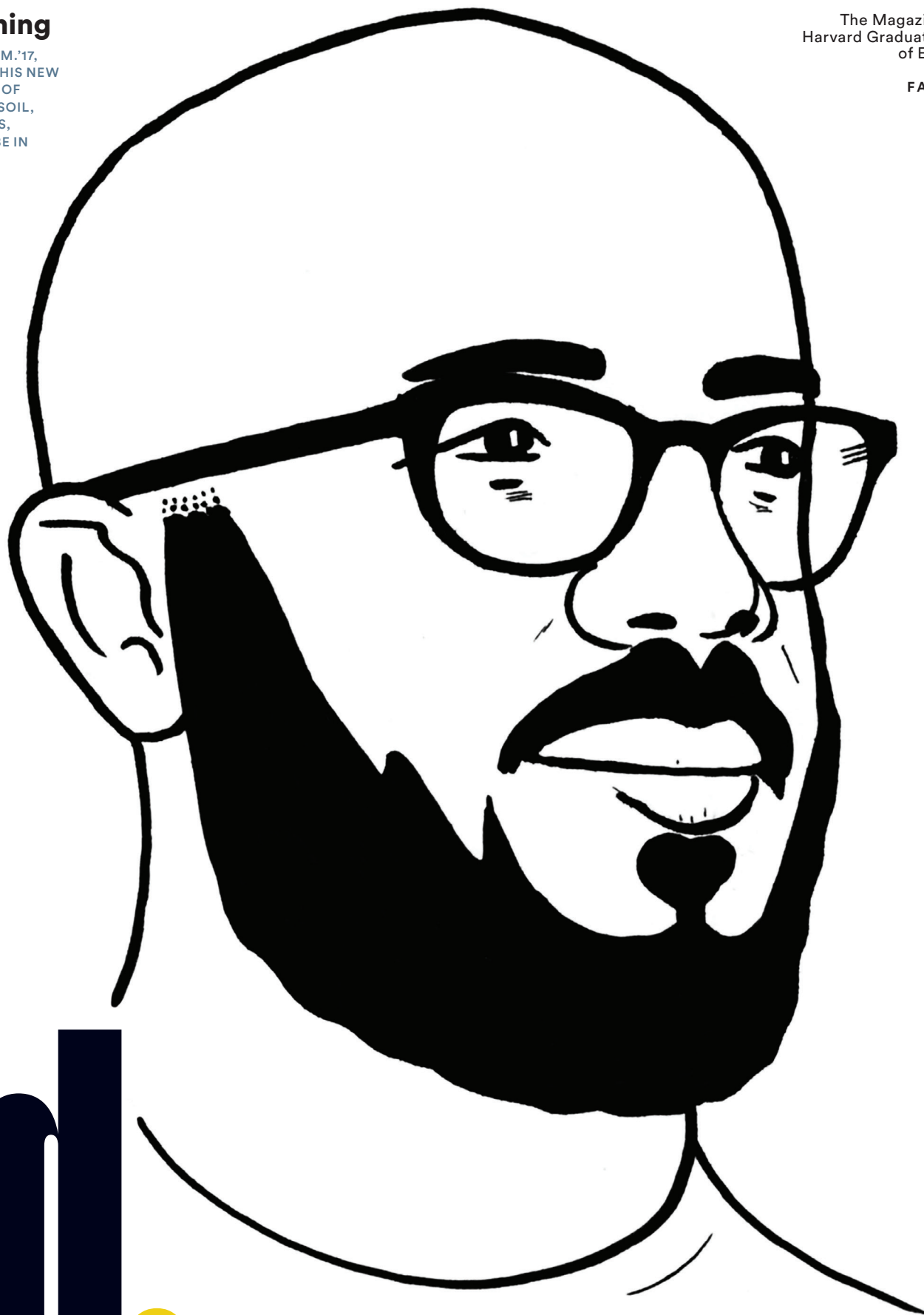


## The Reckoning

AS CLINT SMITH, ED.M.'17,  
PH.D.'20, SHARES IN HIS NEW  
BOOK, THE HISTORY OF  
SLAVERY "IS IN OUR SOIL,  
IT IS IN OUR POLICIES,  
AND IT MUST, TOO, BE IN  
OUR MEMORIES."

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FALL 2021



**Ed.** ●

# Ed.

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ON APPIAN WAY

# Back to the Issue(s) at Hand

It's not the end of the pandemic. Not yet. And we know that. But after devoting much of the last two issues of *Ed.* to COVID-related essays and stories, we thought it was time to tilt our coverage to other education topics — the pieces we had on hold, the profiles and projects we put on a list to one day include.

Of course, there are still a few stories that have a pandemic connection, like a chart from Professor Jal Mehta and [JUSTIN REICH, ED.D.'12](#), on school practices that changed during COVID. And there are fun stories, including one about two alums who had to rethink their theater-focused middle school, and another about a master's student who, during a year of learning virtually from his parents' kitchen table, discovered the simple joy of getting real mail from classmates he had only known online.

But most of this issue of *Ed.* is timely for other reasons, focusing on people and ideas that are not only interesting, but also, in some cases, headline news. There's a story about Assistant Professor Jarvis Givens' new Black Teacher Archives Project, and a feature that explores something being debated in statehouses and school districts across the country: how we teach history in schools, especially the history that isn't pretty, and who decides what can be taught. We also have our cover story: a piece about *Atlantic* staff writer [CLINT SMITH, ED.M.'17, PH.D.'20](#), and *How the Word Is Passed*, his current *New York Times* bestseller that was just longlisted for the National Book Award. Happy reading.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



“This is a world of teachers who cultivated dreams in generations of Black people, while living under persecution. Their stories have so much to teach us.”

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR JARVIS GIVENS, (SEE P. 10)

A school for Black students in Greene County, Georgia, circa 1941

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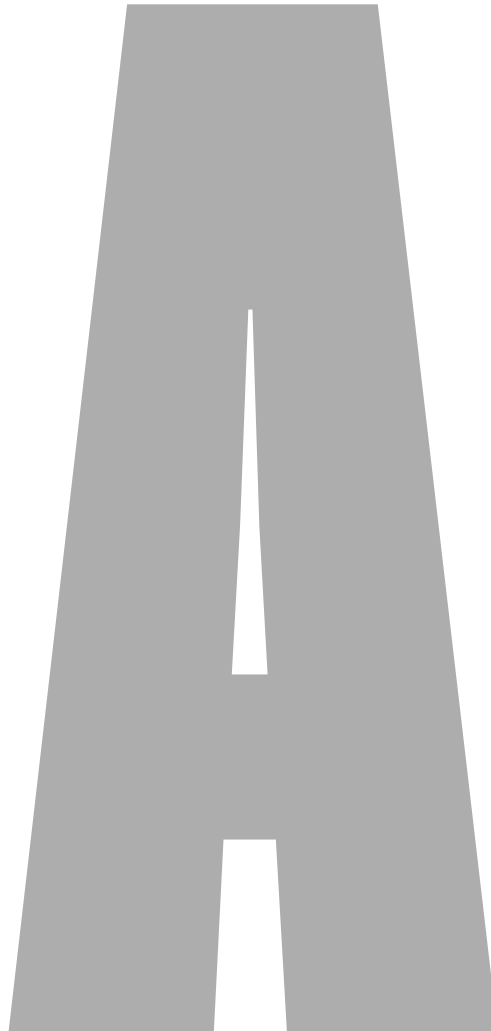
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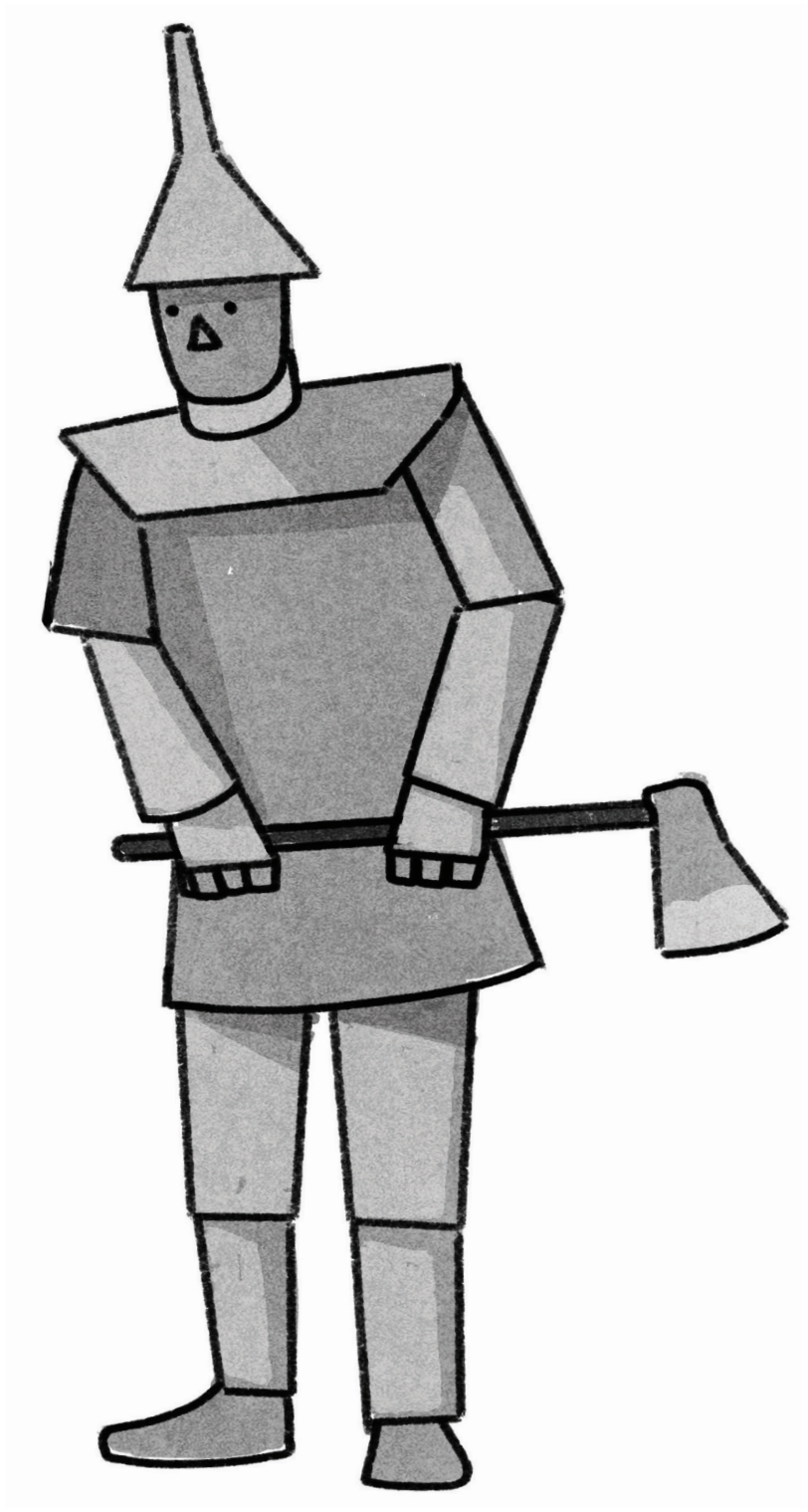
# People



“I had 14 Oz books on my bookshelf as a kid and schlepped them around whenever I moved.”

**TRACY HEATHER STRAIN, ED.M.'95**  
(SEE P.8)





## AT WORK

# The Show Went

Despite COVID, two alums  
knew the play was the thing

Story by Lory Hough

**WHEN THE PANDEMIC** shuttered schools around the country last spring and moved learning online, extracurriculars like band and drama were usually canceled or put on hold. For Atlas Middle School in New Haven, Connecticut, that wasn't an option. As a theater-based school, Atlas had to figure out how the show — literally — could go on.

As luck would have it, being nearly brand new (the school had opened just six months earlier) had its advantages.

"We were lucky to still be in design mode," says co-founder **MARIA GIARRIZZO-BARTZ, ED.M.'14**. "We were able to look at the situation and respond quickly."

For example, they had just finished the first week of work on a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students had been cast in their roles, and everyone was working in their design departments, coming up with ideas for props and costumes. Like the rest of the world, they didn't know how long remote would last, but, says Giarrizzo-Bartz, since the school's approach is to use the theatrical process as the "engine" for learning other subjects, they had to keep looking forward. That meant moving rehearsals online, with student stage managers iMessaging castmates when it was time to rehearse a scene. As the pandem-

ic progressed, they embraced the idea that the show would need to be fully filmed on Zoom, rather than performed on the stage of their partner, Long Wharf Theatre, as planned. The students, she says, rose to the challenge.

"The set design team created digital backgrounds. The costume team ordered things to be delivered to people's houses, or dropped them off in plastic bags on porches," she says. "The props team made or ordered multiples of the same prop for filming in multiple houses." They had students hang green screens on walls in their homes, and mounted their devices on homemade PVC pipe tripods. Once filming started, actors had unique challenges, like figuring out how to "face" one another on screen or create the appearance of handing props back and forth.

Beyond rethinking ways to put on a show, the pandemic also allowed the new school the unique opportunity to step back and discuss what else needed reinventing.

"When you create a school, you have a vision of the type of community you'd like to create. Along the way, your stakeholders can push you to make compromises to your vision," says co-founder **CAROLINE GOLSCHEIDER, ED.M.'14**. "Sometimes these compromises are needed and welcome — we want to be responsive to our community! However, some of these compromises resulted in accommodating a more traditional educational model than what we had envisioned. The pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred in the summer of 2020, allowed us to step back and say 'Hey! Let's recommit to our vision of what school can be.'" That meant human-centered, flexible learning that de-emphasized traditional testing.

The pandemic also reaffirmed what they already knew: that social-emotional learning is core and relationships matter in schools.

"Being online with students in their homes brought more fully into focus the complex human identities and experiences of our company," Golschneider says. "We were all literally

in one another's homes, with cats on screens and kids in laps, and siblings crying in the background, experiencing a global trauma together, and processing that together. This made us recognize a need to slow down, to prioritize relationships over any punitive systems, and respond to the kids who were struggling with even more specific and tailored supports such as delivering paper packets of work to their houses when they struggled to stay engaged online or adjusting the school day to start later in the morning."

These are all things, they agreed, that should continue at the school beyond the pandemic. "These are all values that make our school better no matter the circumstances," Golschneider says.

They also worked on equity issues, starting with Wi-Fi access and accessibility, and encouraging students to ask deeper questions about the shows they were doing.

"This was true for *The Wiz* during COVID," says Giarrizzo-Bartz, referring to the musical they performed live in the spring of 2021 fully masked (masks designed by students) and the audience seated outside. "All of our anti-bias,





Atlas's Afrofuturistic production of *The Wiz*





Atlas co-founders Maria Giarrizzo-Bartz and Caroline Golschneider

anti-racist work was tested. There were questions about how we were approaching *The Wiz*, questions around appropriation versus appreciation, and how can we honor the history of *The Wiz* as white directors?”

Golschneider says students had college-level conversations about these questions.

“They talked about their identities, about playing a certain character as a white person,” she says. “We talked about anti-racism and how it directly applied to our production. We didn’t always agree, but to hear one another’s viewpoint was important.”

This is exactly what the two were hoping for when they were Ed School students living together after meeting on a roommate housing board and commuting every weekend back and forth to New Haven, where their husbands both worked.

“During the car rides that fall, we dove into our philosophy about education, our experience as teachers, what we wanted to do,” says Giarrizzo-Bartz, who previously ran the drama program at the East Harlem School and came to Harvard to figure out if she could start her own children’s theater company. Golschneider had been a music teacher in the Windsor Locks, Connecticut, school district.

“I really wanted to stay in the public school realm, but there’s not always a lot of room for experimentation,” says Golschneider. “I

knew that in order to do what we wanted to do, we needed to start a school.”

Linda Nathan’s Designing a Democratic School class at the Ed School made a huge difference, allowing them to dive into different aspects of building a school, from governance to philosophy to planning.

“That’s where I got all of the feedback and we came out with a prospectus,” Giarrizzo-Bartz says. Luckily, an established nonprofit in New Haven, the Neighborhood Music School, once a settlement house for immigrants, was looking for a way to utilize their facility during the day before their own after-school and evening activities started. When Giarrizzo-Bartz heard this, she says, “I leapt out of my seat.”

This fall, the school opened fully and in person, with remote learning available to students in quarantine. They are remaining intentionally small, both for their philosophy (“The small size cements the community and that’s important,” says Golschneider) and for ease during the continuing pandemic, with six to 10 students in each grade, plus two students back for a “fellowship year” to repeat some eighth-grade work and start a ninth-grade curriculum.

And then there’s the theater.

“For the fall show, we are doing the companion piece to our inaugural production of *The Giver*. It’s called *Gathering Blue* by

Lois Lowry and explores the role of creativity and art in the preservation of culture and history,” says Giarrizzo-Bartz. “We’ll revisit many of the same themes from the curriculum we devised to accompany the *The Giver*, like neuroscience of memory, cultural memory, and global studies, and additional tie-ins to ableism, genetics, and biomedical engineering. As of now, the plan is a live, masked performance for families in our large performance space. Fingers crossed!”

- ▶ Learn more: [nmsnewhaven.org/atlas/](https://nmsnewhaven.org/atlas/)
- ▶ Watch *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Zoom show and bloopers reels: [nmsnewhaven.org/atlas-past-performances/haven.org/atlas-past-performances/](https://nmsnewhaven.org/atlas-past-performances/haven.org/atlas-past-performances/)



Story by **Gianna Cacciatore**

# Memoir Making



**MICHAEL SADOWSKI, ED.M.'95, ED.D.'05**, believes that every life can tell a story — it just takes some digging to figure out what that story is. Recently, we sat down with Sadowski to learn about his story, *Men I've Never Been*, which was published as a memoir last spring and shortlisted for the William Faulkner-William Wisdom Award for Nonfiction.

## How did this book, your memoir, come about?

The book started when I was just writing stories, some about being bullied and about my family. I quickly realized that gender socialization was a thread connecting these stories. As a graduate student, I worked very closely with [former Ed School Professor] Carol Gilligan, whose work explores theories about gender socialization. I saw those theories at play in my own life. They informed the story arc of what my memoir became. In some ways, it's a gay coming-of-age memoir ... but I'd like to think it's more than that. It's really about how we're socialized into gender in our culture, and the ways that socialization costs us some of our closest relationships.

## So you found your story through the writing process?

Yes. I wouldn't say that my attitudes about the individual incidents I was remembering and writing about changed, but the lens that I saw them through did. I started to understand that writing a memoir is a process of understanding. You come to see your own story as a story. My own journey through trying to emulate all these different masculine images was a story about the ways in which our gender socialization can silence us. It had a beginning, a middle, and an end. I think that we all have stories that we live. We may just see them as things that happened, but they are metaphors. They are stories.

## Who do you hope will read *Men I've Never Been*?

People who relate to the idea of trying to live up to a false self. I distanced myself from a lot of relationships in my life — with family, with friends, with partners — because I didn't feel like I could be my authentic self. If you've felt this way, my story is for you.

► Michael Sadowski is an associate dean at Bard College, where he has been teaching courses on adolescent identity and LGBTQ issues in education for more than a decade. He is also the author of several other books, including *Safe is Not Enough* and *Adolescents at School*. Prior, he taught high school for five years

► Visit his website: [michaelsadowski.net](http://michaelsadowski.net)

# The Wizard Behind the Camera

Filmmaker Tracy Heather Strain brings Oz writer and many others to life

Story by Lory Hough

**L. FRANK BAUM.** We know his books. We know the famous movie. But what do we know about the writer himself? For most people, the answer is, not much. So when *American Experience* reached out to filmmaker **TRACY HEATHER STRAIN, ED.M.:95**, and asked her to create a documentary about Baum, author of the beloved *Wonderful World of Oz* book series, she and her husband, Randall MacLowry, jumped at the chance.

“I had 14 *Oz* books on my bookshelf as a kid and schlepped them around whenever I moved,” Strain says. The couple was also excited to work on a topic that was about pop culture.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t easy going at first. Baum’s wife, Maud, had burned most of his personal papers after his death in 1919, making research into how Baum thought and felt difficult. Then, while Strain and MacLowry were filming, COVID hit. With only 5 of the 12 interviews done at that point, the team had to finish the rest remotely on Zoom, which

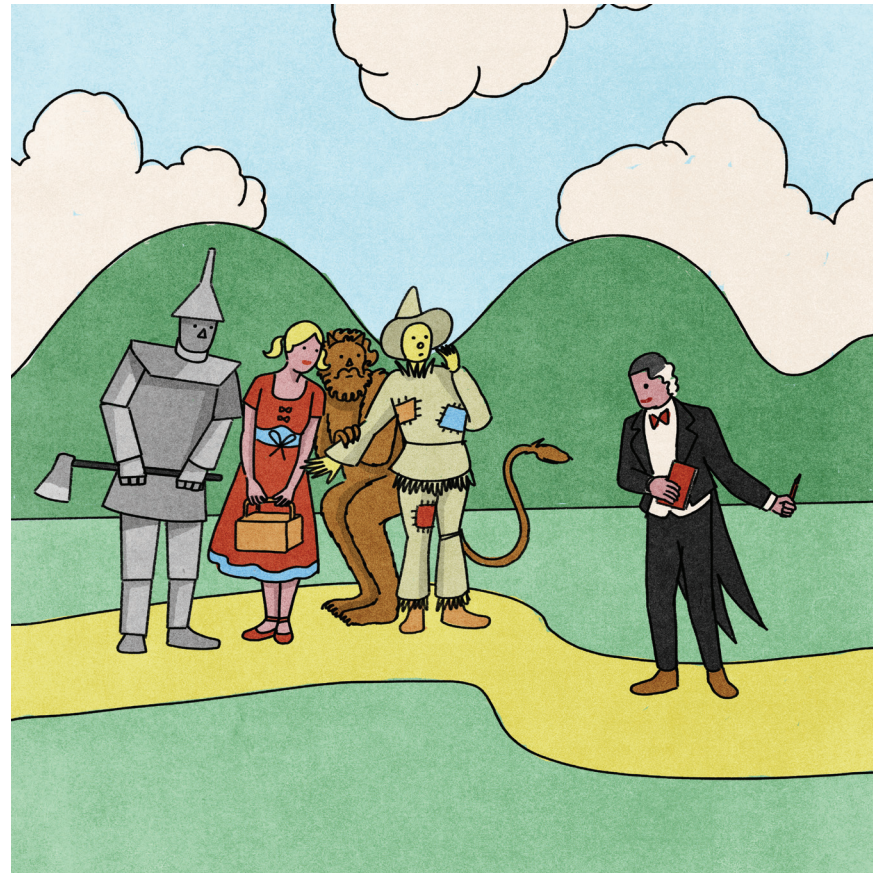
was less than ideal. Strain says access to archives that weren’t already digitized was also difficult.

“It was a huge challenge to get through that,” she says.

But they did, and a year later, in April of this year, *American Oz: The True Wizard Behind the Curtain*, debuted on PBS’ long-running series, *American Experience*.

Despite the challenges, Strain says she learned something about Baum that surprised her, something that probably surprises most viewers: He was ahead of his time.

“Baum was very forward thinking, especially in terms of women’s rights and women’s place in society,” she says. He was influenced, in part, by his mother-in-law, Matilda Gage, co-founder of the National Woman Suffrage Association with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. He was also an impractical dreamer who followed his passions and the “next big thing,” even when those passions nearly ruined him. Through the years, before finding success with his writing, he





worked as a traveling salesman, a newspaper publisher, a fancy poultry breeder, a store owner, and a touring actor.

*American Oz* isn't Strain's first documentary. She first started working on films in the mid-1980s after watching *Eyes on the Prize* and being floored by the six-part documentary focused on the American Civil Rights movement. She also wasn't completely happy with her career in direct marketing and advertising. "I realized I needed to learn how to

make films like that," she says of *Eyes*. She started at the bottom, answering phones and conducting research for small production companies, then eventually started pitching her own story ideas and writing copy. For a few months, she even worked as a "kid wrangler" for *Zoom* at PBS. At one point, while a student at the Ed School, she thought she'd go into children's television.

She stuck with documentaries and won her first Peabody Award in 1999 for her work (episodes three and four) on the six-part docuseries, *I'll Make Me a World: A Century of African-American Arts*, produced by Blackside, which had produced *Eyes on the Prize* more than a decade earlier. She won a second Peabody in 2018 for *Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart*, which ran on *American Masters*. The documentary, a passion project about the late playwright best known for writing *A Raisin in the Sun*, was a labor of love, Strain says. She had discovered Hansberry when she was 17, after seeing the play based on

Hansberry's life, *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black*, at a community theater. Surprisingly, although she had already won one Peabody when she started working on the Hansberry film, and was making a name for herself in the documentary world, Strain found it hard to raise money, especially for an archival project, which is expensive. It ultimately took her 14 years from idea to completion.

"It was a challenge at times to keep going," she says, "but Lorraine's sister, her friends, her cousin, and so many others gave me their time. They had faith in me. I felt I owed it to them. That's what kept me going."

These days, in addition to continuing to produce documentaries like *American Oz* through Film Posse, the production company that she and MacLowry cofounded, Strain balances her art with teaching about film. After half a dozen years at Northeastern University, she moved from Boston to Connecticut, where she is now a professor of film studies at Wesleyan University, teaching

documentary storytelling, production, and history, as well as associate director of the College of Film and the Moving Image and co-director of the Wesleyan Documentary Project. Film Posse is also working on a new film for *NOVA* about how scientists are using archeology and genetics to add to the historical record of the slave trade and slaves.

Teaching is something that has taken her by surprise, she says.

"I never imagined in a million years that I'd be a tenure track professor," she says. "I'm wearing a lot of hats. But it's an exciting time to be making documentaries and I'm grateful for the opportunity to literally teach students and share knowledge, and to learn with the students."

And on top of that, she says, "teaching is helping me become a better filmmaker."

► Watch the *Oz* film on PBS: [www.pbs.org/video/american-oz-cvqd3p/](http://www.pbs.org/video/american-oz-cvqd3p/)



Filmmaker Tracy Heather Strain at work with her husband and collaborator Randall MacLowry



FEATURE

Jarvis Givens at the Abiel Smith School in Boston (1835), the oldest public school for Black students still standing in the United States. The space is now part of the Museum of African American History.



# TEACHING

Through his new Black Teacher Archives Project, Assistant Professor **Jarvis Givens** wants people to know that the story of Black education and Black teachers is complicated — and worth telling.

Story by **Lory Hough**

Photograph by **Séan Alonzo Harris**

# GO Teaching





Princeton Professor Imani Perry, co-founder of the Black Teacher Archives Project

**THE IDEA STARTED**, as ideas often do, because something needed to change. When Assistant Professor Jarvis Givens was working on his dissertation in graduate school, and then later on his book about Carter G. Woodson and Black education, he realized it wasn't always easy to track down the documents and historical materials he needed. Some had been lost, much was buried deep in the dusty archives of universities and libraries, neglected and out of sight.

Givens also realized, once he started digging, that some of the material he did find, especially in journals published by Black teachers' associations after the Civil War and through the Jim Crow years, was showing a more complicated picture of Black education in American during those years than most people knew. Yes, the image of Black students attending dilapidated and underfunded schools was true, but as Givens writes in *Fugitive Pedagogy*, his book about Woodson that came out this year, Black teachers weren't simply "helpless victims" carrying out orders from white leaders. They were also intellectuals, or "scholars of practice," as Givens now calls them. They were "educators who lean into the intellectual demands of their work, modeling what it means to be thinkers and doers." Under the watchful eye of the authorities, these teachers covertly revised the mandated curriculum to help their students, and taught in a "veiled world ... only partially visible to the white public of their time and the historical record left behind."

Around the time he was digging and discovering the rich material in these teacher association journals, Givens started talking about his work and the importance of the journals with his neighbor, **THERESA PERRY, ED.D.'82**, a recently retired professor from Simmons College and former dean of Wheelock College. Turns out, Theresa Perry had been having similar conversations with her daughter, Imani Perry, a professor of African American studies at Princeton who had been using

teachers' journals extensively for the book she was writing, *May We Forever Stand: A History of the Black National Anthem*. Then, when Givens and the two Perrys were at an annual education research conference in 2018 in New York City, the elder Perry "summoned" them to a meeting, says Perry, and they started brainstorming how to capture the journals and other critical material in one place, not only for future researchers, but also to help reset the record on early Black educators.

"As someone who hunted down issues of the journals everywhere I could find them, it was clear to me that providing historians and critical pedagogues with these materials could transform both the history of education and Black studies," says Perry.

From this, the Black Teacher Archives Project at Harvard was born.

Described as an online "archival initiative to preserve the political and intellectual contributions of Black educators before 1970," the Black Teacher Archives Project officially launched in June 2020, two years after those brainstorming meetings, and is expected to be finished in the fall of 2022. With Givens and Perry as the principal investigators, the first phase of the project includes digitizing teachers' journals from Colored Teachers Associations (CTAs), as they were called. These statewide professional associations formed in Southern states during Reconstruction, and in some Northern and Midwestern states during Jim Crow, and operated for more than 100 years, from 1861 through the late 1960s. The national organization was called the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. (It merged in 1964, during desegregation, with the National Education Association.)

Each state CTA published its own journal, usually monthly or quarterly, starting in the 1920s and ending in the 1960s. In total, there are about 650 volumes made up of 5,000 is-

**“The Black Teacher Archives Project will help us tell more dynamic stories of Black educators, especially given all that becomes possible once historical sources are digitized.”**

JARVIS GIVENS

sues. Today, about 140 institutions around the country have some archived copies, including Harvard, which has a small number of journals from the state chapter in Virginia.

Content varies. In addition to meeting minutes and board member lists typically found in association publications, Givens says much of the content in these journals actually sheds light on the reality of the lives of Black educators, in and outside the classroom, during those decades.

“There are excerpts from speeches delivered at state and national teachers’ meetings,” including intellectuals like Woodson and Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of the National Council for Negro Women, Givens says. “There is poetry written by Black teachers, stories about grassroots efforts to raise money to build schools, and coverage of partnerships between CTAs and other political organizations.” He also found essays highlighting important legal cases that had a direct impact on their lives as professional educators and as Black Americans.

“In these articles, we see Black teachers as more than just practitioners in the classroom,” he says. “We also see them thinking, strategizing, and developing ideas around the constraints of their practice.”

This contrasts sharply with how Black educators are often viewed, Givens says.

“In this country, K-12 teachers are often still seen as non-intellectuals, non-pedagogical knowers, especially Black teachers,” he says. “Then and now, teachers have had to turn to organizations like the CTA to create the spaces necessary to sustain the work they are trying to do.”

As Perry told an audience during a recent Swarthmore College webinar about the Black Teacher Archives Project, “the bigotries that exist when it comes to Black teachers and students persist and are often telescoped into the past. I think the false assumptions of incompetence that are applied to Black teachers now are also present when it comes to the



Mosquito Crossing,  
Georgia, circa 1941





Siloam, Georgia, circa 1941





**“As someone who hunted down issues of the journals everywhere I could find them, it was clear to me that providing historians and critical pedagogues with these materials could transform both the history of education and Black studies.”**

IMANI PERRY

past. It’s remarkable how much disbelief one confronts when describing the highly trained, organized, and politically committed work of Black teachers in the Jim Crow era.”

At times, she said, Black teachers were even combative. “That’s part of why having the documents readily available” through the Black Teacher Archives, “is so important. This isn’t opinion,” she says. “This is historically documented.”

It’s partly this misconception of Black teachers that led Givens to rethink his focus when he was working on his dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley. He had first read Woodson’s 1933 book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, when he was an undergrad at Berkeley. Later, in graduate school, he learned that Woodson, a long-time teacher and child of former slaves (and creator of Black History Month, which was originally called Negro History Week), also published textbooks and wrote curriculum as a critique of the curriculum imposed on Black teachers for their students.

“I didn’t go to graduate school to study education, but learning about Woodson and these textbooks planted a few questions in my mind about the intellectual world of Black education that Woodson and these textbooks seemed to be emblematic of, and how that story challenged narrow frames of Black education prior to desegregation as separate, unequal — and nothing else,” Givens says. “It suggested that the story was more complicated, and that there was a lot of important work done in Black schools that dominant narratives about Black education during Jim Crow seemed to flatten and distort.”

And then he heard a story while researching Woodson that further challenged his thinking — and led him to coin the term “fugitive pedagogy,” a theory and practice that shows that in the pursuit of freedom, Black people consistently deployed fugitive tactics. Slaves learned to read in secret. Newly emancipated people during Jim Crow integrated all-white schools,

and Black teachers developed covert instructional strategies while wearing a public mask of compliance.

The story he heard came from a videotape he watched one afternoon, while sitting in a small storage room in a church in Prince George’s County in Maryland. A member of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), an organization started by Woodson, had given him a bunch of tapes to watch from past events. In one of the videos, Givens heard Jerry Moore, a retired minister, talk about his discovery of Woodson as a teenage boy in Webster Parish, Louisiana, in the early 1930s. At the time, Louisiana was a textbook adoption state — a state that reviewed textbooks and other educational material and “approved” what could be used in class. Moore’s teacher, Tessie McGee, would couch a copy of Woodson’s book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, in her lap during class, despite clear instructions from the state’s all-white department of education stating that all teachers had to stick to using pre-approved curriculum openly displayed on their desk. As Moore said in the video, “When the principal would come in, she would ... simply lift her eyes to the outline that resided on her desk and teach us from the outline. When the principal disappeared, her eyes went back to the book in her lap.”

As Givens writes in his book, *Fugitive Pedagogy*, “She kept the book out of sight, understanding the likely repercussions were she to be caught.” For teachers like McGee, “a critical aspect of their work had to be done covertly. If they were to fall or be caught, there was no safety net to catch them.” Just a few years earlier, for example, a black principal had been threatened and then fired from a school in Oklahoma “after a Klan-run white school board learned that Woodson’s textbook, *The Negro in Our History*, had — as they put it — ‘crept into our Negro schools.’”

But for McGee, and other Black teachers at that time, “at the heart of her pedagogy was



(left) White Plains, Georgia, circa 1941; (right) Tuskegee, Alabama, circa 1902



**“I’ve seen and experienced the sense of urgency that some teachers bring to teach Black students. It’s no coincidence now that I’m studying these things.”**

JARVIS GIVENS

an insistence that there was a different way of knowing the world,” Givens says.

Learning about this remarkable but little-known fugitive work by early Black teachers was a turning point in his work, Givens said during a *Harvard EdCast* interview in February. Through his book, and now with the Black Teacher Archives, he says he wants to draw a narrative line from enslaved people secretly learning to read and write, “to some of the kind of concealed political work that Black teachers were doing even after Black education was technically legal in the South, in the United States, more broadly. ... Even as Black people could kind of learn out in the open in ways that they weren’t able to prior to the Civil War, there were still restraints and a lot of restrictions. They always had to tow this line in terms of how much they could really reveal about their political desires to be recognized as fully equal to white Americans, their former masters, et cetera.”

With teachers like McGee, Givens says that moment of power walking into the room and the Black teacher concealing what she actually wanted to teach — and knew was necessary for her Black students to learn — “signaled to me the kind of careful ways that Black teachers worked to negotiate power in the context of Jim Crow schools,” he said. “It just added a different layer of meaning to the importance

of Woodson’s textbooks” and to the materials they are now highlighting through the Black Teacher Archives Project.

—  
What’s next for this ambitious project? Just as the pandemic affected everything in education, it has had an impact on the project’s progress, Givens says, limiting the ability of the team, which includes project manager Micha Broadnax, to travel to archives for material. Still, they are moving forward, he says, including partnering with scholars at historically Black colleges and universities.

Once the project digitizes as many CTA journals as possible, they will also start adding additional material about Black educators.

“We are developing an interactive timeline chronicling important developments in the history of African American education,” Givens says. “The site will also include interpretive resources that will provide important context for the CTA journals, including reference lists, shorts essays on key themes, and links to other relevant sources. We will also include interviews with former members of CTAs, some that already exist in different places, but also interviews that we are conducting with leaders of these organizations that are still with us. Collectively, we hope the site will be easy



to integrate into courses on the history of education, African American history, and curriculum for teacher training programs.”

Broadnax sees phase two as a space “where researchers will view the journals en masse and be able to search and review based on information such as the dates published, the physical repository that holds the copy of the journal, and keywords. We are also starting to scope out content to include to help researchers better understand the context of these Black educator organizations such as timelines, summaries, bibliographies, and guides.”

For Broadnax, getting this right is important for many reasons.

“My mother, born after *Brown v. Board of Education*, integrated her elementary school in Charlottesville, Virginia, and my brother is part of the 2% of public school teachers in American who are Black men,” she says. “The work of constructing this archive to make more visible and accessible the publications of Black educators is personal, political, and professional.”

Givens says he also wants the project to provide current teachers with examples of how they can engage in meaningful anti-racist fugitive work in their schools and communities — something he experienced with his teachers growing up in Compton, California. As he wrote in a piece for the *Atlantic* last spring,

“The educators who taught me, like so many generations of African American teachers before them, operated from a pedagogical vision that was fundamentally anti-racist. They exposed students to expansive visions of Black life, through both their lessons and the relationships they formed with us as students.” This included his former high school history teacher, **TAUHEEDAH BAKER-JONES, ED.L.D.’21**, now chief equity officer for Atlanta Public Schools.

“She wasn’t teaching during Jim Crow, but she was a Black woman teaching Black students and she was engaging us in writing our own textbook as a critique of the dominant textbooks,” Givens said in a 2019 *Ed.* story about Baker-Jones and Givens. “She’s one of the teachers in the back of my mind as I’m writing. I’ve seen and experienced the sense of urgency that some teachers bring to teach Black students. It’s no coincidence now that I’m studying these things.”

And it’s important, now more than ever, to get this story out into the world, he says.

“The Black Teacher Archives Project will help us tell more dynamic stories of Black educators, especially given all that becomes possible once historical sources are digitized. This is a world of teachers who cultivated dreams in generations of Black people, while living under persecution,” he says. “Their stories have so much to teach us.”

► Access the Black Teacher Archives Project: [bta.share.library.harvard.edu](https://bta.share.library.harvard.edu)

► Listen to the EdCast with Givens, or read the transcript: <https://hgse.me/3jrZ4nN>

► Learn more about Givens ([jarvisgivens.com](https://jarvisgivens.com)) and Perry ([aas.princeton.edu/people/imani-perry](https://aas.princeton.edu/people/imani-perry))



## STUDY SKILLS

# Harvard Families

**COMING FROM A** small, close-knit town, **ANNA KIRBY, ED.M.'20**, family program manager with Harvard University Housing's Graduate Commons Program (GCP), wondered if Harvard could feel like home when she first started as a Ph.D. student at the Ed School.

Kirby had a background in developmental psychology and understood the importance of relationships. She'd worked in community-based arts education programs and was interested in how events like concerts or workshops can deepen relationships, not just among community members, but between parents and children. When making the move to Cambridge, she wasn't sure if the pace of urban living would allow for deep connections to develop between people and place.

"I've always liked to feel rooted in the places I live and rooted in the communities I'm part of," she says. "It can be hard to meet your neighbors in an [urban] environment."

Yet as she moved into Harvard housing, she was struck by exactly the opposite. Her building felt quiet and residential, there were plenty of green spaces, and the GCP organized events to help residents meet neighbors. Inspired by that newfound community spirit, Kirby began working for the GCP as an intern.

"The position was a complement to my class work because it was focused on building community," says Kirby. "I'd be drawing

on human development research to build relationships and programming that supported the development of kids, parents and caregivers, students, and their partners who were all adjusting to life on campus."

She also appreciated the diversity of the campus housing community — graduate and postdoctoral students, faculty, staff, visiting scholars, and of course, their spouses, partners, and kids. Many have traveled long distances and the transition can be a sacrifice for families. Kirby felt that the place where Harvard community members and affiliates live, then, must feel like a safe, stable home.

"I think we'd all want Harvard to be a place that feels like it's built for the families that are making that commitment to having a Harvard journey," says Kirby, noting that because Harvard is so big and students are often socially siloed into their schools or departments, it can be difficult to make Harvard feel less like a school and more like a home. The GCP acts as a cross-campus network that families can use to connect with people as neighbors.

Kirby began developing programming for families. Then COVID hit and physical meeting spaces across the university began to shut down. Families wondered how they could support their kids. In response, Kirby worked with the GCP to develop a Zoom series called Parenting in Challenging Times.

That included leaving room in meetings for families to voice their concerns and struggles. But the uncertainty wasn't just confined to the pandemic. Kirby and the GCP team also recognized that, after the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests, families had a real desire to talk about justice and what it means to be anti-racist. Many were unsure of how to start these conversations with their children. Kirby collaborated with fellow Ph.D. student Hania Mariën and local social justice education organizations, Little Uprisings and ZNT Arts. They sent families picture books to spark conversations about race, class, gender, and culture. Corresponding art projects also took place over Zoom. She and Mariën developed a packet of resources that families could continue to use once the program ended.

Modeling conversations about race and identity has been at the forefront of Kirby's mind as she develops her dissertation — a look at how children understand and grapple with concepts like justice and equity. "How these ideas relate to our identities and who we are plays out in the communities we live in," says Kirby. "They say something about how we should act, and the kinds of responsibilities we have to the people around us."

Emily Boudreau is a staff writer in the Office of Communications and Marketing

**For Ed School families living and learning together, Anna Kirby wants Harvard to feel not just like a school, but like home**

Story by Emily Boudreau, Ed.M.'19







RECESS

# A SWING AND A HIT

Matthew Grimes, Ed.M.'21, finds his dream job doing DEI work with the MLB

**MATTHEW GRIMES, ED.M.'21**, doesn't remember a time when he wasn't playing baseball or watching it on TV. Growing up with a field close to his apartment, and with a dad and brother who loved the game, baseball was just a fact of life. So it's no surprise that after graduation from the Ed School this past May, Grimes ended up with a job overseeing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for a Major League team.

And not for just any team — for his longtime favorite team: the Cleveland Indians (recently renamed the Cleveland Guardians). Which is a surprise, given that Grimes is from Troy, New York.

"This is a dream job for me. Growing up, I would pretend to be the players I saw on TV. When I was finally able to play t-ball, in 1997, it happened to be the same year that the best team in the major leagues was the Cleveland Indians," he says. "They went to the World Series against the Florida Marlins." His family watched all of the games. "One day, my older brother said he was going to be a Marlins fan, so I said I was going to be an Indians fan."

Now an Indians employee, Grimes is figuring out how best to help the organization in a role that is not only new to him and to Cleveland, but also to the Major League.

"DEI is a new thing for professional sports, and for baseball, in particular," he says. "A lot of sports clubs have had to make a decision: Do we want to use our platform for good?" His hope is that in this new role, he can serve as a model.

"Every role I've had had been an inaugural role so I'm used to laying down the foundation and seeing where my role goes," he says. With Cleveland, this includes connecting the business side of the team with the baseball side. "I'm the first employee to work in both sides," he says. "There's a huge disconnect between business and baseball." He's also involved in ongoing work to increase the number of women in the organization, around the team's name change, and to expand the team's traditional fan base.

"We don't have a Latinx following, yet the west side of Cleveland is predominantly Latinx, so shame on us," he says. "Baseball, historically, has been a game for white fans. How can we go out with boots on the ground and re-engage?"

Grimes credits the Ed School for helping him get to where he is.

"The Ed School opened my eye to possibility," he says. "It also gave me the confidence to say about this job, 'If not me, who?'" **LH**







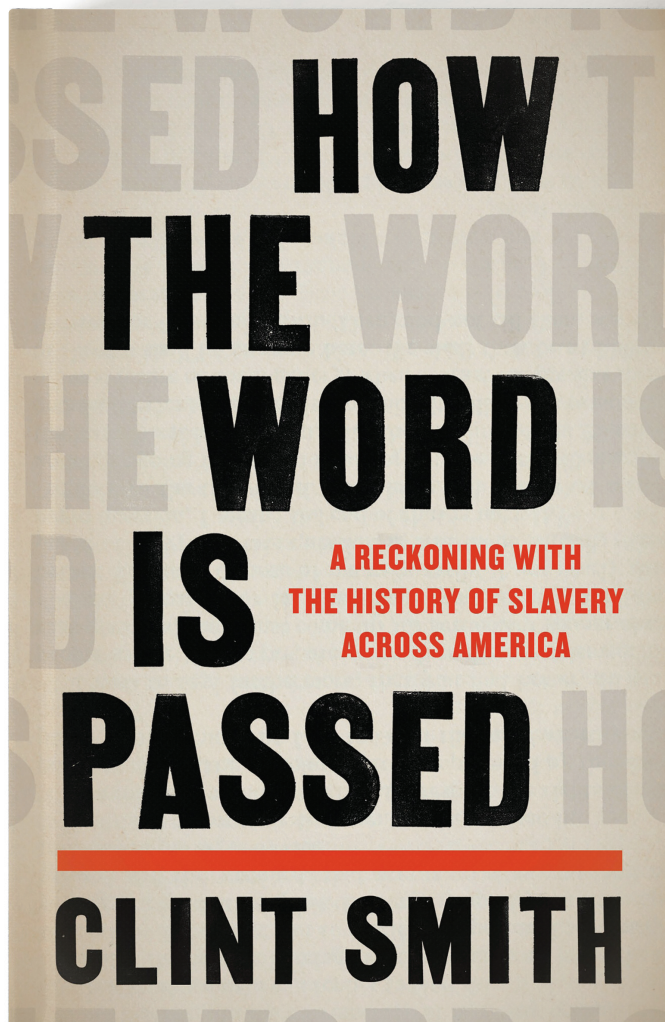
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# Ideas



“What I wanted to do is have the book be a work of history that felt like a novel. I wanted it to feel less like a text that was preachy, or telling you something you didn’t know, and more about the reader being there beside me.”

**CLINT SMITH, ED.M.’17, PH.D.’20.**  
(SEE P.26)





## INFOGRAPHIC

# Should it Stay or Should it Grow Now?

A look at school practices that should grow, fold, or be developed post-COVID

Theme	Trust and Relationships	Schedule and Time	Depth and Breadth of Curriculum	Student Agency and Relevance
<b>Amplify</b> (CHANGES WORTH GROWING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home visits that build relationships between home and school</li> <li>— Advisers, advisories, office hour check-ins</li> <li>Zoom-style chats to allow introverted student more of an opportunity to thrive</li> <li>— Virtual meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarters with three classes at a time rather than seven</li> <li>— Teacher load of 65–80 students</li> <li>— Longer breaks between classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marie Kondo-ing the curriculum (i.e. focusing on a smaller set of priority standards)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance and choice to keep remote students engaged</li> </ul>
<b>Hospice</b> (OLD PRACTICES TO FOLD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excluding parents from school concerns</li> <li>— Rush-through content: transactional relationships</li> <li>— Single ways of teaching and sharing what students know</li> <li>— Notion that face-to-face is needed for all meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7–8 period day in secondary schools</li> <li>— Teacher load of 160 students</li> <li>— No time between classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pacing guides, rush-through content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardized curricula, pre-set subjects, absence of student choice</li> </ul>
<b>Create</b> (NEW IDEAS TO DEVELOP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share power and collective decisionmaking with families</li> <li>— Organize schooling around smaller, more intimate communities</li> <li>— Create multiple modalities for sharing learning</li> <li>— Powerful in-person meetings, virtual meetings for other concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarter schedule with three blocks</li> <li>— Teacher load of 65–80 students</li> <li>— Student free periods and ability to use some time in ways consistent with their interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on fewer standards that orient learning around key topics and skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students define passions and goals, put in charge of learning to achieve those goals</li> </ul>



Last spring, as the school year was coming to a close, Professor Jal Mehta, along with [JUSTIN REICH, ED.D.'12](#), director of the MIT Teaching Systems Lab, came out with a report about the changes that were made to teaching and learning due to the pandemic, and the ways that students and teachers now want to reinvent schools. The report was based on three research exercises they did, including one where students, teachers, school leaders, and families reflected on the past school year to figure out which changes worked well and are worth growing (amplify), old practices that need to be retired (hospice), and new ideas that should be developed (create). Here is a chart of their findings.

Competency- and Mastery-Based Learning	Assessments	Social and Emotional Learning and Self-Care	Equity	Treat Students Like Humans
<p>Eliminating system of averaging grades, which heavily penalizes students with zeros for incomplete assignments</p>	<p>Examination of student work</p>	<p>Mindfulness practices, check-ins, emphasis on mental health of adults as well as students</p>	<p>Feeding students, ensuring basic needs are met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting each student where they are</li> <li>- Listening more to students, involving students in co-design of anti-racist practices</li> </ul>	<p>Less behavioral policing of students' dress and other choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Let students eat when they are hungry and go to the bathroom when they need to</li> <li>- Outdoor learning</li> <li>- Later start times consistent with adolescent circadian rhythms</li> </ul>
<p>Seat time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assumption that all students need to learn exactly the same</li> <li>- "Learning loss" as a frame</li> </ul>	<p>Standardized tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grades and report cards</li> <li>- Finals week</li> </ul>	<p>Rush-through content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attention only to academics</li> </ul>	<p>Seeing students only as academic producers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leveling and tracking, deficit notions of students</li> <li>- Discipline and suspension</li> </ul>	<p>Dress code</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tasteless food</li> <li>- Bathroom and hall passes</li> <li>- Learning can only happen in classrooms</li> <li>- Getting up at 5:30 a.m. to ride multiple buses for 7:10 a.m. start</li> </ul>
<p>Competency and mastery based systems that allow students to define interests, move at own pace</p>	<p>Relevance and choice to keep remote students engaged</p>	<p>Restorative restart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing space and time for mental health</li> </ul>	<p>Consistently seeing students holistically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comprehensive equity audit</li> <li>- Restorative justice approaches to discipline</li> </ul>	<p>More student autonomy around personal matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involve students in designing menus</li> <li>- Off-campus learning: field trips, internships, apprenticeships</li> <li>- Later start times, including a plan for sports that accommodate later start times</li> </ul>

# How the Word Is Passed

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLETTA GIRMA  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SIMONE MASSONI

In May 2017, after the statue of Robert E. Lee was taken down in his hometown of New Orleans, CLINT SMITH, ED.M.'17, PH.D.'20, realized he knew little about his city's relationship with slavery, including the hundreds of parks, schools, and statues named after Confederate figures and local slaveholders. Even the street where his parents still live, he came to understand, was named after a man who owned more than 150 slaves during his lifetime. ¶ Soon after, Smith became “obsessed” with how slavery is remembered and reckoned with, and for nearly three years, he traveled around the world, visiting museums, plantations, cemeteries, prisons, and historical landmarks to learn how different places — and the people who run or visit those places — confront, or fail to confront, the legacy of slavery. It was also a journey to fill in his own gaps. ¶ Smith turned those visits — what *The New York Times* called his “cross-country survey of slavery remembrance” — into a book that came out in June 2021, *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*. He was interviewed by Terry Gross on *Fresh Air* and made the cover of *Poets & Writers* magazine. The book debuted at No. 1 on the *Times* bestsellers list and was nominated for a National Book Award. ¶ This summer, we caught up with Smith, who was on a whirlwind author's tour. (By the end of July, he had already done 120 interviews.) As interview 121, we talked to him about storytelling, what didn't make it into the book (which we've excerpted by location on the following pages), and how his former English students at Parkdale High School in Maryland are now DMing him.

► Visit Smith's website: [clintsmithiii.com](http://clintsmithiii.com) and listen to Smith reading an excerpt: [soundcloud.com/hachetteaudio/how-the-word-is-passed-galveston-and-juneteenth](https://soundcloud.com/hachetteaudio/how-the-word-is-passed-galveston-and-juneteenth)

► Lessons for students: [zinnedproject.org/news/lessons-how-the-word-is-passed](https://zinnedproject.org/news/lessons-how-the-word-is-passed)





Clint Smith, author  
of *How the Word Is Passed*





## I. Monticello Plantation

(CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA)

I looked around the lawn and imagined what Monticello would have been like two centuries ago. It belonged to Jefferson, yes, but it was not his home alone. It was the home of thousands of enslaved people, including several large families. Some families were enslaved at Monticello for three generations or more. There were the Gillettes, the Herns, the Fossetts, the Grangers, the Hubbards, the Hemingses. ¶ I scanned the landscape and imagined the Gillette children running between the horses as the animals were groomed and fed, their adolescent voices swirling in the mountain air. I thought of David and Isabel Hern, how, despite marriage between enslaved people being illegal in Virginia, they were wed and remained so until Isabel's death. I imagined how they might have taken breaks from work under the shade of mulberry trees, whispering and laughing and holding each other in their arms. I thought of Joseph Fossett, who remained at Monticello while his wife was taken to Washington, DC, to train as a cook in the White House kitchen during Jefferson's presidency. How three of their children were born in the White House. How in 1806 Jefferson thought Joseph had run away, when he had in fact gone to see his wife in Washington. ¶ I thought too of how in 1827, after Jefferson's death, Edward and Jane Gillette along with nine of their children and twelve of their grandchildren were sold. How David Hern along with his thirty-four surviving children and grandchildren were sold. How Joseph Fossett was freed in Jefferson's will, but his wife, Edith, and seven of their children were sold. How these families were separated to posthumously pay off Jefferson's debt. ¶ I thought of all the love that had been present at this plantation, and I thought too of all the pain.

(P.13-14)





## II. Whitney Plantation

(WALLACE, LOUISIANA)

To my left was the Big House, framed by a row of oak trees whose branches bent like crooked crescent moons, wind chimes singing in their tangled limbs. The leaves had changed color, folded into themselves, and dressed the dirt on the cobblestone path in a thin blanket of brown foliage. The Big House sat at the end of the road, alluring in its decadence, its white façade with a dozen open doors and windows, wind slapping the shutters back and forth against the pane. ¶ Behind me was a memorial of intersecting white stone partitions, with the names of a hundred thousand people enslaved in Louisiana laid out across each black slab. It was similar to the Wall of Honor I had seen earlier in my visit but far larger, with even more names. The walls of this memorial sat like shadows anchored to the ground, a labyrinth of lost voices etched into dark stone. It was staggering to even consider the enormity of the number of people, and to consider what that number meant in the context of my own life. I thought about all of the descendants of these names and the lineage of Black Louisianans who came after them. How the intergenerational progeny of the names on the walls were possibly people I passed on the street, people I had gone to school with, people checking out their food next to me in the same grocery store. Perhaps they were members of my own family. Lineage is a strand of smoke making its way into the sky even though we can't always tell where it's coming from, even though sometimes we can't distinguish the smoke from the sky itself. (P.82-83)

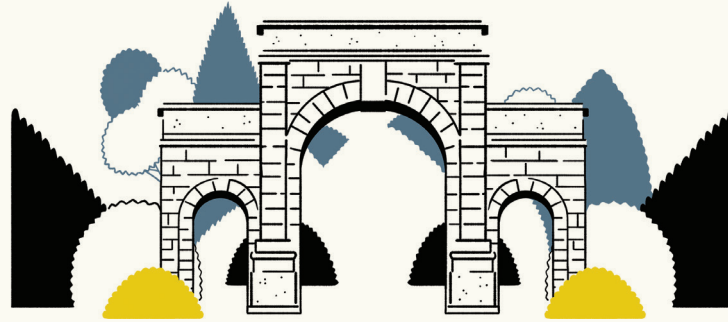


### III. Angola Prison

(LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY, ANGOLA, LOUISIANA)

I turned and asked Norris, “How much did you get paid when you worked the fields?” ¶ “They give folks an allowance. First six months when I came to prison, you didn’t earn anything,” he said. “The first six months you’re paying off all of your clothes that we got to give you while you’re here. Now, go figure.” Norris chuckled. “Six months going to pay for clothes for a lifetime.” ¶ But how much does someone make after the period is finished? I asked. ¶ “Jobs in the field? Seven cents an hour.” ¶ I leaned in, thinking I had misheard. ¶ “Seven cents,” Norris said again. ¶ “This place really is just like the plantation was. Just to utilize all the free labor that they can get,” Norris continued. “They lost all that free labor to emancipation, and now how are we going to get that free labor back? You got all these folks wandering around with no real skills, don’t know what to do, well, we can create laws to put them back in servitude, and that’s what they’ve done. Where do they work? They go right back to working convict leasing, working these same plantations that they were free from.” ¶ I asked Norris what stood out to him in his memories of the field. ¶ “Picking cotton,” he responded, without any hesitation. “Man... it’s like knowing your history, knowing what our folks went through, and all of a sudden, having one of those cotton sacks in your hand.” He cupped his hand and then closed his fingers around the bag we were both imagining in his grasp. His knuckles were dark and cracked, and when he reopened his hand he rubbed the inside of his palm with his thumb. ¶ “I think that’s the biggest challenge more than anything else,” he continued. “Not the work but just the mindset of being there and knowing you’re kind of reliving history, in a sense. I’m going through the very same thing that folks fought and died for, so I wouldn’t have to go through it, and here it is all over again.” (P.116–117)





#### **iv. Blandford Cemetary**

(PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA)

“My father was in the military, so I was raised primarily north of the Mason-Dixon Line. So I don’t have the Southern upbringing. I don’t have the War of Northern Aggression or the states’ rights war,” he said, referring to the alternate names the Civil War is sometimes called by those sympathetic to the Confederate cause. “Is it possible that this church in 1735 may have been built probably with slave labor? Absolutely. When the balcony was used up here, and the congregation was small, did slaves stay up there? Perhaps.” Ken said that the lack of discussion around these topics was potentially tied to the demographic makeup of the cemetery’s visitors. “Our visitor population is overwhelmingly white, because again, what this is, it’s not that a Black population doesn’t appreciate the windows, but sometimes in the context of what it represents, they’re not as comfortable.” He went on: “In most cases we try and fall back on the beauty of the windows, the Tiffany glass kind of thing.” ¶ Perhaps it was not simply that Black people did not come to a Confederate cemetery because they didn’t want to be in the space, perhaps Black people did not come to these spaces in large part because of how the story of the Confederate cause was told. I was tempted to tell Ken about the Whitney Plantation: how a great many people assume that Black Americans would have no interest in visiting the land upon which their ancestors were enslaved, but my visit to the Whitney had shown me that if a place was willing to tell a different story — a more honest story — it would begin to see a different set of people visiting. For me, coming to a Confederate cemetery and hearing Ken speak about the beauty of a set of windows without explaining what they were meant to memorialize, was not unlike going to a plantation and listening to a talk about the decorative infrastructure of the enslaver’s house without mentioning the enslaved hands who built it. (P.123–124)

## Clint Smith On: His hopes for the book, what didn't make the cut, and how time changes things

(THE INTERVIEW)

**One of the beautiful things about the book is your narrative writing style, which is so accessible and compelling. You're truly a storyteller.**

I think what I wanted to do is have the book be a work of history that felt like a novel. I wanted it to feel less like a text that was preachy, or telling you something you didn't know, and more about the reader being there beside me. You have to have characters who you feel invested in, or who you can explore their psyche or spirit. I wanted to tell my own story and have the reader accompany me, so the sensory details — the voices, the texture — were so important to me. Ultimately, I'm profiling people who tell stories for a living. The tour guides, the public historians. They're not simply telling facts, but they're people who are telling stories, people who have come to recognize that these are people and stories and that creates a kind of intimacy. We base our identities in stories.

**Your visits to these sites are really detailed, especially the conversations. Did you tape everything or maybe carry around a notebook?**

All conversations that are reflected were tape recorded. I have an audio recording of all conversations. I felt that was important, especially tackling a sensitive subject matter. I didn't want there to be any doubt that this is what they said. The integrity of the book and capturing the specificity of what people said was important. I also had a notebook everywhere I went. I'm also recording a lot of videos and taking lots of pictures, then I go and write the physical descriptions of the place while it's still fresh. I write as much down as I can, then I go to the audio interviews and transcribe them.

**You're asked in just about every**

**interview about your visit to the gift shop at Angola Prison, with their "Angola, a gated community" koozies and T-shirts. Why do you think this comes up so often?**

I've worked in prisons and jails for the past seven years, teaching. I wrote my dissertation on what education means to people sentenced to juvenile life without parole. I think I went to Angola thinking, I know what the deal is, but what's reflected in the text is that I was still taken back when I went. I was still so unsettled. My work didn't prepare me for the absurdity and abhorrence in what I saw in that place. The gift shop adds another layer of horror in what is already a horrific situation. Clearly, the absurdity of what we do here — we incarcerate thousands of black men in a place where their ancestors were picking cotton — is made worse by, oh, and this place also has a gift shop.

If each place that I visited represents a spectrum of how slavery manifests itself today, Angola represents one end of the spectrum. It belittles the experience of people living through those conditions. Recently, I got an email from someone who went to Angola after reading the book. She said she was told they were going to remodel and would be making some big changes.

**You write that there were dozens of sites you visited that didn't make it into the book. What site do you wish could have made the cut?**

I would have loved to go out west, to California, to talk about the history of slave people in the gold mines. I finished my reporting in New York, maybe two weeks before things shut down. Maybe that's how it was supposed to end, but I would have loved to stretch out west. Also, I have an extended

section on plantation weddings that got cut. It wasn't fitting into the narrative.

**Since the book came out, have any of your former high school students reached out?**

The funny thing about social media is your kids find you. Many have found me. They're DMing me on Instagram and Twitter. They'd be around 25, 26 now. They're adults, grown-ups now. They've got jobs and kids. They'll say, look at you, you're famous. They're really, really kind. Like I said in the book, the earliest sparks of this book were made possible by those early days. I miss it. There's nothing like teaching. Those early days gave me so much clarity about how I wanted to move through the world. That work, it both grounded me and reminded me of the stakes, of how important it is, but also, it was an ever-present reminder that the landscape of inequality is not because of the people in any given community, but because of the things done to that community.

**Your own kids are little now. When they're older, will you take them to these sites to see what you saw?**

I would love to. I have to imagine that when they're older, so many of these sites will look different. So many readers have reached out to me and said they visited Monticello, for example, five, 10 years ago and how different it is now. It's a place that evolves. What Monticello looks like in 10 years will probably look different than it does now. Time changes things, and that's a good thing.

**And hopefully the Angola Prison gift shop will be gone.**

Fingers crossed. Fingers crossed. LH





## v. Galveston Island

(GALVESTON, TEXAS)

Galveston is a small island that sits off the coast of Southeast Texas, and in years past this event has taken place outside. But given the summer heat, the island's humidity, and the average age of the attendees, the organizers moved the event inside. A man named Stephen Duncan, dressed as General Granger, stood at the base of the stairwell, with other men dressed as Union soldiers on either side of him. Stephen looked down at the parchment, appraising the words as if he had never seen them before. He looked back down at the crowd, which was looking up at him. He cleared his throat, approached the microphone, and lifted the yellowed parchment to eye level. ¶ "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere." ¶ All slaves are free. The four words circled the room like birds that had been separated from their flock. I watched people's faces as Stephen said these words. Some closed their eyes. Some were physically shaking. Some clasped hands with the person next to them. Some simply smiled, soaking in the words that their ancestors may have heard more than a century and a half ago. ¶ Being in this place, standing on the same small island where the freedom of a quarter million people was proclaimed, I felt the history pulse through my body. (P.173-174)



## vi. New York City

(MANHATTAN)

Once we made our way back to the group, Damaras explained, “One of the biggest lies we are still telling in this country — and I know because I’m trying to combat it — [is that] during the Civil War we were the good guys, right? New York City was good. Everybody else in the South, they were bad.” ¶ She went on: “Here’s a small recap. This is what happens. We divide ourselves up into two sections: Southern — Confederate or slaveholding states; Northern — Union or free states. What are we fighting over?” She pauses and scans our faces. “Currency — what our currency was going to be moving forward. The United States of America’s economy was founded on the currency of selling human livestock. So we’re fighting a war over slavery. When we teach this story to our children, adults, and people outside this country, we lie and we say that New York... we were never a slave state, we were a free state.” Damaras took a deep breath and shook her head. “Guys, what were you just standing in front of?” She pointed to the marker behind us, her voice rising an octave. “Where we’re standing” — she pointed emphatically to the grounds beneath her — “this is the second largest slave market in the United States of America. The second largest, the first being in Charleston...” Her voice dissolved into the cacophony of the city. ¶ Damaras adjusted her microphone and waited for an ambulance to pass. “Eventually slavery would become so intertwined with our economy that Fernando Wood — he was the mayor of this city during the Civil War,” she clarified, “he would say, ‘Listen...we should secede from the Union,’” she said, paraphrasing what Wood indeed proposed in 1861 in an effort to protect the city’s profitable, cotton-trading relationship with the Confederacy. (P.221–222)





## VII. Goree Island

(DAKAR, SENEGAL)

I had arrived back in the US, and one afternoon I found myself scrolling through the photos I had taken during my trip to Goree. In one photograph, small children chased a soccer ball around a field of sand, clouds of dust rising behind swift ankles. A group of women in colorful garments sat on benches under baobab trees, whose thick trunks and infinite branches stretched like a canopy across the courtyard. Stray cats curled around the benches, dragging their backs along the splintered uneven wood. ¶ I found another photograph I had taken of the Door to No Return from the opposite end of the House of Slaves. In the photo, the stone, arched corridor narrows as your eyes move closer to the door. Upon first glance, you cannot tell that the door opens out over the ocean; it is instead simply a burst of light erupting from the wall. What I like about this photo is that the sun's vibrant glow draws your attention to the door while simultaneously obscuring what's behind it. Almost as if it were saying, "Look at me, but don't look past me." ¶ That door could no longer be what I had first imagined, but perhaps it did not need to be. Around 33,000 people were sent from Goree Island to the New World. Perhaps it matters less whether they did so by walking through a door in this house or if they were marched down to a dock and made to board from there. Perhaps it matters less that millions of people were not sent into bondage from this island but that people from this island were sent into bondage at all. When I stood in the room in the House of Slaves that sat adjacent to the ocean, when I opened my arms and touched its wet stone walls, did it matter exactly how many people had once been held in that room? Or was it more important that the room pushed me into a space of reflection on what the origins of slavery meant? (P.267-268)

# Nigeria Is Where I'll Stay

A Nigerian teacher helps out-of-school children in her hometown

Story by Aramide Oluwaseun Akintimehin, Ed.M.'21

## ● OTA, NIGERIA FACTS



Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

Population..... 163,783

Distance to Lagos ..... 22 mi.

### STUDENT INFO:

Local Ota universities .....  
Covenant and Bells  
University of Technology

Number Nigerian children  
not in school..... 13.2 million

Percent girls who are  
illiterate, ages 15–24 .....37%

Economically challenged  
students ..... 73%

Four-year graduation  
rate ..... 60%

Number of children Talent  
Mine aims to reach.....5,000  
(BY 2024)

SOURCE: UNICEF, UNESCO

**I REMEMBER** running back from school every day as a 6-year-old child to teach what I had learned in class that day to a row of empty 7UP bottles in my mum's parlour. I was in grade three. I loved to teach, anyone or anything.

Teaching came naturally to me, so I also helped the other students in my class who struggled with learning or understanding difficult concepts. I held tutorials during my free time and sometimes after class, from elementary school until college. It was interesting to see how all “my” students progressed.

My passion for teaching led me to apply for the Teach For Nigeria fellowship, a two-year fellowship program where young promising leaders are recruited to teach in low-income communities with the aim of fighting educational equity in Nigeria, and I got in!

At my first school, I walked into my grade two classroom, located in the Ota community of Ogun state Nigeria in October 2018, to find 68 kids in my classroom. My initial thought was to run away and pick up the finance job I had been offered or the full master's scholarship I had waiting for me in a top private university in Nigeria. Not only were there a lot of students, but also my kids had not had access to good teaching and well-trained teachers, conducive learning environments and experiences, or qualitative learning materials. They had little or no exposure to the world outside of their immediate environment and communities, and some of them suffered extreme malnutrition. This was painful to see.

Many also lived in a community where there was no role model for them to look up to and where no one made them hopeful that with education, tomorrow could be better, regardless of their experience or background.

I chose to stay.

I wanted to stay so that at least they would have me to look up to. So that they would experience love, care, and respect and be treated with dignity.

I chose to stay to ignite hope in their hearts and show them that their background should



not be a major determinant of their future; instead, they should embrace education and be empowered to soar as high as eagles.

In that classroom, I believed that I could make a change in their hearts and give them my best so they could become the best versions of themselves. Hope and love were the major words in my heart, and I wanted to live it out, so I stayed.

Then one day, while taking a short walk after a full day of teaching, I met some kids roaming about on the streets during school hours. I wondered why they were not in school, so I crossed to the other side of the road and we had such a great conversation. I got to know them, and the sad highlight of our conversation was that their parents couldn't afford to send them to school due to financial constraints. Every day, they walked around the community until their other friends who could afford to be in school finished for the day. I felt my heart drop and the burden to see





Market street in Lagos, Nigeria

kids access education became weightier.

I was lucky. I had access to a private school education all my life and I thought everyone else did, too, but I was all wrong. At the time, fees for the public school cost \$4 per term (three months), an amount that wouldn't seem like much to many Americans, but it was a luxury for these Nigerian families to pay. This was a painful realization for me because I know how empowering education is and the impact it can have on a person, family, and nation. I was hurting to see that these children and their families were missing out

on the countless benefits of education.

The burden of the educational inequality in Nigeria led me to start Talent Mine Academy, a nonprofit where kids in low-income communities are provided with fully funded access to quality education and enrichment programs so that they are raised to be leaders and responsible citizens of their communities. So far, I have worked with 100 kids, boys and girls, in the Ota community of Nigeria, including every one of the kids I met that day on the street.

To improve the impact of the work that I do

at Talent Mine Academy, and to benefit other communities in Nigeria, I applied last year to the Learning and Teaching Program at the Ed School. Before coming to Harvard, I thought I would turn Talent Mine into an actual school. But after doing an impact cost analysis in a social entrepreneurship course I took with Professor [FERNANDO REIMERS, ED.M.'84, ED.D.'88](#), I discovered a better and more sustainable way to provide education to kids in low-income communities. Rather than build schools in places that were already saturated with schools, instead I would work with existing private





Akintimehin with some of her students whose tuition has been fully funded

schools that have the physical facilities and human resources.

Now, just a few months after graduating from the Ed School, our newly developed core programs are:

► **THE PRIVATE SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME**, where we partner with private individuals and organizations to provide fully funded primary education to our kids in private schools. We locate a private school in their community and get donors to pay for their primary education fees.

► **ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**, where we balance the intellectual stimulation that our kids get in the classroom with mentorship, leadership sessions, and life skills development programs around issues like digital literacy, empathy, and being responsible, to transform their mindset and help them be better versions of themselves.

► **TEACHER TRAINING**, a program we are still developing. It is taking a while because we are brainstorming and reading about sus-

tainable ways to train teachers in the private schools we pair our kids with. Even though we partnered with Schoolinka, a teacher-training platform in Africa, the lack of technology and digital infrastructure in low-income communities in Nigeria has posed as a challenge.

Now, with my Harvard degree in hand (and hanging on the wall of my apartment), I am more equipped with the right skills, knowledge, and expertise, and I am working to develop a model of schooling and learning for kids in low-income communities so that they can access quality education at little or no cost to them.

And I stayed.

After graduation, I never considered moving. Just as I chose to stay during my Teach For Nigeria days, despite the challenges, I chose to stay after I graduated from Harvard. It is important for me to do this work in Nigeria because, at this point, we need good governance, leadership, and accountability more than ever. We need schools and organizations

in the education space and beyond to invest in raising the kids who are the promising leaders to make a change in the country and continent at large.

As Nelson Mandela stated, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” For me, that change starts right here, in Nigeria, my home.

Aramide Oluwaseun Akintimehin graduated from the Ed School’s Learning and Teaching Program this past May

► Follow Akintimehin on Instagram and Twitter: @AramideKayode

► Check out her website: [talentmineacademy.org](https://talentmineacademy.org)

► Watch a television interview with her: <https://hgse.me/3juX110>



# Ola Ozernov-Palchik, Lecturer on Education

This summer, just before the fall semester kicked off, Ola Ozernov-Palchik, faculty director for the Mind, Brain, and Education Program since 2019, talked about reading in multiple languages, *Pippi*, and picnic blankets in Boston's museum of trees.

## What are you currently reading?

I am reading a collection of short stories by Anton Chekhov.

## What drew you to this collection?

Chekhov's empathetic and poignant — and humorous! — portrayal of humanity in a manner devoid of melodrama.

## What kind of reader were you as a kid, and what book most stuck with you?

I was an avid reader as a child. When my family immigrated from Russia to Israel, I had to transition into reading in another language, and being constrained by my own language skills was very difficult for me. One of the books I read in both languages multiple times and loved was *King Matt the First*. It is a book about a

child who becomes a king at a young age and has to deal with the adult world's irrational social and political complexities. The book was written by Janusz Korczak, a Jewish educator and director of an orphanage in Poland who, during WWII, refused to abandon his students and marched alongside them to the gas chambers. When I learned the historical context of this book in adulthood, it gave it a whole new meaning for me.

## What book do you most like reading to your son?

One of his favorite books, and the book I loved reading to him the most, is *Pippi Longstocking*. Pippi is a fierce, brave, creative, and funny little girl, and she is one of our favorite characters.

## What's the last interesting or useful thing you read in a book recently?

I recently read *In the Land of Invented Languages*. The book describes human attempts to create a perfectly logical universal language. But these attempts failed because we need our language to be imperfect and ambiguous, I guess to accommodate our imperfect and fuzzy minds.

## Is there a book you'll assign to your students this year that you think all educators should read?

This is a hard choice. I would assign two books. One book, *The Proust and the Squid*, is by my wonderful Ph.D. adviser **MARYANNE WOLF, ED.D.'79**. The book is about the cognitive neuroscience of reading and is beautifully written. Another book I would assign, especially to students considering doctoral studies, is *The Writing Workshop* by Barbara Sarnecka. I give this book as a gift

to my mentees who go to doctoral programs. It is an engaging, practical resource for how to write well.

## Favorite place to read?

My favorite place to read is under a tree at the [Arnold] Arboretum [of Harvard University], sprawled on a picnic blanket with my son.

## What books, in addition to the one you're currently reading, are on your nightstand?

I recently finished (and loved) *Uneducated*, *The Henna Artist*, and *The Vanishing Half*.



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# Practice



“I don’t think that any knowledge,  
especially any curriculum knowledge, is neutral.”

**KEFFRELYN BROWN, ED.M.’99**  
(SEE P.48)





# So Your Student Believes the Earth is Flat

Ten ways for teachers to address science denial

By Barbara Hofer, Ed.M.'77, and Gale Sinatra

**SCIENCE DENIAL** has become rampant and deadly in recent years, threatening individual health, community well-being, and the life of the planet's environment. As educators, we know that teachers have a significant role in addressing this growing problem. Teachers can mentor the next generation of scientists, and they can also nurture an appreciation for science and instill regard for scientific expertise, regardless of students' chosen careers. Science can contribute to contemporary problems great and small. Such work is enhanced when members of the public understand and trust the scientific expertise.

Why is it that some individuals reject vaccinations during a pandemic or deny the human role in climate change? As two research psychologists, we have identified key constructs that make all of us susceptible to science denial, doubt, and resistance, detailed in our new book *Science Denial: Why It Happens and What to Do About It*. We include copious suggestions for how to address these challenges.

Here are our top 10 tips for teachers to address science denial with students in their classrooms:

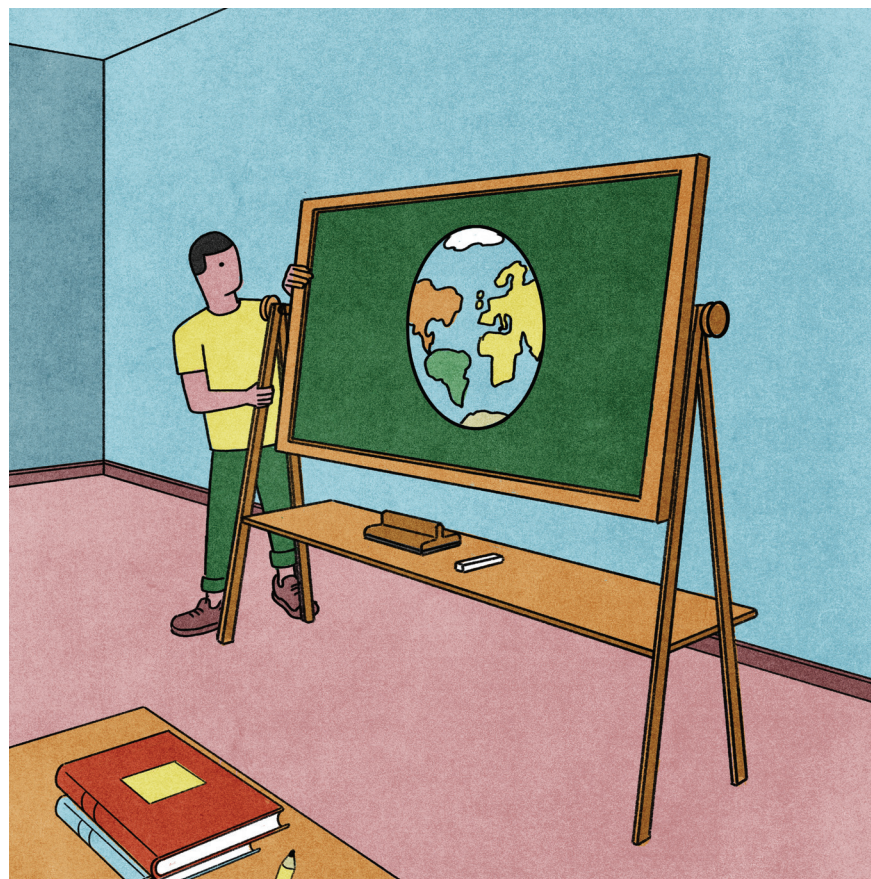
## 1. First, teach your students to value science.

Teach them that science is a systematic and reliable way to pose questions and seek answers about the natural world. Its strength lies in scientists' collective willingness to trust the evidence from combined results of many tests, an accumulation that builds toward scientific consensus, through peer

review of research findings.

## 2. Cultivate a scientific attitude.

At the heart of scientific thinking is an openness to new evidence and a willingness to change one's mind in light of new evidence. Educators will also recognize it as a cornerstone of critical thinking, relevant in all fields and highly valued in classrooms. Acknowledge it when you see it expressed in discussions. "I see how you changed your mind when you found out that..."





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### **3. Teach not only what scientists know but how they know.**

Students are often taught the scientific method as the sole means by which scientists test claims, through controlled studies in labs. This impression makes it difficult to understand how sciences such as astronomy may rely more on observations than experiments. Broaden their awareness of the various fields of sciences and the processes by which scientists know.

### **4. Address misconceptions about science.**

In our own research we have found that individuals often assume that unless scientists know something with complete certainty, the findings are dismissed as not trustworthy. For example, although 98% of climate scientists think that climate change is largely caused by human activities, only 57% of the public share that view.

### **5. Acknowledge emotions as a part of learning, not something to keep at bay.**

Many students were upset and an-

gry when Pluto was demoted to a dwarf planet. The issue of climate change may prompt anxiety, which needs attention for learning to occur. Consider the range of emotions involved, address negative ones, and foster positive ones.

### **6. Help students learn to evaluate scientific information they read online.**

Whether a fourth-grader is investigating if dinosaurs lived at the same time as humans or a high school student is trying to learn more about sex, they are likely to seek information online and are typically ill-equipped to evaluate what they read. Build information literacy skills into every research assignment. Teach algorithmic literacy; students often erroneously believe that the top hits in a search are more reliable and valid, unaware that an unseen, proprietary formula is selecting the results.

### **7. Offer basic information about how our minds work that helps explain science denial, doubt, and resistance.**

For example, confirmation bias is a human tendency to seek information that aligns with prior beliefs. Ask students to monitor their own search habits, for example, when seeking information about a topic, and to note when they stop looking and why.

### **8. Teach students to determine what expertise to value and trust.**

We each have a bounded understanding of science and need to rely on expertise to make many decisions when the science is beyond our reach. Offer differing sources for their review on a topic of interest and help them adjudicate which are likely to be more reliable. Discuss where else they get information and how they weigh competing ideas.

### **9. Foster healthy skepticism.**

Such skepticism (not doubt or resistance) is a critical part of both the scientific process and consumer awareness. Help students become wary of clickbait headlines (“chocolate cures cancer!”) and individ-

ual studies yet to be corroborated. They can learn to be especially suspicious of campaigns designed to foster doubt in scientific findings, funded by vested interests.

### **10. Be aware of your broad and lasting impact as a teacher.**

Scientific thinking is critical for all students, not just those who want to become scientists. Help all students, regardless of their career paths, learn to think scientifically and appreciate the scientific expertise. With your help they can become citizens who can contribute to public dialogue from an informed, evidence-based stance and make decisions about their own health and wellbeing for years to come.

Barbara Hofer, Ed.M.'77, is a professor emerita of psychology at Middlebury College. Gale Sinatra is a professor of education at the University of Southern California

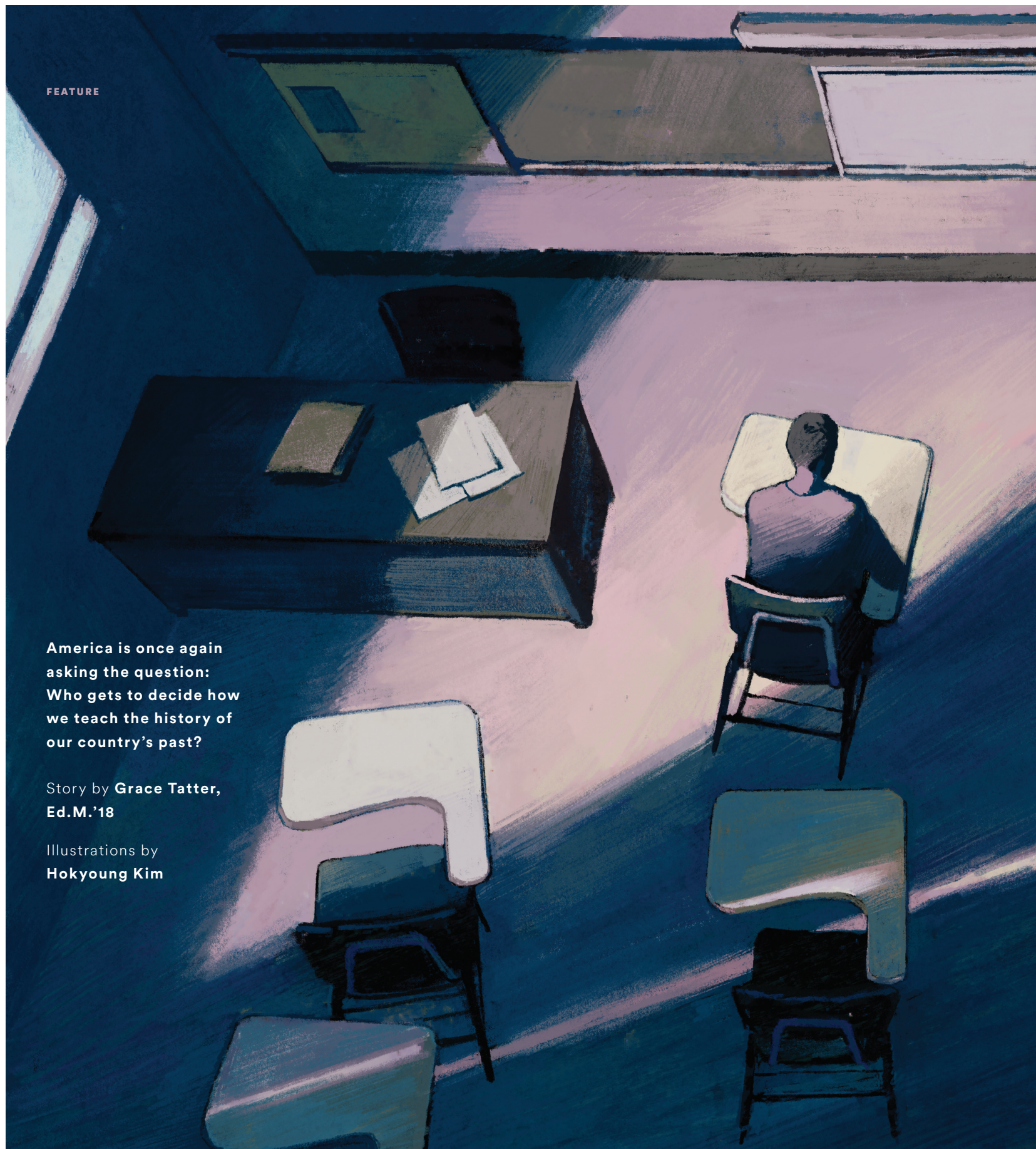


FEATURE

America is once again asking the question: Who gets to decide how we teach the history of our country's past?

Story by **Grace Tatter**,  
Ed.M.'18

Illustrations by  
**Hokyoung Kim**





# The Greatest Battle in HISTORY





**SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS** have always had to keep tabs on the news, tying current events to their history and civics lessons. But in a trend that crescendoed this past summer as educators prepared for their third pandemic school year, the news hasn't just been part of their lessons — their lessons have been part of the news.

The recent drumbeat of headlines about social studies started in 2019, with the release of *The New York Times'* 1619 Project, an exploration of the centrality of slavery to American history, named for the year that the British colonists brought the first enslaved Africans to Virginia. The project — which was launched with searing commentary from Nikole Hannah-Jones that would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize — included curricular material that was adopted by schools across the country. Almost immediately, then-President Donald Trump publicized his opposition to the project. His administration announced its own history initiative: the 1776 Project. Then the pandemic happened, and, alongside it, a widespread, multiracial reckoning about racism in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd. Many educators became even hungrier for material that would help students trace the winding path from where the nation came from to the world they experience today. But the backlash was already primed. As of early November, 2021, *Chalkbeat* and *Ed Week* reported that 28 states have debated some sort of policy limiting how educators discuss race in the classroom, ranging from bans on the 1619 Project to prohibitions on discussing unconscious bias or “white privilege.” Twelve states have enacted them. Some policies mention critical race theory; some do not. They all aim to curtail how teachers can teach about the history of racism in the United States.

Despite fear-mongering headlines about critical race theory, actual lessons about it aren't documented on the K–12 level. The theory is usually taught on the graduate level, including at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where Adjunct Lecturer **DAREN GRAVES, ED.D.'06**, has co-taught a course on it for years with fellow



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Ed School Adjunct Lecturer **KIMBERLY TRUONG, ED.M.'04**. (Full disclosure: I took the course in fall 2017.) Graves has met the headlines about critical race theory with some bemusement. He notes that the theory, first articulated by scholars at Harvard Law School as a way to understand the role of race and racism in American institutions, is now being conflated with any discussion of race.

Critical race theory is a growing field, he says, and one that can offer a useful framework for teachers, helping them discern both what and how they teach. But it's not the dogma more sensationalistic articles or broadcast commentaries make it out to be.

"It's not a curriculum," Graves says. "It can give analytical tools to see how race is real, how it is operating. It gives you tools to think about, Is racism happening and why and how? It helps us think about whose voices are being elevated or not."

In some ways, he says, the vocal detractors of critical race theory in the K-12 classroom don't really seem to oppose the theory itself. They oppose students discussing how racism operates today, and why. That opposition has put history and social studies educators and what they teach in the middle of a nationwide debate over the country's past, which itself is a debate over the nation's future.

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History is inherently political, and so is its study, says **KEFFRELYN BROWN, ED.M.'99**, a professor of cultural studies in education at the University of Texas, Austin. "I don't think that any knowledge, especially any curriculum knowledge, is neutral," she says. In the 1900s, Catholic Americans complained that curriculum at public schools was overly influenced by Protestantism; more recently, in the 1990s, local school board meetings and op-ed pages hosted debates over multiculturalism in schools, or broadening curriculum to focus on cultures beyond Europe. In J. Anthony Lukas' *Common Ground*, which fo-

cuses on school desegregation in Boston, Lukas describes how the education writer and historian Jonathan Kozol was fired from a Boston elementary school in the mid-1960s for teaching students Langston Hughes' *Ballad of the Landlord*, which details police violence against the Black narrator. Kozol was told to stick to poems that "accentuate the positive."

Brown points out that deciding which facts to focus on and what materials to teach with will change depending on who is in power, as will language and word choice. In 2012, Brown co-authored an article in the *Harvard Education Review* on the representation of racial violence in Texas textbooks, which she and her partners analyzed through the lens of critical race theory. They found that the textbooks did include historical incidences of racism. Lynchings were mentioned; violence against Black people was discussed. But it was rarely called racism, and it was usually portrayed as the direct result of individual actions—not the consequence of larger





“If students don’t learn about the history of slavery, then they might believe that the Electoral College is a benign institution predicated on establishing democratic fairness for Americans across the country,” Smith writes. “They might grow up to believe that the enormous wealth gap between Black and white Americans is simply a result of one group working harder than another. They might think that our prison system looks the way it does because Black people are inherently more violent.” Similarly, learning about the history of redlining or school segregation raises questions about the government’s role in housing and education today, with answers just as hotly debated as how history should be taught.

systems. Brown refers to this as the “men doing bad things” phenomenon. “The way that racism, so to speak, existed was something that was in the past; something that was not sort of deeply connected to the country itself or the fabric of democracy; ... that it was an aberration.”

Several states’ new policies about how to discuss racism in school specifically take aim at explorations of systemic racism, or the idea that racist ideology was a force in the nation’s founding. But the overlap between racism and the founding of the United States isn’t really a matter of interpretation, but of facts. In a September 2020 *Atlantic* article, **CLINT SMITH, PH.D.’20** (see page 26), points out that the centrality of slavery is spelled out in primary documents. He writes, “Teaching the actual history of slavery does not necessitate skewing, omitting, or lying about what happened in this country; it takes only an exploration of the primary source documents to give one a sense of what it was and the legacy that it has left.”

Smith writes that acknowledging this legacy has implications for how we interpret present-day conditions and political agendas — and perhaps the implications for the present day are the beating heart of the debate over what students should learn.

The framing of history not only has implications for how students understand the United States’ past and present. It also has the potential to shape how they understand themselves. A popular skit by the comedian Bo Burnham skewers the common treatment of Black history in American classrooms as confined to a limited discussion of just a few key figures, like George Washington Carver. “White guys get a lot of s\*\*\*, and it’s not fair, because we’ve done a lot of things, you know?” sings Burnham. “We invented a lot of stuff. White guys invented ... everything but peanut butter. That’s what I was taught in school. Everything but peanut butter. Doesn’t sound right, but the American educational system having a bias? No way, Joseph.” In his new book *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* (see page 10), Assistant Professor Jarvis Givens quotes Woodson, a historian and founder of Black History Month, on the psychological implications of such a white-centered narrative: “The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies,” Woodson wrote.

Brent Bette, a current Ed.M. student in school leadership, knows firsthand how empowering it was to find someone he identified with in the



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“I think sometimes that policymakers assume that the teacher controls everything that happens in the classroom, which is never true.”

**KAYCIE BENNETT, ED.M.'20**, SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

history books. As a child in rural Connecticut, he became hooked on history, particularly inspired by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt — like him, an only child— and like him and most of the prominent figures he learned about in history classes, a white male. When Bette became a history teacher himself, he wanted to give his students of color the opportunity to connect to the material in the same way.

“It kind of hit me after the first month or so: They’re not seeing themselves in this. So how can I engage them better?” He began making the conscious effort to go beyond the figures highlighted in textbooks.

Henry Turner is a principal at Newton North High School in Newton, Massachusetts. He’s focused on a more inclusive history for his teachers, and on bringing in discussions about the realities of race to all subjects as a principal — something he felt with even more urgency after a 2016 incident in which white students at his school were filmed driving through the school parking lot, waving a Confederate flag. A history that celebrates the racial identity of all students and acknowledges the realities of the barriers posed by racism helps all students, Turner says.

“When we support the students who are the most marginalized in our schools, it’s good for the students who are the most empowered in our schools,” he says.

In part informed by the work of Ed School Professor Danielle Allen, Bette, now transitioning from the classroom to a new role as an assistant principal in Lenox, Massachusetts, has emphasized including more people of color in history lessons and providing richer context about their resistance to oppression. However, that involves acknowledging the existence of racial oppression. Lawmakers behind the policies limiting how to talk about race have said they mean to protect students from discussions that will sow division. The Tennessee law make lesson plans illegal if students feel “discomfort,” “guilt,” or “anguish.” The implicit, and perhaps ironic, subtext is that the law is meant to protect *white* students from discomfort or guilt borne from acknowledging

racism and any white privilege. (Ascribing privilege to any racial group or sex is also forbidden by the Tennessee law.) But Graves, also a developmental psychologist, argues that discomfort is not a bad thing; if anything, it’s part of learning. He says that race identity formation, or students’ perceptions of themselves based on their race, is happening in schools whether or not race and racism are discussed in the context of history.

And if white students are uncomfortable when they’re presented with new historical information or questions about race, it’s not necessarily because they’re overcome with guilt. Brown says that part of the reason students are often uncomfortable when they confront racism in a historical context is because they haven’t been exposed to it before. They feel they’ve been lied to — something she sees often with her undergraduate students at the University of Texas.

“The reason that people feel bad, if, indeed, they feel bad when they learn about [racism in history], is because they haven’t learned about it,” she says. “Because they’ve gone through life assuming that this doesn’t exist or not knowing that it exists, [they become] very frustrated or upset once they learn a more realistic and fuller picture of our history.”

Ultimately, educators say that excising uncomfortable conversations about race and racism is an impossible goal. Whether or not the curriculum includes materials about the embeddedness of racism in American life, students are going to ask about it. **KAYCIE BENNETT, ED.M.'20**, is a middle school social studies teacher in Florida’s Miami-Dade County. Florida’s state board of education passed a policy this past summer prohibiting teachers from suggesting “that racism is not merely the product of prejudice, but that racism is embedded in American society and its legal systems in order to uphold the supremacy of white persons.” But Bennett says that students will inevitably want to grapple with hard questions about race and society. Last school year, events

► Related curriculum and student activities: [pulitzercenter.org/1619](https://pulitzercenter.org/1619)



like the 2020 presidential election, Capitol riots, and the Derek Chauvin trial meant that students were probing serious questions about the role of racism in public institutions and life on their own, and wanted to discuss them in class.

“I think sometimes that policymakers assume that the teacher controls everything that happens in the classroom, which is never true,” she says. “It’s a living community. The students bring in their own backgrounds, their own interests and opinions.”

The inevitability of conversations about racism today are exactly why states should be helping teachers prepare for such discussions, rather than forbidding them, Graves says. “Whether we like it or not, race is happening in schools. Racism is happening in and around school. Kids are forming racial identities in school, whether it’s happening intentionally or not.”

Before moving to Florida, Bennett spent a year teaching in Massachusetts, where her school used the 1619 Project in their curriculum.

In Florida, those materials are forbidden. But, she says, that wouldn’t keep her from talking about slavery or bringing in similar perspectives into her classroom. “There are other resources that can be used as a substitute,” she says. While the subject matter is inherently political, Bennett says her job is to present students with facts and different viewpoints, and to create a welcoming learning environment. Her job is not, she says, to get them to agree with one another or to subscribe to a single thesis or theory about American history. In one of the most diverse school districts in the nation, her students come from families of different national, cultural, racial, and political origins.

“Definitely, there is more disagreement and heterogeneous opinion when it comes to politics than what you would find in a lot of other places in the country. It’s not something that I experienced teaching in Massachusetts. It’s not something that I saw in my own education in Louisiana,” she says. That’s all the more reason to help students learn how to have conversations about contentious issues that touch on race. “The community has been defined and students feel safe to whatever extent I can make that happen.”

Bette says that learning to have conversations about thorny parts of American history and present-day events is a critical skill — and one that many adults don’t have. He says that in addition to allowing teachers the flexibility to use a range of materials in history and social studies classrooms, they also need support from administrators to facilitate difficult conversations.

“I actually think that they have these conversations much more easily than adults can. Some [conversations] are going to be hard and some are going to be difficult, [but] it is a much more meaningful way to approach this than just trying to put a curriculum together. I think that’s only the first level of this,” he says. “You need to understand diversity in a real-world aspect, and develop relationships with people that don’t look like you, that don’t come from the same background as you, that don’t share the same history as you. That’s where the real work happens. But



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## “Whether we like it or not, race is happening in schools.”

ADJUNCT LECTURER DAREN GRAVES, ED.D.'06

I think that's also where the best strides happen as well.”

Blocking students from conversations about race, in a historical context or otherwise, is just leaving them less equipped for the real world, because our history and our present are inextricable. Race never just shaped the experiences of people of color, Graves says. “For white parents who are worried about their kids’ identities, impacting how they feel about themselves in school, I would argue, welcome to my life, right? Or my childhood or my kids’ childhood, or many people of color’s lives, what they have to contend with on a daily basis.

“I’m not saying that this is about spreading the pain. This is about being stronger and feeling a sense of agency to be able to change our communities for the better moving forward.”

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One possible positive byproduct of all of the controversy around what to teach in social studies and history classes is that people are talking about social studies and history classes.

“What has happened — I don’t think maliciously necessarily — I think we have said ‘science, math, science, math,’ this is where the future is. This is where we have to focus our attention,” Bette says. “I think people have finally woken up to the fact that social science education, talking about the world around you, about the nation, about people who aren’t like you, who share different narratives, is just as important as understanding science and math.”

On the second anniversary of the launch of the 1619 Project, Nikole Hannah-Jones noted on Twitter how controversial the project and the discourse around reframing history has been. “I hoped to force the year 1619 into the national lexicon,” she wrote. “It might be argued that [one] can measure the success of that goal by the intensity of the pushback.”

The energy in the debate over our nation’s history, and how it’s presented in schools, underscores the importance of history and social studies. The stakes of what and how students

are taught are high. How students understand the nation’s past will influence how they understand the nation’s present — and, by extension, themselves and their role in it.

Grace Tatter, Ed.M.’18, is an associate producer for NPR’s *On Point* and a freelance writer

In August 2019, the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery, *The New York Times Magazine* published a special issue as part of their 1619 Project





# What I Did This Summer

The 12 weeks Muna Malin, Ed.M.'21, spent learning about babies' brains



**DURING THE SUMMER OF 2020**, when struggling school districts across the country were overwhelmed by the amount of work that needed to be done to face the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, Dean Bridget Long and the Public Education Leadership Project at Harvard University responded by sending 21 brand new graduates into districts to help through a new 12-week initiative, the Dean's Education Fellows Program. As Senior Lecturer **JENNIFER CHEATHAM, ED.M.'06, ED.D.'10**, noted, the new fellows rolled up their sleeves and "just got in there." This past summer, a new batch of graduates went back into the field for a few months, looking at issues such as how professional development affects student performance in Detroit, racial equity in Boston, and special education funding in New Orleans. Colorado native **MUNA MALIN, ED.M.'21**, who previously worked in early childhood and girls' education domestically and abroad, specifically

in Saudi Arabia and Senegal, was one of those fellows. As one of three students assigned to work in Gwinnett County Public Schools, the largest district in Georgia, Malin worked on a project created because the district was struggling to get all children ready for kindergarten. In August, as the fellowship was winding down, Malin spoke to *Ed.* about babies' brains, early childhood development, and why she realized it was important to visualize surveys.

**Why did you want to do this fellowship this past summer?**

I was excited about this fellowship because it afforded me the opportunity to apply the knowledge and experience that I gained throughout my master's program.

**Was the work done in-person in Georgia or virtually?**

I was physically located in Gwinnett County, Georgia, during this fellowship, but the fellowship was





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completely remote, which for me was very convenient.

**What in particular about the Building Babies' Brains Project appealed to you?**

Building Babies' Brains was of particular interest to me because of my love for early childhood education. I was eager to be involved in supporting early childhood development in the Gwinnett County community.

**You were responsible for what part of this project?**

This summer, I produced a self-assessment for caretakers of children under 5 years old that helps familiarize them with developmental milestones. The assessment will also direct the respondents to resources that will continue to support their learning.

**What kinds of questions are asked when caretakers fill out the assessment?**

The questions are all related to

developmental milestones. An example question is, "Can your child stand while unsupported?"

**What was the goal of the project and of the self-assessment, in particular?**

The general aim of the project is to ensure that children are on the right path to kindergarten readiness. The questions are not intended to diagnose; rather, they are meant to familiarize parents with common milestones that are associated with their child's age. The self-assessment will be accessible on the Building Babies' Brains website later this year. Hopefully, it will guide them to other resources that are already available.

**You just graduated from the Ed School. What did you learn from working on this project that helped extend what you learned while you were here?**

I learned how much revision goes into formulating assessments. I also learned the wide range of

considerations that impact assessments. It is really important to think about how certain questions will be received by caregivers as well as the connotations that might accompany some questions.

**The project's focus was on child development. What did you learn in that area?**

I have gained extensive knowledge of child development. I learned about current efforts regarding special education, culturally responsive education, and professional development.

**Such as?**

I learned how unique early childhood care and education is. For example, while creating the list of questions for the survey, it was clear that I had to separate children by month because children under 5 years old develop rapidly from month to month. I enjoyed familiarizing myself with milestones from 1 month old to 12 months old as this was an age group with which

I did not have prior experience.

**What did you learn about yourself?**

I realized how much I enjoy technical projects such as the caregiver survey. I had to frequently visualize what the survey would look like to respondents and this would inform how I phrased the questions. I liked this process because it taught me how to effectively reach caregivers and assure that the survey would be beneficial and informative.

**You've said that creating resources for parents and children isn't easy.**

One of my lessons learned is that there is a lot of trial and error in creating resources. A well-crafted resource requires input from multiple people who have expertise and experience in the field. The individuals that I interacted with during the Building Babies' Brains fellowship provided many insights that I did not think of while working on the assessments.

# What I Learned Writing a Book With My Father

**GROWING UP, MATT TALLON, ED.M.'09**, administrative director of faculty support services at the Ed School, had seen the burn scars and the skin grafts covering his father's body. He remembers the times his dad's back acted up. What he didn't fully understand was that the wounds — the ones he saw and the ones his dad carried inside — were from the night in 1972 when his dad's Mohawk plane was shot down at the tail end of the Vietnam War. His father survived, but his copilot didn't, and he rarely talked about those days. So Tallon was surprised when his dad came to him in 2009 with a stack of yellow notepads filled with his handwritten memories — memories that the two of them turned into a new memoir called *100 Days in Vietnam*. Here's what he learned.

**My father, Lt. Col. Joseph Tallon, didn't share these stories.** It was better for him to put it away, not talk about it much. I got bits and pieces here and there so I knew something had happened to him, but I didn't know the details. I had to probe. Then my dad came to me with the yellow legal pads and I had to interview him. We typed up the notes.

**He was motivated to start sharing by his former high school students in South Carolina.** My father was one of those social studies teachers that wove into his lessons so many personal stories and narratives that the students told him he must spend time telling his life stories in retirement.

**My father flew a spy plane, a surveillance plane.** It took pictures. Now they use drones. He was a military intelligence officer.

**His plane was shot down around 1 in the morning.** They were at a low speed and a low altitude, so it was already dangerous. Both were ejected from the crash. They hit the ground pretty hard. The man sitting next to him, whose job was to run the surveillance equipment, didn't survive.

**My dad only knew this guy, specialist Daniel Richards, for three hours.** He had been stationed on another base in Thailand, but they happened to be flying a mission together that night. It was their first flight together. My dad was 25. The other soldier was 23.

**In regards to the accident itself, I learned the depths of the survivor's guilt that he still feels to this day.** I knew he was emotional about losing his observer, but it took the detailed work we did recounting that accident from all angles for the book to get a sense of his true guilt that he wasn't able to get the aircraft safely back on the runway even with the disabled engine.

**He thought it was his turn to serve. He was trying to make something matter.** You want to think your service matters. One of the themes of this book is, how do you make sacrifice matter?

**Basically all that was left in Vietnam in 1972 were guys like my dad. The Americans were scaling back their presence.** Nixon was running for reelection and following his 1968 pledge to end the war if elected, he's desperately trying to find a way out.

**It was a really terrible time to be there.** There was never a good time, of course.

**When we first started working together, I didn't know if the book would be in his voice or my voice.** It ended up being in both. The guts of the book, parts one and two, really center on my dad's time in Vietnam, and we put current events in there, but another thread, what makes the book unique, is my dad was newly married when he went to Vietnam. This was a year later. You can see in reading the letters, he's clearly missing my mother. He wrote to her nearly every day. It's truly a love story.

**I learned that my mom had the letters buried in the attic. She brought them out halfway into the writing process.** After that, we totally rewrote the book. It allowed us to create the narrative like a journal. As a reader, you're experiencing this as he was experiencing it, as a 25-year-old instead of as a 74-year-old. It's not just looking back, as many memoirs are written.

**Because we found cassette recordings and handwritten letters, my father couldn't hide from his 25-year-old self during this project.** For me, it was a revelation. I too had been an Army lieutenant at age 25 and also newly married and serving overseas some 30 years after my father's experiences in Vietnam.

**When we first started the writing, I started taking classes at Harvard Extension School on memoir and creative nonfiction,** at night, after work. I really pushed myself in drafting this memoir. You also see how having two history teachers for parents had an influence in how we structure the book.

**There were certainly myriad challenges with this project over the 12 years it took to get to this final published product,** and many times I wondered if it would ever get finished in the high-quality manner we so desired it to be. I often joke that this book was written and rewritten between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. many times over, and sadly that's probably true.

**What I really learned writing a book with my dad is that I'm a lot like him** and I'm very different from him all at the same time.

▶ Check out family photos from the book: [gse.harvard.edu/ed](http://gse.harvard.edu/ed)



Matt Tallon with a photo  
of his dad, at the Dorchester  
Vietnam Veterans Memorial





## PAST TENSE



WHEN HIS CHILDHOOD bedroom in Manhasset Hills, New York, became his Ed School classroom during the pandemic, and his family (mom, dad, and brother Nelson) became his learning community, **DUSTIN LIU, ED.M.'21**, says he found joy in something many consider ho-hum: receiving snail mail at home, especially when it was from people in his Ed School world.

Prior to COVID, Liu says he didn't get much paper mail, "just the regular stuff — bills, catalogs, flyers," he says. But then during the holidays, he got his first piece from a peer in his program. "My classmate, Chandler, sent me his family holiday card from Connecticut," he says. "It was a surreal experience and felt like the most 'in-person' experience I had with my classmates." Later, during the spring semester, the mailings became more frequent. "I had friends who would send me books, small notes, postcards, and even a plant!" One of his professors, Lecturer **ALEXIS REDDING, ED.M.'10, ED.D.'18**, sent small gifts to students after hosting trivia events and raffles. Liu, who is now living in Boston and working in-person as a teaching fellow at the Ed School, displayed these "valued artifacts," as he called them, in a special place in his room. "Right in eyes view on the cabinet next to my bed," he says. "It made the virtual year feel less virtual."

● What's one of your favorite memories from your time studying at the Ed School? Let us know: [Lory\\_hough@harvard.edu](mailto:Lory_hough@harvard.edu)



Help the Whitney. Point your phone's camera to the QR code below:





BACK STORY



If you've read *How the Word Is Passed*, you're familiar with the Whitney Plantation in Louisiana. It experienced an enormous amount of damage from Hurricane Ida and will be closed indefinitely. Please consider making a donation to help them rebuild & pay staff."



"I will sign, personalize, and send books to the first ten people who show me a receipt of their donation to the Whitney."



"The ten books are claimed! You all are amazing (and fast as hell). But please keep these donations coming and support this institution. It's the only plantation museum in Louisiana, and one of the few in the country that focuses on the lives of the enslaved."

CLINT SMITH, ED.M.'17, PH.D.'20, author of *How the Word Is Passed*, appealed to his followers in a series of Tweets on September 2, 2020, to support the Whitney Plantation, one of the locations he writes about. (See story, page 26.) Below left is a storm-destroyed slave cabin.

A behind-the-scenes look at how our stories get made, featuring our writers, photographers, illustrators, editors, and designers.





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“THE WHITNEY EXISTS AS A LABORATORY FOR HISTORICAL AMBITION,  
AN EXPERIMENT IN REWRITING WHAT LONG AGO WAS REWRITTEN. IT IS A HAMMER  
ATTEMPTING TO UNBEND FOUR CENTURIES OF CROOKED NAILS.  
IT IS A PLACE ASKING THE QUESTION, *HOW DO YOU TELL A STORY THAT  
HAS BEEN TOLD THE WRONG WAY FOR SO LONG?*”

CLINT SMITH, *HOW THE WORD IS PASSED*

