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RICE AND RACE
CULTIVATING CURIOSITY ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL HISTORIES
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RICE AND RACE
ΚΑΛΛΙΕΡΓΩΝΤΑΣ ΕΝΔΙΑΦΕΡΟΝ ΓΙΑ ΑΜΦΙΛΕΓΟΜΕΝΕΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΕΣ

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Όταν κάποιος διδάσκει επισκόπηση της ιστορίας των Ηνωμένων Πολιτειών σε ένα κατά βάση «λευκό» πανεπιστήμιο του Νότου, έρχεται αναπόφευκτα αντιμέτωπος με τα διλήμματα που θέτει η προσέγγιση της δουλείας στη Βόρειο Αμερική, ένα αμφιλεγόμενο και προβληματικό ιστορικό θέμα. Πολλές έρευνες καταδεικνύουν ότι η απλή ένταξη των φυλετικών και εθνοτικών μειονοτήτων στο πρόγραμμα διδασκαλίας της ιστορίας έχει περιορισμένη επίδραση στις αντιλήψεις για τον φυλετικό άλλο, εφόσον οι τελευταίες διαμορφώνονται με βιωματικό τρόπο (Sleeter 2011). Στη Βόρειο Αμερική, οι ιστορίες των εγχρώμων διδάσκονται σε διακριτές περιόδους στη διάρκεια της χρονιάς, όπως, κάθε Φεβρουάριο, στον «μήνα της μαύρης ιστορίας», ενός ετήσιου εορτασμού των επιτευγμάτων των μαύρων Αμερικανών και αναγνώρισης του κεντρικού ρόλου των Αφρικανών Αμερικανών στην ιστορία των ΗΠΑ, ή στη Cinco de Mayo, 5η Μαΐου, ημέρα εορτασμού του πολιτισμού και της κληρονομιάς των Μεξικανών (El-Haj 2006). Ωστόσο,

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η παρουσία των εγχρώμων στα περισσότερα αμερικανικά εγχειρίδια ιστορίας είναι ακόμα περιθωριακή (Vecchio 2004; Hughes 2007). Επιπλέον, οι λευκοί δάσκαλοι, εάν περιλαμβάνουν γνώσεις για διαφορετικές ομάδες, τείνουν να το κάνουν αυτό με τρόπο τυχαίο σε μία ευρωκεντρική οργάνωση της διδασκαλίας (Gay 2010). Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, χρησιμοποιώντας ένα πακέτο ρυζιού και ένα σακίδιο με τα απαραίτητα αντικείμενα για το ταξίδι από τη δουλεία προς την ελευθερία, η Έκθεση *Bunce Island*, μία περιοδεύουσα έκθεση που πραγματοποιήθηκε το 2009, αναφέρεται στην ιστορία του κέντρου εμπορίου δούλων στο κάστρο της νήσου Bunce (Bunce Island slave castle) στη Sierra Leone αλλά και γενικότερα στη βρετανική, αμερικανική και αφρικανική ιστορία της δουλείας. Τέτοιου τύπου προσεγγίσεις και στρατηγικές μπορούν να δημιουργούν ιστορική περιέργεια στους σπουδαστές, ώστε να κατανοούν καλύτερα και να αντιλαμβάνονται την αμφιλεγόμενη ιστορία της δουλείας στη Βόρεια Αμερική, σχηματίζοντας για αυτήν μία περισσότερο ουσιαστική και σύνθετη συνολική εικόνα.

Η Kay Traille είναι Αναπληρώτρια Καθηγήτρια Ιστορίας και Διδακτικής της Ιστορίας στο Τμήμα Ιστορίας και Φιλοσοφίας στο Kennesaw State University των Ηνωμένων Πολιτειών. etraille@kennesaw.edu

ABSTRACT

Teaching a United States History survey course in a mainly white Southern university inevitably leads to the dilemma of comprehensively tackling the controversial and problematic issue of North American slavery. Much research demonstrates that the mere inclusion of racially and ethnically diverse people into the history curriculum has a limited effect on racial attitudes as they are learned actively (Sleeter 2011). In North American classrooms, the histories of people of colour are often placed into distinct times on the calendar, such as Black History month, an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history held each February, and Cinco de Mayo or the Fifth of May which has evolved into a day for celebrating Mexican culture and heritage (El-Haj 2006). However, the representation in most American textbooks of people of colour is still marginal (Vecchio 2004; Hughes 2007). Furthermore, white teachers, if they include knowledge about diverse groups, tend to do so in a haphazard fashion within a Eurocentric framework (Gay 2010). Using as gateways to retelling uncomfortable history, a packet of rice, coupled with a runaway slave bag and its contents, the Bunce Island Exhibit, a travelling exhibit (2009) of 20 doorsized panels, recounted the story of Bunce Island slave castle in Sierra Leone and its close links with British, American, and African slavery history. Such approaches and strategies may create curiosity in students to better understand, appreciate and experience a nuanced and more inclusive picture of the controversial history of North American slavery.

Introduction

And speaking of rice, I was sixteen years old before I knew that everyone didn't eat rice every day. Us being geechees, we had rice everyday.

(Vertamae Smart Grosvenor, in *Vibration Cooking: or The Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*, quoted in Hess 1992: 1.)

Sometimes the assumptions we make about others come not from what we have been told or what we have seen on television or in books, but from what we have not been told. The distortion of historical information about people of colour leads young people (and older people too) to make assumptions that may go unchallenged for a long time (Tatum 1997:4-5).

I was born and grew up in the United Kingdom as a child of migrant parents from what was the West Indies. We ate rice almost daily, and, on very special occasions, American “Uncle Ben’s Rice” was prepared. On the cover of the orange rice box was the smiling face of “Uncle Ben”, an African American. Why “Uncle Ben” was on the packet was never personally questioned. Years later, the connection was made between African American slavery and the story of American rice in a university history lecture. From the teaching about the North Atlantic slave trade, it is easy for students to think of slaves as one great mass of unskilled labour, working on cotton plantations, and to see them as victims without agency. To recognize these people as having highly prized skills is something teachers may fail to recognize or affirm in their teaching.

Educational researchers and practitioners agree about the need to identify, engage, and help students unpack the nuanced, context-specific differences at the junctures of race, culture, gender, and sexuality encountered on a daily basis. How teachers foster critical, self-reflexive ways of teaching to promote equity and democratic ways of being is important (Ladson-Billings 1994). Bringing symbols and metaphors to life from museum education may effectively and powerfully illustrate often hidden meanings and histories for students who are unaware of these aspects of the past, and for students who are aware and need affirmation that their histories matter. In history lessons, teachers and students in the United States face the task of coming to terms or ignoring their difficult heritage of race and racism which continues to bleed into the present.

Material culture can help chip away at the silence of forgotten or ignored histories, and create a comfortable space to contemplate, talk, and write about controversial issues and recognize how they have impacted the past and the present. Museum education can intrude into the quiet, nonchalant ideas people may hold about their histories,

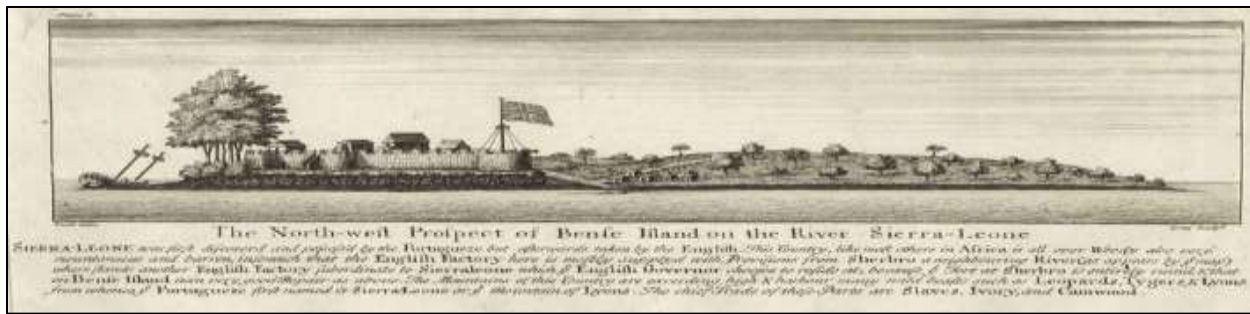
disrupt dominate narratives and introduce new nuances, understandings, and self-reflexive interrogations.

Early American rice industry

The Bunce Island portable exhibition¹ recounts the history of Bunce Island in pictures and through a short film. Bunce Island is the site of a slave castle in the African Republic of Sierra Leone; it is one of around 40 well documented slave castles along West Africa's coastline. These castles were trading posts for human trafficking in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The British used Bunce Island between 1668 and 1807, and it is estimated that around 30,000 African people were sent to slavery on plantations in the West Indies and North America. This was their last glimpse of Africa before they were loaded onto ships for the perilous Middle Passage to the New World and a lifetime of bondage for them and their descendants in America. When Freetown was founded in 1787, Bunce Island was a well-established centre of international trade in Sierra Leone. The island went through several name changes, it was originally known as *Bence Island*, then *George Island*, *Bance Island* and ultimately *Bunce Island*. In 1948 the island was declared Sierra Leone's first officially protected historical site by the Monuments and Relics Commission (Opala 2007).



Picture 1. Bunce Island from the sea. (Courtesy of Dr. Daniel Paraka, Director, Campus Internationalization Global affairs, Kennesaw State University)



Picture 2. Artist's impression of Bunce Island from the northwest, c. 1727. (Wikimedia Commons)



Picture 3. Westside of the Bunce Island castle in 1805.
(Computer reconstruction, Copyright ©2008 Chatelain and Opala)

The history of slavery in North America is more closely linked to Bunce Island than any other slave castle. Agents in Charles Town (South Carolina) and Savannah (Georgia) sold enslaved people bought from Bunce Island directly to local rice planters. New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts also participated in the slave trade directly with Bunce Island (Opala 2007).

The Bunce Island exhibit enhanced Georgia's middle and high school American and World History curriculum through a traveling exhibit of 20-door-sized panels. It built on a successful teacher enrichment workshop (held in January 2009 and co-sponsored by the Georgia Humanities Council) that provided teachers and schools with the necessary background to tell the story of Bunce Island in Sierra Leone, and its extensive legacy of connections to coastal Georgia and South Carolina.

Before seeing the Bunce Island exhibit, students are shown a man wheeling a large crop bundle. Students are asked to guess what the crop is; most think it is wheat and are surprised to learn it is rice. Then a packet of rice and pictures of different kinds of rice

from around the world are used to demonstrate its universality and as an entry point into discussing how the American rice industry began and developed in the United States and its links to human bondage.



Picture 4. Man wheeling rice stalks.

Presented with a packet of rice, most students know it is a staple crop for many people around the world. Many American students are aware that in some Asian countries one greets people by asking if they have eaten rice yet. In China, instead of wishing people a happy New Year, the phrase used is “May your rice never burn”. Their word for food is “rice”. Rice has long been a symbol of fertility and in the West is often thrown at weddings. When learning about America’s entry into the industry of rice growing, students discover rice is a notoriously difficult crop to grow, but eventually became the cash crop which shaped the British colony of South Carolina into the richest colony before the American Revolution of 1776 and is still a staple crop grown in the United States (Colcanis 1993).

The complex development phases of rice growing – that it takes almost a year to grow, and has to be watered and drained at different times of its growing cycle – come as a surprise to most students. When students learn about the intricacies of rice growing they are more able to understand that the enslaved people who grew rice in Africa understood before they arrived in America how to perform the technical engineering work of raising dikes, creating sluices for the flooding of the crop, and seeding. Many students are surprised that rice was and is grown on the continent of Africa, seeing it as an Asian crop. Students also learn how rice is harvested, threshed, cleaned, sorted, and made ready for market by enslaved labour (Nellis 2013: 96). Eventually, students

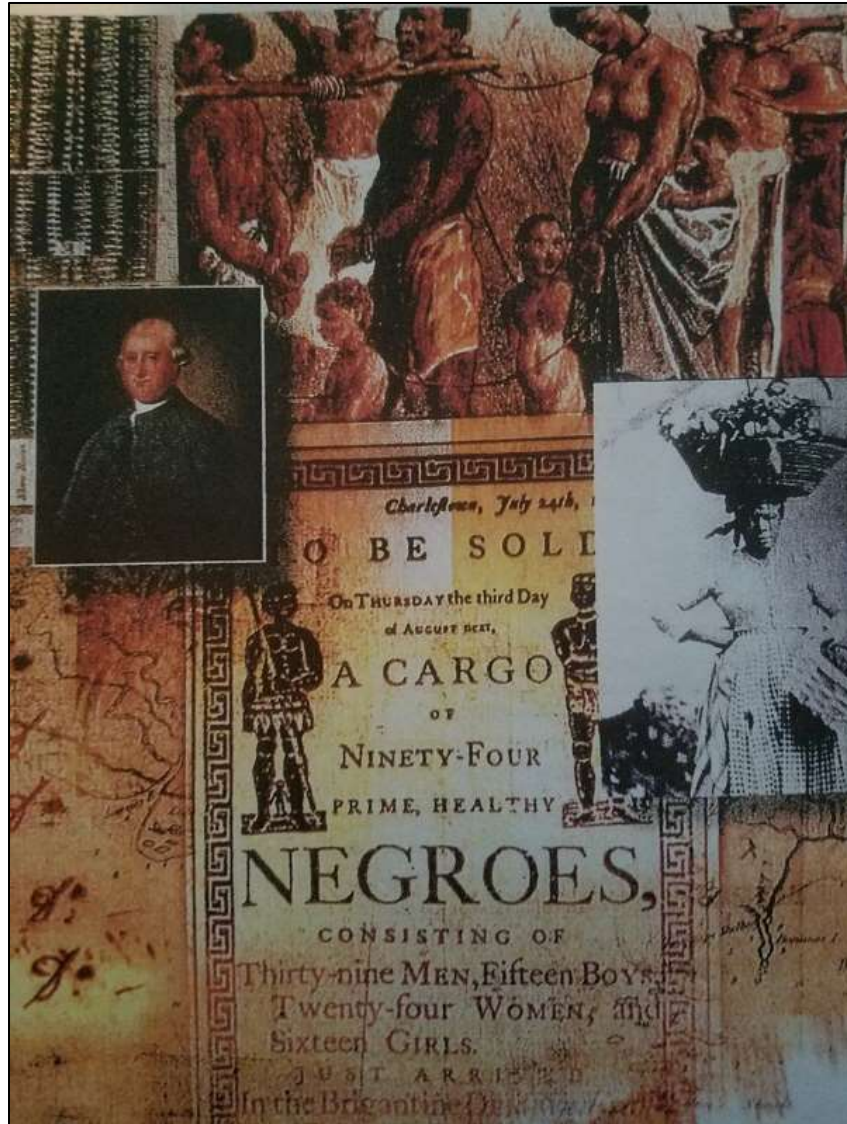
are able to compare the uses of rice in colonial and post-colonial America, such as food for both people and animals, paper and paste making, and in brewing to its uses today (Coclanis 1993).

They research pictures of rice and find it is prevalent in the arts and crafts of the South Carolina region, one example being “Rice Beds”, four poster beds that supported mosquito netting, with carvings of rice decorating the foot posts. Students talk about always having rice on the table at meal times, which was never questioned or seemed significant until this particular lesson. The stereotypical representation of North American slavery focuses on “King Cotton” and to a lesser extent “tobacco” as the crops which made America, rice is the forgotten crop. On the contrary realization dawns that the cash crop rice is highly significant in the colonial period and that “To the planter the rice plant represented power, wealth, prestige, and a sense of uniqueness” (Tuten 2010:101). Finding new ways to interrupt dominant narratives and embrace or acknowledge difficult heritages is important for teachers and students as they walk the treacherous minefield controversial issues always involve.

Unlike stereotypical exhibitions of slavery, which concentrate largely on the Middle Passage and the Triangular Trade or tell a superficial story, the Bunce Island exhibit connects the present to the past. It highlights the intricate work of rice growing and the largely unacknowledged way enslaved people helped build America. The exhibit is unflinching in showing the dislocating awful realities of slavery, but it also recognizes the skills of enslaved people and their connections with the present day, in terms of Gullah culture, which has survived and is a living testimony to the resilience of the enslaved and their descendants.² It brings to life a forgotten and to a large extent erased part of southern American history.



Picture 5. Gullah women hulling rice with mortar and pestle circa 1925.
(Courtesy of Georgia Archives)



Picture 6. Collage of pictures from the Bunce Island Exhibit.

Touring the exhibition students learn through pictures and descriptions that although most of the Africans held in the Bunce Island fort went to the Caribbean Islands, a large number also came to the British colonies in North America. African people being trafficked through Bunce Island were often sold to plantations in South Carolina and Georgia. What students have researched in the classroom about the development of the American rice industry is reinforced by the exhibition. It informs visitors that the infant colonial rice industry learned that African farmers from the West African Rice coast or Windward coast from Senegal down to Sierra Leone and Liberia had the technical knowledge and expertise to make growing rice commercially viable. Therefore, these plantation owners were willing during the 18th century to pay huge amounts for enslaved people from this part of West Africa (Coclanis 1993). Students discover from the exhibition that the slave trade for rice growing in South Carolina led

to black people outnumbering whites in the colony. On the eve of the American Civil War in 1860, of the 4,595 population of South Carolina's low country, i.e. the region along the coast, black people outnumbered whites almost twenty-one to one. The African American population numbered 4,383 and the white population was a mere 212. All of the African Americans were enslaved on rice plantations (Dusinberre 2000: 388).

No area in the entire South, in fact, was so thoroughly dominated by the institution of slavery as the low country under the rice regime, and in no area was the role of African Americans and the influence of African American culture so profound (Coclanis 1993: xiv).

The exhibition gives teachers a prime opportunity to educate students about diverse issues and help them better understand and recognize the complexities of North American slavery. Students learn from the exhibition that in the United States the descendants of African rice cultivators are called "Gullahs" or "Geechee" and still live along the South Carolina and Georgia coast, and have strong connections to Bunce Island. Some African American students quietly affirm that they are "Gullah descendants", a fact which up until now they have not voiced.

The exhibition breaks the silent history of these people. Using pictures, words and film, it explains the history and the present lifestyle of the Gullah people. Students discover aspects of Gullah life. For example, the Gullah live in small farming and fishing communities and have preserved a strong African cultural heritage, probably because of their geographical isolation and a strong community life. The creole that the Gullah people speak is similar to Sierra Leone Krio:

[They] use African names, tell African folktales, make African style handicrafts, such as baskets and carved walking sticks, and enjoy a rich cuisine based primarily on rice. [...] Rice occupied a place of cultural importance in much of West Africa and continued to be of cultural importance to the descents of the enslaved people brought to North America (Tuten 2010: 50).

Seeing the enslaved as people

Once students have looked at enslaved people as people, they are more able to break the tyranny of viewing them as victims without agency, a view which, although broken to some extent, still persists. Linking the idea of a group of people to that of an individual slave is easy to do with stories of named people such as Solomon Northup or Harriet Tubman.³ The contents of a runaway slave's bag help students think about what individual enslaved people might have as personal possessions worth taking on an undoubtedly perilous journey.



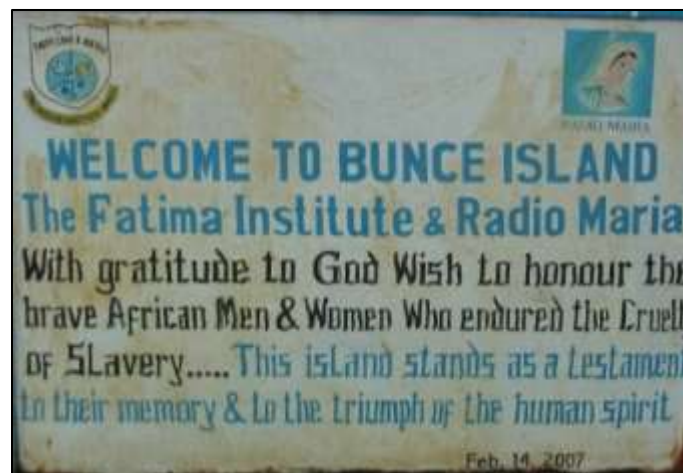
Picture 7. A runaway slave bag.

Contained in a rough calico draw-string bag are the following objects: a Bill of Sale, an oyster shell, a piece of flint and steel, a wooden spoon, a pewter button, a piece of chain, a feather, and two knitted stockings. During a class period, nine students are invited to pull an item out of the bag or the bag is passed around the class. One aim is to help students understand how historians approach sources. Having students handle artefacts is something they enjoy, and will probably remember long after they have forgotten lectures. Each student describes one of the artefacts. As they are able to see and examine the object at close range, some are able to tell, and others to guess the material from which it is made. If they have touched it, they can describe how it feels. Then they can begin to guess what each item was used for, and why a slave might have kept the object. These visual sources speak about the life and the technology of the time, and about the society of the people who made and used them. In a discussion, students make connections with material culture we have today. They also draw parallels of items they would keep if ever forced or compelled to leave their homes and in this way build arguments made from the sources. When we teach anything, students have to make connections with their prior knowledge such as artefacts that they or people they know treasure (for example a student in 2018 talked about a small bottle of sand collected by a grandparent from Iwo Jima Island in Japan during the Second World War.) to make meaningful connections with what they learn (Gay 2010). The use of everyday objects and material culture from the past is something students find relatable even at university level.

Students also talk about their emotions on seeing a particular object or the emotions they think the slave might have had at the time. Asking students to imagine what different people at different times might make of the items –such as, a plantation owner during the Civil War (1860s), the Civil Rights Movement (1960s), and the present Black Lives Matter Movement (2016)— helps them understand the changing interpretations and significance and symbolism of items at different time periods. Students make hypotheses about what the contents tell them about enslaved people and their society and then compare it to objects they might take, if forced to flee from their own home, as the author has taught students who for a variety of reasons find themselves homeless.

At a surface level, this strategy is deceptively simple but in no way trivial. Examining the material culture of the past – like other primary sources – enables learners to see a bigger picture of the past and better understand the value and pitfalls of sources. These sources help students engage with their own identities and sift through cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity and hopefully gain a deeper understanding of the world in which they live and how the past still affects us. (Some of my American students with a Caribbean heritage are stunned when they listen to recordings of Gullah to find they can understand parts of the Gullah language because of its links with variety of English “patois” spoken in many parts of the Caribbean.)

For a long time in the Western historical tradition, there has been an overwhelming tendency to see written sources as being more reliable and venerable than objects or the spoken word. To some extent, artefacts had been seen as less worthy or reliable, because historians are often working on “hunches” about a particular object. Students ascertain the value of relics and artefacts of the past, because they are concrete objects, which may make history more relevant to students’ everyday lives, once they are able to make connections from the past to the present.



Picture 8. This sign welcomes visitors to Bunce Island. Unlike other slave trading sites, Bunce Island has never been built on since the abolition of slavery. (Photograph by Dr. Dan Paraka, 2001)

Discussion

Teaching about race and racism from the inception of this country is a controversial issue in the United States, and even more so in Southern states with a legacy of apartheid in schools and lived experiences. Many students now in university grew up in the late 1990s in a seemingly diverse world. However, de facto segregation still exists in many areas of the United States.⁴ Explorers of university life suggest students generally mix with people they grew up with, and have relatively few friends or acquaintances from different cultures. This tendency is also probably true of their teachers (Nathan 2006).

Race and racism is part of the legacy of the American past; students and teachers have to grapple with the often vivid lived experiences of students of colour, and as educators challenge our own internal beliefs and attitudes to enable more equitable teaching and learning (Rubie-Davis 2007). Approaches and strategies in teacher education courses to help teachers teach about issues such as race and class often separate subject matter from pedagogical content knowledge (McDonald & Zeichner 2009). We also understand a student's race may affect the way he/she views content and classroom experiences (Banks 2002; Sleeter 1996; Epstein 1997; Traille 2007). Furthermore, white teachers claim they lack the knowledge and the skills to equitably serve the needs of the diverse students they encounter, because teaching such aspects is not in their comfort zone (Richert, Donahue & LaBoskey 2009). The majority of the North America's future teachers are white, female and middleclass, and the majority of the students they will teach are not, thus sometimes making for a cultural mismatch between students and teachers (Feistritzer 2011; Gay 2010; McCray, Webb-Johnson & Bridgest 2003). Schools in the United States are also seriously engaged in stemming haemorrhaging high school drop-out rates of designated minority students (The National Centre for Education Statistics 2017). Moreover, in 2014, History was the subject African Americans did most poorly at, in terms of proficiency (National Assessment of Educational Progress). Why? Considering all the subjects on the curriculum, why do African Americans seem to find history the most difficult or perhaps not worth bothering about? This is a question history educators and those that write history standards should be asking, but we are not. In 2018 we are a country which is becoming more divided on matters of race, inclusion and equality, and our silence equals complicity. All of these factors speak to the complexities involved in propelling all students toward academic success as we teach controversial histories.

When teaching controversial issues, it is possible for a lesson to degenerate into a "hierarchy of oppression" of who suffered most in history instead of getting students to understand concepts such as "equivalent" (Ladson-Billings, 2000). One of the most uncomfortable parts of American history is the issue of slavery. Recently a children's

book, *A Birthday Cake for George Washington*, created a storm of protest and was withdrawn from publication over its “superficial” portrayal of slavery (Stack 2016). This year, in the Southern state of Georgia, and not for the first time, a teacher’s chosen method to teach about slavery met with strong criticism from some parents (Downey 2016). Educators cannot be reckless in the approaches and strategies they use to confront these emotive issues. Nor can History teaching become “Heroes and Holidays” when just digging a little deeper into the master narratives often uncovers layers of history ignored or forgotten, history which can enrich the classroom experience of all students and help them question “the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” yesterday and today (Ladson-Billings 1994: 128; Wineburg 2001). When students experience more alternative stories of slavery –like that of Bunce Island or the significance of rice growing or the multiple ways enslaved people resisted– they experience a more complete and satisfying picture of complex histories, like those of slavery.

In the United States, race is a significant mediating factor for students of colour, so it is not surprising that the topic students of colour had most questions about was the issue of slavery, and why racism was and is still so acceptable. The question that Faith asks in a reflection written about slavery is often repeated in reflections from students of colour:

The question I would like to know would be “When will racism end?”. Although that is a question I wish I could write about, unfortunately I do not have an answer (Faith, African American, female, 2016).

As history teachers, we too have no clear answer to this question. However, giving students an opportunity to debate the history of racism embedded in attitudes and actions of the past is important. Racism has left indelible fingerprints on the present that probably stretch into the future and makes it an issue that as educators we should not choose to repress or ignore. In the summer of 2015, students had the opportunity to write a reflection about a historical site. They could choose the site, but it had to be linked to America after 1890 to the present. Many chose to visit the then newly opened Civil Rights Center in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Students wrote that what started out as fulfilling a class requirement turned into something that made them examine aspects of life many took for granted:

This museum has a major impact on everyone who walks into it and illustrates the pain and fight for equal rights for African Americans and people around the world. It is important that people go and visit this site not only just to say they have been but to gain knowledge and respect for the people that were involved and led the Civil Rights Movement... It is important for black and white children to go and learn about the civil rights so that they never forget how much their ancestors went through

just so they could sit next to one another in class (John, European American, 2015).

The students in the class mentioned above may probably not have spent a day of their summer touring a museum, but given the choice between writing a straight history paper or visiting a historical site linked to the history we were studying and writing about the experience they all opted for the latter. Touring museums is not always a priority for parents of school-aged students. For Middle and High school students visits to museums are few and far between unless when they are taken there by schools, therefore, portable exhibitions –which by their nature are small– are worthwhile investments for hire, as permission slips, monies from students, arranging transport and a host of other variables do not come into play. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in their learning experiences, be they from formal study or direct observation (Nager & Shapiro 2007). Particularly in the study of History, the reality of school diversity brings with it issues of identity, ownership, belonging, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Epstein, Mayorga & Nelson 2011).

These matters, like most of the cultural iceberg, lie hidden in plain sight (Hall 1977; Lustig & Koester 2013). Material culture is an effective way to begin scaffolding the learning of history. Through a portable museum exhibit, a packet of rice and the bag of a runaway slave, students are able to embark on a journey of discovering, recognizing and making personal connections with the past and the present. Yes, slavery was a traumatic abomination, but enslaved people were skilled, and they resisted slavery and contributed to the building of America in many unsung ways. Students do not hear this story often enough, or, if they do, it is drowned out by louder repetition of dominant storylines of victimization.

Perhaps what makes artefacts like these so engaging and useful is that they interrupt dominate majority narratives, and uncover history for students in this part of the United States. Students begin to understand that history is made, not just retold. They are forced to acknowledge that dominant cultures give great weight to their lived experiences as a way of explaining how a country survives and thrives yesterday, today and perhaps tomorrow.

Students in the United States are able to understand that the historical past may be distorted to suit the storyline of European American exceptionalism, and that the same sources may be interpreted differently at different times or in the same time period, depending on who is examining them. Exploring the exhibit and the artefacts may help students unravel their own perceptions and misconceptions, analyse perspectives so that students are prompted to make connections they probably would not make through the reading of most History textbooks. History teachers are probably guilty of repeatedly telling rather than showing students they need to focus on historical understanding and disciplined inquiry, and that context and subtext matter. Using

material culture as a tool to enhance student learning about a topic is another strategy we can use to enable students to uncover what this actually means in practice, because:

It is still the case that too little history teaching makes explicit reference in even an ambient way to the art, music and material culture of past societies, which might help pupils to build up a textured understanding of past societies (Kitson, Husbands & Steward 2011: 79).

Students are enabled by exploring the layers behind the surface history many may experience in introductory survey history classes to develop a less ritualistic and a more informed awareness of their own cultures (Bain 2000: 335). The Bunce Island Exhibit, a slave's bag and a simple packet of rice are examples of tools to be used by teachers in the context of a history class that potentially may help students uncover a blurred and ignored part of American colonial history. Perhaps a student from Georgia or South Carolina who has never wondered why rice is always a part of their dinner and not potatoes, will look differently at the dinner table and the seemingly insignificant bowl of rice may take on a deeper meaning because of their experiences in a history classroom.

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Notes

¹ The author first became aware of the exhibit in 2009 when she helped organize a workshop at Kennesaw State University featuring the exhibit for Middle and High School teachers co-sponsored by the Georgia Humanities Council at Kennesaw State University where the exhibit is now housed.

² In the United States, the descendants of African rice cultivators are called "Gullahs" or "Geechee".

³ Solomon Northup was born a freeman and, when he was thirty, was kidnapped and sold into slavery and rescued after twelve years in January 1853. Harriet Tubman was born into slavery, escaped and returned numerous times to rescue other enslaved people via the "Underground Railroad," a system of safe houses and places where runaway slaves would be sheltered and aided in their escape.

⁴ Wilcox County held its first integrated prom organized by students in 2013 (nbcnews.com).