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The Untold History in Textbooks: The Bias and Absence of History in U.S. History Textbooks and the Impact on Black Students

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Background

- Generally black¹ students struggle in history and school more than white students (Portrait of Inequality, 2011)
- Only 60% of black students graduate (Portrait of Inequality 2011)
- Black students do worse in history (Loewen, 2007)

Research Questions

1. What methods can history teachers use to spark interest, in history, rather than just reading facts out of a textbook ?
2. What is some information left out of history textbooks that would help black students learn and how can teachers acknowledge this information to positively impact their students?
3. What effects does connecting history to student's lives, present day issues, and other historical events have on the students?

¹ “Black” is used as a general term, while “African American” is used when specifically referencing someone from Africa.

The Untold History in Textbooks: The Bias and Absence of Accurate History in U.S. History Textbooks and the Impact on Black Students

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Findings

Who writes History Textbooks?

- Sales publishing representatives write textbooks (Loewen, 2007)

Countering Biases In Textbooks

- Teaching students to critically analyze texts allows them to examine portrayal of historical figures and not just memorize facts (Schleppegrell, Greer & Taylor, 2008)
- Facts can be biased too

American Exceptionalism

- The idea that America is always right, no matter what their decisions have been.
- Question the motives of America's leaders, it is the American people's *duty* to do so and it makes America stronger (Chandler, 2010)
- Teach students non-American exceptionalist history

What Textbooks Should Do

- Create “historical thinkers” in classrooms, not just students searching for factual answers
- Focus more on causation and connection between historical events
- Increase opportunities for discussion by showing different historical viewpoints

Silence of African American History

- There is a lack of African American representation in U.S. history and this has shown to impact black students' self esteem (Loewen, 2007)

Alternate Options to Textbooks

- Primary Sources
- Internet
- Connecting these alternate options to present day issue

Methodology

- Information was found through online database searches to find research studies from the past 10 years

Theoretical Framework

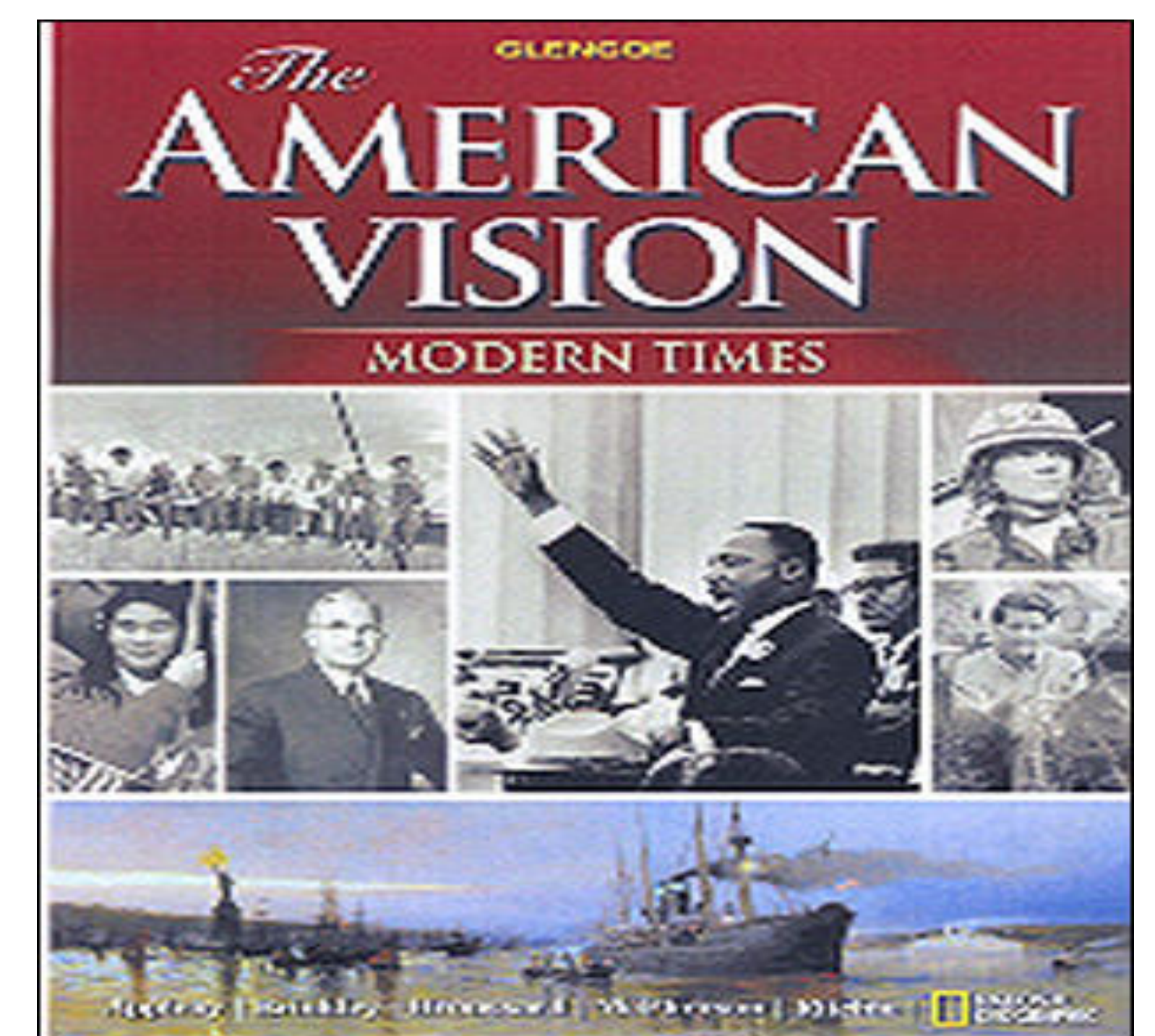
- Critical Theory
- “Who controls the past controls the future” (Orwell, 1949)
- It is a school failure, not a student failure (Watson-Gegeo and Welchman Gegeo, 1995)

Conclusion

- Everyone, especially teachers, need to learn about the inequalities textbooks expose
- Without acknowledgment then nothing will change

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my family, friends, classmates, and professor for helping me throughout this process



Caption: A textbook that is used in many high school history courses

<http://webs.rps205.com/curriculum/ssandvoc/HSTextbooks.html>