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‘A Movement Reconsidered’

An examination of how Black Civil Rights in the USA, 1954–1970 has been taught as a senior subject in New Zealand secondary schools, and whether or not it accurately reflects contemporary scholarship and new trends of interpretation.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Black Civil Rights (BCR)¹ in the USA, 1954–1970 has been taught as a senior subject in New Zealand secondary schools since its introduction into the New Zealand History curriculum in 1988. It provides a historical perspective on the political, economic, and social context in which the National History Curriculum Committee (NHCC) made the decision to introduce this topic into the Form 5 (now Year 11) History curriculum. It is also concerned with whether the conceptions of Black Civil Rights history from 1988 to the present (2013), reflects contemporary scholarship and new trends of interpretation.

This thesis argues that the continued reliance on a classical/master-narrative approach to the teaching and learning of BCR in the USA, 1954–1970, reflects a historiography that is frozen in time. The result is that teachers are disseminating a conception of BCR history that is politically slanted, conservative, and Eurocentric. It is an approach that perpetuates the myth that there is inevitability about America's progressive history; that its lofty notions of democracy, justice, and the equality of all people, will in the end triumph.

¹ The New Zealand History curriculum calls this topic, Black Civil Rights (BCR). It is more historically accurate to use the term, as Black leaders during the period did, the 'Freedom Movement.' I retain the use of BCR and later Civil Rights Movement (CRM) because it is the term used in New Zealand. In my teaching I encourage to use the more accurate term, 'Freedom Movement.'

Furthermore, this thesis contends that as one of the two most popular Year 11 History topics, this selective, sanitized approach to teaching BCR deprives students the opportunity to understand that historiography is subject to change, that historical events are open to interpretation, and that history as it is written is not always history as it was. As an alternative, this thesis advocates a counter-narrative approach that draws on recent scholarship and new trends of interpretation.

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² Please see Appendix A for documentation.

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Glossary

AS	Achievement Standard
AO	Achievement Objective
AHTA.....	Auckland History Teachers' Association
BCR.....	Black Civil Rights
CDD.....	Curriculum Development Division
F5/F6/F7	Forms 5, 6, 7
HOD	Head of Department
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCEA	National Certificate in Educational Achievement
NHC	National History Curriculum
NHCC	National History Curriculum Committee
NZCF.....	New Zealand Curriculum Framework
NZHA	New Zealand History Association
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
WAHTA.....	Wellington Area History Teachers' Association