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The Permanence of Racism in Tennessee Public Schools

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Studies

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Dedication

To my mother, my wife Lillian, family, friends, and colleagues, thank you for believing in me and providing me with the patience I needed throughout this entire journey. Your belief, support, and encouragement helped me make it through. To my father, I promised you that I would complete this degree, and I know we will not be able to celebrate it together, but I know you are smiling above.

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To my lovely wife Lillian, thank you for your encouragement, patience, and love. You have truly been understanding through this process. Thank you for all of your proofreading skills. I love you.

To my children Devin, Kendra, and Shawn II, I hope I have been an inspiration to the three of you. Always remember you can accomplish anything you put your mind to. I love all three of you dearly.

To Dr. Arthur Cushman, thank you for saving my life. I will always be eternally grateful.

Abstract

The qualitative case study exposed the permanence of racism beginning in the antebellum public schools of Nashville and continued in the current actions in the Tennessee legislature with the expulsion of two Black male legislators. Critical race theory is used as the main descriptor for the actions of White politicians and legislators in Tennessee who continue the oppressive treatment of Black people in the state of Tennessee.

White members of the Tennessee legislature have attempted to strategically continue white supremacy in their decision to display a depiction of one of the most deplorable, racists in the history of the state of Tennessee, Nathan Bedford Forrest. They also splintered the voting power of people of color by changing the voting districts in Nashville and Memphis in an attempt to eliminate adequate representation in the legislature.

Critical race theory can be used to establish equality for everyone in the United States. It is not indoctrination. Unfortunately, there is still a segment of Americans who prefer to disavow the truth about the history of the United States. We cannot move forward without the acknowledgment of the deplorable actions of the past. This is the reason racism continues. We are not in a post-racial time period. We have reverted back to a time period in which individuals believe it is acceptable to use disrespectful words and comments directed toward people who look different. This is how the permanence of racism works.

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Chapter I

Introduction

I had the advantage of having parents who grew up in Nashville, TN, and explained how they managed to progress in the Jim Crow South. As an undergraduate student at Fisk University, I spoke to my father at length about growing up in Nashville during segregation. We spoke about White-only and Colored only signs, what it was like not being able to go certain places because of being Black, whether he participated in the sit-in movements, segregated schools and neighborhoods, and his feelings toward integration. He told me that the signs did not really bother him because that was all he knew. My father explained he never thought about being able to go into white spaces because he was unaware of what was in those places, and everything he needed was available to him in his own area for Black people. My father was a veteran and when he returned to Nashville he did not participate in the sit-in movements in downtown Nashville. He believed that if he could risk his life fighting for the country he should not have to be a part of any movement to go wherever he wanted. He went to a meeting about the sit-ins but explained that he left after the discussion turned to not defending himself if anything was thrown at him or poured on him. He knew that he would have defended himself against any violent act directed toward him. My father described how there were stores in his neighborhood and how the Jefferson Street community in North Nashville had the first Black-owned bank, grocery stores, medical facilities, and department stores for Black people. This area contains Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee State University, three of the four Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Nashville. Both of my parents were retired public school teachers and

agreed that the worst thing that happened to Black people was integration. They matriculated through segregated public schools and had all-black teachers who were genuinely concerned with each student's future. Parents were dedicated to their children's success because they wanted them to have a better future than they had. The schools served as the center of their Black community. He also told me that integration forced Black children out of their neighborhoods into white spaces where they were not wanted, and into classrooms with White teachers who could not relate to them. My mother and father shared stories with me about traumatic experiences they encountered, and stories they were told by their parents and grandparents, and I also was able to learn that my great-great-grandfather was born a slave, the child of a female slave, and the slave master's son. Listening to the stories of Black voices allows people of color to completely understand the permanence of racism in the United States.

Historical Background through the lens of critical race theory

W.E.B. DuBois believed that the classifying of races was used to explain slavery, and structural racism spawned race (Ray, 2022). Critical race theorists view racism as structural which identifies actions that are discriminatory as salient and the major causes of inequality (Ray, 2022). The bias of established policies that have historically granted benefits to one racial group over another racial group is considered structural racism which, in turn, generates negative consequences in the judicial, police, housing, banking, educational, and healthcare systems for individuals on the receiving end of the biased policies (Ray, 2022). Ray (2022) adds structural racism doesn't discount individual racism; it establishes that the racism of individuals is empowered when it is included in structures responsible for the disbursement of resources. Critical race theory removes the

idea of racism only being promulgated from an individual perspective and adds a political connection to structural racism, in the perception of differences in access to needed resources. In a political system, racism could be expressed by individuals through their deeds or frame of mind (Ray, 2022).

Critical race theory originates from critical legal studies identifying racism as a normal function of American society (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Hartlep (2009) explains that critical race theory initially was focused on legal issues related to racism but had expanded into the education field because of the inequalities still prevalent in public education after the Brown decision. The lack of racial progress after the passage of the Civil Rights Acts and Voting Rights Act of the 1960s in the United States initiated the need for critical legal studies in the 1970s. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) assert a major part of critical race theory focuses on how racism is an extensive part of policies and legal systems that affect everyone. Race was created to exploit people of different cultures and Ladson-Billings (2021) explains that critical race theory describes this exploitation as an intentional act to benefit the white culture at the expense of taking advantage of other cultures, especially black and brown cultures. Institutions and structures were created in the United States to benefit the white culture, declaring their actions as the norm in society, and racist behavior exposes itself anytime white privilege created by laws and customs does not work to benefit White people (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Discriminatory actions became normal for many members of the white culture along with an unwillingness to consider how their actions perpetrated against other cultures are oppressive. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) add the existence of white privilege through institutional and systemic customs formulates the oppressive actions

suffered by people of color in the United States. When individuals from normally oppressed groups are allowed to advance through white privilege, it is typically the result of the self-interest of the dominant culture, and this advancement is seen by White people as a benefit to white people called interest convergence (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Changes only occur in minimal instances because the white culture does not want to suffer the loss of their benefits.

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) identified the tenets of critical race theory. Race is an ordinary feature of society because of how people deny that it exists. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) add interest convergence allows the white culture to benefit any time Black people receive incremental steps toward receiving equality. Race and different races are conceived through ideas and relationships that have no biological basis (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Racism is a permanent aspect of American culture through institutions and structures that were created to benefit the white culture. Delgado and Stefancic (2017), Ladson-Billings (2021), and Hartlep (2009) identify the fifth tenet as one that focuses on storytelling which provides a voice for Black people to communicate their own stories. Critical race theory is able to use factual stories to help decipher and explain historical actions and moments that occurred in Black History (Hartlep, 2009). Hartlep (2009) concludes the last tenet as the intersectionality of race and gender.

Critical race theory is an approach to law, politics, and economics academically, highlighting outcomes that did not foster equality among races. Rogers (2022) believes laws and rules in the United States were created to continue white supremacy and oppress people from other cultures and are the basis of the institutional and structural racism that

continues to exist in the United States. Zuckerman (2022) notes critical race theory is being used to eliminate the truthful teaching of Black History and anti-racism in the public-school systems of the United States. Critical race theory applies to Black History because of the struggles and experiences people of color have received through the use of the racialized power of racism (Crenshaw, et al., 1995).

Christopher Rufo is one of the main opponents of critical race theory and uses his platform to stir up panic among his followers (Ray, 2022). Rufo examined anti-racism books that contained information regarding critical race theory from the nineties to develop his ideas of labeling anti-racism as radical in nature (Williams-Wells, 2021). Rufo has described critical race theory as the ideal villain that is the instigator of his made-up political threat that was in opposition to conservative views (Williams-Wells, 2021). Rufo even started a tip-line for parents to contact if their children were being taught critical race theory, even though not one single conservative ideologue is able to explain the truthful meaning of critical race theory (Williams-Wells, 2021). Individuals like Rufo have labeled critical race theory as anti-American, and a threat to the American way of life. This American way of life is white privilege and racism (Williams-Wells, 2021). There are also conservative state legislatures led by governors who have passed bills outlawing the teaching of critical race theory (Tennessee Department of Education, 2021). Ray (2022) attests that individuals and groups that oppose critical race theory actually are in opposition to diversity, equality, and equal protection of the laws. Many White people in opposition have no idea what critical race theory is, but their goal is to create a whitewashed version of history that will benefit their version of life in the United States. Ray (2022) adds another way to view the anti-critical race theory movement as a

response to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Many of the same people who protested against civil rights are also against critical race theory. Bell (1992) extols that the interests of Black people will always be less important than the interests of White people.

Bell (1992) opines that racism is an essential element of American society. Slaves created the wealthiest country on Earth (Foner, 1988). The Reconstruction period, with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments illuminated that Black people were not going to simply sit around and not focus on creating a better life for themselves and future generations (DuBois, 1935). Black people started their own communities, became educated, voted, and were elected to government positions (Foner, 1988). Reconstruction was proof that people of color were not secondhand citizens and when given the chance they could create and develop successful communities and sustain wealth for themselves. Foner (1988) adds despite these new laws aimed at controlling people of color, black communities continued to flourish in numerous areas in the United States. Barber (2021) asserts children of color were acquiring the knowledge needed to continue the successful black communities by attending segregated schools which were developed, taught, and maintained by people of color. These schools prepared the next generation of teachers for their children (Barber, 2021). The racism continued as a method to keep Black people in their place as secondhand citizens (Bell, 1992). The new racist laws forced people of color to only be able to visit specific areas, and if caught in White-only areas or loitering they could be arrested or killed (DuBois, 1935). Children of color were transplanted from safe spaces in segregated black schools into white schools operated and controlled by White people with no concern for the experiences of

black children (Bell, 1992). Bell (1992) concludes the Brown decision was never completely implemented and did more harm than good to Black children by forcing them into white spaces that contained individuals who were not concerned for their well-being or future.

According to the rules of the Tennessee Department of Education (2021), the state legislature and Governor Bill Lee have enacted laws along with procedures for reporting any educator who discusses, teaches, or uses materials related to critical race theory. These rules also include prohibited concepts that if taught could make children feel oppressed or any form of guilt towards their race. The prohibited concepts are deliberately an attempt to control how aspects of history are taught in Tennessee schools. Barber (2021) believes the focus of these critical race theory laws is they do not want the history of Black people taught through the voices of Black people. This is not Black History being taught by teachers of color, it means Black History being taught from the perspectives of people of color. When this connection is illuminated, it becomes evident what conservative whites are attempting to eliminate, Ray (2022) concludes, is not critical race theory, because critical race theory is a theory created by scholars, it is the truthful teaching of Black History in the United States from the perspective and experiences of Black people. The theory gives a voice to oppressed people to be able to express their truth (Ray, 2022). King (2021) believes the United States Government have always had an issue with the truth as told from the perspective of people of color because it magnifies the complicity of the United States Government. Critical race theory is not a class that is being taught, it is not a concept of topics in a curriculum in school, it is the truthful examination, critique, and history of Black people in the United States from the

voices of the people who have lived in these oppressive conditions and continue to be deprived of equal protection under the law (King, 2021). Conservative Whites want to tell their own version of Black History that does not include the voices of the oppressed, which will continue their white supremacist ideals. King (2021) concludes the fear many White people have is not critical race theory, it is not even Black History, it is losing their white privilege and supremacy.

Statement of the Problem

Bell (1992) expresses the racism that exists in the United States is permanent, and unable to be eradicated because of the myriad of ways racism is used and continues in the institutions, structures, and laws of America. These laws and structures have been used for more than four hundred years to keep Black people in a subordinate status (Ray, 2022). Success for Black people is used by White people as interest convergence to communicate the United States falsely is a color-blind society (Bell, 1992). Many White people believe without visible discrimination that racism is a part of our past in the United States (Bell, 1992). Racism and oppression were used to create the wealth of this country and have continued throughout the history of the United States to continue white supremacy (Foner, 1988). White people saw that they would not be able to continue the oppression of Black people after slavery ended, and their reaction was to implement racist laws to curtail the progress Black people were making (Bell, 1992). Ignorance and outright apathy toward the oppression of Black people is a widespread problem among some White Americans (Ray, 2022). Being unable to relate to the effects of oppression and racism, while using their own personal experiences as the standard of the experiences of the majority of people in the United States are examples of how some White people

live their lives. They are unable to relate to anyone outside of their own privileges afforded by their whiteness (Ray, 2022). Conservative White people are labeling the truthful and factual teaching of Black History as anti-American (Barber, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

Progress has been made regarding racism in the United States, but the use of oppression caused by racism exposes itself time and time again in different ways (Bell, 1992). Crenshaw, et al. (1995) expound that critical race theory is able to scrutinize the way racism had been continuously used in the United States to benefit the dominant culture, while deleteriously affecting Black people. Ray (2022) adds racial justice had not benefitted Black people because it had not been used to honestly examine how institutional and structural practices in the United States were developed and continue to disparage the needs of Black people. Critical race theory is the honest discussion of how racism in the United States is permanent because of the institutions and structures in the United States that were established to benefit the White culture while oppressing people of color (Ray, 2022). These structures will never allow the equality of all people because their rules and laws promote white supremacy. The purpose of this study is to show the permanence of racism in the state of Tennessee through the lens of critical race theory. Critical race theory is a central component in discussing the institutional and structural racism that had always been a part of the United States, and how these laws and rules place people of color at a disadvantage (Ray, 2022). Critical race theory is the truthful teachings of Black History (Barber, 2021).

Definition of Terms

Children of color	Black children
CRT	critical race theory
Dominant culture	White people
Dominant group	White people
Dual school system	white and black separate school systems
Mother of color	Black woman
Nashville Plan	desegregation of public schools one year each year, starting with the first grade and continuing with the next grade the next year
Naturalistic inquiry	research involving real-world issues and settings
Native Schools	all-black schools owned, operated, and maintained by Black people during antebellum times
People of color	Black people
Schools of color	predominately black schools
Students of color	Black students
Teachers of color	Black teachers

achieved financial independence in the United States as their idea of a color-blind society (Barber, 2021).

Research Question

The following research question was developed and used as a guide throughout this study:

1. What is the impact on public education and state government of the conservative laws passed in the state of Tennessee regarding critical race theory?

Methodology Overview

The design for this study is a qualitative case study using a historical investigative perspective of documents available regarding the educational opportunities for people of color starting with the antebellum period. The examination of documents with the qualitative research perspective included an extensive focus on the use of the permanence of racism in relation to educational opportunities for people of color (Bell, 1992). The study examined the connection between critical race theory and Black History.

Implications

This contemporary study may motivate further actions in the achievement of the equality of races that have never been accomplished (Bell, 1992). The future must be filled with substantial actions from people of color in a review of past actions so the future will not be littered with obstacles attempting to revert to conditions of the past (Bell, 1992). Black people cannot ignore current actions perpetuated by politicians who claim America is in a post-racial period, free from discrimination and inequality (Ray,

2022). The intent of this study is to create a connection between critical race theory and the current racial climate in the United States.

Further Research Directions

Future research ideas could focus on the quest for social justice and equality in the United States. Politicians have strategically eliminated progress made by Black people through racist laws, gerrymandering, and finding methods to curtail the voting rights of people of color (Ray, 2022). Critical race theory should play an indispensable role in the future of people of color because the actions of many conservative politicians in the years of this study are remarkably similar to the actions of past racist politicians (Ray, 2022). The current politicians are using different names for the past racist actions taken against people of color, Ray (2022) adds, in an attempt to return to the time in which white supremacy was rampant in most parts of the United States.

Summary

The intent of this study is to provide valuable insight into the true intentions of conservative politicians in regard to eliminating the teaching of a concept that is not taught in K-12 schools. The intent of this study is to analyze how racism had and continues to proliferate in every aspect of American life (King, 2021). The research will also decipher the veracious curriculum conservative White politicians want to be restricted from the public schools in Tennessee, which is the truthful teaching of Black History (King, 2021). This truthful history from the perspective of Black people is what conservative politicians want to be muted because these stories will prove to everyone how disgraceful and oppressive the United States had been and still is (King, 2021).

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review will examine how critical race theory relates to the racism people of color have experienced beginning with the arrival of the first Africans in 1619 (Hannah-Jones, et al., 2021) to the implementation of conservative lawmakers passing laws regarding the teaching of critical race theory continuing to 2023 in the state of Tennessee. The focus of the literature review was on the permanence of racism in the United States and despite federal laws being passed to allow freedoms for people of color, this same federal government has allowed states to implement racist laws to curtail the freedoms people of color have been granted (Bell, 1992).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory attempts to describe racism in the United States as an integral part of institutions and policies that are continuously being used (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s made significant progress in helping African American citizens gain rights as American citizens, but, unfortunately, the work was not completed (Tate, 1997). African Americans were only allowed to gain the rights that were beneficial to the white culture and most of the rights that were gained benefitted the white culture by financial means, such as allowing Black people to spend their money in white businesses, which permanently destroyed black businesses in black communities that depended on the support of other Black people (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Economic integration had not created substantial benefits for Black people because of the harassment and racial profiling many Black people experience when visiting white establishments, black communities suffering immense harm without the money circulating in their communities, and the economic instability for African Americans had

increased poverty in black communities that was not prevalent when black businesses were major factors in their communities (Barber, 2021).

Tate (1997) attests that critical race theory examines the prevalence of the experiences of the dominant culture as the standard bearer used as the normal standards of society. The theory offers objections to the dominant culture as standards for laws. Tate (1997) adds critical race theory illuminates the actions of the dominant culture that have been standardized in laws that perpetuate a one-size-fits-all approach to the laws that have been adopted in the United States. Critical race theory was developed as a means to better understand how the gains of the civil rights movement have been undermined and, in several areas, completely eliminated (Tate, 1997). Institutional and structural racism is evident in the judicial, police, employment, voting, housing, and educational systems of the United States that began during slavery and have continued to produce inequality (Emling, 2020). Emling (2020) concludes critical race theory attempts to illuminate the institutional and structural racism in these systems that perpetuate white supremacy.

According to Ray and Gibbons (2021), critical race theory does not blame racism on White people as individuals or even entire groups of people. Ray and Gibbons (2021) add critical race theory surmises that United States institutions were created with racism in their laws, regulations, rules, and procedures that cause varied results based on an individual's race. The discussions regarding critical race theory by people who know the real meaning of the theory are not arguing that White people currently living are responsible for the past, these theorists believe White people should feel a moral responsibility to try to eradicate how racism continues to affect the lives of people of

color (Ray and Gibbons, 2021). These conservative politicians who create laws against the teaching of critical race theory continue to illuminate their ignorance regarding the concept (King, 2021). Barber (2021) believes the problem conservative Whites have with critical race theory is not actually critical race theory, it is Black History. King (2021) concludes the curriculum that teaches these concepts is Black History, and we should all be willing to discuss how laws that were created in the past to benefit only one race continue to provide negative consequences for people of color.

Bell (1979) perceives that any changes resulting from civil rights legal actions end up favoring the needs of the white majority. The Brown court decision is unable to be completely comprehensible without analyzing the economic and political advantages gained by the White people in decision-making positions of school districts. Bell (1979) adds the same White people who were against school integration made the decisions of how integration would be implemented. White parents made the argument that integration would eliminate the standards of the school's academics, cause consequential problems with discipline, and put White children in harm's way (Bell, 1979). These same White parents had the belief since the schools would not remain all white, they would not be quality schools. Bell (1979) concludes the Brown decision needs to be viewed as benefitting the United States status with domestic interests more than establishing equality of educational opportunities for children of color.

The voice of people of color is a requirement to be able to analyze educational systems with the link between critical race theory and education (Ladson-Billings, 2021). The component of voice is a definitive method of communicating the experiences and realities of the oppressed, which is indispensable in the fight to achieve justice. Ladson-

Billings (2021) adds an individual's reality is developed by establishing and communicating stories about their realities. Unfortunately, the silence of people of color is one of the major problems in education. This forced silence is used to force Eurocentric views on public school students and communicates a sense of inferiority toward students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

In education, critical race theory analyzes the subject-specific curriculums as a method to fit into the current social structure benefitting White people (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Critical race theorists have a desire to enlighten and correct educational curriculums with truthful, complete explanations of topics. The fight against critical race theory is an attempt to force any controversial topic found in the educational curriculum to be discussed and taught in ways to benefit the white culture (Ladson-Billings, 2021). People of color comprise close to 12% of the population in the United States, but children of color hold the student majority in all but one of the largest school districts in urban communities. Tate (1997) believes research conducted on Black children ought to include important historical and legal background, the ideology of racism, a sustained reexamination of current ideas of the connection between race and social class in learning, and the impact of underserved neighborhoods on the schools. Tate (1997) also disagrees with the socially constructed ideas of racial groups in relation to educational achievement in schools and regards children of color as simple, lazy, and undeserving people, compared to White children as intelligent, diligent, and deserving people. These perceptions of students in their ability to learn have rationalized the development of policies that are oppressive and how they reflect these ideas.

Ladson-Billings (2021) believes educators should be focused on the education debt instead of the achievement gap to improve the academic progress of children of color. Looking at the achievement gap diverts attention from the structural problems that were started when the public-school systems were created to benefit White children and limit the academic achievement of children of color. Ladson-Billings (2021) adds the structural problems began as more resources were provided for White children in white schools. Many people of color are concerned with the inadequacy of educational research regarding communities with schools that are majority students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2021). The character of schools of color is reduced because of their nonwhite status. Black students are suspended or expelled from educational facilities for cultural expressions that the white culture views as negative expressions (Ladson-Billings, 2021). The academic achievement for students of color have not improved, but their suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates are rising.

Antebellum Nashville Education

According to Degregory (2010), many Black people believed education would lead to their liberation from the years of slavery, racism, and dehumanizing actions from the dominant culture, allowing them to become self-sufficient with the ability to provide for their families. Degregory (2010) adds educational experiences for free Blacks, and for some slaves were provided by Native Schools which were created and operated by Black people. Degregory (2010) asserts violent actions of racism from opponents of black education causing some of these schools to be temporarily closed, but they were never able to permanently eliminate the desire of Black people to gain an education or curtail their opportunities to learn in these black-operated schools. Degregory (2010)

believes the desire of Black people to gain an education is not discussed enough.

Attempting to gain an education during slavery meant risking one's life. One of the first people to start a Native School was Alphonso Sumner, who was a free Black man who was a barber and was able to develop relationships with some of the elite White people of Nashville (Degregory, 2010). Sumner started his school in March of 1833 for free Black children, and the relationships that he had established with some Whites allowed him to conduct his school without interference from opponents. Degregory (2010) attests White people accepted his school as long as only free Black people were students. Even though Sumner's school was only to be attended by free Black people there is proof that a few Black slave children attended, and they even had been given approval to attend from their masters (Degregory, 2010). Sumner's other responsibilities led him to hire other free Blacks who could serve as teachers, with one of these new teachers, Daniel Wadkins, becoming more prevalent than Sumner in the future for his work in educating Nashville's Black citizens (Degregory, 2010).

Degregory (2010) asserts that it was extremely dangerous to teach Black people regardless of whether they were free or enslaved. The White teacher, John Yandle, continued teaching Black people to read and write for nearly a year with the assistance of Daniel Wadkins (Degregory, 2010). Sarah Porter Player started her own school in 1841, but after a year moved her school to another home while hiring Wadkins as her assistant, and with their student population increasing during this time Wadkins started his own school in 1842, while becoming the leader of the focus of educating Black people in Nashville for the following decade (Degregory, 2010). According to Degregory (2010), Wadkins was cognizant of the racism he would encounter but he exhibited extreme

caution in his efforts so he would not encourage the wrath of opponents of his efforts and moved his school between 1842 and 1856 at least six times, while at the same time teaching day, night, and evening classes of substantial sizes. During this time the relationship between Black and White people in Nashville was tenuous, as more White people believed educated Black people created an additional threat (Degregory, 2010). Wadkins and other teachers of Black students communicated with their students to not discuss any information regarding the Native Schools, suggested for them to hide any educational materials while on the streets of Nashville, and reminded them to not create any extra attention by moving around in groups on the streets (Degregory, 2010).

Even though Wadkins was extremely careful nearly fifteen people issued a threat to his safety when they came to his home to tell him he should not teach Negro children, adding they should be taught in a free state and that he should not teach them anymore (Degregory, 2010). Because of the racist threats, Wadkins closed his school in 1855, temporarily reopened it in 1856, and within seven months the Nashville police captain ordered him to close the school due to the threat of a negro insurrection. Degregory (2010) adds White people in Nashville, and in other parts of the South were afraid of Black people rioting and fighting for their rights. The revolts of Prosser, Vessey, and Nat Turner created massive anxiety among White people which caused the insurrection panic of 1856 (Degregory, 2010).

People of color wanted public schools because they thought gaining an education could provide first-class citizenship, and the elite black people trusted that by educating freedmen they could become equal to White people (Lovett, 1999). The elites believed the public schools would help their children become part of the middle class. According

to Lovett (1999), people of color were not allowed to attend public schools during slavery but starting in 1853 White children could go to public schools in Nashville, but free Black people had to attend clandestine schools, even though Black people were required to pay taxes in support of the public schools. By 1850 the majority of young free Blacks could read and write with people of color, sectarian, non-religious, and military all conducting schools for the freedmen in Nashville (Lovett, 1999). The relationship between the races dissipated and took a turn for the worse as Black people in Nashville became the victims of racist violent acts from the poor Whites of the city (Degregory, 2010). While these violent acts occurred, some of the White people who supported the education of Black people refused to help any Black people as gangs of White people intimidated them, causing Wadkins and Player to shut their schools down in 1856 because of the threats of violence from White people with the Nashville city council deciding to implement rules regarding the rights of Black people and stated that there would be no school for Black or White people and declaring Black people could not assemble in groups after sundown for the purpose of preaching (Degregory, 2010). Degregory (2010) concludes the council members believed the new rules would end the work of Black education in Nashville. One of Wadkins' former students who according to Degregory (2010) would eventually become the most powerful politician and one of the most influential people in Nashville was James C. Napier. Napier was instrumental in starting a new school for Black people in 1859 to be taught by Rufus Conrad from Cincinnati. Only in operation for nearly three months, Conrad was told the officials of Nashville wanted the school closed, the students dismissed, and that he had twenty-four hours to leave the city (Degregory, 2010). Wadkins was able to renew the educational

efforts for Black people after their schools had been closed for three years with the Union military occupation of Nashville in 1862 (Degregory, 2010). Degregory (2010) concludes that Native Schools did not just identify the people of color's initial attempts for education, it also describes how Black Athens was shaped by these teachers.

Tennessee Reconstruction Education

Perhaps Reconstruction's greatest gift was the beginning of public education for children (DuBois, 1935). Former slaves attended Freedmen's Bureau Schools and if they were not available, they formed their own schools (Gates and Yacovone, 2013). According to DuBois (1935), the greatest advance for the Negro in education was the preparation of Negro teachers for their own schools. People of color exhibited an eagerness to learn after being released from slavery, even though the White Southerners did not believe Black people would be able to learn, believing it would be a waste of time attempting to educate Black people (Foner, 1988). Foner (1988) adds there was significant opposition to the beginning of a public school system in the South, and property owners did not believe they should pay taxes for the education of laborers. It was their belief that laborers did not need an education, and with an education they would be more difficult to exploit (DuBois, 1935). The laborers understood that they were not equal to the property owners, and their only method of attaining the property owner's status would be for the laborers to own slaves (Foner, 1988). The other laboring class, Blacks, connected knowledge with power and believed they could use education as a stepping stone to wealth and respect (DuBois, 1935). Newly emancipated Blacks were determined to become literate and began donating money, supplies, and labor to help erect their own school buildings (DuBois, 1935). DuBois (1935) concludes the former

slaves believed the inferiority inflicted upon them would be eliminated as they gained an education, so in former slave territories, the beginning of the movement for public education started with former slaves. The Freedmen's Bureau ended in 1870, as well as financial support from the federal government for the education of the public (Fairclough, 2001).

Public educational facilities for Black people were a phenomenon after the end of the Civil War, and Foner (1988) adds there were some Blacks who were able to learn to read and write during slavery, but it was a small percentage. Black people believed an education was a means to remove themselves from the inferiority of slavery, and believed an education was tied to their success in life (Foner, 1988). These schools were filled no matter if it was during the day or night (Foner, 1988). The first public education movement at the expense of the state was started by Black people in the South (Savage, 2002). Schools in Tennessee for Black children typically remained open for no more than three months a year while schools for White children received most of the education funding (Summerville, 1982).

Starting in 1866, the state government of Tennessee legalized segregation by race in public schools, causing at least twenty-nine of the one hundred thirty-six public school districts to have lawsuits placed against them to remove the segregation based on race (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). Black people in Tennessee by the fall of 1866 purchased buildings to be used for schools and also paid for the expenses of the teachers (Savage, 2002). Savage (2002) adds they were responsible financially for twenty-two schools, fifteen others they were partly supporting, and twenty-six other buildings they owned for the purposes of the

education of Black people. Black people in Tennessee by May of 1870 were responsible for thirty schools in rural communities where Black people were able to acquire higher paying jobs and with these higher paying jobs Black people combined their resources to help increase the number of Black adults and children who could read and write (Savage, 2002). The schools were not new ideas for Black people in Tennessee, they were just an inspiration for how Black people could work together to ameliorate the lives of other Black people regardless of the Black Codes which were passed after the Civil War to continue the racism, oppression, and dehumanization of people of color (Savage, 2002). Black people who combined their resources for these schools believed the schools were continuing the tradition of the Native Schools they were familiar with, and some even attended (Savage, 2002). Savage (2002) concludes the quest for education by people of color in Tennessee after the Civil War continued their focus on liberation through education.

The first school segregation law in Tennessee passed in 1866 which mandated different schools for Black and White children, and the state constitution was amended again in 1869 to enact a law that prohibited interracial schools in the state of Tennessee, however, the law allowed all individuals of the state to attend the University of Tennessee, but Black and White people had to be separated from each other (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). A sequence of statutes applying to education started in 1870 that strengthened the separate school districts for Black and White children in Tennessee. The Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) adds a law was enacted in 1873 requiring that the separate school districts be administered in similar

fashion, but Black and White children would be instructed in separate schools, while in 1901 the legislature enacted a law that a fine, prison time or both could be implemented if any educational institution that taught students were integrated, and another law enacted in 1925 required different elementary and high schools for Black and White children, and then in 1932 high schools being separated by race became a requirement. The Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) asserts the dual system of education in Tennessee did not provide equal opportunities to students of color, so there were educational initiatives started by private entities to help Black children and adults, and these initiatives functioned to help people of color learn to read and write so they could vote. According to the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) between 1953 and 1961 the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, TN, took the lead in helping Black people become literate and even helped educate people that would later play important roles in the civil rights movement. The integrated Highlander School was fire-bombed and in 1960 people from the state of Tennessee attempted to lock their doors because they were helping people of color.

Nashville Reconstruction Education

According to Savage (2001), there were many people of color who relocated to Nashville as a result of the presence of the Union soldiers in 1862, attempting to escape the fighting of the Civil War and the oppression of more than two hundred years of servitude with Nashville providing them the best opportunity of gaining an education and feeling liberated. The benefit of an education was a staple of the black communities of Nashville and several black communities in Tennessee started their own schools at the

denouement of the Civil War (Savage, 2001). Teachers of color were extremely creative and had the expertise to develop learning opportunities with fewer materials (Savage, 2001). Savage (2001) extols that the dominant culture in Tennessee did not agree with educating Black people and was willing to use violent methods to curtail black school expansion. The Black teachers in these schools according to Savage (2001) had to constantly subvert Black Codes and Jim Crow prohibitions against educating people of color. Education for Black people meant the opportunity for freedom along with being viewed as a leader within the black community, and most Black people had the desire to gain an education in schools that the black community provided materials, and that were taught by other people of color (Savage, 2001). Savage (2001) concludes education for Black people was also a process that allowed people to use the struggles of previous generations as motivation to achieve more for themselves.

According to Degregory (2010), the beginning of Fisk in 1865 precipitated the closure of nine black-owned and operated schools in Nashville. The efforts and success of these schools will never be adequately measured because of the personal liberation created by people of color as they gained an education. Degregory (2010) explains Fisk School was able to create more educational prospects for people of color after the Civil War. Joseph McKee was the missionary who first offered Nashville's Black children free educational opportunities through his funding, and Degregory (2010) believes he was surprised to learn of the established tradition for the education of people of color existing in Nashville from the Native Schools. According to Degregory (2010), Fisk School caused the end of the Native Schools because people of color were not required to pay tuition at Fisk, as was required of the Native Schools.

In Davidson County, Tennessee by 1880, Lovett (1999) highlights there were one thousand five hundred sixty-three students of color matriculating in nearly thirty schools. In the District Eleven area, there were fewer than two hundred students with only two freedmen schools (Lovett, 1999). In different areas of Nashville Davidson County, there were varied numbers of accessible schools for children of color. The city council, Lovett (1999) adds, created the opportunity to increase the number of schools for children of color in October of 1867, so the Gun Factory School was opened and expanded to accommodate the Lincoln Hall School. The Trimble School for children of color replaced the Gun Factory School in 1870 and added grades one through four with three hundred fifty-eight students of color by 1873. The first children of color eighth-grade class graduated from Belleview in 1874 (Lovett, 1999). The large black population exerted constant pressure on the school board for more school space for children of color and another space was provided for the primary grades of one through four at the Capers Church basement in 1874 that had space for one hundred nine children of color (Lovett, 1999). Additionally, in 1880 after adding the Edgefield area city leaders decided to use a four-room house for the education of students of color, named Vandavall which was the first school for children of color in Edgefield, after the opening of a school for White children in 1870 (Lovett, 1999). Lovett (1999) concludes there were more than one thousand five hundred children of color combined in four public schools in the city.

Tennessee Jim Crow Education

In Williamson County, TN, there were thirty-three black schools containing more than one thousand four hundred students, taught by thirty-nine Black teachers with the most secure school for Black students being the Ninth District Colored School of

Franklin (Savage, 2001). Black students with these early educational opportunities, Savage (2001) adds, developed their own black community in Franklin with businesses, houses, and churches, but more importantly, supported the future endeavors in educational attainment for Black people. Claiborne's Institute was named for the Black man who provided the land for a school to educate Black students in 1888, and Savage (2001) extols that each school day started with a chapel service, which then continued with reading, writing, arithmetic, and history classes. The school that was named for Willis Claiborne had one administrator, three instructors, and two hundred fifty students. Beginning in 1907, the city of Franklin started a board of education tasked with benefitting the public schooling of White children (Savage, 2001). Savage (2001) adds the district had two elementary schools, one white and one black, and unfortunately, Claiborne Institute happened to burn down in 1907. Savage (2001) states the new Claiborne Institute became known as Franklin Colored School. The new Franklin Colored School contained three classrooms on each side, containing grades one through eight with high school grades added in 1923, with a student enrollment in 1911 of two hundred eighty-four students. A conversion was made from the horribly built Franklin Colored School to Franklin Training School which connected the change from a small country school to a comprehensive high school with a football team, bands, proms, and graduations (Savage, 2001). The new school was not just an educational institution for the children, Savage (2001) asserts it also became the middle of community life for the people of color in Franklin. Unfortunately, this new Franklin Training School was also horribly built, so in 1949 a new Franklin Training School was built that contained elementary and high school grades.

The most substantial school construction program for rural schools started in 1913 with the Rosenwald Fund (Savage, 2002). Schools were funded for both races, but Black people donated more money than White people (Savage, 2002). The difference in these contributions between 1913 and 1928 amounted to a difference of three million dollars. Rosenwald Days was another method to generate money for black schools. Savage (2022) described the number of resources provided by Black people caused many of them to be double taxed for the free public schools. The biggest difference in funding with free public schools was that school boards fully funded white schools, but they did not fund black schools (Savage, 2022). Consequently, people of color made substantial donations for the upkeep of the buildings, and for the materials the teachers needed. Savage (2002) asserts the cultural capital initiated by people of color in Franklin can be analyzed in three parts, resource development, community leadership, and extraordinary service. Historically, black schools have never been funded at the same level as white schools (Fairclough, 2001). Teachers in black schools were viewed as leaders of the black community (Savage, 2002). Savage (2002) concludes the service educators provided Black children in their segregated communities, and at the same time were able to establish connections with their students by discussing traumatic events they may have witnessed or even received created irreplaceable experiences for their students.

Savage (2002) describes how Southern Jim Crow laws denied Black people the same resources that were available to White people in schools and in everyday life such as the old decrepit buildings for schools, outdated books, less school funding, and deficient equipment compared to white schools. Legal segregation established a closed Franklin black community which inspired the determination of Black people in their

Franklin community to provide for themselves and feel secure serving as role models for their children (Savage, 2002). Segregation caused Black people to develop their own grocery stores, barber shops, restaurants, churches, funeral homes, a hospital, and other social organizations that gave them the institutions needed to survive in their own area. Savage (2002) explains in developing their own communities Black people displayed agency and cultural capital by believing education could be used for social change, creating their own self-sufficient community even with segregation, and using the schools as the most important part of the community. Black children were able to grow up witnessing the struggles of segregation, but at the same time, they were able to understand how an education could better their lives. The black community of Franklin, TN, between 1890 and 1967, started and developed four public all-black schools and were able to find success despite the prejudicial educational regulations enforced by the totally White school board (Savage, 2002). During the seventy-year time period between Jim Crow laws and integration, Black people were able to focus on the schools for their children by raising money, building repairs, and diversifying the school curriculum, while at the same time, their children received an adequate education (Savage, 2002). In 1958 another segregated black elementary school was built, Charles Johnson School, which allowed the Franklin Training School to only contain high school students, in September of 1961, the name Franklin Training School was changed to Natchez High School but was only in operation for six years in this name (Savage, 2002). The county school board in January 1967, passed a final desegregation plan that closed Natchez High School in May 1967 and annexed it as the vocational department of the white Franklin High School.

According to Carey (2020), there were close to ninety black high schools in Tennessee spread out from Memphis to Kingsport that were better known as negro high schools or colored high schools and after the Brown decision, it took close to fifteen years for high school integration to reach every corner of the state of Tennessee. The total of all black high schools in each county of Tennessee differed, with Shelby County having fourteen, and at least fifteen counties did not have any of these schools (Carey, 2020). Carey (2020) explains most counties had at least one, but for the students who lived in counties without one, the students of color had to decide to either go to a school in another county or not attend high school at all. According to Carey (2020), there were many well-known people who attended all-black high schools in Tennessee. Wilma Rudolph went to Clarksville's Burt High School, Ed "Too Tall" Jones was a student at Merry High School in Jackson, Reggie White graduated from Howard High School in Chattanooga, Perry Wallace, the first person of color to play basketball in the Southeastern Conference, at Vanderbilt, attended Pearl High School in Nashville, Patricia McKissack also attended Pearl High School, Tina Turner went to Carver High School in Haywood County, Stanley Scott, the first black reporter for United Press International, matriculated at Industrial High School in Bolivar, and Carl Rowan attended Bernard High School in Warren County.

Nashville Jim Crow Education

Starting in 1867, Nashville leaders continued a separate but unequal policy for public schools (Lovett, 1999). After emancipation southern leaders made a grave mistake: they believed the superiority they created by separate and unequal policies in schools would cause the schools for people of color to be inferior (Lovett, 1999). White

leaders in Nashville began to seek out methods to slow down the growth of children of color in public schools in 1869 (Lovett, 1999). Only thirteen teachers in Nashville were from the North by 1875, but nearly all of the teachers for children of color were from the North less than ten years previously, in 1867 (Lovett, 1999). Lovett (1999) adds black leadership in Nashville constantly faced the dilemma of acquiring enough space for the constant increase of children of color desiring an education while they also were desiring the ability to use teachers of color in their schools, with 35% of the public-school students in the city being children of color. Teachers of color were confined to county schools until the beginning of the 1879 school year when the school board of the city decided to allow more teachers of color (Lovett, 1999). Children of color were unable to attend public schools after the eighth grade until the middle of the 1880s (Lovett, 1999).

The first public high school in Nashville for students of color was Meigs School which started as a grammar school in 1883 and then started enrolling high school students in 1886 (Lauder, 2021). Due to increasing enrollment, all the city of Nashville's black high school students moved to the previous Pearl Grammar building built in 1897 which started the historically known Pearl High School (Lovett, 1999). According to Lovett (1999), the white school authorities of Nashville displayed discriminatory actions toward all people of color, by paying Black staff employees less, not hiring additional Black teachers when Black student enrollment increased, and Black principals and teachers were paid less than their White counterparts. White teachers were allowed to teach children of color, but teachers of color were not allowed to teach White children (Lovett, 1999). In 1889 the school system spent over thirty-two dollars for every White student in

high school, but only spent a little more than ten dollars on each Black high school student.

According to Lovett (1999) from 1895 to 1913, Pearl graduated more than one thousand students of color from grammar school, and nearly four hundred students of color from high school. Pearl High School was overcrowded and in poor condition when Black leaders asked the mayor for help (Lovett, 1999). Lovett (1999) explains that a new Pearl School was opened in 1916 but was built smaller than what was needed to accommodate the number of students. The city spent nearly three times more building the white schools than it did building the new Pearl School (Lovett, 1999). The differences in educational spending were not confined to only school buildings with expenditures for teachers of over a quarter million dollars for White teachers, compared to close to sixty-two thousand for teachers of color (Lovett, 1999). There was also a wide discrepancy in the amount of money spent on school supplies and materials, with white schools receiving more than one hundred sixty thousand dollars in supplies and black schools receiving a little more than twenty thousand. Lovett (1999) adds the schools for children of color were overcrowded with some of the teachers conducting classes in shifts so every student could be taught. Oftentimes, because of their persistence, black schools were able to receive some changes, such as Pearl High School being able to offer students more classes (Lovett, 1999).

The Meigs School, Lauder (2021) alludes, resumed in the fall of 1924 with grades 1-9, freshly named Pearl Junior High, and on November 26, 1928, the name was changed to Cameron Junior High School. Cameron, Carter School, Napier School, and Nelson Merry School were all named after important people of color in the Nashville area

(Lauder, 2021). The first Cameron building was two stories, without indoor plumbing, and completely overcrowded (Lauder, 2021). The building was designed, Lauder (2021) continued, to house eight hundred students, but contained at least one thousand students, along with a waiting list. The elementary grades were on the first floor, with students in grades seven through nine on the second floor (Lauder, 2021). At the beginning of the 1955 school year Cameron, Lauder (2021) adds, converted to a senior high school with grades one through six relocating to the new Johnson Elementary School. The Cameron building in 1955 contained a boys' gym, auditorium, band and chorus rooms, and a stadium. The very first graduation of a senior class occurred in June of 1957 (Lauder, 2021). Lauder (2021) concludes the Cameron student body was still all-black in 1968, and in June 1971, the last all-black student class graduated from high school.

Tennessee Brown Education

Ninety years after the end of slavery the fight for an equal education for Black children started, as the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* (Horsford, 2011) decision determined that separate school facilities for educational purposes were unconstitutional. This decision ended the separate but equal law established by the 1896 *Plessy* decision (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). Segregated schools negatively affected the opportunity for Black children to learn because of the lack of resources and infrastructure (Horsford, 2011). Horsford (2011) adds due to the violence and unrest occurring after the decision, the Supreme Court decided to proffer another decision, and in 1955 the court asked federal judges to magistrate school districts to desegregate their facilities with all deliberate speed. White supremacist organizations attempted to use fear and scare tactics on Black people so they

would not attempt to send their children to schools with White children (Horsford, 2011). The Supreme Court had to issue another ruling in *Cooper v. Aaron* proscribing states could not pass laws to circumvent the desegregation ruling from the Supreme Court because of the many White people who did not want the public schools desegregated in the South or North (Horsford, 2011). Southern state and local governments held out against desegregating their public schools and condoned violence from parents and mobs. It would be the responsibility of each state and local jurisdiction to keep the peace and protect the citizens. Also, in the North school desegregation was hindered by housing segregation coupled with neighborhood schools (Horsford, 2011).

Dual public-school systems according to Mauney (1982) was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause which initiated the decisions of the Supreme Court in 1954 *Brown* and 1955 *Brown II* while alerting boards of education in the South that de jure segregation was prohibited. Mauney (1982) attests that federal judges had to find methods to eliminate the barriers of southern school districts related to the differences in race. Some of the case judges became the makers of school policies and in some situations school administrators in districts that had different racial components, methods of supporting schools economically, patterns of housing, public school alternatives, viewpoints of state and local school officials, and the needs and demands of people within the community and sponsors of public schools (Mauney, 1982).

Mauney (1982) suggests that the experience in the state of Tennessee allowed the federal government the chance to scrutinize the decisions of the judiciary relating to school districts that were considerably different. Mauney (1982) explains the majority of

the school districts never reached federal courts, and twenty-five of the districts voluntarily eliminated their dual school districts based on the different races, but the segregationists' policies of thirty-two districts came before federal judges at some point. Mauney (1982) asserts the border state of Tennessee elicited a magnificent opportunity to analyze the judicial process in an area that was the responsibility of the state and local decision-makers without the interference of the federal government. One reason for the minimal amount of judicial oversight in Tennessee was that only a little over 15% of the population was Black. Half of the counties in Tennessee had between zero to one thousand people of color in their counties. However, many school districts offered opportunities for educational attainment to much larger numbers of students of color (Mauney, 1982). People of color held the majority of the citizenry in two areas, the cities of Memphis and Jackson (Mauney, 1982).

According to Mauney (1982), the strategy of the NAACP in Tennessee was to attack the rural school districts first because the attorneys believed they would not receive as much resistance and the population of Black students was between three and 20%. The NAACP attorneys believed as piecemeal changes occurred in rural districts other districts would not resist their own desegregation. The NAACP surmised that each court decision would create a precedent for other rural districts to follow. Mauney (1982) explains that in some rural counties, there were only two high schools, one white and one black, so in these instances after court-ordered desegregation school districts would close the black high school and all the students would go to the white high school. In many of these rural areas, Mauney (1982) adds black schools were not equal to white schools and the Black students and parents did not mind the closing of the dilapidated facilities. In

these small rural areas, the parents did not have any choice other than to send their children to desegregated schools because they did not have the resources to send their children to private schools (Mauney, 1982).

In early 1955, Houston (2012) asserts the beginning of the stalling began in Tennessee when one of the state senators, Charles A. Stainback, suggested legislative action that would allow school boards the power to allocate students to certain schools as a method to prevent integration of the schools. Governor Clement of Tennessee vetoed the bill, becoming the first governor in the South to take a stand against segregation (Houston, 2012). Houston (2012) adds the attorney general of Georgia stated that Tennessee was no longer a friend of Georgia after the stance that was taken by the governor of Tennessee. In May of 1955, Brown II prescribed that desegregation should occur with all deliberate speed (Houston, 2012).

The Parent Teacher Association created by people of color in Davidson County alerted the school board that they would prefer to have educational facilities that were equal instead of integration, and Houston (2012) adds the parents sent a letter to the mayor describing their desire for equal facilities more so than their children going to white schools. The majority of Black parents agreed that the schools for Blacks were inadequate and second class, and they wanted their children to have facilities equal to White children, Houston (2012) adds the Davidson County school board decided to begin putting more money into schools of color in an attempt to cause them to be equal with white schools. When considering school integration from the viewpoint of a Black child, Houston (2012) concedes it was extremely unnerving. Even though black schools were in bad condition and lacked substantial materials, the teachers of color truly took an

interest in each Black student, cared for each Black student, and expected the best from each Black student (Houston, 2012). With integration students of color were going to experience the exact opposite in white schools, especially with White teachers who had no experience with the black culture or with Black people because of all the years of racism and segregation (Houston, 2012). With the Brown decision teachers of color were not overly excited about moving to integrated schools, and some of the teachers knew they may lose their jobs because of integration. Houston (2012) concludes people of color in Nashville were optimistic regarding the promise of Brown but were anxious about the future of Black children.

Nashville Brown Education

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) describes the first attempt focused on school desegregation in the Nashville School System occurred in September 1955, by way of an order from the federal court which did not produce results and attempts to make any changes happened at a very slow pace and were not significant. While more children of color were being denied admittance to white schools, Z. Alexander Looby filed a lawsuit against the school board in September 1955 (Houston, 2012). The Robert W. Kelley, et al. v. Board of Education of Nashville focused on the Nashville City Schools, with a little more than 35% of children of color. Looby's idea was by placing the lawsuit on the city schools, the county schools would follow in desegregation because at that point the city schools contained more children of color than the county (Houston, 2012). Twenty-one children of color were plaintiffs in the lawsuit and the school board asserted their readiness to abide by Brown, but their response to the lawsuit was to designate a panel of four men to study the situation more closely and await direction from

the courts. Houston (2012) asserts the majority of educators and politicians in the South as well as Nashville were obstructing the law, and the Nashville school board used the lawsuit as another method for delay, placing the responsibility on the court to direct their future actions.

The instruction committee of the school board for the city of Nashville provided a report on October 29, 1956, for what would become known as the Nashville Plan for desegregation (Houston, 2012). This plan suggested restricting integration only for the first grade, which was close to thirty-two hundred students. However, the meat of the plan was in how the school zones had been drawn, and the allowances for transfers, which were further methods to delay complete integration. The new school zones split the city area into sections that allowed for only a few children of color to attend all-white schools near their homes (Houston, 2012). Houston (2012) explains the school board used the justification that school capacity was the focus of the new zones and not race. The school board also allowed any child in the first grade to transfer to a different school if the child was assigned to a school that was formerly attended only by the opposite race, or if the student was a minority in their new school (Houston, 2012). Houston (2012) adds the excuse provided for the integration plan starting with only the first grade as it may be easier for children who have not been socialized into previously segregated schools to adapt to integration, but the older grades could create impediments for students of color because they would not be ready for the rigors of academics. Houston (2012) explains the board believed starting integration in the first grade would delay ideas about interracial relationships and potentially explosive sexual attractions. The board also

believed using the first grade as a test case could allow for any changes that needed to be made after the first year (Houston, 2012).

Looby did not agree with the Nashville plan for desegregation and believed using first graders as guinea pigs for experimentation, was only for the interest convergence of the school board (Houston, 2012). Houston (2012) added the board was able to adhere to the court order, by proving school assignments based on race were ending on paper, but in theory, there were only a few children of color allowed to enroll in previously all-white schools. The transfer rules for students gave parents the opportunity to return their children to a school that was of their own race (Houston, 2012), and the transfer plan also allowed White parents to transfer their children if they were going to have a teacher of color. Houston (2012) asserts The Parents School Preference Committee submitted ideas to the Tennessee General Assembly in the first month of 1957, giving the governor the power to close schools and withhold money from integrated schools. According to Houston (2012), Judge Miller accepted the Nashville Plan for integrating the schools starting with the first grade, however, Miller did not accept the one-grade-a-year aspect of the Plan, but instead required the school board to develop a plan to integrate all grades to be sent to him by the end of December 1957.

Nineteen six-year-old children of color held the hands of their parents on the morning of September 9, 1957, on the way to a new school for the first day of classes (Houston, 2012). Parents of color attempted to calm down their perplexed children as they attempted to go to new schools (Houston, 2012). One of my former high school guidance counselors, Rosemary Lewis, according to Houston (2012) decided to let her son know that the crowds were only there to wish him well on the first day of school.

The children and their parents walked through insults, being spit on, and dodging flying objects as they made their way to their new schools on the first official day of desegregation in Nashville schools. Houston (2012) adds some of the picket signs contained the words “God is the Author of Segregation,” “Keep Our White Schools White,” “The Mayor is A Rat,” and “What God Has Put Asunder Let Not Man Put Together.” There was also a White woman yelling “Pull that black kinky hair out” at the same time the children of color walked by. The mood in the city of Nashville had become virulent three years after the Brown decision (Houston, 2012). Houston (2012) concludes people’s feelings toward a different race were not changed by a few children of color being allowed into white schools, and for the Black students, their adjustment to new environments was difficult.

Monday night after the first day of integration, hundreds of White people had a downtown rally with John Kasper speaking his vile, prejudicial ideas and passing out racist information (Houston, 2012). Houston (2012) asserts Nashville was a city that was considered moderate with little to no violence until after midnight on September 10, 1957, when a bomb exploded at Hattie Cotton School after the first day of school. Houston (2012) contends an FBI informant reported that he had seen John Kasper with dynamite. After Kasper’s arrest a journalist in Nashville stated, “For the first time in history, a White man was given nigger justice.” Pickets and boycotts were prevalent for a few days as a show of resistance to the schools desegregating (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). Houston (2012) adds that through the 1957 school year, only nine children of color remained in the schools they integrated.

Relations between Black and White people in Nashville according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) were virtuous before desegregation efforts actively began, however, desegregation attitudes differed with White parents wanting to continue segregation, and Black parents wanting desegregation for the sake of a more quality education for their children. For a majority of Black parents, the integration of Black and White children was not their focus, only the best education for their children (Houston, 2012). Roberts (1974) concludes the group who held the most anxiety were the Black teachers because of the possible effects of desegregation on their job locations, while the White teachers who were averse to desegregation relocated to private schools.

Nashville Education After Brown

According to the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) the Nashville City Schools and Davidson County Public Schools were separate districts in the 1950s, and both were segregated. The districts merged in 1964, creating the second-largest school system in Tennessee (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). The Nashville City Schools became one of the beginning federal cases after the Brown decision because of the extreme inequalities between white and black schools. After the Brown decision, the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) describes the state of Tennessee as implementing a school preference law that would provide parents with the choice of their children attending segregated schools, and a Pupil Assignment Act allowing the school board to designate specific schools for students. According to the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) Nashville City and Davidson

County Schools embraced these ideas, and in 1957 in separate lawsuits desired for the federal court to decide if these enrollment plans were unconstitutional. Both of the suits were affirmed as illegal and in 1957 the Nashville School district submitted plans to integrate one grade per year, starting with the first grade (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). The district court approved the stairstep plan, but the federal court decided it was not a remedy for integration (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). Court orders would continue to be filed into the 1980s (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). According to the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) people opposed to integration reacted violently after the court's decisions by bombing a school and a church.

Perlstein (2004) describes forty-four children matriculated into white schools in 1960, causing people of color to exhibit extreme doubt regarding the one-grade-a-year plan to integrate Nashville schools. This plan functioned as interest convergence for White people because they were allowed to leave the school district and students of color gradually experienced a better-funded education with more materials. Segregation of public schools was still prevalent in Nashville, TN, in 1964, ten years after the Brown decision (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). According to the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) during the following decades actions through legal channels by the federal government, parents, and NAACP would be required for some school districts to follow the legal mandate of the Brown decree. The Tennessee

Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) noted that previously segregated school districts used freedom of choice ideas to respond to court actions against their refusal to desegregate. In 1968 the United States Supreme Court in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent* determined the freedom of choice attendance plans were fruitless in bringing about school integration and determined federal courts needed to analyze school assignments for students as well as all features of the operations of each school which came to be known as the Green factors including student school assignment, faculty school assignment, staff assignment, transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). The Court created the idea of unitary status in identifying a school district that had progressed from a segregated or racially dual school system to an integrated or unitary system (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). In order for a school district to receive the unitary status the district would have to submit evidence to the courts that was compelling for each remnant of segregation of each Green factor was abolished and not likely to be revived (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008). According to the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008) many school districts are still under the supervision of the court because of the costly and long process required to prove the school system is in a unitary status. Dozens of school systems in Tennessee and around the South that were formerly under a court order achieved unitary status, and nine of the school systems in Tennessee that achieved unitary status had their court orders released

after 1991 (Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2008).

United States District Judge L. Clure Morton according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) originally allowed the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to organize a desegregation plan for the schools of Nashville-Davidson County. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), the proposal only affected nearly 60% of the one hundred forty-one schools in the district. Most of the white schools close to the county lines, Morton decided, were not appropriate to integrate (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). Judge Morton further decided according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) that the schools which were not part of the busing decree could not expand their facilities in an attempt to inspire white flight to those remaining segregated schools. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), the HEW plan included school zone adjustments, consolidation, joining, and reconfigurations of grade levels, but no school would be allowed to contain over 44% Black students. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) explains that plan A, for elementary schools, stipulated the closure of five schools with seventy-four schools containing 16% to 41% Black students, allowing three of the twenty-two county line schools remaining segregated with the other nineteen schools receiving no more than 11% Black students. There would be no elementary school containing over 41% Black students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). Less than 60% of Black students would be assigned to schools containing between 25% to 41% students of color (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977), with one hundred twenty-five Black students attending one of the sixteen schools that contained less than five percent students of

color. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), nearly a quarter of White students would matriculate in schools with less than five percent of students of color. Nearly twenty-two thousand elementary students were entitled to transportation provided by their assigned school (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977).

According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), the court proposal for junior and senior high schools would close Central High School, with McGavock High School opening, and eleven of the tenth through twelfth grade senior high schools would contain eight to 44% Black students, one would contain 11% Black students, with six remaining segregated because they were located on the county lines. The first HEW plan that focused on secondary schools according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) decided that none of the schools would have more than 44% Black students, thirteen schools near the county lines would contain nearly 100% White students, and more than twenty-six thousand junior and senior high school students would be bused. Twenty-nine of the forty-three schools that contained at least 90% of Black students would contain between 15% to 44% of students of color, with one location containing 11% of students of color (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). The HEW plan was accepted after the court denied the ideas submitted by the plaintiffs and the Nashville school board (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). After the acceptance, according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), a few changes were made to the HEW plan: North High School would contain 44% students of color, not 65%; Pearl High School would contain 33% students of color, along with changes to the student enrollments at Stratford, Maplewood, and others; condense the amount of time some students would be bused; and accept the school board's idea pertaining to McGavock

High School which allowed the school to be a comprehensive high school that would receive students from several junior high schools from different distances that required longer times for students to be on buses.

According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), the desegregation of teachers and staff began the year before the students with the court-ordered ratio for every school to be 80% to 20% White to Black, however, more than ninety campuses were not in compliance with the ratio. A human relations department, with a person of color as director was created to help with teacher transfers of majority Black teachers transferring to schools containing mostly White teachers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). The Nashville Metropolitan District received over half a million dollars in federal funds to assist in the process of desegregation which paid for staff development, human relations, logistical support, and technical assistance (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), the Nashville Metropolitan School District identified the procurement of curriculum expansion and facility upgrades as the most extensive upgrades generated by desegregation.

According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), the order from the court was the motivation for the desegregation of the Nashville Metropolitan schools, while the opponents of desegregation were encouraged by the Nashville Metro Council and some political leaders. As a result of desegregation seven schools in the inner-city were closed; suburban schools contained numerous portable classrooms; students of color were stable at nearly twenty-four thousand; White pupils decreased by over fifteen thousand to nearly fifty-seven thousand (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). During the fifth year of the plan according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

(1977), nearly twenty-four schools contained between 50% to 95% students of color leading to the distinction of the return of segregated schools. The resegregation seems to be a result of the court only focusing on the desegregation of nearly 70% of the schools instead of all the schools (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977), there were only enough white schools in the plan to change the racial dynamics of inner-city schools. Most of the schools in suburban areas the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) attests were not changed leading to numerous White families relocating to the surrounding counties. Black principals, according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) did not lose their positions as many did in other cities, and by 1975 the numbers of Black and White administrators remained the same as in 1970, with a significant increase in Black assistant principals. The building of new and renovating schools and a detailed study of the needs of the Nashville Metropolitan Schools are a few of the significant advances that were completed (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1977) activities that have been sponsored by individual schools have been desegregated, but the most inspirational aspect for the future success of Nashville Metropolitan schools has been the mutual respect of understanding between White and Black students.

There were no court decisions regarding Nashville's integration policies, between 1959 and 1970, before the court determined the Nashville Plan was too slow in its integration process (Woodward, 2011). In 1971 the court approved another plan that had been submitted by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) that changed school zones, grouped schools, and changed the grades of some schools

(Woodward, 2011). The biggest change of the plan was the busing of more than thirteen thousand students starting in the 1971-72 school year, according to Woodward (2011) in an attempt to reach ratios in the schools based on the races of students reflecting between 15% to 35% student of color in every school. This ratio was a better image of the total population in the Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County School District (Woodward, 2011). Woodward (2011) adds the ratio also established there would be no schools that would be predominately Black in the district. Bell (1979) adds many parents of color had varied ideas regarding the benefits of their children being bused to white schools, and even fewer of the parents of color were happy after finding out children of color would be the students required to ride the buses. The desegregation plan, Bell (1979) explains, caused students of color to ride buses considerable lengths away from their homes. Some parents of color believed the bus rides were the only method that would allow their children to acquire a quality education since their neighborhood black schools would never be funded equally by the white school boards (Bell, 1979).

Children of color have experienced the burden of desegregation, riding school buses in the elementary grades for longer times than White students and going to schools feeling unwelcome (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). In segregated schools, children of color had teachers who looked like them, were role models, and truly believed in the prospects of their students, whereas in integrated schools' teachers had diminished ideas of potential for children of color (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). As students were relocated by busing according to Honey and Smrekar (2022) White teachers were not provided with the resources needed to help advance the abilities of students of color. Many White teachers who were not prepared to guide student growth in students of color also held

biases against them because of their race, oftentimes causing a difference in instruction between students of color and White students (Honey and Smrekar, 2022).

In 1971 white resistance was increased by the court-ordered plan involving busing to integrate Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County Public Schools (Perlstein, 2004). Perlstein (2004) concludes close to 20% of White families left the school district the first year of busing and continued steadily in the years after as busing continued. According to Perlstein (2004), most of the white flight was a result of White parents not wanting their children to be in school with children of color. White schools that were not part of the busing plan experienced a larger increase in White students (Perlstein, 2004). Perlstein (2004) adds that busing did not cause any drop in achievement from White students, but what it did illuminate was that children of color could raise their achievement levels with more resources, and the achievement of Black children was in direct contradiction with many of the White detractors of the educational ability of people of color. Court rulings in *Dowell* (1991) and *Freeman* (1992) changed the desegregation efforts of schools in the South by deciding that the decisions of the courts in the previous decades were meant to be temporary and that the local control of a school district that made a good faith effort to integrate, those districts could be removed from the court orders (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). A court ruling three years later, *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995) ended the court decisions at a quicker pace, by deciding as long as the past victims of prejudicial actions had achieved the status they would have achieved without the prejudicial actions, remedies had been accomplished (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). Honey and Smrekar (2022) noted unitary status had exacerbated a trail directly back to

resegregated schools, coupled with an unwillingness for White parents to allow their children to enroll in urban public schools.

There are some White people who are in favor of equality of the races but are unwilling to support any actions that could help attain equality, such as busing, affirmative action, or bilingual education (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). Some parents of White children claim to support a diverse school but will not send their children to a school that is diverse (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). Honey and Smrekar (2022) allude there are three ideas that attempt to explain these contradictions: social-psychological theories describe that symbolic racism, racial resentment, subtle prejudice, or color blindness are taking the place of historical forms of racism, social structural theories account for the rivalry of group interests in being able to remain in a higher status than other races, a belief in race-neutral policies that do not illuminate preferences based on race.

When Nashville schools received unitary status Honey and Smrekar (2022) believe the system started closer-to-home and neighborhood-based school zones and ended the busing program. According to Honey and Smrekar (2022), the elementary to middle to high school clustering plan started. The district also started magnet schools as a school of choice program, but because of the unitary status, a policy that was race-neutral could only be used for the magnet schools (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). Nashville schools have become resegregated despite the tone and messages expressed by the decision-makers of the district (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). The demographics of the school district have changed considerably with 41% students of color, 26% Hispanic, 28% percent White, and four percent Asian, but district matriculation does not reflect the

changing demographics (Honey and Smrekar, 2022). Unitary status allows many of the past efforts to achieve integration, unavailable to the school district. Honey and Smrekar (2022) add that magnet schools can be used to help with diversity, but without race-conscious policies, they will not be as successful.

State of Tennessee Law

According to the rules of the Tennessee Department of Education (2021) prohibited concepts in instruction there are several prohibited concepts that have been adopted by the conservative republican governor and legislature in the state of Tennessee. The first prohibited concept that is not allowed to be included or promoted in instruction or curriculum is that one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex. The second prohibited concept is based on an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, is inherently privileged, racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously. The third prohibited concept is an individual should not be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of the individual's race or sex. The fourth prohibited concept is an individual's moral character is determined by the individual's race or sex. The fifth prohibited concept is an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex. The sixth prohibited concept is an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or another form of psychological distress solely because of the individual's race or sex. The seventh prohibited concept is a meritocracy is inherently racist or sexist or designed by a particular race or sex to oppress members of another race or sex. The eighth prohibited concept is the state of Tennessee, or the United States is fundamentally or irredeemably racist or sexist. The ninth concept is promoting or

advocating the violent overthrow of the United States government. The tenth prohibited concept is promoting division between, or resentment of, a race, sex, religion, creed, nonviolent political affiliation, social class, or class of people. The eleventh prohibited concept is ascribing character traits, values, moral or ethical codes, privileges, or beliefs to a race or sex, or to an individual because of the individual's race or sex. The twelfth concept is the rule of law does not exist, but instead is a series of power relationships and struggles among racial or other groups. The thirteenth prohibited concept is all Americans are not created equal and are not endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The fourteenth prohibited concept is governments should deny to any person within the government's jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.

The rules of the Tennessee Department of Education (2021) allow parents to file complaints with an individual school, school district, or the Department of Education. Allowing parents, the opportunity to submit complaints could lead to substantial problems. This law allows for the elimination of any history that does not glorify historical aspects of the history of the United States (Tennessee Department of Education, 2021). The history of people of color in the United States is one of racism, oppression, dehumanization, trauma, and torture since 1619 (King, 2021). The state legislature and governor of Tennessee do not want the truthful teaching of the brutality and inhumane treatment perpetuated against people of color for over four hundred years (Barber, 2021). No education official in the state of Tennessee has supplied any written policies surrounding what is allowed to be discussed in classes (Tennessee Department of Education, 2021). Conservative politicians are attempting to control the educational

teaching of topics that could illuminate the deplorable actions of the past that would cause their own children to better understand the disparities that exist in society (Washington, 2021).

King (2021) explains these laws being passed by conservative legislatures and governors are an attempt to whitewash history that only focuses on European History while excluding and removing four hundred years of racism, and Black History from the voice of people of color who experienced traumatic events. Even when Black History is taught, seldom is the discussion focused on the contributions and major accomplishments made by people of color, with the focus primarily on the subordinate roles and depictions of them as being subhuman and heathens.

Conclusion

During slavery, there were only a few locations in which it was legal to teach a Black person to read (DuBois, 1935). Despite the laws forbidding slaves to learn to read and write, many slaves and free Blacks created, operated, and maintained Native Schools in which they learned how to read and write (DuBois, 1935). The feeling of inferiority of former slaves inspired their desire to rise out of their condition by gaining an education (DuBois, 1935). The former slaves knew that they would be relegated to laborers without becoming literate (Foner, 1988). The teaching of writing was not allowed because of fears of slave uprisings and as a result of a few slave revolts, White people in Southern states decided that any form of literacy for Black people could possibly lead to further insurrections (Foner, 1988). Foner (1988) adds White people acting as slave patrols were authorized to enter and search the living quarters of any slave seeking any educational materials, even though freed Blacks could receive an education in schools that had been

started by freedmen or from schools built from the generosity of Northern organizations. The Plessy v. Ferguson court decision in 1896 legalized separate but equal (Horsford, 2011) educational facilities for Black and White children which were never equal. Horsford (2011) describes black schools including all ages in one room of a building, often shacks with leaky roofs, and Black teachers were paid only half of the pay White teachers were paid. The greatest step for Black people attempting to better themselves through education was how they were able to prepare their own teachers in a segregated educational environment, and by developing their own teachers, Black people would be able to continue educating further generations (Horsford, 2011). Horsford (2011) concludes people of color were motivated to learn after escaping the horrific conditions of slavery with Black people viewing education as a way to improve themselves as well as become an inspiration for future generations.

The United States Supreme Court issued a decision that was intended to significantly change the civil landscape of the United States (Gates and Yacovone, 2013). Before this decision, laws and customs existed in virtually every area that was called separate but equal, with colored-only and white-only signs in public facilities (Fairclough, 2001). Kendi (2016) asserts the separation of races never created facilities that were equal. The Brown vs. Board of Education decision of 1954 ruled that segregated public schools violated the Constitution (Gates and Yacovone, 2013). The decision for desegregation of the public schools directed school districts to implement these plans with all deliberate speed. Numerous school districts in the South refused to comply with the decision, and according to Gates and Yacovone (2013), there were some school districts that closed their schools instead of desegregating. Egerton (2009) adds

that in time every public school system in the United States was influenced by the Brown decision. The desegregation plans for rural areas by federal courts, according to Mauney (1982), moved through the courts at a quicker pace when compared to urban areas in the fifties and sixties. Complaints were easier to resolve in districts with less than 20% Black students than they were in districts with more than 20% Black student populations (Mauney, 1982). Ray (2022) believes that the ending of segregation in schools in the Brown decision has not consistently improved the lives of minorities, and the retaliation to the decision in the seventies and eighties has resegregated public schools.

The Nashville Plan for the desegregation of the Nashville City Schools was focused on desegregating one grade each year (Ramsey, 2005). The city school board of education was inundated by White parents enacting pressure tactics to maintain the dual school system (Ramsey, 2005). After the NAACP filed a lawsuit against the school board, the Nashville school board attempted to improve all-black schools. Ramsey (2005) adds the educators and parents of segregated areas attempted to provide for black schools because of the value of those institutions in their communities. People of color in Nashville wanted their children to have better opportunities educationally.

Three years following the ruling that segregation laws pertaining to schools were unconstitutional, the public schools in Nashville, TN, applied a stairstep plan beginning with a determined group of first-grade students and each year adding the next grade until every grade would be integrated by 1968 (Egerton, 2009). Nineteen students of color enrolled in first grade in eight previously segregated white schools and White protestors were at most of the schools, but there was no violence (Egerton, 2009). One evening after integration started a wing of Hattie Cotton Elementary was destroyed by an

explosion, where only one Black student enrolled (Egerton, 2009). The bombing ended the protests, and no other disturbances occurred allowing integration to continue without incidents.

Chapter III: Methods

The impetus for this section is to provide the design of my research and methods for my data collection (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). Critical race theory is able to describe the racist and dehumanizing actions that have been perpetrated against people of color in the past and continue to be experienced by people of color despite the passing of civil rights laws (Bell, 1992). Racial equality cannot be achieved without state governments being required to enact as well as enforce the equal treatment of all American citizens (Ray, 2022). The goal of my research design is to illuminate the permanence of racism in Tennessee (Bell, 1992) through a case study approach (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019).

Research Question

The current study will answer the research question:

1. What is the impact on public education and state government of the conservative laws passed in the state of Tennessee regarding critical race theory?

Research Design

This study is a qualitative historical case study based on a naturalistic inquiry (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019) with a focus on the permanence of racism which has remained active for the past four hundred years (Bell, 1992). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) explain that a case study examines an issue from its current effects. A qualitative case study is intensive and is descriptive of highlighting a societal issue (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). Merriam (1998) explains case studies are used to be able to establish a complete grasp of the problem and explanation for everyone involved in the situation. The focus is placed

on the process instead of the end result. Future studies and policies can be established from case studies (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) extols case studies are different from other types of qualitative research methods because of the intensity of the descriptions and investigations used in the study. Education qualitative case studies are typically encased with conjecture from other topics, such as history, sociology, and educational psychology (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) adds a historical case study describes and scrutinizes a school, a program or practice related to a school, or a possible intervention being used which has progressed through the years. To be able to effectively complete the study, historical documents were used by the writer. The qualitative method provided the ability to analyze the connections (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019) between critical race theory and Black History.

The literature review reveals the historical contexts of racism in Tennessee and the current forms of racism. The purpose of the study was to examine how critical race theory is able to identify and explain the racism that continues within the government, its laws and decisions, and its impact on people of color (Bell, 1992). To establish this connection the researcher had to be abreast of the tenets of critical race theory and which tenets are being used in the state of Tennessee in an attempt to eliminate the accurate teaching of Black History (King, 2021). Racism in the state of Tennessee remains prevalent after four hundred years by conservative decision-makers (Bell, 1992).

Merriam (1998) identifies a case study which is descriptive is able to elucidate the problem and more than one component is responsible for it, the possibility for reconsideration causes the situation to remain pertinent, and the impact of individual thoughts and feelings pertaining to the problem. A descriptive case study also describes

how the phenomenon has evolved over time, contains information from sources such as newspapers and individual stories, and the ability to locate facts from different entities. Being able to recount how past time periods facilitated current events, identifying various feelings regarding the problem while proposing how the feelings of different people exert influence on the outcome, and disclose facts in different forms as well as from the perspectives of unrelated groups are also characteristics of descriptive case studies (Merriam, 1998).

Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher was to examine and develop how racism is still being used in the state of Tennessee to curtail the educational experiences of children of color (Barber, 2021). The researcher also established how critical race theory is being used to eliminate the honest teachings of Black History from the experiences and voices of people of color in Tennessee (King, 2021). The study was managed in a manner that was ethical. An introduction, literature review, and methodology were developed for the proposal (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The data was valid and trustworthy to ensure the research question was answered (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). An adequate procedure was used to limit the possibility of bias in collecting the data and analyzing the data (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). By using the case study technique, the researcher aimed to expose the interconnection of components related to the situation by focusing on the comprehensive account and description (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) concludes the use of the case study design is useful in scenarios that are not able to differentiate between a changing circumstance and its conditions.

Merriam (1998) explains the examiner is the individual who compiles and disseminates the data and is able to use opportunities to verify important information to be used in the study. The examiner should have a high degree of ambiguity in this type of study because situations may occur that could cause the researcher to second guess the next step to take in the process of the study (Merriam, 1998). This lack of structure is ideal for individuals who are able to adapt to unintended situations or alterations that may occur in qualitative studies (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) adds the understanding from case studies is more tangible because it relates to our personal experiences, circumstantial because our personal experiences are developed from our own circumstances, expanded by the readers expounding, and focused on the personal experiences fixated on by the reader.

It was very important for me to examine the different historical time periods in Tennessee beginning with the antebellum education period and culminating with the integration of public schools. The purpose of my examination of the historical period was to establish how critical race theory is connected with the historical actions in public education in Tennessee and continues through the current actions in the legislature. This examination provided examples of the cultural capital implemented by people of color in starting their own Native Schools, and the development of the all-black community in Franklin, TN. It was also important to describe the prohibited concepts passed by the Tennessee legislature in an attempt to hide the anti-blackness in Tennessee through an attempt to ban critical race theory. I believe we are living in a perpetual state of the permanence of racism.

Data Collection

As the examiner, I was responsible for compiling data that was relevant to my study (Merriam, 1998). Thinking creatively about the study is a requisite skill for locating essential documents to use while also keeping an open mind regarding information that could relate to the study (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), information regarding firsthand experiences are primary sources with secondary sources being reported by individuals who did not experience the situations directly. Merriam (1998) adds some documents could be both primary and secondary sources. The analysis of data begins with being able to make sense of the data collected (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) explains that it is a process that requires the ability to switch between concepts and data, reasoning, and elucidation which establishes the study's findings.

I collected data from the entire state of Tennessee that was available in relation to the continuous legacy of anti-blackness perpetuated by the Republican supermajority Tennessee legislature which continues to demonstrate the permanence of racism. The expulsion of Representatives Jones and Pearson motivated my desire to delve into how racism in the past has continued to the present day. I used journal articles, newspaper articles, websites, and books in collecting data from the past. After the Tennessee Three actions I was able to find an enormous amount of material fixated on how racism continues daily in Tennessee.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) explains that the analysis of data is the action of understanding the data from your study. It is a complex procedure which includes working through extensive information and conclusions linking explanations. Merriam (1998) asserts a

case study is a thorough examination of a single, bounded unit, and delivering a complete mastery of the case is the most important aspect when analyzing the data. Expressing a grasp of the documents studied is the connection through which the analysis of the data expounds a clear comprehension of the information studied (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) adds the focus of a case study is to express comprehension, which is the data analysis, of the information acquired from interviews, observations, and documents.

My data analysis was deductive through the lens of critical race theory. I was amazed with how the actions of the Tennessee legislature appropriately described the tenets of critical race theory in their past and present decisions, even though they have banned the theory from being discussed in public schools. It is obvious the legislative members have no idea what critical race theory is about or entails. I was surprised with how many people I knew through my parents who were instrumental in school desegregation in Nashville. As a child I was bused to elementary and junior high school, but I didn't know that I was part of the Brown decision. I gained a complete understanding how Nashville became resegregated. I remember my father telling me that Nashville contained a good ole boy system in politics. After reading and collecting data I completely agree. The Tennessee legislature upholds the good ole boy system by voting and making decisions which do not benefit the majority of Tennessee residents but benefit their personal belief system.

Limitations/Delimitations

Limitations are parts of your study that may alter the findings and are typically items that are not controllable (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The historical information chosen for this study was detailed and relatable to my research questions (Roberts and

Hyatt, 2019). The literature review furnishes the needed information for collecting data as well as analysis of the data (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019).

Delimitations identify the boundaries of my study (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The time of study started during slavery to current times (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The site of the study included the state of Tennessee (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). Historical research, primary, and secondary sources were used to collect data (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The main delimitation was the focus on sources that concentrated on racism in the Tennessee.

Merriam (1998) explains case studies are the favored option for responding to questions in research because the strengths of case studies are more prevalent than their limitations. Case studies allow the investigation of numerous variables involved in social units which are extremely salient in a complete understanding of the phenomenon. Case studies are focused on authentic problems allowing for the findings to provide an aggregate result of the problem (Merriam, 1998). The outcome offers an expansion of the experiences for the reader, which can be viewed as an indefinite conjecture that could guide studies in the future (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998) case study is an integral method to facilitate the base of understanding in a field of study and because of its benefits, case studies are ideal for studies completed focusing on education.

Trustworthiness

Merriam (1998) explains that research of a qualitative nature could cause ethical problems when collecting data and also when propagating the material because of the connection between the researcher and the participant. This connection according to

Merriam (1998) is the deciding factor of the depth of the actual study's purpose the researcher may reveal. In researching modern phenomena case studies is the preference because actions are unable to be influenced (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998) a case study uses some of the same methods as a historical study, with the addition of the evidentiary sources of direct observations and systematic interviewing. The benefit of the case study is the capability of using a more complete arsenal of corroboration, such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations, which are often unavailable in historical studies (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) adds case studies may sometimes reduce or overemphasize a problem which could cause the reader to develop an inaccurate interpretation of the problem. Merriam (1998) also adds a case study could be restricted due to the susceptibility or rectitude of the researcher because this individual will be the principal instrument of collecting and analyzing the data. Merriam (1998) concludes the researcher is dependent upon their own aptitude and adeptness in every part of the study.

Validity and Reliability

Merriam (1998) explains that being able to determine the validity and reliability causes the researcher to analyze the essential parts of the study. A qualitative study dispenses enough details for the reader to decide that the result is reasonable (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) adds any concerns regarding validity and reliability can be addressed in how the information is conceived as well as how the data is assembled, scrutinized, and elucidated. Merriam (1998) concludes understanding is the foremost reason for the study.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

A.W. Willis was the first Black state legislator elected in Tennessee in 1964 since the 1800s (Blain, 2019). In 1966, the first Black woman, Dorothy Lavina Brown, was elected to serve in the Tennessee General Assembly. Blain (2019) adds that the increase in political opportunities for people of color caused white supremacists in Tennessee a desire to develop methods of intimidation toward Black voters. Six state holidays were created in 1971 through state law which included Nathan Bedford Forrest Day, and in 1978 a mural of Forrest was revealed in the rotunda of the Tennessee Capitol Building (Blain, 2019). Blain (2019) believes this action was a purposeful attempt for the white supremacists of Tennessee to continue the oppression of people of color by glorifying the ideals of the Confederacy, while at the same time denouncing the gains of the civil rights movement.

The concerns and needs of White people are the only concern of the conservative Republican Party at the federal and state levels, as policies are created (Tribune Staff, 2023). Conservative Republicans are using critical race theory as a scare tactic to eliminate the teachings of Black History in public schools and higher education (Tribune Staff, 2023). The Tribune Staff (2023) points out the racism in police reform and the altering of voting rights for people of color. Black lawmakers have attempted to increase the awareness of White lawmakers regarding the abhorrent structural racism in the Tennessee legislature, but the Republican lawmakers prefer to focus on establishing culture wars and supporting proposals with racial animosity (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022). The chair of the Black Caucus explains that with any idea that exposes facts regarding

Black History within the chamber, the White lawmakers expose their fragile psyche and fear of the truth being revealed (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022).

The Tennessee legislature has mostly been a place for White men, and they subconsciously believed people of color, if elected to the legislature, would feel emboldened to assimilate with them while not attempting to rock the boat or become vocal activists (Dirks, 2023). Dirks (2023) adds White legislators expected people of color in white spaces to be willing to go along with them to be accepted. Dirks (2023) explains it's an old idea that people of color should feel grateful for being allowed in white spaces and having access to power. Justin Pearson, Justin Jones, and other Black legislators have been vocal regarding their forced silence on the legislative floor which forces them to break the rules, or not be allowed to speak (Dirks, 2023). Dirks (2023) opines Representative Sherell suggested that the state of Tennessee should bring back lynching as a form of the death penalty in the state. Blain (2019) concludes that anyone who has accepted and believes the United States is in a post-racial period need only pay attention to the actions and rhetoric of the current conservative Republic Party to recognize the type of society these politicians are seeking.

Nathan Bedford Forrest

The conservative legislature in Tennessee have attempted to dismantle the Historical Commission of Tennessee after they decided to abolish the mural of Nathan Bedford Forrest which was placed inside the Capitol building in Nashville, TN, in 1978 (Phillips, 2021). Forrest was a slave trader as well as the first recognized leader of the Ku Klux Klan which was started in Pulaski, TN. Many citizens within the state of Tennessee had been attempting to have the depiction of Forrest removed by appealing to

the White lawmakers of Tennessee regarding the horrific actions of Forrest toward Black people (Phillips, 2021). Phillips (2021) believes white supremacy was the focus of the depiction of Forrest in the Capitol building along with the legislators' unwillingness to consider the negative effects it had on everyone who may view it. According to Blain (2019), Governor Bill Lee exemplified the presence of white supremacy in Tennessee due to his disdain for changing the law which allowed for the celebration of one of the most racist people from the state of Tennessee. According to Blain (2019) Governor Lee allowed a Nathan Bedford Forrest Day in July 2019 to celebrate one of the most heinous generals of the Confederacy. Black people who saw the mural of Forrest were reminded of an individual who believed in slavery, wanted slavery to continue, and was an actual slave trader (Phillips, 2021).

Forrest should never be exhibited in public spaces and celebrating a holiday is a mockery to any person of color victimized by the oppression, dehumanization, and threats of violence perpetrated by white mobs (Blain, 2019). The only purpose for this type of holiday is for the opportunity of white supremacists to elicit their ideals of racism by attempting to intimidate people of color instead of offering respect for the historical oppression caused by individuals who share the beliefs of Forrest. White supremacy only allows the feelings and beliefs of White people to be considered (Phillips, 2021). Phillips (2021) adds the Tennessee Historical Committee was accounting for the feelings of everyone when deciding to remove the mural of Forrest in 2021, and not just the selfish feelings of White people who believed his depiction accounted for the honor of his accomplishments. The Committee believed his depiction was an insult to Black Tennesseans because of his desire to destroy the lives of people of color (Phillips, 2021).

Blain (2019) explains how the depiction of Forrest, with his deplorable actions and attitudes toward people of color, completely disrespected the Black people of Tennessee and communicated to all Tennesseans that the racist actions of the past were acceptable. According to Allison (2023), the mural of Forrest was removed once Governor Bill Lee garnered enough votes from individuals on the state commission, even though Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally and House Speaker Cameron Sexton were firmly against the Forrest removal. Unfortunately, Phillips (2021) adds white supremacy will not emphasize or allow the needs or feelings of Black people to be a focus of their decisions. The actions and attitudes of white supremacists continue to perpetuate the permanence of racism in Tennessee that is part of critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory

Governor Bill Lee of Tennessee believes in the “exceptionalism of the United States” and nothing that could cause divisions among citizens should be in the curriculum of schools (Kruesi, 2021). Kruesi (2021) adds limitations have been placed on educators in the state regarding the teaching of institutional racism, which could cause school districts to forfeit funding if taught. Kruesi (2021) asserts that Tennessee is one of numerous Republican-led states that have prohibited the discussion of race and racism in educational facilities. Allison (2021) explains the Tennessee General Assembly included that any schools which instruct about white privilege could also lose funding. A democratic lawmaker from Memphis, Representative Pearson, believes that the banishment constitutes revisionist history (Allison, 2021).

There are no examples of critical race theory being taught in any schools (Allison, 2021). Allison (2021) believes since there is no proof of critical race theory being taught

in any schools the opponents of the theory are focusing their efforts on eliminating the factual history, struggles, oppression, and dehumanization of Black people in the United States. Allison (2021) adds these rules are forcing teachers to teach a fake, white-washed version of American history that would not identify the oppression and atrocities of slavery, along with the separating of Black families, the raping of Black women slaves, and the whipping and lynching of slaves. This inhumane time of history needs to be discussed and should be understood that it relates to the continued racism in the United States (Allison, 2021).

Young (2023) points out how critical race theory has many people in the United States outraged, even though it is a legal framework that could possibly be used in productive ways in classroom history lessons. Young (2023) also believes critical race theory can foster communication between people which could foster a better understanding of the past and how many actions of the past continue in different institutions in the form of racism. How could an educator attempt to explain current racism without relating it to the historical racism of the past (Young, 2023)? Young (2023) asserts many proponents of critical race theory have a problem with the truthful actions of the white culture in the past as well as in the present. A fact of the United States is how racism is rooted in many systems and institutions. Young (2023) concludes people of color in the United States are valuable and have contributed to numerous aspects of the United States, and allowing students the opportunities to communicate and listen to the experiences and express experiences of their own could lead to a more effective understanding and value of each culture.

Bracks (2012) exudes Thurgood Marshall was the first Black Supreme Court Justice, Carol Moseley Braun was the first Black woman elected to the United States Senate, Ralph Bunche was the first Black person to win the Nobel Peace Prize, Shirley Chisholm was the first Black woman elected to the United States House of Representatives, Hiram Rhodes Revels was the first Black man to serve in the United States Senate, Edith Sampson was the first Black woman named an official delegate to the United Nations, Mary McLeod Bethune founded Bethune Cookman College, Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute, Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable is considered the founder of Chicago, Benjamin Banneker assisted in developing the boundaries of Washington D.C., Guy Bluford was the first Black person in space, Alexa Canady was the first black female neurosurgeon in the United States, Charles Drew set up the first blood banks before World War II, Percy Julian amalgamated the drug used to treat glaucoma, Granville T. Woods invented a railway telegraph system to avert train accidents, Garrett A. Morgan invented the gas inhalator which became a gas mask, and the automatic traffic signal, and Dr. Daniel Hale Willimas performed the first open heart surgery. This is only a few of the memorable successes of Black people in the United States which could be removed from history classes in the state of Tennessee because of the actions of the Tennessee General Assembly.

Tennessee General Assembly

James Grossman (2022) from the American Historical Association penned a letter to the Tennessee House of Representatives and the Tennessee Senate regarding House Bill 2670 and Senate Bill 2290 being passed to place restrictions on the education of United States History in Tennessee. The versions of both bills would eliminate any

teaching that is discriminatory, and it had also forced educators to be unable to explain and teach the continuing effects of slavery and racism in the history of America (Grossman, 2022). Grossman (2022) adds the bill eliminates higher education facilities from conducting any type of sponsored discussions or conferences that focus on racism within the United States, or that an individual should have negative feelings about themselves because of their race or sex. Grossman (2022) explains the bill includes information referring to not causing any infringement on the academic freedom of higher education faculty, but the outcome of this bill will force educators to second guess themselves when focusing on how no limits were placed on the trading of slaves by the United States Constitution, that segregation was legalized by the Plessy decision, and how women were not allowed to vote for a substantial period of time in American history. House Bill 2670 and Senate Bill 2290 create a hindrance to the academic preparation of Tennessee students (Grossman, 2022). Many students will not be taught important historical information regarding the truths of the United States. Grossman (2022) adds these bills could also cause negative consequences for students in Tennessee to successfully complete the United States History Advanced Placement test or be able to complete United States History dual enrollment courses. Knowledge delays in Tennessee students could also affect their readiness for college, and the colleges and universities in Tennessee could possibly induce accreditation issues due to the curtailing of academic freedom and independence of professors from legislative pressure being applied by the Tennessee legislative body (Grossman, 2022). Grossman (2022) attests Tennessee students could also face employment problems because of an inability to relate to

individuals from different cultures, and students would not receive the exposure related to different voices and backgrounds that could assist them in the workforce.

House Bill 2670 proposed by Cameron Sexton was passed by the Republican supermajority allowing the reporting of professors by students or employees at colleges and universities who endorse or promote ideas and content that have been determined to be divisive concepts (Quinn, 2023). Quinn (2023) adds the bill includes stipulations that an institution must investigate and take action to correct a violation that has happened. Any violation as well as any reparatory method must also be communicated yearly to the treasury comptroller. Quinn (2023) wonders if college students are of age to have discussions regarding racial topics and structural and institutional racism. Representative Jones questioned a co-sponsor of the bill, John Ragan, a Republican if this bill sounds more like fascism or authoritarianism instead of a democracy of freedom (Quinn, 2023). Quinn (2023) adds that Jones told Ragan that it's really deplorable what he was attempting to accomplish and that he would appreciate it if Ragan would explain to him his motivation for the bill because his refusal to answer seemingly is a continuous effort of the racism continuing to perpetuate the legislature.

The Tennessee General Assembly (2022) identifies the co-sponsors of House Bill 2670 as Representatives Gant, Lamberth, Faison, White, Zachary, Sherrell, Ogles, Griffey, Haston, Powers, Ragan, Reedy, Moody, Cepicky, Williams, Todd, Howell, Lynn, Warner, Hawk, Cochran, Terry, Hurt, Lafferty, Grills, and Littleton. The Tennessee General Assembly (2023) summary for Senate Bill 817 which originated with House Bill 2670 describes sixteen divisive concepts that are not to be taught in public schools or higher education facilities in the state of Tennessee. The bill also placed

limitations on public colleges and universities in the state of Tennessee. The Tennessee General Assembly (2022) identifies three limitations contained in House Bill 2670. A student or employee is not to be penalized, exploited by race, or treated in a negative way because the individual does not agree with one of the divisive concepts, a student or employee cannot be forced to accept specific beliefs in order to receive a job, tenure, promotion, or attain graduation, and any person that thinks a violation of the divisive concepts has affected them is able to seek out recourse in a legal proceeding.

The Tennessee General Assembly (2022) describes a divisive concept as the idea that a particular race or sex is naturally superior or inferior to another; a person is naturally allowed to receive privileges or oppressed because of their race or sex; someone should be discriminated against or negatively treated because of their race or sex; a person's moral disposition is based on their race or sex; anyone is responsible for the actions of the past because of their race or sex; a person should endure shame or any emotional anguish due to their race or sex; a meritocracy is naturally racist or sexist, or created by a certain race or sex to persecute a different race or sex; the state of Tennessee or the United States is structurally racist or sexist; encourage or assist in the collapse of the United States government; encourage separation or indignation of a race, sex, religion, political choice, or social class; attribute values or ethics to a particular race or sex; the rule of law is devoid, but is based on power connections and tussles between racial groups; all Americans are not designed equally and are not provided by their maker with life, liberty, and pursuing happiness; governments should not provide equal protection of the law; includes race or sex conventionalizing; or including racial or sexual blaming.

The Tennessee General Assembly (2022) indicates the Tennessee Legislative House passed Amendment One and the House Bill as amended on March 7, 2022. The amendment attaches the need for a public college or university in Tennessee to investigate any student or employee complaint of a violation of any of the divisive concepts. If a violation is verified the institution shall reprimand the perpetrator for the first violation and end the perpetrator's employment after a second violation. Institutions are also required to publicize the number of complaints along with the results of their investigations yearly as well as the actions taken by the public institution in regard to the perpetrator's employment. The Tennessee General Assembly (2022) substituted House Bill 2670 for Senate Bill 2290 on March 21, 2022, and adopted Amendment 2, then passed House Bill 2670 as amended. Amendment 2 eliminates modifications of House Amendment 1 and attaches the requirement for each public college and university in Tennessee to provide the outcome of every two-year survey concluded as a result of this bill to be presented to the Senate education committee. The survey results from each college and university will be presented at the same time their budgets will be presented to the committee at the upcoming general assembly session. The budget is submitted after the survey's fulfillment to the Finance, Ways, and Means Committee of the House during the next session of the Education Administration and Instruction Committee meeting.

The Tennessee Three

The National Urban League (2021) identifies legislatures as elected officials in each state that are expected to listen to the people who elect them. Unfortunately, in Tennessee, only a few of the elected officials seem to care about the needs and desires of

their constituents (National Urban League, 2023). Three elected officials stood up and participated in a protest with over one thousand voters who came together in the Capitol building seeking laws pertaining to guns that would be more beneficial for the citizens of the state of Tennessee (National Urban League, 2023). According to the National Urban League (2023), the impetus for this protest was a school shooting that took the lives of three school children and two staff members at the Covenant School in Nashville. Elfers (2023) explains there is a racist connection between the fight against gun safety and the attempt to abolish democracy in the United States. The legislators who participated in the demonstration were two young Black males, Representative Justin Pearson of Memphis, and Representative Justin Jones of Nashville, and one white female, Representative Gloria Johnson of Knoxville, who afterward became known as the Tennessee Three (National Urban League, 2023). The National Urban League (2023) is able to explicate the racism within the Tennessee legislature after the two young Black males were expelled from the legislature for their stance, but the White woman was not expelled. According to the National Urban League (2023), this action by the legislature has created national attention to an ongoing problem of racism within the legislature of the state of Tennessee. The legislators' efforts exemplified the racist ideals of the majority of White members by ignoring the needs of the citizens in the state, while instead punishing young Black legislators' who were actually doing their job.

The removal of two young Black male lawmakers from the Tennessee State Legislature, while at the same time, their White female associate escaped removal for breaking the same minor house rule is an outward sign of the rampant racism exuding the legislative chamber on a daily basis (Harmeling, 2023). Harmeling (2023) explains

Representatives Justin Jones and Justin Pearson were absolutely banished for being Black, and not contrite enough for the White male members of the legislature. Harmeling (2023) adds Jones, Pearson, and Gloria Johnson went to the House floor to fight for a ban on assault weapons in the state of Tennessee. The exposure of outright racism is an important point in our society as well as an opportunity for progress (Harmeling, 2023). Harmeling (2023) outlines racism as an ugly truth in the state of Tennessee, the state where the Ku Klux Klan was birthed. There have only been two removals from the state legislature in over one hundred fifty years (Harmeling, 2023). A representative accepted a bribe in 1980, and in 2016 another member was removed for sexual harassment (Harmeling, 2023). However, a representative arrested on domestic abuse charges, an admitted child molester, or a representative urinating on the seat of another legislator was not enough to be removed from the current membership (Harmeling, 2023). Unfortunately, if you stand up with your constituents in the capital requesting action be taken to strengthen gun laws in the state of Tennessee Legislature to stop more mass shootings in the state you become the enemy (Harmeling, 2023). Harmeling (2023) concludes you become the enemy for one reason in this body, you are a Black male.

Jones and Pearson returned to their positions by the end of the week in the districts they represented (Mystal, 2023). The actions of the racist legislators in Tennessee have been broadcast, and now the entire nation is aware of the attitudes of the lawmakers toward people of color in Tennessee (Mystal, 2023). Mystal (2023) explains the entire country should understand the meaning of critical race theory after the actions of the Republican supermajority in Tennessee. Tennessee is one of the states that have prohibited the teaching of the ways structural racism compromises the outcomes of

political and legal cases (Mystal, 2023). The expulsion of the two Black legislators has explained the basis of critical race theory more accurately than anyone could have done in academia (Mystal, 2023). Mystal (2023) adds Jones and Pearson have become the face of the permanence of racism perpetuated by white supremacists that critical race theory entails. Seeing racism that is overt and open for everyone to witness is very powerful (Dirks, 2023). Representative Pearson's Memphis district is 61% Black, Representative Jones' Nashville district is 31% Black and 24% Hispanic, and Representative Gloria Johnson's Knoxville district is 58% Black. Dirks (2023) explains that targeting these legislators for a minor violation was a method to discredit the individuals and communities they represent. Dirks (2023) concedes with the majority of the United States now being people of color the Republican party has started using unconstitutional ideas to hold onto power.

Racism

Dirks (2023) explains the expulsion of Jones and Pearson describes how any peril to democracy is always a byproduct of racism. Dirks (2023) believes any Americans who trust in democracy should be concerned by the actions of the racist legislators in Tennessee. The espoused racism exhibited by removing the two Black legislators and not removing the White legislator was completely understood by the Republican legislators in their conversations which were recorded on audio (Dirks, 2023). Dirks (2023) notes that Republican Representative Zachary held Representative Barrett liable because Barrett did not vote to remove the White Representative, Gloria Johnson. Dirks (2023) adds Zachary continues to hear the Democrat Representatives accusing the Republican members of being racists, and the Tennessee legislature of being full of racism and white

supremacy. Representative Cepicky was caught on tape stating he was called a racist, misogynist, and white supremacist while adding that he would have to watch Jones get reinstated, which would be disrespectful to the state of Tennessee (Dirks, 2023). Dirks (2023) concludes that Cepicky did not explain how Jones returning would be disrespectful to Tennessee.

Racism was prevalent in the tone and words used that were directed toward Jones and Pearson with the rules of conducting an expulsion hearing unable to hide the anger of the White legislators (Dirks, 2023). Dirks (2023) adds the rage of White people is used as a method to put people in their place and dictates people of color remain in their place according to the structure of the races. Dirks (2023) explains how one White legislator spoke to Pearson. Representative Farmer spoke with his hands shaking in emotion and claimed Pearson was using a temper tantrum in an attempt to get his way. Pearson told Farmer that he wanted to be allowed to speak for his constituents who came to the Capitol after another school shooting and were requesting that the legislators enact laws focusing on gun violence (Dirks, 2023). Dirks (2023) concludes that the problem for the White legislators was not that they broke a minor rule, but it was Jones and Pearson asserting their rights to be treated as equal members of the legislature, instead of being silenced by the prevalent racism in the body. They refused to assimilate, and be silent members (Dirks, 2023). Harmeling (2023) asserts the Republicans in the Tennessee legislature chose the wrong individuals if they believed their racism was going to be allowed to continue or simply fade away. Harmeling (2023) concludes White people tend to look for ways to blame the victim as a way to place blame for their racism.

Mystal (2023) explains the legislators who were heard on audio making racist remarks and House Speaker Cameron Sexton, or any other conservative Republican in the legislature will more than likely not receive any type of consequences for their racist actions. Sexton does not even reside in the district he represents (Mystal, 2023). Mystal (2023) adds they will not receive any retribution because many of the people who voted for them share their racism and believe people of color should not be in leadership positions. These legislators who have been acting this way have been able to continue their racism because the entire legislative body have been consumed with white supremacy (Mystal, 2023).

News Channel 5

Williams (2023) notes that during an investigation of the Tennessee General Assembly, several incidents were illuminated that espouse racism within the House of Representatives of Tennessee. The intent to honor an elderly civil rights activist caused backlash, a White Republican's idea that lynching be used for capital punishment, and several other actions by House members have continued the tradition of unethical actions and remarks within the chamber. Williams (2023) describes that everyone may not be embracing racism intentionally, but racism is absolutely an issue in their actions. Williams (2023) adds the Republican Caucus Chair Jeremy Faison, and some other Republican associates were firmly against a statement that heaped praise on "the Tennesseans that sacrificed their own individual safety by fighting to guarantee freedom of oppressed groups throughout the country." Faison sponsored an amendment that eliminated any mention of oppressed people. Williams (2023) explains that Faison argued there are many people in Tennessee, including himself, who do not believe

oppression presently exists in the United States. Williams (2023) explains that the resolution referred to oppressed groups of the past.

Williams (2023) asserts many Black legislative members are not surprised by the actions of the Republican members in the legislature. There is an obvious extent of white fragility from some of the male white Republican members that are also obvious in the treatment of Black members by some of the White members. Williams (2023) explains these same Republican members who espouse racist actions become flabbergasted after their racist actions are exposed. Williams (2023) adds the Republicans eliminated a bill that was in a subcommittee that would make yearly diversity training mandatory for police officers. Surprisingly, Governor Bill Lee supported a bill that would make a state holiday for Juneteenth (Williams, 2023). Juneteenth is the holiday in celebration of the ending of slavery, but twenty-eight White Republicans voted against the holiday (Williams, 2023). Williams (2023) attests the Juneteenth holiday was Senate Bill 0269, House Bill 0317 with representatives Bricken, Capley, Cepicky, Cochran, Doggett, Farmer, Fritts, Grills, Hulsey, Keisling, Powers, Ragan, Reedy, Rudder, Sherrell, Todd, Warner, and Zachary voting firmly against the holiday. Representatives Barrett, Bulso, Butler, Gant, Haston, Helton-Haynes, Hurt, Littleton, Moon, and Vital refused to vote, even though they were available to vote.

Williams (2023) wonders if the actions of some of the Republican legislative members demonstrate if Tennessee is beyond the point of racism being prevalent in society, or if racism will always be a part of Tennessee. Representative Zachary supported a bill allowing teachers the choice to not participate in training that could assist them in recognizing their own biases if the focus of the training makes them feel

awkward (Williams, 2023). Williams (2023) explains that implicit bias training was deemed unnecessary by Faison because it seems like it is aimed at White people, even though students of color being suspended and expelled at higher rates than other groups prove implicit bias training is a needed entity in every school in Tennessee. Williams (2023) concludes the Tennessee Legislature contains members who are unwilling to acknowledge or even discuss their needs for diversity training because they refuse to admit their own individual biases toward people of color.

Legislature

The state of Tennessee is continuously plagued by ineffective Republican legislatures' who ignore the needs of the people as well as the citizens' rights provided by the state (Memphis Urban League, 2023). According to the Memphis Urban League (2023), the voters of Tennessee are keenly aware of the disdain repeatedly displayed by the elected representatives of this state towards, not only their needs but also their safety. These same representatives attempted to relate the efforts of the Tennessee Three to the January 6 insurrection that occurred in an attempt to bring an end to the counting of the electoral votes of the 2020 presidential election. According to the Memphis Urban League (2023), the Republican majority in the Tennessee legislature continues to keep a firm grip on the political conditions they have created to remain in power, while simultaneously forcing their Democrat members to remain silent. The expulsion of Jones and Pearson occurred because they were Black and refused to remain silent (Memphis Urban League, 2023). Even though the leadership of the Tennessee legislature was willing to be seen as un-American by the public, their main focus was to keep the Black men in their place as subordinates (Memphis Urban League, 2023).

Phillips (2023) describes the interest of Cameron Sexton in resigning his position as Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives as intensified after he assembled the voting members to push out two Democratic members who are Black. These members had stood up in solidarity with a public protest regarding gun control after a school shooting in Nashville. Phillips (2023) adds more than a thousand signatures were attached to an online appeal for Sexton to be removed as leader of the house, asserting that he had racist motives in his quest to remove the two Black members. Sexton has a track record of voting for bills that could be harmful to people of color, such as Senate Bill 1636 prohibiting city requirements for Affordable Housing, Senate Bill 8005 increasing criminal penalties for protesting on public property, Senate Bill 102 prohibiting schools from requiring implicit bias training, House Bill 2248 rescinding funding for the University of Tennessee's Diversity Office, House Bill 48 reducing the number of Nashville Metropolitan Council members by half, House Bill 1735 reducing the age requirement for handgun permittees, and House Bill 1189 establishing legal protections for gun dealers, manufacturers and sellers against lawsuits (Vote Smart, n.d.).

Marsha Blackburn (n.d.) is a United States Senator from Tennessee, who was born in Laurel, Mississippi in 1952, and believes critical race theory develops an erroneous story that focuses on establishing discord between people. The information is portrayed as anti-racist but actually fosters racial conflict. Blackburn (n.d.) argues that American citizens regardless of environment and faith are in agreement that critical race theory is a radical element that will cause harm to people and that it is deleterious to the equality which exists in the United States. Blackburn (n.d.) and at least thirty other members of the Senate voiced their concerns after the Department of Education offered

aid in support of critical race theory. Blackburn (n.d.) also wanted to eliminate the aid for the 1619 Project which she believes was created based on incorrect information regarding the United States and is also being used in critical race theory lessons.

Blackburn (n.d.) asserts the actions of Governor Bill Lee in eliminating critical race theory lessons from being a part of school lessons is important but allowing parents to be a part of actions to protect their children and communities from critical race theory had become the greatest advantage. Parental involvement allows parents to contact the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights when they believe their child is being discriminated against because of critical race theory. Blackburn (n.d.) concludes that a population that is educated and understands United States history is the best method to fight the attempts of critical race theory to recast the history of America.

Gerrymandering

After the expulsion votes, the Republicans in the legislature were not concerned about their racist actions but were more concerned about how their actions would be perceived (Mystal, 2023). According to Mystal (2023) audio of the conversations in the legislature caught Representative Cepicky stating that they are fighting for the republic of the country at this point. Mystal (2023) adds that Cepicky is proving the thoughts of the Republican Party at this time, which is that Black Democrats should not be allowed to be a part of the government of the United States. This is the type of racism that is virulent because these individuals are not concerned with looking racist but are more concerned with people of color in Tennessee being unable to elect their own representation (Mystal, 2023). Black communities have had their voting power diluted through the gerrymandering efforts of the Republican legislature. Mystal (2023) concludes the true

motivation for the actions of the Republican-led legislature is to eliminate the voting power of Black people in Tennessee so they will not have any representation in the legislature.

The actions of the Tennessee state legislature and Governor Bill Lee exemplify their disregard for the needs and concerns of the state's Black population (Tribune Staff, 2023). According to the Tribune Staff (2023), their racist motivations are obvious in their decisions regarding gerrymandering and redistricting in their efforts to eliminate representation in Congress for black communities in Tennessee. Kruesi and Mattise (2022) add that Nashville's Black voting bloc has been spread across several districts to dilute their voting power and eliminate opportunities for Black representation. They also passed a law that abolished twenty seats of the Nashville Council. This action removed half of the council's seats, which would also limit the representation of people of color after reconfigured maps and districts were altered (Tribune Staff, 2023). The Tribune Staff (2023) concludes the present council of forty members is the most inclusive and diverse in the history of Nashville. Unfortunately, according to the Tribune Staff (2023), it's not enough right-wing racists on the present council, and since the council is unlike the Republican supermajority in the state legislature, the council's size should be reduced to further eradicate the voices of Black people.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) presented their arguments to the Tennessee State Legislature regarding the thinning out of votes from people of color after the legislature purposefully divided Nashville Davidson County into three districts, while concurrently demoralizing the increasing voting power of people of color in Memphis by dividing district thirty-one. The change will affect the possible

equal representation for people of color by carving out the strength of their voting bloc. The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) exudes the legislature has decreased the voices of people of color with the new congressional maps. The maps broke up historically black communities that were previously in one district for years in Nashville. The diverse Cordova community of Memphis was also splintered as they were possibly going to be able to elect a senator of their choice with their community strength (Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 2023). The intent of the state of Tennessee legislature was to create a situation in which people of color would not be able to elect representatives of their choice who would listen to their needs and concerns and be willing to work for their interests (Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 2023). The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) concludes the attempts of the Tennessee legislature to weaken the power of the growing communities of people of color while restricting any representation in Congress for their communities.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) explains it is a deliberate infringement of the Constitution of the United States to restrict the voting opportunities of people of color through acts of gerrymandering. The voice of the people is our voice with voting. Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) asserts the changes made in the Tennessee legislature to senate and congressional maps constitute an overt menace to people and communities of color. Gerrymandering preserves an apparatus that fuses power for a small number while at the same time purposefully restricting the voices of people of color (Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 2023). The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) opines the same lawmakers who seek to retain power are the individuals who are trusted

to defend the democratic processes of the United States. Instead, according to the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2023) these elected officials have gerrymandered the voting power of people of color in an effort to remain in power, by restricting the political power of people and communities of color.

The League of Women Voters (2023) describes methods attempting to restrict voting rights in Tennessee, such as a requirement of identification at the voting site, and the increased difficulty of acquiring an absentee ballot. The legislature was not translucent or concerned with being diverse in their decisions by creating a more discriminatory mapping in regard to the voting makeup for the predominately Black areas of Nashville. What the legislature created, according to the League of Women Voters (2023) was an essential travel back into time in which people of color wielded no political power in voting for representatives who would be concerned with their predominately black communities. These new maps subvert the equal protection of people of color by eliminating the power of the voting bloc (The League of Women Voters, 2023).

Conclusion

Bhattacharya and Price (2023) believe many White Americans don't consider anti-Blackness to have a negative effect on the economy or politics in the United States. Bhattacharya and Price (2023) explain how the actions of many legislatures in the United States reflect the attitudes of people who are of the opinion that Black people are not deserving of political capital. Consequently, there are many White people who harbor the racist belief that people of color are not as developed or advanced as White people and should be controlled like children. Bhattacharya and Price (2023) add these types of

thoughts exhibit how racism has permeated through generations and has continued to evolve into white supremacy. Older generations of White people have used anti-Blackness as a method to eliminate democracy for the future (Bhattacharya and Price, 2023). The political landscape in the United States has a disproportion of older White males who have witnessed the increase of rights Black people have received, and local governments are attempting to curtail the knowledge of unequal racial treatment that younger generations are exposed to in educational facilities. Bhattacharya and Price (2023) conclude conservative Republicans do not want racism taught in schools because it will expose the hypocrisy of equal opportunities that people of color have never received. Conservative Republicans are afraid of losing power and control over the minds and actions of their own White children (Bhattacharya and Price, 2023).

According to Phillips (2021), white supremacy is the problem in Tennessee. The feeling of hatred toward people of other races is racism, but believing White people should receive the optimal benefits in every situation is white supremacy (Phillips, 2021). Phillips (2021) adds that white supremacy is often perpetuated through racism. Many people who are white supremacists consider themselves to not exhibit racism because they believe they do not dislike any other races (Phillips, 2021). It is very difficult for some White people to identify racism because they tend to focus on an individual's motivations or desires (Phillips, 2021). However, Phillips (2021) ascertains white supremacy is not as difficult to acknowledge because it consists of White people focusing on the wants and needs of other White people while excluding the wants and needs of other groups of people. Phillips (2021) concludes if someone White argues that they

don't have a racist bone in their body, but their actions are racist, they are exhibiting white supremacy.

Racism is prevalent in many situations occurring in the state legislature of Tennessee (Allison, 2023). Allison (2023) explains the chief of staff for previous Speaker of the House Glen Casada, Cade Cothren penned a message regarding the Common Core curriculum that people of color are idiots, and Cothren has issued an apology for his racist insult. In 2018 a House member who was initiating a bill made a comment about wetbacks during the revealing of a story (Allison, 2023). Allison (2023) adds two separate episodes that occurred in 2020 in which Republican legislators made jokes regarding the eating of fried chicken by Black people. Allison (2023) concludes the Tennessee legislature is currently identified by scandals and problems that are being accepted by the Republican supermajority as business as usual.

Allison (2023) exudes the Tennessee legislature has been a place full of scandals, pettiness, and racism for an extended period of time. A conservative Republican member previously used a cowbell every day in an effort to gain the support of the predominately White conservative legislative members (Allison, 2023). Allison (2023) adds one Republican legislator, David Byrd was appointed as the House Education Committee chairman even though he had been implicated in the sexual assault of three teenage girls he taught and coached, and the White legislative members refused to take any action against him. More than ten years later Byrd apologized on tape to one of the girls (Allison, 2023). Allison (2023) concludes that even though there were many Republican house lawmakers who thought the implication was true, as a group they decided Byrd was elected legitimately. Allison (2023) continues that a Democratic legislator who was

unwilling to re-elect the current speaker of the house suffered the wrath of pettiness by having her office relocated to a tiny room without windows. Allison (2023) describes the actions of the predominately White legislative members expelling the two young Black members in comparison to the inaction these same White legislative members have refused to take on scandalous actions of other White legislative members as the epitome of white supremacy.

According to Kruesi and Mattise (2022), the Republican lawmakers continue to argue they are implementing policies that benefit all Tennesseans while denying they are oppressing minorities, which is firmly contradicted by their efforts in dividing Nashville into three congressional districts, making it easier to weaken the Black vote. Republican lawmakers in Tennessee desire to create and keep Republican supermajorities to make their decision-making easier and promulgate more deeply seeded racist policies (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022). Davis (2023) explains watching two Black men fighting for their careers, reputations, and political lives in the Tennessee legislature resembled a Jim Crow-type trial. Karen Camper, the House Minority Leader identified that Pearson and Jones were on the receiving end of different treatment (Davis, 2023). Elfers (2023) adds the legislative members chose to ignore the need for gun safety and instead placed their focus on removing the Black representatives who were utilizing their First Amendment rights. Elfers (2023) concludes the state legislature of Tennessee is unwilling to accept the First Amendment right to assemble and demonstrate when people of color are the leaders. Mastrangelo (2023) adds Representative Jones definitely views his expulsion as racism after a White legislator called him an uppity Negro and believes the racism may be the result of an unconscious bias based on a double standard. Following his beliefs,

Mastrangelo (2023) concludes Jones is focused on the needs of the seventy-eight thousand people he represents.

Another Black male legislator, Representative Vincent Dixie believes the Republican leaders in the legislature are attempting to quash the comments of people of color regarding racism, just as they have regarding the critical race theory banishment in public education (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022). Conservative Republicans have used critical race theory as a descriptor for eliminating the teaching of institutional and structural racism prevalent in the United States (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022). Their reasoning for banning critical race theory is to stop an attempt to change American history and make White people think they are not racist (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022). Kruesi and Mattise (2022) add the ban on critical race theory is being used to stop the truthful teaching of Black History in public education and penalize people who teach the truth about the history of the United States. Kruesi and Mattise (2022) conclude that Dixie admonished the Republican-led legislature for creating a hostile environment without implementing any laws that help people of color. After a legislator started a bill to recognize racism as a public health threat, Republicans refused to pass the bill because it included information about racial biases in healthcare (Kruesi and Mattise, 2022). Kruesi and Mattise (2022) explain the Republican-led legislature also refused to honor Martin Luther King Jr. Day until the efforts for Dr. King's plan of a Poor People's Campaign focused on the rampant poverty in the United States was removed. Kruesi and Mattise (2022) conclude the legislature only passed the bill after the goal of eliminating systemic racism was removed.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this study was to examine the ways in which anti-Blackness continues in the state of Tennessee. The permanence of racism continues within the Republican-led legislature focused on depictions of oppressive individuals, public education policies, legislative actions, and voting rights for people of color which continue to infringe on the rights of Black people in the state. Their decisions are rife with racial animosity toward people of color. Young (2023) believes racism is implanted in numerous institutions in the United States, and systems that continue to permeate inequality for people of color in the United States. I believe there should be some type of equality advanced within government that is concerned about the needs of the majority of citizens in the United States. As currently constructed, Black people are not effectively represented in decision-making positions in Tennessee that are willing to focus on their needs (Young, 2023). The actions of elected government officials continue to prove the tenets of critical race theory are alive and well within the state of Tennessee.

The purpose of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, and the research question were explained in Chapter 1 (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The historical background of the study through the lens of critical race theory was examined in Chapter 1 to identify the significance of the struggles of Black people in Tennessee. The research design is a qualitative case study using a historical investigative perspective of available documents (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). The research question focuses on the impact of the Republican-led Tennessee legislature in their actions which continue to stimulate anti-blackness in the state of Tennessee. The most important issue is how frequently the legislature's action describes the tenets of critical race theory.

Chapter 2 is a review of the historical documents available regarding the anti-blackness perpetrated against Black people in the state of Tennessee. Chapter 3 was used to describe the methodology used for my dissertation. By using a case study design, I examined numerous historical documents about the public-school systems in Tennessee and related how the permanence of racism has continued through the actions of the Tennessee legislature against Black people. I used primary and secondary sources to delineate the depth of how racism is embedded in the institutions and structures of Tennessee. Merriam (1998) explains a comprehensive outcome typically occurs from case studies. These types of studies increase the experiences of a reader as well as promote an understanding of the education discipline.

The findings of this study connected the actions of the past with the current actions of the Tennessee legislature to create active research literature (Roberts and Hyatt, 2019). Several time periods were examined and compared to develop the framework of anti-black actions taken by the Tennessee legislature. Critical race theory was connected with the racism of the past to the anti-black bills recently passed in the legislature. Anti-black representatives were identified through their individual comments and actions within the legislature. The racism from the antebellum period until the actions against the Tennessee Three were highlighted and dissected to establish the permanence of racism in the state of Tennessee.

Analysis of the Findings

Critical race theory examines how racism is permanently embedded in many institutions in the United States that continuously benefit White people in their lives while impeding the possible progress of people of color (Allison, 2021). According to

Young (2023), critical race theory have caused White Americans to panic because they are unable to control the narrative of how Black History is portrayed. Why are so many White Americans against CRT if we are living in a post-racial society? There are numerous answers to this answer. The government of the United States is complicit in the inequalities prevalent in society because of its hypocrisy in forcing democratic ideals on other nations while at the same time allowing Black people to continue to suffer innumerable harms from white supremacist rules and regulations on a daily basis through institutional and structural racism (Gates and Yacovone, 2013). State governments have been duplicitous in reacting to the progressions made by Black people in local areas by allowing white supremacist groups and organizations to continue to harass and destroy successful Black communities with impunity (Emling, 2020).

State governments have also enacted laws and customs that only benefit the white culture (Emling, 2020). Many White individuals do not want the truthful depiction of the barbaric and dehumanizing actions of their ancestors discussed, especially the individuals who continue these disgusting acts against humanity. Because of institutional racism, they are able to classify CRT as indoctrination while acting as if CRT has a curriculum that teaches topics that will cause people to dislike each other (Blackburn, n.d.). I believe politicians are concerned about their own culture's actions being brought to light which will depict how some White people have treated Black people to gain and manipulate their wealth.

Zou (2021) explains critical race theory doesn't denunciate individuals for racism, but instead focuses on providing ideas for changing policies for the public in an effort to establish the opportunity for equality and freedom for everyone. The racial term of Black

was created during slavery with the meaning of being enslavable (Bell, 1992). Critical race theory is focused on the structure of racism, meaning it's a racist process, not only the actions of an individual's biases and prejudices (Bell, 1992). CRT is not taught in k-12 schools and is not educational content that can be taught (Zou, 2021). Since critical race theory is not educational content, what is actually being eliminated by Republican governors and legislatures? The teaching of Black history establishes the need for critical race theory and is the content people are attempting to eliminate (Zou, 2021). Critical race theory had also become the phrase being used to remove any discussion or lesson taught about the source of racism and how prevalent racism is in our society (Zou, 2021). Everyone should learn the history and proliferation of racism throughout the history of the United States in order to eradicate the institutions and systems that continue to perpetuate it.

According to Bell (1992), and Ladson-Billings (2021), the tenets of critical race theory focus on race being constructed by society, the convergence of interests, the permanence of racism, using the voices of people of color in storytelling, and finally race and gender intersectionality. Racism is part of the many institutions and structures that were created by White Americans throughout history (Bell, 1992). These institutions and structures were developed to benefit White people by establishing white privilege.

According to Bell (1992), people of color are allowed in these white spaces only when it benefits White people, which is another tenet, interest convergence. I believe the rights that Black people gained during and after the Civil Rights Movement are an example of interest convergence. During segregation, there were numerous all-black neighborhoods and communities that were successful and prosperous (Gates and Yacovone, 2013). The

interest convergence occurred by allowing Black people to spend their money in white spaces, creating economic gains for White people and permanently damaging the wealth in Black communities (Bell, 1992). Being able to use the voices of Black people in telling our story is the most effective method of communicating Black History in a truthful, effective manner.

The mural of Nathan Bedford Forrest in the Tennessee State Capital building was an act of cowardice and disrespect at the same time. Republican leaders knew the history of this deplorable man, and their willingness to keep his disgusting image for the public to see is more a reflection on them as elected officials (Phillips, 2021). After the Historical Commission voted to have the mural removed the cowardice of the Republican-led legislature voted to dismantle the commission. According to Phillips (2021) the actions of these Republicans were an attempt to promote white supremacy at the capitol building. I believe they were acting in their own racist self-interests without considering the effects of the depiction of a man who was an outright racist in a public space for every visitor to see. Governor Lee was not much better because he didn't want to change the law that allowed the deplorable bust of Forrest to be displayed (Phillips, 2021). Obviously, the depiction of this horrible, racist, slave trader serves as another example of the permanence of racism in the state of Tennessee.

Governor Bill Lee of Tennessee believes we are progressing to a greater nation, the exceptionalism of the United States should be taught in Tennessee public schools, and how everyone can live and work together to continue to progress in a better way (Kruesi, 2021). According to Kruesi (2021), Lee believes nothing should be taught that could create animosity or discord between people. Black people have been oppressed and

suffered for over four hundred years in the United States (Bell, 1992). Lee and other Republicans want to whitewash history and create false narratives in describing the past oppression and discrimination in the United States (Kruesi, 2021). Kruesi (2021) adds Black Democratic members of the legislature believe the Republican restrictive mandates on the teaching of American History in Tennessee will cause teachers to avoid explaining how racism built and developed the United States and the ways in which racism continues.

Grossman (2022) explains that House Bill 2670 and Senate Bill 2290 do not effectively address any concerns of the public in regard to history education. The bills create a hindrance to the academic freedoms of higher education faculty. The majority of educators who teach history have immense support from Democrats and Republicans about teaching how slavery and racism play an integral role in the history of the United States, and the effects are presently still relevant. Grossman (2022) adds at least 75% of Democrats and Republicans agree with teaching history focused on topics that could cause students to feel uncomfortable. I believe history teachers who are successful create learning environments for students that force them to analyze and synthesize past and present information and be able to determine similarities and differences. This information illuminates how a few politicians have used critical race theory as a method to sow discord between parents and educators in public schools by providing parents the opportunity to complain about anything they do not agree with. Parents who complain about critical race theory have no idea what it is, but they use it to garner reactions from people who are also uninformed and uneducated about the factual history of the United States.

Regardless of the feelings of history teachers in the state of Tennessee, the Senate passed Bill 0817 which identifies concepts that are prohibited to be taught in public k-12 schools and public higher education (Tennessee General Assembly, 2023). I analyzed the prohibited concepts and believed they are an affront to control the topics taught in public educational facilities. Obviously, the conservative supermajority in the Tennessee legislature is attempting to whitewash history education in Tennessee while minimizing the history and oppression, dehumanization, and violence people of color have received in the United States since 1619. Basically, as a teacher in Tennessee and you say Martin Luther King, Jr's name, and a student goes home and tells their parents, the state of Tennessee legislature has created a system in which you, as the educator, have to prove you were not teaching critical race theory, and critical race theory has no subject matter.

Concerned citizens in Nashville, TN, attended a session of the Tennessee General Assembly attempting to have their voices heard regarding more stringent gun laws for the state of Tennessee after a school shooting (Davis, 2023). The Tennessee Three joined the citizens in the protest. After the protest, numerous White male members of the legislature began a discussion to have the Tennessee Three expelled from their positions in the legislature because they felt the three had broken the rules of the house (Davis, 2023). The results of the expulsion vote were to expel the two Black males, Jones and Pearson, but not to expel Johnson, the white female (Davis, 2023). This action played out throughout the United States and brought to light the oppressive and discriminatory actions within the Tennessee legislature. There have been several members of the racist legislature who have spoken out after the actions of the three and the reactions of the legislature which were recorded (Mystal, 2023). According to Mystal (2023),

Representative Scott Cepicky commented that he would have to continue to see Representative Jones in the legislature of the fucking state he chose to move to. Cepicky also mentioned that the whole world was now watching, and they were going to have to stand their ground. Mystal (2023) adds that Cepicky believes the state he relocated to was made for only people like him and not for people of color, like Jones and Pearson. The White male majority in the legislature does not care about the needs of the people of Tennessee (Mystal, 2023). Mystal (2023) adds they have their own racist agenda and continue to espouse the same racist vitriol as some of the people in their elected districts. The outward racism of many of the White male legislative members established an attitude that people of color in the legislature should be seen and not heard (Dirks, 2023).

The districts that the three legislators represent contain predominantly people of color (Dirks, 2023). Representative Jones commented after his expulsion that they refuse to be silent as the status quo attempts to destroy democracy. Removing the two Black men for actions they committed in support of the citizens of Tennessee will hopefully serve as an indictment on the predominately White male legislative body that continues to be elected to either commence to work for all the people of Tennessee or be replaced by individuals who will do the work to help the citizens of Tennessee (Dirks, 2023). The expulsions of Representatives Jones and Pearson were extremely short (Allison, 2023). They both were reinstated by the people who voted for them to represent them in their communities (Allison, 2023). The outright racism of the White representatives in the Tennessee legislature should prove how permanent racism has been and still is in the Tennessee legislature and in the state of Tennessee.

Marsha Blackburn (n.d.) a United States Senator from Tennessee states critical race theory is a radical thought process that is being used for political purposes by Democrats to make neutral concepts racially meaningful. The neutral concepts she refers to are mathematics and history. I am not sure how anyone is able to make mathematics racially important unless you explain that mathematics originated in Africa. As far as history, Blackburn's words seem to insinuate people of color do not have a history, or that our history is not important. The history of the United States is full of stories that are positive and negative. Creating a false narrative regarding the treatment of Black people in the United States is not neutral. I am a firm believer that the truth must be taught about slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the horrific Jim Crow time period which included lynchings, killings, looting and burning, the growth and destruction of Black communities, the Civil Rights Acts, the Voting Rights Acts, the Civil Rights Movement, the Southern strategy of Richard Nixon, the dismantling of the rights of Black people during the Reagan and Bush eras, the resegregation of Black communities and public schools because of economic policies, and the rebirth of white supremacist organizations because of the white nationalist rhetoric of politicians in the United States. I am not surprised by the ignorant comments from Blackburn. Some White people from Mississippi continue to have the same racist feelings despite moving to other locations. I believe it is past time that we as a society begin holding our elected officials responsible for their actions and words. Blackburn comes across as full of racism and hatred and believes people of color do not have any history to be proud of. It's difficult to put the right words together to adequately address the type of ignorant wretched individual she is. It is truly unfortunate to be born and raised in Tennessee and know that an individual

like her represents the state as a Senator. She should never be in any type of leadership position. Leaders are supposed to be educated and informed about any information they speak of. She has absolutely no understanding of critical race theory, but I am sure she understands white supremacy.

Limitations

The limitations of my study could relate to not being based on in-depth interviews. However, for correlation purposes, I decided to focus on historical peer reviewed documents that were available. My desire was to have a narrower focus in my study because of the available material and current actions of the Tennessee legislature. Merriam (1998) adds case studies can be restricted by the coherence of the investigator by reducing or overstating the problem.

Recommendations for Further Study

I believe further studies could be conducted focusing on interviews of Black people and their experiences with racism. Another study could also identify the permanence of racism in other institutions and structures in the United States and how their actions have continued to have negative impacts on people of color. Critical race theory offers a variety of ideas that can be further studied and researched in an attempt to foster more equitable opportunities for people of color. Another study could focus on each individual legislator of Tennessee who voted for the legislation to end Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion activities at colleges and universities receiving state funding in Tennessee.

Implications

The politicizing of education by unqualified individuals has created an educational environment in which educators are unable to effectively educate students to their best abilities. Educators currently have to be concerned about issues that are completely out of their control. The education profession used to be held in reverence. Unfortunately, politics has caused many educators to leave their profession and the individuals hurt the most are the students.

This study has provided a concise understanding of how the past racism in Tennessee continues through the actions and attitudes of members in the legislature. It has also exposed the disdain toward young Black representatives who want to work with the people and communities they serve. Hopefully, the actions of the career politicians who make decisions based on the status quo will be voted out, and replaced by younger, more vibrant individuals who care for their constituents.

Conclusions

The conservative politicians know they are unable to publicly announce that Black History cannot be taught in public schools. I believe their focus in these critical race theory laws is they do not want the history of Black people taught through the voices of Black people. This is not simply Black teachers teaching Black History. This means Black History is being taught from the perspectives of Black people. Critical race theory is relative to the truthful teachings of Black History. Now, when we make this connection, it becomes evident what conservative Whites are attempting to eliminate. It

is not critical race theory, because critical race theory is a theory created by scholars. The theory gives a voice to oppressed people to be able to express their truth. One has to probe further in order to illuminate the true intentions of conservative politicians like Governor Lee in Tennessee. They fear the TRUTH. The same reason Malcolm X became such a threat was that he communicated the complete and total truth regarding the deplorable living conditions and treatment of people of color in the United States and how these actions were hypocritical to the laws of the United States (Gates and Yacovone, 2013). Critical race theory is not a class that is being taught, it is not a concept of topics in a curriculum in school, it is the truthful examination, critique, and history of people of color in the United States from the voices of the people who have lived in these oppressive conditions and continue to be deprived of equal protection under the law (Bell, 1992). This truthful history from the perspective of people of color is what conservative politicians want to be muted because these stories will prove to everyone how disgraceful and oppressive the United States has been and still is. I believe conservative Whites want to tell their own version of Black History that does not include the voices of the oppressed, which will continue their white supremacist ideals. I believe the fear many White people have is not critical race theory, it is not even Black History, it is losing their white privilege and supremacy.

Hopefully, the Tennessee Black Caucus, Urban League, NAACP, teachers, and even students will take active roles in creating Good Trouble in Nashville and the rest of Tennessee to help foster the change in state policies, and local government actions. We all have to come together to hold these politicians accountable for their actions and replace the legislators who do not work for their constituents. I believe change is

coming. The population of Nashville has increased with an influx of new residents from different areas of the country. With new citizens come new ideas. I believe Representatives Jones and Pearson have set a precedent for younger, more active representation from areas that are becoming more diverse. The good ole boy system in the Tennessee legislature is hopefully dying a slow death. We have to show our older family members and ancestors that we have learned from their suffering and oppression, use our voices as the current citizens, and fight back against the attempts to create new forms of intellectual oppression.

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