In conclusion, while test scores show that Black and Hispanic students score lower than their white peers, this is not indicative of an inherent gap in intelligence. Instead, this is a stark warning that the education we currently receive is not equally distributing resources and education for students of color.

What is your understanding of white privilege?

My understanding of white privilege is that it is the system by which I, as a white person, receive preferential treatment in a racially biased society without earning or wishing for it. Examples of white privilege can include getting more scholarships, being less likely to be a victim of police harassment, and being perceived as the 'default'.

Since European times, social constructs have perceived white men as the ruling class. The recent civil rights, feminist, and LGBTQ+ movements, while creating legal equality between all humans, have not crafted social equality in the slightest. Black people are still often discriminated against and stereotyped, with recent events showing this is repeatedly the case in law enforcement. Latino people, Asian people, Native Americans, and Indigenous people are all subject to unique stereotypes based on their skin color and perceived race.

However, as a white person, you are immune to stereotypes based on the color of your skin. No one is going to think you are a criminal for wearing a hoodie, low-income for shopping at Goodwill, or an illegal alien if you work in the agriculture industry. Being white means that the social lens of the world sees you as 'normal' and attempts to see the best in you, while simultaneously seeing people of color as abnormal and assuming the worst of them.

I realize that white privilege has had its role in getting me to the point where I am, and continues to shape the way that I and my Black and brown peers are perceived. I believe the only way to combat this inherent societal viewpoint is to talk about it and strive to break down the privilege that white people enjoy daily.

Is racism really over in America?

Racism is not over in America, but it has changed form. Less than 65 years ago, it was legal to dictate the facilities someone used based on their perceived race. Now, several non-discrimination and civil rights acts ensure that legally, racism is not codified. This has led some people, including those who were alive during segregation, to believe that racism no longer exists. However, racism is now a more implicit issue, encompassing stereotypes, unconscious bias, and unrealized privilege.

Imagine this: You were born, a white man, in 1944. You grew up in a suburban neighborhood, attended a school with no people of color, and got a respectable white-collar job. In your late teens, the news is increasingly speaking about the fight for civil rights by the Black community. You support them; after all, they're human too. They should be able to use the same bathrooms as everyone else. Then, the year you turn 20, the Civil Rights Act is passed, and you begin seeing the effects. Some Black families move into your neighborhood, and after a few years, your first Black co-worker joins your job. Fast forward, and you are now 80, and you're confused. You see in the news that Black people are protesting for equality. Didn't they achieve that decades ago, when they were legally allowed the same privileges as white people?

You can see where the confusion comes from. It is difficult to go from seeing discrimination as something outward and blatant to quiet and pervasive. However, despite the change in form, racism is still a prevalent issue. If someone yells at your face or talks behind your back, it's still being mean either way; one way is simply quieter than the other. This is also a good analogy because it is much harder to confront a quiet insult than a loud one. The Black community is still fighting against racism in America, even if it looks a little different now.