

# **THE CHANGE WE SEEK:**

**Creative History as Social Justice**

# THE CHANGE WE SEEK: Creative History as Social Justice

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A special thank you to Derek, Dr. Kelley, Marc, JMark, and Tania  
For inspiring me throughout my project's creation  
And to my family, friends, and peers  
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# Abstract

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## Abstract

*In what ways could digital tools enhance the historical material of oral history to inspire public engagement and deepen understanding of the complexity of systemic racism in America?*

*The Change We Seek* is a project that intends to promote social change through reimagining how oral history can be used and presented to better inform collegiate and high school students on complex issues of race in American society.

Through utilizing the educational value of sharing narratives from people of color (POC), and animation, this project is an all-out effort to redefine how oral history has the potential to provoke a realization within the American public of its sizeable racial disparity.

The research included in this paper also documents significant historical and theoretical research that shapes the content produced for *The Change We Seek*. This research charts numerous instances of how the foundations which shape American society, most specifically education, have significantly affected the lives of black people forcing readers and viewers of content produced from *The Change Week Seek* to understand the gravity of America's racial divide.

## **Introduction: A Needed Change**

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The inconvenient truth is that racial progress in this country is always more complex and frequently more illusory than it appears at first glance.

– *Michelle Alexander*

## Section 1: American Education

American education has failed to properly enlighten Americans on topics of race. Not only do educational institutions in America have a longstanding history of avoiding racial discussion and sharing the cultural history of its minorities but have also failed to adapt the few lessons that do to investigating the complex nature of how racism operates today. Much of racial education still abides by a simplistic, non-immersive lens that does not provide an understanding needed to challenge a deeply complex and embedded American philosophy that perpetuates ignorance toward movements of social injustice and systemic racism.

Through current events of social unrest, we have seen a lack of American understanding of complex issues of race. As the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many other black people sparked a nationwide movement for social activism, what also came to the forefront was a lack of empathy and apprehension by many Americans of why POC was stating, “Black Lives Matter” in a time of racial unrest.



Figure 1: *Where George Floyd Was Killed*. Yang, Caroline. New York Times., 2020.

The statement alone may be simple at face value but elicited as much reaction as it did and continues to do because its undertones are complex. That in stating “Black Lives Matter” it presents a declaration acknowledging that black people have lived in a society that has

perpetuated systematic racism for over 400 years—from slavery, to convict labor, to lynchings, to mass incarceration, to George Floyd.

These continuous injustices had not manifested from thin air but through an American system of racial injustice that instills discomfort in talking about the plight of black people. A plight that today places 1 in 3 black men in prison, positions its black youth at the bottom of America's achievement gap, and ensures Black citizens are contained within a wage gap between its racial majority.

Though those three words are powerful, the common non-critical race theory or non-immersive educational models in place do and will not allow the public to understand the importance and complexities presented within the statement unless one is personally exposed to elements of systemic racism or has acquired a deep understanding of black history.

Thus, educational methods that attempt to discuss and educate Americans on racial topics must differ from common forms of education. Education on racial issues must immersively reveal what American society has systematically hidden for generations. That racial injustice happens to persons of color daily.



Figure 2: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Animated Video: Reveal Racism.

## Section 2: A Need for Voices

From Abolition to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, black people have come together and shared their personal experiences to change the society they lived in. Whether it was Fredrick Douglass or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK), their determination and communicative skills introduced a collective acknowledgment by American citizens of racial injustice.

POC's resolve, insight, and voices resulted in the overthrow of significant racist ideology that was for generations enforced through American learning and racially biased mainstream media. Through inspiring words and the intellectually versed, POC made successful efforts to create equality in a society that had continually incited white people to go out of their way to define black people as chattel, ignorant, and second-class citizens.

Thus, after May 25, 2020, when American citizens once again have come face to face with its history of continued racism, content and intellectual analysis from America's minority groups must be shared to address the significant issues involved with racial education that plagues this nation.

Just as the written words of Frederick Douglass inspired thousands of people to fight for the abolition of African slaves, or the audible statements of MLK led to the creation of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964; POC must utilize every accessible medium to its fullest potential to change how Americans view their racially insensitive social norms.



Figure 3: The Killing of George Floyd: What We Know. Grisesdieck, Judy, MPR News, 2020

It is a recent acknowledgment of this needed push to share the experiences of POC through various creative mediums that recent literature and social justice studies have begun to utilize. As within the progression of oral history (which are recorded interviews that focus on significant recollections of historical moments or social issues), POC have redefined racially biased stereotypes and history through the creations of community archives and forms of engaging media.

For example, the effects of police brutality were recorded through a community effort in Cleveland named, *A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland*. Participants of the internet-based archive used oral history to give narratives told by POC a platform for intellectual authority over social injustice.

Moreover, in the creation of a historical graphic novel named *March* by Civil Rights leader John Lewis, Lewis creatively presented his own experiences in a graphic novel that became an immersive way to unveil the history of racial injustice in America to its youth (Lewis; *Righting the Record*).

These approaches in progressive media were seconded by creations within Critical Race Theory (which is a theoretical framework in social science that examines society and culture as they relate to race, law, and power). This theoretical foundation explains that insights told by black and brown people can result in groundbreaking research that has redefined what racism is and where it exists in American society. This redefinition has resulted in award-winning publications and creative media that immersively challenges hidden systems of American racism, such as Carol Anderson's book *White Rage* (2016) and Ava DuVernay's video documentary, *13<sup>th</sup>*.

Thus, through the acknowledgment that voices of color need to be heard through newer and immersive mediums, *The Change We Seek* intends to expound upon this need using oral history and critical race theory to understand how one can successfully provide students with an understanding of America's racial disparity and educate them about complex topics of race.

*The Change We Seek* is an all-out and unapologetic effort to do what generations of black and brown people have worked for generations to do. To change the fundamental parts of society that perpetuate racial inequity through presenting young Americans with voices of color that expose America's racially biased nature.

## Section 3: Project Definition

*The Change We Seek*, is an animated oral history series that intends to collect, animate, and evaluate interviews from POC who have experienced moments of racial inequity in American society and made significant efforts to change it for the betterment of all persons. Interviews collected delve into the variance of racial inequity in American society, from the effects of racially biased educational legislation to moments of microaggressions in higher learning institutions.

Through its creation, this project aims to enhance the historical material of oral history using digital media and highlight personal accounts from black and brown people, which are proven forms of cultural education and social justice.

In this project, the term enhancement is defined as an improvement in the visual literacy and educational value of a historical material using digital tools. Within this enhancement, the goal is to create educational content that teachers and students can utilize to gain insight into America's racial disparities and cultural history.

### First Implementation

Within this first iteration of *The Change We Seek* one, four-minute animated video was created. This animated video, called an enhanced oral history, is a part of an educational series that intends to highlight existing racial disparities in America's learning spaces.



Figure 4: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Animated Video: Education Series Title Card

The education series was established through a process of collecting oral histories about racial inequalities in American schooling, forming a historical argument from accumulated interviews, animating a significant historical memory that parallels the series argument, and evaluating its educational value after it was created. It is a process that seeks to ensure the series' enhanced oral history maintained historical integrity and a meaningful educational message.



Figure 5: *The Change We Seek Education*: Visual Outline

Using the storytelling nature of oral history and the pedagogical value of sharing narratives from POC the creation of this series is an intellectual exertion to discover what theoretical concepts define the importance of enhancing oral histories, how the historical material can be converted into immersive tools of education, and highlight how aesthetic design can better inform students on topics of race.

It is recommended to read this paper after viewing the enhanced oral history. The enhanced oral history is available for public viewing at NC State's *Innovation Studio* (D.H. Hill Jr. Library), my personal website [dbcreates.com](http://dbcreates.com), and on YouTube (under the channel DB Creates).

## **Chapter 1: Defining Oral History**

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Oral history's value derives not from resisting the unexpected but from relishing it. By adding an ever-wider range of voices to the story, oral history does not simplify.

- *Donald A. Ritchie*

## Section 1: Oral History

In being a public historian, I have always been asked often, what is oral history? Is it an interview? Are they stories? Can anyone do it? During years of archiving in museums, building exhibits, and conducting numerous oral histories, I've realized that there is no other historical artifact with so many different interpretations and definitions. This variety of oral history interpretations has resulted in the litany of questions that people have asked me about oral history. However, the confusion makes sense in terms of how complex and widely used the historical resource has become.

Oral history is more than just a historical source but an entire field of study as well. As defined by the *Oral History Association*, "oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events" (Oral History: Defined). Thus, oral history operates on two planes of utilization. It is a practice that must be performed to create the historical resource, and a method of research that once created is analyzed by scholars.

Thus, because oral history is both a tool and method of research its use and theory surrounding it has been defined by numerous disciplines other than history. Without the traditional methods that oral historians held themselves to until the 70s, other disciplines, such as literature and folklore, expanded the uses of oral history that catered to telling stories of marginalized communities (Abrams 2,3). Its result was creating an oral history discipline that helped facilitate a movement towards the forgotten and oppressed. A historical tool that redefined how social justice could be performed.

The tool and discipline grew to be used by social historians that reexamined 300 years of American slavery through the lens of the oppressed, revisited historical moments of racial injustice, and presented new social justice projects intended to challenge how Americans view topics of race in contemporary times.

It is this discipline that *The Change We Seek* intends to utilize to promote social justice and create its content as it gives marginalized communities and POC a voice to correct falsified preconceptions, express the need for societal change, and contains the immersive potential to connect with its audience through personal storytelling.

## Section 2: The History of Oral History

To chart the significance that oral history has had on promoting voices in marginalized communities, it is necessary to follow the progression of the field from its origins. Tracing the roots of oral history goes further back than any other historical source. Since the beginning of historical documentation, oral history has been used as a research tool to illustrate the happenings of a historical moment. It is an instance that is evidenced by the famous Greek historian Thucydides who wrote, the first known historical writing which referenced "eye-witnesses" accounts of the Peloponnesian Wars (Ritchie 49).

However, even though oral history was the first historical record, academic historians strayed away from oral history. In the late 1700s, historians considered printed sources as the authority for curating historical moments. This focus on printed sources was spurred on by advancing press production and a reliance on empirical study created by the German School of Scientific history during this period (Ritchie 3; History of Oral History). Therefore, throughout the late 1700s to mid-20th century, historians relied upon written records to curate history and only referenced oral histories as secondary materials (Ritchie 3; History of Oral History). Thus, the historical tool of oral history and efforts centered around recording personal experiences were only utilized by either non-traditional historians or outside the field of history.

As American memory and historical interpretation became prominent after the Civil War, non-traditional historians began to reuse intellectual interviewing during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This effort of reusing the historical source was meant to preserve cultural history and overturn American history that had begun to illustrate "romantic images of the Antebellum South" after the Civil War (Ritchie 3; Blight 12).

In 1890, historian Frederic Bancroft traveled throughout the South to collect experiences of slavery from freedmen by handwriting their experiences down (Ritchie 3). In his journey across the South, Bancroft sought to expose the harsh realities of slavery that oppressed black people and placed white elites at the top of Southern society.

Bancroft's interviews led to a foundational analysis of slavery he published called *Slave Trading in the Old South* (1931). As stated by The University of South Carolina Press, "Frederic Bancroft exploded deeply entrenched myths about antebellum slavery when *Slave Trading in the Old South* was first published in 1931" (Tadman). His publication was a form of social justice analysis created and inspired by oral histories that combated America's "whitewashing" of American history (Tadman).

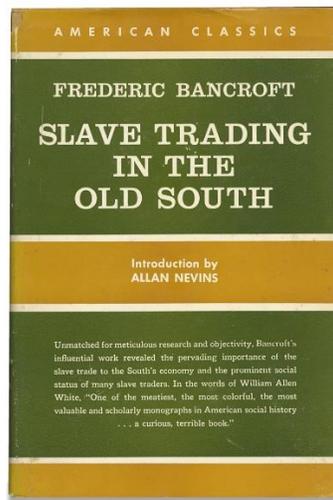


Figure 6: Slave Trading in the Old South, South Carolina Press, Abebooks, 2021

The theme of using written, oral recordings to archive the experiences of marginalized people continued throughout the 1930s with one of the largest efforts of oral history. The New Deal Federal Writers Project (WPA), created in 1935, was made to give many unemployed American citizens, due to the Great Depression, job opportunities. These opportunities provided by the project would include recording the history of everyday American citizens (New Deal Programs).

The WPA included "more than 6,000 writers, recording over 10,000 recollections from a variety of Americans" (Abrams,4). This project expounded on Bancroft's interest in collecting insight from POC as the director of the WPA, Ben Botkin, claimed the handwritten interviewees "gave answers which only they (former slaves) can give, to questions we still ask: What does it mean to be a slave? What does it mean to be free" (Ritchie 4)? These questions from Botkin hint that people performing oral histories inquired about cultural

content that POC could only provide. These oral histories told by former slaves were lived retellings that illustrated experiences that many Americans did not share or understand. The interviews were a gateway into hearing and learning about complex history from the eyes and voices of communities that were oppressed.

## **Becoming a Discipline**

Even though historical projects like Bancroft's and the WPA were large in scope and created a framework for how oral histories could tell the stories of marginalized communities, oral history did not truly become a discipline until 1948. During this year, American historian Allan Nevins, from Columbia University, decided to create the first oral history archive at Columbia University. Nevins sought to create an archive that would utilize an advancement in technology and systematically collect a record of "significant lives" (Abrams 3,44; Ritchie, 4-5). Nevins used a tape recorder with the intent of interviewing "great men" (Ritchie 6-12). Although his approach catered to only elite white men, it made the historical tool a "modern technique" and part of an academic sphere that began to view oral histories as a credible and unique audible source.

To historians, tape recorders made oral history interviews re-playable recordings that could be quickly transcribed compared to written down interviews that were prone to human error (Leavy). Nevins archival process and other Universities, such as the University of California at Berkeley, led to oral history becoming a universal practice throughout the 60s. During this decade, both the Harry S. Truman Library Program, which collected oral histories, and the *Oral History Association* were founded (Ritchie 4,5).

## Section 3: A Shift in History

By the early to mid-60s, a dynamic shift in the field of history began to occur, a large part of this due to recognition in the historical field that marginalized communities such as the working class and POC were active agents in history. During this period, a new wave entered the field of history that focused upon history "from the bottom up" as inspired by E.P. Thompson's publication *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) (Ritchie 49).

Thompson's book posited that everyday people were active participants in controlling the outcome of history, introducing what would be called social history. This history presented a significant detour from prior historical beliefs that only the elite or persons of momentous circumstances dictated significant changes in societal outcomes. This new use of social history made previous works that failed to include marginalized insights outdated (Ritchie 6; Lynd 6).

As American scholars throughout the late 60s and into the 80s began to dive deep into narratives, such as feminism and minority studies, the use of social history resulted in oral history projects that utilized new recordings. Historians began recording new feminist and black and brown interviews, including voices of marginalized and local communities into their curations of history.

Social history, in which oral history was directly influenced, had thus redefined recorded narratives of history that for generations was exclusive, racially biased, and class-favored. As stated by Donald Ritchie in his book, *Doing Oral History* (1994):

A new generation of American historians began writing history "from the bottom up." Many of these interviewers came out of the civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements. Eager to write history of those groups left out of the standard history texts, they lacked the abundant manuscript resources and formal documentation available on the elites and turned instead to oral sources. (Ritchie 7)

This growth in using oral sources produced numerous influential bestsellers that addressed significant social topics in American society that would later become creative works that transcended the traditional medium of text and how narratives in oral history could be used, such as Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976).

This publication was a story of a fictional African slave named Kunta Kinte, that was inspired by the personal accounts of slaves located in oral histories. The story followed Kinte's life in slavery, demonstrating the harshness of slavery, the creation of American black criminality, and slavery's generational effect on the African American experience (Hanley). Hanley's work was on the New York Top Seller List for forty-six weeks and was later adapted into an American television miniseries in 1977.

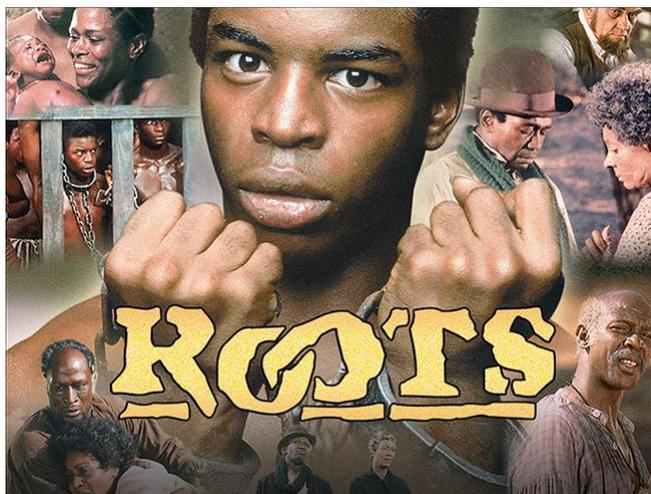


Figure 7: *Roots*, Alex Haley, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. 2016.

The miniseries won both a Golden Globe and Peabody award, drawing over 130 million total television viewers, which was more than half of the U.S. population (Best Seller List, ABC). It displayed that oral history was a successful tool for immersively educating Americans on the cultural history of marginalized groups and could be adapted into captivating narratives that made Americans listen to the voices of black people. As stated by Haley when discussing the use of oral histories:

In those days, slaves were sold and shifted much like livestock, so records were sporadic. Nor did records reflect things like children born from unions between white masters and black women. So, to expect these records to provide an accurate account is pure naivete. When it comes to black genealogy, well-kept oral history is without question the best source. (Kaplan)

Alex Haley's publication and other oral history-inspired projects throughout the 70s and 80s would open Americans' eyes to the reality of their countries' history of racial injustice.

Thus, oral history became an intellectual resource that refined how history was and could be told through its use of auditory and storytelling nature. The historical material grew to develop the innate ability to tell narratives from the perspectives of POC in an intellectually supported and engaging way. This uniqueness of oral history is what postmodern oral historians have expounded upon to produce more narratives from POC and enhance how the historical material is accessed.

## **Chapter 2: Postmodernist Oral History**

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Oral history is a composite genre which requires that we think flexibly, across and between disciplinary boundaries, in order to make the most of this rich and complex source.

- *Lynn Abrams*

Technology enriches a story.

- *Valerie J. Janesick*

## Section 1: Postmodernist Oral History

As scholars who use oral history are now continually interviewing people with different experiences and developing projects that seek to delve into the untold realities of various social issues, the field of oral history has entered an era that branches from postmodernist approaches. As defined by professor of educational and policy studies at the University of South Florida, Valerie Janesick, postmodernist oral historians utilize multiple forms of media to collect oral history and seek to interactively interpret the historical source because they believe it lends itself to creative interpretation due to its storytelling and auditory nature (Janesick 114-116).

Postmodernists are also aware that oral histories can be formulated into projects that seek to tell and present experiences of the unheard, as contained within oral histories are collections of stories that help people make sense of the world around them. This understanding of stories thus shapes one's societal perceptions that are usually skewed towards the majority. (114-116).

Thus, by creatively introducing narratives that are not often told or analyzed, postmodernists use oral history projects as a means for expressing social justice or simply preserving the experiences of others to counter racially biased preconceptions in society.

These two natures of creative interpretation and social justice theory within postmodernist oral history are what *The Change We Seek* intends to utilize and expound upon. To express narratives from POC through oral histories, storytelling nature, and creative potential to promote social justice.

## Section 2: The Storytelling Nature of Oral History

A significant reason why oral histories contain a storytelling nature is that it is produced through an interview format. Oral history can only be produced through an interaction between an interviewer and interviewee, making the historical record strictly reliant on human interaction. These human interactions parse out elements of human communication that cater towards explaining how an interviewee interprets the world they live in or how they have experienced it.

These elements of human communication are especially present when individuals retell a lived experience as humans often divulge their experiences through a story format. As stated by Jonathan Gottschall in the *Storytelling Animal* (2012), "Humans are creatures of story, so story touches nearly every aspect of our lives" (Gottschall 15). Therefore, much of oral history tends to include stories, as people often tell their experiences through a narrative. In these narratives, the human mind seeks to impose meaning to a lived moment that an interviewee finds significant. This intellectual exercise performed by the mind forms a story and gives an oral historian an idea of how societal elements or personal interactions can develop personal historical memories.

Thus, oral history is both apart and lends itself to the nature of storytelling as the historical material, through its auditory nature, is an expression of how an interviewee communicates to its interviewer their interpretation of the world by sharing narratives that include specific words and actions which illustrate their thoughts. As defined by the National Storytelling Network, storytelling is "the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination" (What Is Storytelling?). It is this storytelling nature that lends the auditory source to creative interpretation and its public interest.

## Section 3: Audio-Based Stories

Through oral history's auditory use, the historical tool becomes an interactive narrative as the words expressed by the interviewee are actively provided to its audience. For example, in listening to an oral history from Joseph McNeil, one of the A&T Four, a listener of his oral history can hear every tonal variation or vocal inflection when he recounts moments leading up to him sitting at a "white-only" lunch counter (Sit-Ins in Greensboro). So, when he puts a deep tonal emphasis on the words "We decided to take a stand" after explaining how living in a segregated society upset him because it continuously labeled him and people who looked like him as inferior to their white counterparts the narrative's audience can understand how significant sitting at a "white-only" counter meant to him (NYU Stern).



Figure 8: A&T Four, Moebes, Jack, *News & Record*, 1960.

It is essential context provided and curated by the interviewees' voice; McNeil's vocal inflections convey to its audience an unseen meaning that can emphasize content spoken at certain parts in which we as the listener tend to remember as well.

This audio element separates oral history from other historical materials as the medium can interactively describe a historical memory through the voice of its creator that a historical document or artifact cannot provide, as traditional historical records force the viewer to infer their own emotional interpretation about a specific time or moment instead of being provided by its creator.

Thus, through oral histories humanistic nature of storytelling and medium it allows users of oral history to produce meaningful and creative productions using digital tools that postmodernists have begun to experiment with—an example of this postmodern oral history being displayed through creations from *StoryCorps*. Created in 2003 *StoryCorps* is a company that seeks to bring people together by collecting and sharing emotional experiences that have an overall positive narrative, many of which are oral histories (*StoryCorps*).

The stories told in *StoryCorps* are far from traditional. They are focused more on presenting the story itself rather than analyzing the cultural environment or historical memory of an archived experience. However, the materials produced in *StoryCorps* have become an unignorable entity in the field of postmodernist oral history. Its stories have been featured on *NPR* radio, received Peabody Awards because of its creative use of collected narratives, and has acquired millions of views on their YouTube channel. Its success in presenting narratives from oral histories has extensively shown the historical materials potential to connect with large audiences that seem to always be enthralled with an exciting or emotional moment of history (*StoryCorps About; StoryCorps*).



Figure 9: StoryCorps Griot, National Museum of African American History & Culture, 2021

*StoryCorps* utilizes an approach to oral history that focuses on the auditory aspect of the material. Being able to hear the voice of a person sharing their lived experience with you brings them to life. Hearing the interviewees' voice defines them as a storyteller, making the auditory experience of an oral history intimate with its listener even if the interviewee is deceased or not in front of you. As expressed by the CEO of *StoryCorps*:

When you're listening in your car or your headphones, it's as if that person is whispering in your ear. It's very intimate. You're right there. A story authentically told is like an adrenaline shot to the heart. I don't think there's any better way of telling emotional stories. (Singh)

This attention to the auditory nature of oral history from *StoryCorps* expresses how powerful the medium can be if significant stories in an oral history are shared. By focusing on the storytelling nature of oral history, it enhances the engagement and meaning of the historical source.

Rather than forcing the public to listen to an entire hour-long oral history that they must seek out for themselves, they are instead given a meaningful story fueled by the intimacy of audio (Singh). This gives the audience an emotional investment that encourages them to listen to the full content within the oral history and provides its curators with more possibilities of storytelling with the stories they collect from oral histories.

## Section 4: Multimedia and Educational Advancement

As the postmodernist approach has grown since the 80s to become commonly used, what has paralleled with its progression is a vested interest by academics to combine multimedia with oral histories. Because oral history contains narratives that are easily aesthetically imagined through its storytelling nature and contains powerful enlightening statements from its interviewees, postmodernists have sought to utilize an expanding tool belt of mediums to enhance these narratives from POC that exist within the historical record.

From using the format of graphic novels to illustrate vital historical moments to applying animation to break down complex concepts presented by interviewees, a joint agreement in these attempts to enhance the historical record is a definite pedagogical value in adding media to the medium. This significant educational value is found in case studies and academic research, which defines the postmodernists' need to combine oral history and multimedia.

### Artistic Oral History

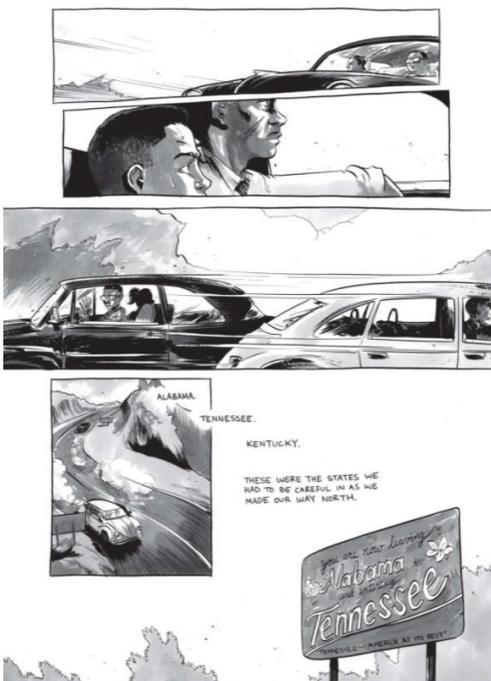
I know now that Uncle Otis saw something in me that I hadn't yet see. That is why we took our trip on June of 51'. There would be not restaurants for us to stop at until we were out of the South, stopping for gas and bathroom breaks took careful planning. Uncle Otis had made this trip before, and he knew which places along the way offered "colored" bathrooms—and which were safer to just pass on by. Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky these were the states we had to be careful in as we made our way North. Black drivers we passed going the other direction, from North to South, faced an added danger their license plates making them visible targets. Sometimes they had to face worse. It wasn't until we got into Ohio that I could feel Uncle Otis relax—and so I relaxed, too. (Lewis 39-41)

This experience is a recollection from a Civil Rights leader and once U.S. Representative for Georgia 5th congressional district John Lewis. In this narrative, Lewis retells what it was like to live in America during segregation, recalling when he traveled with his uncle Otis from the South to the North. Lewis explains that in being black he and his uncle had to abide by segregation laws through the South. This American enforcement of segregation limited their ability to venture into certain areas or travel in the South without a constant awareness of white people's presence (39).

His narrative is a powerful one. It is a piece of history that was uncovered through oral history and recorded for others to encounter. Its written depiction does not use either the auditory or visual potential that oral history contains but gives one a brief understanding of what segregation was like. However, what if this narrative was presented differently? What if these once spoken words were presented with aesthetic content that the historical material lends itself to?

It is a question that is answered in John Lewis's historical graphic novel, *March*. *March* is a graphic novel that uses parts of autobiographical oral histories combined with inked images to construct its narrative following Lewis's experiences during the Civil Rights Movement. It is a narrative that centers upon the importance of using aesthetics to enhance oral history's educational value, presenting its ability to break down complex cultural narratives using imagery.

In knowing this context, now read the same narrative told by Lewis presented earlier with the art style of *March*:





41

Figure 10: *March*. Aydin, Lewis, Powell. Top Self Productions., 2013. 37

Figure 10A: *March*. Aydin, Lewis, Powell. Top Self Productions., 2013. 38

Figure 10B: *March*. Aydin, Lewis, Powell. Top Self Productions., 2013. 39

Figure 10C: *March*. Aydin, Lewis, Powell. Top Self Productions., 2013. 40

Figure 10D: *March*. Aydin, Lewis, Powell. Top Self Productions., 2013. 41

In the second read, there are apparent differences in how the narrative is interpreted. For instance, the images provide its viewers with a visual bridge that fills gaps in a narrative that requires a level of cultural understanding. As within the transcribed version of the oral history, Lewis never clearly articulates that he and his uncle were avoiding spaces where white people in the South lived or the exact severity of visiting those spaces. However, the images provided within the graphic novel format introduces this existing contextual information using visual literacy.

This is best demonstrated when Lewis states, "...Uncle Otis had made this trip before, and he knew which places along the way offered "colored" bathrooms and which were safer to just pass on by..." referring to places that were best to avoid during segregation for black people. This graphic novel panel shows the faces of two white men sitting at the front of a gas station who have threatening looks (39).

The visualization is simple, but details to the reader that segregation was enforced heavily between white people and black people showing the existing danger of not abiding by its enforcement that could lead to either arguments or violence. It is an illustrative enhancement of an oral history that educates the reader on racial issues, no matter what pre-existing knowledge they may have or lack, while simultaneously getting them closer to how Lewis reimagines his significant historical memories.

This graphic nature of *March* has resulted in its use in today's public schools. In 2017 both San Francisco and New York schools adopted the novel as part of their 8th-grade "core curriculum" for American History (Carson). The graphic novel was used as an educational resource for teachers to ask questions about historical moments during the Civil Rights Movement and even provoke race-centered critical analysis.

It is a curriculum that invites students to answer questions about racial topics by attempting to infer cultural differences or narratives presented in a visual format. These lessons provoke students to think about these all-important topics in America critically. The graphic novel has become a gateway for both the public and students to engage in critical thinking, a key component of America's core curriculum standards in institutions of higher learning (Foundation for Critical Thinking). As defined by the Common Core Standards, a "graphic novel format, provides verbal and visual storytelling that addresses multi-model teaching, and meets Common Core State Standards" (Jaffe).

## Documentaries and Animation

Another key example of a postmodernist approach that utilizes multimedia to enhance the educational value of oral history or interviews is the award-winning documentary the *13th*. This educational documentary created by Ava DuVernay presents the mass criminalization of black men in American society dating back to its creation.



Figure 11: *13<sup>th</sup>*. Ava DuVernay. Netflix, 2016

Throughout the documentary, DuVernay utilizes numerous forms of media ranging from strictly audio recorded interviews to animated visualizations that break down complex statistical evidence and racial topics. In her documentary, the visuals are used to enhance the viewer's experience and force them to grapple with understanding complex issues of race (DuVernay). An example of this is presented near the beginning of the documentary when DuVernay pairs multiple audio excerpts from interviews she performed with visualizations of historical evidence. As one of the interviewees' states:

The thirteen amendment to the constitution makes it unconstitutional for someone to be held as a slave. In other words, it grants freedom to all Americans. There are exceptions including criminals, (next interviewee), there is a clause, a loophole (next interviewee). If you have that embedded in the structure in this constitutional language, then it is there to be used as a tool for whichever purpose one wants to use it. (Duvernay)

Through these words spoken by each interviewee, there are several animations displayed that visually enhance these descriptions. When the first interviewee states, "The thirteen amendment to the constitution makes it unconstitutional for someone to be held as a slave. In other words, it grants freedom to all Americans," an animation zooms into a roman numeral of thirteen displaying the words within the 13th Amendment, followed by an animation of doves flying out of the word freedom (DuVernay).



Figure 11A: *13th*. Ava Duvernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:01:51).

Figure 11B: *13th*. Ava Duvernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:01:51).



Figure 11C: *13th*. Ava Duvernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:01:55).

Figure 11D: *13th*. Ava Duvernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:02:01).

However, when the scene starts to describe the loophole within the 13th Amendment, it displays within the American flag African slaves, which transitions into a section of the thirteenth Amendment that clearly states this loophole.



Figure 11E: *13th*. Ava Duvernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:02:06).

Figure 11F: *13th*. Ava Duvernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:02:10).

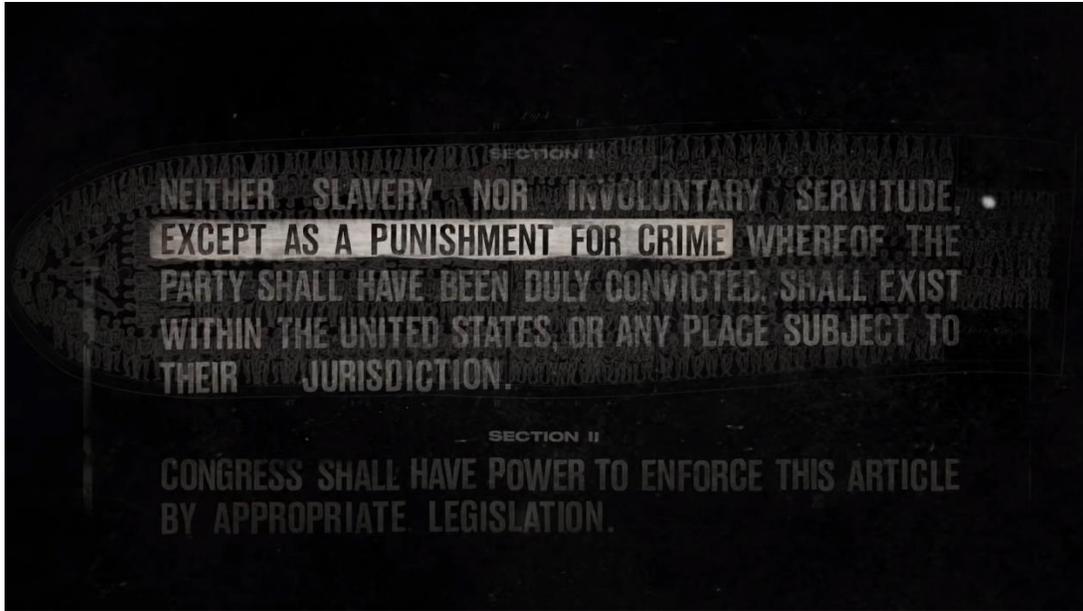


Figure 11G: 13th. Ava DuVernay. Netflix., 2013. (00:02:15).

It is a visualization that allows the viewer to understand the historical context behind the interviewees' words as one can see America's history of attempting to control black bodies through displaying a slave ship and the ever-present loophole in the thirteen Amendment. These visualizations are significant as they show how multimedia and especially animation can enhance the meaning of an interviewees' words (DuVernay).

As stated by Sara Juarez in *The Power of Documentary*, "Documentaries not only enhance our aesthetic awareness but also our social consciousness" (Juarez). The interplay between the intimacy of audio and aesthetic visualizations gives any viewer of the *13th* a social consciousness of the historical context behind each interviewee's words. Thus, animation provides an aesthetic bridge of cultural understanding that could not be provided with only the auditory component of oral history.

Thus, *The Change We Seek* will utilize the postmodernist approach by using forms of multimedia, such as edited audio, creative imagery, and animation to provide its viewers with an aesthetic awareness about important historical and cultural context that affects the experiences of POC.

## **Chapter 3- Defining Critical Race Theory**

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As race relations continue to shape our lives in the new century—setting the stage for new tragedies and new hopes—critical race theory has become an indispensable tool for making sense of it all.

- *Angela Harris*

## Section 1: The Core Concepts of Critical Race Theory

As Americans have started to grapple with the complex nature of race relations in American society due to continuous acts of police brutality, the search for newer models of racial education has become prominent. Citizens who have not been aware of America's long history of racism or deeply embedded racially biased legislation are now seeking to understand why an African American man can be choked by the police for eight minutes and forty-six seconds in a county that claims it is the land of the free (Hill). Thus, many academic professionals and institutions have begun to utilize the theoretical model of Critical Race Theory (CRT). As defined by Purdue University's Online Writing Lab:

Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is a theoretical and interpretive mode that examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression. In adopting this approach, CRT scholars attempt to understand how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how they are able to represent themselves to counter prejudice. (Purdue)

It is an approach that places race at the center of its analysis. Unique from other modes of analysis, CRT seeks to expose racism that is often hidden through generations of unequal racial treatment by using key concepts. These concepts are as follows:

1. "Racism is ordinary." "Racism is ordinary" refers to the theoretical stance that racism is a common occurrence, facilitated by systems of oppression, that POC grapple with on an everyday basis.
2. Closely tied to the "ordinary" belief, is systemic racism (Delgado, 3,4). It is a concept that presents systems in America gives affordances to white people over POC, which has resulted in both "hidden-psychological" and physical negative effects on POC as expressed by Professor of Civil Rights at Alabama University and co-founder of Critical Race Theory, Richard Delgado:

Most would agree that our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material. The first feature, ordinariness, means that racism is difficult to cure or address. Color-blind, or “formal,” conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination, such as mortgage redlining or the refusal to hire a black Ph.D. rather than a white high school dropout, that do stand out and attract our attention. (Delgado 30)

3. Race is a social construct- The conception of race is created by the ideals of social “thoughts and relations” because it does not correlate genetically or biologically with American categorizations of race (30).
4. Voices of color are significant because they are forms of cultural education. This concept explains that because POC have unique experiences and histories "with oppression," they can communicate racial matters to "their white counterparts" that they are not aware of (30).
5. Finally, the fifth concept is a shared understanding between Critical Race Theorists. That social activism is all-important, placing the theoretical model in an active sphere. This concept advocates for subscribers of CRT to act on ascertaining social change once they can better understand complex social problems.

Through these fundamental concepts' scholars have begun to analyze the racial problems of today. It is these core concepts and the creations of CRT content in which *The Change We Seek* intends to define both the educational power of narratives told from POC and the historical argument that formulates the main content produced in the initial conception of its (Education Series) enhanced oral history.



Figure 12: Critical Race Theory, Ramsey County Law Library. 2020.

## Section 2: The Origins of Critical Race Theory

To fully understand why CRT has been so successful in exposing the pillars of systemic racism present in American society (especially in its systems of education), one must follow its origins. To trace CRT back to a movement that was supported by social activists who sought to create a theoretical model that would promote significant racial equity after American leaders and legislation had stalled social change years after the Civil Rights Movement.

### The Beginning of CRT

Even though America's legal decrees have defined much of the racial disparities that exist today, ironically, social activists who have worked in law have created some of the most powerful theoretical models to combat racism, such as CRT. Over America's history, Civil Rights lawyers and social justice advocates studied law to overturn legislation that favored white people over every other race (Crenshaw 1334).

This history of countering racial discrimination was put into action by Civil Rights scholars, such as W.E.B Dubois, who helped in forming the NAACP on February 12, 1909. The organization's goal was to put an end to "anti-black violence" that had grown rampant throughout America during the early 1900s from lynchings and race riots. Through continuously creating court battles that combatted lynching the NAACP found success in the courts by providing distinctive and empirical arguments that exposed the difference in racial experience and the number of racial disparities in American society (Nation's).

These victories led to the Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954. The case ended legal segregation presenting statistical and personal evidence that legal segregation produced unequal education (Nation's).

However, after the decree of *Brown* and numerous Civil Rights Acts that followed, the large racial disparity in America did not significantly change (Legal Highlight). Throughout the mid to late 60s, Southern schools still refused to desegregate. By the early to mid-1970s,

government representatives such as President Richard Nixon began to approve legislation that rejected the ideals of integration through utilizing "colorblind terminology."

Thus, during the mid to late 1970s, a new theoretical model, called CRT, was created by a group of legal scholars. This group included the first tenured black professor at Harvard Law School, Derrick Bell. Bell operated on the premise of what was defined as interest convergence theory. This theory suggested that "a white majority will support racial justice only when they have personal interest in doing so" (Delgado, 176).

In utilizing this premise, Bell sought to formulate a theoretical model that differed from prior Civil Rights theories. As past theories sought to slowly negotiate elements of social justice through state and federal court decisions, Bell instead questioned the entire legal and theoretical system that America was conceived from. A system that to Bell, and other Civil Rights lawyers began to agree, operated from the interests of its white majority. As stated by Delgado:

Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. (Delgado 3)

The theoretical lens of Bell and other founders of CRT, like Delgado, have resulted in critical race theorists' core belief that American society perpetuates systemic racism. Therefore, to combat racism, one must develop an understanding of how race affects American society, examine the foundations of liberal order, and be an active participant in striving for social change in a society that perpetuates inequality (Delgado 3-4).

## Section 3: The Power of Storytelling for People of Color

Just for a moment, imagine you are driving home one evening. As you are driving, through your peripheral you notice a police car is following you. As you make a turn, the police car's siren flips on. You pull over and are immediately asked by the cop to put your hands on the dashboard and then slowly reach for your ID.

Throughout the entire process, the officer watches your every movement as his hand is close to his gun. After looking at your ID and running your license plate, he tells you that your taillight was out and gives you a ticket to get it fixed.

Although this story may seem uneventful to some, make one change to that story. If not already, imagine you were an African American man. How would the story change? When you saw the police car follow you or the police officer tell you to reach for your license, what would you do? Or how would you feel? In knowing that American policing was founded on the principles of slave catching, or that the American media have criminalized black men since D.W. Griffith's, *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, what would you do in this situation? (Smiley, Bonczar, Criminal).

All these questions help one realize there is a racial difference of experience in American society that is best understood through personal insight. It is this realization that American CRT legal scholars have expounded upon in their utilization of legal storytelling.

As stated by clinical professor of law and director of programs at Rutgers-Camden, Ruth Anne Robbins, "Storytelling really is part of general lawyering skills, just as much as legal analysis, logic, and argumentation" (Moorhouse). For lawyers, whether consciously or unconsciously, the arguments they construct in the court of law are structured through the framework of a story. No matter what evidence or "traditional logic-based legal arguments" a lawyer utilizes, they seek to persuade a judge and juries to decide in favor of their client (Moorhouse).

Thus, the power of storytelling is significant in law because stories are practical tools of persuasion (Moorhouse; Delgado; Storytelling 2414). The framework of stories can provide judges and jurors with a deeper insight into the vital context surrounding a lawyer's argumentation.

This fundamental use of storytelling within the court of law in recent years has been examined and utilized by critical race theorists and Civil Rights lawyers to introduce cultural perspectives and factual backgrounds from people who are not within America's dominant racial group, as POC's cultural insights were not foreseen in significant racially biased legal cases that have shaped America's history such as *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*. As defined by Richard Delgado:

The "legal storytelling" movement urges black and brown writers to recount their experiences with racism and the legal system and to apply their own unique perspectives to assess law's master narratives. (Delgado 9)

By POC expressing their insights through stories in the field of law, it introduces to America's dominant group what it is like to be non-white. This expression from POC exposes a needed understanding of historical and societal information that shapes the behavior and situations POC are exposed to.

For example, in Delgado's publication *An Introduction of Critical Race Theory* (2001), he defines an existing cultural gap in racial understanding between dominant and minority groups because American society has produced and normalized material and ideals of the dominant group. As Delgado states, "history books, Sunday sermons, and even case law it makes it difficult to understand or even access stories of minorities" (Delgado 62; Liz).

Thus, the racially dominant group operates on a different basis of societal understanding than POC justified by American society because their experiences are internalized as official or commonplace. Delgado provides an example by describing the built-up cultural hegemony between the dominant racial group (white) in America and minority groups. He

describes the cultural hegemony between white and black people, explaining how the racial majority in America may view the African American historical experience as he states:

Early in our history there was slavery, which was a terrible thing. Blacks were brought to this country from Africa in chains and made to work in the fields. Some were viciously mistreated, which was, of course, an unforgivable wrong; others were treated kindly. Slavery ended with the Civil War, although many blacks remained poor, uneducated, and outside the cultural mainstream. As the country's racial sensitivity to blacks' plight increased, federal statutes and case law gradually eliminated the vestiges of slavery. Today, blacks have many civil rights and are protected from discrimination in such areas as housing, public education, employment, and voting.

The gap between blacks and whites is steadily closing, although it may take some time for it to close completely. At the same time, it is important not to go too far in providing special benefits for blacks. Doing so induces dependency and welfare mentality. It can also cause a backlash among innocent white victims of reverse discrimination. Most Americans are fair-minded individuals who harbor little racial prejudice. The few who do can be punished when they act on those beliefs. (Delgado 40)

Many of America's racial majority view African Americans' historical and current experience in this light because they have not had to experience moments of racial discrimination and have been assured through racially biased legislation and educational tools that the Civil Rights Act solved every social issue for every American citizen. It is a false reality that the dominant racial group can live under because American society has catered to their needs and wants (Delgado 40-41).

It is a history that is far from the reality of how POC and marginalized communities view their history as the racial disparities and inequity suffered in these communities today are staggering.

Thus, by POC sharing their personal experiences and insights of racial disparities, it acknowledges this gap in cultural and historical understanding between the two racial groups. They are exposing the underlying "mindset" of the dominant group and introducing a "shared reality" between both racial groups, which they can both navigate to produce legislation that considers disparities that exist between races (Delgado; Storytelling 2413).

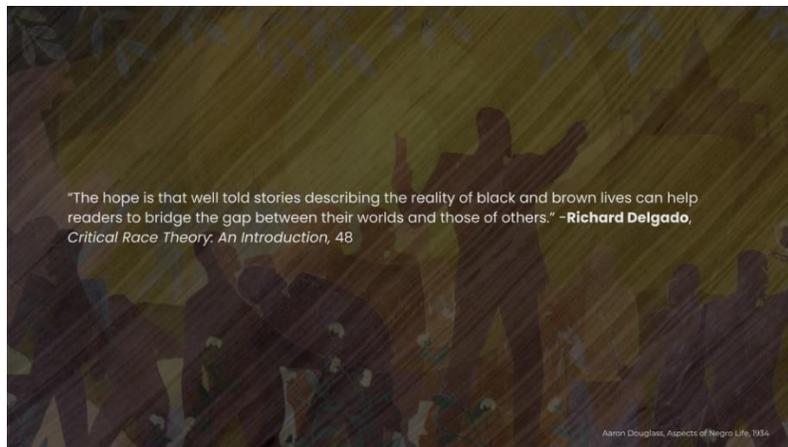


Figure 13: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Legal Storytelling.

Storytelling has evolved to have a powerful meaning for POC. To share engaging personal stories in the hopes to bridge persons of non-color to a "new and unfamiliar world" of social reality that POC already exist in. As stated by Delgado, "The hope is that well told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help readers to bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others" (Delgado 48).

## Section 4: Critical Race Theory and Education

As CRT has grown to be utilized by numerous disciplines, scholars in most recent years have decided to use the theoretical tool as a guide to investigating the ever-present racial disparities that have existed in American society for generations. One of the most pressing of these disparities is American education.

The experience of American education is drastically different between POC and non-color. As for POC, they are disciplined at a significantly higher rate than white people. They are more frequently taught by teachers who are not their ethnicity and are more likely to attend schools with less funding and high poverty rates (Gordon).

It is a matter that is a part of keeping black people in a position of second-class citizenship as in American society; the more education one receives, the more likely they are to acquire an occupation of higher income. For example, persons who have received a high school diploma account for 8% of citizens earning \$100,000, while on the other hand, 75% of people making the same earnings received a college degree (Greenstone).

Thus, in considering America's racial divide in education, CRT scholars of today have placed race at the center of analyzing it to discover and expose its racial educational gap. As stated by Delgado in *An Introduction to Critical Race Theory*:

Today, many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use the theoretical method to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing.

(Delgado 3)

It is an effort through CRT that has proven successful. It has created projects such as the *New York Times 1619 Project*, which has garnered interest in overturning existing educational injustices in American education.

Created by journalist and Critical Race Theorist Nikole Hannah-Jones, the *1619 Project*, has forced Americans to rethink how narratives of history are learned, as often they have been taught through only the perspectives of white Americans.

Published on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first arrival of enslaved Africans to colonial Virginia, the project was a “long-form journalism” venture which aimed to “reframe the country’s history, by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the United States’ national narrative” (The 1619 Project). In its first publication, it included 100 pages of content that addressed America’s history of social injustice. It was a publication that included essays, poems, and creative photos.

By creating this project, Jones's intent, along with its other contributors, was to force Americans to grapple with its long history of avoiding historical narratives of race. Jones pointed out that American education has so often marginalized the affects and significance of American slavery and African American history. As Jones stated in an interview on *CBS This Morning* on August 22, 2019:

We don't know about 1619 the same way we don't learn very much about slavery. It is shameful. No one wants to talk about their sins, or the worst moments and slavery gives contradiction to our entire creation story of the United States. And so, we've tried to push it aside, we've tried to make it marginal, and in doing that we've marginalized the 40 million descendants of the enslaved as well. So, what we're trying to do with this project is force us to confront the truth, and then maybe we can actually to move past slavery and become the country that was written in our ideals in the constitution and the declaration. (CBS This Morning)

It was a project that received backlash from many Americans and historians who traditionally examine historical narratives through a scope that often romanticizes how this nation was founded. It is a historical lens from traditionalists that has historically diminished the active agency that African Americans have had on the formation of American society (CBS This Morning; Silverstein). It is not to say that the 1619 project is the only way one can examine American history, or that its collection of historical data was a perfect historical effort, but to vehemently dispute its attempt to view history from the eyes of the marginalized is discounting perspectives and narratives that are fundamental in how this country came to exist.

The project culminated in a national reimagining of how scholars analyze historical narratives and how Americans talk about issues of race. It was an effort that resulted in Jones winning a Pulitzer Prize Award for her introductory essay within the project and an acknowledgment by New York University Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute of being one of the ten greatest works of journalism in the decade (2010 to 2019) (Sullivan).

Thus, through the 1619 project's educational focus and so many other CRT-inspired publications that have intended to spark intellectual discussion and force Americans to reexamine issues of race, *The Change We Seek* aims to do the same. Through utilizing concepts from critical race theorists, this project uses the theoretical tool to define its historical argument in the enhanced oral history. It is an effort that seeks to put CRT into creative use so Americans can better understand today's racial inequities in American schooling.

## **Chapter 4: Critical Race Theory in Practice: A Historical Argument**

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Stories can name a type of discrimination; once named, it can be combated.

*-Richard Delgado*

## Section 1: Historical Argument

May 17, 1954, was supposed to change American schooling forever. On this day, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), deeming state laws that established racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The verdict of *Brown* had overturned 58 years of legal racial segregation defined by the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The case was a collective effort from black parents to acquire equal educational funding, facilities, and experience for not only their children but future generations of black people (Meatto; "The Supreme Court").



Figure 14: New York World-Telegram & Sun Collection/Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

However, in looking at America's educational landscape today, it has maintained its highly segregated and racially biased existence. For example, in American schools today, "more than half of the nation's schoolchildren are in racially concentrated districts, where over 75 percent of students are either white or non-white" (Meatto).

It is an occurrence that negatively affects black children as segregated schools have proven to depress the educational outcomes of black students, widen the performance gap between white and black students, and give them lesser pedagogical resources because they are twice as likely to attend high-poverty schools (Garcia).

Thus, it is this project's intent to acknowledge these existing racial inequities in American education that were supposed to be quelled through the approval of *Brown*. As content created for the first iteration (Education Series) of *The Change We Seek* highlights, African American students who attend predominantly white schools exist at the intersection of two historical narratives defined by race.

One narrative that is plagued with white resentment toward black achievement in educational spaces, due to the approval of the Supreme Court case of *Brown*, and another narrative that demonstrates generations of black resolve and courage shown during the Civil Rights Movement and following civil cases that grant Black students the ability to learn in desegregated spaces.

It is a racial crossroads that results in a mixture of frustration and pride by many young black Americans who attend learning institutions in America, such as this project interviewees, because its racially biased systems still exist.

## Section 2: White Rage

Within the first historical narrative exists the persistence of white resentment that has created America's racial divide in academics called white rage. It is a term coined by African American professor at Emory University, Carol Anderson, as she defines white rage as white backlash and resentment towards black achievement or gained social status which appears through legislation or subtle acts. As Anderson states:

White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly. Too imperceptibly, certainly, for a nation consistently drawn to the spectacular—to what it can see. It's not the Klan. White rage doesn't have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working the halls of power, it can achieve its ends far more effectively, far more destructively. (*Anderson, White Rage ix*)

It is a white resentment triggered by black achievement that ultimately harms every American citizen because much of black achievement brings about social change that seeks to implement equality efforts. As defined by Anderson:

The truth is, white rage has undermined democracy, warped the Constitution, weakened the nation's ability to compete economically, squandered billions of dollars on baseless incarceration, rendered an entire region sick, poor, and woefully undereducated, and left cities nothing less than decimated. All this havoc has been wrecked simply because African Americans wanted to work, get an education, live in decent communities, raise their families, and vote. Because they were unwilling to take no for an answer. (xi)

It is a recurring formation of white rage that was mostly created after *Brown* and the Civil Rights Act (1964) as overt declarations of racial segregation or racial discrimination became unconstitutional. This acceptance of new law resulted in the use of racially biased litigation that sought to overturn the ideas of *Brown* or mask methods of white supremacy under colorblind terminology and inadvertent acts of racism (ix, x, 53).



Figure 15: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: White Rage Collection.

This existence of white rage has defined the racial inequities that black Americans must face within today's educational environments. Environments that have placed black students who seek equal educational opportunities into either segregated or racially biased integrated spaces, hampering their educational aspirations to achieve.



Figure 16: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Carol Anderson-White Rage.

White rage is a theoretical concept that has been present in the history of America for generations, shown in the creation of the Southern Manifesto, racially biased court decisions, and presidential administrations which sought to overturn efforts of integration to appease white people who did not want to adjust their privileges in American schooling to achieve equal opportunities for black people.

## **Southern Manifesto (1956)**

On March 12, 1956, Howard Smith of Virginia, chairman of the House Rules Committee, presented a document on the house floor that was the culmination of white resentment towards laws that would give African Americans educational opportunities to achieve (Aucoin 173; "The Southern Manifesto").

After the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education II*, which advocated for schools to desegregate with "all deliberate speed," 138 Southern members of Congress signed what was initially named the "Declaration of Constitutional Rights" ("Southern Manifesto"). This document, which would later be named the Southern Manifesto, advocated for continuing racial segregation in public schooling. It was a Manifesto that claimed the decision of *Brown* was a "clear abuse of power" to enforce desegregation upon Southern states ("The Southern Manifesto"; "The Supreme Court"). It was a piece of legislation that was campaigned by its constituencies as a Manifesto that meant to take "a patriotic stand" to defend the Constitution as *Brown* had infringed upon State rights (Aucion 173-176; Driver).

However, this statement from its creators was only a guise to mask ideological beliefs of maintaining a racial caste system in the South that fostered white supremacy and privilege in American schooling that had existed before *Brown*.

Its original creators, avowed segregationists, Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Sen. Harry F. Byrd of Virginia, had made numerous early drafts of the document that had approved utmost interposition toward the Supreme Court's decision of *Brown*. These drafts, as defined by senators who had viewed them, "did not contain a statement denouncing improper and illegal resistance" towards *Brown* and contained rhetoric that

would have prompted white southerners to ignore constitutional law to resist integration" (Aucoin 174-175).

These drafts, however, were not received well by both Northern and several Southern politicians. Many politicians believed the drafts were "too extreme" and would later come to agree that overt declarations against *Brown* would not last in the court of law because existing evidence of racial discrimination in places of learning was irrefutable (Aucion 175).

Thus, from this realization, "well-educated" lawyers, Sen. Sam Ervin of North Carolina and Sen. John Stennis of Mississippi decided to adjust the document to contain politically safe terminology while still advocating for the rejection of integration and Southern interposition (Driver). Therefore, the conception of the Manifesto began a nationwide utilization of racist tactics during and after the Civil Rights Movement that propelled "colorblind" legislation to advocate to the rest of America the need to maintain a society that favored the needs of white people and slowed the progress of black achievement. As mentioned by Justin Driver of the *Los Angeles Times*:

Ervin, Stennis and the other manifesto drafters avoided naked appeals to racial bigotry not least because that would alienate the document's intended audience: white Northerners. As numerous manifesto backers explained, the document was designed to transmit Southern opposition to *Brown* directly to citizens outside the old Confederacy. Accordingly, the manifesto was excerpted and reprinted in newspapers around the country, including this one. (Driver)

Through these origins, the document was then presented, spawning reactions from press and government officials that declared the Manifesto still promoted Southerners to defy desegregation. It is a standard analysis that is shared by numerous historians who have analyzed the document as stated by Sean D. Cashman:

The Southern Manifesto' marked a return to the rhetoric and resistance of the old Confederacy. This was the lounge of interposition, nullification, and states' rights resurrected in order to resist desegregation. (qtd.in Aucon 176)

Thus, the Manifesto utilized the issue of states' rights to maintain what each Southern State was fighting for the right to do during the Civil War. The Manifesto was an effort to maintain the subjugation of black people by diminishing their opportunities to achieve. Instead of the South rejecting Abolitionism to halt the freedom of black people, this time, *Brown's* rejection by Southern states would block black people from obtaining freedom from segregation and Jim Crow.

From the Manifesto's plea to all Southern states to exhaust all "lawful means" to resist the "chaos and confusion" that would result from school desegregation," massive resistance took root in the South creating initiatives of white rage that extinguished numerous attempts at desegregation efforts throughout the late 50s ("The Southern Manifesto").

For example, local school boards in Virginia that were placed under federal court orders to desegregate, such as Charlottesville, Norfolk, and Front Royal, were closed by the State's governor James Lindsay Almond. As in Governor Almond's words, he sought to close every "school threatened with desegregation" (Anderson 42, Ch.3). It was an effort of racial segregation and white rage inspired by the Manifesto that unfortunately harmed the educational experiences of both white and black students.

Governor Almond's decree to close schools in Virginia had halted schooling for "nearly thirteen thousand white children" and maintained unequal schooling for black children for an entire decade after *Brown*. An instance that is shown through statistics as only 1.63 percent of black students were attending desegregated schools ten years following the significant court case (Anderson 41).

The Manifesto also validated white resentment toward social change for many angry white parents who refused to have their children attend schools with Negro children. As most Southern white parents vehemently opposed racial integration, as stated by historian Neil McMillen:

Not unlike pro-slavery zealots of the 1850s, the pro-segregationist of a century later were inclined to brook no latter-day Abolitionism among fellow southerners... In this repressive atmosphere the moderate was vilified and he who was found 'soft' on integration was adjudged treasonous. (McMillen 235; Segregation in America)

This polarized outrage toward integration by white Southern citizens continued to block black citizens from gaining access to resources that would allow them to achieve, best evidenced in the rise of the White Citizens Council during the mid to late 50s. This council used tactics of white rage to heavily discourage black citizens from speaking out against segregation in the South. For example, in 1955, 53 black residents in Yazoo County, Mississippi, signed a "desegregation petition launched by the NAACP" (Ellis; Segregation in America). In response to this petition, the state's White Citizens Council published an ad in the local newspaper exposing their names to the public. This action subjected the petition signers to widespread harassment, loss of work, and in some cases, cancellation of their bank account (Ellis; Segregation in America). This occurrence is just one example of white rage that was enacted by the Southern Manifesto.

Thus, the Southern Manifesto was a form of white rage. A rage that existed through legislative subtlety intended to incite a rejection towards the social and political achievements that black people had begun to gain during the early Civil Rights Movement. It was a decree that, although did not dispel *Brown*, did slow its progression. Because of the Manifesto, most integration efforts in the South resulted in awkward integration efforts during the late 60s and 70s because it was delayed for so long.

## **Milliken v. Bradley (1974)**

In the early 1900s, millions of African Americans sought to make a change. Tired of racial segregation and discrimination in the South, over 6 million black people decided to forget the Jim Crow South to experience the American dream (Gregory 113). This movement, which became known as the Great Migration, led to black Americans moving to the North to find job opportunities that were abundant in cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit. In particular, Detroit was an epicenter for the Great Migrations' first wave. During this first wave, a total of 1.5 million African Americans migrated to the city because of its attractive auto industry and available property (Gregory 32).

However, through this migration of black people came resistance from white communities that had already existed in the city. Newly migrated black people were barred from white neighborhoods in Michigan with discriminatory housing covenants, racial violence, and redlining (Gregory 32). The use of these methods defined a racial divide across its metropolitan area. Although some of Michigan's discriminatory practices were outlawed after WWII, local neighborhoods still maintained redlining and housing covenant efforts that formulated white-only suburban areas and a majority of black people in the intercity. As highlighted by Professor of Law at Cardozo School of Law, Michelle Adams:

The story was the story American apartheid, federal redlining of neighborhoods and race-based restrictions on house sales, known as covenants, had made it nearly impossible for black families to move to the suburbs. (Nadworny)

It was an instance of racial discrimination that by the early to mid-70s had created essentially dual school districts based on race because Michigan's housing was so segregated. During this period, at least two-thirds of Detroit's school system was black. Furthermore, these segregated inner-city schools that black students attended received far less attention and resources from the State. For example, Detroit's DeWitt Clinton School was "nearly 100 percent black in the 1960s" and as referenced from Samantha Meinke's in

the *Michigan Bar Journal*, “textbooks were out of date and class sizes expanded to as many as 50 students; classes were held in trailers on the schoolyard because the building was falling apart” (20).

To quell this growing problem of racial segregation in public schooling on April 7, 1970 “four of the Detroit Board of Education’s six members” approved an integration plan (20). This plan was immediately met with white resentment as due to bomb threats and the creation of committees from white parents that sought to resist integration, the plan was voided through the state legislature, an effort that was listed as Public Act 48. This act also “placed school districts under control of local neighborhoods” (Burger 791; Meinke 20).

During this period of racial segregation and tension, on August 18, 1970, black parents represented by the NAACP filed a suit against officials within the State of Michigan (Burger 717; Nadworny). This suit argued that both the State and city of Detroit had perpetuated racial segregation in its schools through its enactment of racially biased policies, such as unequal housing, redlining, and the newly created Public Act 48 (Burger 791; James 964; Meinke 20;). Thus, black parents wanted the originally proposed integration plan to be reinstated to overturn Michigan's unequal schooling and generations of housing segregation.

Following the filing of the suit, it was taken to two preliminary lower courts, Judge Stephen J. Roth’s courtroom and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. In its early rounds, the suit gained support as the Sixth Circuit declared Public Act 48 unconstitutional because it nullified the local district’s attempt to comply with the federal desegregation mandate.” (Burger 791; Meinke 21-22). The case was then put on trial to consider if the Detroit School Board and state government followed de jure segregation.

Thus, a 41-day trial commenced in the district court. It was a trial that presented significant evidence of Michigan's racial segregation in schools and housing. This evidence highlighted policies in the Federal Housing Administration, Homeowners Administration, and

discriminatory practices of banks that created Detroit's racial apartheid between its inner-city and suburbs.

The NAACP also exposed the state's system of racially biased decrees as referenced by Meinke:

The Detroit board and State government actively increased school segregation by implementing an optional attendance zone policy, building new schools in white neighborhoods, and drawing boundaries that created the most racially segregated schools possible. (21-22)

It was this evidence that spawned an interest by the NAACP to press for an integration plan that would "reach beyond the city limits to include white students in the suburbs in an inter-district busing desegregation plan" (Burger 766; Meinke, 21-22). At the end of the district court trials, Judge Stephen Roth declared the Detroit Board and state responsible for school segregation. This decision that was later appealed by Michigan's State and suburbs and taken to the United States Supreme Court.

## **Supreme Court Decision**

Although the lower and district court trials had shown insurmountable evidence of racial discrimination in housing and schooling in Michigan, when the case was taken to the Supreme Court, the judges sided in favor of maintaining Michigan's segregated operation of school districting in a 5-4 court decision.

The judges had sided with arguments formed in support of Michigan's suburban districts. These districts and the State presented to the court their awareness of the racial segregation in the State's schools. However, they had declared they had not willingly created its school districts with the intent of "fostering racial segregation in public schools." As stated by Elise Boddie, professor at Rutgers Law School, "[The suburbs were] making this

issue a question of white guilt or innocence... we know there may be a problem of segregation, but it's not our fault. We're not responsible for it" (qtd. in Nadworny).

The court decision was voted upon by four newly appointed Supreme Court Justices by President Nixon. President Nixon ran on the premise of putting a halt to integration efforts to acquire the vote of a growing white population that was angry about the growth of integration in the North after the South had finally begun to desegregate. As Nixon declared only a year later in *A Special Message to the Congress on Equal Educational Opportunities and School Busing*, "schools exist to serve the children, not bear the burden of social change" (Nadworny; "Special Message to the Congress").

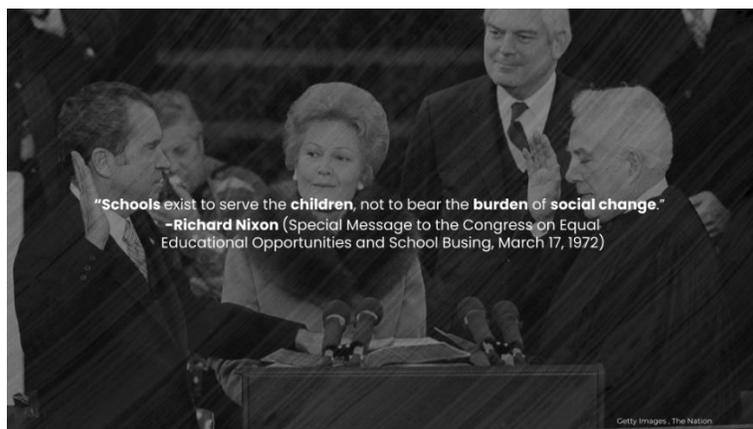


Figure 17: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Milliken-Nixon.

It was a political stance that would soon be utilized throughout future presidential administrations like Ronald Regan's and George W. Bush's to garner white support rather than listen to the ever-pressing needs of black parents and students (Hannah-Jones). The decision resulted from white rage, a collective lack of care and resentment toward black progress that came at the cost of needed social change in educational institutions.

It was a court decision that still affects schooling to this day as many Northern and Southern states in American are still able to keep learning spaces highly segregated because the case of *Milliken* disallows federal involvement in desegregating across district or county lines. It is an instance that enables local governments and school boards to maintain historically

segregated (and racially biased) counties. As stated by Justice Thurgood Marshall in his dissent of the decision of *Milliken*:

Under such a plan, white and Negro students will not go to school together. Instead, Negro children will continue to attend all-Negro schools. The very evil that *Brown* was aimed at will not be cured but will be perpetuated. (qtd. in Nadworny)



Figure 18: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Milliken.

The existence and allowance of cases spawning from white rage, such as the *Southern Manifesto* and *Milliken*, have contributed to why black students today are exposed to the country's high segregation rates and awkward existence in integrated spaces. Spaces that are often created from only the concerns of white parents and officials.

## Section 3: Black Resolve

However, it is a history of white rage that defines the significance of black resolve and achievement to acquire their human right to higher education. As generations of black people have sacrificed their time and effort for future black students to exist in educational spaces that provide them with newer opportunities that past generations of black people could not benefit from. Much of this effort being exercised through building strong communities that inspired future generations to achieve and creating litigation that has historically pushed for integration efforts in American education.



Figure 19: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Black Resolve.

### The Importance of Education

Black education is a history of resilient efforts to secure freedoms for future generations of black Americans. Dating before Emancipation, education was always valued by black people as it was never given to them. During American slavery, the education of African slaves, especially in the South, was forbidden as enslavers believed that teaching their slaves would present two concepts that threatened the institution of slavery.

The first concept expressed that if slaves could have access to education, they would begin to revolt against their oppressors. This concept is shown in Southern slave owners' focus on creating laws that banned slave literacy throughout the Antebellum period as religious texts and publications inspired slaves, such as Nat Turner, to rebel against the slave society (Finkelman 445). Thus, slaves that were found reading or writing would suffer severe

punishments such as whippings or amputation of toes or fingers. It was a distinct focus on disrupting black literacy by white oppressors (Bly).

The second concept believed by Southern slave owners was that if African slaves were ever able to become educated, it would disrupt a Southern social system that relied on the dehumanization of black people. The slaveholding elite believed that giving education to black people provided them with an acknowledgment of humanity as the concept of education itself perpetuated concepts of human improvement and enlightenment (Bly; Finkelman 445-446). Thus, through the education of black people, it would not allow white enslavers to justify the cruelties they had oppressed upon African slaves if they were considered human.

This white resentment and fear on the part of white slave owners developed numerous slave narratives of black people being beaten or whipped for attempting to claim their humanity. As stated by a former slave, "There is one sin that slavery committed against me, which I will never forgive. It robbed me of my education" (J. Anderson, 5).

Thus, when black people gained their freedom, education became their top priority as it did not only facilitate an Abolitionist movement, fueled by literate African Americans, but was a part of their humanity that was taken away by their oppressors (Cameron 212; Douglass iv). Thus, black Americans who had overcome the cruelties of slavery sought to acquire education, which was one of the most significant parts of their humanity, through a collective resolve.

During the late 1800s, ex-slaves created a multitude of free schools, ranging from self-teaching to native. As expressed in a report from the Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau, John W. Alvord, in 1866, he had identified 500 native schools created by freedmen throughout the South (J. Anderson 6-8). Also, within this black educational movement was the establishment of the first Southern Historically Black College (HBCU) that founded Baptist minister Henry Martin Tupper named Shaw University (HBCU First).

This black resolve to create institutions of education even surprised white Northern missionaries who thought former slaves would be completely dehumanized from the brutal institution of slavery only to discover ex-slaves had already created their own means of securing their freedoms (J. Anderson 6). These early institutions were created on the premise that their education was meant to "expand their ideas and social reality" rather than giving up control to America's dominant racial group of how their education was taught or distributed (J. Anderson 6).

Black communities created schools and curriculum that, in the long run, would produce an "intellectual and moral development" of a future leadership class that would have the ability to organize themselves to acquire "freedom and equality" (J. Anderson 18-19). With the help of the Freedmen's Bureau, by 1865, "fourteen Southern states had established 575 schools" with an attendance of 71,779 Negro and white children (J. Anderson 19). This establishment of Southern schools resulted from black politicians' initiation during Reconstruction to legalize public education in newly rewritten Southern constitutions after the Civil War. As stated by Anderson, "By 1870, every Southern state had specific provisions in its constitutions to assure a public-school system financed by a state fund" (19).

Although this growth of black communities and education was severely hampered during the late 1800s, through the 1896 Supreme Court decree of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the rise of white supremacy in politics during Redemption, African Americans had created a framework for themselves to receive an education (Xavier 126). During America's 58 years of legal segregation, these communities eventually spread throughout the country, which gave future generations of black people the social consciousness and tools to successfully overturn the racist structure of segregation.

## **Desegregation and Integration Efforts**

As black communities began to grow around the country in the early 1900s, its members began to utilize their own intuitions of education to formulate ways to receive equal treatment. Through living in American segregation, black people were constantly exposed

to being considered second-class citizens. For example, black people in the South had to give up their seats on the bus, were not allowed to eat at certain white-only restaurants, and throughout all of America were often not accepted into places of higher education.

Most of the time, the only places African Americans could receive education beyond high school were within established HBCUs such as Howard University. As stated by HBCUs First, throughout late 1800 to 1900s, "HBCUs provided undergraduate training for 75% of all black Americans holding a doctorate degree; 75% of all black officers in the armed forces and 80% of all black federal judges (HBCU First; "Historically Black Colleges"). Institutions such as these produced scholars who sought to overturn America's use of segregation, shown in the creation of the NAACP.

Created in 1909 by white and black activists, the NAACP challenged America's racist social and economic systems by presenting legal battles to ensure equal rights for all its citizens. Through the leadership of Charles Hamilton Houston and his "protegee" Thurgood Marshall, who were both graduates of Howard University's Law school, they helped campaign to end the Supreme Courts decree of *Plessy* ("NAACP History"; "NAACP Legal History").

Expanding from a study conducted by a municipal judge and NAACP supporter Nathan Ross Margold, Houston throughout the 1930s and early 40s sought to slowly chip away at the large system of American segregation by filing lawsuits that exposed "under segregation, the facilities provided for blacks were always separate, but never equal to those maintained for whites" ("NAACP History"; "NAACP Legal History").

Through this strategy, Houston won several cases in the hopes of eventually being able to challenge the decree of *Plessy*. However, this task was eventually passed on to Thurgood Marshall, who by the mid to late 1940s had won cases against segregation in Virginia, Texas, and Oklahoma. They were cases that eventually led to the significant court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* ("NAACP Legal History"). Represented by Marshall and a collective of NAACP attorneys, the case presented to the nation how segregation in schooling negatively impacted the lives of black students.

It was an instance that was most famously displayed through Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark's "Doll Test." ("*Brown v. Board: The Significance of the 'Doll Test'*")



Figure 20: How an Experiment with Dolls Helped Lead to School Integration "Untitled, Harlem, New York, 1947" Gordon Parks/The Gordon Parks Foundation, New York Times.

This test was created to discover how black children were psychologically affected by American segregation. Using four identical dolls that only differed in skin color kids between ages three and seven, as stated by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Educational Fund:

...were asked to identify both the race of the dolls and which color doll they prefer. In this test majority of the children choice the white doll because they had associated “positive characteristics” to it ("*Brown v. Board: The Significance of the 'Doll Test'*").

These results from Dr. Kenneth and Mamie Clark presented to the court that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation created a feeling of inferiority among African American children and damaged their self-esteem” (“NAACP Legal History”).

Thus, evidence such as "the doll test" led to Marshall and his supporting group of NAACPs attorneys' victory in the case of *Brown* ("*Brown v. Board: The Significance of the 'Doll Test'*"). In the victory, the Supreme Court deemed segregation unconditional, legally overturning the perils of *Plessy*. It was a decision that every place of learning in America had to

acknowledge as, from the influence of *Brown*, the New York City Board of Education gave a public statement, as it claimed:

Segregated, racially homogeneous schools damage the personality of minority-group children. These schools decrease their motivation and thus impair their ability to learn. White children are also damaged. Public education in a racially homogeneous setting is socially unrealistic and blocks the attainment of the goals of democratic education, whether this segregation occurs by law or by fact. (Hanna-Jones, "Choosing a School")

It was a notion that took years of black resolve to assert into America's social consciousness. To highlight the country's history of white resentment towards black people. An effort that was only made possible through a collective black resolve to build and use their communities to improve American society for themselves and future American citizens.

## Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education



Figure 21: African American and White school children on a school bus, Charlotte, NC. Warren K. Leffler, U.S. News & World report Magazine, 1973.

After the decision of *Brown*, African Americans still found it challenging to implement desegregation in the South. States such as Virginia and Arkansas had taken massive resistance to heart as its governors closed schools and passed state laws to thwart the new freedoms in education that black people had rightfully taken. However, compared to these other Southern States North Carolina was one where black people had made significant progress in seeking to achieve integration even if it had come decades after it was decreed by law.

Due to the number of black colleges in North Carolina, the State was the location for many significant events during the Civil Rights Movement that pushed for public integration. From the A&T Four that originated through the ideals of students from the historically black-all woman Bennett College, to breaking down Wilmington's operation of segregated schools through forcing its school board to create plans to desegregate in 1968 by Dr. Hubert A. Eaton and NAACP lawyer Julius Chambers, black communities in the State prized education and sought to further efforts of integration to support this value (H. Eaton 56-57; Willis).

Thus, by the late 60s, most counties in North Carolina had begun to desegregate, but this development was unacceptably slow. Throughout the mid-50s, North Carolina had operated through a system that allowed desegregation named the Pearsall Plan. This plan sought to appease the "all deliberate speed" request from the United States Supreme Court, creating desegregation plans that gave students the option and voucher system to choose which school they wanted to attend ("School Desegregation").

This effort, however, did little to integrate as white parents would not assign their children to schools that contained black children, and black parents rarely wanted to subject their children to attending predominantly white spaces of education. The Pearsall Plan was eventually declared unconstitutional in federal court, placing pressure on North Carolina to find ways to integrate instead of desegregating in a fragmented manner ("School Desegregation").

Thus, black parents came together again to file a suit to enforce integration plans that would take desegregation efforts a step further. Julius L. Chambers of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund defended six-year-old James Swann and nine families. These families represented by Chambers filed a suit against the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district as the district had done little to achieve integration, evidenced during the mid-1960s when only less than "five percent of African American children attended integrated schools "(Burger 1-6; Britannica).

It was an instance of racial segregation that was fueled through the districts busing as many students such as Swann were not able to attend schools closest to them because its attendance lines were either drawn to exclude black communities from newly desegregated "white" schools or mirrored Charlotte's segregated housing (Burger 7-8).

Through the cases refiling, it was taken to Judge James B. McMillan, where he acknowledged that attorney Chambers had presented evidence that displayed integration could not be achieved through simple school assignment or freedom choice plans. It was a surprising decree as judge McMillan's decision to enact forced busing would possibly subject him to resentment from local white parents and communities who vehemently rejected the concept of integration (Kutrow).

The case was eventually introduced to the Supreme Court in October of 1970. Chambers continued to represent Swann and, Solicitor General of the United States, Erwin Griswold represented the federal government (Burger 4). It was a clash between years of black resolve that sought to achieve what *Brown* had advocated for and the growing sentiment among angry white citizens who feared the possibility of enforced integration.

In the end, the court decision acknowledged unanimously that enforced busing as an adequate option for integration and future integration plans had to "remedy past wrongs," improving upon plans that sent only portions of black students to predominantly white schools. As stated by Cornell's Legal Information Institute's multimedia Supreme Court of the United States archive, *Oyez*:

In a unanimous decision, the Court held that once violations of previous mandates directed at desegregating schools had occurred, the scope of district courts' equitable powers to remedy past wrongs were broad and flexible. The Court ruled that 1) remedial plans were to be judged by their effectiveness, and the use of mathematical ratios or quotas were legitimate "starting points" for solutions; 2) predominantly or exclusively black schools required close scrutiny by courts; 3) non-contiguous attendance zones, as interim corrective measures, were within the courts' remedial powers; and 4) no rigid guidelines could be established concerning busing of students to particular schools. ("Swann v. Charlotte")

The case created a solution to help African Americans implement school integration after years of its rejection. As stated in the case syllabus, "Today's objective is to eliminate from the public schools all vestiges of state-imposed segregation that was held violative of equal protection guarantees by *Brown v. Board of Education*" (Burger 2).

*Swann* was an effort that gave black students educational opportunities that past generations could not acquire. African American students benefitted from busing as it improved integration efforts throughout the county and gave them access to resources that were not provided prior.

## **Section 4: Enhanced Narrative -Ms. Shannon M. Valrie**

It is two historical narratives of white rage and black resolve that express the content of *The Change We Seek's* first enhanced oral history. It is an animated story that highlights how white rage has created educational environments that spawn moments of racial injustice, resulting in a racially awkward experience for black students that attend predominantly white desegregated spaces.

This awkward existence for black students forces them to grapple with America's history of white resentment, which affects their daily lives in places of education and forces them to acknowledge they are learning within environments that past generations of black people did not have access to. It is a mixture of recurring racial trauma and black resolve that still happens because America's racially biased systems still exist.

### **Ms. Shannon's Story**

In October of 2020, I performed an oral history with St. Andrews admissions counselor Ms. Shannon M. Valrie. This oral history focused on her experiences in American education, in which she shared her recollections from her first memories of attending school to watching her children attend public schools. However, through listening to her retellings, a narrative presented itself that could not be ignored. That no matter what school she attended, her race, whether she was conscious of it or not at the time, was a critical factor in how she experienced each educational environment.

During her time in American education, she was constantly exposed to racial injustice because she was a black American. For instance, during much of her time in Middle and High school, she had attended schools that only catered to white students' needs and cultural history. As Ms. Valrie described her freshman to junior years attending William B. Travis high school in Austin, Texas.

Even though the school had the most diverse student body she had been exposed to throughout her primary education, it still favored the history of white people even when it was culturally offensive to students of other ethnicities. As she states:

I went to a high school that was named after a Confederate William B. Travis. The school mascot was the Rebels. The logo was a confederate flag. Not realizing the significance of that until later on until almost basically recently how like, I would say later 20s and when I ended up going to college what that confederate flag stood for... And I just think about how at pep rallies they would be waving that flag and we would be cheering, not knowing what it really stood for. (“Ms. Shannon Valrie” 00:27:34)

To Ms. Valrie, it was a shocking experience to recount because an educational institution that she was proud to represent in athletic competitions had made history that oppressed POC so commonplace that she unknowingly supported it.



Figure 22: *The Change We Seek* Historical Documentation: Ms. Shannon Valrie's Picture, Travis High School, 1987.



Figure 22A: *The Change We Seek* Historical Documentation: Ms. Shannon Valrie's Picture, Travis High School (1), 1987.

However, in her last years of high school, Ms. Valrie was placed in an educational environment that truly awakened her at a young age to how racially biased, and segregated American schooling was. Ms. Valrie recounted that during her senior year of high school, she moved from her diverse high school located in *Austin, Texas*, to highly segregated areas in Georgia during the late 80s ("Ms. Shannon Valrie" 00:27:34).

During her first weeks in Georgia, she attended a predominantly all-black high school located in Decatur, Georgia. She stated that she and her siblings were not used to the environment because they had lived in places that were at least somewhat diverse for their entire lives. However, in moving to Georgia, the school they attended only had one race of students. It was a short experience which she described as a cultural shock. As described in her own words:

Honey, we were in culture shock for a minute. Cuz these were like rough, like we had been to school with like black kids, and it was like more middle class, you know but this was like, even though the parents had money we were in Decatur, Georgia honey. Where the kids were like, it was a little different. So even though

we were still black we were culture shocked because we had never be to an all-black, I mean no other, it was just black. (Ms. “Shannon M. Valrie” 00:40:59)

In being exposed to this racial segregation Ms. Valrie and her siblings asked their parents to move to a different school. They hoped their academic experiences would return to the diverse environments they were used to.

However, their request only exacerbated their cultural shock as their parents decided to move to Gwinnett County, Georgia, where she and her siblings attended South Gwinnett High School.

Instead of being placed in an all-black school she was then put into a predominantly white one located in Snellville, Georgia. This school was located only 20 minutes away from the birthplace of the KKK (Stone Mountain) and was a part of a school system that, once forced to integrate, sought to maintain segregation by any means, evidenced in its government officials’ efforts to place black students in classes that were, as labeled by the county for the “educable mentally retarded” and away from white students placed in regular or gifted courses (Herold).



Figure 23: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Snellville Scene

Figure 23A: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Valrie Close-up

Ms. Valrie, however, was one of the black students not labeled as such by the county, leading to her having to exist in a predominantly white academic space that contained subtle acts of white rage from its teachers and staff.

As displayed in the enhanced narrative, it focuses on her first day coming to South Gwinnett High School. On her first day Ms. Valrie mentioned that she was looking “so forward” to attending a typing course she had signed up for because she had always admired people who could type at high speeds (“Ms. Shannon M. Valrie” 00:40:23).

However, when Ms. Valrie sat down and began to type, she realized she could not keep up with the other students because she had joined the course two weeks into the semester, as she stated in the oral history, "I didn't know what to do" ("Ms. Shannon M. Valrie" 00:41:56). Through looking at the white students around her, she could see they had learned specific techniques that allowed them to type at a sufficient level. Thus, she asked her teacher for help, in which the teacher responded by saying:

If you expect me to go back and show you the key of what your supposed to be doing, honey that’s not about to happen. So, my suggestion to you is that you figure it out, do the best that you can, and try to keep up.” (“Ms. Shannon M. Valrie” 00:41:56)



Figure 23B: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Teacher Scene

It was a statement from her teacher that deeply affected the educational experience of Ms. Valrie as for the rest of her time in the course she was forced to memorize entire paragraphs to keep up because her teacher had never shown her the correct positions to place her hands on the keyboard (00:42:25).



Figure 23C: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Typing Scene.

It is a recollection that still angers Ms. Valrie to this day because it was one of the only courses in her entire academic career in which she received a C in. Ms. Valrie expressed that she always sought to obtain high grades evidenced in her ability to be in the top percent of her class in Texas (00:43:05). Nevertheless, due to a singular instance of white rage toward her existence in a predominantly white space, she could not do something she was ordinarily great at doing. She was not allowed to achieve.

It was an experience that was made from a direct result of legislation formed by white rage. As the history Gwinnett County reveals an ingrained racial dichotomy that segregates black people from equal resources and opportunities.

Since the early 1800s, northern regions of Georgia had always contained a significant majority of rural white people. This racial divide was exacerbated during the late 1960s and early 70s when these regions began to be converted into white suburbs with housing covenants. These covenants resulted in a considerable growth in white students attending its public schools and a subsequent decrease in black students as defined by policy researcher and staff writer at *Education Week*, Benjamin Herold, "between 1967 and 1977, the number of white students in the local public schools doubled, to more than 27,000. The number of black students dropped by 10 percent" (Brown-Nagin 414; Herold).

Thus, these black students were relegated to lower-income places in counties surrounding and within Atlanta, converting Georgia's school districts into a racial dynamic that was remarkably similar to Michigan's schooling problem. As much of the states and counties,

financial support was given to the suburbs instead of shared with Atlanta's metropolitan area (Brown-Nagin 409-411, Ch. 12).

The counties gradual expansion of segregation was not quelled through efforts to desegregate as well. As Gwinnett County's all-white school board had utilized tactics to maintain segregation even when the law claimed it was unconstitutional through placing black students in special education courses during the mid to late 70s (Herold).

This historically enforced "racial apartheid" in Georgia was eventually challenged in 1972 through a six-year court case named *Armour v. Nix* (1972) (Brown -Nagin 410). It was a case created by poor black parents who sought to implement desegregation across Atlanta and its suburbs. However, the case was eventually ignored by Georgia's local courts as following the court decision of *Milliken vs. Bradley*, as Benjamin Herold states, "In its 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court made it near-impossible to force suburban school systems to take part in regional desegregation efforts" (Herold).

Thus, Ms. Valrie's experience was created by efforts of white rage. The counties actions to uphold a history of racial segregation, which harmed the learning experiences of black children, resulted in Ms. Valrie attending schools that were highly segregated and culturally shocked her educational experience, inhibiting her potential to learn.

Though, what cannot be left out is Ms. Valrie's resolve to overcome it. Near the end of Ms. Valrie's recollection of her time at South Gwinnett High School, I asked her, "in being in that experience, how do you think that you overcame it" (Ms. Shannon M. Valrie" 00:49:16). Ms. Valrie's response drew from a history of African American and personal history that fueled her to want to overcome her situation and find a way to achieve when she was told she could not. As Ms. Valrie states:

So, when somebody tells me no, that pushes me even harder to prove you wrong. And so my determination, not only the fact that I'm first generation for both sides to go to college and graduate, I was determined that at the time I knew I didn't wanted to be a

janitor. Which is not a bad thing because it took care of me. But I also knew I didn't want to be...my Dad was in construction so there were periods of time where if its cold, he's on the unemployment, her not working. You now, and I just remember there were times were we didn't have... and I needed... I wanted to be something that my parents would be proud of and that if I ever had to take care of them, that you know, that they would be.. even my grandparents, that they would be super happy that I achieved something that they didn't complete. ("Ms. Shannon M. Valrie" 00:49:16)

In her interview, she actively remembers her drive to prove those who have discriminated against her wrong and her family's history of seeking to achieve so she can have a better future. Seeing her parents and grandparents work hard to create a situation where she could receive an education is something she never took for granted. It compelled her to push forward even when society and white resentment had pushed back. It is why when she graduated high school and was accepted into Grambling State University, she recounted how excited her mother was for her once they got on campus. As she states:

When we first got on campus, I think my mom was more excited. She was super proud because this was something that she, you know, I don't know if she was expected or just super proud that her daughter went to college. And so my mom had bought me all this stuff to make sure I had every was ready... ("Ms. Shannon M. Valrie" 00:57:07)

Ms. Valrie was not only getting an education for herself but for her entire family that honored education because they knew how important it was for black people. It is quite possibly the most powerful motivator. To know generations of people who look like you have fought and worked so hard to see you achieve better than they could. Thus, white rage is nothing compared to black resolve.

## **Chapter 5: Creating Change- Research Goals and Collecting**

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The interpretive power of oral history can, therefore, be quite radical in comparison with other methods. The ones without a voice become vocal; the passive visitor can become involved - and not just on the press-button level, but emotionally; links can be made between visitor and curator.

*-April Whincop*

## Section 1: Research Questions and Objectives

*The Change We Seek* is a project that abides by a three-part creation process to ensure its content is successful in achieving its prescribed educational value.

The educational value of *The Change We Seek* is intended to enhance the historical material of oral history using animation to create enlightening content that teachers and students can utilize to gain insight into America's racial disparities and cultural history.

### Education Series

In this project's first iteration, named the Education Series, its goal was to produce one 4 to 6-minute enhanced oral history. This enhanced oral history was created by collecting historical interviews, animating collected oral histories that align with this project's historical argument, and evaluating this creative effort to determine its educational value.

Through posing research questions, the methods of collecting, animating, and evaluating were imagined to define needed research objectives for its content production. These research questions and objectives are listed as follows:

### Collecting

#### ***Research Question***

In seeking to collect oral histories for creative interpretation, how can one ensure the interviews collected will include engaging historical narratives that align with this project's goal of exposing the complex nature of racism in schooling?

#### ***Research Objective***

To create a process of intellectual collecting to ensure each oral history conducted has a shared historical focus about issues of race in America and allows interviewees to share unique narratives that are opportune for creative interpretation.

***Sub-objectives***

To define a shared historical meaning for each oral history.

To find participants who have cultural insight into the project's historical focus and awareness of racial issues.

To utilize software that allows interviews to abide by CDC guidelines of social distancing.

**Animating*****Research Question***

After collecting educational context that can be creatively interpreted, how can one ensure the addition of animation to an oral history improves its visual literacy and overall educational value?

***Research Objective***

To create an intellectual process that ensures animations utilized only enhance the educational value and visual literacy of narratives told in collected oral histories.

***Sub-objectives***

To define an art style that best illustrates an interviewees' reimagining of a historical moment to a student audience.

To determine what transitions and animations are successful in providing engaging educational value.

**Evaluating*****Research Question***

How does one ensure the creation of an enhanced oral history provides its audience with a shared educational meaning that evaluates topics of race?

Furthermore, how does one determine if this effort in historical enhancement successfully reaches its educational goal?

***Research Objective***

To create an intellectual process that results in creating informative tools that help teachers and students acquire a shared educational meaning from the enhanced oral history.

To present the enhanced oral history to teachers and students to define the educational value of the content.

***Sub-objectives***

To define what educational tools can be used to help teachers and students learn from the enhanced oral history.

To discover how the enhanced oral history could be included in scholastic curriculum.

## Section 2: Collecting

In defining that *The Change We Seek* is a project that originates all its content from significant moments in oral histories, the recorded historical material takes precedence in its development. As important as it is to interview persons in marginalized communities or enhance content told in an oral history, the interview process itself takes priority because it ensures dialogue in the historical record will contain meaningful content and will exist as the recorded material needed to be enhanced.

For instance, if a historian records an oral history interview about Negro League Baseball (NLB), but most of the interview includes an explanation on Southern cooking, it is useless because it had not contained information on NLB that could be learned from. The historian's interview was therefore compromised due to a lack of structure or direction on their part.

Likewise, if the interview is recorded with poor audio quality, or not at all, the source cannot even be interpreted. Thus, oral history is a process that takes both strategy and effort on the part of the interviewer.

A skilled oral historian is aware of the rigor it takes to keep an interviewee focused on key historical memories that future audiences may be intrigued by and record these recollections with the best audio quality afforded to them. Thus, an interviewer follows fundamental steps to ensure the recorded historical resource reaches its intended educational value.

These fundamental steps that ensure the historical resource reaches its intended educational value are considered in *The Change We Seek*. It is a process that ensures oral histories collected in this project will provide pedagogical value to moments of social injustice in American education and contain significant recollections that could potentially be enhanced.

## **Pre-interview**

Before an oral history is conducted, the interviewer must speak with the interviewee. This gesture defines what questions will be asked during the interview and could lead to discovering key recollections that would be helpful to the interviewer.

By performing a pre-interview, it does two critical things. One, it provides the interviewer with a better understanding of the interviewee. When the interviewer is aware of crucial historical information the interviewee may remember it eliminates unneeded inquiries, preserving precious interview time (*Doing Oral History* 74).

Second, it primes the interviewee's mind to topics that will be discussed during the interview. When an interviewee has time to think about specific lived experiences or subjects overall, they can provide more information than when prompted on the spot.

### ***Pre-interview -The Change We Seek***

In pre-interviewing for the first iteration of this project, the aim was to find and pre-interview POC who had a diverse history in American schooling. Collecting perspectives from those who have lived in multiple regions around America would highlight how vast this country's racial inequalities are and provide the project with an enormous scope of content to utilize.

Thus, I reached out to several educated social justice activists I had known from working in academia. They were two admission counselors at St. Andrews University named Ms. Shannon M. Valrie and Mr. Patrick Stevenson which I had met in teaching a Black Lives Matter Course over the summer. They were great candidates as they had lived in multiple places throughout their lives and had displayed their powerful voices during the summer course. Their voices inspired many of the students to share their analyses and recollections on racial topics. Thus, it only made sense to include them in a project that's geared toward educating students on the perils of racial injustice.

**Participant: Ms. Shannon M. Valrie**

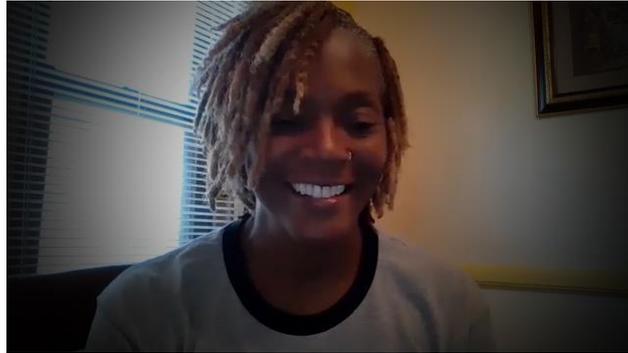


Figure 24: *The Change We Seek* Historical Documentation: Ms. Shannon Valrie's Picture.

The first interviewee was Ms. Shannon M. Valrie (regional admission counselor), who attended public schooling during the 80s, eventually becoming the first in her immediate family to receive an advanced degree. During her pre-interview, I learned that she attended several schools that catered to the needs of white students instead of her own.

This racial divide was evidenced in her time in high school when she attended Travis B. High School in Texas and South Gwinnett High School in Georgia. She explained that these places facilitated experiences of social injustice—for instance, Travis B. High School was named after a confederate general, and South Gwinnett High School was located in a predominately white region of Georgia.

She told me she was willing to share several stories about attending those schools. Through learning this, it allowed me enough time to research each school's history before the interview and include detailed questions. The questions would allow Ms. Valrie to elaborate on her time at the schools providing the recorded interview with detailed stories that could be creatively interpreted.

**Participant: Mr. Patrick Stevenson**



Figure 25: *The Change We Seek*: Mr. Patrick Stevenson Oral History Picture, 2020.

The second interviewee was Mr. Patrick Stevenson, an admissions counselor at St. Andrews University as well. Mr. Stevenson received a diverse mixture of schooling due to his family's involvement in the military, receiving an education in multiple institutions worldwide. During his pre-interview, Mr. Stevenson explained that even though he was exposed to many schooling places, much of his education was in spaces that were predominantly white because he attended honors courses. Through his time in these spaces, he grew tired of the lack of cultural understanding these institutions provided, resulting in him wanting to attend a Historically Black College. It was information that alerted me to create questions on the importance of cultural understanding.

## **Creation of Questions**

To perform an oral history, the interviewer must ask questions. Questions guide the interviewee to remember key moments within their memories. These questions must reach a compromise between simplicity and open-endedness as they are only meant to invite the interviewee to elaborate on their experiences. Well-written questions either build off prior ones (so the interviewee and future listeners can follow along with the source chronologically) or are conversational (allowing the interviewee to feel as if it is a normal conversation so they can feel comfortable in expressing their lived experiences) (“Archiving Oral History”).

### ***Creation of Questions -The Change We Seek***

In formulating the questions for this project's oral histories, much of its inspiration came from existing oral history guides. These guides helped frame each question as open-ended statements that could encourage interviewees to elaborate upon questions and set a chronological framework for the interviews.

Guides, such as *The Dallas Jewish Historical Society Oral History Project* or *Smithsonian: How to Do Oral History Guide*, began its interviews by asking simple questions. These questions, such as "Where were you born?" and "What was your earliest childhood memory?" were used to get an interviewee to start remembering early parts of their life ("50 Questions"; "Archiving Oral History"). This gesture would provide future listeners with background information on the interviewee and allow an interviewee time to evaluate their memories early on so later they can recite their personal experiences. Once these preliminary questions are asked, the following questions would focus on the topic the interviewer sought to learn about.

In this project's case, transitioning from questions about personal information in their early years of life to educational experiences was seamless because people's early experiences are intertwined with education. From our earliest ages, we are placed in preschool or kindergarten and do not leave places of learning until the end of high school. Thus, questions for the project were created to dive into early experiences and were followed immediately by inquiries about American education.

These questions on schooling investigated possible experiences in schools defined by race. This change in questioning is shown during the beginning of each oral history as the interview begins in asking participants about their early years of education and is followed by questions like, "were your teachers diverse?" The interviewee is given time to explore their early memories of education and then is posed with specific questions to think about racial issues and elaborate on them.

This project's oral history questions on racial experience were also modeled on significant racial differences in how American institutions operate. Much of these racial dichotomies explored in each oral history were found through statistics provided by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). These statistics mention America's racial discrepancies in funding, racial demographics, teaching, and discipline ("K-12 Disparity Facts"; "The Condition").

Its quantity evidences this inclusion of questions attempting to explore America's racial inequities as within the oral history questionnaire, 24 of the 46 questions asked in each oral history pertain to the presented racial issues.

**ORAL HISTORY GUIDE**

**Early Education**      **Higher Education**      **Legislation/ Disparities**      **CURRENT**

**INTERVIEW: 45-60 MIN**

**THE CHANGE WE SEEK**

**Early Education**

- When and where were you born?
- Who were your parents and what did they do for a living? Significant family history?
- What was your childhood like?
- What school(s) did you attend in the early years of your education?
- Primary School
- Middle School
- High School
- why did you attend?
- was the school diverse?
- how many students?
- class size?
- What was the community like around the school you attended?
- demographic?
- parent involvement?
- Do you remember any teachers or lessons in the school(s) curriculum that stood out to you?
- subjects taught?
- Were your teachers diverse?
- How were your interactions with other classmates (teachers)?
- extracurricular activities?

**Higher Education**

- Where did you receive your (degree) higher education?
- When did you know you wanted to receive a \_\_\_\_ degree?
- Was race ever a factor in your decision?
- What was your first day on campus like?
- During your education do you remember any moments of racial injustice or difference of experience because of race?
- Have you experienced moments of microaggressions during your time in higher education?
- Have you experienced moments of racial injustice in the past or currently (educational system)?
- If so how did this moment affect you (mentally/physically)?
- Were you able to overcome it?
- Was your experience in early education affected by race?
- Did you feel your education was worthwhile at this higher intuition of learning?

**Legislation/ Disparities**

- Have you been aware of any American legislation that has affected your education?
- Were you affected by school districting during your time in school?
- Private Schools?
- Magnet School?
- Educational Programs?
- (If Parent)
- What schools did your children attend?
- Do you remember why you had them attend those schools?
- Was school districting a factor in your decision?
- Were test scores a factor in your decision?
- Were you ever disciplined during your time in school?
- Did you ever compare your own experiences in American education to the experiences of White students?
- After the Brown v. Board decision Integration was supposed to occur in America. Has it? And did any of the schools you attended ever attempt to implement integration in anyway?

**CURRENT**

- What are you feeling and thinking in the wake of the recent murders and social unrest (George Floyd, Brianna Taylor)?
- How have these events affected your family, friends, and communities (e.g., church, workplace, neighborhood)?
- Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the likelihood of real change in our society? Why?
- In what ways can we change America's educational system for the better when addressing topics of race?
- What are the first steps you would recommend for real change?
- Is there anything we haven't spoken about that you would like to talk about?
- Thank you so much for speaking with me today.

Figure 26: *The Change We Seek* Oral History Questionnaire, 2020.

## Recorded Interview

Once the questions are defined, the interview must be performed. In this process, the interviewer must be an active participant. They are responsible for setting up and monitoring the recording software or devices, asking timely interviewee questions, and steering the direction of the interview to its intended educational purpose. It is a difficult task to perform as each interviewee responds differently to being interviewed. Some interviewees give straightforward answers, and others may elaborate for an extended

period. Thus, the interviewer's job is to make the interviewee elaborate more during significant recollections and keep them on track during unimportant ones.

### ***Recorded Interview -The Change We Seek***

In recording oral histories for *The Change We Seek*, the methods used catered to the current state of social distancing that Covid-19 has produced. Usually, in recording an oral history, an interviewer would attempt to meet in person with the interviewee. This in-person visit would allow the interviewer to set up audio recorders and have an intimate conversation with the interviewee.

However, academic study has accepted newer guidelines to ensure oral histories can still be conducted during this period of human isolation. These newer guidelines include using digital technologies that record conversations, evidenced in the *Oral History Association's* creation of a *Remote Interviewing Resource*, which helps researchers discover how they can adapt their interviews to remote use ("Remote Interviewing"). Thus, in recording these interviews, software labeled below was utilized.

### ***Digital Tools***

*Zoom*: Zoom a cloud-based videotelephony software program allowing users to video chat and share content. It is a program that also allows its users to record their sessions (Video Conferencing).

In recording this project's interviews, *Zoom* provided compromised audio compared to in-person recordings. By conducting in-person recording, microphones and recorders produce clear audio that is not hampered by stutters in internet connection or downgraded recording equipment that an interviewee may possess.

However, *Zoom* was able to provide the unique element of video recording. Instead of only hearing the interviewee's word, potential viewers would be able to see each interviewee. Through seeing the interviewee, it gives viewers a visual understanding of significant

moments expressed in the interview and provides the interpreter of the source extra context to utilize creatively.



Figure 27: *The Change We Seek* Oral History Questionnaire: Zoom Interview (Shannon M. Valrie), 2020.  
 Figure 27A: *The Change We Seek* Oral History Questionnaire: Zoom Interview (Patrick Stevenson), 2020.

Adobe Audition: *Audition* is a “digital audio workstation” that can edit and or record multiple forms of audio at a time. This software was used to provide an audio backup to what was recorded through Zoom (“Audio Editing”). Audition was used to make audio recordings collected through Zoom clearer. Using this software allowed me to edit out background noise that could hinder its listeners' understanding of the oral history.

### ***Interview- The Change We Seek***

Once each interview began, I was fully prepared to keep each one within a specific time frame. I had a forty-six-question document to reference. If the interviewee strayed too far from the historical topic, I would easily reference my document and get the interview back on track.

However, when I started each interview, it became clear that this method would not work because each interviewee had a vast number of experiences and knowledge about injustices in American education. Thus, each interview lasted around an hour and a half. In these interviews, I utilized an inquire-only approach, only interrupting the interviewee to get detailed information on instances they shared.

Ms. Valrie's narrative focused on how a school's racial demographic can affect its black students' educational experiences. She mentioned her time at a diverse school in Texas was a great educational experience, but in moving to segregated environments in Georgia, she

"hated it." Most significantly, her time at a predominantly white school in Georgia was exceedingly difficult for her because racism was rampant. All of this resulted in her interest in attending an HBCU. Ms. Valrie explained that the HBCU she attended focused on her interests and well-being instead of schools she previously attended that were predominantly white.

While in Mr. Stevenson's interview, he highlighted the vast difference between attending a predominantly white school and a Historically Black College for black students. He identified that black students are subjected to being defined by white Americans' preconceived notions of black people in predominantly white spaces. Mr. Stevenson explained he was ridiculed for liking context such as anime or being in honors courses because white America, and many black portrayals in the media, only prescribed black men to being athletic and unintelligent.

This notion was best displayed in his explanation of people calling him "*Oreo*" during his time in high school. It is a term spoken to high achieving black people in educational institutions because it means one is black on the outside and white on the inside, claiming one is not really black if they are intelligent or do not fit in white America's definition of black men.

While on the other hand, when Mr. Stevenson attended a Historically Black College, he was surrounded by other black people who expected him to achieve and strive for excellence. Thus, during his time at an HBCU, he was not placed in a racist-preconceived box but instead considered a person who could achieve in whatever his interests were.

Thus, when I stepped back and analyzed these shared moments, it became apparent that both their educational experiences intertwined with the educational environments they were exposed to. The predominantly white spaces they attended shaped their educational experiences with their classmates and were places where most of their racial traumas existed. Thus, I choose to focus on enhancing a historical narrative that highlighted the difficulty of attending a predominantly white space of education as a black person.

In this effort, I choose Ms. Valrie's shared narrative that highlighted when she moved from her diverse, high school in Texas to a highly segregated one in Gwinnett County, Georgia. It is a story that defined the projects historical argument (See Ch.4, Sec. 4) and would be used in its animation process (See Ch.6 Sec. 4).

## **Archive-**

After an oral history is completed, the audio source is preserved digitally. Often these recordings are stored on multiple storage outlets to ensure that information is not corrupted or overridden. Once the interview is safely stored, it is then examined and curated to help future researchers discover moments they may find significant. This process of curation is done through transcribing the historical source or providing timestamps to critical questions.

### ***Archive -The Change We Seek***

In recording Ms. Shannon Valrie and Mr. Patrick Stevenson's oral histories, these recordings were converted into mp3 and mp4 files by Zoom. Once converted, the files were uploaded to google drive and YouTube, providing users multiple locations to access the content.

In terms of curating each recorded interview, timestamps were created for the ones uploaded to YouTube. These timestamps mark questions and essential historical information allowing users to skip to significant moments during each oral history.

## **Chapter 6: Art of Change- Development of Artwork and Animation**

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An engaging, multimedia-rich digital story can serve as an anticipatory set or hook to capture the attention of students and increasing their interest in exploring new ideas.

*-Bernard Robin*

## Section 1: Art Introduction and Character Design

The development of the art and animation for the first iteration of *The Change We Seek*, starring Mrs. Shannon M. Valrie, abided by an incremental design process. This process began with developing the artistic portrayal of the interviewee, followed by storyboarding its aesthetic design and ending with creating its animations. Thus, this portion of the paper will present the artistic development of this project's first enhanced oral history in order of how it was intellectually conceived.

### Digital Tools

*This process utilized the following digital tools:*

-Adobe Aftereffects – editing software that allows its users to apply motion graphics, animation, and visual effects to a video or sound clip.

-Adobe Premiere Pro – timeline-based editing software. It specializes in simplifying the process of editing video and post-processing applications.

-Adobe Photoshop –raster-based image editing software. Used to edit historical photos and digitally draw scenes in the enhanced narrative.

-Adobe Illustrator- vector graphics-based editing software. Used to design the cartoon character of Ms. Valrie.

### Character Design

In defining the purpose of adding aesthetic quality to this project's enhanced oral history, it is meant to represent a specific educational meaning provided by the interviewee. It is an artistic purpose that is intended only to support the interviewee's words instead of overpowering them, as their words are the foundations of the story and its educational value.

For example, only seeing Martin Luther King Jr. talk without audio or adding far too much aesthetics to his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech would devalue or cheapen its significance. It is Dr. King's voice and tone that defines his last speech as memorable.

On April 3, 1968, MLK spoke into a microphone in front of hundreds of African Americans tired of racial injustice, with a great vigor to promote non-violent protesting. His echoes bouncing off the walls of Mason Temple Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Intentionally, extending every syllable of each word so everyone in the church could hear him ("I've Been to the Mountaintop").

As he reached the end of his speech, he began to raise his voice as he spoke about seeing a better future because of recent efforts of non-violent protest. Eventually, he claimed he had no fear because he had seen the mountaintop, stating the words:

...But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So, I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. ("I've Been to the Mountaintop")

These words were spoken infallibly and louder than anything else he had said during his forty-minute speech. They are words that define the significance of his speech and who he was as a person, as only a day later, he was assassinated.

In listening to his words 53 years later, you are teleported into that moment through his voice. An ability that is only provided by audio. You cannot relate to the meaning or educational value that MLK represents if you simply watch the video with only images.

Instead, these images are only tools of enhancement that can provide deeper meaning but are not precedence to the importance of sound. Imagery that reenacts historical moments can provide a viewer with important information, such as the passion shown in MLK's eyes during the end of his speech or the reactions of each church member who attended.

However, it cannot provide the viewer with an understanding of his moral resolve in the face of possible death. Thus, every image is meant to support the philosophical meaning of the words. This intellectual acknowledgment is what this project valued as every image was

used to display the significant parts of the narrative while simultaneously allowing the reader to focus on the interpreter's voice.

It is a balance between auditory significance and aesthetic design used to create the first iteration of *The Change We Seek*. As the narrative used emphasizes a critical historical moment for a POC that has educational value.

Ms. Valrie's historical recollection is personal and therefore contains a variety of emotions that must be heard. Thus, the art style in Ms. Valrie's animated narrative had to be complex enough to visually represent the reimagined historical moment and simple enough not to overtake the importance of her spoken narrative. Thus, in this realization, I started with animating the narrator of the story, Ms. Shannon M. Valrie.

By beginning with attempting to reinterpret the interviewee of the animated oral history visually, it helped in two ways. First, it allowed me to experiment with what artistic choices would ensure audiences' approval of its aesthetic appeal. Second, adjusting the character in the early stages of the project helped define what art style would not overpower the spoken narrative but instead visually enhance it.

## Section 2: Aesthetic Appeal

Having an aesthetically pleasing graphic style for the enhanced oral history was significant. As defined in the world of design, we as humans have attractiveness bias (Lidwell 29). Meaning users of a product, no matter the medium, tend to gravitate towards impressive or attractive visual input (29). This visual bias makes 8th graders view the detailed artwork from Andrew Aydin in the graphic novel *March* or seek out and become immersed in narratives from *Pixar*.

These visually pleasing works and the characters have unique artistic portrayals that draw an audience in through their visuals and keep their audiences engaged through the strength of their narratives. It is a concept that *The Change We Seek* sought to mirror in the creation of its first enhanced narrative. To create an aesthetically pleasing character, and then once approved by the colleagues, would be used as a basis for the design choice of the animations.

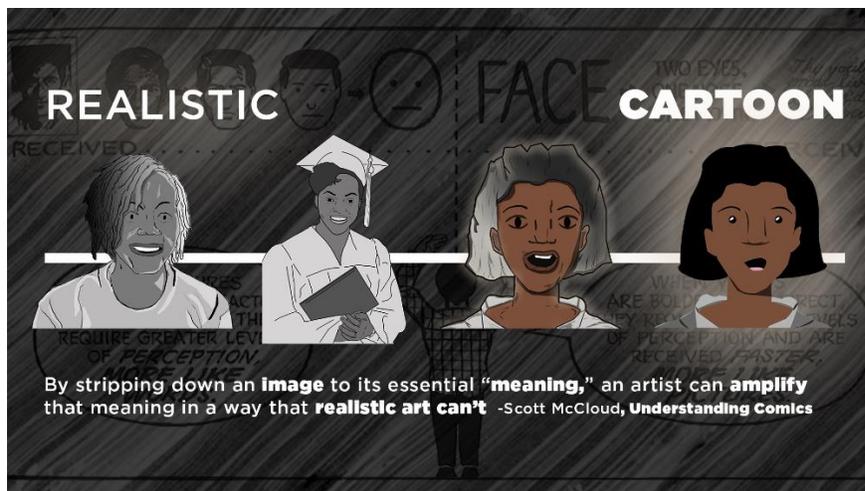


Figure 28: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Icon Chart.

Within the first steps of creating the character design for the video, I drew upon Scott McCloud's concepts of image association to discover what made an artistic form visually pleasing or functional. In McCloud's publication *Understanding Comics*, he breaks down how humans visualize forms and what makes one successful or beneficial (McCloud 26-37). McCloud highlights how we collectively correlate specific images to represent a person,

place, or thing named an icon. Within this definition of icon, he mentions that created pictures are icons that are "fluid" and variable according to appearance, leaving a level of abstraction in which an audience can identify a shared meaning (28).

It is the existence of pictorial abstraction that McCloud displays how certain variations of abstraction have unique differences that can change how viewers react to or interpret art forms even though they may share the same meaning as another. For instance, there is a clear difference between how Michelangelo drew a human and how Charles Schulz did. Michelangelo's drawn human form is more realistic than Schulz's creation of Charlie Brown.

This artistic abstraction is a spectrum between artistic forms, which McCloud defines as realism vs. cartoon. Realism is distinguished as pictures that are closer to an actual photo (like Michelangelo), while cartoons are classified on the farthest part of abstraction. The cartoon being simplified shapes and colors that tend to garner mass appeal (Scholz). This artistic difference in creation proposed by McCloud is what specified the art style for this project's enhanced oral history. A grappling in choosing between a realistic style or cartoon.

Thus, in drawing the first design of Mrs. Valrie, I choose to draw inspiration from the graphic novel *March* that sided on realism. The designs in *March*, created by artist Andrew Aydin, utilized a mixture of black ink and black and white watercolor to create a world that was like real-life with slight abstractions (Lewis 126-127).

Most specifically, Aydin chose to illustrate each character as realistic so they would be recognizable. It was an intentional artistic decision so that the viewers would identify with the iconic teller of the story, John Lewis. The only abstractions from photorealism in Aydin's creations being within the detail of the eyes, ink use, and shadowing around the facial features.



Figure 29: *March*. Aydin, Lewis, Powell. Top Self Productions., 2013.

These were the design choices that I decided to mirror, drawing Ms. Valrie in a realistic grayscale. I also decided to place abstractions on the details of the eyes and shadowing of the hair, placing a grayscale gradient over it.

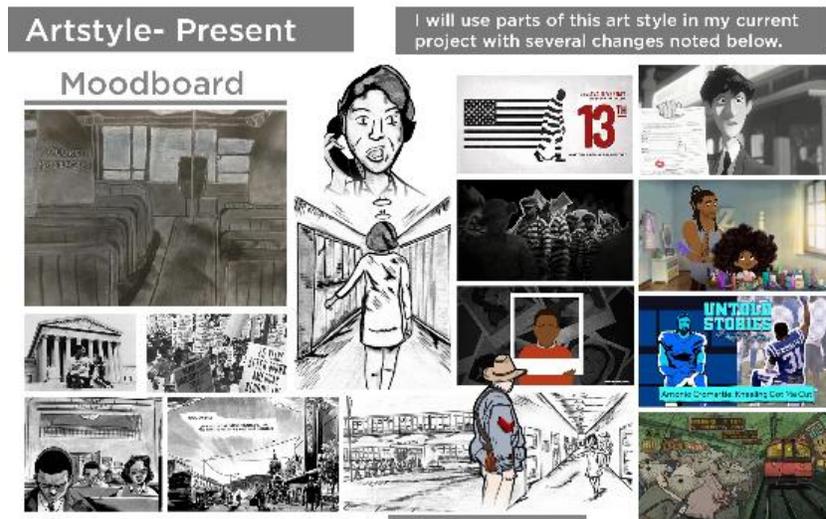


Figure 30: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Artwork: Moodboard



Figure 32: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Artwork: Gradient.

Figure 32A: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Artwork: Realistic.

The initial design gave viewers an immediate recognition of who Ms. Valrie was. However, though workshopping the style with classmates, there was a collective response. To my peers, the combination of the eyebrows and eyes were out of place. Several expressing it either made her expression, which was meant to be a smile, creepy or uncanny to Ms. Valrie in real life. This realistic design was then adjusted to acquire the same response of awkward facial expression and the uncanny valley.

Thus, to alleviate criticism, the next step was to reset the approach, changing from the realistic character design to a cartoon. This transition was supported through McCloud's theoretical definition of the cartoon. The cartoon can be just as effective or "acceptable" as a realistic creation because our minds can take simple lines or dots and decipher them into a shared meaning (McCloud 29). It is a proven form of art that has created iconic figures in the historical memories of millions of Americans'.

From Charlie Brown to the *Boondocks*, the cartoon style has had sustained success because it is an inviting interpretation of the natural world that we can relate to because we can see ourselves in them. As stated by McCloud, "The cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled, an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel in another real, we just don't observe the cartoon we become it!" (McCloud).

It is a unique nature that is a positive trait in working on a project such as *The Change We Seek*. As in the creation of Ms. Valrie's narrative, it was significant to have viewers relate and or empathize with her experience. Using a cartoon that seeks to exist in the realm of abstraction makes the narrative a relatable one rather than just a series of historical images on a screen with spoken words. It makes the viewer reimagine Ms. Valrie's experience through their own eyes in a way that is not distracting from her words but instead provides the viewer with a refreshing aesthetic reinterpretation.

Within this understanding, the switch from realistic to cartoon was an effort to make the artistic portrayal of Ms. Valrie iconic and easier to impose facial expressions upon that would be relatable to a wide variety of audiences.

However, in this transition to cartoon, the first transfer was not received well because forms that were simplified to fit the style we're not consistent, shown again in the eyes. In proportion to the rest of the character, the eyes were too large, making the entire figure awkward.



Figure 32B: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Artwork, Gradient #1.

In this realization, I found that the principle of aesthetic appeal was two-sided. Meaning, just as attractive bias could provide public interest, an unattractive or inconsistent design could hinder it. This realization is what defined the importance of aesthetic appeal for my project. Creating an art style that was not appealing would distract viewers from the spoken narrative, inevitably resulting in a lack of overall care from the viewer because they would be too focused on its artistic flaws.

This realization of attractive bias led to an entire reimaging of the character. By using Adobe Illustrator, the character's design was retooled, focusing on only utilizing simple shapes. It was a design inspired by an illustration made by Lauren Walker, an artist at the social justice organization *Truthout* (Shuler).



Figure 33: Lauren Walker, *Truthout*, 29

Her illustration used simple shapes to show images of black men who were killed due to social injustice. Through this picture, it inspired me to use similar forms. Thus, in Ms. Valrie's new design, she was made through a cutout of shapes. Her hair is a combination of simple squares and circles, just like her head and ears. The only lines used in the form being the definition of her nose and the bottom of her eyes. It was a simplification of the art form that made her easy to understand and view—a vessel for the story to convey her emotions and thoughts while telling her all-important story in a personal way.



Figure 34: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Cartoon Artwork.

Figure 34A: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: First Day Scene.

This design became the most successful, as in workshopping the design, students and colleagues were more inviting to the form. Comments ranged from "much improved" to "the eyes are fixed." The process of achieving aesthetic appeal was therefore accomplished.

## Perfect Balance

In discovering the character's appeal, what also became defined was its ability to exist with the spoken narrative of Ms. Valrie cohesively. To not distract from the narrative but enhance its intellectual value. A notion that is especially important when critical moments in the story are centered upon the artistic vessel's environment and actions. These environments and actions define how Ms. Valrie remembers the historical moment as it is not visually recorded but only memorized through her own eyes.

Thus, the artistic reimagining of her narrative is essential for a viewer to interpret specific details that they could not visualize through her words. Like the color of Shannon's skin, the look of the typewriter she used in the 80s, or her classmates. These are all elements of visualization that give the audience insight into her audible narrative. Therefore, the artwork and words must work in tandem. There must be perfect balance or harmony between the narratives artwork and spoken story that only enhances the story.

With the use of the cartoon-based art form, I found the simple art style could reach this needed balance as it could perform simple feats of animation and facial expressions without deterring from the experience. For example, during the end of the narrative, there is a scene in which Ms. Valrie explains she could not keep up in her typing class because her teacher never taught her the proper techniques to type (00:01:55; also see Appendix A).

During this part, Ms. Valrie's tonal infection becomes higher in stating, "I didn't know what to do!" Therefore, in the scene, two significant parts must be conveyed to the viewer. The first is an animation that displays her looking at other students typing while attempting to keep up, providing the audience with a visualization of the educational gap placed before her due to her teacher's neglect. The second shows the emotion that Ms. Valrie displays through her retelling of the moment, existing as an audible, and now visible, insight into how being unable to type as fast as the other students made her feel.

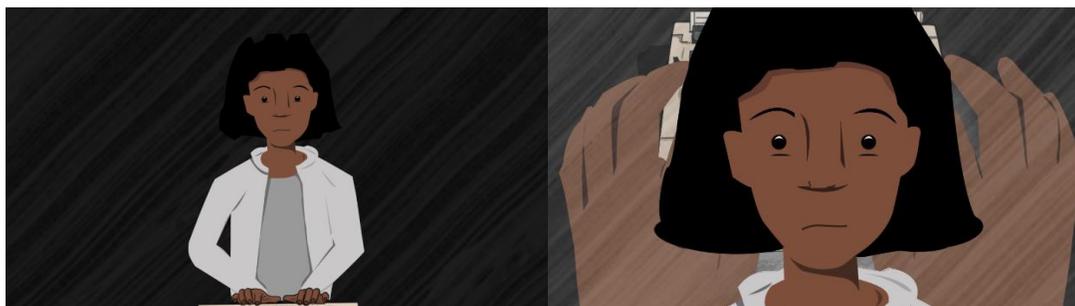


Figure 35: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Typing Scene #2.

Figure 35A: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Typing Scene, Close-up.

It is a complex scene that demands a perfect balance between the animation and voice. The animation must get the viewers' attention but not enough to distract from the emotion that Ms. Valrie provides through her voice. Moreover, the viewer needs to see facial expressions

from the character that provides a distinct focus on her emotions rather than its fluidity of movement or realism. Her emotions amplified through her voice, carry a complex intellectual weight that should not be overlooked because an animation distracts the viewer.



Figure 35B: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Animated Video: Typing Scene, Close-up #2.

Thus, the character's design must be relatable and simple enough to successfully convey its complex narrative, making its design cater to the cartoon style. As defined by McCloud, "when we abstract an image through cartooning, we are not so much eliminating details we are focusing on specific details. ---By stripping down an image to its essential "meaning an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can't." This notion is vital to the character design as it is an artistic vessel that exists in the story only to amplify the oral history's meaning and or narrative.

## Section 3: Designing Aesthetic and Animation

Just as in the character's design, I sought to utilize simplicity in other animations and artistic enhancements in the narrative. In this approach, I developed a set of aesthetic rules that would ensure each animation had a definitive purpose and maintained a familiar aesthetic. It is a principle in design that many graphic designers utilize to ensure their creations convey a complex message clearly or keep their designs less overwhelming.

As stated by graphic designer Gareth David, "we consider simplicity to ensure that pieces of communication have maximum clarity. (David)" It is a significant notion in this project's goal of discussing complex topics of race using animation. Suppose the animation or designs surrounding the historical narrative are too complex. In that case, it negatively affects its educational value or its message.

This danger of the animated narrative being too complex is further exemplified in enhancing an oral history. The listener is already focusing on the words and vocal inflections of the interviewee that provide essential details in understanding the narrative. Thus, adding too much content would risk overstimulating its audience or confuse the historical material. Both results that this project intends to avoid. Thus, the aesthetic rules were as follows:

- 1. Everything must be grayscale except for the skin colors of the characters or significant objects.***

At the core of Ms. Valrie's narrative, it is a story about how her skin color created a difference of experience compared to her white counterparts. Thus, my goal was to define ways within the art style to convey how her skin color was significant and highlight the objects that reminded her of being mistreated.

By making everything grayscale except her skin and important objects, it imposed an emphasis on what created her experience of racial trauma. It shows that her blackness stood out in a predominately white space. This design decision provides a visual cue to its audience of her being in an environment that facilitates white rage.

It is a style that is inspired by the animated short *Paperman*. This narrative is animated in complete grayscale except for one component that is key to the story. In the story, the main character meets a woman that changes his life. However, he loses track of the woman at a train station, only being left with a paper with her lipstick mark on it (Kahrs).

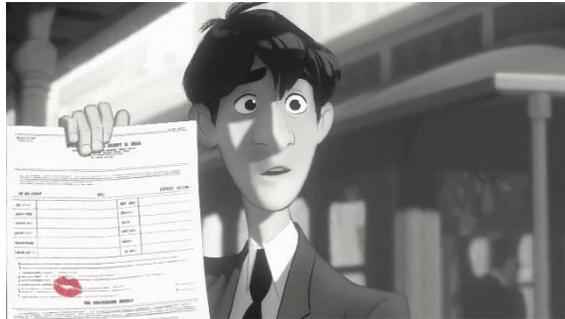


Figure 36: *Paperman*, John Kahrs, Walt Disney Animation 2012.

Throughout the rest of the film, the paper eventually directs him back to her. It is a clever way of placing attention on a vital component of a story, visually highlighting something that shapes the primary character's experience. The same is done in Ms. Valrie's narrative, now focusing on her skin color. Through simply existing as a black woman, it results in a difference of experience to her other classmates. Thus, I found it significant to provide color to her skin and objects that defined her experience of social injustice. To place visual importance on what people who actively enforce white rage pay attention to, skin color.

**2. *The film must only use two transitions, a scribble effect and an ink reveal.***

In filmmaking, one of the most important concepts is consistency. Consistency is a filmmaker's ability to utilize similar designs, style components, or cinematic principles within a film, so the audience has a distinct tonal or intellectual understanding of it. It is a concept utilized by the best filmmakers today, such as Wes Anderson or Edgar Wright. Their creation processes have grown to become recognized for their particular use of transitions or scene composition to highlight significant moments in their films. Take, for example, Edgar Wright's film *Hot Fuzz*. In

this comedic action film centered around cop movie tropes, Wright purposefully uses transitions to convey significant comedic tones (Every Frame a Painting).

This consistency is best demonstrated in the film's opening scenes as the main character must transition from a large city home to the countryside for his police assignment. In this transition, Wright uses a host of similar and quick cuts to show how the character moves from one place to another. These cuts perform two significant actions.



Figure 37: *Hot Fuzz*, Edgar Wright, StudioCanal, 2012.

Figure 37A: *Hot Fuzz*, Edgar Wright, StudioCanal, 2012.

First, it provides the audience with significant visual information, such as the place he is going and his “move from civilization”, displayed in his loss of cell phone service (Every Frame a Painting).

Second, it visually emphasizes comedic elements that otherwise would not be included if a simple cut from the big city to the countryside was provided. The quick cuts smash in all his funny expressions and uncomfortable feelings during his journey, efficiently providing needed context for the viewer and entertaining them all at once.

Thus, in the creation of the enhanced oral history for *The Change We Seek* the importance of providing transitions that have intellectual significance was utilized as well. Through each scene only scribble effects and ink reveals were used to impose tonal consistency in the film. Furthermore, these transitions were used to provide aesthetic importance to the interviewees' historical descriptions.

This is best displayed near the middle of the enhanced narrative. Shannon describes her move to Snellville, GA, and its proximity to Stoneville, Mountain Georgia (See Appendix A). In her explanation, the scribble and ink reveal transitions are used. The ink reveal transition occurs first when Shannon exclaims, "where the KKK did their meetings."



Figure 38: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Snellville Scene.

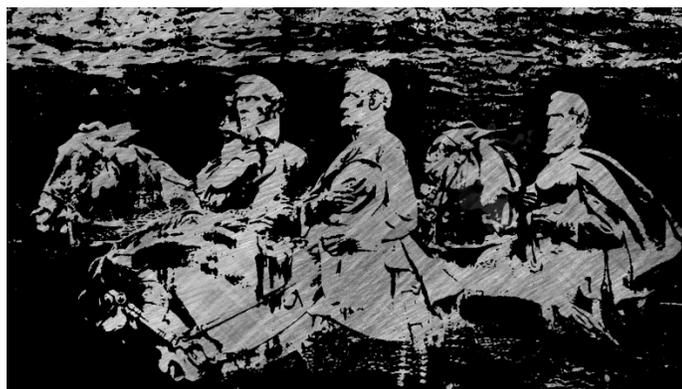


Figure 38A: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Stone Mountain Scene.

It is a transition that utilizes animation, making the historical image appear to have come to life. In the frame prior, it is drawn, showing an image closer to the distinction of a cartoon. An effort through visual-transitioning to remind the viewer that the narrative is actual historical memory and not simply an imagined film.

**3. *Every effect must be detailed as if it were drawn.***

This rule of simplicity spawned from a single statement by African American Studies Professor Carol Anderson during my viewing of her recorded lecture at Emory University. As she lectures about the existence and effects of white rage in America, she mentioned her intention of exposing this concept to the public.

She claimed, “I set out to make white rage visible, to blow graphite onto that hidden fingerprint and trace its historic movements over the past 150 years” (Anderson Emory). It is a statement that sparked the aesthetic tone of the animations and art style of Ms. Valrie’s narrative, as the educational purpose of the video is to expose white rage through her personal experience.

Therefore, displaying each animation or scene as if it is drawn is aesthetically conveying both Dr. Anderson's and the film's intent. It is an intent that seeks to shed light on the existence of racism in today's world.

## Section 4: Uses of Animation

Animation is nothing less than magical. To take a collection of images and manipulate them to create motions that the human eye perceives as actual movement is something that sounds impossible to do but is completely real when performed. It is a form of art that has used this magical essence to make works of art that imitate life, communicate concepts, or tell an immersive narrative resulting in billion-dollar movies and cartoons.

However, animation also has shown it has another unique purpose beyond just being aesthetically fascinating. Animation can educate because it can break down complex concepts and provide needed context through visual representation. This unique educational nature in animation is best displayed through two educational case studies that have dealt with America's complex systems of race, which inspired this project's enhanced oral history.

### Mass Incarceration, Visualized

In the first study, a dynamic video produced by the cultural-focused magazine *Atlantic* shows the educational value of animation. This video, named *Mass Incarceration, Visualized* (2015), is part of a series that intends to provide critical insight on issues of black incarceration in America, providing its viewers with interactive statistical data.

Its use of animated data provides viewers with a visual reference to numbers and concepts that are difficult to mentally process in talking about black incarceration. For instance, in the animated video, narrated by sociologist Bruce Western, he explains "the current inevitability of prison for certain demographics of young black men and how it has become a normal life event" (Mass Incarceration). The narrative is a spoken argument that becomes illustrated to its viewers through short animations. During Western's lecture, he explains that America's incarceration rates are the highest in the world, resulting in significant incarcerations that affect black men.



Figure 39: *Mass Incarceration, Visualized*, Atlantic, (00:00:34).

During his explanation, an animated map is shown that highlights the United States and its significant incarceration rate using color. It is a visual signal to viewers that the country's prison rates are more significant than others. As the animation continues, prison bars appear in the frame around the outline of America.

It is a simple animation but can visually express to its spectator that Americans' use of incarceration is significant. As America locks up its population at a staggering rate compared to others, implying through pictorial representation Americans ever-present cultural values of placing people in prison cells rather than supporting reform. It is a unique context that could not be given only through text or a regular image. The animation directs the audience's attention to essential information through color change and movement.

### ***Enhanced Oral History Use***

*Atlantic's* effort in *Mass Incarceration, Visualized* to break down complex elements through the use of animation is echoed in Ms. Valrie's enhanced oral history. For instance, during the middle of the enhanced oral history, Ms. Valrie explains that she was not able to type as fast as her white classmates because her teacher never showed the proper techniques needed to do so.

When she makes this statement in the enhanced narrative, the audience is provided with an animation of her cartoon character not being able to type. Her character's hands slowly move toward the typewriter. However, they cannot press the keys leading to a second animation that wipes away the image of her trying to type ("Ms. Shannon" 00:01:53).

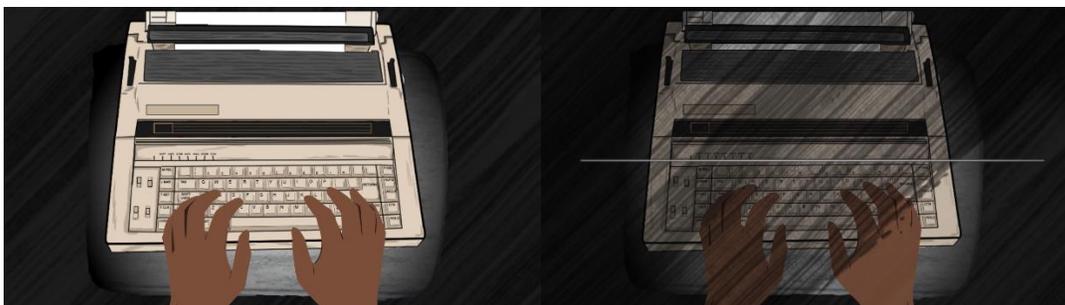


Figure 40: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Hurt Typing Scene  
 Figure 40A: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Hurt Typing Scene #2.

The struggle of her typing is conveyed again when Ms. Valrie mentions, to keep up with the other students, she would memorize entire paragraphs because she did not know where to place her hands on the keyboard.



Figure 40B: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Hurt Typing Scene #3.  
 Figure 40C: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Hurt Typing Scene #4.

This recollection is paired with a first-person animation of Ms. Valrie attempting to perform this method of typing. In the animation, the camera shows her attempting to type at first but then is tilted on its side to appear as if the viewer is moving their head. Once the camera is tilted, viewers are presented with a paper pad containing a paragraph on it. After a moment, the words in the paragraph flash on the screen, visually expressing to its audience Ms. Valrie's attempt to remember the paragraph before she tries to type again. The camera then zooms back out onto her character's hands.

It is these animations that visually interpret how difficult typing was for Ms. Valrie. To view the effort she had to exert to try and keep up with her classmates provides a visual reference to how much of a hindrance typing was for her when she did not have access to foundational techniques. It is an animation that breaks her struggle down to a visual understanding.

## The Enduring Myth of Black Criminality

The scholastic ability of animation is expressed in a similar *Atlantic*-produced video called *The Enduring Myth of Black Criminality* (2015), narrated by social activist Ta-Nehisi Coates. This short animation displays that motion graphics can be used to provide visual proof to an educational narrative, grounding its academic argument or lesson into reality.

For example, Coates discusses the historical context surrounding the criminality of black men in America, leading to him discussing how America's police force was formed around fugitive slave laws ("The Enduring"). In creating these slave laws, African slaves were hunted down for bounties that states sanctioned as legal, creating an overt awareness by white citizens to profile black men. It is a significant piece of historical information that without visual proof would be difficult to believe. Thus, during Coates's narration of this law, an animation shows the exact slave fugitive law that started American policing. A helpful animation that strengthens the narrative's historical argument by providing viewers with needed contextual validity.

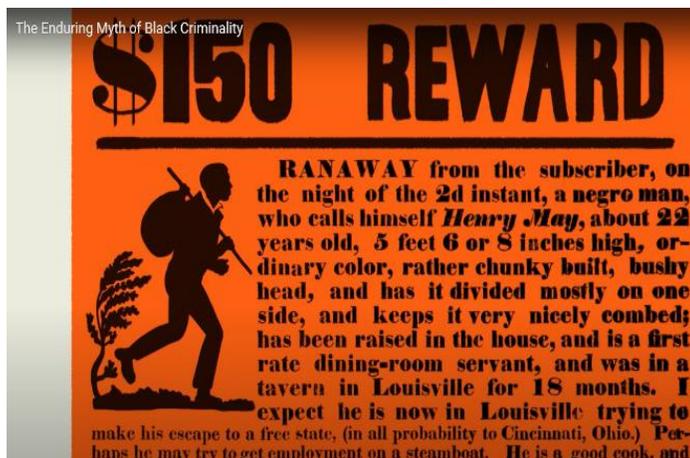


Figure 41: *The Myth of Black Criminality*, Atlantic, (00:00:34)

### Enhanced Oral History Use

*Atlantic's* ability in *The Enduring Myth of Black Criminality* to show visually tangible evidence through animation is utilized in Ms. Valrie's narrative as well. During several segments in the enhanced oral history, actual historical photos are shown to the viewer to display that Ms. Valrie's recollection is grounded.

For example, during the middle of her narrative, she shares that she moved from Texas to Georgia. In her move, she defines that her new home was located only 20 minutes away from the birthplace of the KKK (Stone Mountain, GA), in which she was forced to attend a school that was predominantly white (00:01:19). As she makes this statement the viewer is shown an animation that scribbles and then reveals through “ink” a historical picture of KKK members meeting at Stone Mountain.



Figure 42: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: KKK Scene

It is an animation that shows the viewer two critical pieces of contextual information. First, it visually displays to its audience that the KKK existed in the region of Georgia that Ms. Valrie referenced, clearing up any discrepancies of what organization she may have been referring to or if her statement was historically supported. Second, the use of the animated scribble and ink reveal provides an aesthetic meaning to the image, visually implying that what is being shown to the viewer is a reveal of Ms. Valrie's historical memory and the racist environment that surrounded her existence.

It is an instance that is utilized at the end of the narrative as well. By the end of the enhanced oral history, Ms. Shannon M. Valrie is revealed to the audience through an ink reveal transition. It is a reveal that is quite shocking to its audience because it is the first time, they are shown the narrator. Thus, this reveal forces its audience to understand that the narrator and recollection were a part of an authentic experience, providing a reason for a viewer to feel empathy during this moment.



Figure 43: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Ending Interview.

These educational enhancements presented using animation is what the first iteration of *The Change We Seek* utilized. To convey its educational lesson by providing animation that displays visual references and tangible proof to important historical and cultural information.

## **Chapter 7: Educational Value and Continuing Research**

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I really liked the animations. I remember you mentioning they took a lot of time, but I feel it really makes your video stand out.

*-Student, St. Andrews University*

## **Section 1: Evaluation Process**

After months of storyboarding, consulting, and editing, the final enhanced oral history was created. This animation labor produced a 4-minute-long narrative that encapsulated a story of social injustice from Ms. Shannon M. Valrie. The creative history was technically sound. Once its final edits were produced, the narrative had smooth transitions, a defined artistic style, and an educational message shared through the words and animated imaginings of the interviewee.

However, once the narrative was produced, several issues had to be addressed if the creative content was to be utilized in educational spaces. These issues centered upon ensuring the narrative had a clear shared-educational meaning for students to learn from so it could be incorporated in teacher curriculum and could be distinguished as impactful enough to foster student engagement.

Thus, the following sections intend to address these issues to display this project's final process in attempting to achieve its educational goal of immersively enlightening students on complex topics of race.

### **Needed Educational Content**

Ms. Shannon Valrie's narrative is a complex one to understand. As stated prior in the chapter *Critical Race Theory in Practice* (See Ch.4), her experience defines that African American students who attend places of education that are predominantly white exist at the intersection of two historical narratives defined by race. It is a narrative that presents critical racial concepts about white rage and black resolve in which a viewer may have difficulty interpreting if they are not already aware of the vital context the creative work presents.

This complex narrative can create a divide in intellectual interpretation between viewers aware of America's history of racial segregation in educational spaces and viewers who are not.

For example, viewers who had experience with concepts presented in the narrative often interpreted Ms. Valrie's creative retelling as it was intended. Expressing the narrative illustrates the existence of a long history of racial inequities in American education that still exists today because racism is embedded in this country, resulting in the creation of racially discriminatory legislation and actions.

However, viewers who had not been accustomed to this acquired knowledge still came away with a form of cultural education that, unfortunately, was only simplistic. They had learned racial injustice had existed subtly through Valrie's animation but had seen the narrative as only a personal experience or a singular act from a racist teacher. It is this conclusion that limits the educational potential of the enhanced narrative. As often when acts of racism are understood as acts performed by "bad" people, one is not taking into account how complex racism in today's society is. The audience is not considering that every person in America has preconceived notions about another's race. Or that people learn racially biased beliefs and are not born with them.

Thus, to provide every viewer with the essential and shared pedagogical understanding about racial elements in Mrs. Valrie's experience, the enhanced oral history was tailored to provide its viewers with needed context to understand its historical argument and narrative fully. This effort would ensure its use in educational spaces would develop an understanding amongst students of how complex racial issues are in America and how they must think critically to seek social change.

### ***Educational Film***

In defining the importance of tailoring the enhanced narrative for classroom use, an educational film was created. This film, ranging around 10 minutes, would prime its audience to historical and critical race theory concepts that are presented in the enhanced oral history.

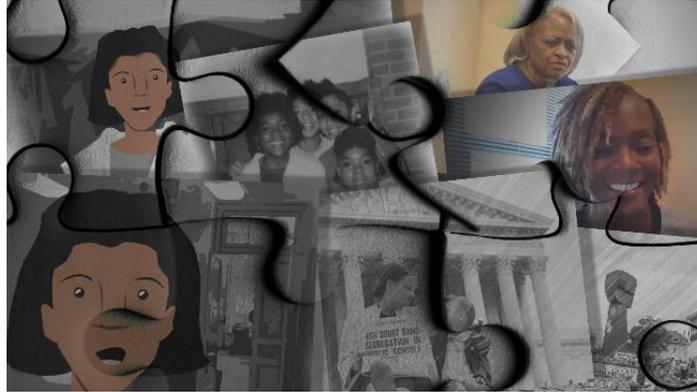


Figure 44: *The Change We Seek* Artwork: Collage.

It is an intellectual effort presented using film that, once viewed, provides its audience with information that enables them to interpret the enhanced oral history by its intended educational purpose.

### ***Historical Argument***

The first part of the film explains how significant America's racial inequities are within its educational institutions and throughout its history.



Figure 45: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Historical Argument.

When the film begins, the audience is presented with a summary of the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, explaining how it was a legal case that was supposed to end 58 years of racial segregation in public schools. The film explains that *Brown* was a collective effort from black parents to acquire equal educational funding and facilities for their children and future generations of black people.

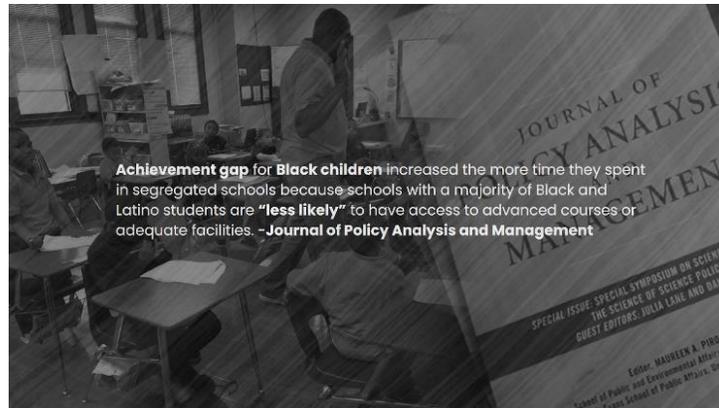


Figure 46: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Achievement Gap.

However, as the film continues, it explains that, unfortunately, *Brown* could not quell America's problematic nature in schooling. It is an unfortunate reality as many young black Americans are exposed to schools that are either completely Black and Latino or placed in desegregated spaces that are predominantly white. These educational spaces negatively affect students of color. As expressed in the film, "American schools with a majority of black and latino children are "less likely" to have access to advanced or adequate facilities.

It is through this presentation of America's longstanding history of racial segregation in schooling that this section in the film highlights its historical argument (see Ch.4),



Figure 47: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Historical Argument #2.

This 2-minute and 12-second section uses a traditional presentation style, presenting its argument with slides, voice-overs, and quick pacing to ensure listeners maintain interest in the film.

It is an informative introduction to the educational film that primes its audience on the complex situation black students are presented with daily. It is a section that intends to dispel misinformed beliefs about America's "successful" implementation of desegregation while simultaneously displaying black people's resolve to achieve integration in a society that has and still facilitates resistance towards this goal.

## White Rage

The second part of the film, which lasts 2-minutes and 48-seconds, focuses on the critical race theory concept, white rage. This section explains the concept through its creator's (Dr. Carol Anderson) own words. This part of the film displays a segment of a lecture Dr. Anderson had given about her book *White Rage* at Emory University. It is a segment that aligns with concepts discussed in the historical argument section, as it focuses on the effects of white resentment, highlighting how complex racism can be. Dr. Anderson explains that racism in America is persistent through physical acts of racial violence and subtle actions that coat America's interworkings of law and places of learning with racially biased beliefs and actions.



Figure 48: Carol Anderson Lecture: White Rage, Emory University.

Through Dr. Anderson's segment, she makes the connection between white rage and black resolve that defines many of the experiences that black students exist among. As she states, As she states:

The presence of black people was not the trigger for white rage... It is the presence of black people with ambition. The presence of black people with drive. The presence of black people with aspirations. The presence of black people who achieve. The presence of black people who refuse to accept their subjugation. The presence of black people who demand their rights. That's the trigger for white rage. And this society therefore punishes black resilience and black resolve. ("White Rage")

These characteristics of resolve displayed by black people are formed by gaining access to forms of education as many highly educated African Americans were able to acquire the ability to achieve, refuse their subjection, and demand their rights through receiving an education ("White Rage"). In the history of the African American experience, education has always been one of the most successful tools for defining black achievement and therefore has been sanctioned away or distributed unequally through forms of white rage.

It is a segment that allows the viewer to gain further insight into why black students exist within two historical narratives in America's educational spaces because white rage and black resolve affect one another. When black people can achieve or challenge racial inequalities (shown in *Brown* or Ms. Valrie's narrative), it is met with forms of white rage toward this black progress. It is an educational lesson that the viewer can remember and utilize to interpret the following enhanced oral history.



Figure 49: *The Change We Seek* Educational Film: White Rage Scene.

This part is enhanced with animations, so viewers are provided with a visual understanding of white rages' existence. For example, within Dr. Anderson's lecture, she mentions that white rage is "cloaked in legalities" and is often subtle and unable to be seen (00:13:30). Thus, Dr. Anderson stated, "so I set out to blow graphite onto that fingerprint, to be able to trace white rage throughout time."

It is a powerful quote paired with animation that first displays a blurry picture of the white house. After several frames, the picture becomes clearer as Dr. Anderson states, "so I set out to blow graphite onto that fingerprint" ("White Rage"). Then the picture of the white house is shown without any blur effect and is painted over with a scribble transition to reveal text that states, "reveal racism."



Figure 50: *The Change We Seek* Educational Film: Reveal Racism Scene.  
Figure 50A: *The Change We Seek* Educational Film: Reveal Racism Scene #1.  
Figure 50B: *The Change We Seek* Educational Film: Reveal Racism Scene #2.

The animation is a visual meaning paired with the words of Dr. Anderson. It uses the blurry pictures of the white house to symbolize how difficult it is to see white rage in American society. Furthermore, the creative interpretation of Dr. Anderson's words animates the revealing of text to demonstrate that the theoretical concept always persists in our cone of vision but can only be uncovered when we actively look for it.

## Enhanced Narrative

After the historical argument and white rage sections, the film transitions to its final portion; this portion displays Ms. Valrie's enhanced narrative. This narrative, named *The Change We Seek: Animated Oral Histories* (Ms. Shannon M. Valrie), can be viewed on YouTube under the channel DB Creates (see Appendix A).

Through all these segments in the film, the enhanced oral history becomes an all-encompassing educational tool. Audiences of the creative history are given enough context to decipher the complex meaning of the enhanced narrative.

## Teaching Guide

This all-encompassing film was paired with a lesson guide for instructors to reference when implementing the enhanced oral history in their coursework. It is a guide that includes links to historical resources, timestamps, and discussion questions to highlight educational moments in the film. The information in this guide can be used at the instructor's discretion as the film's educational message is already defined through its use.



Figure 51: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Teaching Guide.

Figure 51A: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Teaching Guide #1.

This use of teacher discretion allows instructors the freedom to highlight specific racial topics in the film that correlates with their own diverse learning modules. It is an educational effort that takes into consideration the way teachers formulate their coursework, as instructors determine what materials will be taught using modules. From high school teachers that abide by universal curriculum standards to college professors that are given the freedom to create their own courses material, the teaching guide takes an educator, step by step, through important educational moments in the film to help them determine how it can best be used in their course.

## Section 2: Educational Use

Through creating tools that would help interpret the film for students and better prepare it for classroom implementation, the educational film was tested through educational use.

In collaboration with St. Andrews University's director of general honors, Dr. Tanner Capps, the film was shown in his honors course. It is a film that aligns with Dr. Capps's definition of liberal arts as he describes within his Statement of Diversity:

The liberal arts classroom should be more like a laboratory and less like a lecture hall, where students are encouraged to open up and test a plurality of perspectives and identities for the sake of developing the character dispositions necessary for future civic engagement and robust participation in life together. (Capps)

He is a professor who seeks to include perspectives from all walks of life when teaching liberal arts. He is aware that many professors tend to lack the desire to include diverse perspectives in their curriculum. It is an awareness he acquired through personal experience, as in being a Japanese American he experienced how racially biased American schooling can be as it prioritized the experiences and intellectual thought of white people over his own cultural history.

Through this intellectual and personal investment in including educational materials that share diverse experiences, he gravitated to this project's first enhanced oral history. He mentioned the narrative was crucial educational content needed in his course because it would help his students understand that race is a critical part of determining how people in our society operate in its institutions and civil engagement (Capps).



Figure 52: *The Change We Seek* Oral Defense Slide: Teaching Statement.

He mentioned the film could be used as an introductory piece in his *Honors Western Civilization and its Global Context* course, as this course is meant to help sophomore honors students "understand the intellectual, social, religious foundations of modern Western civilization" (Capps). Through this lens, he used the film to expose how significant the distinction of race is in Western culture. As Dr. Capps pointed out, the distinction of race in America results in a difference of personal experience defined by its power systems.

Thus, Dr. Capps invited me to attend an extra credit Zoom session to present my project and educational film to his honors students. This Zoom session, which contained 16 students, allowed Dr. Capps to discuss how race affects Western culture. He correlated much of the film's educational content to how systems of power in Western culture often perpetuate racial discrimination. Dr. Capps pinpointed how Dr. Anderson's explanation of white rage displays how the concept dominates much of America's institutions of power, resulting in racial discrimination in schooling and voter suppression. Furthermore, he explained that Ms. Valrie's experience resulted from this white rage, showing how it affects POC personally.

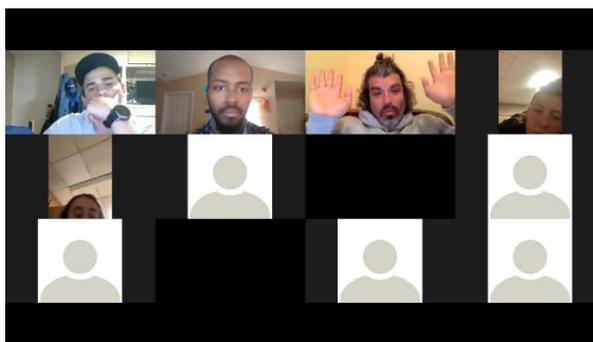


Figure 53: *The Change We Seek* Course Session.

The film, therefore, gave Dr. Capps a launching pad for addressing racial issues in his course. Through showing the film and utilizing the teaching guide, he could introduce his students to racial topics that may have been difficult to address by simply lecturing. Instead, the film gave every student who attended a shared understanding of the racial inequities in American education and Western societies part in maintaining them, emphasized by their reactions to the film.

After Dr. Capps shared his intellectual analysis of the content, students shared their insights on it as well. These insights had a common interpretation of the creative work focusing on how racism can be performed through subtle acts because of white rage and the personal narrative expressed in the film. As mentioned by numerous students:

I think that because her story was "normal" in the sense that the actions that took place, being a student in class, were ones viewers could easily relate to, it allowed the viewer to understand that it is not only protests, riots, and murders where white rage exists, but that everyday scenarios prompt white rage. ("SAGE 240")

"just how big of an impact racism can have on one person and how it can change their entire perspective and life. I really found how the first-hand account emphasized the seriousness as it was not just another media post." ("SAGE 240")

"I really liked the animations. I remember you mentioning they took a lot of time, but I feel it really makes your video stand out." ("SAGE 240")

"I especially appreciated Ms. Valerie's narrative. Her personal account reveals how racism is sometimes a subtle thing, rather than an act of violence." ("SAGE 240")

It was through the film's focus on key historical and critical race theory concepts in its beginning and animation of a personal narrative at the end that displays every part of this project's process and educational focus in action. The film's use in an honors course was an educational effort that informed these student evaluations and numerous others that declared the same sentiment.

Thus, this effort in creating educational tools that allowed teachers to intellectually implement the enhanced oral history in their coursework and present students with a shared (and meaningful) educational lesson about complex racial topics was a successful endeavor.

## Section 3: Learning Outcomes

In creating the first iteration of *The Change We Seek*, unexpected educational outcomes were discovered. These outcomes were found through its creation process of collecting, animating, and evaluating.

### Collecting

In collecting oral histories from Ms. Shannon Valrie and Mr. Patrick Stevenson, I discovered the historical material lends itself to creative interpretation because the interviewees wanted their memories of lived social injustice to be interactively learned from, so they were not experienced for nothing.

Both Ms. Valrie and Mr. Stevenson were aware before each interview was recorded that their insights would be collected for possible creative interpretation. Therefore, when they expressed their personal experiences of social injustice, they felt they were providing narratives that would help future students learn about racial issues in a meaningful way.

Through their acquired trust, the interviewees believed these oral histories were important in addressing racial issues that affected their personal experiences in American society. Thus, they wanted to end these injustices by seeking to find creative ways to educate others on their plights. It is why near the end of Ms. Shannon's interview, she states:

I just wanna say your generation and the generations after you have to keep working hard. You have to keep educating the youth and even sometimes us as parents ... keep sharing and pushing toward equality and to make things better. (“Ms. Shannon M. Valrie”)

Ms. Valrie's message acknowledges the importance of educating current and future generations by sharing messages of equality. Thus, the act of collecting Ms. Valrie's and Mr. Stevenson's memories of racist acts toward them or opinions on racial issues becomes more than an endeavor of social justice but a form of personal justice as well.

## Animating

From animating the enhanced oral history, I realized the importance of simplicity. To find peace in throwing away entire drafts or animation efforts because the words that define narratives spoken in the oral history are the focal point.



Figure 54: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Artwork: Development Scene.

Figure 54A: *The Change We Seek* Prototype Artwork: Development Scene #1.

To hear Ms. Valrie's voice as she recounts the social injustice, she experienced is the most crucial part of the enhanced narrative. It is the personal and intellectual connection between the interviewee's historical memory and listener. Through oral history's auditory nature, it is the only part in the enhanced narrative that provides its audience with informative context and vocal inflections that expresses personal emotion that fosters human empathy.

Thus, every word included in the enhanced narrative from the original oral history must be significant because it defines how the film is intellectually interpreted. Moreover, every animation used must support or enhance segments of the oral history that lends itself to visual interpretation. It is an animation effort that seeks to discover harmony amongst the spoken narrative and its visual representation. Making an enhanced oral history forms a

mindset that heightens artistic and historical interpretation to the most significant concepts presented in oral history.



Figure 55: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced Oral History: Beginning Card.

## Evaluating

Finally, in evaluating, I discovered the power of visual literacy. Students who viewed the film expressed that its inclusion of animation helped them decipher racial concepts more quickly than certain parts of text or explanations that inhibited their interest in engagement.

It is a sentiment summed up in one sentence by one of the students in the extra credit course session, "I liked the animation of Ms. Valrie's story. I felt it painted a better picture" (SAGE 240). It is a straightforward statement but one that highlights the importance of visually enhancing these oral histories.

Providing students with engaging visual elements fills in the visual blanks that are often missing in traditional forms of learning, such as lectures or regular oral histories. To be told about racism through the eyes of a person of color and then have it visualized creates a new way of interpreting racial topics that may have already been addressed traditionally.

It is this newer illustrative approach paired with powerful narratives that students often retain. As through the success of works, like *March*, *the 13th*, and many others, exploring the power of visual elements and engaging story allows one's educational message to stand out to its intended audience. It is these learning outcomes that will be considered for future creations of *The Change We Seek*.

## Section 4: Continuing Research and Use

Through collecting, animating, and evaluating, the first iteration of *The Change We Seek* achieved a lot. Through this process, the project achieved its intended educational goal of creating a digital tool that visually enhanced the historical material of oral history to help Americans better understand cultural and racial issues in American society.

The project was an elaborate first effort that collected oral histories from POC, creating an enhanced oral history that included a historical argument and classroom use of its created content. Thus, through this success in *The Change We Seek's* first endeavor, the project will exist as an ongoing one. This first iteration will remain as the beginning of a more significant effort to enhance narratives told in oral histories by POC. Therefore, this last section of the paper intends to highlight continuing research that will allow this project to grow in intellectual development and define its potential use in its future.

### Continuing Research

#### *Expansion of Timeframe*

In the original creation of *The Change We Seek*, my personal goal was to create three enhanced narratives within this first iteration. Making three enhanced oral histories would provide viewers with a deeper understanding of systemic racism, as each enhanced narrative would recount the memories of an interviewee from a different decade.

This variance in perspective and time within each narrative would allow me to explain how systemic racism formed in the past and how it exists in the present rather than only defining white rage's effect on one person's life.

However, once I discovered how labor-intensive animation was, I was forced to create only one enhanced narrative. Therefore, in future implementations of this project, more oral histories from various periods will be researched and utilized.

### ***Project Management/ Team***

The creation of this project was a labor of love. After spending countless hours collecting, animating, and evaluating, I was greeted with a realization that this project was too much for one to take on alone.

Because *The Change We Seek* is a project that incorporates a diverse set of disciplines to reach its intended educational goal, the number of tasks and skills needed to be learned and executed were vast. Therefore, in future implementations of this project, it is critical to acquire the help of skilled professionals and financial support to gain access to tools and management that will expand the creative potential of its enhanced oral histories. This need for resources will lead to research efforts to acquire grant funding from educational institutions.

## **Use**

### ***Teaching***

As seen in this paper's evaluation section (see Ch. 7), content for *The Change We Seek* is meant to be used in a classroom environment. Thus, Ms. Valrie's enhanced oral history and future content will be implemented in more classroom settings through consulting with college and professional instructors.

### ***Exhibit***

*The Change We Seek's* enhanced oral histories also intend to be utilized in exhibit spaces. Because the project's content utilizes the engaging nature of storytelling and animation when telling narratives of cultural insight, it can captivate audiences in multiple exhibit spaces. It is content that can be shown in art galleries as a piece of interactive artistic design or in historical museums to educate its viewers on racial inequalities throughout history.

It is a form of public use that will be showcased at NC State's Innovation Studio at D.H. Hill Library. Ms. Valrie's enhanced oral history, along with information on the project, will be projected for viewers to interpret.

**YouTube**

The complete educational film and future ones will be uploaded to YouTube for public viewing on my own, DB Creates channel. By uploading the project's content, it will allow students, teachers, and the public to grapple with these enhanced oral histories on their own accord.

**Website**

Lastly, all content created for *The Change We Seek*, including collected oral histories, enhanced oral histories, and documentation, will be stored on a public website for user consumption.

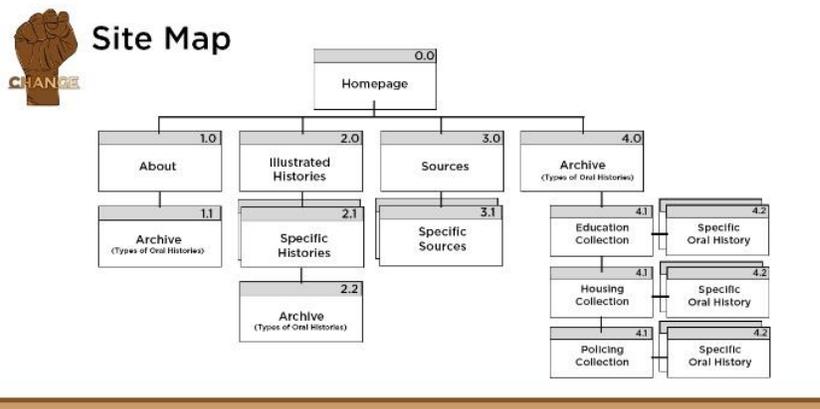


Figure 56: *The Change We Seek*: Site Map.

# Appendix

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## Appendix A

### Transcript of Enhanced Oral History (Ms. Shannon M. Valrie)

This section is a written record of *The Change We Seek's* enhanced oral history. The enhanced oral history is available for public viewing at NC State's Innovation Studio, my personal website dbcreates.com, and on YouTube (under the channel DB Creates). The full educational film is only available for private viewing.

#### Written Transcript

*Ms. Shannon M. Valrie:*

(00:00:34) And so I was already angry probably before we got to Georgia then once we got to Georgia I mean I'm getting emotional just thinking about it I hated it. I hated I hated everything about it. (00:00:44) I hated..

Now I'm going to a school where, yes in Middle School it was different because I didn't really experience racism like that and Middle School (00:00:53). But now I'm coming to a state or a place Atlanta that supposed to be the mecca black people (00:01:03), and you know opportunities and all this. And of course my parent moved to, to a area where, (00:01:17) Snellville, Georgia where it's literally down the street from Stoneville Georgia where they KKK held their meetings (00:01:21). And it was just like you know we didn't know any of that moving there initially.

I don't think until we found out the history of Stone Mountain and the Confederate (00:01:27) ..., and it was just so... I ended up going to and all... South Gwinnett High School (00:01:36). Its is no longer all white now, but at the time it was for me.

My sister, brother and I were all we're all there together. I just remember the first day of class (00:01:45). How I think I was looking so forward to... like I think I told you, like a keyboarding class, like to type because I was so fascinated (00:1:53), I watched people type really fast and I was just like oohh.. (00:02:03) I'm going to be able to take this class and you know type fast like that, and so I, they had already spent two weeks in, so I was like well I didn't know what to do (00:02:13).

And so the teacher basically said, she basically said um well... (00:02:21) If you expect me to go back and show you the keys of what you're supposed to be doing.. Honey that's not about to happen. So, my suggestion to you is that. You figure it out. Do the best that you can. (00:02:37) And try to keep up. (00:02:44) I was hurt.

So the whole time in that class.. I'm sorry I'm just getting pissed thinking about it but.. The whole time in that class (00:02:54). I had.. It was like memorization for me (00:03:00). Meaning I would read a whole paragraph Darrien (00:03:03), of what I had to type and that's how I typed, because she never showed me where my hands were supposed to go (00:03:11).

When I tell you that made me so angry, I was angr.. I was really hurt by that and that was that first time in a class that was an elective that normally we would have gotten A, I got a frickin C and I was upset. Because I top ten percent of my class in Texas...

*Interviewer (Darrien Bailey):*

Why do you think the teachers, didn't want to help you at all?

*Ms. Shannon M. Valrie:*

They weren't used to a Black family coming there and not having something. You know, they weren't use to a family who, a Black family in that area who were great at sports but also not dumb. And academy were able to do the work and succeed and do well.

*Interviewer (Darrien Bailey):*

And in being in that experience how do you think that you overcame it?

*Ms. Shannon M. Valrie:*

(00:4:04) So, when somebody tells me no, that pushes me even harder to prove you wrong. And so my determination, not only the fact that I'm first generation for both sides to go to college and graduate, I was determined that at the time I knew I didn't wanted to be a janitor. Which is not a bad thing because it took care of me. But I also knew I didn't want to be...my Dad was in construction so there were periods of time where if its cold, he's on the unemployment, her not working. You now, and I just remember there were times were we didn't have... and I needed... I wanted to be something that my parents would be proud of and that if I ever had to take care of them, that you know, that they would be.. even my grandparents, that they would be super happy that I achieved something that they didn't complete.

## Visuals/ Animations



Figure 57: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced: Thumbnails.

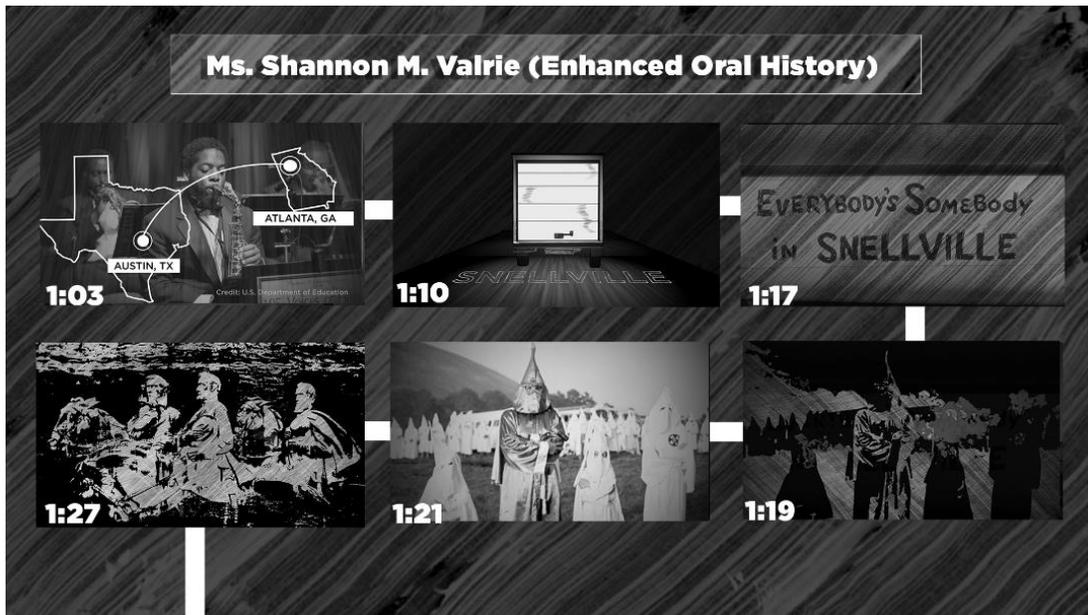


Figure 57A: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced: Thumbnails #1.



Figure 57B: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced: Thumbnails #2.

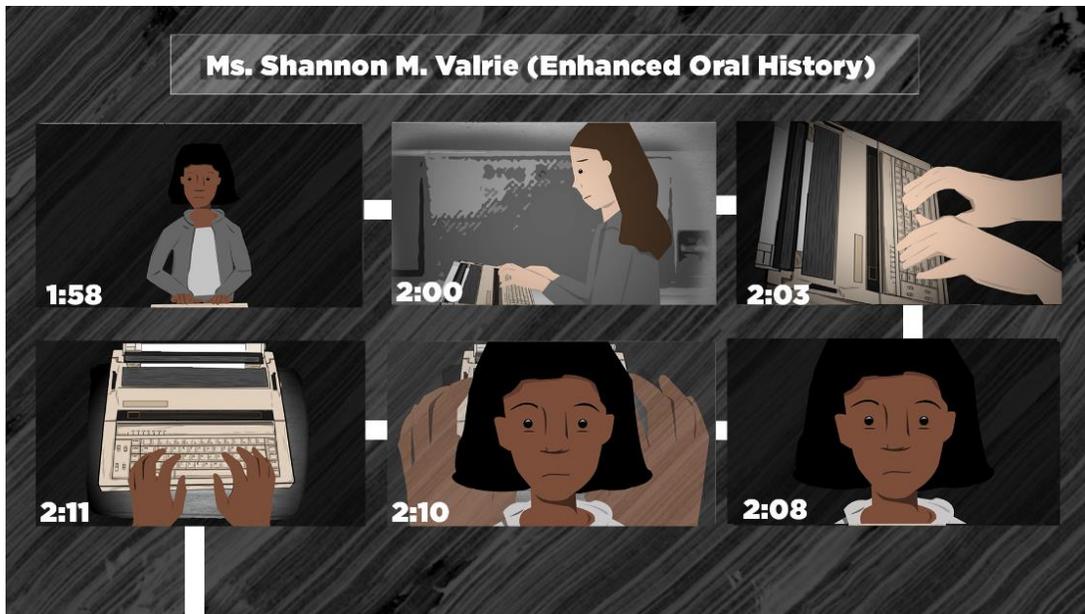


Figure 57C: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced: Thumbnails #3



Figure 57D: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced: Thumbnails #4.

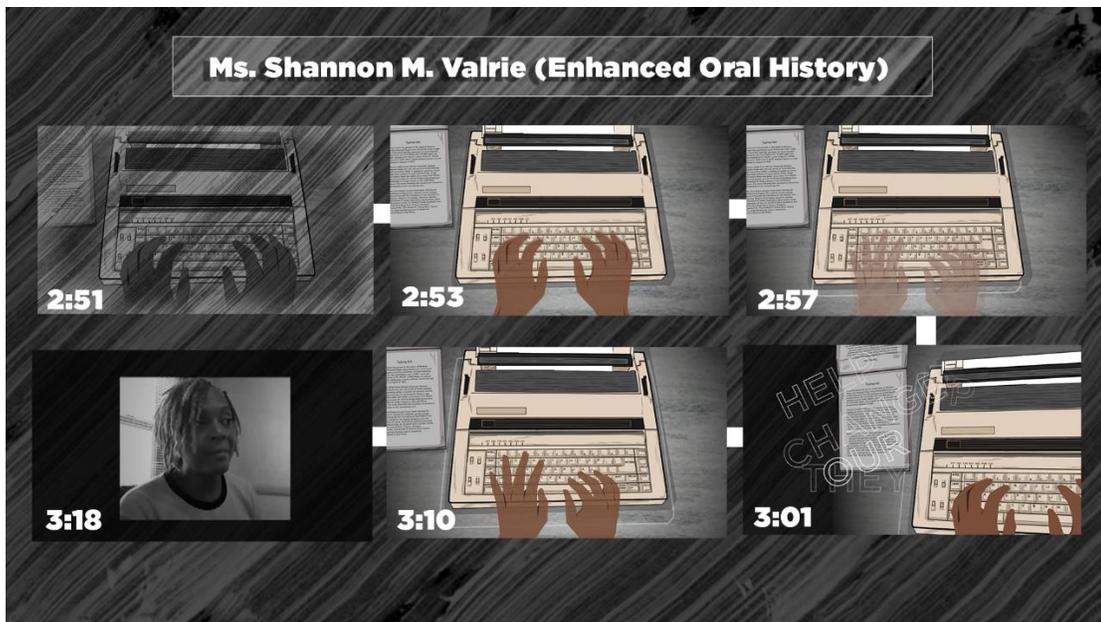


Figure 57E: *The Change We Seek* Enhanced: Thumbnails #5

# Glossary of Terms

**Critical Race Theory-** theoretical framework in social sciences that uses critical theory to examine culture and society.

**Enhancement** - Improvement in the visual literacy and educational value of a historical material using digital tools.

**Enhanced Oral History** – An oral history that is animated.

**Legal Storytelling-** Founded by Critical Race Theorists, it is a legal argumentation that uses storytelling to provide judges and jurors with cultural insights on cases that involve people of color. (The crux of it being that--- by telling stories from black and brown people, it introduces the country's dominant racial group to understanding what it's like to be nonwhite.)

**Oral History-** Both a collection and study that uses sound recorded interviews to gather historical information from people who have personal or significant knowledge of past events.

**People of Color (POC)** - a person who is not white. It also references to people who are not categories by American society as within the majority or dominant racial group.

**Postmodern Oral History-** An acknowledgement that oral histories are forms of social justice because they can share the stories and cultural history of marginalized groups and that they are enhanced by multiple forms of media.

**Racism-** a system into which we are socialized that produces patterns of domination and oppressions.

**Storytelling (nature)-** The act of sharing stories. This act can be performs thought multiple forms of media or actions.

**Systemic Racism-** Racism that is ingrained into the norms of society so much it become commonplace, resulting in the normalization of racial inequity within the structures of a society.

**White Privilege-** “The social privilege that benefits white people over non-white people.” These benefits are a result of a buildup of racial bias legislation and historical memory that place the dominant racial citizens and liberties over minority groups.

**White Rage-** White backlash and resentment towards black achievement or gained social status.

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