

# NCSS: An Advocate for Diverse Voices

Jeremiah Clabough and Rozella G. Clyde

In our first article in this commemorative series, we began by celebrating the centennial anniversary of NCSS and describing the organization as a *bridge* crossing the troubled waters caused by the competition among the social studies disciplines. Through the creation of NCSS, historians, economists, geographers, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists from universities gained a safe place to gather, share ideas, and develop programs in support of K-12 social studies educators. This bridge also became at times a launch pad where new concepts and visions could spring into life in the form of different NCSS initiatives aimed at welcoming, valuing, and respecting diversity.

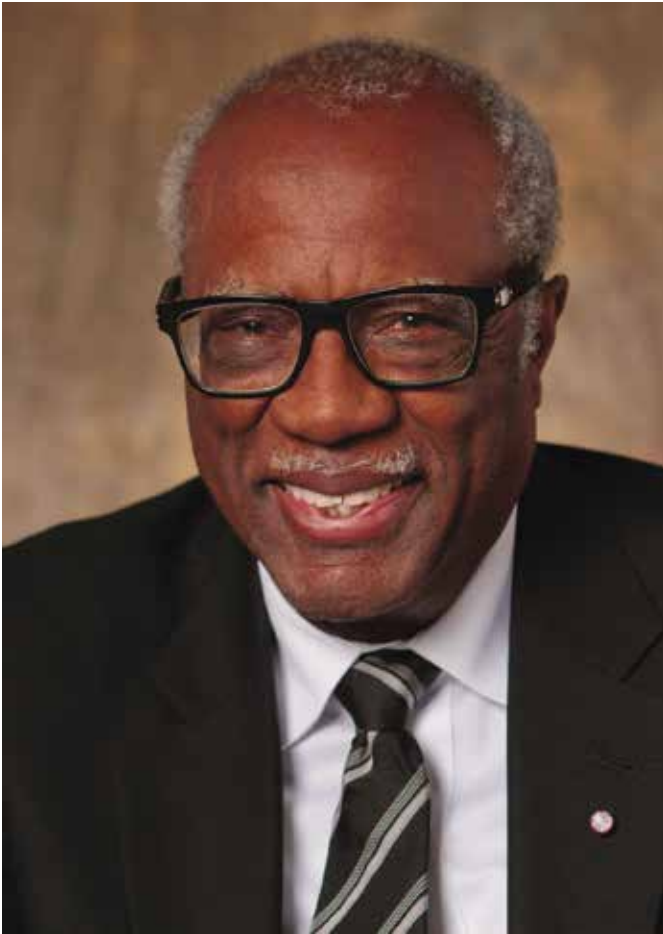
As a progressive organization, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has provided a forum where discussions honoring diverse voices may be heard. In this article, although space does not permit us to highlight all of the association's diversity initiatives, we discuss many of the ways in which NCSS has included diverse voices and perspectives and has contributed to honoring, teaching, and defending the inclusion of diverse voices in K-12 social studies classrooms. NCSS supported numerous committees such as the Racism and Social Justice Committee founded in 1973. Since the 1990s, it has supported a number of Special Interest Communities including the African American Educators Community, Indigenous Education Community, Asia Community, Middle East Community, the Community for LGBTQ and Allies, and the Religious Studies Special Interest Community.

In this article, we will highlight some of the notable actions that have embodied the organization's commitment to diversity. First, we focus on how NCSS has been a vehicle for scholars to inform social studies educators on inclusive, relevant, and accurate ways to teach about diversity. Our article then examines the NCSS programs that select excellent books for young people—the Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, the Carter G. Woodson Award, and the Septima Clark Award. We also discuss the position statements on multicultural education, the Columbus Quincentenary, and Indigenous Peoples. The article is followed by a panel discussion featuring five active NCSS members who have played an important role in support of teaching practices dealing with diversity. In the discussion, the panelists examine the ways in which NCSS addresses issues of diversity and inclusion, and make recommendations for the future.

## The Birth of Multicultural Education

NCSS and its affiliated councils have aimed to support educators by being a vehicle for sharing teaching strategies and complex concepts. Perhaps no educator better embodies this than Dr. James A. Banks. Banks began his educational career teaching fifth graders in Chicago.<sup>1</sup> By 1969, he had earned his Ph.D. and moved to the University of Washington as its first Black professor in the College of Education.<sup>2</sup> In the same year, Banks published an article in *Social Education* that was based on his doctoral dissertation and analyzed the portrayal of Black Americans in textbooks. He followed up on this theme in 1971 and 1973 with articles on decision making in teaching Black history and on teaching for ethnic literacy. *Social Education* provided a vehicle in which Banks's research gradually evolved from the treatment of Black history to examining the ways in which the educational canon treated marginalized groups. Banks applied concepts within the intersections of history, sociology, and psychology and provided opportunities for like-minded researchers to respond to these new theories.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1970s, NCSS created a Racism and Social Justice Committee with Banks as its chair. One of the committee's projects was the 43rd NCSS Yearbook, *Teaching Ethnic Studies: Concepts and Strategies*, which was edited by Dr. Banks and was the first book published in the 1970s to focus on teaching Ethnic Studies. Banks's vision was expanding and drawing a wider network of followers. As editor, Banks drew upon the perspectives of scholars covering a range of ethnic and racial groups: Jack D. Forbes (American Indian), Carlos E. Cortés (Mexican American), Lowell K.Y. Chun-Hoon (Chinese American), and Barbara A. Sizemore (African American). By 1976, the NCSS Task Force on Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guidelines, chaired by Banks, published *Curriculum Guidelines for Multiethnic*



Dr. James A. Banks

*Education*. The NCSS Board of Directors endorsed this publication as its official position statement. The Task Force updated and reissued the position statement in 1991. Many researchers refer to James Banks as “the father of multicultural education,” while also pointing out that there were other scholars who played key roles in the founding and development of multicultural education.

Dr. Banks became the first African American NCSS president in 1982. The focus at the NCSS annual conference that he organized was on diversity and citizenship education, focusing on the theme “The Future and the American Dream.” In his presidential address, “Cultural Democracy, Citizenship Education, and the American Dream,” he defined the American Dream as having inherent limitations. People were drawn from all over the world to participate in the American Dream, but discrimination was a major obstacle preventing non-white Americans from achieving it, and “particular ideological, cultural, and physical characteristics became prerequisites for a full American identification and for total participation in the body polity.”<sup>4</sup> Banks continues to challenge educators to ask questions that consider different perspectives to critically examine existing educational and social structures and rethink the ways we train teachers through transformative teaching practices.

As in the 1982 annual meeting, NCSS conferences have often focused on diversity, which has been represented by a wide range of speakers and presentations. Most recently, in 2020, the closing NCSS conference event featured Karen Korematsu interviewing George Takei about his graphic novel on the internment camps in which Japanese Americans were forced to live during World War II. These internment camps were established by Executive Order 9066 and upheld by the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Korematsu v. United States*.

### Strengthening the Contemporary Diversity Dialogue

The work started by Banks has continued in the twenty-first century with scholarly articles appearing in the NCSS periodicals *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, *Middle Level Learning*, and *Theory and Research in Social Education* (published by the College and University Faculty Assembly of NCSS). One example was the special section in the January/February 2017 *Social Education* edited by LaGarrett King on “Teaching and Learning African American History.” Articles in this special section provide guidance on how to integrate Black history in meaningful ways into social studies classrooms.<sup>5</sup> For example, William L. Smith argues that social studies teachers, while celebrating the accomplishments of notable Black men and women cannot lose sight of current societal barriers that still prevent many Black Americans from actualizing the American Dream. Like others in the special section, his article highlights contemporary public concerns.<sup>6</sup>

King’s articles in *Social Education* over the last several years have added to the scholarship on teaching about diversity.<sup>7</sup> He argues that we should disrupt the norms on how we teach Black history. If social studies teachers accurately represent the perspectives, contributions, and voices of Black men and women, this allows students to grasp how racial discrimination has impacted the Black community while also examining the agency that Black historical and contemporary figures have exercised as catalysts for change.<sup>8</sup> An article coauthored by King, Amanda E. Vickery and Genevieve Caffrey in a special section of *Social Education* on Teaching Controversial Issues in 2017 suggests the racial literacy skills needed to unpack controversial topics connected to race.<sup>9</sup> King also argues that the professional development provided to K-12 teachers needs to be reconsidered so that they can engage in deeper conversations about Black history.<sup>10</sup>

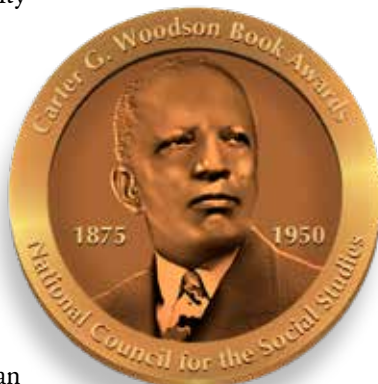
NCSS has offered resources on numerous racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States, including African Americans, Indigenous Peoples, Latinxs, Asian Americans, and Muslim Americans. A page on the NCSS website titled *Resources for Teaching about Racism, Anti-Racism, and Human Rights* offers suggestions for teaching about the different groups and their lived experiences. For example, Carol Buswell’s article presents a historical mystery to enable high school students to research Native American Nations who

were forced to relocate during the 1800s.<sup>11</sup> Articles by Zeina Azzam Seikaly and Karima Alavi focus on the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the problem of discrimination that Arab and Muslim Americans faced, as well as offering activities and resources to examine their culture.<sup>12</sup> The concept of excluding certain groups is explored in Joanne Dufour’s case study of Chinese Americans’ experiences in the late 1800s with the Chinese Exclusion Act.<sup>13</sup> An article in *Social Studies and the Young Learner* by Noreen Naseem Rodriguez offers classroom resources for discussing the internment of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government during World War II.<sup>14</sup> Another article in a later issue of the same journal by the Turtle Island Social Studies Collective provides an inquiry-based unit for students to research Indigenous women who have held leadership positions and been change agents in society.<sup>15</sup> A special section of the January/February 2013 issue of *Social Education* included a set of articles that focused on the Hispanic Heritage of North America, whose guest editor was Bárbara Cruz, whose scholarship has centered on multi-cultural and global perspectives in education.<sup>16</sup>

### NCSS Notable Trade Books, Carter G. Woodson, and Septima Clark Awards

NCSS has undertaken multiple initiatives to support diversity through its various awards programs. For example, in collaboration with the Children’s Book Council, NCSS established the Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People in 1972. Trade books selected for this prestigious award “emphasize human relations, represent a diversity of groups and are sensitive to a broad range of cultural experiences, present an original theme, or a fresh slant on a traditional topic.”<sup>17</sup> Many recent award-winning trade books have been acknowledged for their inclusion of diverse historical figures who challenged social injustices. Some examples include *Martin and Bobby: A Journey Toward Justice*; and *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights*.<sup>18</sup>

After the award for the NCSS Notable Trade Books was established, NCSS created a second award in 1974, when the Racism and Social Justice Committee added The Carter G. Woodson Award to honor the “father of Black History.” This award recognizes authors of trade books devoted to accurately describing the experiences of ethnic minorities and race relations in the United States. James Banks was one of the central



figures in the creation of this award. Each year, one elementary, middle, and high school social studies trade book receives the Carter G. Woodson Book Award, and three other trade books are honored as outstanding runner-up books. Books that win this award have to meet rigorous criteria including, “respect for ethnic and racial differences and the worth and importance of individual(s)/group(s) presented.”<sup>19</sup> Recent award winners include *The Undefeated: Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*; and *Black and White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene “Bull” Connors*.<sup>20</sup> The award has demonstrated NCSS’s dedication to sharing accounts of historical and contemporary figures who have challenged discriminatory public policies.

In 2019, NCSS established the Septima Clark Award to recognize outstanding trade books. This award, which is named for Septima Poinsette Clark, a leading African American teacher, civil rights leader, and adult civics educator, honors books for young readers that accurately depict women’s issues, perspectives, and accomplishments, and are thoroughly researched and well-written.<sup>21</sup> Each year, one book is selected as a winner and another book is honored for each of the elementary (K-5), middle (grades 5–8), and high school (grades 7–12) levels. Some winners of this prestigious award include *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People*,

*Maya Angelou*; *Streetcar to Justice: How Elizabeth Jennings Won the Right to Ride in New York*; and *Reaching for the Moon: The Autobiography of NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson*.<sup>22</sup>

The award reflects a commitment by NCSS to acknowledging, honoring, and valuing diverse voices by providing stories of the accomplishments of female role models for young girls to identify with and emulate. We have highlighted other work done by NCSS connected to women’s issues and gender issues in our previous commemorative article in the May/June 2021 issue of *Social Education*.<sup>23</sup>

### How Do We Teach about the Past?

One of the main questions challenging the social studies field over the past century is, “How do we teach about the past?” Many of the students in our classrooms grow up in families with differing cultural experiences, biases, and beliefs. These different viewpoints shape how people interpret and conceptualize the past. NCSS has always encouraged social studies educators to apply sound historical research methodology when analyzing figures, issues, and events from both the past and

present. One illustration of this can be seen in the 1991 NCSS position statement on the Columbian Quincentenary.

NCSS issued the Columbian Quincentenary position statement to provide educators with guidance about how to address conflicting narratives surrounding the impact of Columbus's voyage to the Americas. The goal of this NCSS position statement was to scientifically analyze the significance and ripple effects of this seminal event. The controversy surrounding Columbus's voyages include inaccurate myths articulated by certain social groups. One of the main goals of this position statement was to emphasize that Columbus did not discover a

new world. The NCSS statement advised social studies teachers on how to discuss the ways in which Indigenous peoples were impacted, and pointed out that the voyage of Columbus prepared the way for Africans to be forced to the Americas through the Atlantic slave trade. Through class discussions using the ideas espoused in the Columbian Quincentenary position statement, students were encouraged to consider the voices, values, and perspectives of

those who are not white Europeans and thus to examine the past from a non-Eurocentric perspective.<sup>24</sup>

In 1991, NCSS published the *Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education*, which were an updated and revised version of an earlier set of *Curriculum Guidelines for Multiethnic Education* that were issued in 1976. In this position statement, the association stressed the importance of multicultural education in American schools. "Multicultural education helps students understand and affirm their community cultures and helps to free them from cultural boundaries, allowing them to create and maintain a civic community that works for the common good."<sup>25</sup> This position statement clearly stated that the health and vitality of American democracy is dependent upon all groups in our pluralistic society being actively involved and valued. Several articles in NCSS journals have supported this principle; for example, Gloria Ladson-Billings, a noted African American scholar, pointed out in an article in *Social Education* that multiculturalism "ensures checks and balances, healthy opposition, and democracy."<sup>26</sup>

In 2018, NCSS issued a position statement to reaffirm the importance of accurately and respectfully teaching about Indigenous peoples and nations. This position statement was a continuation and extension of points made in the Columbus Quincentenary position statement. It affirmed that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to dignity in education, and to see and

experience their cultures, traditions, histories, and ongoing sovereignty movements affirmed in social studies curriculum and classrooms."<sup>27</sup> Some of the goals of this position statement focused on reshaping the ways that social studies teachers frame the teaching of Indigenous Peoples in their curriculums. It emphasizes that teaching about Indigenous Peoples has to move away from the periphery of the social studies curriculum, and that educators must more meaningfully integrate the lived experiences of local Indigenous Peoples into social studies instruction. This requires an accurate representation of tribal identities with a focus on current events and the protection of the rights of

Indigenous Peoples across the country, as well as an understanding of tribal governance and respect for the sovereignty of all Indigenous Peoples.

In addition to its position statements, the NCSS leadership has issued current events responses that reflect its commitment to the vision of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In response to the killing of George Floyd in May 2020, for example, an NCSS statement condemned the use of excessive violence or force, or

extrajudicial processes, by law enforcement authorities against African Americans. In response to attempts by the federal government to prevent the inclusion of the curriculum developed by the 1619 Project in K-12 schools, NCSS released a public statement in Fall 2020 supporting teaching about slavery in the social studies classroom using resources like those provided by the 1619 Project and other sources. Earlier this year, after the tragedy in Atlanta in which six Asian American women were killed, the NCSS president and executive director released a statement condemning the harassment and violence against Asian Americans that had increased sharply during the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>28</sup>

### Looking Toward the Future

NCSS official positions and programs have informed social studies educators on inclusive, relevant, and accurate ways to teach about diversity. A full commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusiveness (DEI) needs to go beyond official statements, and many NCSS members want the association to have a stronger impact in support of DEI in the social studies curriculum and social studies instruction throughout the country. In a chapter in a book commemorating the 75th anniversary of NCSS in 1995, Jesus Garcia and Edward Buendia stated that "many ethnic minority members feel that they are welcomed into NCSS to serve the organization's goals of enhancing diversity

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and not to truly address their concerns on matters relating to marginalized groups and social studies.”<sup>29</sup> In order to explore the role that diversity has played within NCSS and to identify valuable objectives for NCSS in future, we reached out to five individuals who are currently active in different leadership roles within NCSS and have played a vital role in shaping and driving the narrative on best teaching practices with diversity topics. The edited transcript of their discussion follows. 🌍

## Notes

1. See Arizona State University, “James Banks,” <https://education.asu.edu/inside-the-academy-of-education/honorees/james-banks>.
2. See the University of Washington, “Faculty Friday: James and Cherry Banks,” <https://thewholeu.uw.edu/2016/01/07/faculty-friday-james-and-cherry-banks/>.
3. James A. Banks, “A Content Analysis of the Black American in Textbooks,” *Social Education* 33, no. 8 (December 1969): 954–957, 963 ff; Banks, “Teaching Black History with a Focus on Decision Making,” *Social Education* 35, no. 7 (November 1971): 740–745, 820–821; Banks, ed., *Teaching Ethnic Studies: Concepts and Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1973); Banks, “Teaching for Ethnic Literacy: A Comparative Approach,” *Social Education* 37, no. 8 (December 1973): 738–750.
4. Banks, “Cultural Democracy, Citizenship Education, and the American Dream,” *Social Education* 47, no. 3 (March 1983): 178–179, 222–32. (National Council for the Social Studies; Presidential address.)
5. LaGarrett King, “The Status of Black History in U.S. Schools and Society,” *Social Education* 81, no. 1 (January–February 2017): 14–18.
6. William Smith, “Why Do We Focus on Firsts? Problems and Possibilities for Black History Teaching,” *Social Education* 81, no. 1 (2017): 19–22.
7. King, “The Status of Black History in U.S. Schools and Society”; LaGarrett J. King, Amanda E. Vickery, and Genevieve Caffrey, “A Pathway to Racial Literacy: Using the LETS ACT Framework to Teach Controversial Issues,” *Social Education* 82, no. 6 (November–December 2017): 316–322; LaGarrett King, “Black History is Not American History: Toward a Framework of Black Historical Consciousness,” *Social Education* 84, no. 6 (November–December 2020): 335–341.
8. King, “Black History is Not American History.”
9. King, Vickery, and Caffrey, “A Pathway to Racial Literacy.”
10. King, “Black History is Not American History.”
11. Carol Buswell, “Using the Indian Removal Act to Teach Critical Thinking,” *Social Education* 81, no. 6 (November–December 2017): 346–350, 360.
12. Karima Alavi, “At Risk of Prejudice: Teaching Tolerance about Muslim Americans,” *Social Education* 65, no. 6 (October 2001): 344–348; Zeina Azzam Seikaly, “At Risk of Prejudice: The Arab American Community,” *Social Education* 65, no. 6 (October 2001): 349–351.
13. Joanne Dufour, “Case Study of Chinese Exclusion Act Enforcement,” *Social Education* 76, no. 6 (November–December 2012): 306–311.
14. Noreen Naseem Rodriguez, “‘But They Didn’t Do Nothing Wrong!’ Teaching about Japanese American Incarceration,” *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 30, no. 2 (November–December 2017): 17–23.
15. Turtle Island Social Studies Collective, “Beyond Pocahontas: Learning from Indigenous Women Changemakers,” *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 31, no. 3 (January–February 2019): 7–13.
16. The special section appeared in *Social Education* 77, no. 1 (January–February 2013). See also Bárbara C. Cruz, Cheryl R. Ellerbrock, Sarah M. Denney, and Cristina M. Vierra, “The Art of Global Education: Using Contemporary Art to Develop Global Perspectives,” in John P. Meyers, ed., *Research on Teaching Global Issues: Pedagogy for Global Citizenship Education* (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2020), 93–113; Christopher L. Busey and Bárbara C. Cruz, “Who is Afro-Latin@? Examining the Social Construction of race and négritude in Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Social Education* 81, no. 6 (January–February 2017): 31–36.
17. See NCSS, Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, [www.socialstudies.org/notable-social-studies-trade-books](http://www.socialstudies.org/notable-social-studies-trade-books).
18. Claire Rudolph Murphy, *Martin and Bobby: A Journey Toward Justice* (Chicago, Ill.: Chicago Review Press, 2018); Steve Sheinkin, *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights* (New York, N.Y.: Roaring Brook Press, 2014).
19. See NCSS, “How to Submit a Woodson Book Nomination,” [www.socialstudies.org/get-involved/how-submit-woodson-book-nomination](http://www.socialstudies.org/get-involved/how-submit-woodson-book-nomination).
20. Kwame Alexander, *The Undeclared* (New York, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2019); Laura Atkins, *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* (Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday, 2017); Larry Dane Brimner, *Black and White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene Bull Connor* (Honesdale, Penn.: Calkins Creek, 2011).
21. See NCSS, “Septima Clark Awards,” [www.socialstudies.org/awards/septima-clark-book-awards](http://www.socialstudies.org/awards/septima-clark-book-awards); NCSS, “Introducing the NCSS Septima P. Clark Women in Literature Book Award,” *Social Education* 83, no. 6 (2019): 370–373.
22. Bethany Hegedus, *Rise!: From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* (New York, N.Y.: Lee & Low Books Inc., 2019); Amy Hill Hearth, *Streetcar to Justice: How Elizabeth Jennings Won the Right to Ride in New York* (New York, N.Y.: Greenwillow Books, 2018); Katherine Johnson, *Reaching for the Moon: The Autobiography of NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson* (New York, N.Y.: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2020).
23. Rozella Clyde and Jeremiah Clabough, “Of Privilege and Pendulums: NCSS and Gender,” *Social Education* 85, no. 3 (May–June 2021): 179–186.
24. NCSS, “The Columbian Quincentenary: An Educational Opportunity,” *Social Education* 56, no. 4 (1992): 248–249; Judith Wooster, “Choosing Materials for Teaching about the Columbian Quincentenary,” *Social Education* 56, no. 4 (1992): 244–247; James E. Davis and Sharryl Davis Hawke, “Seeds of Change: Cutting-Edge Knowledge and the Columbian Quincentenary,” *Social Education* 56, no. 6 (1992): 320–322.
25. NCSS, “Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education,” *Social Education* 56, no. 5 (1992): 274–294.
26. Gloria Ladson-Billings, “The Multicultural Mission: Unity and Diversity,” *Social Education* 56, no. 5 (1992): 308–311.
27. NCSS, “Toward Responsibility: Social Studies Education that Respects and Affirms Indigenous Peoples and Nations,” *Social Education* 82, no. 3 (May–June 2018): 167–173.
28. See [www.socialstudies.org/news/ncss-condemns-killing-george-floyd-countless-black-people](http://www.socialstudies.org/news/ncss-condemns-killing-george-floyd-countless-black-people); [www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/teaching-about-slavery-using-1619-project-and-other-resources](http://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/teaching-about-slavery-using-1619-project-and-other-resources); [www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/response-anti-asian-harassment-and-violence-during-cov](http://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/response-anti-asian-harassment-and-violence-during-cov)
29. Jesus Garcia and Edward Buendia, “NCSS and Ethnic/Cultural Diversity,” in O. L. Davis, Jr., *NCSS in Retrospect* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1995), 63.



**JEREMIAH CLABOUGH** is Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.



**ROZELLA G. CLYDE** is Educational Director, Clydeoscope Educational Consultants, LLC, and Chair of the Friends of NCSS Community.

# Panel Discussion on NCSS and Diversity

In order to gain a broader perspective on the work NCSS has done to address issues of diversity, we assembled a panel of five NCSS members who have played an active role in NCSS leadership, contributed to NCSS publications, and participated in NCSS conferences: Mark Finchum, LaGarrett King, Chanda Robinson, Cinthia Salinas, and Jing Williams. They responded to questions by email. Their edited responses follow.

Rozella G. Clyde and Jeremiah Clabough

1. *What steps would you like to see NCSS take to advance its stated goal of being a diverse and inclusive organization?*

**Chanda Robinson:** Just Be It! Diversity is not a check-the-box approach. It is and should be in every policy, practice, and event. NCSS must be the embodiment of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Just be the change we want to see!

**Cinthia Salinas:** NCSS should take every possible step to send forth the message that our identity and willingness to act is the cornerstone for citizenship education. NCSS needs to take steps to diversify its standing committees, provide outreach that is critically conscious, and make statements that begin to reshape the organization as a social-justice-minded and active collection of educators. The NCSS Board of Directors must also take a public stance to shift the image of the social studies from being a portrait of traditional values and marginalizing

narratives regarding our democracy. Change is hard—racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia are not easy to erase—but a critical mass of social studies educators can begin the difficult dialogue and create opportunities to advocate for a more inclusive approach to teaching and learning in the social studies.

**Jing Williams:** We should go beyond the national boundary to consider diversity and inclusiveness on a global scale. The percentage of international members in NCSS is small, but their voices deserve to be heard through multiple channels within the organization. The International Assembly provides an excellent platform for international scholars and teachers to present their research and teaching practice at each annual conference. NCSS could do more. For example, most of the articles in the NCSS publications are currently authored by U.S.-based scholars. It would benefit everyone if we could also include articles by international scholars. People in other parts

## The Panel



**Mark Finchum** currently chairs the NCSS Indigenous Education Community and has been an active member of NCSS since 1991. During this time, he has served a term on the board of

directors, chaired the board of the Fund for the Advancement of Social Studies Education (FASSE), served as the guest editor of an issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, presented at several conferences, and been a member of the NCSS House of Delegates on many occasions.



**LaGarrett J. King** is the Isabelle Wade Lyda and Paul C. Lyda Professor and Founding Director of the Carter Center for K-12 Black History Education at the University of Missouri. His

research focuses on the teaching and learning of Black history in schools and society, on which he has written extensively. He is the Editor of the book *Perspectives on Black Histories in Schools*,

and the author of a framework for Developing Black Historical Consciousness for use in schools. He is a member of the review board of *Theory and Research in Social Education*.



**Chanda L. Williams Robinson** is a social studies educator with more than 20 years of experience. In addition to teaching in schools in Maryland and South Carolina, she served

at the South Carolina Department of Education as the Education Associate of Social Studies and African American Studies from 2006–2012 and was the secondary social studies curriculum consultant for Richland County School District One in Columbia, S.C., from November 2012 through June 2020. She is now the CEO and founder of Chanda Robinson Consulting (CRC), LLC. She was recently elected to her second term on the NCSS Board of Directors.



**Cinthia Salinas** is the Ruben E. Hinojosa Regents Professor in Education at the University of Texas at Austin. A former Texas high school social studies teacher, Cinthia joined NCSS in 1999

and is on the editorial board of *Theory and Research in Social Education*. She is the former Chair of the NCSS College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) and was the co-program chair for the NCSS annual conference in 2019.



**Jing Williams** is an Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of South Dakota, where she teaches elementary and secondary social studies methods

courses. She has been an NCSS member since 2010. She served as the Program Chair from 2016 to 2018 of the NCSS International Assembly (IA) and President of IA from 2018 to 2020. Her research and publications focus on global perspectives in social studies education.

of the world may have experienced the same or similar issues as in the United States. Their experiences and views can provide valuable learning experiences.

**LaGarrett King:** Of course, there is much to be desired to be truly equitable. To be truthful, NCSS has a public relations problem with many teachers from diverse backgrounds. That is historic, based on mishaps the organization has had in the past. I would love to see more outreach to those communities and strategic and public support for teachers of color and topics that affect students of color. But it will take time.

**Mark Finchum:** Although there are many special interest communities inside NCSS, some of which deal with diversity and inclusion, I would like to see NCSS examine its current list of communities to look for gaps. NCSS could also survey its membership for suggestions on other communities that are needed and then intentionally seek those members who would work to establish active communities to face unmet needs.

2. *Please discuss ways in which NCSS has addressed issues of racial justice, equity, and inclusion while you have been a member.*

**Mark Finchum:** NCSS brings in keynote and featured speakers to address conference attendees on a broad range of topics. In the most recent conference, George Takei addressed his time as a child in the internment camps set up for Japanese Americans during World War II. Other speakers have included Kareem Abdul Jabbar and his work on the Harlem Renaissance, Debbie Allen and *Amistad*, Morris Dees and the SPLC [Southern Poverty Law Center], and Chad Smith, Chief of the Cherokee Nation. In every conference, there is a range of speakers who have the academic and/or personal credentials to add credibility to the issue at hand. Other activities include the NCSS Task Force on Underrepresented Groups that worked toward developing ways to bring in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), tribal colleges, elementary teachers, and many more groups.

**Chanda Robinson:** The Board of Directors has had several discussions and training regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). During recent current events the Board, the executive director, and the president have released position statements expressing their stance regarding the teaching of history, racial injustices, and DEI.

**Cinthia Salinas:** There have been attempts, for example, through statements and most recently webinars, to address race, gender, class, or sexuality within our profession. Unfortunately, there has not been a consistency of focus, and these actions have not permeated the entire fabric of NCSS. By “consistent,”

I mean that as issues arise, the organization has made statements or taken steps to publicly stand against injustice, but those efforts are not pervasive. They do not institutionalize change and a position on social justice. The membership is part of the driving context here. Asking social studies teachers to engage in more critical stances towards history, geography, and economics seems to be a challenge for NCSS. A critical citizenry—informed and ready to advocate for an inclusive democracy—should be foremost in our thinking.

**LaGarrett King:** While there is much that NCSS can do to achieve greater access to racial justice, equity, and inclusion, I find that the leadership under Executive Director Lawrence Paska, recent past presidents such as Tina L. Heafner and Stefanie Wager, and the Board of Directors are committed to this work. I have seen NCSS begin to address societal issues that are related to equity as well as help build special interest groups related to diversity. I was surprised to see on-demand videos that addressed race and racism, anti-bias, and equity. It is important that NCSS continue to provide these resources for social studies teachers.

3. *How can the voices and experiences of groups who have been marginalized be amplified so that their cultural experiences and interpretations can be better integrated into the social studies curriculum?*

**Cinthia Salinas:** Creating a clear visible message about the identity and intent of the organization is primal in making outright or incremental change. The NCSS-sponsored journals should emphasize issues that are about a more inclusive democracy—as should the boards and editors of each journal. Whatever “mechanisms” are used to convey the purpose and goals and work of NCSS should be shifted to reflect an inclusive intent and a desire to transform the organization.

**Chanda Robinson:** Educators need the correct resources to tell the history as it happened—what actually did happen, and why it happened. We can provide schools and school districts with a “toolbox” on how to tap into the local history within each city, county, and state. There are several local and state colleges, university professors, museums, and historical societies that would love to tell their story and history. Local history could really spark students’ interest to learn about the connection to the state, national, and global stage.

**Jing Williams:** The biggest issue for teachers is the lack of time. They must teach mandatory content in a short semester, so it’s hard for them to add something new and unfamiliar to teach in their already packed schedule. To encourage teachers to include minority groups’ cultural experiences in their classrooms, NCSS could consider forming a special group that

designs ready-to-use lesson plans with plenty of lesson ideas and teaching resources. These lesson plans should be free for all teachers to use. NCSS could host some free webinars for teachers on how to teach such topics. All webinars should be recorded with an open access on the Internet, so teachers who do not have time to join the webinar can watch and learn when they have time.

**LaGarrett King:** I think we all know the answer, but we do not want to do what it takes to achieve it. Social studies educators of color and other identities are in our classrooms doing the work that many other social studies educators are not doing. We say we welcome those faces, but we are fearful of those voices. Spotlight these educators who may not have the fanfare or large Twitter followings. Social studies educators of color are not waiting on NCSS to extend an invitation. They are doing the work. The problem is the perception that NCSS is not trying to find those voices. Outreach is important.

**Mark Finchum:** When proposals for conference sessions are being reviewed, NCSS could create a community filtering process. For example, if a session proposal is about an Indigenous topic, send that proposal to the Indigenous Education Community where comments could be made that would strengthen the proposal, or serious problems could be noted, and the proposal could then be rejected. Letting marginalized groups have more influence on what is presented at the conference could be a very helpful strategy to improve social studies instruction.

4. *What are your perspectives on the current discussion challenging the teaching of U.S. and World History in American schools for being Eurocentric?*

**LaGarrett King:** We know that the social studies curriculum is Eurocentric. This is an enduring question that continues with little sustained effort to correct it. Anyone who knows how to read can see that the curriculum is Eurocentric. My question to everyone is: what are we doing about it? Black educators have been saying this since the nineteenth century. Do we really want to provide a more equitable curriculum? We know what to do. Carter G. Woodson, James Banks, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Joyce King, and many more have told us time and time again how to move forward. We have work to do to be truly equitable. We need to not only think of quantitative ways to achieve curriculum inclusion but also qualitative ways.

**Mark Finchum:** I find it hard to understand how anyone can fail to see that much of United States and World History in American schools is taught from a Eurocentric perspective. One thing that NCSS could do is to publish a special issue of *Social Education* with articles that offer strategies and resources

that would help broaden perspectives for the basic classes that most high schools offer. That same concept could be used as a theme in a future conference so that proposals for sessions could highlight such broadening of perspectives.

**Jing Williams:** The beauty of the United States is that it is a great country made up of immigrants from all over the world. Globalization is by no means a modern phenomenon. It started thousands of years ago as people traveled across the globe. No one can deny that they are living in a globalized world. Everyone is a member of the international community. When something happens in one part of the world, it can quickly affect other parts of the world, directly or indirectly. Thus, people need to know and care about world affairs, both in the past and the present. If the teaching is Eurocentric or through a Western lens, our students' world views could be narrowed or distorted. They will be deprived of the opportunity to develop a holistic historical perspective of the world, and thus, they will have a hard time understanding current world affairs. Teachers have no choice but to infuse a global perspective in their daily teaching to benefit their students, who will be the future of the country and leaders of the world.

**Cinthia Salinas:** There is a growing movement amongst public school educators to introduce "other" narratives. An Anti-Critical Race Theory movement has also emerged, designed to preserve an exclusive narrative. The enactment of change happens at the teacher education and teacher in-service levels, spanning hundreds of colleges of education and thousands of districts and schools. One would think the next generation of social studies educators would begin to push against the envelope. We oddly continue to graduate young social studies teachers who adhere to the traditional narratives that only serve to marginalize most students and communities of color. The NCSS College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) should also be dedicated to influencing teacher education programs that are not truly focused on a social justice approach to the social studies.

**Chanda Robinson:** Teacher educators can only teach what they *know*. Chinua Achebe tells us of that great proverb—"until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

5. *What do you think are the most effective ways in which schools can combat racism and prejudice?*

**Mark Finchum:** It should be a part of every school's DNA to be welcoming and safe for all students. One thing an individual school can do is look at its mascot and what its mascot represents. If it is based on an Indigenous stereotype, then get a new mascot. Keeping the stakeholders involved from the start of any



project is a must. If there is to be meaningful change, it has to be a cooperative effort.

**Cinthia Salinas:** If teachers are not committed, they will not support students and communities who want to bring different narratives and civic identities to the discussion. Within NCSS, our scholarly work should focus on exemplars. NCSS could initiate more public acknowledgement of programs, projects, teachers, and schools that serve to exemplify the importance of “*other*” narratives. The fundamental ideas of critical pedagogy, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, critical race theories, anti-racist pedagogies, and decolonial theories should all be embedded in these actions. Each of these theories uplifts teacher’s contributions to our democracy, making us more conscious of how this nation was sadly built on the power of elites but now instead must reflect the power of all.

**Chanda Robinson:** Schools need to continue to make Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) connections and provide training for educators with culturally responsive teaching and DEI. Schools also need to provide content training that supports the state-approved standards in history/social studies. You cannot teach what you do not know.

**LaGarrett King:** This is such a packed question. However, we have research on this from several scholars and classroom teachers. I will say that social studies is about how we represent humanity. So, we are on the front lines to combat racism and prejudice. We have young children to consider. We have our future to consider. After parents, the challenge of fighting inequities is on us. We are so miseducated as a society that we need an educational transformation. Our curriculum is important for meeting this challenge, but our teachers are the most important. We need teachers who are willing to approach truth from multiple angles. We need teachers to understand who they are and how their identities influence teaching. We need a total educational transformation to fully embrace our mission as a country and as an organization. 🌍



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