



Incorporating Native American History and Settler Colonialism in the AP United States History Course

Curriculum Unit 19.02.04

by John K. Laub

Introduction

In this curriculum unit, I intend to augment the AP United States History course with key concepts in Native American studies in order to illuminate colorblindness and legitimized racism in classrooms across the nation.

When I was child growing up in the Seventies, my father and teachers always told me that to the winners go the spoils of war and history is written by those who are victorious in battle. Repeated over and over, the narrative became dogma and seemed to be the natural law of the universe. I did not have the education to counter the aforementioned canon of American life.

At a young age, I desired to learn more about Native Americans. I wanted to explore the cultures and experiences of Indigenous people, and the roles they played in our country. Regrettably, there was very little taught in my high school classes in Southbury, CT. I had to rely on movies and TV shows to provide acumen into the cultures of Native Americans in North America. Unfortunately, the limited images and perspectives often perpetuated racial stereotypes that clouded my knowledge with the colonial settler narrative of American history and promoted legitimized racism.¹ As I read more books and attended classes in college, I was exposed to multiple perspectives, gained intellectual knowledge and questioned the chronicles of U.S. history.

I provide educators and students with multiple perspectives in order to raise student understanding of Native American history and settler colonialism—the removal and erasure of Indigenous people and functions as an invasive intruder who advances a distinctive identity and sovereignty—as well as debunk the accepted creeds of the past and stereotypes in America today.

Indigenous groups have survived and thrived hundreds of years of settler colonialism. They have not vanished, nor were it inevitable, that they disappeared. I will focus on disputing the colonial settler narratives inscribed in history books and promoted by colorblind educators. My research will rely on three important sources: *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* by Leanne Betasamosak Simpson and *The Real All-Americans* by Sally Jenkins.

Illuminating Native American History

There is no questioning the lack of Native American history that is taught in schools. My unit focuses on AP U.S. History scholars, who are juniors and seniors. I want the students to examine their own cultural and racial biases, and how a colorblind ideology has impaired our educational system and promoted a white colonial settler account of American history.

Across the country, educators and politicians are pushing to challenge the assumptions of settler colonial history and incorporate the Native American history and studies into curricula. In California, former Governor Jerry Brown signed two laws in 2017, AB 738 and AB 2016, promoting Native California history. The State Board of Education must also adopt ethnic studies by March 2020. In Montana, the state pledged to sponsor the distinctive cultural legacy of Native Americans in 1972 and the Indian Education for All Act was finally implemented with financial support in 2005. Unfortunately, Native American history, politics and culture is still largely disregarded by many schools across the nation. In my home state, there is very little in the K-12 standards or curriculum in which focuses on Native American history.

As a life-long educator, I hope to expand the students' knowledge of the intersection of race, colonial settler narrative and legitimized racism in United States history.

Throughout our YNHTI seminar on colorblindness, we have studied the dramatic effect that colorblindness has had on Americans' perspective and scholarship. Since the 1970s, scholars and teachers from the across the political spectrum, have centered on a paradigm of racial colorblindness—the contention that we should ignore race in all disciplines and teach without any focus or discussion of race, racism or colonialism to our students.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) addresses the fallacy of colorblindness in education. Teachers and academics must address the role of race and racism in the structure of U.S. Society. There is no question that by ignoring the tremendous culture and history of Native Americans that educators are often complicit in the colorblindness paradigm.

In "Rethinking Pedagogy to Re-center Race: Some Reflections," Caitlin L. Ryan and Adrienne D. Dixon illustrate the importance of CRT in the classroom.

"The particular lens of CRT, however, makes the systemic cultural and racial patterns that operate in schools more visible...Dominant discourse in both legal scholarship and educational institutions frequently seek colorblindness as an ideal. CRT points out that an appeal to a colorblind perspective is a particular political choice that ignores historical and social contexts where race has and continues to matter."ⁱⁱ

According to Dwanna L. McKay, indigenous populations experience legitimized racism and it is often ignored by white Americans, who do not even recognize their racial bias. Legitimized racism is defined as Western Civilization's depiction of Indigenous people without any deep cultural knowledge or input from the people in order to gain power. McKay states that legitimized racism "transforms overt racism into so-called benevolent acts of tradition and honor."ⁱⁱⁱ The cultural portraits are accepted as true because racial power degrades tribes

into stereotypes and hideous caricatures.

In “Shifting Frames” by Milton Reynolds in *Seeing Race Again*, the teacher-educator examines curricula across the country that hide the inhumane atrocities committed in U.S. History by the federal government and a race-based political system and culture as well as the colorblind educational complex that hides the truth from students. Reynolds probes “conceptual impoverishment”^{iv} and the negative impact it has on all Americans. It begins with teachers who did not learn U.S. history in-depth and embrace colorblindness as an ideology in their classrooms. The inability of far too many educators to confront their own biases and promote an inaccurate narrative of American history hurts all students. “In essence, colorblind knowledge fosters ignorance by intentionally abstracting historical events from the systems and structures of power and subjugation that produces these outcomes,” states Reynolds.^v

Colorblindness in the AP U.S. History Curriculum

In order to illuminate colorblindness in the AP U.S. History course, I specify Native American studies activities for educators and teachers that can be included in their classrooms throughout the school year or after the AP exam in May. Students will read primary sources, short stories and poetry of Native Americans to provide a new narrative of Indigenous people. Also, two films are examined to offer a more complex account of Native American history and culture. Teachers can use all of the materials specified to illustrate legitimized racism in America and challenge scholars to confront their own colorblindness.

There is little question that the AP course is structured around a historical narrative of the political, social, economic and cultural structures that built this country. It lacks a critical eye on the impact of a white-power structure and colonial settler account that committed genocide against Indigenous peoples for over 300 years.

Despite the clear omission, it is the role of the educator to enlighten students. The AP exam always occurs during the first week of May, and afterwards, there is plenty of time to examine the role of Native Americans in history. For the past four years, I have taught a unit on the Indian Wars from 1865-1890 in order to fill a massive hole in the AP curriculum. I spend a month studying Native American tribes on the Great Plains, including history, art and culture. Every educator who wants to open the curtain of colorblindness and knock down the door of White Fragility—a political, cultural, social and educational setting that protects white people from race-based stress and offers racial comfort—should embrace a unit to discredit the colonial settler history that dominates the curriculum. My unit provides needed resources and activities for educators to incorporate a more diverse prospectus in their AP U.S. History courses.

Indigenous people have strived and flourished in spite of colonialism and genocide. My personal goal is to help educators expand their knowledge of the history of Native Americans, legitimized racism and CRT in order to increase students understanding and comprehension of colorblindness and its impact on American society today.

Essential Questions to Challenge Colorblindness

- How do educators counter the colonial settler chronicle in the AP U.S. History curriculum?
- How have white power structures legitimized racism and created a colorblind society?
- How did Carlisle’s victory over Army uplift Native Americans and debunk the white supremacist narrative?
- How do sports franchises degrade and legitimize racial stereotypes?
- How have Native Americans survived and strived despite the loss of their land?
- How have Native Americans rewrote the narrative of their history and culture?
- How does Columbus Day contribute to a false narrative of white supremacy and dehumanize Indigenous people in the AP U.S. History curriculum?

Legitimized Racism in America

Educators need to recognize the history of legitimized racism, and its impact on colorblindness in the classroom and history curriculums. Contextual knowledge of the long history of racial stereotypes promoted by white Americans and implemented by the power structure of the Federal government must be revealed. Teachers, and scholars, will learn settler colonialism, sovereignty, treaty violations, white supremacy and the fraudulent narrative written by white Americans.

There are 567 federally recognized tribes and 35 states are still home of Native American tribes.^{vi} Native Americans did not become United States citizens until 1924, and in 1932, federal regulations relegated Native Americans to second-class citizens: “Civilization Regulations” banned Indigenous dances and ceremonies and confined the tribes to reservations. In many areas of the country, Native Americans are still denied treaty and sovereignty rights and face discrimination by state and federal governments.

Since the Revolutionary period, white Americans embraced and encouraged racist troupes of Indigenous people for propaganda, subrogation, blame and profit. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson added the following in regard to Native Americans: “He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the *merciless Indian savages*, whose known rule of warfare, is undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”

Financial wealth, land ownership, a white supremacy ideology and a colonial settler narrative have been passed from one generation to the next among white Americans for over 200 years. With the assistance of the Federal Government and the United States Army, Native American land was taken on the Great Plains and in the West during the second half of the 19th Century and given to white settlers. Indigenous people were omitted from this transfer of wealth, and students need to understand how generations have endured second-class citizenship in our Constitutional Republic and a white-dominated political culture.

At the dawn of the Twentieth Century, white supremacists advocated segregation and promoted Social Darwinism to suppress all minorities, including Native Americans. Across the nation, white Americans attended Wild West shows and Wild “Buffalo Bill” Cody organized and profited off ticket sales of mock battles between the army and Indians. Many Americans embraced the racist account promoted at the shows.

Linguistics also became a rhetorical weapon of white supremacy in order to subjugate Native people. Across all avenues of popular culture, Indians were referred to as “savages,” “pagans,” “injuns,” “braves,” “bucks,” “chiefs,” “redskins,” “thieves” and “squaws” and adjectives—wild, dirty, sneaky and pesky—added to the smearing of the Indians.

Scholar Richard King writes:

“A common belief in the contemporary United States, often unspoken and unconscious, implies that everyone has a right to use Indians as they see fit; everyone owns them. Indianness is a national heritage; it is a front for commercial enterprise; it is a costume one can put on for a party, a youth activity, or a sporting event. This sense of entitlement, this expression of white privilege, has a long history, manifesting itself in national narratives, popular entertainments, marketing schemes, sporting worlds, and self-improvement regimes.”^{vii}

Some of the negative tropes can still casually be heard and embraced by Americans: “Indian Giver” and “On the Reservation” are often employed by whites in casual conversation without even understanding the historical roots of the terms. And racial stereotypes are still accepted among families. “...American children are still socialized into playing Indian. Columbus Day celebrations, Halloween costumes and Thanksgiving reenactments stereotype Indigenous Peoples as one big distorted culture. We are relegated to racist stereotypes and cultural caricatures,” Dwanna L. Robertson stated in *Playing ‘Indian’ and Color-Blind Racism*.^{viii}

In order to assist educators in augmenting the AP U.S. History curriculum, I have provided historic case studies and learning activities to illuminate colorblindness and legitimized racism in classrooms. Teachers have a variety of options to prepare their scholars for the final argumentative essay assessment: *Should Congress pass an Amendment to the Constitution that bans the use of Native American symbols as nicknames, mascots or logos by sports teams?* For historic case studies, educators can explore the Carlisle football team at the turn of the 20th Century and Washington Redskins’ owner George Preston Marshall, a white supremacist. Both lessons place colorblindness and legitimized racism in historical context for students. For current events, teachers can examine local political debates centered on Native American mascots, nicknames and logos of teams that promote stereotypes and legitimized racism in society.

Also included in my seminar paper are activities that incorporate primary and secondary sources to debunk stereotypes and contest the colonial settler narrative. Students observe the Sioux and Coeur d’Alene histories and experiences in film—*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and *Smoke Signals*—as secondary sources of Native American cultures. Two modern writers—Joy Harjo and Sherman Alexie— reveal Native American voices to eradicate racial stereotypes and promote Native American experiences. A primary source by the American Indian Movement, *The Trail of Broken Treaties: A 20-point Position Paper*, confronts the colonial settler narrative in the AP U.S. History curriculum. All of the historical cases and activities weave together a counter narrative to the colonial settler one embattled in the AP curriculum.

Carlisle Ranks among the All-Time Best

In the late 19th century, the Industrial Age brought tremendous technological changes, and the closing of the western frontier threatened visions of further manifest destiny in the continental United States. Americans looked for definitions of manhood, and sport rose to the forefront as a potential answer. Colleges in the Ivy League wanted to prepare elite men for leadership positions in society, and football provided a wonderful avenue to challenge their white students.

Underneath the game, a white supremacist ideology drove the narrative and glory of the heroic white competitor. Minorities were not physically strong enough or had the mental fortitude to play on the gridiron...only whites, according to Social Darwinists and elite progressives.

Some Americans promoted the assimilation of Native Americans as an opportunity to civilize the original populace of North America. Christian schools sprouted to prepare Indigenous children for a new life in American society. In Pennsylvania, Carlisle Indian Industrial School stood at the forefront of the new institutions dedicated to assimilating these children. Students came from conquered tribes, parents were pressured into surrendering their children, and occasionally, families volunteered kids to these boarding schools.

How did these new schools demonstrate that their students could assimilate? At Carlisle, football became an avenue to debunk white supremacy and prove that Native Americans could also thrive. By 1910, Carlisle has one of the best teams in the nation and competed against Yale, Harvard, Penn and Army. Who was the best athlete in the nation? None other than Carlisle star Jim Thorpe, who in the summer of 1912, would win the Gold Medal in the Decathlon.

By the fall of 1912, the Bulldogs were one of the best teams in the nation and owned an explosive offense, outscoring opponents 454-120. In early November, the team travelled to West Point to take on Army. For the players, it was not just another game. It represented their desire to earn respect and prove themselves.

For years, the white press accused Carlisle of cheating off the field and playing a less than masculine style of football on the gridiron. The Bulldogs emphasized speed, strategy and tactics as opposed to the brute force employed by the majority of white teams. "They had invented a whole new brand of game. Carlisle football, mixing the run, pass, and kick with elements of surprise was the game of the future."^{ix} It was a contrast of styles that angered many white Americans. Now, 9-0-1, the Bulldogs sought a victory worthy of their status in college football.^x

On the other sideline, the cadets dressed several future WWII generals: Geoffrey Keyes, Leland Hobbs, Vernon Prichard, Omar N. Bradley and Dwight D. Eisenhower. The outcome of the game had major implications for both clubs seeking a national championship in college football. For the Bulldogs, it also meant earning respect across the nation from the white press. "Though they were clearly the best offense in the nation, commentators continued to mark them with an asterisk, as if they were something less than a real college team, and suggested they had run up their extravagant scores against weaker competition."^{xi}

Despite all of the advantages of race, wealth and privilege, Army had no answer for the talented Bulldogs. "The shifting, puzzling, and dazzling attack of the Carlisle Indians had the Cadets bordering in a panic, *The New York Tribune* observed."^{xii} When the final gun sounded, Carlisle had punished Army 27-6 and stunned the

sports public.

“Since Whiteness has long enjoyed privilege in this society, work using CRT will likely bring new critiques on procedures that have heretofore been considered necessary or even best practices. Yet the benefits of such work would bring us closer to a just society. What types of inequalities would we see and what new possibilities for change might become visible when these issues are viewed through a lens that centers race?”^{xiii}

In a nation obsessed with sports, why has the public ignored the great Carlisle teams of the past? Why have the Bulldogs been relegated to the dustpan of history? I hope to bring the amazing accomplishments of the Carlisle team back into the consciousness of Americans. Unequivocally, Carlisle disproved the mendacity of racial stereotypes and myths of Native Americans, and through the lens of CRT, should be added to curriculum units across the country.

Legitimized Racism and Colorblindness in the Nation’s Capital

The Roaring Twenties are remembered for prohibition, organized crime, Jazz and flappers. It was also the Golden Age of Sports, and many professional teams incorporated racist nicknames for the identity of their franchise: Braves, Chiefs, Indians, Redskins and Warriors. Red-faced mascots were fashioned, Indian dances choreographed, face paintings promoted and feathered headdresses designed. Organizations (college and professional) created multi-million dollar franchises off “Indian” brand names.^{xiv}

As the Great Depression wreaked havoc across the country, George Preston Marshall, a racist and segregationist, invested in professional football along with two other partners.^{xv} The trio were awarded a franchise in Boston and decided to name the new team the Braves, which was the same designation as the baseball club in the city. In 1935, Marshall endorsed and convinced the other owners to ban African-Americans from playing in the NFL, and his franchise was the last team to sign an African-American player, trading for Bobby Mitchell in 1962.

It is not surprising that Marshall embraced the racial stereotypes of the era. He collected popular derogatory merchandise of Native Americans: Cigar-store Indian statues and heads, paintings, famous Indian chiefs’ portraits, Indian blankets and other artifacts.^{xvi} Marshall decorated his office with the racist regale of the first half of the century. In the middle of the Depression, he changed the franchise name to Redskins and moved the team to Washington D.C. in 1937. The derogatory term is a clear discriminatory slur, and in the 19th Century, the federal government paid for bloody scalps of dead Native Americans.

One of the more racist tropes is the Washington Redskins fight song *Hail to the Redskins*:

Hail to the Redskins!

Hail Victory!

Braves on the Warpath

Fight for old D.C.

Run or Pass or Score

We need a lot more

Beat 'em Swamp 'em Touchdown

Let the Points Soar

Fight On, Fight On 'til you have won

Sons of Washington

Scalp 'em Swamp 'em

We will take 'em Big Score

Read 'em Weep 'em Touchdown

We want heaps more!

Fight On, Fight On, 'til you have won

Sons of Washington

Marshall wanted to sell tickets and devised a racial-induced marketing strategy to promote the team. He hired coach William “Lone Star” Dietz, a self-proclaimed American Indian, and promoted Dietz’s ancestry to fill seats. Many historians do not believe that Dietz was Native American, and that he misrepresented his heritage to gain renown. Before home games, Marshall required Dietz to wear Indian feathers and war paint. “‘In the thirties,’ Cliff Battles remembered, ‘we would, at the urging of George, put on war paint before a game and so a little Indian dance to entertain the paying customers. None of us liked that very much...[it]was so overdone it was embarrassing.’”^{xvii} Despite opposition to the stereotypes, Dietz assisted in the promotion of the white-supremist narrative and designed the team logo, which has a long history of colorblindness among sports fans across the nation.

Resisting Legitimized Racism

In 2005, the NCAA decided to remove harmful “Indian” mascots from sports teams, and since 1965, no professional sports franchise has established a new mascot based on Native American stereotypes. “Specifically, rather than honoring Native peoples, these caricatures and stereotypes are harmful, perpetuate negative stereotypes of America’s first peoples, and contributes to a disregard for the personhood of Natives peoples.”^{xviii}

In May 2019, Governor Janet Mills (Maine) signed a bill that banned high schools and colleges from using Native American symbols as a nickname, mascot or logo: Maine is the first state in the country to pass such landmark Civil Rights legislation. Representative Benjamin Collings sponsored the statute and is delighted that the bill became law.

“While Indian mascots were often originally chosen to recognize and honor a school’s unique connection to Native American communities in Maine, we have heard clearly and unequivocally from Maine tribes that they are a source of pain and anguish,” said Governor Mills stated. “A mascot is a symbol of pride, but it is not the source of pride. Our people, communities, and understanding and respect for one another are Maine’s source of pride and it is time our symbols reflect that.”^{xix}

Unfortunately, legitimized racism is not limited to professional and college teams. Many local communities have also named their high schools after racial stereotypes of Native Americans. In Connecticut, there are over 20 high schools with Native American nicknames (Canton Warriors, Farmington Indians, Glastonbury Tomahawks Killingly Redmen, Nonnewaug Warriors, RHAM Sachems, etc.) and mascots.

I live in New Haven, CT, and next door in North Haven, residents have debated and quarreled over the Indian nickname and mascot. In 2015, opponents of the high school’s nickname posted a petition and believe it is offensive and belittling of Indigenous people. “...take a stand and change the old and disrespectful ways people think about race.”^{xx} At a North Haven Board of Education meeting in March of 2015, Talia Gallagher, Class of 2013, spoke up against the use of Indians as a moniker and requested that the mascot be changed.

Of course, some members of the community did not agree with Gallagher. Supporters of the North Haven Indians started an on-line petition on Facebook. Michael Parisi, also a Class of 2013 graduate, supported the mascot and history behind its symbolism. “Here, every time we go out and play, we are honoring them,” Parisi stated.^{xxi} Why is legitimized racism so engrained in our local communities? All across the country, local school districts have grappled with the same questions as North Haven, CT.

In Favor of Indigenous People’s Day

Is Columbus a hero? It is a fascinating question and viewpoints are likely impacted by the respondent’s age and geography. Americans under 30 are likely to harbor a far different perspective than their parents, and students in progressive states are more likely exposed to a different narrative than the rest of the country. Despite the positive direction in many classrooms surrounding the debate, there are still more educators and students who need to learn the historical facts in order to oppose colorblindness and legitimized racism against Indigenous people.

In 1492, Columbus searched for a western sea route to India and China in order to trade for gold and spices. He did not discover a new route but landed on Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic). After three voyages across the Atlantic, Columbus never stepped onto the Americas. In the 11th Century, Leif Erickson, a Viking explorer, became the first European to discover North America. He landed in eastern Canada, which is most

likely in the area surrounding the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. In 1497, John Cabot, a Venetian, navigated the eastern coast of North America under the English flag. In 1502, Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian explorer, reached Brazil and the new land became known as the Americas. There is no national holiday for any of the other European explorers.

Why Columbus? For some Americans, the holiday is a time to celebrate Italian-American heritage and a symbol of European superiority and dominance. Columbus symbolically represents western civilization: He traversed the Atlantic Ocean and facilitated the spread of Christianity and civilization to the Indigenous people. But facts are a stubborn myth-breaker. The Italian explorer enslaved and tortured people, ignited the slave trade of Africans, forced Indigenous people into the gold mines, chopped off hands to subjugate the tribes and started a genocide.

In 1905, Colorado made Columbus Day a state holiday. It did not become a national celebration until over thirty years later. Former Presidents have romanticized Columbus: In 1892, Benjamin Harrison implored Americans to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of Columbus' voyage; in 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt launched Columbus Day as a federal holiday; and in the 1980s, Ronald Regan waxed poetically about the magnitude of Columbus and his discovery. The Federal Government, the White House and the power structures in America have promoted legitimized racism and the colorblindness of the Columbus Day holiday.

Abolish Colorblindness in the Classroom: Teaching Strategies and Activities

Activity 1: Framing the Counter Narrative

Rationale: Students will observe Native American cultures in order to eradicate colorblindness.

Objective: Indigenous people are Americans and thrive in modern society. Many Native American Tribes are confined on reservations and portrayed, and seen, in stereotypical ways. Students, and educators, will reflect on their own bias and colorblindness when watching the videos.

Activity: Big Video Portrait: Building a Silent Conversation. Teacher will post four large post-it notes on the walls and each will be labeled with the title of the videos. Students will watch all four and take notes on each. Afterwards, scholars will walk around the room, and write their reactions and thoughts on the post-it sheets. Finally, the teacher will guide a Socratic discussion of the responses after all are posted.

Videos to View

- "A Tribe Called Red: Stadium Pow Wow"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAEmjW9J3_o

Music shapes culture, and at times, defines a generation. A Tribe Called Red writes the narrative of indigenous people between their traditional ethos and the modern world. The band combines traditional 'pow wow' chanting and singing with modern hip-hop and electronic music.

- "Unlearning 'Indian' Stereotypes by Rethinking Schools"

The video teaches about racial stereotypes and provides a primer to Native American culture and history. Narrated by Native American children, it is an exceptionally useful tool in its straightforwardness and its lucidity: The children speak with fluency and authority. “Unlearning Indian Stereotypes” enlightens scholars about the reality of the chronicle of indigenous peoples and is a wonderful resource.

- “Ending the Era of Harmful “Indian” Mascots by National Congress of

American Indians” <http://www.ncai.org/proudtobe>

Indian mascots, logos and symbols have become multi-billion-dollar brands that continue to promote racial stereotypes. For over forty years, Native American advocates have promoted changes to teams’ nicknames in an attempt to end the legitimized racism against indigenous peoples. These images have appalling consequences for Native Americans, and there is an immediate need to end the colorblindness across the country.

- “American Indian College Fund: Help a Student Help a Tribe”

<https://adage.com/creativity/work/help-student-help-tribe/26338>

A college education is often a well-deserved ticket to a career and the middle class. Many Native Americans do not have access to the upward ladder and only 14% of American Indians have a college degree, which is half of the national average. The personalized stories of Native Americans expose the delusion of racial stereotypes and danger of colorblindness in society.

Activity 2: Poem Analysis

Objective: Students will examine “Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings” by Joy Harjo and explore a counter-narrative of land ownership.

Rationale: Joy Harjo is an accomplished poet, playwright and musician, and in June 2019 became the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate in United States history. She has published eight books of poetry, a memoir and two books for young adults. A Muskogee Creek Tribal member, Harjo was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She is a professor of English and American Indian studies at the University of Illinois at Urban-Champaign. “My poems are about confronting the kind of society that would diminish Native people, disappear us from the story of this country,” Harjo wrote.^{xxii} Reading and analyzing the poem allows the scholars to absorb a counter narrative of land ownership in America.

I have chosen “Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings” as a counter narrative to colonial settler history, and a Native American perspective on tribal lands taken by the whites and the Federal government. Also, I want scholars to examine the colorblindness in the AP U.S. History curriculum and absence of Native American voices.

Activity: “How to Analyze a Poem in 6 Steps” by Teach for America^{xxiii}

Step One: Read

- a. Students will read poem silently
- b. The class will read it aloud

Step Two: Title

- a. How does it relate to the poem?
- b. Does it paint a picture?
- c. Does it imply multiple possibilities?

Step Three: Speaker

- a. Who “tells” the poem?
- b. Who does the speaker address?
- c. Are there clues about the speaker’s personality or point of view?

Step Four: Mood and Tone

- a. What is the mood of the poem?
- b. What is the attitude of the speaker?

Step Five: Paraphrase

- a. Students analyze the poem line-by-line

Step Six: Theme

- a. What is the subject?
- b. Who is the speaker?
- c. What is the situation of the poem?

Activity 3: Film Analysis of the Sioux

Objective: Students will analyze the 2007 film *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* to open the curtain on a colorblind ideology and society.

Rationale: Students will explore the culture and history of the Sioux and engage with the movie to open their eyes to cultural genocide by a white-power structure. I selected *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* as a counter narrative in American history. The AP U.S. History curriculum endorses a colonial settler history and there is a dearth of Native American voices. Scholars need a more complete analysis of Western expansion in order to break away from their colorblindness.

Because the film is over 120 minutes long and scholars often ask for a scene to be paused or rewound, two full 80-minute classes must be allotted to viewing the assessment. In addition, it is suggested that educators turn the English subtitles on for students who may struggle with auditory learning.

Activity: Students will be required to take notes while watching the movie and answer opened-ended and historical questions as a homework assignment.

1. List four historical items you learned or found interesting while watching *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.
2. What are your thoughts and questions about the film? You might reflect upon the historical figures, their challenges, the title or other ideas.
3. What is the significance of the title *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*?

4. Describe the argument between William Tecumseh Sherman and Senator Henry Dawes in the beginning of the film.
5. Explore the “twoness” of Charles Eastman as a Sioux who was educated in a Christian school and white society.
6. Analyze the different viewpoints of the Ghost Dance by the Sioux and white Americans.
7. Examine the Dawes Act and its impact on the Sioux.
8. Before watching this film, how did colorblindness and legitimized racism impact your perspective of Native Americans? How has the film rewritten the narrative in your opinion?

I have shown *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* for the past decade in some of my classes and collected stupendous responses from former students. It is one of the more eye-opening and enlightening units in my toolbox to teach empathy, debunk the heroic white narrative and illustrate the taking of the land for the benefit of white settlers. I have included responses from my scholars:

“The Director did an excellent job at encapsulating Senator Henry Dawes’ emotions and perspectives toward the Sioux. There were times where Dawes felt as though he held the ultimate solution to the Native Americans instead of realizing that white Americans and the Federal Government had stripped the Sioux of their culture and resources.” Rylan

“It was interesting to see a film about a subject that I knew so little about: It was never discussed in any of my classes nor mentioned in my text books. I find it incomprehensible that I have not learned a shred about these events in any history class until now.” Miles

“After watching this movie, I was very surprised how little I knew of the Sioux or Western migration by white Americans in the 19th Century. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* made me realize how much Native American history has been hidden from my education. These stories are gruesome and horrifying in American history and should be taught.” Melody

Activity 4: Counter Narrative Analysis in Film

Objective: Students will dissect the 1989 film *Smoke Signals* in order to comprehend the multifaceted negotiations native peoples have performed to navigate settler colonial society, preserve their sovereignty and challenge forms of domination.

Rationale: Students will explore the culture of the Coeur d’Alene and cultural revival of reservation life in modern America. The film is less than 90 minutes but will be viewed over two periods. In addition, it is suggested that educators turn the English subtitles on for students who may struggle with auditory learning.

In 1998, *Smoke Signals* debuted at the Sundance Film Festival by Miramax Films and it was promoted as the first major feature film written, directed and produced by Native Americans. Chris Eyre directed and co-produced the film, which was adapted from Sherman Alexie’s book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*.

“*Smoke Signals* is an important movie for Indian Country, and to see these beautifully nuanced Native American characters on the big screen was a revelation for us,” says Victor Rocha, conference chair of the National Indian Gaming Assn. “Not only could we be the stewards of our

own stories, but it proved we could make great movies.”^{xxiv}

Two best friends, Victor Joseph (Adam Beach) and Thomas Builds-the-Fire (Evan Adams), embark on a journey to recover the ashes of Victor’s father. The young men could not be any more different, but form a deeper bond of understanding. It is a story of the universal nature of forgiveness and spiritual renewal is surveyed through self-examination, sorrow and catharsis.

In 1988, the National Film Preservation Act formed the National Film Preservation Board (NFPB) to “ensure the survival, conservation and increased public availability of America’s film heritage.”^{xxv} Twenty-five films are nominated every year, and Carla Hayden, 14th Librarian of Congress, named *Smoke Signals* to the National Film Registry twenty years after it was produced.

Activity: Students will examine their own basic assumptions and racial stereotypes of Native Americans and assumptions of settler colonialism in history.

1. List four historical items you learned or found interesting while watching *Smoke Signals*.
2. What are your thoughts and questions about the film? You might reflect upon the historical figures, their challenges, the title or other ideas.
3. Why did the writer and producers title the film *Smoke Signals*?
4. Why does the narrator make the statement “We were children born of flame and ash” early in the film?
5. What is the cultural significance of the statement “It’s a good day to be indigenous!”
6. Describe the relationship and journey of discovery by Victor and Thomas.
7. Why does Thomas-Builds-the-Fire tell stories throughout the movie?
8. How does *Smoke Signals* illustrate a counter narrative of life on the reservation?

Activity 5: Primary Source Analysis

Objective: Students will explore colonial settler policies undertaken by the Federal government to take the land from Native Americans over the course of American history.

Rationale: In 1832, Black Hawk stated: “You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it.” Founded in 1968 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the American Indian Movement (AIM) demanded civil rights for Native Americans and opposed poverty and police brutality against Indigenous people in urban communities.^{xxvi} AIM also sought “revitalization of traditional culture, protection of legal rights and autonomy over tribal areas and the restoration of lands that they believed had been illegally seized.”^{xxvii}

In the AP curriculum, colorblindness in the course must end and a new narrative written that includes the voices of Native Americans. An analysis of a primary source provides scholars with the historical information necessary to reanalyze the colonial settler narrative of American history.

Activity: The American Indian Movement: *The Trail of Broken Treaties, A 20-point Position Paper*

How to Analyze a primary source document^{xxviii}

1. Summarize the document in your own words.
2. What is the author’s purpose? Who is the intended audience?
3. Make connections with the text: lectures, current events, personal experiences, books and movies.

4. Make inferences: read between the lines, speculation and conclusions.
5. Compare the primary source to a secondary source: the AP United States History text book used in your course.
6. Write down four historical items that you learned after reading the document.
7. Identify two questions about the documents left unanswered, or that you now have, after reading it.
8. Explain how the source illustrates colorblindness in the AP U.S. History curriculum.
9. How can this document be incorporated in an AP U.S. History course to oppose a colonial settler narrative?

Activity 6: Short Story Analysis

Objective: Students will explore a counter narrative of American life in a short story.

Rationale: A poet, novelist and filmmaker, Sherman Alexie is an award-winning author: He earned a National Book Award for Young People’s Literature for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) and given a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writer’s Circle of the America’s. Alexie was born to Salish Indians—Coeur d’Alene father and Spokane mother—and his maternal grandmother was a Spokane spiritual leader. As a child, he suffered from congenital hydrocephalus and underwent surgery: He became an avid reader instead of an athlete. Alexie attended an all-white school, earned honors and voted class president. In 1991, Alexie graduated from Washington State. An analysis provided the students with a much-needed perspective on American life.

Activity: Students will analyze two short stories from *The Lone Ranger and Toronto Fistfight in Heaven: “Crazy Horse Dreams”* and *“A Drug Called Tradition.”* Literary analysis is an interpretation of a piece of literature and allows the reader to comprehend how the parts contribute to the entire piece.

Big Portrait: *Constructing a Literary Analysis*^{xxix}

- I. Summary
- II. Context
 - a. What is the author’s background?
 - b. What is the narrator’s personality?
 - c. What is the role of the narrator?
- III. III. Setting
 - a. Where and when does the story take place?
- IV. Plot
 - a. Identify essential plot points: Conflict, Climax and Resolution.
- V. Characters
 - a. What are some of the character’s personality traits?
 - b. What roles do the characters play?
 - c. What are their morals and ethics?
 - d. What is the relationship with other characters?
- VI. Literary Devices
 - a. What devices does the author employ?
 - b. Allusion, Foil, Foreshadowing, Irony and Symbolism

Final Assessment: Argumentative Essay

Objective: Students will articulate their knowledge of legitimized racism in America and take a position and defend an argument with evidence from sources and lessons.

Rationale: The Common Core established English Language Arts Standards for Writing, and in Connecticut, students are required to read texts, primary and secondary sources and acquire knowledge in order to problem solve in Social Studies and English classes. Students must think critically, analyze evidence and synthesize knowledge learned throughout the unit. The final assessment will compel scholars to achieve the criteria in the Common Core.

Activity: Teachers will mandate that scholars research articles on the debate over the use of Indigenous Peoples' symbols as team nicknames. Students must understand the role of Congress in our Constitutional Republic and how to amend the Constitution. The students will write an argumentative essay answering the following question: *Should Congress pass an Amendment to the Constitution that bans the use of Native American symbols as nicknames, mascots or logos by professional sports teams?*

Alternative Final Assessment

Rationale: I am lucky enough to teach in an Arts Magnet school, and many of my scholars are incredibly talented artists. In order to allow scholars to display their abilities, I provide alternative assessments. One year, a student was in danger of failing my U.S. History course as a junior, and he asked for an additional assignment to pass for the year. I asked him to research a topic from the Civil War and complete a painting of the event with a bibliography. He came back with a 22 x 16 oil painting of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. It was well researched and an original interpretation of the day's events. Needless to say, he passed the course, and I still have the painting on the wall at school. He taught me a great lesson, and there is a wonderful opportunity in this unit to provide scholars with an alternative assessment.

Activity: Design a new logo and/or mascot for a team that currently is colorblind to the legitimized racism of the use of their Native American nickname. Or design a T-Shirt logo for Indigenous People's Day.

Implementing District Standards

According to "The New Haven Public Schools Social Studies Curriculum Overview," the primary mission of the NHPS Social Studies curriculum is to "support the development of active, informed and responsible citizens."^{xxx} To accomplish this, teachers must help students to make the following logical connections:

"Past, present, and future—between historical and contemporary events and issues.

Global—between regions, environments, and cultures around the world.

Personal—between the curriculum and students' personal interests, concerns, and career aspirations.

Interdisciplinary—between various content areas.”^{xxxi}

This curriculum unit specifically guides students to make those connections by exploring the concept of structural racism in American history. This unit scaffolds and guides students to make connections between Indigenous People, white supremacy and privilege and the promotion of racial stereotypes by sports teams while considering interdisciplinary content areas of social studies across the curriculum. In the final assessment, students are encouraged to apply what they have learned from the curriculum unit to make personal connections with structural and legitimized racism in modern American by writing an argumentative essay.

My Colorblind Awakening

As a child, one of my fondest memories was participating in the YMCA Indian Guides with my Dad. We explored Native American culture and dressed in Indian attire; we even participated in a Memorial Day parade on a float. In elementary school, our class visited the Algonquian Indians, an Indigenous tribe in Connecticut, and learned how to make authentic Syrup from Maple trees.

On our birthdays, Dad took us to Child World and allowed my brothers and I to pick out one present. I’ll never forget looking at the action figures on the shelves and wanting a Johnny West, Best of the West action figure. Staring at the toys with eyes wide opened, I looked at the options and grabbed Geronimo: Fort Apache Fighter and put it in the cart while my brother purchased Johnny West. I was inundated with a settler colonial narrative and understanding of Native peoples. Unfortunately, when I attended Western Connecticut State University in the Eighties, Native American history was non-existent, and the history department imparted a colonial settler narrative.

In 1991, I earned my Master’s in History and spent a decade working as a graphic designer for magazines, newspapers and books. I felt unfilled and did not want to turn 50 sitting behind a computer screen over ten hours a day. Fifteen years ago, I left publishing in order to pursue a new career as a teacher. In order to earn my Connecticut Educator Certification, I needed to go back to school. While going to classes, how do I pay my mortgage? Tutoring the SAT and AP U.S. History part-time in the evenings and on the weekends provided the best option to earn a paycheck.

Without any knowledge of the term colorblindness, it became obvious to me that the scholars knew nearly nothing about Native American history. For the past fifteen years, I have tutored over a hundred students, and the vast majority were raised in a family with financial resources and lived in a community of higher socio-economic means. They attended schools that employed colorblind teachers in history courses, and in my experience, the lack of a diverse curriculum clearly impacted the AP scholars.

I spend an inordinate number of hours tutoring Native and African American history as well as the rise of eugenics—the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics—as a political and social movement that infiltrated all facets of society from education to sports. The students were shocked in regard to the hole in their curriculums and the avoidance of the challenging topics by their colorblind teachers. Every year in my AP U.S. History course, I uncover the

racial stereotypes of Native Americans and augment the course with activities to illustrate colorblindness to my scholars.

Annotated Bibliography

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In 1991, Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson published a ground-breaking work that began to change the heroic narrative of Christopher Columbus in classrooms. The book provides educators with the resources required to expose colorblindness and legitimized racism across all educational curriculum and schools of study: Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, English, Economics, Music and Art. In 2012, the Tucson, Arizona school district banned *Rethinking Columbus* from being used in classrooms. It is the responsibility of all educators to ensure that students learn the historical truth of the Italian explorer who ignited a genocide of Native Peoples across the Americas, stole the land and enslaved millions, to acquire gold and silver for the Spanish Empire. Educators must end colorblindness and legitimized racism in schools. *Rethinking Columbus* is a great place to start in order to discredit the white supremacy narrative for any teacher who wants to rethink and teach a more enriched and truthful chronicle of Columbus and Indigenous peoples.

Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*: By Dee Brown. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972.

In 1971, Dee Brown, a white author, opened the eyes of millions of Americans when he challenged the narrative taught in schools, observed on film and promoted in sports in his pioneering work. For centuries, whites told the stories of the Indigenous people in North America and ignored nearly all perspectives and primary sources of Native Americans. Brown confronted the racially biased accounts by drawing on autobiographies, council records, oral stories and firsthand accounts to examine the racial genocide of the Sioux, Ute, Dakota, Cheyenne and other tribes during the second half the 19th Century. *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* is a remarkable resource that confronts the colorblindness of the white account of how the West was won.

Diamond, Jared M. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017.

I no longer accept the survival of the fittest tale of United States history and the unquestioned doctrine of American greatness. *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jarod Diamond opened my eyes. The false narratives of European superiority and the inferiority of people and their cultures in the Americans before 1492 are discredited. For far too long, European conquest has been told through an incomplete lens of winners and losers, and the inevitability of victory for white Christians in the Colonial Settler narrative. It is time to decolonize American history and provide a new narrative in which both sides of the conflict are told. The history and culture of Native Americans must be explored in the arts, sports and film. *Guns, Germs and Steel* provides a great start to provide a new chronicle.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015.

For centuries, Americans learned the myth of the heroic white settler who tamed and cultivated the land and civilized the Indigenous people. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz turns the narrative upside down and examines the historical truth behind the creation of the United States. Dunbar-Ortiz details settler colonialism with meticulous research as well as the genocide of Indigenous people from the Pequot Massacre to Wounded Knee. She begins with the first encounters between the English settlers and the Native tribes and explores the brutal violence employed by pioneers to take the land from 1637 to 1890. The inhabitants of North America were not savages who wanted Christianity to save their souls, but self-governed people who loved freedom and mastered the resources provided by nature. All educators should read *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States* to broaden their knowledge of Native Americans in order to expose legitimized racism in our history and culture.

Jenkins, Sally. *The Real All Americans: The Team That Changed a Game, a People, a Nation*. New York: Broadway Books, 2008.

Sally Jenkins examines the Carlisle football team with Jim Thorpe and its dramatic victories over major college football clubs at the turn of the 20th Century, culminating in a triumph over Army in 1912. The descriptions of the formative stages of college football—a brutal and violent sport—provide a wonderful analysis of the early decades of the game. Ivy League institutions dominated college football and there was little regard for the rules and competitive spirit of the game. Jenkins writes a fantastic narrative tying together all of the cultural, historical, racial and contextual information about Native Americans in a Christian society, and the successes and failures of all involved. The book also provides vast insight into Pop Warner, Richard Pratt, Walter Camp, Amos Alonzo Stagg and Teddy Roosevelt.

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In Connecticut, the U.S. History curriculum for sophomores is thematic and one of the units is centered on social justice and civil rights in American history. For the summative assessment, I ask the scholars to present oral presentations on civil rights movements and heroes. One of the assigned group projects is the American Indian Movement (AIM), which was founded in 1968 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. AIM advocated for civil rights, protested racism and injustice and illustrated the long history of broken treaties by the Federal government. The site offers so many critical resources for educators to explore colorblindness and legitimized racism from the perspective of Native Americans. I read "The Trail of Broken Treaties, 20-point Position Paper" with my students as a primary source.

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