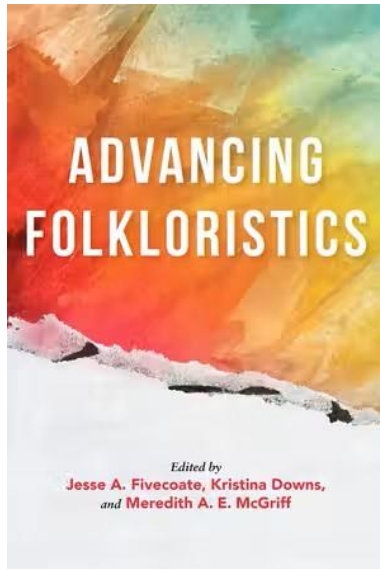


Journal of Folklore and Education Reviews



Advancing Folkloristics. Jesse A. Fivecoate, Kristina Downs, and Meredith A. E. McGriff, eds.

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021, 223 pp.)

Martha Sims is an Independent Folklorist.

Inspired by presentations and discussions at the 2017 Future of American Folkloristics Conference held at Indiana University, the essays in this collection discuss and, in some cases, illustrate ways to build a strong path forward for the discipline and those who are (or are studying to be) practicing folklorists in public and academic contexts. Taken as a whole, the essays provide numerous explanations for why and how folklorists should carefully and consciously consider ways to shape the future of the discipline, with the goal of spurring a reimagining of the work of the discipline

as well as the presentation of that work beyond the field. How can folklorists amplify the unique perspective they bring to the study of cultural expression? How can folklorists productively collaborate with those in other disciplines? How can folklorists build on the ways they give voice to those in the communities they study to better support those communities? Each of the essays provides insight into the theory or praxis addressed. However, to fulfill JFE's mission, this review will focus on ways that the collection, including particular essays, might be useful in educational contexts.

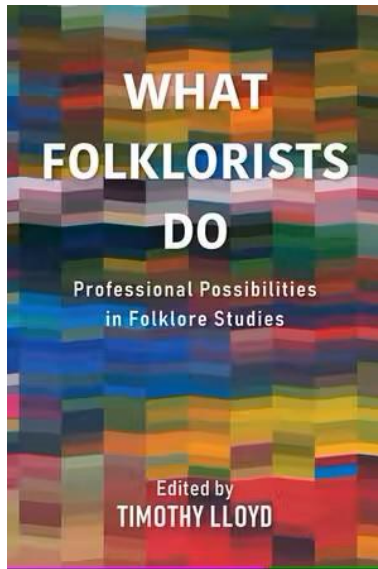
The opening essay, Kay Turner's "Deep Folklore/Queer Folkloristics," dives directly into the collection's focus with Turner's playful, engaging writing drawing readers along as she builds bridges between folklore and queer theories. Bringing in concepts from the history of folklore scholarship, she lays groundwork that could make clear, even for readers such as advanced folklore undergraduates unfamiliar with queer theory, the value she identifies in connections between folklore and queer theories. Turner nudges readers into the collection, where they will read more about challenges in the field's present and for its future.

The groupings of essays, below, suggest themes addressed in the collection but are not intended to be exclusive. Readers will find essays on work folklorists do (in public and/or academic arenas) by Hansen, Belanus, Guest-Scott, Wilson, and Addison. Also included are essays suggesting expanding folkloristic research and scholarly concepts, written by Rouhier-Willoughby; Thorne and De Los Reyes; Otero; and the collection's three editors, Fivecoate, Downs, and McGriff. The final two essays offer practical approaches for advancing the field, Shutika's from an academic-administration perspective and Kitta, McNeill, and Blank's from a public/social media perspective. Two of the essays, Andrea Kitta's and Phyllis M. May-Machunda's, would effectively fit multiple educational contexts.

Andrea Kitta's "An Epidemic of Meanings" describes the complex ways her experiences and beliefs have intersected with her ongoing research on vaccinations and how challenging it has been for her to manage her expression of those beliefs. The essay could be incorporated into an introductory college folklore course, an advanced undergraduate or graduate course, or useful as an introduction to belief and fieldwork practices for public school educators (such as those who participated in programs like the one May-Machunda writes about). In any of these contexts, Kitta's personal exploration of her position as a researcher, including if and how she has handled expressing her beliefs during fieldwork, would be enlightening, especially for those newly introduced to ethnographic research. For readers more experienced with fieldwork and familiar with basic principles related to researchers' interactions with consultants, the essay could serve as a jumping-off point for discussions of reflexive approaches to fieldwork and interactions with community members. The personal nature of the piece and limited use of jargon are features that would make it accessible to a variety of audiences. Kitta's introspection reveals questions about where researchers' beliefs and attitudes belong in the fieldwork process, opening up potential discussions of how and when researchers might deepen their work with their consultants.

Phyllis M. May-Machunda's essay will speak to educators and folklorists of varying ages and levels of experience, in particular those who are doing and/or interested in social justice work. "Culturally Conscious Collaborations at the Nexus of Folklore, Education, and Social Justice" examines a significant intersection of educators' and folklorists' practices. Through the essay's description and analysis of a workshop May-Maychunda and Amanda Dargan facilitated, readers will see an illustration of a powerful community-based project that provides a window into the value of folkloristic praxis in addressing issues of social justice in education. The essay has multiple layers, explaining the context and background—both theoretical and practical—of the workshop. Folklorists, graduate students in folklore studies, and public-school educators will benefit from a look at this deeply collaborative project. This essay provides an example of the meaningful work folklorists can do in collaboration with communities, especially important work in the current climate of critiques of and attacks on the education system.

Overall, the collection will be thought-provoking for practicing folklorists, as well as those teaching and training aspiring folklorists.



What Folklorists Do: Professional Possibilities in Folklore Studies.
Timothy Lloyd, ed.
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021, 245 pp.)

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Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University

Timothy Lloyd, former Executive Director of the American Folklore Society, has assembled a valuable compendium of 76 short essays by folklorists, mostly North Americans, exploring an impressively broad range of professional options and careers. Most of these essays include career trajectories, describing the authors' background and education, and how they were led, whether through planning or serendipity (commonly, a mixture of both) into their own particular niches.

In the Introduction, Lloyd provides a quick history of Folklore Studies, and surveys its key ideas and methodologies. His description of Folklore as a “listening discipline” with fieldwork at its core, sets the central theme of the book. The book is then divided into four large chapters, each with approximately twenty short essays: “Research and Teaching,” “Leading and Managing,” “Communicating and Curating,” and “Advocating and Planning.” Of course, these categories are arbitrary (as Lloyd acknowledges); many of the essays could fit comfortably into more than one category, some into all four. The book’s organization leads the reader from the halls of academia through various kinds of public and applied work, and into the world of advocacy.

Chapter one, “Research and Teaching,” includes essays on fieldwork, library research, and teaching college classes, but also less obvious topics such as quantitative research, internationalism, and being an independent scholar. The seven articles on college teaching focus on teaching undergraduates, graduate students, community college students, teaching in an interdisciplinary department, teaching medical students, teaching writing, and teaching science; this list demonstrates a strength of Lloyd’s book, which is the examination of similar or related topics from different perspectives.

Chapter two, “Leading and Managing,” includes not only academia and public folklore programs, but such topics as non-profit organizations, museums, recording labels, consulting firms and diplomacy. Although being a diplomat or directing a recording label may seem very different from teaching college classes, the book reveals commonalities among folklorists, regardless of job titles: listening, educating, thinking ethnographically.

Chapter three, “Communicating and Curating,” is the most diverse chapter, although they are all diverse. It includes essays on communication-related topics as translating, designing comics and other kinds of visual representation, editing, publishing, journalism, the internet, and theater; writing fiction, poetry, and textbooks; the curating of museums, libraries and archives; and such

public folklore topics as festivals and cultural tours. Again, these diverse topics are linked by the perspectives of folklorists: dialogic, fieldwork based, inclusive and accountable.

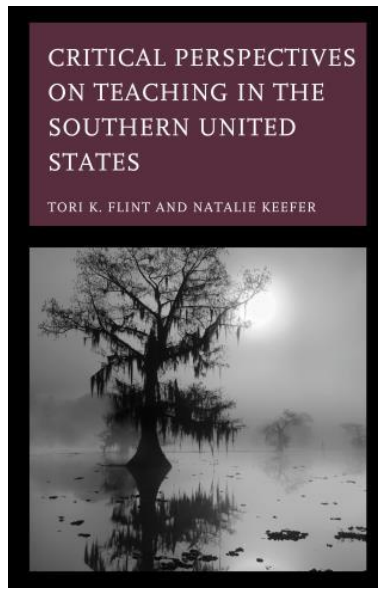
Chapter four, “Advocating and Partnering,” builds on the foundations of Folklore Studies described in earlier chapters to suggest current and future directions for the field. Many of the essays describe advocating for various kinds of communities: place-based communities, labor-based communities (and unions), regions, disability communities, poets. Many of them deal with politics and public policy, community organizing or social services. This section also includes several essays on working with K-12 education and educators.

The diversity of “professional possibilities” and of career trajectories presented in *What Folklorists Do* is breathtaking, and is certainly an antidote to the “how will you find a job?” question that folklore students inevitably are asked. Personally, I was impressed at how much Folklore Studies has changed and expanded in the four decades I have been in the field.

Anyone reading this book will be more interested in some topics than in others. Inevitably, there is variation in the tone of the essays. Some are more personal, some are more issue-oriented. They are all highly readable, and, considering that almost all of them involve some element of career trajectory, most of the authors resist bragging about their accomplishments (although they all are very accomplished). Most readers will probably not read the book cover-to-cover – in some ways, it is more like a reference work than a unified collection of articles. But the shared themes of so many of these essays are striking: fieldwork, collaboration, dialogue, advocacy, education, cultural mediation, and most of all, skilled listening.

Although most of the essays in this volume deal with education in a broad sense, those dealing with K-12 education may have particular interest for readers of this journal. These include Ruth Olson’s “Collaborating with K-12 Teachers,” which focuses on the development of cultural tours (for students and teachers) in Wisconsin, Lisa Rathje’s “Partnering with K-12 Education,” which focuses widely (but succinctly) on working with artists and K-12 teachers in the classroom, and Jon Kay’s “Creating Educational Content,” which broadly focuses on the link between public folklore and education, including Kay’s own work with elders in Indiana. Many other essays, however, are closely related to these: for example, Nicole Musgrave on a variety of ethnographic, educational and advocacy programs at the Hindman Settlement School in eastern Kentucky, or Katherine Borland on connecting university education to community education. A great many of the essays in this book take readers into areas that are highly applicable to K-12 education. The ideas and methodologies of museums, for example, can be brought into the classroom either directly (visiting museums) or indirectly (creating a classroom exhibit); the same is true of ethnographic documentation (audio or visual), theater and stand-up comedy, writing, poetry, archival research, comics, and so many other areas that are touched on in *What Folklorists Do*.

What Folklorists Do is an important, exciting and accessible book that I would recommend to anyone with any interest in folklore.



Critical Perspectives on Teaching in the Southern United States.
Tori K. Flint and Natalie Keefer, eds
(Washington, DC: Lexington Books, 2020, 258 pp.)

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For many, the term “The South” evokes ideals of grace and beauty, lush greenery, and sweet tea. While these images may be true, Tori K. Flint and Natalie Keefer’s edited volume present a different set of words describing the educational system in the South. This work highlights extreme poverty, racial prejudice, and a curriculum that overlooks those who have differing cultural backgrounds. While these issues sound disheartening, the authors provide hope to address these matters as well as thoughts on their own teaching practices.

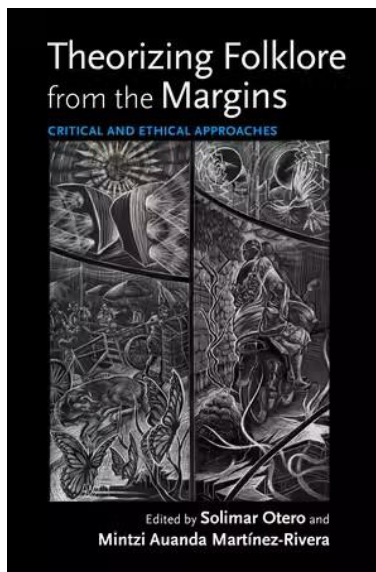
The book consists of fourteen essays divided into four sections: Sociohistorical Foundations, Reflections from the Field, Pedagogy and Content, and Borders and Boundaries: Language, Immigration, and Identity. The authors range in years of experience and classroom levels, from college faculty to middle school teachers, giving a variety of perspectives on the topic. These educators do not suggest radical changes to the curriculum but as Samuels and Haas said of those wishing to teach social justice, it is “not [taught] as a separate component...but as an approach that is ingrained in their daily professional practice” (36). While the authors suggest methodology and approaches that have helped them to connect with their students and make the content relevant and meaningful, these actions can be performed on an individual level. The book also presents autoethnographical reflections on being a teacher in the South. Valin S. Jordan posits that this type of “counterstorytelling...publicizes the marginalized voice for the purpose of understanding racism and Whiteness on the experience of people of color” (85). She and others in the volume reflect on their experiences as educators—but also as women, as first-generation immigrants, as Black—and share how their own lives enhance (or frustrate) their pedagogical experiences. The quantitative research presented in this volume, performed by educators in their classrooms, provides novel findings on student experiences and perceptions as well as the reactions of teachers to these activities. Throughout the book, the ideas of community, identity, and conversation for inclusion resonate, the key tenets of folklore.

Although the only time the authors mention the word “folklore” in the book is to indicate an erroneous belief about antebellum race relations (129), folklore practices and methodology are offered as ameliorative measures for many of the educational problems in the South. Bernard and Flint examine “unscripting the curriculum,” a reaction to state-mandated content that must be delivered verbatim, and they instead allow students to “discuss and share the ways that cultural traditions are kept alive in their own families” (61). An additional suggestion comes from Amy Samuels who discusses the blind spots students have in their own world views and how some students (particularly white students) do not feel they have a culture. She suggests that through aspects of identity exploration, students can realize the error of the presupposition that “dominant

culture is not culture, it is just *normal*” (77). Personal narrative serves as another unspoken folkloric approach in education. Watson-Canning noted how telling her story of 9/11 put the tragedy into perspective for her students in a way that no other methodology had.

Teachers also found success through the appreciation of community and identity. Matthew M. Green discusses community and notes that when teachers are “valuing the knowledge that students bring with them to the curriculum and allowing students space to write themselves into the curriculum,” (213) the subject matter begins to resonate with students as they see themselves and their identities as part of the American community. Butler and Spinoza reference the idea of *cariño* (affective warmth) as a way of “building authentic relationships with students and fostering reflection and discussions about their lives, interests, and stories” (193). Each essay, from Percy and Clabough’s chapter on teaching Southern politics to Bravo-Ruiz’s contribution on English learners, echoes the ideas of allowing students’ unique voices and experiences to shape the classroom.

While this book is more theoretical than practical in that it does not offer distinct lesson plans or classroom activities spelled out in detail, it does offer teachers a current perspective on what it means to be an educator in the South. This book serves as a needed overview of systemic problems in American education. However, the challenges faced by educators in Louisiana and Florida are not unique. Educators in Illinois, California, and Pennsylvania will find inspiring, helpful conversations surrounding pedagogical and classroom concerns that teachers across the United States encounter daily.



Theorizing Folklore from the Margins: Critical and Ethical Approaches. Solimar Otero and Mintzi Auanda Martínez-Rivera, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022, 342 pp.)

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As I write this, another wave of mass shootings in the U.S. continues to rip at the delicate threads of our already overstretched cultural tapestry, devastating trust in each other and institutions, and creating even more fear in public spaces and schools. Thus, this book, and other resources like it, should be the only weapons used in public and educational settings. I am referring to a “weapon” as “a means of gaining an advantage or defending oneself in a conflict” (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and as “(a skill, idea, or tool) that is used to... achieve something” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

This powerful collection of 16 critical essays takes aim at the myriad forms in which hate, violence, othering, disenfranchisement, etc., manifest in social life as the result of dominant power structures

Journal of Folklore and Education (2022: Vol. 9)

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supported by the “legacies of white supremacy, homophobia, misogyny, xenophobia, ableism, and other injustices and forms of discrimination” (19). It is these power structures, among others, that have kept certain individuals and communities at the margins. The “margins,” as presented in the book, vary by author and range from the physical (such as prisons) to the symbolic (as in the intersections between methodologies and ideas).

The book draws its inspiration and edge from communities at the margins that have been creating strategies to survive and thrive despite the abovementioned challenges using *cultura y poder*, or “culture and power” (19). These two terms signify a relational process and “work through each other in helping create individual and communal reinventions of the self, tradition, and belonging” (3). As such, the editors and contributors cast a wide net across multiple key themes, geographies, and sites to “examine the elusive yet visceral nature of the conception and experience of *poder y cultura*, by centralizing the epistemologies of the communities typically the subject of folklore studies” (3).

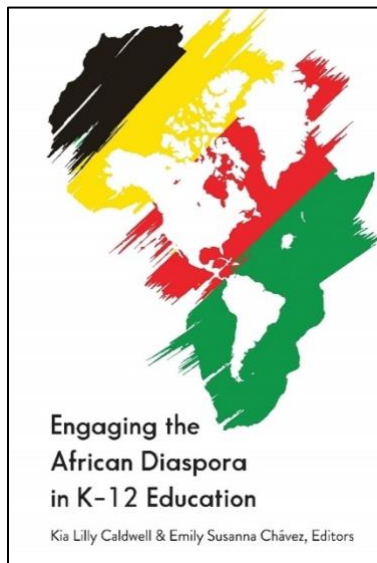
The result is an illuminating, moving, and reflexivity-inducing work that takes us into and through very different marginal worlds “among, and with, Mexican, Wolof, Native American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Haitian, Martinican, Andean, North American, African Diaspora, and LGBTQI folk cultures and communities” (13). Ethnographic essays show us what it means for both subjects and researchers to live, learn, interact, research, and, of course, theorize, from the margins; others that focus on archives and disciplinary histories, for example, reimagine how to challenge institutional power most critically to bring to light the insights of people (in community, public, and academic settings) who have been silenced, pushed aside, or invisibilized by the dominant power structures already mentioned.

The volume is divided into four sections: ‘Critical Paths,’ ‘Framing the Narrative,’ ‘Visualizing the Present,’ and ‘Placing Community.’ “Each section engages with ideas of critical and ethical folkloristics and invite us to rethink folklore studies from multiple perspectives, from the concrete to the abstract” (13). Some of the skills, ideas, and tools that readers can expect to gain from these pages include many fine examples of reflexivity, as “[c]laiming a clear positionality and a reflexive apparatus is necessary for doing folklore critically and ethically” (18-19). Indeed, whether the book is talking about the margins of academia, or the margins of our own subjectivities, we find throughout the hopeful message that you can—and should—bring your full self into the research and writing process and engage the world ethically and critically with the tools, languages, lenses, senses, knowledges, and interests you already possess.

Also in the text we encounter the important idea that we should embrace engaging in difficult topics that often push us outside our comfort zones (19). Indeed, the “authors in this book touch on issues that most folklorists tend to avoid: racism, sexism, ableism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, elitism, violence, and regionalism” (9). However, they put them front and center and open them up, in dialogue with voices from the margins, not only to “share stories that otherwise may not be told, [but also] to experiment with format[s] and content [that feel right for each of us], and to (re)create, (re)think, and (re)model our discipline[s]” (19). There are also critical practical skills for fieldworkers likely not found elsewhere in folklore literature, skills that can help all, but

particularly women of color, defend ourselves and each other in the dangerous dominant social order. For instance, Mintzi Auanda Martínez-Rivera’s chapter in which she speaks firsthand in an open, vulnerable, and honest way of the difficulties of doing research in a conflict zone in Mexico.

Ultimately, what the editors and the contributors of the book are trying to achieve is a more honest, reflexive, critical, and ethical set of approaches, conversations, methodologies, narratives, and histories to set us on “alternative paths that can enrich and strengthen folklore studies in ways that are relevant and necessary for the twenty-first century” (19). An enriched and strengthened folkloristics means a discipline that puts forth work that matters, disrupts the status quo, and creates a more equitable world, anywhere we are challenged by the most pressing issues of our troubled times.



Engaging the African Diaspora in K-12 Education. Kia Lilly Caldwell and Emily Susanna Chávez, eds.

(London: Peter Lang Press, 2020, 326 pp.)

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On September 17, 2020, former President Donald Trump announced that he planned to craft the 1776 Commission—a commission charged with developing and promoting “patriotic education” and “pro-American curriculum” (Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump at the White House Conference on American History,” September 17, 2020).

The commission was largely in response to 1) educators becoming increasingly critical and honest about the white supremacist, genocidal foundations of the United States and 2) the 1619 Project—an ongoing journalistic endeavor spearheaded by Nikole Hannah-Jones that seeks to “reframe the country’s history...[by placing] the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country” (Jake Silverstein, “Editor’s note and introduction” in the “1619 Project,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019, 4-5). Trump and his followers viewed these approaches to American history as “toxic propaganda [and] ideological poison” which “if not removed, will dissolve the civic bonds that tie us together, [and] will destroy [the] country” (Trump). During his 1776 Commission announcement, the former president declared that discussion of race in the classroom likens itself to an imposition of a “new segregation”—a sentiment that continues to be echoed by senators and congresspeople, educators and administrators, and parents and students. In 2021, a slew of Republican-driven bills in many states were introduced to restrict the teaching of critical race theory—a way to think about systemic racism—and other discussions of racism. While a reactionary response to progressive change is the norm in this country, it is important for educators to continue to resist teaching our children an inaccurate and deeply flawed version of our history

that upholds white supremacist ideology. One such act of resistance is the recently published text *Engaging the African Diaspora in K-12 Education*.

Edited by Kia Lilly Caldwell and Emily Susanna Chávez, the volume contains chapters and curricula by K-12 educators, librarians, academics, scholar-activists, and administrators whose work centers around the teaching of the African diaspora. They aim to provide a text that considers how we teach the African diaspora at the K-12 level. *Engaging the African Diaspora in K-12 Education* argues that while the African diaspora is crucial in K-12 it is either taught inaccurately, completely overlooked, or reserved for higher education. This volume thoroughly addresses this gap between K-12 education and higher education by equipping educators with ways to competently incorporate issues such as U.S. and Latin American slavery, the Haitian Revolution, and the role of art in Black liberation into their curricula.

The book initially took shape in the fall of 2014 with the founding of the African Diaspora Fellows Program (ADFP) at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. The goal is to provide professional development around African and African diaspora studies to middle- and high school teachers in North Carolina. While this program reached and resonated with a group of educators in the state, there was an acknowledgement that this type of information should also be shared nationally—hopefully in the form of a book. Most contributors have participated in ADFP as fellows, speakers, or planning members. Together they offer a text that advances “educators’ knowledge of and familiarity with African [diasporic] communities” and provides “resources for teaching about topics and people that are often invisible or overlooked in traditional school curricula” (1).

Engaging the African Diaspora in K-12 Education is sectioned into seven parts. The first, “Slavery and Emancipation in the Americas,” contains chapters that address overlooked or whitewashed aspects of slavery in middle- and high-school classrooms. For example, Signe Peterson Fourmy addresses the unique and often neglected experiences of enslaved women—from sexual abuse and reproductive resistance to division of labor among prescribed gender lines. Like other contributors, Peterson Fourmy also provides age-appropriate modifications for subjects like sexual assault. Such modifications allow younger students to see the complexity of history in a way that does not rob them of a truthful presentation. The second section, “Pan-Africanism and Perspectives Across the Diaspora,” focuses on ways to think about the interconnectedness of the African diaspora through the exploration of Pan-Africanism, forms of autoethnography, and Black German Studies.

Meanwhile the third section, “Black Communities and Movements in the United States,” is composed of chapters with goals to correct historical narratives of Black folks and communities by humanizing the enslaved and engaging the idea of music as resistance. In “Challenging the Master Narrative: Teaching the Civil Rights Movement Accurately and Effectively,” Hasan Kwame Jeffries writes about how damaging it is to teach students about the false dichotomy between figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X; the need to look at Civil Rights activism outside the South to paint a fuller picture of Black resistance; and the importance of teaching students about the power of organization for material change.

Section four, “Centering Afro-Latin American Experiences,” addresses the erasure of Afro-Latin American experiences in K-12 curricula through discussions of African descendants in Latin American countries and ethnoeducation. Section five, “Teaching Critically About the African Diaspora,” includes chapters of culturally responsive professional development, the use of critical race theory in thinking about Eurocentric curricula, the importance of primary sources in teaching the African diaspora, and ways to competently complete research in the “digital information age.” As is the trend within this book, Mireille Djenno provides practical advice on how students can gain access to primary documents, books, art, and more in “Bibliographic Resources for Learning About and Teaching the African Diaspora.”

Section six, “African Diaspora-Centered Professional Development: Reflections from Educators and Curriculum Specialists,” features perspectives from current and former ADFP participants.

Holly Marie Jordan’s chapter seems especially relevant during a time when educators are needing to resist misinformed desires to squelch discussions of race in schools. She writes:

Until our schools and society have abandoned the oppressive and whitewashed status quo, our classrooms must be places where educators and students together continue the powerful history of resistance that began in the African diaspora. As they develop, students must encounter meaningful learning that allows them to divine their own roles in the struggle for equity and liberation. (264)

The final section provides three phenomenal curriculum resource guides: developing and maintaining identity and resistance in the transatlantic slave trade, the Haitian Revolution and the Negritude movement, and how to approach analyzing activists’ texts from Abolition to the ongoing movement for Black lives. Each guide provides key topics, general questions educators and students could investigate, standards that align with the topic, and resources such as websites, books, primary resources, art, and more.

In a time when educators are finding themselves in struggles to our students how to engage honestly and accurately with our past, present, and future, *Engaging the African Diaspora in K-12 Education* is a truly timely book.