

# WHEN RACIAL RECKONING AND “ANTI-WOKENESS” COLLIDE

## What’s Left Out of AP African American Studies and Why Everyone Should Care

African American Studies without Audre Lorde, James Baldwin or bell hooks? African American Studies censored of core concepts like “systemic marginalization” or “intersectionality”? African American Studies that allows states and districts to decide if students will even see topics like Reparations or Affirmative Action? African American Studies without Black Lives Matter, the scholarship of Black Queer Studies, Black feminism or the student struggles for Black Studies itself? After so much enthusiasm and anticipation, how was *this* the revised Advanced Placement African American Studies course outline unveiled by the College Board on the first day of Black History Month, February 1, 2023?

This report will outline:

- how the development and subsequent revisions of AP African American Studies (AP AAS) reflects its position at the collision of a movement for reform, sparked by the racial reckoning of 2020, with the anti-woke backlash that has been building momentum ever since;
- what was erased from the course, how it amounts to censorship, and why that matters;
- why we cannot trust the College Board to fix and steward this course on its own, given their current failures and history of capitulations to extremist censorship demands.

## Out of the Summer of 2020: New Momentum for AP AAS

In 2020-21, thanks to the demands of a united, multiracial and multigenerational coalition of Americans, there was enough sense of urgency about the need for education around understanding racism and, particularly, structural racism in the US, to influence even the College Board – the powerful institution behind SAT tests, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and other measures that act as gatekeepers on the path to higher education. The College Board found an opportunity to fill a market need, after more than a decade of stalled plans for AP AAS. The protests in the wake of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor’s murders created an opportunity for a reset. Many young people who were looking for ways to understand what they just witnessed, what many of them had been a part of, created new momentum for a course with the objectives of understanding our history, its contemporary ramifications, and its implications for how we envision an emancipatory future.

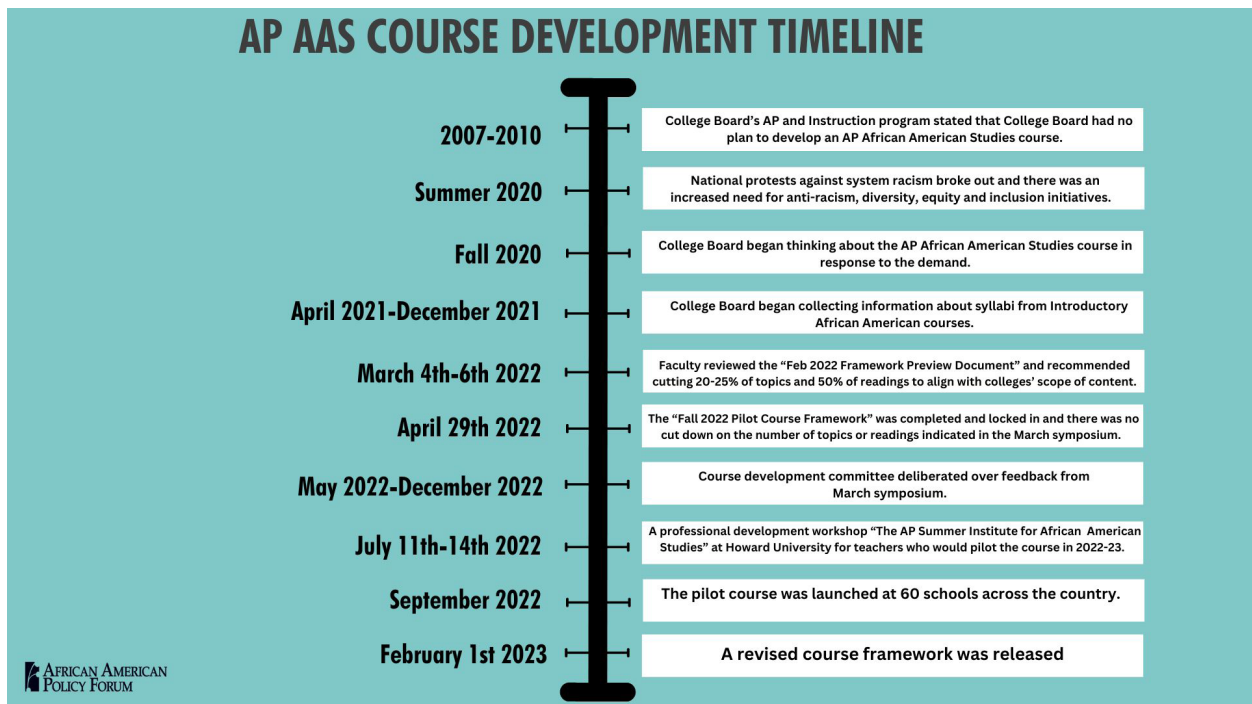
This national demand for anti-racism education initiatives also drove colleges and universities to change their attitudes towards such a course. A College Board official [reported](#) that colleges

that had previously not been willing to offer credit for the course were more “amenable” to it after the summer of protests.

With renewed attention on racial inequities in education, the College Board was also keen to have a course offering that would attract Black students and fend off scrutiny of just how few Black students are enrolled in AP courses. In fact, [NBC News reported Education Trust data](#) shows: “15% of high school students in the US are black, but they are only 9% of students enrolled in AP courses.”

From a financial standpoint, with many colleges opting to move to test-optional and test-free admissions, the College Board’s flagship SAT test might have become less ubiquitous. But this policy shift away from mandatory SAT testing only made AP tests even more significant markers of student achievement in college applications and even more critical to the College Board as a moneymaker. In fact, according to [Forbes](#), the AP is the College Board’s largest income generator. And as more and more colleges move away from the SAT, the AP courses become even more important to the College Board, for certain, but also to admissions officers who are determining academic merit only via GPAs and APs.

So, the College Board set out to curate the course in consultation with hundreds of high school and college instructors, combing through Black studies course offerings from institutions across the country, highlighting key concepts and topics that the course should include. Core themes emerged, including the top three: the black diaspora, black feminism and intersectionality, and the language of race and racism – including structural racism. The pilot framework for AP African American Studies would join 38 existing AP courses that are meant to replicate a college level curriculum. The research development for the course that has been piloted in 60 high schools across the country, reported, “strong consensus” across college course syllabi when considering sources, topics, recurring concepts and the major disciplinary ideas of Black Studies.



## Students Wanted Black Voices and Depth of Content

The [original](#) 2022 course framework included a report on the results of student focus groups about what they hoped to learn in AP African American Studies:

“Students expressed these four expectations for the course:

- Black perspectives should ground the text and materials.
- Emphasis should be placed on joy and accomplishments rather than trauma.
- Students should be provided with an unflinching look at history and culture.
- Students should have an opportunity to learn about lesser-known figures, culture, intersectionality, and connections across time and topics.”

Students “expressed a desire for depth of content and noted that most of their existing knowledge about African American studies is self-taught, often via social media.” One said, “I would like to learn how these historical events and historical people have affected African Americans today. I feel like that’s such an important topic to talk about and it helps us understand more about how society works.” The original course framework of February 2022 reflected student demands for depth, rigor and content consistent with college-level scholarship in the field of Black Studies.

## Colliding with a Juggernaut: the Backlash Hits AP AAS

While the protests from the summer of 2020 sparked the piloting of AP AAS, in the intervening years, a backlash to the same moment of racial reckoning grew into a juggernaut that would roll over academic freedom and racial justice in education in states and local communities across the country. Without political leaders willing to engage an organized resistance, this so-called “anti-woke” movement waged a disinformation campaign against Critical Race Theory and anti-racism that brought educational gag orders in the form of so-called “anti-CRT” state legislation, education department regulations and other forms.

With little political energy put towards a response to anti-Black attacks like the so-called Stop WOKE Act in Florida and legislation and other measures enacted in 20 other states, the juggernaut’s momentum intensified towards greater attacks on LGBTQ+ rights and related teaching and learning content. An unprecedented wave of book bans and attacks on what teachers could say in the classroom was already well underway. AP African American Studies was a creation made possible by (and designed to be marketed to) Black students and their parents, but it collided directly with this backlash.

Unfortunately, the \$1.6 billion-dollar non-profit, College Board, failed to take an ethical stand when its AP African American Studies course ran into the buzzsaw of “anti-woke” censorship demands. Far from living up to its own [professed](#) opposition to censorship, the College Board’s revisions unveiled on Feb 1 confirmed the worst fears of many. An opportunity that many had awaited for years, some even decades, resulted in profound disappointment.

The framework that was released differed dramatically from earlier drafts in precisely the arenas that had given rise to so much excitement. Key concepts and movements such as structural racism, intersectionality, Black feminism, queer theory, Black Lives Matter, reparations, the New Jim Crow, were either erased altogether or reduced to “Sample Topics” specifically subject to censorship dictates of states and districts.

Historic and contemporary giants in the field (including scholars, writers and activists) that had appeared in the original framework for the course were completely gone.

<b>Before (Feb. 2022 Course Framework)</b>	<b>After (Feb. 2023 Course Framework)</b>
James Baldwin (3)	REDACTED
Amiri Baraka [formerly LeRoi Jones] (2)	REDACTED
Tiffany E. Barber (3)	REDACTED
Ta-Nehisi Coates (6)	REDACTED
Cathy Cohen (1)	REDACTED
Patricia Hill Collins (2)	REDACTED
James Cone (1)	REDACTED
Kimberlé Crenshaw (3)	REDACTED
Ta-Nehisi Coates (6)	REDACTED
Cathy Cohen (1)	REDACTED
Angela Davis (1)	REDACTED
Roderick Ferguson (1)	REDACTED
Barbara J. Fields (1)	REDACTED
Henry Louis Gates Jr. (4)	REDACTED (except for 1 map and one mention of thanks)
Nikki Giovanni (1)	REDACTED
Jacquelyn Grant (1)	REDACTED
Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1)	REDACTED (except for one mention of thanks)
Darlene Clark Hine (2)	REDACTED
bell hooks (1)	REDACTED
Leslie Kay Jones (1)	REDACTED
June Jordan (1)	REDACTED
Robin D.G. Kelley (1)	REDACTED
Audre Lorde (3)	REDACTED
Manning Marable (2)	REDACTED
Gloria Naylor (1)	REDACTED
Fabio Rojas (1)	REDACTED
Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2)	REDACTED
Alice Walker (1)	REDACTED
Sylvia Wynter (3)	REDACTED

A list of works entitled “Sources for Consideration” (in the original 2022 AP African American Studies course framework) were chosen because they represented “a strong consensus from college syllabi.” Few of the titles remained in the 2023 revised version of the course.

<b>“Sources for Consideration” in Original AP AAS</b>	<b>Revised AP AAS</b>
<i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> by W.E.B. DuBois	Included
<i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i> by Michelle Alexander	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
“Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King Jr.	<b>EXPUNGED</b> (other works by Dr. King were included)
<i>Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World</i> by David Walker	Included
<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> by Frederick Douglass	<b>EXPUNGED</b> (other works by Douglass were included)
“Discourse on Colonialism” by Aimé Césaire	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
<i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself</i> by Harriet Jacobs	Included
“The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” by Langston Hughes	Included
“What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” by Frederick Douglass	Included
<i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i> by Thomas Jefferson	Included
“The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
<i>The Mis-Education of the Negro</i> by Carter G. Woodson	Included
<i>The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano</i> by Olaudah Equiano	Included
<i>Atlanta Exposition Address/Atlanta Compromise</i> by Booker T. Washington	Included
“If We Must Die” by Claude McKay	Included
<i>Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali</i> by D.T. Niane	Not included but replaced with “The Sunjata Story—Glimpse of a Mande Epic,” a griot performance of The Epic of Sundiata (video)
“The Ballot or the Bullet” by Malcolm X.	Included
<i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> by Frantz Fanon	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw	<b>EXPUNGED</b>

<b>“Sources for Consideration” in Original AP AAS</b>	<b>Revised AP AAS</b>
“On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Desire: Black Studies Toward the Human Project” by Sylvia Wynter	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
<i>Between the World and Me</i> by Ta-Nehisi Coates	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
“Message to the Grassroots” by Malcolm X.	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
“The Negro Art Hokum” by George Schuyler	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
“The Black Campus Movement and the Institutionalization of Black Studies, 1965-1970” by Ibram H. Rogers	<b>EXPUNGED</b>
“Black Studies and Global Perspectives: An Essay” by St. Clair Drake	<b>EXPUNGED</b>

The lists above do not include additional works specified in the Fall 2022 Pilot Course Guide that were also largely expunged by the final revisions. In fact, in a dramatic shift from both prior versions of the course, secondary sources – the essence of the field of Black Studies – were no longer listed in the course framework. This shift was explained in an introductory comment, “Anchoring the Course in Sources:” a focus on primary sources would avoid “extraneous political opinions or perspectives.”

Whatever explanations or excuses have been offered by the College Board for those revisions, the cuts they made were in direct alignment with the specific objections made by the Florida Department of Education. However, the majority of Americans oppose this censorship of Black Studies, books and scholars, believe in the freedom to learn, and support public education as a cornerstone of a multiracial democracy.

Organizations like the College Board must hear from all of us in that majority that they cannot censor us out of our own stories to satisfy neo-Confederate extremists and then market them back to us. Powerful educational institutions must, instead, be urged to live up to their stated values and to use their power and resources to ensure that all our students and teachers have access to the books, ideas and scholarship they need to build better futures.

### **What Other Cuts Were Made?**

The original “Learning Outcomes” for AP African American Studies included the essential themes and core concepts found in the course development research takeaways. This was also the case with the Course Goals and “Recurring Concepts” in the Fall 2022 pilot guide version. However, when these were revised for the Feb 2023 Course Goals, key elements had been struck out, including “intersections of race, gender, and class” and “systemic marginalization.” These were excised from their places as key underpinnings of the course—from being defined as “at the heart” of the course” which by AP standards would mean they could not be subject to state or local elective choice/censorship.

## What Was Expunged from Course Goals In Last Revision? (Expunged items in Strikethrough; Added items in CAPS)

- Identify ~~the intersections of race, gender, and class, as well as~~ connections between Black communities, in the United States and the broader African diaspora in the past and present.
- **COMPARE AND analyze A RANGE OF perspectives ABOUT THE MOVEMENTS, APPROACHES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND KEY FIGURES IN FREEDOM MOVEMENTS, AS EXPRESSED in text-based, data, and visual sources to develop well-supported arguments applied to real-world problems.**
- Evaluate the political, historical, aesthetic, and transnational contexts of major social movements, ~~including their past, present, and future implications.~~
- Develop a broad understanding of the many strategies African American communities have employed to represent themselves authentically, promote advancement, and combat the effects of inequality ~~and systemic marginalization locally and abroad.~~
- ~~Describe the formalization of African American studies and new directions in the field as part of ongoing efforts to articulate Black experiences and perspectives and create a more just and inclusive future.~~
- ~~Connect course learning with current events, local interests, and areas for future study.~~

There was more removed: applying arguments to “real world problems,” “including past, present and future implications” of social movements, and understanding the field of African American Studies, its history and connections to a “more just and inclusive future,” and the goal to “connect course learning with current events, local interests and areas for future study.”

**More cuts were made to the course topics.** By the Fall Pilot version of the course, “Black Queer studies” had been eliminated. Also dwindled down to only one mention in a book title was any critique of “colorblindness” or “postracialism.” Antiracist teacher training, strongly recommended in the research findings for course development, did not make it into the Fall version. Mass incarceration, reparations and Black Lives Matter were now optional weeklong units, though still fleshed out with suggested readings and explications of subtopics. Intersectionality remained as a required topic in addition to being part of the course goals and a “recurring concept,” but not for long.

AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY FORUM	Key Concepts Already Removed By Fall Revision Feb 2022 vs. Fall 2022	
	FEB 2022 (81 pages)	FALL 2022 (246 pages)
Black Queer Studies, queer of color critique	2	0
'Postracial' Racism and Colorblindness, Postracialism	6	1 <small>(Zero in final version)</small>
Antiracist (pedagogy, pedagogical/instructional approaches)	3	0

When the 2023 version of the course was made public, the comparison between Fall 2022 and Feb 2023 versions of the course was even more stark. Key concepts had been erased entirely, used only in reference to historic figures or reduced to optional single mentions.

**Mentions of Key Concepts in AP AAS Course  
Fall 2022 vs. Feb 2023**

	FALL 2022	FEB 2023
<b>Intersectionality, intersections</b>	26	1 <small>(Optional/ Can Be Censored)</small>
<b>Black Feminism/feminist(s), womanism</b>	39	3 <small>(Only historic figures)</small>
<b>Institutional racism, structural racism, systemic marginalization</b>	11	0
<b>Reparations</b>	15	1 <small>(Optional/ Can Be Censored)</small>
<b>Black Lives Matter (BLM), Movement for Black Lives</b>	11	1 <small>(Optional/ Can Be Censored)</small>

For comparison, the Fall 2022 Pilot course guide reveals the depth of the learning material for Black Lives Matter and Reparations (even as optional topics) that was offered to students.

**The Movement for Black Lives, Black Lives Matter in FALL 2022 version:  
Optional Topic with Included Sources and Descriptions**

Movements and Debates

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TOPIC 4.24, OPTION 4

# The Movement for Black Lives

**Starting Points**

- [The Black Lives Matter Statement: What We Believe](#)
- "The Matter of Black Lives" by Jelani Cobb, *The New Yorker*, 2016
- *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21st Century* by Barbara Ransby, 2018
- *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 2019
- "A protester holding a Black Lives Matter sign" by Jermaine Gibbs, 2015, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (photograph)

**Explore**

- Similarities and differences between 20th-century Black political movements and the 21st-century Movement for Black Lives

**Possible Focus Areas**

- The Movement for Black Lives encompasses a coalition of activist organizations that support Black communities and call for the end of anti-Black racism, state-sanctioned violence, and gender discrimination. Organizations of this movement advocate for reparations, Black liberation, and gender equality.
- The Movement for Black Lives builds on the strategies and philosophies of prior Black political movements of the 20th century and similarly emerged in response to the police killings of African Americans.
- The Movement for Black Lives coalition is decentralized and relies on local leaders and grassroots organizations to organize around issues of importance in local communities. This approach generated the rapid growth of the movement nationally and internationally. It allows activists to leverage the movement to focus on specific issues of importance to Black communities in the Americas and elsewhere around the world.



## REPARATIONS in FALL 2022 version: Optional Topic with Included Sources and Descriptions

### Movements and Debates

# TOPIC 4.24, OPTION 3 Reparations

#### Possible Focus Areas

- The act of reparations, making amends or offering compensation for an injustice, has been debated in the case of African Americans since the 19th century. Discussions include various perspectives for understanding the impact of centuries of racial injustice inflicted on African Americans, from slavery, through Jim Crow policies, to the contemporary effects of this history that create barriers and unequal challenges for African Americans in the U.S. Just as historical and contemporary forms of anti-Black racism are global and not limited to the U.S., movements for reparations exist throughout the African diaspora.
- Contemporary debates on reparations encompass various perspectives in four areas:
  - Determining the nature and extent of wrongdoing (e.g., the developments in consideration for reparative justice, such as enslavement and Jim Crow legislation, and contemporary inequities, including health disparities, the school to prison pipeline, and the racial wealth gap).
  - Determining culpability (e.g., identifying who is responsible for harm, who has benefitted from injustices, and who should bear the cost)
  - Determining beneficiaries (e.g., the descendants of those enslaved in the U.S., recent immigrants)
  - Determining compensatory methods (e.g., monetary compensation, scholarships, public apologies)

#### Starting Points

- H.R. 40, [Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act](#)
- "[The Case for Reparations](#)" by Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Atlantic*, 2014
- Pinback button promoting reparations for the Tulsa Race Massacre, 2001, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

#### Explore

- The primary historical and contemporary debates about reparations for African Americans in the U.S.

- Ta-Nehisi Coates' article, "The Case for Reparations," expands the call for reparations beyond repair for the unjust enslavement of African Americans. It points to the long history of systemic discrimination that continued after slavery ended in 1865. Coates examines facets of Jim Crow era policies (1865–1968), such as those that denied African Americans equal access to housing equity, subjected them to residential discrimination, and compounded the effects of 19th-century impediments like sharecropping and tenant farming. By focusing on an expansive period, Coates' perspective highlights the enduring effects of systemic racism in American life, contesting the notion that it is a relic of a distant past and thus not quantifiable or compensable.

And the same can be said for Intersectionality, which was a required topic of the course.

## INTERSECTIONALITY was a required topic with required reading in Fall 2022 AP AAS pilot course

### Movements and Debates

# TOPIC 4.16 Intersectionality

#### Required Course Content

##### SOURCE ENCOUNTER

- "[Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color](#)" by Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Stanford Law Review*, 1991 (pp. 1241–1245)

##### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

**LO 4.16**  
Explain the concept of intersectionality and its connection to earlier Black feminist activism.

#### ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

##### EK 4.16.A

The term *intersectionality* refers to the interconnected nature of social categories (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, ability) and the interdependence of systems that create unequal outcomes for individuals. It is an approach that examines how interlocking forms of oppression manifest in many areas of society, including education, health, housing, incarceration, and wealth gaps.

##### EK 4.16.B

Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality*, building on a long tradition of Black feminist scholars and activists who critiqued the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories.

##### EK 4.16.B.1

In the 19th century, leaders such as Anna Julia Cooper and Maria Stewart linked their racial and gender identities and argued that racism and sexism could not be understood in isolation.

##### EK 4.16.C

In "Mapping the Margins," Kimberlé Crenshaw explains the need for intersectional approaches to create inclusive forms of public policy that avoid reproducing discrimination by accounting for the ways individuals are affected by interlocking systems of oppression.

## Where are the only mentions of BLM, reparations, and intersectionality in the revised February 2023 Framework?

These topics appear solely on a list of “*Sample Project Topics: Illustrative Only.*” Intersectionality appears well below a new entry: “Black Conservatism: development and ideology.”

**AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY FORUM**

### Where are BLM, reparations, and intersectionality now?

**Sample Project Topics: Illustrative Only**

*These topics are not a required part of the course framework that is formally adopted by states and that defines the exam. This list is a partial one for illustrative purposes and can be refined by states and districts.*

**IN-DEPTH HISTORICAL ENGAGEMENTS**

- The impact of the domestic slave trade on Black families
- Abolition and Abolitionists: Major figures, dynamics, and milestones
- The role of religion in African American resistance to enslavement
- Evangelicals and the international movement against the slave trade
- The impact of the G.I. Bill
- Local African American history and culture
- Black participation in the military: barriers and breakthroughs

**POLITICS AND POLICY DEBATES**

- Affirmative Action: approaches and controversies
- Black Lives Matter: Origins, impacts, critics
- Reparations debates in the U.S./ the Americas
- The legacy of redlining
- Crime, criminal justice, and incarceration
- African American health and healthcare outcomes in the United States
- Black conservatism: development and ideology
- Movements led by Black women: Combahee River Collective and beyond
- Black politics: African Americans and the political spectrum

**IMMERSIONS IN THE ARTS**

- The influence of African mythology and folklore in the Americas
- African American performance art
- The Harlem Renaissance: major works, figures, influences
- The Chicago Black Renaissance: major works, figures, influences
- Iconography in Black faith traditions
- Politics in the poetry and drama of the Black Arts Movement

**GLOBAL STUDIES**

- Africa and slavery: resistance, participation, and impact
- African American cultural ties to Africa
- Art and social change across the African diaspora
- Resistance and revolts: struggle across the diaspora
- The evolution of civil rights legislation

**SOCIETAL EXAMINATIONS**

- African Americans and the built environment: architecture and design
- African American demographics: patterns of migration and ethnic diversity
- Black families in the 20th century
- African American inventors and inventions
- Intersectionality and the dimensions of Black experiences
- The complexities of Afrocentricity and Black Nationalism
- Medical ethics: The Tuskegee Study; Henrietta Lacks
- Black athletes: history, achievement, and social roles
- Black thought leaders: writings, contributions, and impact
- Medicine, technology, and the environment
- The AIDS crisis and African American health
- Gay life and expression in Black communities
- The Black middle class in the 20th century

These sample topics are optional, to be sure, but, worse, they are **explicitly subject to state, local and even individual teacher censorship**. This makes these topics even more vulnerable to attack by so-called parents’ rights organizations who are already banning books at unprecedented rates across the country. Students in many states or districts may never have access to these topics at all.

While the College Board claimed that the revisions revealed in Feb 2023 were part of the normal process of course development, the changes that were made align very closely with the “concerns” of Florida’s Dept of Education:

## CONCERNS FOUND WITHIN COLLEGE BOARD’S SUBMITTED AP AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE

TOPICS FROM AP COURSE	CONCERN
<p><b>Topic 4.15</b> <b>Intersectionality and Activism</b></p>	<p>Intersectionality is foundational to CRT, and ranks people based on their race, wealth, gender and sexual orientation.</p> <p><b>INCLUDED READING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kimberle Crenshaw – Known as the “founder” of intersectionality, co-editor of <i>Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement</i></li> <li>• Angela Davis – self-avowed Communist and Marxist</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 4.19</b> <b>Black Queer Studies</b></p>	<p><b>INCLUDED READING:</b></p> <p>Roderick Ferguson - who exclaims, “We have to encourage and develop practices whereby queerness isn’t a surrender to the status quos of race, class, gender and sexuality. It means building forms of queerness that reject the given realities of the government and the market.”</p>
<p><b>Topic 4.29</b> <b>Movements for Black Lives</b></p>	<p>Movement for Black Lives is an organization with stated objectives that include eliminating prisons and jails, ending pretrial detention, and concluding “the war on Black trans, queer, gender non-conforming, and intersex people.”</p> <p><b>INCLUDED READING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leslie Kay Jones who wrote, “Every day, black people produce an unquantifiable amount of content for the same social media corporations that reproduce the white supremacist superstructures that oppress us.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 4.16</b> <b>Black Feminist Literary Thought</b></p>	<p><b>INCLUDED READING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell Hooks – Author of many intersectionality texts, and in the recommended reading states “I began to use the phrase in my work ‘white supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ because I wanted to have some language that would actually remind us continu-ally of the interlocking systems of domination that define our reality.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 4.30</b> <b>The Reparations Movement</b></p>	<p>All points and resources in this study advocate for reparations. There is no critical perspective or balancing opinion in this lesson.</p>
<p><b>Topic 4.31</b> <b>Black Study and Black Struggle in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b></p>	<p><b>INCLUDED READING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robin D.G. Kelley argues that activism, rather than the university system, is the catalyst for social transformation.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Kelley’s first book was a study of Black communists in Alabama.</li> <li>o Kelley warns that simply establishing safe spaces and renaming campus buildings does nothing to overthrow capitalism.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**The course is now designed so that the anti-truth states can excise the things they don't like, like mass incarceration, queer theory, or intersectionality.** In the process, they have recreated a Jim Crow system. It replicates the way segregation was accommodated in the federal transportation system. There was no segregation in the Northern states, but the moment the Mason Dixon line was crossed, local law prevailed and Blacks had to move to segregated cars. The same is happening now with this AP course. In states that permit it, students can learn about some of the contemporary issues in their independent projects, like how to write arguments supported by data seeking change, and how to think about topics like mass incarceration. However, South of the Mason-Dixon line, these topics can be censored with the blessing of the College Board.

What the College Board's revisions of AP AAS propose is perhaps even worse: some states will now be able to decide for all others what parts of Black history will be told and for what end, and what parts will not. This is quite distinct from how the College Board approaches AP Biology. **A state that tries to take evolution out of the curriculum will not receive AP credit, but a state that takes out structural racism or intersectionality from Black studies can undereducate its students with the College Board's complete blessing.**

## **Replaced and Watered Down: Excuses and Inadequate Euphemisms**

In the [New York Times](#), the College Board stated that concepts like intersectionality were still a part of the course but not the word itself. College Board's Dr. Jason Manoharan said the term "intersectionality" had been removed because it had been co-opted:

"I don't think it's effective to use a word that is basically drained of its meaning and filled up with political rhetoric," he said. "I think kids need to know the concept. And they need to understand the importance. But I don't think we need to create a needless battle over a term that has been compromised by disingenuous voices."

Manoharan's statement suggests, first, that he believes he has the qualifications and standing to decide what concepts in AP AAS have meaning, rather than the university scholars in the field that were surveyed by experts to develop the course. Additionally, his words suggest that powerful educational institutions like the College Board should reward disinformation campaigns, rather than take a stand to defend academic freedom and integrity against racist attacks. His abandonment of "intersectionality" as a term argues that reactionary politicians should get to decide what content in African American Studies has value, even as they defame the course as "lacking educational value."

The revised course's replacement concept for intersectionality – "Overlapping Dimensions of Black Life" – drains away the explanatory power of intersectionality as a conceptual, critical framework. It depicts the circumstances of individuals with multiple identities, not what the implications of those identities are in terms of power, structural, and systemic ramifications in law, society and culture. This shift in the course focus is also reflected in the treatment of "Black Feminism," which was replaced by mentions of individual historic figures or Black women's leadership. Mentions of the discrimination experienced by Bayard Rustin or the fact that Black lesbians did not "see or feel a space for them" in the civil or women's rights movements due to

their LGBTQ+ identities is not a substitute for the analytic framework of Black Queer Theory.

## **Excuses and Explanations**

When the extent of the erasure of works of scholarship was revealed in the new revised version of AP AAS, there was discussion about whether or not this reflected customary practice. Some have said that AP courses generally do not require secondary sources. This “consistency” excuse does not hold up to examination, particularly given that this was, explicitly, African American *Studies*, not a Black History course. The AP AAS revised framework note on “Anchoring the Course in Sources” implies that primary sources must be the main focus to avoid “extraneous political opinions or perspectives,” yet an analogous AP US Government and Politics says student success *depends* on “exposure to and analysis of multiple secondary sources.” Accordingly, relevant secondary sources are listed in each topic, even if they are optional. The revised AP AAS, too, acknowledges that students should engage with scholarly works but leaves this choice to teachers and no longer explicates those optional texts as was done in the prior iterations of the course.

Moreover, primary sources are not themselves inherently apolitical. Speeches by Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, two Black Republicans, were notable additions to the revised AP AAS course. Many of the deleted scholars and thinkers have published speeches or other primary materials that could have been chosen to replace scholarly articles that were erased from the course.

In an email released by the *Wall Street Journal*, a leader at the College Board admitted that the choice to move to primary sources was made, specifically, to avoid conflicting with laws in many states. College Board officials have also stated that there will be a Virtual Library of secondary sources available to students that will include many of the excised authors. The proposition that a separate (but equal) space for scholars of Black Studies would be sufficient or not be considered a harm to students or the public view of the value of the scholarship is untenable, particularly given the targeting of these individual scholars, their work, their books and more. Moreover, as the College Board has made clear, many states and districts would not allow teachers to draw from these sources. Teachers who would choose to do so would also be more vulnerable to local and state pressure as their choices would be individual, rather than having the institutional support of the College Board and AP.

## **What’s Left Out of Understanding Black Studies as a Field of Study?**

The final unit of the Fall 2022 pilot version of AP AAS included two full topics and powerful works of scholarship by Darlene Clark Hine and Robin D.G. Kelley, devoted to the field of Black Studies. The topics were “Tools of Black Studies Scholars” and “Black Study and Black Struggle in the 21st Century.” Black Studies remains now collapsed into a single topic that also includes Afrofuturism (which had been a standalone topic before). In this crowded topic, the only remaining required “source encounters” are related to two films, “Black Panther” and “Space is the Place.” Connections to conceptual frameworks that are now unnamed in the course, to African American communities today and to the student protest movements of the past that made the field possible, and to specific contemporary movements like the Movement for Black Lives have all been erased.

AP African American Studies is a course that came into being because students demanded it, much like their predecessors' protests led to the creation of Black Studies as a field of study. This example from the 2023 revisions showcases what a disservice it would be to offer a course that is hollowed out of vital concepts, scholarship, and connections to the present and, hopefully, to "a more just and inclusive future." Students deserve a restoration of the original course goals and framework.

## **Timeline of Revisions**

The College Board's introduction and subsequent revisions to the AP African American Studies curriculum followed a flurry of exchanges between the College Board and the Florida Department of Education, detailed in [this timeline](#). In late January of 2023, Gov. DeSantis publicly began speaking out against the course and ultimately denounced it as having "no educational value." The College Board's initial response to this denunciation was to simply state that the course was still in its pilot phase and "frameworks often change significantly as a result."

That exchange prompted an Open Letter signed by over 800 Black scholars stating that "the contention that an AP curriculum in African American Studies 'lacks educational value' is a proposition supported by white supremacist ideology, because it fundamentally demeans the history, culture, and contributions of Black people." Only after this widespread condemnation did the College Board defend the educational merit of the course and the field of African American Studies. Their denials of having been influenced by Florida's demands to make revisions were made less credible when Florida DOE released records revealing extensive exchanges with the College Board over several months.

The AP example is not only about the specific course, but the ability of a racist regime in one part of the US to set the standard nationally on what can be taught. We are living with the consequences of "Lost Cause" narratives promoted by the Daughters of the Confederacy and by [changes to textbook regulatory bodies in certain states](#) becoming nationalized via textbooks – [as recently as 2018](#) only 8 percent of high school seniors could identify that slavery was the cause of the Civil War. Rejecting the anti-Black backlash must also include rejecting the politics of appeasement that water down our ability to teach about the transformative potential of Black freedom struggles, past and present.

## **A Troubling Precedent: AP US History Was Whitewashed of the Word "Racism" in 2015**

As caught off guard as they may have seemed by Florida's condemnation of the AP AAS course, the backlash to the AP African American studies course pilot was something the College Board had faced before. In fact, the response and subsequent revisions to the 2014 updated AP US History framework could be seen as a dress rehearsal for the anti-CRT/anti-woke wave of legislation and the backlash to this course.

States like Oklahoma, Texas and Georgia objected to the 2014 version of AP US History on the grounds of ["anti-American bias"](#) and too much focus on "negative" aspects of American history vs. American exceptionalism. These three states introduced bills threatening to ban the course, while the Republican National Committee passed a resolution accusing the course of promoting "radically revisionist" history. Similar to the current AP AAS media controversy, in 2015, the College Board claimed to stand by the course as they had developed it, while making revisions in line with conservative demands.

According to [Newsweek](#), there was a wholesale change in descriptions of slavery and race in the new version: “Passages that previously cited racial attitudes, stereotyping, and white superiority in early American history have been rewritten or deleted, and some passages that previously implicated early European colonists in racism and aiding in destructive Native American warfare have been softened and replaced with more passive language.” When the 2015 revisions were announced, more mentions of the Founding Fathers and a section on “American Exceptionalism” were added. The resulting [AP US History framework](#) still used today does not include the words “racism” or “racist” – despite depicting racist rhetoric and iconography in primary source examples that students are required to view and analyze. Suggested correct responses on the AP US History Exam description to one such primary source document demonstrate how AP History students are not being taught the tools they need to name, let alone understand and analyze, racist, white supremacist ideas or how such ideas have been able to proliferate.

**AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description Sample Exam Document Replete with Racist Ideology with Sample Exam Responses**

**Document 2**

Source: Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, 1885.  
 It seems to me that God, with infinite wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future. Heretofore there has always been in the history of the world a comparatively unoccupied land westward, into which the crowded countries of the East have poured their surplus populations. But the widening waves of migration, which millenniums ago rolled east and west from the valley of the Euphrates, meet today on our Pacific coast. There are no more new worlds. The unoccupied arable lands of the earth are limited, and will soon be taken. The time is coming when the pressure of population on the means of subsistence will be felt here as it is now felt in Europe and Asia. Then will the world enter upon a new stage of its history—the *final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled*. . . . Then this race of unequalled energy, with all the majesty of numbers and the might of wealth behind it—the representative, let us hope, of the largest liberty, the purest Christianity, the highest civilization—having developed peculiarly aggressive traits calculated to impress its institutions upon mankind, will spread itself over the earth.

**Examples of acceptable use of the content of a document:**

- “Document 2 really demonstrates the effect of religious superiority, and the **pride in racial heritage**”

**Examples of supporting an argument using the content of a document:**

- “However, social causes were also a factor in the practice of American Imperialism. There was seen through the application of Social Darwinism to a global scale. Many felt that Anglo-Saxon, were a more fit race than any to expand, and Christianize and civilize the rest of the world (Doc. 2).” (Uses evidence from document 2—Strong’s assertions about the superiority Anglo-Saxons—to support an argument about a cause of American imperialism)

The 1885 document is an explicitly racist, Anglo-Saxon-Christian supremacist manifesto, welcoming the world approaching “*a new stage of its history—the final competition of races.*” When students must react on the exam to this overtly racist rhetoric, the Scoring Guidelines for AP Exam Sample Correct Responses suggest that a correct response from students would note that the document demonstrated “*pride in racial heritage*” or that “[*many felt that Anglo-Saxon, were a more fit race.*” There is implicit acknowledgement of the belief in racial superiority, but that idea is normalized, whether that is the intention or not, without an analytic framework or even the words racist or racism available to contextualize how this document reflected and proliferated racist, white supremacist ideology.

All students are harmed by the failure to teach basic literacy about the proliferation of racist ideas in the United States. This 2015 example of appeasement of conservative legislative threats to AP US History presages both the AP African American Studies revisions and the wave of anti-CRT, anti-woke legislation across the country. It is precisely this gap in literacy about racist ideas and structural racism that has facilitated the “anti-woke” disinformation campaign that has robbed anti-racism and Critical Race Theory of their original meanings and recoded them to mean “anti-white.”

## AP US Government and Politics 2023 exam excised *Roe v. Wade*

Similarly, in 2022, when the *Dobbs* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the College Board chose to avoid running afoul of any conservative blowback. *Roe v. Wade*, which had appeared as one of 15 required Supreme Court cases in the AP US Government and Politics course and exam, was quietly removed from the 2023 exam with its future status uncertain, pending “an update this fall.”

### ***Walking a Fine Line: Censorship, Anti-woke Laws and What AP Stands For***

On March 2, 2022, after the initial Feb 2022 version of the AP AAS course outline was developed, the College Board responded to the confusion and fears of teachers facing a wave of anti-CRT, “anti-woke” legislative, regulatory and personal attacks by sending a statement of principles to all AP teachers called *What AP Stands For*. [What AP Stands For](#) would also become a new preface to the Fall 2022 and February 2023 versions of AP African American Studies. While claiming that this document demonstrates how the College Board was taking a stand against censorship, the document’s other purpose was to show that AP courses did not run afoul of any of these new laws. Many of the principles laid out in *What AP Stands For* use language similar to the talking points used by anti-woke politicians and parents’ rights protestors.

The College Board references such common buzzwords and phrases as: “transparency,” “indoctrination,” “students are not required to feel a certain way,” “can evaluate for themselves.” Diversity in backgrounds is not sufficient—the College Board added “diversity in viewpoints” as well.

As [EdWeek](#) noted, the principles also align with anti-CRT, “anti-antiracism” legislation from Virginia, North Dakota, Texas, Florida and New Hampshire:

## EducationWeek®

Sample text of AP principles	Sample text of education bills/bans
The AP program "makes public its course frameworks and sample assessments."	Virginia governor's executive order: Superintendent of public instruction must "ensure that parents are empowered with open access to information on primary instructional materials utilized in any school."
"AP courses enable students to develop as independent thinkers and to draw their own conclusions. Evidence and the scientific method are the starting place for conversations in AP courses."	North Dakota HB1508: "Each school district and public school shall ensure instruction of its curriculum is factual, objective, and aligned to the kindergarten through grade [12] state content standards."
"AP students are expected to analyze different perspectives from their own, and no points on an AP Exam are awarded for agreement with a viewpoint."	Texas HB3979: Teachers who discuss a "particular current event or widely debated and currently controversial issue of public policy or social affairs...shall, to the best of the teacher's ability, strive to explore the topic from diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective."
"AP students are not required to feel certain ways about themselves or the course content."	Florida HB7: Prohibits instruction that makes students believe they must "feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress" because of past actions by members of the "same race, color national origin or sex."
"Students are encouraged to evaluate arguments but not one another. Respectful debate of ideas is cultivated and protected; personal attacks have no place in AP."	New Hampshire HB2: Prohibits teaching students "that one's age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, mental or physical disability, religion or national origin is inherently superior to people of another age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, mental or physical disability, religion, or national origin."



## Double Standard: Evolution Cannot Be Censored from AP Biology, but Black Lives Matter, Reparations, and Intersectionality Can Be Censored from AP African American Studies

Given the College Board's nationwide business model that seeks acceptance and endorsement from states with very different political environments, the institution framed its tip-toeing around anti-woke rhetoric and legislative attacks in "What AP Stands For" as **taking a stand against censorship**. As [EdWeek](#) described, the College Board's response to questions about how teachers should approach the APs in the new environment: "Well, it's complicated."

While most of "What AP Stands For" deflects or appeases the growing wave of anti-CRT, anti-antiracism, anti-woke legislation that snowballed into attacks on teaching about LGBTQ+ issues and identities, the College Board did seemingly take a stand on who should have a say in determining course content: "Parents do not define which college-level topics are suitable within AP courses; AP course and exam materials are crafted by committees of professors and other expert educators in each field."

And, as previously mentioned, AP also took a stand against censorship and laid out the consequences of bans on required concepts, particularly for "the heart" of a college subject: "If a school bans required topics from their AP courses, the AP Program removes the AP designation from that course and its inclusion in the AP Course Ledger provided to colleges and universities." In addition to the AP Biology example discussed earlier, [EdWeek cited](#) another example: "an AP U.S. Government and Politics teacher must assign the reading of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "Letter From Birmingham Jail" essay, College Board says." Without that required text, the course would lose its AP certification. Disturbingly, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which was on a list of recommended readings in the original course framework, did not survive the revisions to AP African American Studies.

So, what was "at the heart" of AP African American Studies that should have been protected from censorship just as evolution was protected in AP Biology? The College Board experts reported "tremendous alignment in what they heard" that resulted in the identified essential themes and core concepts that were reflected in the goals (called "Learning Outcomes") for the course. One of the key "research takeaways" was that core concepts should include Black feminism and intersectionality and the language of race and racism, which included structural racism.

### What is "at the heart" of AP African American Studies?

For the postconversation survey, the AP Program proposed more specific titles for content topics and themes. These are similar to the data shown in Table 3 but are not a 1:1 match, so results should be interpreted with that caveat in mind. Intersectionality, Cultural Production and Appropriation, and Structural Racism were selected as the most essential themes. In terms of alignment with actual college courses, respondents indicated they spend

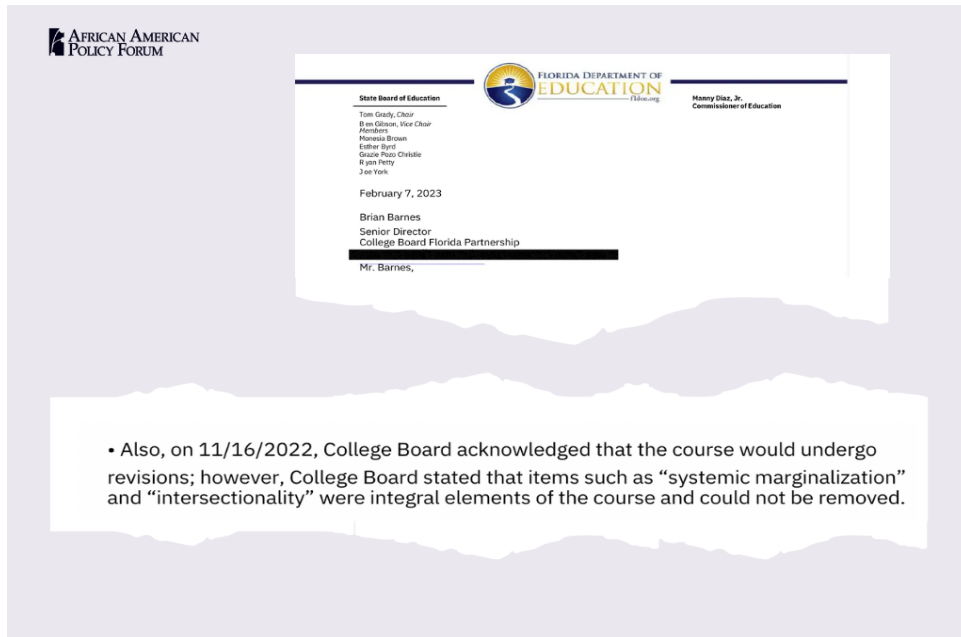
#### COURSE CONTENT

##### Research Takeaways:

- Students should understand **core concepts**, including diaspora, Black feminism and intersectionality, the language of race and racism (e.g., structural racism, racial formation, racial capitalism) and be introduced to important approaches (e.g., Pan-Africanism, Afrofuturism).
- Each unit should foster **interdisciplinary analysis**, with specific disciplines identified (e.g., history, literature, arts, social sciences) and recurring across the course.

The Fall 2022 Pilot Course included “intersections of identity” as one of three “Recurring Concepts”: “major disciplinary ideas” that would be “woven throughout each unit of the course.”

Further evidence of the centrality of these to the course was detailed in the Florida Department of Education Letter to the College Board of Feb 7, 2023. The Florida DOE alleged that on 11/16/2022: “College Board stated that items such as “systemic marginalization” and “intersectionality” were integral elements of the course and could not be removed.”



Sadly, this protective stance against censorship of these “integral elements,” if true as stated by Florida’s DOE, did not hold.

On April 26th, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported on a trove of emails](#) that expose the truth we’ve long suspected—the College Board lied about the politically motivated, profit-driven revisions it made to its AP African American Studies course. In recent weeks we’ve seen a groundswell of opposition to the College Board’s gutting of the brand new course from Black Studies scholars, feminists and queer theorists, public school teachers, parents, and students. The College Board responded to the outrage with round after round of blatant denials and PR spin.

First, the College Board claimed that the removal of topics such as Black feminism, intersectionality, black queer theory and activism, mass incarceration, and modern social justice movements were not motivated by demands from Florida Governor Ron DeSantis or the conservative state’s Board of Education, but rather were made [to bring the course in line with AP standards that precluded the use of “secondary sources.”](#) The Florida DOE took an easy victory lap, [releasing the record of a year-long correspondence with College Board staff](#) over whether the course complied with the state’s new “anti-woke” laws.

Even after this embarrassing revelation, [the College Board maintained that its communications with Florida officials had not prompted the changes](#), which they further claimed were sanctioned by their advisory committee of Black Studies professors and scholars. Now, we learn

that this is not true; email exchanges reveal that at least some of these scholars [protested in emails to these revisions](#), saying they were **not consulted on major changes** that undermined the integrity of the course and misrepresented the field of Black Studies.

The *WSJ* revealed that on February 9, Professor Nishani Frazier of the University of Kansas wrote to fellow curriculum committee and College Board staff members, saying

*I have patiently and quietly watched the ubiquitous interviews and media assertions that AP would not make changes at the behest of any group beyond professors, teachers, and students. If this is so, which student, professor, or teacher suggested adding black conservatives to the course over Combahee River Collective? [ . . . ] We all know this is a blatant lie. In fact, the major changes which occurred came from my unit—and not once did AP speak with me about these changes. Instead, it rammed through revisions, pretended course transformation was business as usual, and then further added insult to injury by attempting to gaslight the public with faux innocence.*

The College Board has not only capitulated to the forces of institutional racism and historical erasure, it has used dedicated Black Studies scholars like Professor Frazier as both swords and shields to cover for its cowardice and duplicity. The College Board has also used supposed concern for the welfare of teachers as the excuse for capitulating to ‘anti-woke’ disinformation and censorship campaigns – instead of using their enormous resources to stand up to those forces that have already done so much harm to educators, especially to Black educators. In response to her message, College Board executive Trevor Packer offered an apology to the faculty advisers for what he admitted was “a violation of our core processes for developing AP frameworks.” Yet the College Board continued to make statements to the media defending the revisions and claiming that they “were consistent with our typical approach of making all AP courses available across the country.”

Only after the *WSJ*’s recent request for comment did the College Board rush to head off the bad publicity with [a vague statement about revising the course yet again](#). Released April 24th, it offers no commitment to restore Black feminism and Black queer theory to the course, no promise to teach students about mass incarceration or the Black Lives Matter movement—it merely claims that “the updated framework, shaped by the development committee and subject matter experts from AP, will ensure that those students who do take this course will get the most holistic possible introduction to African American Studies.”

As Frazier wrote in her email, “It is no surprise that AP received challenges from white conservative groups unhappy with the presence of black studies in schools. [ . . . ] The issue is not why we must fight against DeSantis. It is why we must enter into battle with a weak partner.”

### **What are the broader implications of Florida’s attack on AP AAS and the College Board’s appeasement strategy?**

If we don’t stop this “anti-woke” crusade against anti-racism, there will be no limit to the contagion. The College Board’s appeasement response with AP US History did not prevent the backlash from coming for AP African American Studies, it only emboldened and strengthened the attacks. Florida has not embraced the watered-down AP AAS course; it is now developing separate curricula to replace all AP courses. And this backlash has not been contained to Florida nor to one governor. Given the effectiveness of the attack on AP AAS in garnering

media attention, there has already been a snowball effect as additional governors in red states attempt to outdo one another in demonstrating their commitment to “anti-wokeness.” Additional states are reviewing the AP AAS course, and some are calling for changes to other AP courses. Florida lawmakers are now [seeking to replace](#) the SAT with a standardized test dubbed “classical and Christian” and to spend millions to develop their own versions of AP courses and exams. There is a broader assault against public education itself, which is a key element of a multiracial democracy, along with voting rights that the same forces seek to diminish as well.

This focus on college-level AP courses is a bridge from the prior focus of “anti-woke,” anti-LGBTQ+ attacks on K-12 education towards the next battle ground: higher education. While these attacks on higher ed are not new, they are being specifically targeted for attack in 2023. The first months of 2023 included a hostile takeover of a public honors college in Florida that was singled out as a haven for LGBTQ+ students, and the elimination or renaming of DEI programs at many FL colleges. Academic freedom itself is being re-defined by the ‘anti-woke’ movement. As was noted in [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), “Quixotically, they call for restricting academic freedom (commonly understood as the freedom to teach and conduct research in an atmosphere free of government intervention) in the name of protecting academic freedom (which they define as the protection of unpopular speech from social and institutional accountability).” All this is happening as we await a US Supreme Court decision that has the potential to eliminate affirmative action programs across the country. Workplace diversity programs also face a wave of legal attacks.

Model legislation is gaining momentum in at least a [dozen states](#) to cut DEI programs entirely from public colleges and universities (already underway in Florida) and eliminate affirmative action policies in admissions and hiring. The use of diversity statements in faculty hiring, which had expanded in the aftermath of the racial reckoning of 2020, has been specifically targeted and has already been eliminated by the [University of North Carolina’s Board of Governors](#) and [several universities in Texas](#). Similar to the College Board, universities and colleges are all navigating the financial implications of standing up to these attacks. We must demand that the most powerful and well-resourced of these institutions take a stand for real academic freedom in the face of conservative intrusions, because [many poorly funded educational institutions are far more vulnerable](#) to legislative and regulatory attacks.

## **BUILDING A MOVEMENT TO RESIST**

### **Open Letter Campaigns with over 5,000 Signatories**

[Hundreds of scholars signed](#) this ***Scholars in Support of Restoring Integrity of AP African American Studies*** letter in mid-February. Thirty [Black LGBTQ+ organizations](#) also signed on to a letter that denounced the “relentless attacks that have led to book banning, curriculum censorship, politically motivated purges of educators, and an exodus of skilled teachers.” And [thousands have signed](#) an [Open Letter on Fighting “Anti-Woke” Censorship of Intersectionality and Black Feminism](#).

Signatories from across the US and around the world comment that they are hungry for ways to join the fight against censorship of these vital areas of study and for equity in education. As these attacks sadly become normalized, it is heartening to see more names added to the Open

Letter every day and to receive messages both of solidarity “for liberation, dignity, and joy of black girls, women, and people of all genders” and of alarm. As one signer wrote, “First they came for our ideas, then they came for us.”

We know that the majority of people oppose and are distressed by these attacks on the freedom to learn, but don’t know where to go to register their opposition or to plan ways to draw the line to interrupt the growing threat to truth, freedom and democracy. And the frustration grows every day as we hear of new attacks against learning about, or merely mentioning, structural racism in schools, colleges and workplaces. “Wokeness” has become the all-purpose scapegoat.

### **Freedom to Learn Demands to the College Board to be delivered on May 3, 2023**

Make no mistake. The courage of Nishani Frazier in exposing the College Board’s mendacity and lack of integrity underlines the importance of the Freedom to Learn network’s Demands to the College Board that we will be delivering to their offices in the nation’s capitol in Washington, DC and in New York City:

1. Fully rescind the “Curricular Framework” published on February 1, 2023, and restore critical concepts, scholarship, and frameworks to the AP AAS course.
2. Provide resources to create new course platforms (including online and other asynchronous formats) so that Florida students and others confronting censored AP content can take the course and sit for the AP exam.
3. Cease and desist from making public claims that the censored Curricular Framework is capable of introducing students to the foundational concepts, themes, and commitments of African American Studies. It cannot.
4. Assume a leadership role in fighting against widespread efforts by states to censor anti-racist thought and expression.
5. If the College Board refuses to demonstrate leadership at this critical moment in our nation’s story, new leadership must be tapped who will meet the moment.

### **Launching Freedom to Learn National Day of Action May 3, 2023**

The freedom to learn is the freedom to live. We cannot survive our current political moment or unlock the promise of our future without the tools to understand and make sense of our past. Public education always has been a driver of democracy and anti-racism — that’s why segregationists fought so hard against integration in the Civil Rights Era and why conservatives today are pursuing a segregation of ideas through bans of books, ideas and anti-racist instruction. Throughout history, we have seen progress toward and retrenchment from multiracial democracy. We know that the time is now to defend our students and our educators, to give them access to truthful history, diverse books and critical ideas, before it’s too late.

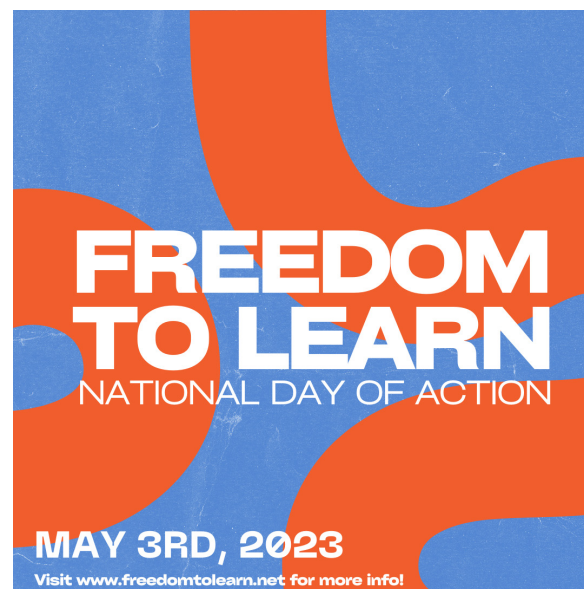
Opponents of democracy have been clear and aggressive in their efforts to take away our rights. What we really need now is for the institutions and leaders who purport to defend democracy and education to match their words with actions and promote the freedom of knowl-

edge without fear or reservation. This is true of the College Board, which should restore its original AP African American Studies curriculum; and it's true of the establishment politicians who see growing censorship efforts as on the back burner of politics as opposed to the flame that is engulfing it.

The Freedom to Learn network is asking all Americans who care about democracy to stand up for Black history, Black voices and Black lives. The Freedom to Learn National Day of Action on May 3 is a moment for some of the most powerful civil rights organizations in history and our allies to come together and send a clear message to the country: our history, our present and our future are deeply interconnected and any attempt to erase or water down the truth of the Black American experience will be met with resistance.

- On May 3, resistance will look like an online movement to uplift the Black authors whose work is being erased and diminished by institutions like the College Board that have undue influence on public education.
- On May 3, resistance will look like teach-ins and read-ins across the country, where educators defy growing censorship to share ideas and texts currently being banned nationwide.
- On May 3, resistance will look like showing up at the College Board national headquarters, with young people who are demanding access and approval of the ideas, books and critical lessons Republicans are trying to eliminate in every corner of education.

This movement is about more than one day. It's about more than one institution. It's about showing the growing political power of people who refuse to be silenced for trying to teach the truth about our history and prepare our students with the tools they need to speak truth to power today. It's about the young people who are asking more of us now so that they can live in a future that values their voices and lives. Join us at [freedomtolearn.net](http://freedomtolearn.net) to learn more about how you can take action.



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