SignatureTheatre **STUDY GUIDE**

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Dedication

This production is dedicated to Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Nikole Hannah Jones, Melissa Harris Perry, and other Black women freedom fighters and scholars upon whose backs freedom has always been fought, and rarely ever acknowledged. On your shoulders we stand and tell this story.

Definition

con·fed·er·ate
noun /kən'fed(ə)rət/

1. a person one works with, especially in something secret or illegal; an accomplice.
"where was his confederate, the girl who had stolen Richard's wallet?"
2. a supporter of the Confederate States of America.

> ***In our present time, to express the view of the enslaved—to say that the Civil War was a significant battle in the long war against bondage and for government by the people—is to compromise the comfortable narrative... it is to point out that at this late hour, the totems of the empire of slavery—chief among them, its flag—still enjoy an honored place in the homes, and public spaces, of self-professed patriots and vulgar lovers of "freedom." It is to understand what it means to live in a country that will never apologize for slavery, but will not stop apologizing for the Civil War."***
>
> - Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?" *The Atlantic*.

Synopsis

Sara, an enslaved rebel turned Union spy, and Sandra, a tenured professor in a modern-day private university, are having parallel experiences of institutional racism, though they live over a century apart. This New York premiere by MacArthur Genius Fellow and Signature Residency 5 playwright Dominique Morisseau, directed by Stori Ayers, leaps through time to trace the identities of these two Black American women and explore the reins that racial and gender bias still hold on American educational systems today.

Characters

SANDRA
(Michelle Wilson)
Black woman, late 30's, early 40's. Scholar, Professor of Political Science, practical, sturdy, compassionate with students, protected with her own emotions, and a striving spirit in the face of institutional racism.

SARA
(Kristolyn Lloyd)
Black woman, early 20's. Tenacious, spunky, tough and resilient. A slave woman with a fighting spirit, unwilling to be broken by her circumstances. Crafty and a sharp, witty tongue. Slowly becoming a Union Spy.

ABNER/MALIK
(Elijah Jones)
ABNER – Black man, early 20's. Energetic and driven. A bit stubborn but strong-willed. A runaway slave and soldier for the Union. Brother of Sara. Loves his sister fiercely.
MALIK – Black man, early 20's. Studious and focused on his education. Driven and intellectually stimulating. A student of Sandra's who tries to carefully navigate her status over his.

MISSY SUE/CANDICE
(Kenzie Ross)
MISSY SUE – White woman, late 30's, early 40's. Spirited, driven, a strong sense of duty and mission. Somewhat oblivious. Emotionally free and open. Daughter of Sara's Master. Sara's former childhood friend.
CANDICE – White woman, mid 20's. Loquacious, intellectually curious, and uncensored in her ideas. Can be misinterpreted as insensitive but is likely unaware. Emotionally free and open. Student and Assistant to Sandra.

LUANNE/JADE
(Andrea Patterson)
LUANNE – Black woman, early 20's. Curious, eager, and inquisitive. A fellow slave with Sara who has been afforded privileges Sara has not. In an affair with the Master. Pushing for kinship with Sara.
JADE – Black woman, late 30's, early 40's. Straight shooter, unafraid of confrontation, down-to-earth. Fellow professor and colleague to Sandra. Navigates institutional racism more directly than Sandra.

An Interview with Playwright Dominique Morisseau

Conducted by Artistic Fellow, Andrea Ambam, Director of Marketing, Communications & Engagement, Rochelle Torres, and Manager of Artistic and Education Projects, Maia Safani
Transcript edited and condensed


Dominique Morisseau, photo by Gregory Costanzo

What inspired this particular play, and how did it come to be?

Well, Lou Bellamy [Artistic Director Emeritus of Penumbra Theatre in Minnesota] reached out to me and said he had a Ta-Nehisi Coates article that he wanted me to read, which was asking why more Black people did not write about the Black participation and experience in the Civil War. My first question to Lou was, "Well what were the Black women doing?" I like to know where I am in my own freedom story. Where were the examples of me or the unsung?

I thought, "Well If I'm going to look at the past, I can't look at through a vacuum. I have to look at the past in relationship to the present." I don't want to be distant. I want to be up-close and personal and overt. I wrote this play to look at the relationship between the past and present not knowing that eventually that kind of thinking was going to be banned in 15 states in this country.

How did you first meet *Confederates* director Stori Ayers, and how did you know she was the right person to direct this play?

I met Stori Ayers at Penn State. She was a graduate student there and I was a guest playwright coming in, commissioned to write a play for her graduating class. I wrote a play for her and fellow students, and they went on to take that play all across the world, win peace prizes for it, and really with no assistance from me whatsoever. I just was going on for the ride, I guess!

Then she moved to New York and became someone who was in my camp supporting me. She started assisting me and just helping me as a writer and navigating the administration side of being a playwright. Then she started to direct my work. Working closely with me, she started to have an understanding and a language about my work that was unlike anyone else. I trust her emphatically with my stories because she would help me find things that I don't know are there. She's been invested in my stories for years, so it's a full circle joy to now have her be my director and for me to learn from her- my former student is now one of my educators about my own work.

And it's not just her, Kenzie Ross was also in that graduating class that I wrote for is now bringing this work to life exquisitely. This is a whole cast full of people who I've either worked with before, come through my home town, or who I know through the

Penn State circuit. There's a very Detroit/ Penn State connection in this play and I just feel it's in the most capable hands with the most generous and loving storytellers that I can think of. It's important to me that the ecosystem that we make this work in is safe and healthy and does not perpetuate the harm that we're trying to stamp out inside the work. This is the right team and Stori is the right leader for that time.

Confederates was originally set to premiere in 2020. Since then, America and the entire globe has been through an ongoing wave of events (pandemic, racial reckoning sparked by death of George Floyd, the list goes on and on). How did _Confederates_ resonate or speak to the state of the America then? How does _Confederates_ resonate or speak to the state of America now? What has stayed the same and what lives in a new context?
For me, this play was always about the legacy of white supremacy in this country's foundation, in its institutionalism. Trying to link this country's founding with white supremacy has made a lot of people uncomfortable or flat out upset; as if it's some "subversive attempt" to try to shame the legacy of this country, rather than confront its truth and deal with its impact on our present so that we can have a better future.

As it seems to be the case with so many of my plays, they just get more and more contemporary no matter when I wrote them. I think it's because the things that I'm writing about, while they're about people and they get very small and personal, they're also very big, about very big ideas and big issues and those issues are human issues... and they kind of transcend time and era. I don't want to say they're timeless because I don't want them to be timeless. I'd like to see these issues come to an end and I don't think that they will until we confront them in all the ways that we have to confront them, whether that is through art, theatre and performance, music, any kinds/forms of live visual and entertainment art; through policy and politic; through education, and through protest and activism, those things will hopefully shift. I'm just trying to contribute my part to that.

Do you remember your own education of the Civil War? Was there anything you learned by writing this show that shocked you, or that you couldn't believe hadn't been covered in school?
My knowledge of the Civil War came mostly from school, where you're taught a very limited curriculum about the Civil War and the reasons for it. To be someone who writes a lot about history, I was really bored with it in high school. I definitely don't remember it as something that felt personal and alive to me. I didn't learn that until later.

I'm a big fan of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. I think my education about the Civil War came post-school, or it came outside of school when I was growing up. I saw movies like *Glory* - that's actually my strongest image of Black experience in the Civil War. My mother thought it was important for me as a young girl to see that movie to educate me on our history and the history of Black people serving this country and serving in our own liberation.

I knew Harriet Tubman. Actually, I knew about her more in elementary in school than I did in high school. Black history was a big thing when I was growing up. I had a school that made a whole tournament out of it, but I didn't know in depth things. I knew Sojourner Truth's name, I knew Harriet Tubman's name, but I didn't know about union spies, and I didn't understand how we were architects of our own freedom. I wanted to know the intricate details of that, so that's why I started studying that for this [play].

Confederates is radically different than anything I've ever written, and it is radical to me in its DNA. I think there's always some

kind of fear and aversion if a story is going to have something about slavery. I think people get really, "we're over it." All I can say is that we're aware of that, and the story is aware of that, so come and know that you're in some safe hands.

I don't believe in the inhumanity of the enslaved. I believe the same complex feelings that we have going on today, they also had going on back then. I believe that the same way we have to navigate patriarchy or white fragility or class issues, they also had to figure that out and deal with that and put on a face here and then take it off there. We're playing with genre to really be able to humanize the enslaved and also those of us in the present.

Sandra and Sara are two powerful Black women in this show on parallel liberation journeys. How much of yourself do you see in these women? What does it mean to be a Black woman writing and telling stories at this time in the American Theatre, and how do you seek your own internal and external liberation in this industry and beyond?

In this play these two Black women, one who is an enslaved rebel woman trying to get free from literal, physical bondage and the other who is a Black woman professor at a contemporary university- a predominantly white institution- is trying to get free mentally. From that mental restriction and that mental oppression that she's experiencing.

These two Black women feel, because of who they are, wanting to be free inside of themselves, wanting to live without being underneath a gaze that suffocates them; they feel that they have a target on their backs and they do they literally have a target on them. And I feel that way as a Black woman theatremaker that writes what I write unapologetically. It just feels like a looming target on my back and I never know when somebody is going to take fire. I feel like I have it on me all the time. And I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels that way. I think we are in the time where we are burning books, banning books in states, banning ideas. I definitely feel unsafe. And I also feel unwilling to cower to that feeling. I feel vulnerable and unsafe and courageous because I'm gonna keep going. Obviously, we all have to keep telling the stories that we are moved to tell, but telling them at this time feels particularly dangerous.

At first rehearsal you spoke about bringing our ancestors into the room. Why is calling in the ancestors important to the process of *Confederates*?

We talk a lot about ancestors in this process and we all have different ancestors, you know? As we've talked about our ancestors, we also talk about the romanticization of ancestors. Our Intimacy Coordinator, Ann [James], has said to us, "your ancestors are always with you," which give us courage to do the things that we have to do in this play. There are some bold, courageous things that have to happen in this play, and to know that you're doing that in partnership with your ancestors, that they're there with you, and the ancestors that went through some of the things that we're gonna enact in this play - not necessarily traumatic things, but boldness - that you're not doing those things in a vacuum; you're doing those things with the ancestors present.

"I don't believe in the inhumanity of the enslaved. I believe the same complex feelings that we have going on today, they also had going on back then. I believe that the same way we have to navigate patriarchy or white fragility or class issues, they also had to figure that out and deal with that and put on a face here and then take it off there.

We feel fortified with the resilience of our ancestors and also conscious that not all of our ancestors, not necessarily culturally, but just relationship-wise, not everybody has things that they want to carry on from their ancestors. So, we're asking for specific things from our ancestors, because there is a misogyny, all kinds of harm, racism, prejudice, and all kinds of things that the ancestors not only lived through but perpetuated, becoming a part of systems themselves.

> ***For me, this play was always about the legacy of white supremacy in this country's foundation, in its institutionalism.***

We don't want those things. We don't want to grab those things and take them to the future. We want to take the parts of them that will help us create a new, healthy ecosystem moving forward. We call upon the ancestors for those things and we give peace and give rest to things and the past that should stay there.

You've had a number of new plays premiere in the past few years. How has your process changed as you've evolved as a writer?

It's exciting to be here to discover myself, and new parts of myself, because I'm still expanding and growing. I always think of August Wilson and a phrase I learned in his play *How I Learned What I Learned* that Ruben Santiago-Hudson did here at Signature. I remember in that production hearing the phrase "limitation of the instrument." What I deduced from that phrase is that you keep playing an instrument until you've found every single note on that instrument that you could possibly play and mix it 5,011 times, and once you've played every note you have reached the limitation of the instrument. It's time for a new instrument. It's time for a new skill. It's time for something else. For me as a playwright, I'm just going to keep finding all the notes I can play until I've reached the limitations of the instrument.

You've spoken about the journey to towards personal liberation. What does freedom look like in this play and in this process more generally?

Inside this process we talk a lot about freedom and what freedom means to us. We try to create a free space in rehearsal for everyone. And for me it's as much about the process as it is about the product. I'm not someone who can do something on stage and live something completely antithetical off stage. If I'm putting on a play about women's safety and fragility, and Black women's safety and fragility, that has to be centered in the rooms that I work in. What freedom looks like for me is the ability to move without feeling like I have a gaze that I am to be obedient to. That somehow that gaze, one way or another even if I unsubscribe from the gaze myself, that somewhere that gaze, those rules of how I should be and exist as a playwright, will somehow come back to haunt me, or they will find some way to punish me if I'm disobedient to the gaze. Whether it is through critical review or decisions that gatekeepers make, whether it is a producer's point of view and the narratives that they'll tell about me and who I am and what I'm like without having any direct experience with me.

I know what it feels more like to be not free than I do to be free, but I think courage makes me feel free. The ability to continue to do a thing that I know may not be accepted by everyone and to do it anyway because that is what is at my heart's core that helps me to feel free, and I think in putting up this play I hope (that's all of our hope actually) that inside of this play process, putting up this play is going to help all of us get free and that's the goal. That's the goal.

An Interview with Sound Designer & Composer Jimmy Keys

Conducted by Artistic Fellow, Andrea Ambam and Manager of Artistic and Education Projects, Maia Safani

How did you get you start in the music industry? What then drew you to theatre, and how does your process differ when working on a play? Is there anything you find uniquely challenging and/or exciting about composing for the stage?

Technically my earliest beginning was in high school working part-time in a record store. But I guess you can say I really got my career start in the music industry when I moved to New York and began interning at Universal/Republic Records. From there I went over to Bad Boy Records, where I worked in and around that system for 7 years on the promotion side. I don't know that I was particularly drawn to theatre, we sort of met each other halfway.

Having a wife that works in theatre, I became a patron and supporter, and over time I developed friendships and relationships with a lot of theatre artists. As I would watch plays and musicals, I found myself having strong feelings about the way music was oftentimes used and could be used in theatre. As fate would have it, the brilliant Ruben Santiago-Hudson came to one of my shows and had the chance to see me with my band in my element. So, when it came time to do the Atlantic Theatre Production of *Skeleton Crew*, he called me up and said he wanted to capture the sound of Detroit Hip-Hop.

I think the biggest challenge about composing for the stage is channeling my creativity while working within time constraints of a short rehearsal process.

Signature provides an artistic home to playwrights and having a creative team that playwrights can trust is a part of creating that home. As a composer/sound designer, what is the collaboration that

Jimmy Keys, photo by Jonathan George

happens between you and the playwright? How does your personal relationship with Dominique, as husband and wife, inspire/influence the way you approach collaboration?

As a composer/sound designer, my job is to provide a sonic context for the world the playwright has created. I must tap into the emotionality of the narrative and, most importantly, move the story forward. Dominique is deeply inspired by music and writes nearly all of her work with some sort of music serving as the backdrop. Having such intimate access to the mind of the writer is definitely very helpful when crafting the sonic landscape of a play. I definitely have learned from Dominique the importance of serving the mission of the story above any other agenda.

I think what makes our collaborations so special is that my expertise comes from moving in an adjacent industry that is removed from the world of theatre. I tend to musically approach things more like an outsider in tune with the pulse of the

broader music world instead of the bubble of the close-knit insular music-theatre community.

When designing/composing, I access the same parts of my mind that I use when I am writing a song, creating a music video treatment, rocking with my band, or DJ'ing a house party. Those elements are storytelling and crowd control.

In first rehearsal you spoke a bit about creating different musical personalities for each character. How do you go about figuring out what a character "sounds" like, and how those musical personas interact with one another in the context of the characters' relationships (and between time periods!)?

I start building each musical identity by thinking about each character's journey, their perspective, and what they each want in the narrative. Next, I begin building a musical backstory. I then revisit the script with my musical dramaturgy hat on, and choose which moments are character moments, narrative moments, or emotional moments. This largely informs my decision. In *Confederates*, it was tricky because we are playing with time and stylistically invoking a tone that walks the line between satire and drama. So, at times, it was extremely important that our music transitions serve multiple purposes.

As a composer, you're working with the entire creative team to bring this work to life. How does the design plan for other elements of the show (set, costumes, hair/makeup, and even stage directions) influence the way you build music for the show? What do you hope the sound design adds to the story?

Set, costumes, hair/makeup, and even stage directions all directly impact the length and arrangement of the music. We have to take into account how long wardrobe changes will take.

The stage direction impacts the energy of the arrangement and how it builds, drops in, and drops out.

Ancestors and ancestry have played a big role in this process. Are there musical ancestors you're welcoming into the space through sound? I remember at first rehearsal you spoke about the lineage of the work song. Your background is in hip-hop, and you mentioned interweaving some innovations pioneered by hip-hop artists, like beat making and sampling. Are you thinking about ancestry beyond individuals and as musical movements or collectives as well?

When I began my creative journey on this play, I was inspired by the origins of the work song. This led me to trace it back to the roots of the spirituals that were sung by the enslaved. By the time we get to scene eight, we've been on an unexpected unorthodox musical journey, staying away from making obvious choices. It is at this moment, just when the audience is likely to embrace the non-traditional format, that I decided to actually go ahead and make the obvious choice. Here is where I am overtly invoking the ancestors. I had the vision to have some vocalists sing a traditional spiritual. Because this piece heavily centers on the voice of women, I wanted this spiritual to be sung entirely in the woman's voice.

Elijah Jones and Michelle Wilson, photo by Monique Carboni

The play explores the past and the present and how similar the worlds are, so musically we take the same approach to exploration. We start out with a clear distinction but as the stories unfold, the lines between the past and present become blurred. Sonically, it becomes a gumbo seasoned with the pain of the antebellum south along with the rebellious hip-hop of today.

Dominique has spoken about the influence of the 1619 Project on this production, particularly amidst debates and bans teaching the project in schools. Hannah Jones dedicates an entire episode of the 1619 Project podcast to music in "The Birth of American Music," emphasizing both the influence and appropriation of Black music in the creation of the contemporary pop canon. As the project gets banned and there are more conversations surrounding banned books it makes me think of another often banned and censored art: music. Have conversations around censorship and reclaiming Black music histories influenced your sound design for this play?

Well interestingly enough, this piece did kind of push me to explore banned and censored music but not in the way one might expect. It led me to explore the concept of erasure and sanitizing our history. I started exploring the music in the time period in which this play takes place. I quickly discovered that there seemed to be an absence of documentation of the Black voice during this era. I discovered an abundance of pro-slavery Confederate folk recordings from this era. Actually, in this post-Trump era there seemed to be an online resurgence of energy, views and popularity. I also was reminded how many of the popular songs that have been passed down through our American lineage have roots in racist ideology. Verses and lyrics have even been omitted from these songs in an attempt to cleanse their origins. I decided in my sound design to shine an audio spotlight directly on this cultural sanitation.

Do you have any advice for aspiring composers/sound designers?

For people just starting in their career, I say immerse yourself in your craft. Go see lots of plays. Go to lots of concerts. Listen to lots of music. Find your peers. Find your community. You should constantly be adding additional skills to your répertoire. People have a tendency to want to fast track the process. Be patient, build relationships with people in a similar place in their career because 5 to 10 years from now these people will become your allies. They will be in a position to help you and you will be in a position to help them. Put the art first and the ego last.

Elijah Jones, Kenzie Ross, Michelle Wilson, Kristolyn Lloyd, Andrea Patterson, photo by Monique Carboni

Interview with Actress Michelle Wilson

Conducted by Artistic Fellow, Andrea Ambam

How did you get your start in the theatre industry?

I went to, Mercy High, an all-girls high school in Michigan. I was getting into so much trouble that my father told me I had to be in three clubs by the end of the week. I realized if I did the spring musical, it would satisfy his demand. My first musical was *The Boyfriend*. So, what started out as a sneaky way to get out of serving detention became my passion. Who knew?!

Your resume speaks to a history of stepping into activated roles with a lot of depth (*Between the World and Me, Sweat, Detroit '67*, etc.). What compels you to the characters of such powerful stories?

I tend to be an attractive collaborator for folks who have something to say. If you're not interested in going deep, my style/talent is not going to resonate with your needs.

This isn't your first time to stepping into a world created by Dominique Morisseau. What compels you as an actress to Dominique's work in particular?

We're two Detroit girls who have no interest in shallow ego-based projects. We really feed off of each other. I'm older than her, but we both grew up in Detroit, went to Michigan, and came to New York City. It's really hard to stay in Detroit and make theatre art. It's such a no-nonsense working-class city that it is tricky to make an entire career in the city, but it informs so much of our political and creative esthetic.

Is there anything new you're bringing to your practice as an actress after the great pause in the theatre caused by the pandemic? Are there any new processes, revelations, or needs that have emerged for you?

Michelle Wilson, photo by Monique Carboni

I've been lucky to do film and TV during the pandemic, as well as a radio play, but nothing is like the beast of theatre. It takes so much endurance. The play/train takes off at 8 and doesn't pull back into the station till you reach the end. My creative muscle has been challenged during this process because inactivity has left me flaccid. But it's truly like riding a bike. I feel blessed to be back in the saddle on such a brilliant project.

So much loss and grief over the last few years reminds me to live hard, go deep and have no regrets.

Sandra is character who spends a lot of time in this show under the scrutiny of her students and even her colleagues. She's grappling with so many different opinions about the way she carries herself and her work, all while trying to be the best professor she can be. In short, Sandra is carrying a lot. What is your process for

stepping into a character like Sandra? How do you prepare for yourself to take on the weight of her experience? In turn, what is your process for stepping out of Sandra? How do you separate the character's emotional burdens from your own?

This process has benefited greatly from an Intimacy Coach. We created a Gathering process at the top of rehearsals and a De-roling process at the end. It's been helpful in consciously inviting in - then leaving behind the work.

However, anxiety and fear pepper every process. If you're doing the craft right, you're allowing yourself to be vulnerable and foolish in the rehearsal room. It's so important that you feel safe in the room so that you can be fearless.

My personal technique involves recognizing there is a Doer and a Watcher in my process. The Doer is feeling and exploring, and the Watcher is executing script, notes and blocking. The dual consciousness helps me to keep perspective.

***Confederates* is premiering at a time when many Black woman academics, like Sandra, are in the national spotlight in conversations surrounding critical race theory, Black Lives Matter, book banning and more. Who have you looked to help inform your portrayal of Sandra? Have you been particularly inspired by anything you've watched, read, or listened to?**

I've been following Nikole Hannah Jones's journey with the 1619 Project very closely. Powerful forces do not want to let the "story" or historical narrative out of their control. It's a reminder of the power of narrative/ history/story.

I actually feel like every time I get on stage it's a profound act of politic. To center a Black woman on stage is an act of defiance/ self-definition.

Has playing Sandra influenced your understanding of any of these national conversations? Have you learned anything new or felt called to explore anything more deeply?

I've been plugged into power dynamics for a long time. I'm aware that Black women are expected to do society's emotional labor while reaping very little of the social reward/ power. It's going to be a bumpy decade. The status quo is feeling an existential threat of diverse voices. We'll have to lean heavily into each other to navigate the backlash.

What advice do you have for young theatre artists interested in acting?

Read. Read. Read. And, read some more.

Michelle Wilson, photo by Rochelle Torres

Civil War Timeline

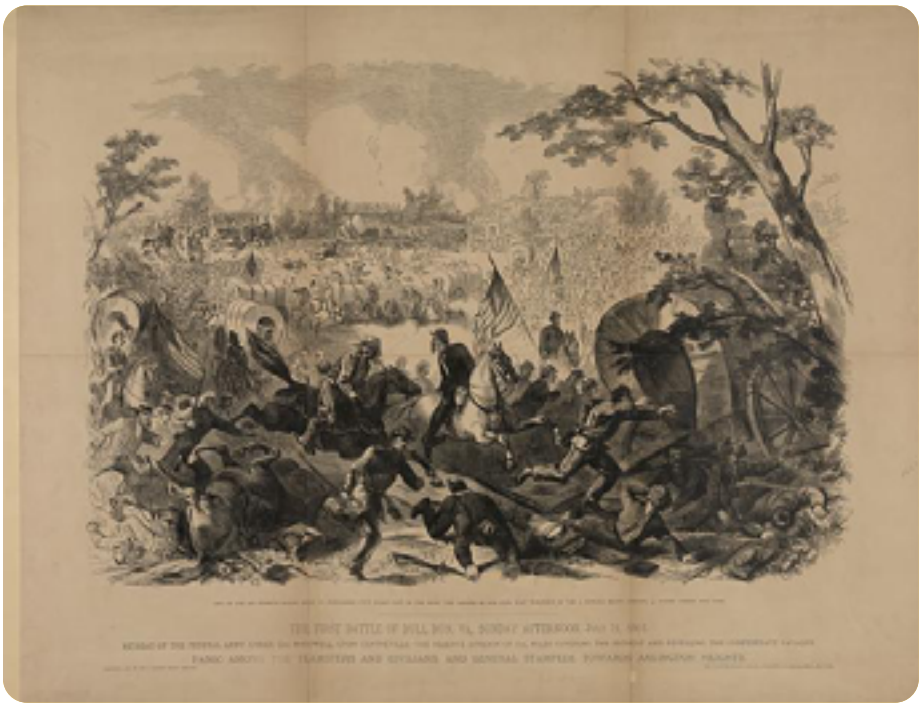
1860

November 6
Abraham Lincoln, a known opponent to slavery, is elected President.

1861

January and February
South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas are the first states to secede from the Union and form the Confederate States of America (the Confederacy). They're later joined by Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina.

April 12
The first shots of the Civil War are fired at Fort Sumter.
July – The South sustains a victory at the First Battle of Bull Run at Manassas Junction, Virginia.



1862

January 27
President Lincoln issues General War Order No. 1, ordering all Union soldiers to advance on the Confederacy.

September 17
Confederate and Union forces fight at Antietam, the bloodiest day of the Civil War.

September 22
President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all enslaved people in rebel territory free as of January 1st, 1863. The proclamation did not, however, free all enslaved people, and honored slavery in slave-holding states that had remained loyal to the Union.

Civil War Timeline

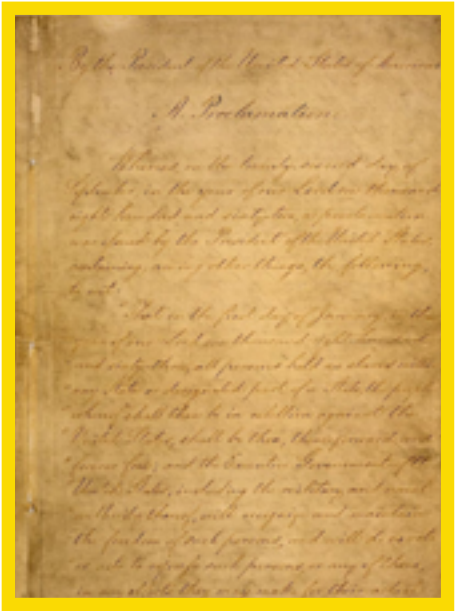
1863

January
The First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment, composed of Black soldiers and authorized by President Lincoln, organizes in South Carolina to fight for the Union. Harriet Tubman served as a cook and nurse, and eventually as a spy and scout with the regiment. The regiment also included a 14-year-old named Susie Baker King, who has been regarded as the first black nurse in the Civil War. The unit was authorized shortly after Robert Smalls, an escaped slave from South Carolina and Union spy, traveled to DC to request permission for Black men to serve officially in the Union army.

February
Other Black infantries are established, including the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. Around 200,000 Black men are enlisted to serve under the Bureau of Colored Troops.

May
Union General Grant captures Port Hudson, Louisiana during the Vicksburg Campaign, gaining control of the Mississippi River and splitting the Confederacy in two.

July
In the Battle of Gettysburg, Union forces fend of Confederate soldiers and halt their invasion of the North. Following the battle Lincoln delivered the famous "Gettysburg Address."



1864

June 15
Congress rules that Black soldiers must receive equal pay.
September – After months of battles, the Confederacy surrenders Atlanta to the Union.

1865

April 9
Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Union General Ulysses S. Grant meet at Appomattox Courthouse and agree on terms of a Confederate surrender.

April 14
President Lincoln is assassinated by actor John Wilkes Booth during a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater in Washington D.C.

June 19
Two and half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas (where slavery largely persisted) to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people were freed. "Juneteenth" honors the end to slavery in the United States and is considered the longest-running Black holiday. Juneteenth became a federal holiday in 2021.

From Union Spies to Renegades - Voices of Resistance in the Civil War

Black Dispatches
As intelligence from Black men and women grew, Union officers began organizing the reports into a special category: "Black Dispatches." Those contributing included enslaved individuals working as stay-in-place agents and runaways and freed Black people who risked their lives as undercover scouts in enemy territory. Despite their significant contributions to Union intelligence, many of the achievements of the Black Dispatch reports were obscured due to racial prejudice and a preference for anonymity due to fear of retaliation after the war.

Mary Elizabeth Bowser
Mary Elizabeth Bowser, a freed Black woman previously enslaved by the Van Lew family, was able to spy for the Union by posing as Elizabeth Van Lew's servant. One of the boldest – and least known – Northern spies, Bowser is said to have had a photographic memory. Assuming the identity of an illiterate enslaved woman, Bowser infiltrated Confederate president Jefferson Davis's Richmond home, gaining access to lists of troop movements, Union prisoner locations and military strategy and treasury reports. Van Lew's diary entries imply that Bowser's discoveries were critical in aiding a Union victory. After the fall of the Confederacy, Bowser traveled the country giving lectures about the war and teaching the formerly enslaved.

Elizabeth Van Lew
Born into an affluent, slave-owning family in Richmond, Virginia, Elizabeth Van Lew became an abolitionist later in life. After her father's death, she freed her family's enslaved workers and used her inheritance to buy and free their relatives. During the Civil War, Van Lew organized an abolitionist spy ring in the heart of the Confederacy. She sent valuable intelligence to Union officers and helped care and plan escapes for prisoners of war. During this time, she assumed a persona – "Crazy Bet" – dressing oddly and acting strangely to divert attention from her activities. She was never arrested and is considered one of the most successful federal spies of the Civil War.

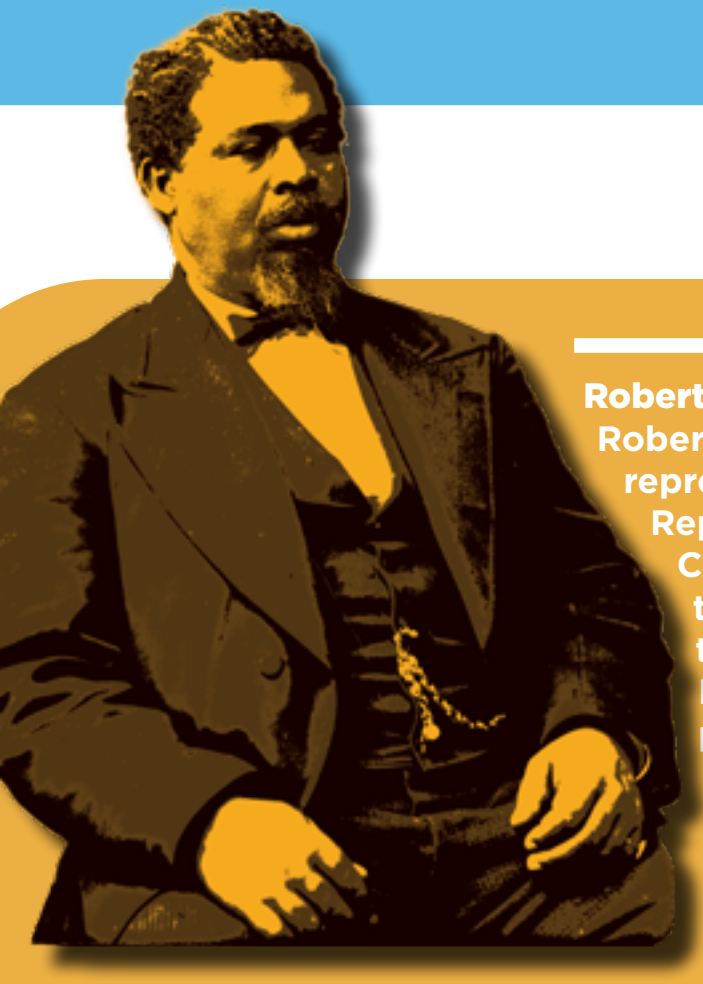
Mary Louvestre
Mary Louvestre was a free Black woman living in Norfolk, VA, where a Confederate ship was being built in a port across the river from the boarding house that Mary and her husband owned. When the ship was almost complete in 1861, Mary traveled north to inform Union authorities, which allowed them to prepare for the Battle of Ironclads off the coast of Virginia a few months later.

Harriet Tubman
Perhaps best known for her work as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman also played a significant role in the Union's victory during the Civil War thanks to her work as a nurse and Union spy. Tubman used her vast knowledge of the South's transportation routes picked up during her travels on the Underground Railroad to assist Union military efforts. Like many other spies, she took to disguising herself as an unassuming elderly woman to gather intelligence on Confederate movements and strategy. After the Civil War, Tubman dedicated herself to the cause of women's suffrage.

Susie King Taylor
Joining the Union cause as a teenager, Susie King Taylor would go on to support the First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment as a laundress, nurse and educator over the course of the Civil War. Having received an underground education, King was well equipped to lead the troops through literacy lessons and went on to establish the first free school for Black children founded by a woman. Later in her life, King would be the first Black woman to self-publish her memoir: *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops, Late 1st S.C. Volunteers*. It remains the sole firsthand account of the experiences of Black Civil War soldiers written by a Black woman.

Sojourner Truth

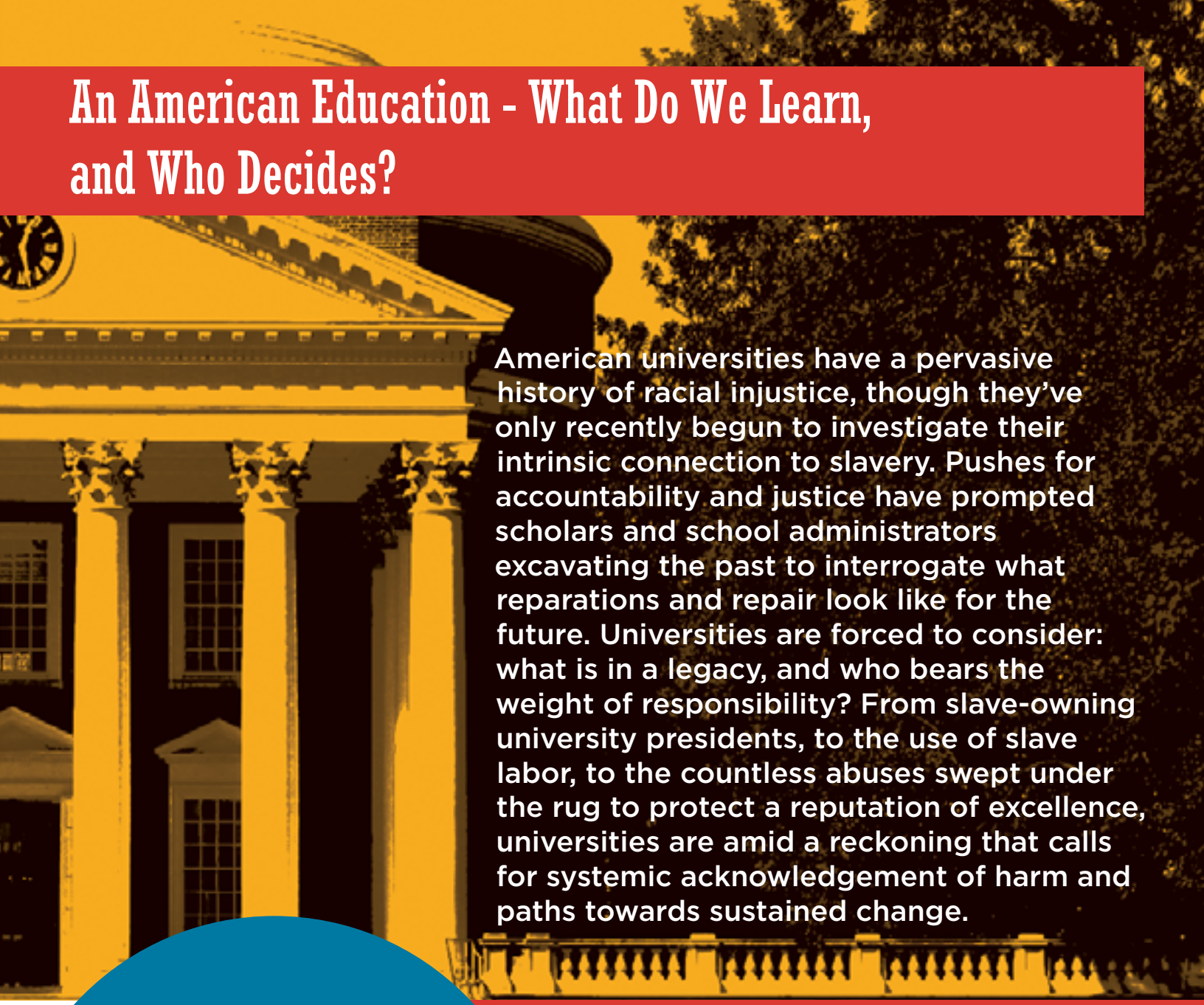
Sojourner Truth was a Black abolitionist, women's rights activist and author who was born into slavery before escaping to freedom in 1826. She is widely known for her 1851 speech "Ain't I A Woman?" where she spoke powerfully about equal rights for Black women. After her 5-year-old son was illegally sold, Truth became the first Black woman to sue a white man in a U.S. court, and win. During the Civil War, Truth helped recruit Black soldiers and worked for the National Freedman's Relief Association, where she rallied people to donate food, clothes and other supplies to Black refugees. In 1864, she was invited to the White House by President Abraham Lincoln to be recognized for her abolitionist efforts. After the Civil War, Truth remained a persistent human rights crusader for Black liberation.



Robert Smalls

Robert Smalls was a Civil War hero and five-term representative for South Carolina in the U.S. House of Representatives. After escaping slavery during the Civil War, he provided intelligence so significant that it was described in detail in the Secretary of the Department of the Navy's report to President Lincoln. Following the war, Smalls focused on personal businesses including his newspaper, the Beaufort Southern Standard, education and his political career.

An American Education - What Do We Learn, and Who Decides?



American universities have a pervasive history of racial injustice, though they've only recently begun to investigate their intrinsic connection to slavery. Pushes for accountability and justice have prompted scholars and school administrators excavating the past to interrogate what reparations and repair look like for the future. Universities are forced to consider: what is in a legacy, and who bears the weight of responsibility? From slave-owning university presidents, to the use of slave labor, to the countless abuses swept under the rug to protect a reputation of excellence, universities are amid a reckoning that calls for systemic acknowledgement of harm and paths towards sustained change.

IN 2020, THE BOOKS THAT RECEIVED THE MOST CHALLENGES TO LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS DEALT WITH RACISM, BLACK AMERICAN HISTORY, AND DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Source: American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom

Only 8% of U.S. high school seniors could identify slavery as the central cause of the Civil War.

^taken from a study conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center's Learning for Justice Initiative

People who decide which books we read:
90% white

People who decide which news is covered:
85% white

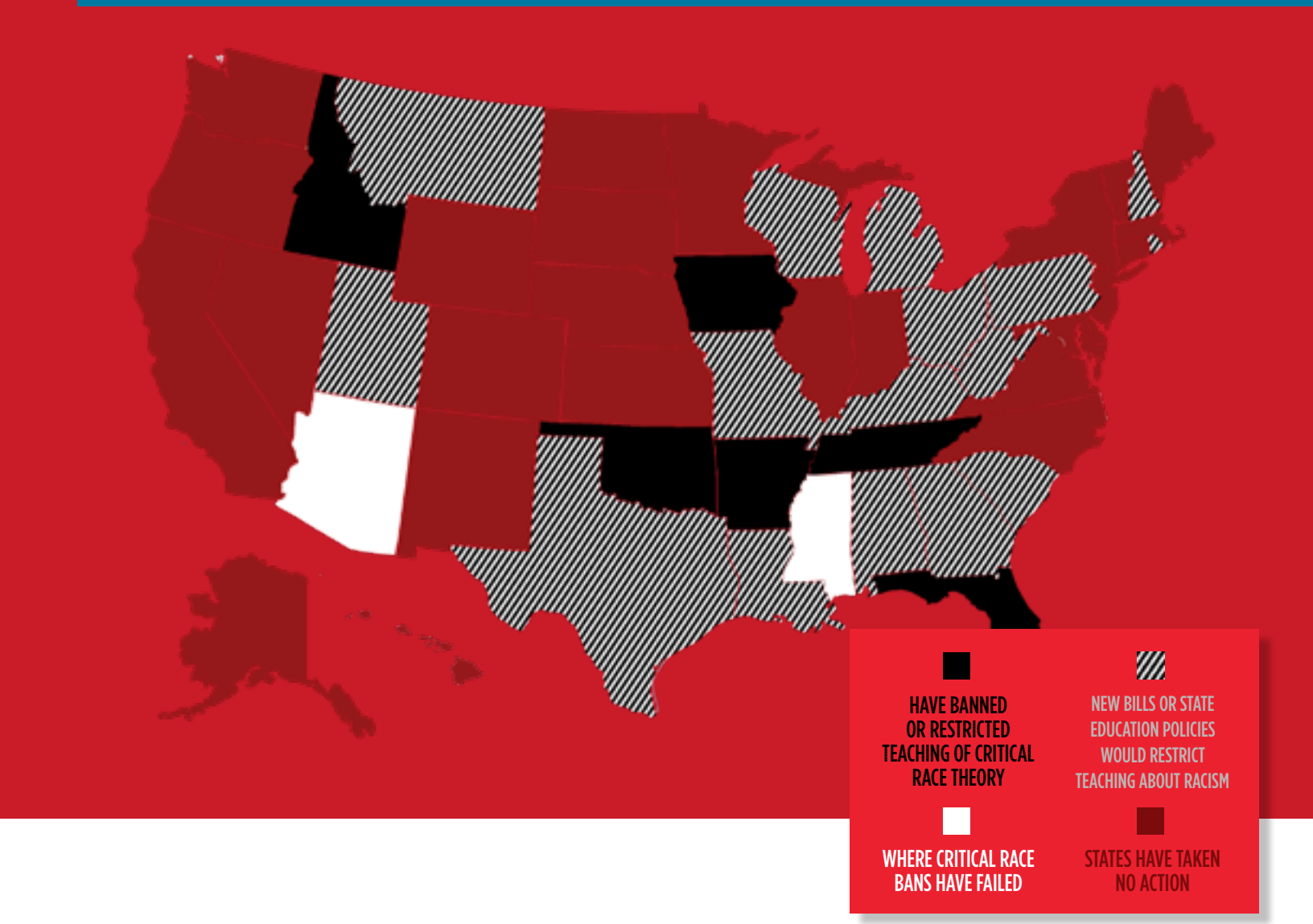
Teachers:
82% white

Full-time college professors:
84% white

^Taken from Robin DiAngelo's White Fragility (statistics are from 2016-2017)

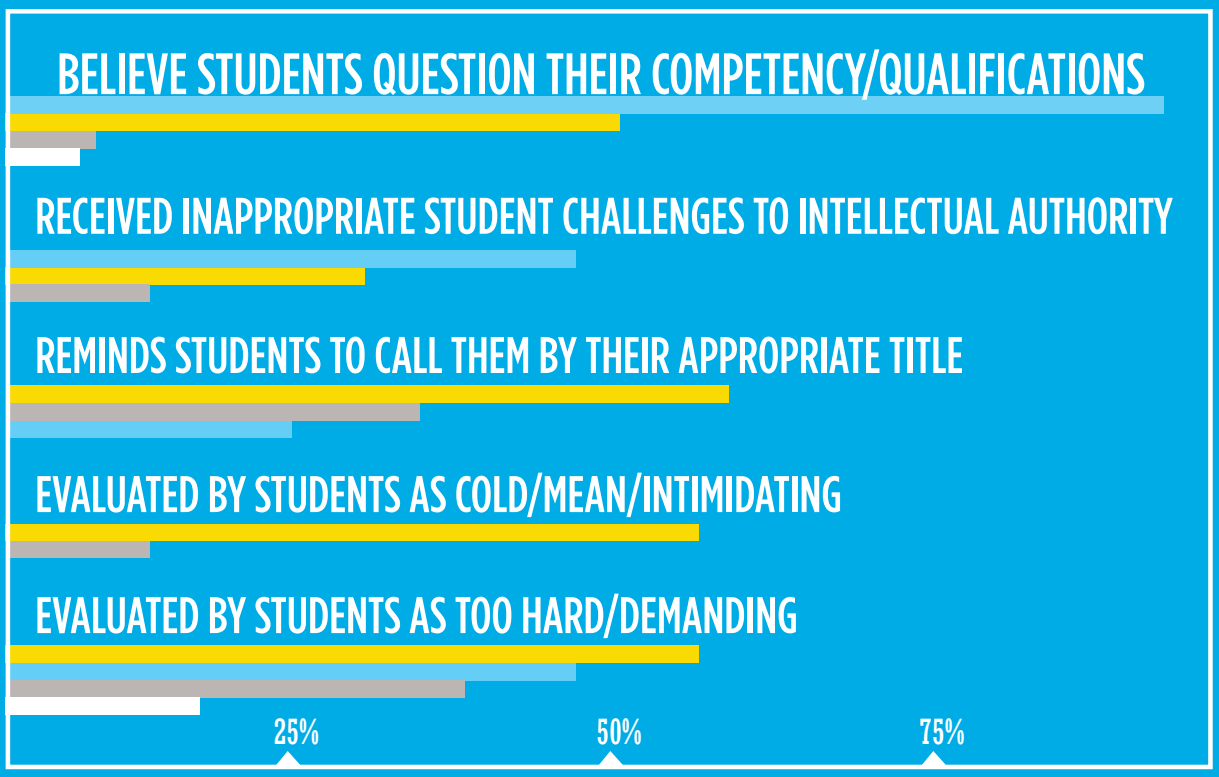
What is Critical Race Theory? The Experts Weigh In:

[Critical race theory] is a way of seeing, attending to, accounting for, tracing and analyzing the ways that race is produced, the ways that racial inequality is facilitated, and the ways that our history has created these inequalities that now can be almost effortlessly reproduced unless we attend to the existence of these inequalities."
– Kimberlé Crenshaw, Law Professor at Columbia University and UCLA

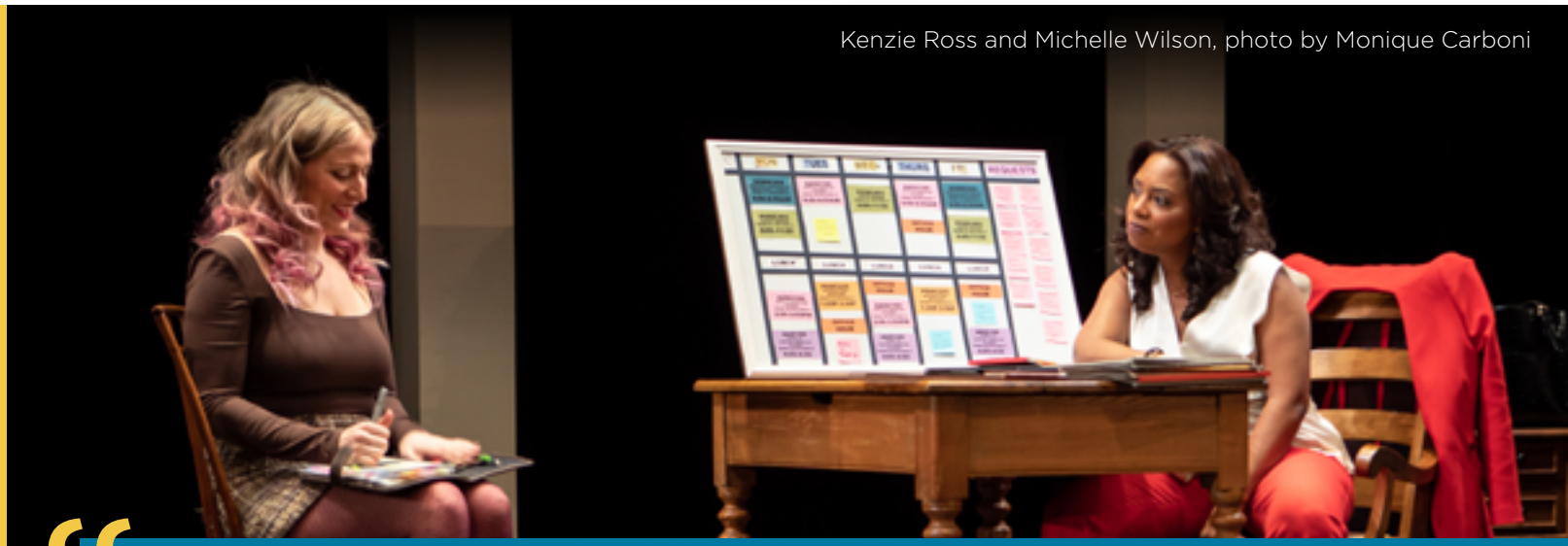


For me, critical race theory is a method that takes the lived experience of racism seriously, using history and social reality to explain how racism operates in American law and culture, toward the end of eliminating the harmful effects of racism and bringing about a just and healthy world for all... The problem is not bad people, the problem is a system that reproduces bad outcomes. It is both humane and inclusive to say, 'We have done things that have hurt all of us, and we need to find a way out.'"
– Mari Matsuda, Law Professor at the University of Hawaii

Black Women in Academia: Understanding the Systemic Challenges



*These charts are from a 1999 study of 29 Black professors and 29 white professors.
All study subjects taught undergraduate classes at a university where the student population was 91% white.
The researcher interviewed subjects and asked 37 open-ended questions.



Kenzie Ross and Michelle Wilson, photo by Monique Carboni

The low representation of Black and female professors in academia is a nationwide issue, with women only making up 36 percent of full professors at four-year institutions and Black women making up a mere 1.9 percent.
-Jyothsna Bolleddula for the Cornell Sun

It definitely is important to be conscious of building diversity, and not just in a cosmetic sense, but ensuring that Black women's leadership is valued, and that our presence is valued.
- Professor Riché Richardson, Africana Studies

Racism is an unrecognized workload issue for faculty of color and Indigenous faculty. Unrecognized labor relating to racism includes:

- Time and effort to prove qualifications to students (especially if they have a non-Western accent or wear non-Western symbols).
- Lectures/seminars/department meetings/faculty meetings following racist comments or action by students or faculty colleagues (which can intersect with sexist, misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic encounters).
- Mentoring Black and minority students navigating a white-dominated neoliberal space.
- Taking on the time and financial burden of planning what to wear so as to refuse racist stereotypes in order to hold creditability and legitimacy amongst colleagues and students.
- Providing emotional labor to white and/or male students and colleagues as they process their privilege and potential guilt.
- Potential racial profiling when traveling for required conferences and workshops.

Taken from Rita Kaur Dhamoon's Racism as a Workload and Bargaining Issue

Revisiting How We Learn the Civil War: Key Concepts from Southern Poverty Law Center's "Teaching Hard History"

America's founders enumerated their lofty goals for the new nation in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Racial justice, however, was not one of their objectives. Rather, the founders sought to preserve white supremacy by embedding in America's guiding document protections for slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In this way, they guaranteed that racial inequality would persist for generations.

- Southern Poverty Law Center: Teaching Hard History

Key Concepts

1. Slavery, which Europeans practiced before they invaded the Americas, was important to all colonial powers and existed in all North American colonies.

2. Slavery and the slave trade were central to the development and growth of the colonial economies and what is now the United States.

3. Protections for slavery were embedded in the founding documents; enslavers dominated the federal government, Supreme Court and Senate from 1787 to 1860.

4. "Slavery was an institution of power," designed to create profit for the enslavers and break the will of the enslaved and was a relentless quest for profit abetted by racism.

5. Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways.

6. The experience of slavery varied depending on time, location, crop, labor performed, size of slaveholding, and gender.

7. Slavery was the central cause of the Civil War.

8. Slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of Americans about race and whiteness, and white supremacy was both a product and legacy of slavery.

9. Enslaved and freed people worked to maintain cultural traditions while building new ones that sustain communities and impact the larger world.

10. By knowing how to read and interpret the sources that tell the story of American slavery, we gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans aspired to created, thought and desired.

Read more here

Deeper Dive

The resources below represent inspirations, activations and contextualization for Dominique Morisseau's *Confederates*. We encourage you to explore before or after the show.

A Call to Action: Black History is American History

Read

- The 1619 Project (*The New York Times*)
- #TruthBeTold Campaign - African American Policy Forum
- Top 10 Most Challenged Book Lists - American Library Association
- Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War? - Ta-Nehisi Coates (*The Atlantic*)

Watch

- The Amber Ruffin Show: Why The 1619 Project Has Republicans Banning "Critical Race Theory" (6-minute watch)
- The Daily Show with Trevor Noah: Nikole Hannah-Jones – Reframing the Legacy of Slavery with "The 1619 Project" (10-minute watch)
- TED: Hasan Kwame Jeffries – Why We Must Confront the Painful Parts of U.S. History (13-minute watch)
- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: How is it Different from PTSD? Dr. Joy DeGruy (6-minute watch)

Race and Academia Today

Read

- The Ivy League's Ties to Slavery Raise Questions for Prospective Students – Tigerlily Theo Hopson (*Teen Vogue*)
- POV: Where Are the Black Tenured Professors? - Malika Jeffries-EL (*BU Today*)
- Burnout, Racism and Extra Diversity-Related Work: Black Women in Academia Share Their Experiences – Katelyn Fossett (*Politico*)
- 3 Ways Elite Universities Benefited from Slavery – Katie Reilly (*TIME Magazine*)
- Universities Studying Slavery (USS) Consortium

Watch

- What is it Like to be a Black Female Professor in the US? (25-minute watch)

Listen

- Radical Imagination Podcast: Reparations – Investigating the question of reparations for Black students at Georgetown University (30-minute listen)

Voices of the American Civil War

Read
- Harriet Tubman
- Susie King Taylor
- Mary Elizabeth Bowser and Elizabeth van Lew
- Robert Smalls
- Sojourner Truth
- Black Dispatches: Black American Contributions to Union Intelligence During the Civil War

Watch
- Bad Bitches of History: Union Spy Mary Elizabeth Bowser (strong language, 3-minute watch)
- From Slave to Congressman: The Story of Robert Smalls – Kevin Hart's Guide to Black History (7-minute watch)

Listen
- Uncivil Podcast: The Ring, The story of Mary Elizabeth Bowser and Elizabeth Van Lew (30-minute listen)

Behind the Scenes: *Confederates*

Read
- Dominique Morisseau Asks: "What Does Freedom Look Like Now?" - Alexis Soloski (*The New York Times*)

Watch
- Dominique Morisseau on *Confederates* – Signature Theatre (3-minute watch)
- Dominique Morisseau Shares What it Means to Her to Be a Playwright - *Playbill* (6-minute watch)

Curriculum Resources

- Learning for Justice (Southern Poverty Law Center) Resources
- Teaching Hard History: American Slavery - Grades 6-12 Framework
- Teaching Hard History: American Slavery – Classroom Videos
- Teaching Hard History: American Slavery - Report
- Teaching Hard History: American Slavery - Podcast

- 1619 Project Pulitzer Resources for Educators

ABOUT SIGNATURE

Signature Theatre celebrates playwrights and gives them an artistic home.

The Pershing Square Signature Center. Photo © David Sundberg / Esto.

Signature makes an extended commitment to a playwright's body of work. By producing a series of plays by each resident writer, Signature delivers an intimate and immersive journey into the playwright's singular vision. In 2014, Signature became the first New York City company to receive the Regional Theater Tony Award®.

Signature serves its mission at The Pershing Square Signature Center, a three-theatre facility on West 42nd Street designed by Frank Gehry Architects to host Signature's playwrights' residencies and foster a cultural community. At the Center, Signature continues its original Playwright-in-Residence model as Residency 1, a year-long intensive exploration of a single writer's body of work. Residency 5, the only program of its kind, was launched at the Center to support multiple playwrights as they build bodies of work by guaranteeing each writer three productions over a five-year period. The Legacy Program, launched during Signature's 10th Anniversary, invites writers from both residencies back for productions of premiere or earlier plays.

NYC Cultural Affairs

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