Theory & Research in Social Education

ISSN: 0093-3104 (Print) 2163-1654 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/utrs20

We're Just Ordinary People: Messianic Master Narratives and Black Youths' Civic Agency

Ashley N. Woodson

To cite this article: Ashley N. Woodson (2016) We're Just Ordinary People: Messianic Master Narratives and Black Youths' Civic Agency, Theory & Research in Social Education, 44:2, 184-211, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2016.1170645

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2016.1170645

Accepted author version posted online: 05 May 2016.
Published online: 05 May 2016.

Theory & Research in Social Education, 44: 184–211, 2016

ISSN 0093-3104 print / 2163-1654 online
DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2016.1170645

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

We're Just Ordinary People: Messianic Master Narratives and Black Youths' Civic Agency

Ashley N. Woodson
University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: Critical race scholars have argued that curricular portrayals of the Civil Rights Movement are undermined by master narratives that legitimate the racial status quo. Although many scholars have critiqued Movement master narratives in social studies and society, few studies have examined Black students' interpretations of such representations and the effects of these representations on their sense of civic agency. In this article, I present ethnographic data that illustrate the function of a specific type of master narrative, messianic master narratives, in 9 Black urban youths' understandings of historical and contemporary civil rights leadership. Messianic master narratives position an individual as the messiah, savior, or deliverer of an oppressed group. Data provide evidence that messianic master narratives constrain Black youths' civic agency, specifically by associating civil rights leadership with immense risk, uncritically invoking Judeo–Christian values, and undermining participants' understandings of historical agency and historical collective action. I conclude by explicating curricular risks associated with messianic master narratives and offering recommendations toward disrupting these narratives in social studies classrooms.

Keywords: Civil Rights Movement, race and racism, social studies education, urban education

In social studies education, the term *Civil Rights Movement* refers to coordinated, non-violent direct action in demand of Black civic and constitutional recognition that occurred between 1954 and 1965 (Martin & Sullivan, 2002). This period is often positioned as foundational to understandings of race and democracy in the United States (Banks, 1995, 2001; Epstein, 1998, 2000; Gay, 2003; Journell, 2008; King, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Martin & Sullivan,

Correspondence should be sent to Ashley N. Woodson, Department of Instruction and Learning, University of Pittsburgh, 5104 Wesley W. Posvar Hall, 230 South Bouquet Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Email: anw@pitt.edu

2002; Swalwell, Pellegrino, & View, 2015) and is widely recognized as a symbolic and strategic point of reference for human rights struggle around the world (Gaines, 2007). Contemporarily, presentations of the Movement and its leadership are prominent across curricula in social studies, history, and civics education (Banks, 2001; Levinson, 2010, 2012; Martin & Sullivan, 2002). Within broader arguments that all students learn about one of "the most celebrated chapters in American history" (Martin & Sullivan, 2002, p. xi), Levinson (2012) specifically described the importance of the Movement to supporting Black students' understanding of civic struggle and to promoting Black students' sense that "they have the capacity and opportunity to become civic leaders" (p. 160).

In contrast to Levinson's hope that representations of the Movement encourage Black students' civic leadership, critical race scholars have argued that some curricula used to teach about the period construct and reify master narratives that undermine Black youths' civic capacities (Brown & Brown, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2003; Woodson, 2015a). *Master narratives* are social and historical mythologies that portray reality in ways that reinforce White power and position (Ikemoto, 1993; King & Swartz, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997; Woodson, 2015a). While the existence of Movement master narratives are well documented (Alridge, 2002, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010; Epstein, 1998; Frost, 2012; Ladson Billings, 2003), implications of these narratives for Black students' civic agency are less clear. *Civic agency* refers to "the self-directed assertion of rights as a citizen . . . [and] an ability to critically understand, navigate and change the conditions of society" through civic engagement and resistance (Fowler, as cited in Konforti, 2009, p. 201). Although scholars have critiqued Movement master narratives in social studies and society, no recent research has examined Black students' interpretations of such representations and the effects of these representations on their sense of civic agency.

In this article, I present ethnographic data that illustrate the function of one type of master narrative—messianic master narratives—in nine Black urban youths' understandings of historical and contemporary civil rights leadership. Messianic master narratives position an individual as the messiah, savior, or deliverer of an oppressed group (Alridge, 2002, 2006). Participants voiced many aspects of messianic master narratives in discussions of Movement leadership and contrasted what they saw as civil rights leaders' qualities with their own potential for civic agency. In what follows, I review critical race theory (CRT) and the ideological origins of messianic master narratives. Then I examine how these narratives emerged in participants' understandings of Movement leadership and how they appeared to limit participants' ability to envision themselves as leaders within civic spaces. I conclude by explicating curricular risks associated with messianic master narratives and offering recommendations toward disrupting these narratives in social studies classrooms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRT

CRT provided the theoretical frame for my study. CRT emerged from the field of critical legal studies in the early 1970s to examine the role of racism in post-Movement legal systems (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard; 2004; Ladson-Billings; 1998; Milner, 2008). While critical legal studies posed meaningful challenges to "society's unfair power arrangements" (Delgado, 1987, p. 303), scholars of color argued that it did not articulate "a psychological or political theory of the origin of racism or of how it could be eradicated" (Delgado, 1987, p. 314). CRT developed to advance such a theory and is characterized by tenets grounded in historical data documenting racial inequality and in the personal experiences of racial minority group members. Three tenets are particularly relevant to examinations of social studies curriculum and practice (Howard, 2004): the thesis that racism is a permanent feature of society, the critique of liberalism, and the theoretical significance of marginalized voices.

The first tenet of CRT holds that racism "is and has been an integral feature of American life, law, and culture" (Howard, 2004, p. 487). Ladson-Billings (1998) contended that hierarchical conceptions of race are "embedded" and "fixed" in the civic imaginary, and that these conceptions continue to "fundamentally sculpt the extant terrain" of civic life (p. 9). Civic power was historically defined in relation to White, male, land-owning citizens. Despite legislation intended to increase civic access, significant racial disparities remain (Levinson, 2010, 2012; Tyson & Park, 2008). Historical exclusionary practices continue to inform who can participate in civic spaces and what that participation can look like—often in ways that marginalize racial minorities and perpetuate their limited access to civic power. Due in part to this cyclical disenfranchisement, critical race theorists describe racism as a permanent feature of social and civic life (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

A second tenet of CRT is the critique of liberalism (Curry, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Milner, 2012). Curry (2007) summarized liberalism as a sociopolitical philosophy that privileges individual rights over group-based claims to representation. He argued that this privileging minimizes the "historical realities" of group-based racial oppression, and cannot adequately account for the role of racism in constraining racial groups' access to and power within civic spaces (p. 43). Together with the thesis that racism is a permanent feature of modern society, the CRT critique of liberalism suggests that the historical and contemporary nature of racism are critical considerations when examining how people of color interpret and access civic spaces (Howard, 2003, 2004; Ikemoto, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2003; Tyson, 2003; Tyson & Park, 2008).

A third tenet of CRT is the theoretical significance of marginalized voices. Historically, voices believed to represent the interests of White citizens have

been considered normal and legitimate (Bernal, 2002), while voices of civic agents of color have been relegated to the margins of civic thought (Howard, 2003, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003). Critical race scholars contend the stories of people of color are necessary and "important histories that help to illustrate the irony and contradiction" (Tate, 1997, p. 218) of civic accounts that only affirm dominant perspectives. These stories, often referred to as counterstories (Carter, 2008; Delgado, 1989; Howard, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), are used to identify and challenge "the power of White privilege in constructing stories about race" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). In this article, Black youths' stories about Movement leadership are used to illustrate the ironies, contradictions, and power of White privilege in representations of the time period and how these representations constrain Black youths' aspirations toward civil rights leadership.

MESSIANIC MASTER NARRATIVES

In contrast to counterstories that challenge White privilege, master narratives are stories that "construct realities in ways that legitimize [White] power and position" (Tate, 1997, p. 221). Messianic master narratives (Alridge, 2002, 2006) are one type of master narrative. Specifically, they are representations of racial struggle that portray "one exceptional individual as the progenitor of a movement" (Alridge, 2006, p. 665). Alridge (2006) developed the construct of messianic master narrative through a textual analysis of secondary U.S. history textbooks, detailing how these textbooks portrayed Martin Luther King, Jr. as a "charismatic savior" (p. 667) and "superhuman figure" (p. 669). Using King as an exemplar case, Alridge (2006) contended individuals positioned as saviors and superheroes are often presented without "personal weaknesses, struggles, or shortcomings" (p. 669). Alridge's (2006) conceptualization builds on Moses's (2010) literary analysis of messianic symbolisms in accounts of Black civic struggle. In Moses's critical review of 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century literature and culture, the author identified patterns in historical text and discourse that presented "certain [B]lack individuals as symbolic messiahs" (p. 2). These symbolic messiahs are positioned as "altruistic" and "perfect" figures who lead "the fight against White oppression, and yet . . . [are] representative of all Americans" (p. 13). Alridge (2006) hypothesized that representations of history that invoke messianic master narratives produce images of leaders that are unreal to students and prevent students from understanding how "ordinary citizens" might "bring about positive and progressive social change in American society" (p. 669). I advance Alridge's (2006) hypothesis and illuminate additional ways in which messianic master narratives might legitimize White power and position.

Ideological Origins of Messianic Master Narratives

Attention to the origins of messianic master narratives is a first step toward disrupting these limited historical accounts. Alridge (2002, 2006) and Moses (2010), respectively, suggested that the contemporary impulse to designate a messiah stems from society's desire to make sense of social conflict through reference to well-known narratives, such as those provided through Judeo–Christian and liberal frameworks. The Judeo–Christian worldview holds that the eradication of human suffering will occur through the teachings and actions of one person, referred to as the "messiah" (Cone, 2010). Religious figures, including the prophet Moses, who is credited with staging the demonstrations that led to the Israelite migration from forced labor in Egypt, and Jesus, who was crucified in ancient Rome for preaching theology perceived to undermine the monarchy, are associated with messianic symbolisms in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (Moses, 2010). According to Alridge (2006), the Judeo–Christian worldview provides an ideological backdrop for correlating deliverance from oppression to the sacrifice of an individual actor. For example, Alridge (2006) described how some textbook portrayals of Martin Luther King, Jr. evoke imagery of Jesus and Moses by positioning King as a "deliverer . . . who would lead his people to the 'promised land'" (p. 667). Alridge (2006) concluded these portrayals are historically inaccurate and allow narratives about King to eclipse the social networks, cultural traditions, and material conditions that motivated and facilitated his activism.

From a critical race perspective, messianic master narratives might also emerge from liberal traditions of individualism. Liberal individualism attaches "a higher moral value to the individual than [to] society or to any collective group" (Arblaster, 1984, p. 15; see also Curry, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Consequently, liberal representations of history privilege the actions and struggles of individuals over those of social groups. The limitations of liberal individualism have been noted in portrayals of Movement leadership (Alridge, 2002, 2006; Carlson, 2003, 2004; Schwartz, 2009). One limitation is a tendency toward tokenism (Guinier, 1991), a practice in which a representative from a racial group is selected by dominant society as a model of particular characteristics. For example, textbook authors erroneously present King's aspirations and politics as standing in proxy for the aspirations and politics of the entire Black community throughout and beyond the Movement (Alridge, 2006; Huggins, 1987; Woodson, 2015a). Those who did (or do) not agree with King are subsequently villanized or erased (Huggins, 1987). Thus, messianic master narratives that rely on liberal individualist themes are also historically inaccurate and distort the complexity of racial politics, solidarity, and struggle (Huggins, 1987; Woodson, 2015a).

Historical inaccuracy does not inherently legitimate White privilege or constrain Black youths' civic agency. Although Alridge (2006) and Moses

(2010) described the limitations of Judeo–Christian symbolism and liberalism in accounts of civil rights leadership, additional data are needed to understand how these narratives might affect students' sense of the Movement, the nature of civil rights struggles, and their own civic agency.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

My participants' respective decisions to reflect on their experiences and respond to my questions were "predicated on my capacity . . . to convey" that I could understand and accurately describe their lived experiences (Dunbar, 2008, p. 89). Being open and explicit about my racial identity, cultural identity, and educational experiences helped me to demonstrate this capacity (Dunbar, 2008; Milner, 2007). As the research relationships developed, I shared past experiences as a Black urban secondary social studies student who graduated with honors despite chronic absenteeism and frequent short-term suspensions. I also reflected on out-of-school experiences with history, including church- and community-based celebrations of African and African-descended heritage and culture. Contemporary experiences included my post-secondary education and training as an African and African American Studies undergraduate and graduate student, as a developing critical race theorist, and as a social studies teacher educator. In addition to sharing these experiences with my participants, I also recorded them as self-reflective memos in my field notebook as a means of holding myself accountable for potential experiential and conceptual biases that might shape my approach to the data-collection and data-analysis processes. Maintaining self-reflective memos provided important opportunities for introspection as I developed and worked to validate my line of questioning, interpretations, and final presentation of the data.

DATA COLLECTION

For this study, I broadly sought to explore urban Black youths' experiences with history and social studies education and to understand how these experiences shaped their civic identities. References to the Movement and its leadership featured prominently in participants' narratives. Subsequently, I became interested in potential connections between their knowledge about the Movement and their understandings of personal civic agency. As one topic within broader stories about the Movement, this study details nine youths' perspectives on the concept of *civil rights leader*. Though struggles for civil rights predate and extend beyond the Movement, the term civil rights leader is often used to describe prominent activists who challenged racial disenfranchisement between 1954 and 1965. Hall (2005) cited civil rights leader Bayard Rustin to describe this period as the "classical" phase of the struggle, "[beginning] with

the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision . . . and [culminating] with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965" (p. 1234).

Data come from a 3-year, critical race ethnographic study conducted in a mid-sized, post-industrial, urban city in the Midwest. Critical race ethnography integrates multiple modes of data collection to identify social and structural features of culture, exclusion, and marginalization (Duncan, 2002). Duncan (2002) suggested that critical race ethnography is appropriate for exploring how "racially informed relations of power are fixed in the seemingly objective social languages" (p. 131), which would include social languages used to describe the Movement, civil rights leaders, and civic struggle in participants' experiences. Data highlight themes that emerged across individual and focus group interviews, within participant journals and writing assignments, and through field notes taken during interviews and ethnographic observations.

Context

Early in the study, a participant selected *Tubmanville* as the pseudonym for the city in which the study took place, naming her hometown after abolitionist, Union military spy, and activist Harriet Tubman. Tubmanville is a mid-sized urban city in the Midwest. It is also one of the most racially segregated cities in the nation. The city routinely ranks on the Federal Bureau of Investigations' list of most violence per capita, and the data collection period was marked by several homicides and high-profile incidents of police violence. Other civil rights issues included chronic unemployment caused by deindustrialization, high rates of poverty, and low high school graduation rates. Although I did not collect data in the high schools, public school district annual reports and the proceedings of community meetings revealed that students' access to social studies content was shaped by high rates of teacher turnover, instructional inconsistency, and aging curricular resources. An analysis of participants' descriptions of their history textbooks has been published elsewhere (Woodson, 2015b).

Participants

Data from nine participants between 16 and 21 years of age are the focus of this study. All were identified through a work-readiness program for low-income youth of color with a behavioral or mental health diagnosis, where the author facilitated writing and journalism workshops. In addition to allowing the author to audio-record and take notes during workshops, participants consented to ethnographic observations at their work site and in their community

as well as qualitative individual and focus group interviews. Though participants were at various stages on and off the education pipeline, all nine had completed at least their sophomore year at one of two urban, predominantly Black high schools. Both schools had high proportions of free- and reduced-lunch students, observed high rates of administrative and teacher turnover, and had not met adequate yearly progress at the time of participant recruitment.

Participants in this study were randomly assigned to two separate focus groups. Alayna, Crystal, Jasen, LaDarius, Monica, Shontae, Stefanie, and Xavier were in one focus group and, as of this writing, were enrolled in high school or college. These eight youths' perspectives exemplify the types of understandings (and misunderstandings) of the Movement that I encountered throughout the 3-year data collection period. Qahir, a ninth participant from the second focus group, was one of the oldest participants in the study overall. He left high school during his junior year prior to enrollment in the study. While aspects of Qahir's experience were representative of other participants' experiences, his stories were selected for this article because they offered unique insight into how messianic master narratives shaped his self-perception of civic agency throughout his transition from high school age to early adulthood.

Interviews

The nine participants for this study completed between four and eight 1-hour-long individual interviews over the 3-year period. Interviews were designed to follow Seidman's (2012) three-interview structure, wherein one interview each is devoted to establishing context for the participants' experiences, reconstructing the details of these experiences, and allowing participants to reflect on the meaning of these experiences, respectively. However, participants were allowed to schedule interviews to discuss specific civic events in greater depth. For example, Qahir scheduled an interview the week following the police shooting of an unarmed homeless Black man to discuss the media coverage of the tragedy. This revised structure did not undermine Seidman's recommendation for "open-ended, in-depth inquiry" (p. 23), maintaining connections across interviews, and ensuring that the interview structure supported the development of a "substantial relationship with participants over time" (p. 25). Alayna, Crystal, Jasen, LaDarius, Monica, Shontae, Stefanie, and Xavier also completed four 90–120-minute focus group sessions. All interviews were semi-structured to ensure that the in-school and out-of-school experiences, historical narratives, and forms of civic education most relevant to participants' civic agency were identified and covered in depth. All interviews were audio-recorded and excerpts were transcribed.

Participant Journals, Assignments, and Observations

To contextualize participants' descriptions of their experiences, I asked each to maintain a journal and complete short assignments on themes, including experiences in social studies classrooms, out-of-school experiences with historical and civic content, and reports on historical events and figures. They were also asked to collect homework, GED preparation materials, newspaper or magazine articles, and other artifacts that they deemed relevant to their civic lives. To develop further insight, I observed individual participants by invitation at community and life events that they thought might further illustrate themes discussed during the interviews. Events for this study included church services, trips to nearby art and history museums, sessions of a GED preparatory course, and a rally for non-violence at a local high school. No observations took place in traditional classroom settings. Observations on and conversations during these events were described in my field notebook immediately following the event's conclusion. The field notebook was also used to maintain a record of reflections on the more formal interviews as well as to construct preliminary themes (Patton, 2002).

DATA ANALYSIS

The interview transcripts, participants' journal entries and assignments, and ethnographic field notes were analyzed using cross-case inductive analysis to "identify core consistencies and meanings" across data sources (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Interest in potential connections between participants' knowledge about the Movement, possible master narratives within this knowledge, and their understandings of personal civic agency provided a framework for analyzing the data. Accordingly, I "searched and sifted" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 34) for instances that illuminated participants' definitions and descriptions of civil rights leaders, the source of these definitions and descriptions, and how their understandings seemed to inform their self-perceptions of civic agency. Initially, all references to the Movement, civil rights, and civil rights leaders were included in my analysis.

As I reviewed the data, I searched for core consistencies and meanings by asking, "How does this expression or observation correspond to or diverge from previous expressions and observations?" and "What kinds of experiences emerge across all data sources?" Tables identifying expressions, observations, and experiences were created for each focus group utilizing focus group transcripts, group assignments, and ethnographic field notes where more than one focus group participant was present. Tables were created for individual participants utilizing individual interview transcripts, journal entries, individual assignments, and ethnographic field notes that reported on that participant. The cross-case summary was developed by identifying convergence across the

tables created for each case (Yin, 2013). Descriptions of Movement leadership and how participants perceived the relationship of these figures to their contemporary civic agency motivated a return to the literature and engagement with the concept of messianic master narratives. With this framing, I presented excerpts of the data with my intended interpretations to participants for further verification. The exchanges presented in the findings were carefully selected to exemplify verified themes as well as my knowledge and observations of the participants over the 3 years of the study.

FINDINGS

In addition to a contextual note describing how focus group participants defined civil rights and civil rights leaders, three themes are presented in what follows: righteous blood, holy and acceptable, and the chosen ones.

Defining "Civil Rights" and "Civil Rights Leaders"

At the close of several focus group interviews, participants collaboratively developed and revised a working definition of "civil rights" that they recorded in their individual journals. The last definition composed by the first focus group read:

> Civil rights are the benefits of freedom, no oppression, and benefits that people get from being a citizen. That no one can take away what you came into the world with. (Field notes)

Additional features of participants' understanding of civil rights were shared during group conversations. These features included Xavier's contribution that civil rights "is like civilian rights," LaDarius's contention that civil rights are "what the police read to you when you get arrested," and Alayna's belief that civil rights include "not being excluded or segregated against." The idea that you come "into the world" with civil rights emerged across interviews and journal entries. I connected this feature of their definition to theories of natural rights, which refer to the rights that humans possess by virtue of being human (Uzgalis, 2008).

I opened one focus group session with the prompt, "Talk to me about civil rights leaders." In response, participants detailed the identities and contributions that they connected to civil rights leadership:

Shontae: People who was against oppression.
Crystal: Someone fighting for equality so that we can do the same things without discrimination.

LaDarius: Um, I don't know.
Jasen: So people fighting for . . .
Stefanie: Our freedom.
Alayna: The entitlement to just do you, live your life.

I noted participants described civil rights leaders through reference to abstract principles including "freedom," "equality," and "oppression" rather than through reference to more concrete historical events or processes, such as participating in a boycott, coordinating a demonstration, or conducting a voter registration drive. This tendency toward the abstract corresponds to Alridge's (2002, 2006) and Levinson's (2010) respective contentions that representatives of the Movement in civic curriculum are often portrayed in extraordinary ways that cause students to feel that they are too "ordinary" for civil rights leadership (Alridge, 2006, p. 681).

With a sense of how the group understood the concept of civil rights, I asked them to name 10 civil rights leaders. The request resulted in the following list, contributed in this order: Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, Maya Angelou, Thurgood Marshall, Nelson Mandela, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth. Continued conversations offered further insight into their understanding of civil rights leaders. For example, Jasen would describe civil rights leaders as "brave" individuals who "basically told White people what's up." Reemphasizing themes related to natural rights, Stefanie shared that civil rights leaders are "Black people who fought for, um, our freedom to do what we were born to do." Drawing on the similarities across these civil rights leaders as well as reflections from other interviews and journal entries, participants seemed to understand *civil rights leaders* as heroic African or African-descended individuals who fought against various forms of racism and racial subjugation. This understanding corresponds to Alridge's (2006) description of messianic master narratives and Moses's (2010) observation that symbolic messiahs are often Black, as racism contradicts "the moral stance of the United States," and a Black messiah overcoming racial oppression resolves this "moralistic strain" (p. 10) by demonstrating the inherent goodness, democratic potential, and legitimacy of the U.S. democracy. It also invokes Alridge's (2006) concern that messianic master narratives produce images of unreal leaders and excludes activists from other racial and ethnic origins who have struggled against racial, gendered, sexual, socioeconomic, religious, and other forms of civic disenfranchisement.

Righteous Blood

The theme *righteous blood* describes the ways in which participants associated civil rights leadership with violence and death. To elaborate, I detail how participants perceived civil rights leaders as fighters that risked and often gave

their lives for "the benefits of freedom" and invoked messianic symbolisms. These perceptions inhibited participants' civic agency by correlating civic leadership and civic action with the expectation of assassination (Woodson, 2015a).

The concept of personal sacrifice on behalf of a greater good was present in Alayna's journal reflection about civil rights leaders, where she discussed the 1963 assassination of activist Medgar Evers:

> Civil rights leaders is people who laid down the[ir] lives for our people. We have the rights we do today because of them.

Other participants shared Alayna's belief that civil rights leaders "laid down the[ir] lives for our people." LaDarius was adamant that young men in his generation "die for nothing," while men like "Malcolm X died like a hero, you know, like with a legacy of people knowing his name forever." In a later discussion on the Ku Klux Klan, Shontae shared:

> The ways that they killed us definitely like, a warning to stay in your place, like that they would take a leader in our community and try to show like, the rest of y'all better sit down somewhere. Like, to burn somebody alive is not normal, it makes you want to just be like, okay, is it even worth it to whatever, like share a water fountain or a bus?

Shontae, Alayna, and LaDarius associated civil rights leaders and civil rights leadership with heroic, violent, and even gruesome death, an association that draws easy thematic parallels to narratives of crucifixion and martyrdom in Judeo–Christian traditions. The recognition that civil rights leaders were sometimes singled out for violent attacks as a lesson to other members of the Black community seemed to discourage Shontae from aspiring to civil rights leadership. She questioned if serving as a civil rights leader was "worth it" as she weighed what she perceived to be the minimal victories of the Civil Rights Movement, specifically the integration of water fountains and public transportation, against the prospect of being burned alive. Xavier expressed a similar hesitation during a conversation on lynching. He commented, "I heard they cut their balls off, man. Like—if you wanted to do the voter registration they would find you and cut your balls off. Fuck that. I don't have to vote!"

Alayna's, LaDarius's, Shontae's, and Xavier's associations of violence with civil rights leadership was also supported through group activities. For example, when asked to produce skits about the Movement in small groups, each group composed and performed a skit that ended with the violent death of the protagonist(s). The main characters of these skits included James Earl Chaney, Medgar Evers, Andrew Goodman, Martin Luther King Jr., Harry and Harriette Moore, Michael Henry Schwerner, and Malcolm X (field notes).

When asked where they learned about these individuals, they mentioned their experiences in school but also noted church programs, independent reading, and documentaries. Touching again on themes of violence, Monica noted, "Those documentaries always end with a funeral." Participants' recognition of White civil rights leaders contrasts their initial presumption that civil rights leaders were all African or African descended, a contrast taken up in the "Discussion" section.

In the above journal entry on Evers's assassination, Alayna also expressed her perspective that the current rights extended to Black people are a direct result of the sacrifices of civil rights leaders. This sense of indebtedness to civil rights leaders has emerged in other research on Black youth (Carter, 2008; Levinson, 2012) as well as with other participants in this study. Jasen believed that members of his racial group and generation owed civil rights leaders continued struggle on the issues that they valued. An individual interview with Jasen took place after a tour of a local art museum, and he was frustrated by the lack of Afrocentric art. He shared:

> I think our generation is a disappointment to civil rights leaders, because, you know we don't really take up the fight anymore. . . . I'm not gonna say they died for nothing, but basically just how many more people need to march to get a fucking picture on a wall you know what I'm saying? I mean, shit like this like we don't even have our own arts is what we supposed to be protesting, like, saying something about why we not in there . . .. They died so we ain't have to put up with this shit.

Jasen expressed his opinion that there is a need for continued civil rights struggle, as well as his understanding that the civil rights leaders of previous generations had "died." While participants expressed differing opinions on the influence and successes of the Movement, the idea that civil rights leaders died on behalf of contemporary Black youth, and that contemporary Black youth subsequently owe these individuals continued struggle, emerged consistently across the data and again invoked themes of Judeo–Christian messianism.

Jasen's sense of obligation did not extend to all individuals who worked on behalf of Black communities. A firm demarcation emerged between the activists that participants considered civil rights leaders and contemporary activists who worked in their community. Several participants attended an anti-violence rally at a local high school. Speakers included relatives and friends of recent homicide victims, the president of the local Crime Stoppers chapter, a state representative, the county prosecutor, a police sergeant, and a local pastor.

Researcher: Were any civil rights leaders there?
Xavier: Nah, just some community people.

Jasen: They is trying to make a difference though, but not like in any kind of for real way. Like, they real local in they thinking.

Crystal: Yeah, like, when I think about Dr. King marching from wherever, you know, none of these people is going to get somebody to march with them just across the bridge . . . .

Stefanie: . . . Civil rights leaders is just more influential, like more people know them because of the work that they do. They ain't about theyself or one or two, or they neighborhood, you know what I'm saying?

Jasen: . . . They ain't in no kind of danger out here . . .. I mean, I ain't trying to be in danger either, so I understand.

The above exchange highlights how Crystal, Jasen, Stefanie, and Xavier associated civil rights leadership with widespread influence and extreme risk. Thus, the engagement in local forms or indirect forms of activism was insufficient for the designation of civil rights leader. Jasen's concluding thought reiterates how many participants sought to avoid the label of civil rights leader and the perils that they perceived to accompany certain forms of civic action.

Holy and Acceptable

The theme *holy and acceptable* describes Crystal's, Monica's, and Shontae's expectations that female civil rights leaders would adopt styles of self-presentation that correspond to Judeo–Christian values, such as refraining from obscenity and dressing modestly. This theme is elaborated through their observations on human rights advocate and musician Nina Simone. I emphasize how Crystal, Monica, and Shontae applied their understandings of a civil rights leader to Simone's art and activism, the role of Judeo–Christian morality in these understandings, as well as how these understandings seemed to constrain their sense of personal civic agency.

Crystal, Monica, and Shontae routinely arrived at focus group sessions about an hour early and left up to an hour after sessions formally concluded. During this time, they would help me to set up the room, read passages from my books, or browse photographs on my laptop. We also took advantage of the intimacy of a smaller, all-female group to explore focus group themes in greater depth. One afternoon, Monica initiated a discussion of Simone's "Mississippi Goddamn," a song that I had introduced to the larger group following a conversation of the Emmett Till lynching. She referenced Simone's repeated use of "goddamn" throughout the song:

Monica: I'm just like uncomfortable with her using GD like that. It's like disrespectful or whatever.

Shontae: GD is like a word that you should never say, I mean, I think you can like never go to heaven after you say it or something. I'm like whoa she got away with that especially back then in the old days.

Monica and Shontae identified as Christian and were active in their respective church communities. Crystal identified as agnostic and was often very critical of Monica's and Shontae's religious worldviews. Her construction of civil rights leader still seemed to overlap with Monica and Shontae regarding the role of religion:

Crystal: You can't say "goddamn" with one breath and then expect people to come after you in prayer on the next. And I do think like civil rights leaders would always pray, to like comfort people or give people hope.

Crystal considered prayer a responsibility of a civil rights leader and did not believe that a leader should use language that undermined their credibility in this area.

In addition to "Mississippi Goddamn," Simone had recorded multiple songs describing and protesting racial violence, racial stereotypes, and Jim Crow legislation throughout the 1960s and 1970s. As examples, we listened to "Four Women" and "Why? (The King of Love is Dead)." After reflecting on the lyrics of these songs, the young women started to debate if a singer could also be a civil rights leader:

Researcher: Could Nina Simone be both? A civil rights leader and a singer?
Monica: Um, I don't really know.
Crystal: No . . . . Cause like, sometimes singers have to dance, you know, women singers have to be like very sexy. And that means like, you know, dancing or looking a certain way. And that's not what civil rights leaders do, cause people won't respect her.

I was struck by Crystal's contention that civil rights leaders should not try to be sexy. Probing further, I found that the young women seemed to prohibit female civil rights leaders from engaging in various expressions of sexuality:

Researcher: Oh. So, civil rights leaders can't be sexy?
Monica: No, not like, she can be basically sexy like she can be good looking or pretty or whatever. But not like, putting herself out there kind of, trying to be sexy.
Crystal: You can't be up in front of people like that . . . White people really hate like, hip hop and hip hop dancing . . . . You gotta be one kind of way with them, just like professionally.
Monica: You have to like be like that as a civil rights leader. As a singer, you can like do whatever you want. Twerk, shake, whatever . . . .

Other perceived responsibilities of civil rights leaders seemed grounded in gendered, Judeo–Christian values. At the close of our first discussion of Simone, I asked Crystal, Monica, and Shontae to journal about Simone's eligibility for civil rights leadership. During our next pre-session conversation, Monica shared her entry. It read in part:

> As a woman civil rights leader . . . you represent God and you represent the entire Black community. In my personal mind, I don't think Nina Simone represented our values well.

I asked Monica to expound on what it meant to "represent God" and the values of "the entire Black community":

Monica:	Like, just like how she was dressing, some of the pictures she was taking . . . .
Shontae:	There was a picture where she was just naked. Titties out, private parts, holding a scarf like just "This is me," you know what I'm saying?
Crystal:	There was one where she was like just in a knitted outfit with big ass holes in it, too. I mean, goodies out on stage . . . .
Researcher:	I've seen lots of goodies on stage. The goodies of very prominent women who have advocated for gender equality . . . .
Crystal:	. . . But like, Coretta [Scott King's] goodies? You know like this is not Beyonce we talking about, this is like somebody supposed to be a civil rights leader.
Monica:	You can't be before the people, like for a minute like White people not a part of this, you can't be up in front of people like we want to be free when they see you ain't gonna act right when you get free.

Crystal, Monica, and Shontae seemed to believe that Simone was not the appropriate representative token of the race. Their criticism of Simone drew heavily on Judeo–Christian expectations of modesty and appropriateness. Monica believed that civil rights leaders represented God, and all three young women agreed that public displays of nudity did not represent God or the Black community well. Unfortunately, these criteria excluded all three participants from civil rights leadership. Crystal stated that she could not serve as a civil rights leader as agnostic because "I'm not about to be up in front of nobody's church." All three young women loved to dance, occasionally cursed, and admitted to texting one or more nude selfies to an intimate partner. Reflecting on the potential consequences of sending the picture, Shontae shared, "[T]he movement would be over if that ever got it, cause I was getting it!"

The Chosen Ones

The theme *the chosen ones* details how Qahir believed civil rights leaders to be morally exceptional, courageous, and perfect individuals. In this section, I explore Qahir's reflections on the intersections of his race, gender, and professional choices, as well as how he perceived these characteristics to exclude him from the rank of potential civil rights leader.

Qahir was a gifted poet who appreciated his mother's efforts to expose him to "cultural shit" like community theater, Black history museums, and tours of historically Black colleges and universities. Out of respect for these efforts, he insisted that he'd attend college one day, though he was unsure of what his major might be. Qahir's mother was the only subject that could bring him to tears. This was notable, as over the 3-year data collection period, Qahir lost three friends and two acquaintances to gun violence, met an older half-brother from a previous relationship of his incarcerated father, and spent a total of 14 non-consecutive nights in jail. Growing up in an impoverished racially segregated community with disproportionate violent crime and poverty made it difficult for Qahir to express his interests and emotions in ways that dominant society might readily recognize. Despite his penchant for poetry, for example, he supplemented his mother's limited income by selling marijuana and bootleg movies for a living.

His small business was beginning to gain customers and credibility beyond the limits of his hometown. He shared that "[A]s far out as [a city about 40 minutes away], you know, it's like I'm doing something. Like they know me out there." "Doing something" came with certain risks, however, and Qahir's nights in jail stemmed from several arrests that occurred since he dropped out of high school at age 17. He admitted that "prolly more than half" of the arrests were his fault, the rest were due to racial profiling and "police stereotypes, even when you ain't doing nothing." Likely due to his perception that his past arrests constrained his civic agency, Qahir sometimes seemed dismissive of my queries about civic activity and potential civil rights leadership. He insisted that these were not possibilities for him given his identity, reputation, and criminal record:

Qahir: You come here in the mornings, you know, the Qahir you see is not the same dude the police see. So you be like, oh tell me more about that shit, and they be like, they basically gonna be like shoot that motherfucker. Don't twist it.

Researcher: Tell me—

Qahir: Ain't nothing to tell. I mean, I respect on everything what you trying to do. But that shit is for people like you to do.

Researcher: Who are people like me?

Qahir: You know, like talk real proper, good education, um, like I think females, you know, have it a little easier with the police, you

know what I'm saying? Like for me, they you know automatically, you know immediately they guess that I'mma be violent or resisting or whatever, and that's really not me in every situation.

Qahir shared that civic activity was "for people like [me] to do," or, people who were able to "talk proper" and who had access to a "good education." Qahir did not position himself within this group of people, and thus did not position himself as a potential civil rights leader.

Qahir also feared that his civic action might be met with police violence. His distrust of the police, and his understanding that the police distrusted him, led him to conclude that an encounter with police might end with him being arrested or killed. Quite understandably, this was an outcome he hoped to avoid. Though Qahir recognized that police surveillance and violence were somewhat inevitable as a Black male who worked outside of the formal economy, he felt that civil rights leaders like King incurred greater, albeit somewhat different, risks:

Qahir: Basically, I just think [being a civil rights leader] would be lonely. You know, I don't want to sound like a bitch or anything, but that's the word that came up in my mind, you know? Doing all that kind of work, it's like, you don't never really get to do that just you know with your boys. Like, you never hear about Frederick [Douglass] and his boys, or Martin Luther King and his boys. Just they be alone, basically. You never hear like oh and he went out that one time, got wasted or whatever or came home and wrote a speech high as fuck. Like what did these niggas do? Just they whole life struggling?

Researcher: You suggest sometimes that your whole life is a struggle. What's the difference between your struggle and the struggles of Douglass or King? How are your struggles different?

Qahir: Like, you know, yeah like I'm struggling. You know every day is a struggle. But I'm not by myself. I wanna go out, I go out. I might get shot at, sometimes, I mean that happens, but ain't no snipers waiting outside from my hotel. I just want a kind of normal life, even if you know it's like racist or whatever, because at least you can have friends. Call your boy like ay what you bout to do? Yo I'm just bout to go march on the capitol real quick, I be back though. No.

Invoking the Judeo–Christian messianic symbol of perfection and liberal individualist themes of isolation and individual sacrifice, Qahir described how the struggles associated with civil rights leadership are endured by individuals who do not get "high" or "wasted," and whose entire lives are consumed by their work. Alridge (2006) noted that messiah figures, such as King, are "often portrayed in isolation from other individuals" (p. 662). In contrast, Qahir desired "a kind of normal life," even if that life was within a society that

was still "racist." Though Qahir referenced abolitionist and author Frederick Douglass in this exchange, the dominance of King's life, death, and model of civil rights leadership is evident in his analysis. The singularity of King is problematic because Qahir infers that all civil rights leaders were vulnerable to the same level of exposure and peril. From his understanding, the constant threat of "snipers waiting outside" resulted in King being "lonely" and having no friends.

It is important to highlight Qahir's belief that his work as a drug dealer was a safer and more viable civic option than civil rights leader. Civil rights leaders did not smoke or drink, which were valued recreational activities in Qahir's social life. Civil rights leaders also were exemplars of personal sacrifice, social alienation, and good behavior. Qahir's understanding of Obama as a civil rights leader and the scrutiny afforded Obama during his campaign and election further supported this theme:

> Qahir: I remember when Obama was trying to get president and they was all looking for like something on this dude, like to say how he had fucked something up. They couldn't find nothing. And you know, that's how he, that's part of how he ended up where he at now. For sure. But me? Shit, they gon find something. And like, what kind of shit is that that the only way people will listen to your ass is if you never did anything? At all?

I challenged Qahir's belief that a criminal record invalidated one from potential civil rights leadership, citing the incarceration of Malcolm X and Huey Newton and the arrest of Anthony Kapel "Van" Jones[1] as potential counternarratives. Qahir had previously identified X, Newton, and Jones as civic figures of interest. He insisted that there was something "different" and "special" about these historical figures that he did not possess:

> Researcher: How is your rap sheet any different than Malcolm's, or Newton, or Van Jones? What makes your arrests different?
>
> Qahir: I don't know if I can make you understand man, how this is like just a whole different scenario than what you thinking. Like, yeah I mean I might get a lawyer or whatever, get some stuff wiped off [my record] or like you know, get probation. I'm just not really, you know, I'm not that dude . . . . These is like special dudes, man. These is like our leaders . . . I'm not perfect, I can't be perfect, my life you know like doesn't really leave that kind of like room for me to do something besides what I do.

Qahir seemed to believe that civil rights leaders were "special" and "perfect." In contrast to King, Douglass, Newton, X or Jones, Qahir felt that his life—which encompassed his devotion to his mother, the realities of police and gang violence, his status as a high school dropout, and the need to earn a

living without formally recognized credentials—did not allow him the space to possess these attributes. By virtue of these conditions and decisions, Qahir perceived the status of civil rights leader to be unattainable to him.

DISCUSSION

Civil rights leadership is just one form of civic agency. Still, the continued positioning of civil rights leaders as role models in schools and communities (Epstein, 1998; Levinson, 2012) suggests that these figures will remain salient points of reference as contemporary Black youth determine their own civic identities. If the Movement and its leadership are to serve as exemplars of social progress and civic agency, educators need a deep understanding of the Movement's meaning for students and how Movement narratives support students as they position themselves within ongoing civic struggles. Findings highlight some of the limitations of messianic master narratives in social studies classrooms and society (Alridge, 2002, 2006). They are broadly inaccurate and seemed to prevent participants from recognizing their potential for civic agency. My discussion reviews four additional limitations of messianic master narratives and states how these limitations function to legitimate White power and position.

First, messianic master narratives associated civil rights leadership with widespread influence and immense risk. The righteous blood theme illustrated how focus group participants invoked messianic master narratives when describing civil rights leaders as brave, renowned freedom fighters who risked incarceration, torture, and death to advance Black civic access. Qahir similarly believed that civil rights leaders lived under constant threat of sniper fire—a threat of violence greater than for those who sell drugs. Consequently, local activists and those who did not directly encounter the risk of assassination were not civil rights leaders. When participants compared the perceived responsibility and sacrifice of civil rights leadership to what they understood as the modest social progress of the Movement, they concluded that the forms of civic agency exhibited by civil rights leaders was not "worth it."

Second, messianic master narratives uncritically invoke Judeo–Christian values that have been used to dehumanize and oppress Black people (Jones, 1997). The theme "holy and acceptable" described Monica's, Shontae's, and Crystal's uncertainties that Simone's activism met the religious criteria for civil rights leadership. They invoked Judeo–Christian expectations of gendered and sexual identity to exclude Simone, who cursed, smoked cigarettes, and took nude photographs, and was thus unsuitable to lead prayer, comfort and influence people, or represent the Black community in civic spaces. Based on their self-reported behaviors, the criteria to be holy and acceptable excluded Crystal, Monica, and Shontae as potential civil rights leaders as well.

Third, messianic master narratives undermined participants' understandings of historical agency and historical collective action. The chosen ones theme described how Qahir could not envision himself as a civil rights leader because they were "perfect" "special dudes." Qahir extended Crystal's, Monica's, and Shontae's religious expectations of civil rights leaders to include broader politics of respectability, wherein only Black people who "demonstrate their adherence to and upholding of the dominant norms of society" (Cohen, 2004, p. 31) can advocate for full citizenship. Qahir believed that civil rights leaders needed a good education, a mastery of dominant English, no arrest record, and no identifiable flaws to be effective. In his mind, these individuals also needed to be capable of engaging in struggle in complete isolation, with little or no encouragement or assistance from other activists or civic organizations. This was not a lifestyle that Qahir desired for himself.

The limitations of messianic master narratives are clear, and an additional pedagogical risk is worth noting. History instruction is more than the presentation of isolated facts (Bain, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010; Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012; Woodson, 2015b). Students are required to make "choices and interpretations" to construct meaningful and complex narratives about the world (Bain, 2006, p. 2091). Salinas et al. (2012) argued that students must practice critical historical thinking or practice deep engagement with silenced and diverse historical perspectives to make informed decisions about the historical evidence that they encounter. My participants seemed to have limited support in their critical historical thinking about messianic master narratives. As a result, their stories demonstrated a tendency to "force fit" their historical knowledge into "the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2413) about the Movement that they had received. For example, the focus group's formal definition of civil rights leaders included only Black people. Their references to White activists, such as Goodman and Schwerner, suggested that they possessed sufficient content knowledge to recognize that civil rights leaders come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, the contention that all civil rights leaders "laid down their lives" was in contradiction to the list of civil rights leaders that my participants created, wherein only three individuals were actually assassinated.

Based on these findings, I argue that messianic master narratives constructed an image of the civil rights leader that overrode many empirical details for my participants. This image reproduced itself, as participants referenced history to examine their own civic agency and legitimated White power and position by siphoning historical and contemporary racial struggle from the hands of "ordinary" people. For at least the youth in my study, only exceptional Black individuals can disrupt White power and position, and even when they do so, it is often at the cost of their life. Effective civic action then is the task of "brave," "special," "perfect" Black people, people my participants do not believe themselves to be. This is problematic, as it prevented my participants from assessing and engaging in contemporary social movements. Hall (2005)

implied that critical historical thinking about the Movement and the narratives used to represent it can support students as "public storytellers," whose stories "could combine with antiracist principles to create a climate in which fresh solutions to social problems can emerge" (p. 1262). For the participants in my study, and for urban Black youth nationally and internationally, these social problems include education and social opportunity gaps (Milner, 2012); police and extralegal violence against Black youth; gentrification and racialized housing practices; and the privatization of social welfare systems, schools, higher education, and health care. Leaving master narratives unchallenged may mean that those uniquely vulnerable to structural racism might feel ill equipped to combat it (Woodson, 2015a).

CONCLUSION

Master narratives are not solely produced in schools, as participants' references to church, independent reading, and media demonstrated. Still, they are advanced through social studies curricula, making social studies classrooms an important site through which such narratives might be disrupted (Woodson, 2015a). Alridge (2006) recommended reducing teachers' reliance on textbooks, making more connections between the past and present, and democratizing existing narratives to be inclusive of "everyday" people to advance more "critical, relevant, and more accurate history" in social studies classrooms (p. 681). The findings of this study suggest additional pedagogical opportunities to complicate the messianic master narratives youth might encounter.

First, educators can draw attention to the types of individuals and actions included and excluded by the term *civil rights leader*. This process might begin by asking students to share their definitions of civil rights leader. Then, using photos of well- and less-known historical activists, students can discuss who meets their criteria and why. Guiding questions for this activity are modeled after Howard's (2003) deconstruction of conceptualizations of citizenship:

What are the attributes of a 'civil rights leader'?
Who defines the criteria?
Whose interests are best served by the construction of 'civil rights leaders'?

These questions disrupt unspoken assumptions about who can, does, and could serve as a civil rights leader as well as offer opportunities to interrogate the role of White position in the construction of historical narratives. Educators might also turn to the autobiographies and personal writings of individuals designated as civil rights leaders to answer the question:

How Have Civil Rights Leaders Defined Themselves?

This question allows educators to give voice to the personal struggles, interpersonal relationships, and political connections of recognized figures toward understanding why some chose what we understand as civil rights leadership as their means of affecting civic change.

Second, educators must be attentive to perspectives silenced by messianic master narratives of civil rights leadership. While it is imperative that Black youth be informed of the potential consequences of civic leadership and the sacrifices of past civil rights leaders (Brown & Brown, 2010), it is also important they learn about the myriad of ways that civil rights struggle did and might take place. Narratives of civil rights leaders who chose armed self-defense (Hall, 2005) or forms of indirect action (Van Delinder, 1999) in response to racial attacks and intimidation are almost non-existent in classrooms and society. Likewise, educators can include the worldviews and practices of Black atheists, Rastafarians, Muslims, members of the Nation of Islam, and other Black spiritual traditions toward disrupting the uncritical reliance on Judeo–Christian theology, values, and social expectations. Since a civil rights leader is not an elected position or a formal appointment, educators can disrupt messianic master narratives by including activists from various racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and ideological backgrounds.

Qahir's story provides an example of why such challenges need to be posed. Undoubtedly, some readers saw Qahir as a willfully disengaged, criminal Black male who takes no interest in being a civic agent. I saw a young Black man who loves his mother; who possesses a wealth of historical and contemporary political knowledge; and who is capable of identifying problems in his community but feels the constraints to his racial, socioeconomic, and gender identity are insurmountable. Though civil rights leadership is not the only or best form of civic action, educators can recognize it as a meaningful symbol of racial struggle and source of continued inspiration for Black and other communities. Given the importance of this category, it is imperative to rewrite narratives of civil rights leadership that all students—including Qahir—might see themselves within. A final reflective question might be:

> What representations of history might support Qahir in envisioning himself as a potential civil rights leader?

If educators hope to support Black youths' civic agency and to provide radical community leadership as a possible option for their civic aspiration and activity, they must be presented with accurate histories that make diverse forms of leadership a real possibility.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Anthony Brown, Dorinda Carter Andrews, Amanda Godley, and H. Richard Milner for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

NOTE

[1]Qahir identified Huey Newton and Van Jones as civic figures of interest in a separate interview. Huey Newton (1942–1989) was a co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Van Jones (b. 1968) is an attorney, environmental and civil rights activist, and former White House Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

REFERENCES

Alridge, D. (2002). Teaching Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement in high school history courses: Rethinking content and pedagogy. In J. B. Armstrong, S. H. Edwards, H. B. Roberson, & R. Y. Williams (Eds.), *Teaching the American civil rights movement: Freedom's bittersweet song* (pp. 3–17). New York, NY: Routledge.

Alridge, D. (2006). The limits of master narratives in history textbooks: An analysis of representations of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Teachers College Record*, *108*, 662–686. doi:10.1111/tcre.2006.108.issue-4

Arblaster, A. (1984). *The rise and decline of Western liberalism*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Bain, R. (2006). Rounding up unusual suspects: Facing the authority hidden in the history classroom. *The Teachers College Record*, *108*, 2080–2114. doi:10.1111/tcre.2006.108.issue-10

Banks, J. A. (1995). Multicultural education and curriculum transformation. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *64*, 390–400. doi:10.2307/2967262

Banks, J. A. (2001). Citizenship education and diversity: Implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *52*(1), 5–16. doi:10.1177/0022487101052001002

Bell, D. (1992). Racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review*, *24*, 363–380.

Bernal, D. D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical race-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 105–126. doi:10.1177/107780040200800107

Brown, A., & Brown, K. (2010). Strange fruit indeed: Interrogating contemporary textbook representations of racial violence toward African Americans. *Teachers College Record*, *112*(1), 31–67.

Carlson, D. (2003). Troubling heroes: Of Rosa Parks, multicultural education, and critical pedagogy. *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*, *3*(1), 44–61. doi:10.1177/1532708602239267

Carlson, D. (2004). Narrating the multicultural nation. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell Pruitt, & A. Burns (Eds.), *Off White: Readings on power, privilege, and resistance* (2nd ed., pp. 302–314). New York, NY: Routledge.

Carter, D. (2008). Achievement as resistance: The development of a critical race achievement ideology among Black achievers. *Harvard Educational Review*, *78*, 466–497. doi:10.17763/haer.78.3.83138829847hw844

Cohen, C. J. (2004). Deviance as resistance: A new research agenda for the study of black politics. *Du Bois Review*, *1*(1), 27–45. doi:10.1017/S1742058X04040044

Cone, J. H. (2010). *A Black theology of liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Curry, T. J. (2007). Who K(new): The nation-ist contour of racial identity in the thought of Martin R. Delany and John E. Bruce. *The Journal of Pan-African Studies*, *1*(10), 41–61.

Delgado, R. (1987). The ethereal scholar: Does critical legal studies have what minorities want? The minority critiques of the critical legal studies movement. *Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review*, *22*, 301–322.

Delgado, R. (1989). Storytelling for oppositionists and others: A plea for narrative. *Michigan Law Review*, *87*, 2411–2441. doi:10.2307/1289308

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Dunbar, C. (2008). Critical race theory and indigenous methodologies. In Y. Lincoln & N. Denzin (Eds.), *Handbook on critical race theory and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 85–99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Duncan, G. A. (2002). Beyond love: A critical race ethnography of the schooling of adolescent Black males. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *35*, 131–143. doi:10.1080/713845286

Epstein, T. (1998). Deconstructing differences in African American and European-American adolescents' perspectives on U.S. history. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *28*, 397–423. doi:10.1111/0362-6784.00100

Epstein, T. (2000). Adolescents' perspectives on racial diversity in U.S. history: Case studies from an urban classroom. *American Educational Research Journal*, *37*(1), 185–214. doi:10.3102/00028312037001185

Frost, J. (2012). Using "master narratives" to teach history: The case of the Civil Rights Movement. *The History Teacher*, *45*, 437–446.

Gaines, K. (2007). The civil rights movement in world perspective. *OAH Magazine of History*, *21*(1), 57–64. doi:10.1093/maghis/21.1.57

Gay, G. (2003). Deracialization in social studies teacher education textbooks. In G. Ladson-Billings (Ed.), *Critical race theory perspectives on social studies* (pp. 123–148). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Guinier, L. (1991). The triumph of tokenism: The voting rights act and the theory of black electoral success. *Michigan Law Review*, *89*, 1077–1154. doi:10.2307/1289550

Hall, J. D. (2005). The long civil rights movement and the political uses of the past. *The Journal of American History*, *91*, 1233–1263. doi:10.2307/3660172

Howard, T. (2003). The dis(g)race of the social studies. In G. Ladson-Billings (Ed.), *Critical race theory perspectives on the social studies: The profession, policies, and curriculum* (pp. 27–43). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Howard, T. (2004). "Does race really matter?" Secondary students' constructions of racial dialogue in the social studies. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *32*, 484–502. doi:10.1080/00933104.2004.10473266

Howard, T. (2008). Who really cares? The disenfranchisement of African American males in preK–12 schools: A critical race theory perspective. *Teachers College Record*, *110*, 954–985. doi:10.1080/00933104.2004.10473266

Huggins, N. (1987). Martin Luther King, Jr.: Charisma and leadership. *The Journal of American History*, *74*, 477–481. doi:10.2307/1900035

Ikemoto, L. C. (1993). Traces of the master narratives in the story of African American/Korean American conflict: How we constructed Los Angeles. *Southern California Law Review*, *66*, 1581–1598.

Jones, W. R. (1997). *Is God a White racist? A preamble to Black theology*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Journell, W. (2008). When oppression and liberation are the only choices: The representation of African Americans with social studies standards. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, *32*(1), 40–50.

King, J. E. (Ed.). (2005). Preface. In J. E. King (Ed.), *Black education: A transformative research and action agenda for the new century* (pp. xxi–xxx). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

King, J. E., & Swartz, E. E. (2014). *Re-membering history in student and teacher learning: An Afrocentric culturally informed praxis*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Konforti, L. (2009). Are civil society actors a source for counter-hegemonic challenge? In *An exercise in world making* (pp. 192–204). The Hague, The Netherlands: The Institute of Social Studies.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7–24. doi:10.1080/095183998236863

Ladson-Billings, G. (Ed.). (2003). Lies my teacher still tells: Developing a critical race perspective toward the social studies. In G. Ladson-Billings (Ed.), *Critical race theory perspectives on the social studies: The profession, policies, and curriculum* (pp. 1–14). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*, 4–68.

Levinson, M. (2010). The civic empowerment gap: Defining the problem and locating solutions. In L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth* (pp. 331–361). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Levinson, M. (2012). *No citizen left behind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Martin, W. E., & Sullivan, P. A. (2002). Introduction. In J. B. Armstrong, S. H. Edwards, H. B. Roberson, & R. Y. Williams (Eds.), *Teaching the American civil rights movement: Freedom's bittersweet song* (pp. xi–xviii). New York, NY: Routledge.

Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, *36*, 388–400. doi:10.3102/0013189X07309471

Milner, H. R. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *59*, 332–346. doi:10.1177/0022487108321884

Milner, H. R. (2012). Beyond a test score: Explaining opportunity gaps in educational practice. *Journal of Black Studies*, *43*, 693–718. doi:10.1177/0021934712442539

Moses, W. J. (2010). *Black messiahs and uncle toms: Social and literary manipulations of a religious myth*. University Park: Penn State Press.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Salinas, C., Blevins, B., & Sullivan, C. C. (2012). Critical historical thinking: When official narratives collide with other narratives. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *14*(1), 18–27. doi:10.1080/15210960.2012.646640

Schwartz, B. (2009). Collective forgetting and the symbolic power of oneness: The strange apotheosis of Rosa Parks. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *72*, 123–142. doi:10.1177/019027250907200204

Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 23–44. doi:10.1177/107780040200800103

Swalwell, K., Pellegrino, A. M., & View, J. L. (2015). Teachers' curricular choices when teaching histories of oppressed people: Capturing the U.S. civil rights movement. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, *39*, 79–94. doi:10.1016/j.jssr.2014.11.003

Tate, W. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, *22*, 195–247. doi:10.3102/0091732X022001195

Tyson, C. A. (2003). A bridge over troubled water: Social studies, civic education, and critical race theory. In G. Ladson-Billings (Ed.), *Critical race theory perspectives on the social studies: The profession, policies, and curriculum* (pp. 15–26). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Tyson, C. A., & Park, S. C. (2008). Civic education, social justice and critical race theory. In J. Arthur, I. Davies, & C. Hahn. (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of education for citizenship and democracy* (pp. 355–366). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Uzgalis, W. (2008). An inconsistency not to be excused: On Locke and racism. In J. K. Ward & T. L. Lott (Eds.), *Philosophers on race: Critical essays* (pp. 81–100). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Van Delinder, J. (1999). Border states and civil rights: Activism prior to 1955. *Social Thought & Research*, *22*, 167–181.

Woodson, A. (2015a). "There ain't no White people here": The master narratives of the civil rights movement in the stories of urban youth. *Urban Education*. doi:10.1177/0042085915602543

Woodson, A. (2015b). "What you supposed to know": Black urban students' perspectives on history textbooks and civil rights leaders. *Journal of Urban Teaching, Learning and Research*, *11*, 57–65.

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ASHLEY N. WOODSON is an Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education, Department of Instruction and Learning, and a Faculty Fellow, Center for Urban Education, at the *University of Pittsburgh*, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. She can be contacted at anw@pitt.edu.