

standing Negro figures selected by the same criterion of historical significance applied to non-Negro figures. Even those textbooks that now make some effort in this direction tend to single out men like Booker T. Washington and the minor scientist George Washington Carver, whose attitudes about race relations are least disturbing to conservative whites. Equally or more worthy of inclusion by the standard of historical relevance are men like Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, and the Reverend Martin Luther King.

Always and everywhere our children should be told the truth, and the whole truth, as near as the best current scholarship can bring us to this elusive quality. This means, among other things, not obscuring the harsher aspects of the truth—the fact that Negroes entered American society as slaves, the brutalities of slavery, the racism of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction era, and the continuing depth and harshness of the problem of segregation and discrimination.

In the light of these general principles, the greatest defect in the textbooks we have examined is the virtual omission of the Negro. As several of the individual reports point out, the Negro does not “exist” in the books. The authors of the books must know that there are Negroes in America, and have been since 1619, but they evidently do not care to mention them too frequently. In one book there is no account of slavery in the colonial period; in a second, there is not a single word about Negroes after the Civil War; in a third (composed of documents and substantive chapters), the narrative does not mention Negroes in any connection.

As Ralph Ellison’s novel, *Invisible Man*, demonstrates, whites frequently do not “see” Negroes. But Negroes are Americans; their history is part of American history. They need to be “seen” in textbooks. The space given Negro history will, of course, depend in part on the nature of the textbook, and minimum standards of coverage are proposed later in this report. What is especially important is that the discussions of Negroes appear as an integral part of the book. Perfunctory or casual treatment may imply that Negroes are not part of America.

Important aspects of Negro experience, of course, depart from that of many other groups in America. Negroes were not just another immigrant group; no other group could be so readily identified by its color, no other group was so systematically enslaved, and no other group has been subjected to as persistent and virulent discrimination. From the seventeenth century to our own day, Negro life has been filled with violence.

These facts highlight another failing of these textbooks that is almost as distressing as the invisibility of Negroes in them. All the texts play down or ignore the long history of violence between Negroes and whites, suggesting in different ways that racial contacts have been distinguished by a progressive harmony. The tone of a textbook is almost as important as anything it has to say. In their blandness and amoral optimism, these books implicitly deny the obvious deprivations suffered by Negroes. In several places they go further, implying approval for