

african american cultural studies in us

African American Cultural Studies in the US: A Comprehensive Exploration

African American cultural studies in the US represents a dynamic and evolving field dedicated to understanding the multifaceted experiences, artistic expressions, intellectual traditions, and social movements of people of African descent in America. This discipline delves into the rich tapestry of African American life, examining its historical roots, its ongoing impact on American society, and its profound contributions to global culture. From the enduring legacy of slavery and the fight for civil rights to contemporary expressions in music, literature, and activism, African American cultural studies provides critical lenses through which to analyze power, identity, and resistance. This article will offer a comprehensive exploration of this vital academic area, covering its historical development, key theoretical frameworks, significant areas of study, influential figures, and its lasting impact on shaping a more inclusive and equitable understanding of American history and culture.

- Introduction to African American Cultural Studies
- Historical Roots and Evolution of African American Cultural Studies
- Key Theoretical Frameworks in African American Cultural Studies
- Core Areas of Study within African American Cultural Studies
- Influential Figures in African American Cultural Studies
- The Impact and Significance of African American Cultural Studies
- Challenges and Future Directions in African American Cultural Studies
- Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of African American Cultural Studies

The Genesis and Evolution of African American Cultural Studies

The field of African American cultural studies in the US has deep roots, emerging from a long tradition of Black intellectualism and scholarship that sought to articulate and preserve the unique cultural heritage of African Americans. Initially, much of this work was conducted outside formal

academic institutions, driven by the need to counter dominant narratives that often marginalized or misrepresented Black experiences. Early thinkers and activists recognized the importance of culture – including music, storytelling, religion, and community organizing – as a site of resistance and a means of survival under oppressive conditions. The formalization of African American studies as an academic discipline gained significant momentum during the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power era of the 1960s and 1970s. Student protests and demands for more relevant and inclusive curricula led to the establishment of Black Studies departments on numerous college campuses across the nation. This period marked a crucial turning point, institutionalizing the study of African American history, literature, sociology, and art within mainstream academia, thereby laying the groundwork for the broader field of African American cultural studies.

Early Black Intellectual Traditions and Cultural Preservation

Before the formal establishment of academic departments, African American cultural expression and intellectual inquiry flourished through various channels. Figures like W.E.B. Du Bois, through his sociological studies and literary works, provided foundational insights into the Black experience in America, coining the concept of "double consciousness." The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s was a pivotal moment, witnessing an explosion of Black artistic and intellectual creativity that celebrated Black identity, challenged racial stereotypes, and asserted cultural autonomy. Writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay, along with musicians and visual artists, used their work to document, interpret, and affirm Black life, establishing enduring cultural touchstones. These early efforts were not merely artistic endeavors; they were also acts of cultural preservation and intellectual resistance, crucial for maintaining a sense of identity and community in the face of systemic racism.

The Rise of Black Studies and Interdisciplinary Approaches

The demand for Black Studies programs in the late 1960s was a direct response to the perceived inadequacy of existing academic disciplines to adequately address the history, culture, and social realities of African Americans. Students and faculty sought to create a space where Black voices could be centered and Black experiences rigorously examined. This led to the development of interdisciplinary approaches, drawing from sociology, history, literature, anthropology, political science, and art history. The establishment of these programs recognized that understanding African American culture required a holistic perspective, one that acknowledged the interconnectedness of social, economic, political, and artistic dimensions of Black life. This interdisciplinary foundation remains a cornerstone of African American cultural studies today, fostering a comprehensive and nuanced understanding.

Foundational Theoretical Frameworks in African American Cultural Studies

African American cultural studies draws upon a rich array of theoretical frameworks to analyze and interpret the complexities of Black life in the United States. These theoretical lenses provide critical tools for understanding historical context, social structures, identity formation, and cultural production. They allow scholars to move beyond superficial representations and engage with the

deeper meanings and implications of African American experiences. The field's theoretical underpinnings are crucial for developing sophisticated analyses of power dynamics, systemic inequalities, and the resilience of African American communities. By employing these frameworks, researchers can illuminate the nuances of cultural expression, political resistance, and the ongoing struggle for liberation and self-determination.

Critical Race Theory and its Applications

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a foundational framework that examines how race and racism have shaped legal systems and societal structures in the United States. Developed by legal scholars, CRT posits that racism is not merely individual prejudice but is embedded within institutions and policies. In African American cultural studies, CRT is used to analyze how laws, policies, and cultural practices have historically and continue to impact Black communities, particularly in areas like education, housing, and criminal justice. It helps scholars understand the enduring legacy of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and ongoing systemic inequalities, and how these manifest in cultural expressions, media representations, and social movements. CRT also explores how Black communities have resisted and challenged these oppressive structures.

Postcolonial Theory and Diaspora Studies

Postcolonial theory, while originating from the study of former colonies, offers valuable insights into the African American experience due to the historical parallels with colonial oppression. Concepts such as the "colonizer/colonized" dynamic, the construction of racial hierarchies, and the psychological effects of subjugation are highly relevant. Diaspora studies further enhances this by focusing on the dispersal of African peoples and the formation of distinct Black cultures across the globe, including the US. These theoretical lenses help scholars understand the complexities of identity formation among people of African descent in the diaspora, the challenges of maintaining cultural connections across geographic boundaries, and the ways in which African American culture has been shaped by both African heritage and the American context. It highlights themes of displacement, belonging, and the creation of new cultural syntheses.

Feminist Theory and Intersectionality

Feminist theory, particularly Black feminist thought, is indispensable in African American cultural studies for its critical examination of gender, race, and class. Figures like bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and Audre Lorde have articulated the concept of intersectionality, which highlights how multiple social identities (such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability) overlap and create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. This framework is crucial for understanding the diverse experiences within the African American community, acknowledging that Black women, Black men, Black LGBTQ+ individuals, and others face distinct challenges and have unique perspectives. Intersectionality allows for a more nuanced analysis of cultural production, social activism, and the lived realities of individuals within the community, moving beyond monolithic understandings.

Performance Studies and Cultural Production

Performance studies offers a vital theoretical approach to understanding how African American culture is created, enacted, and transmitted. This perspective views culture not as static but as a dynamic process of performance, encompassing everything from music and dance to rhetoric and everyday interactions. Scholars in this area examine how African Americans have used performance to resist oppression, build community, and express identity. This includes analyzing the rich traditions of Black musical genres like jazz, blues, and hip-hop, as well as the rhetorical strategies of Black preachers, activists, and artists. Performance studies illuminates how cultural practices are sites of both affirmation and contestation, where meaning is negotiated and social identities are constructed and performed.

Key Areas of Exploration in African American Cultural Studies

African American cultural studies encompasses a vast and diverse range of topics, reflecting the richness and complexity of the African American experience. Scholars in this field investigate the historical development of Black culture, its various forms of artistic expression, its impact on social and political movements, and its ongoing evolution. By focusing on these key areas, the discipline provides a comprehensive understanding of the contributions of African Americans to the broader American and global landscape. The studies within this field are crucial for appreciating the resilience, creativity, and enduring influence of Black culture, and for fostering a more complete and accurate historical narrative.

African American Literature and Literary Traditions

The study of African American literature is a cornerstone of cultural studies, exploring a rich tradition of writing that has documented the Black experience in America for centuries. This area examines works from the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs to the poetry of Phillis Wheatley, the novels of Toni Morrison and James Baldwin, and contemporary authors. Key themes include the legacy of slavery, racial identity, the struggle for freedom and equality, the complexities of family and community, and the search for belonging. Literary analysis often focuses on stylistic innovations, narrative strategies, and the ways in which Black writers have used language to challenge oppression and celebrate Black life. This scholarship highlights the literary contributions that have shaped American letters and provided powerful critiques of racial injustice.

African American Music and Musical Genres

Music has always been central to African American culture, serving as a powerful vehicle for storytelling, emotional expression, social commentary, and spiritual sustenance. African American cultural studies extensively analyzes the diverse and influential musical genres that have emerged from Black communities, including spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz, soul, funk, R&B, and hip-hop. Scholars examine the historical development of these genres, their musical characteristics, and their social and political contexts. They explore how music has been used as a tool for resistance, a means of preserving cultural heritage, and a platform for articulating the joys, sorrows, and aspirations of

Black people. The global impact of African American music is also a significant area of study, recognizing its pervasive influence on popular music worldwide.

African American Visual Arts and Aesthetics

The visual arts provide another crucial avenue for understanding African American culture. This area of study explores the diverse artistic expressions created by African Americans throughout history, including painting, sculpture, photography, film, and digital media. Key artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Augusta Savage, Romare Bearden, and Kara Walker are examined for their contributions to American art and their engagement with themes of Black history, identity, and social justice. Scholars analyze the aesthetic principles, thematic concerns, and cultural contexts of these works, investigating how visual artists have depicted the African American experience, challenged stereotypes, and contributed to the broader artistic dialogue. The field also considers the role of visual culture in shaping perceptions of race and identity.

African American Religious and Spiritual Traditions

Religion and spirituality have played a profoundly influential role in the history and cultural development of African Americans. African American cultural studies explores the unique expressions of faith found within Black communities, particularly the Black church, which has historically served as a center for spiritual guidance, social activism, and community organizing. This scholarship examines the theological underpinnings, liturgical practices, and the profound impact of Black religious traditions on music, literature, and political thought. It delves into the ways in which faith has provided solace, fostered resilience, and fueled movements for social change, offering a critical analysis of the intersection of spirituality and the ongoing struggle for liberation and justice.

African American Social Movements and Political Activism

The history of African Americans is inextricably linked to a legacy of activism and the pursuit of civil rights and social justice. African American cultural studies critically examines the various social movements that have shaped the Black experience in the US, from the abolitionist movement and the Civil Rights Movement to contemporary Black Lives Matter activism. Scholars analyze the strategies, ideologies, leadership, and cultural expressions of these movements, understanding them not just as political struggles but as cultural phenomena. This includes studying protest songs, speeches, literature, and visual art that have been used to mobilize communities, articulate grievances, and envision a more equitable future. The analysis often highlights the interconnectedness of culture, politics, and resistance.

Influential Figures in African American Cultural Studies

The field of African American cultural studies has been shaped by a constellation of brilliant thinkers, writers, artists, and activists whose intellectual contributions and cultural creations have

profoundly influenced our understanding of Black life in America. These figures have provided critical analyses, challenged prevailing narratives, and illuminated the richness and complexity of African American experiences. Their work continues to inspire new generations of scholars and cultural practitioners, reinforcing the importance of centering Black voices and perspectives in academic discourse and beyond. Examining their legacies is essential for grasping the depth and breadth of this vital field of study.

W.E.B. Du Bois: Sociologist, Historian, and Activist

W.E.B. Du Bois is a foundational figure whose multidisciplinary approach laid much of the groundwork for African American cultural studies. His seminal work, "The Souls of Black Folk," introduced the concept of "double consciousness," a term that describes the internal conflict experienced by subordinated groups in an oppressive society, forcing them to see themselves through the eyes of their oppressors. Du Bois's sociological studies of Black communities, his historical analyses of racial inequality, and his tireless activism for civil rights and racial uplift provided enduring insights into the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of the Black experience in America. His work continues to resonate in contemporary discussions about race, identity, and social justice.

Langston Hughes: Poet of the Harlem Renaissance

Langston Hughes was a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance and one of the most influential poets of the 20th century. His poetry, essays, and plays captured the spirit, struggles, and resilience of African Americans during a period of significant cultural and intellectual awakening. Hughes embraced Black vernacular language, blues rhythms, and jazz cadences in his work, celebrating everyday Black life and challenging racial stereotypes. His writings provided a voice for the voiceless and helped to forge a distinct Black literary tradition. His contributions are studied for their artistic merit, their historical significance, and their profound insights into the African American psyche.

Zora Neale Hurston: Anthropologist and Novelist

Zora Neale Hurston brought a unique anthropological and literary perspective to the study and depiction of Black Southern culture. As a trained anthropologist under Franz Boas, she conducted extensive fieldwork, meticulously documenting folklore, language, and traditions within Black communities. Her novels, such as "Their Eyes Were Watching God," are celebrated for their vivid portrayals of Black life, their rich use of dialect, and their complex female characters. Hurston's work emphasized the vibrancy and autonomy of Black culture, often in contrast to the more politically driven approaches of some of her contemporaries. Her legacy is crucial for understanding the importance of cultural authenticity and preservation.

bell hooks: Feminist Theorist and Cultural Critic

bell hooks was a transformative voice in feminist theory, cultural criticism, and African American studies. Her prolific writings explored the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and sexuality, offering incisive critiques of power structures and advocating for critical pedagogy and the

liberation of the mind. Hooks's work, including "Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism" and "Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center," provided foundational analyses of Black womanhood and systemic oppression. She emphasized the importance of love, community, and education as forces for social change, making her a towering figure in contemporary intellectual thought and activism.

Soyinka, Achebe, and the African Literary Canon

While primarily focused on African literature, the works of Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka and author Chinua Achebe are profoundly influential in understanding the broader context of African diaspora studies and its connection to African American cultural studies. Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" offered a seminal portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society, challenging Eurocentric historical narratives and asserting the validity of African perspectives. Soyinka's writings, encompassing plays, novels, and essays, explore themes of identity, oppression, and the complexities of post-colonial Africa. Their contributions are vital for understanding the ancestral roots and the ongoing cultural dialogues between Africa and its diaspora, including the African American community.

The Enduring Impact and Significance of African American Cultural Studies

African American cultural studies has had a profound and lasting impact on American society and scholarship, transcending academic disciplines to inform public discourse, shape artistic movements, and drive social change. Its significance lies in its ability to illuminate the often-unseen contributions and experiences of African Americans, providing a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the nation's history and cultural fabric. The field has consistently challenged dominant narratives, revealing the complex interplay of power, resistance, and creativity that defines the Black experience. Its influence extends to how we understand race, identity, art, and justice, making it an indispensable field for comprehending the complexities of modern America.

Reshaping Historical Narratives and Understanding

One of the most significant impacts of African American cultural studies has been its role in revising and enriching historical narratives. By centering the experiences and perspectives of African Americans, the field has challenged Eurocentric accounts that often marginalized or misrepresented Black contributions. Scholars have unearthed forgotten histories, highlighted the agency of Black people in shaping their own destinies, and revealed the pervasive and enduring nature of racism and its impact on American society. This critical re-examination of history is crucial for a more complete and accurate understanding of the United States, acknowledging the central role of African Americans in its development and cultural formation.

Informing Contemporary Social and Political Movements

The analytical tools and theoretical frameworks developed within African American cultural studies have been instrumental in informing contemporary social and political movements. From the Civil Rights Movement to the Black Lives Matter movement, the intellectual groundwork laid by cultural

studies scholars has provided critical analysis of systemic inequalities, racial injustice, and the cultural expressions of resistance. Understanding the historical context of oppression, the power of collective action, and the role of cultural identity in mobilizing communities are all central to these movements. The field continues to offer vital perspectives on issues of police brutality, economic disparity, and the ongoing struggle for racial equity, demonstrating its enduring relevance to contemporary activism.

Influencing Arts, Media, and Popular Culture

African American cultural studies has profoundly influenced the arts, media, and popular culture, both within and beyond the African American community. The scholarship on Black music, literature, and visual arts has elevated these forms, recognizing their aesthetic value, their historical significance, and their cultural impact. This influence is evident in the widespread recognition and study of Black artists and their works, the integration of Black cultural themes into mainstream media, and the ongoing innovation within Black creative industries. The field's critical analysis of representation in media has also pushed for more diverse and authentic portrayals of Black life, contributing to a more inclusive cultural landscape.

Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding

By providing a deep and critical understanding of African American culture, this field fosters essential intercultural dialogue and promotes greater understanding between different communities. It highlights shared human experiences while also celebrating the unique cultural heritage of African Americans. This engagement can help to dismantle stereotypes, build empathy, and bridge divides. In an increasingly diverse society, the insights gained from African American cultural studies are vital for promoting social cohesion and building a more just and equitable future for all. The field encourages an appreciation for cultural difference and the richness that diversity brings to society.

Challenges and Future Directions in African American Cultural Studies

While African American cultural studies has achieved significant recognition and influence, the field continues to grapple with evolving challenges and embraces new directions for future inquiry. The dynamic nature of culture and society necessitates ongoing adaptation and re-evaluation of existing frameworks and methodologies. As new generations of scholars emerge, they bring fresh perspectives and engage with emerging issues, ensuring the field remains vibrant and relevant. Addressing these challenges and pursuing these new avenues is crucial for the continued growth and impact of African American cultural studies in understanding the multifaceted Black experience.

Addressing Contemporary Issues and Emerging Trends

African American cultural studies must continually engage with contemporary issues that affect Black communities, such as the persistent impacts of systemic racism, economic inequality, the

digital divide, and ongoing struggles for justice. Emerging trends in technology, social media, and global interconnectedness also present new landscapes for cultural expression and analysis. Scholars are increasingly exploring the influence of digital culture on Black identity, the use of social media in activism, and the evolving representations of Blackness in new media forms. This forward-looking approach ensures the field remains responsive to the lived realities of African Americans in the 21st century.

Intersectional and Transnational Approaches

Future research in African American cultural studies will likely continue to emphasize intersectional and transnational approaches. As scholars refine the understanding of how race, gender, class, sexuality, and other identity markers intersect, there is a growing need to examine these complexities within a global context. The study of African diaspora connections, including relationships with Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, will become even more critical. These approaches allow for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the diversity within Black experiences and the shared histories and cultural exchanges that connect people of African descent worldwide.

The Role of Digital Humanities and New Methodologies

The digital revolution has opened up new avenues and methodologies for African American cultural studies. Digital humanities offer innovative tools for analyzing vast archives of texts, images, and audio-visual materials, enabling new forms of research and data visualization. Scholars can now create digital archives, conduct computational analyses of literary texts, and build interactive platforms to share research and engage public audiences. The integration of these new methodologies promises to expand the reach and depth of scholarly inquiry, allowing for more dynamic and accessible explorations of African American culture and history.

Institutional Support and Academic Visibility

A persistent challenge for African American cultural studies, and ethnic studies more broadly, is securing adequate institutional support and maintaining academic visibility within universities. As academic landscapes shift, ensuring the continued strength of Black Studies departments and programs, as well as the integration of African American cultural studies into broader curricula, remains a vital concern. Advocacy for the field's importance, the mentorship of new scholars, and the demonstration of its relevance to understanding contemporary society are crucial for its sustained growth and influence. Maintaining the integrity and visibility of these essential academic pursuits is paramount.

Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of African American Cultural Studies

African American cultural studies in the US stands as a vital and dynamic field that continues to illuminate the profound, complex, and transformative contributions of people of African descent to

American society and global culture. Its journey from marginalized intellectual traditions to a robust academic discipline underscores its importance in challenging dominant narratives, enriching our understanding of history, and informing contemporary social justice movements. By employing critical theoretical frameworks and examining diverse areas of cultural production, from literature and music to art and activism, the field offers indispensable insights into identity, resistance, resilience, and the ongoing pursuit of equality. The enduring legacy of influential figures and the field's continuous adaptation to new challenges and methodologies ensure that African American cultural studies remains not only a critical lens for understanding the past but also an essential guide for navigating the present and shaping a more equitable future. Its impact is a testament to the power of centering Black voices and experiences in the ongoing project of American self-understanding and cultural evolution.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are some of the most significant academic journals or publications in African American Cultural Studies today?

Key journals in African American Cultural Studies include 'American Quarterly,' 'Journal of American History,' 'Callaloo,' 'African American Review,' and 'Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society.' These publications consistently feature cutting-edge scholarship on the diverse expressions and historical evolution of Black culture in the United States.

How has the rise of social media platforms influenced the study and expression of African American culture?

Social media has become a crucial space for the dissemination, negotiation, and creation of African American cultural forms. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) foster new modes of storytelling, community building, political activism, and artistic innovation, making them vital areas of study for understanding contemporary Black culture and its ongoing evolution.

What are the current debates surrounding the concept of 'authenticity' in African American cultural production?

Current debates often grapple with who gets to define and produce 'authentic' Black culture, questioning gatekeeping mechanisms and celebrating diverse expressions. Scholars are exploring how globalization, digital platforms, and intersectional identities challenge traditional notions of authenticity, emphasizing fluidity and individual interpretation.

How are scholars in African American Cultural Studies addressing the ongoing impacts of systemic racism on contemporary cultural practices?

Scholars are actively examining how enduring structures of systemic racism, from mass incarceration to economic inequality, continue to shape and inform contemporary African American cultural practices. This includes analyzing how art, music, literature, and activism serve as both

responses to and critiques of these persistent injustices.

What are the emerging trends or new areas of focus within African American Cultural Studies in the 21st century?

Emerging trends include a greater emphasis on digital culture and online communities, critical examinations of Black environmentalism and climate justice, the study of Black queer and feminist narratives, and analyses of the transatlantic and diasporic connections within African American culture. There's also a growing interest in interdisciplinary approaches, blending cultural studies with fields like public health, urban planning, and technology studies.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to African American cultural studies in the US, with descriptions:

1.

The Souls of Black Folk

This seminal work by W.E.B. Du Bois offers a profound exploration of the African American experience in the early 20th century. Du Bois delves into themes of double consciousness, racial identity, and the persistent struggle for equality in the United States. His essays and reflections provide enduring insights into the psychological and social realities of being Black in America.

2.

Invisible Man

Ralph Ellison's masterpiece is a powerful narrative about an unnamed Black man's journey through racial prejudice and alienation in modern America. The novel masterfully employs symbolism and allegory to depict the protagonist's search for identity and belonging in a society that renders him invisible. It's a critical examination of race, social commentary, and the individual's struggle for self-definition.

3.

Sister Outsider

Audre Lorde's collection of essays and speeches is a cornerstone of intersectional feminist and Black feminist thought. Lorde bravely confronts issues of racism, sexism, and homophobia, advocating for the power of difference and the importance of challenging oppressive systems. Her work continues to inspire activism and scholarly inquiry into the lived experiences of marginalized individuals.

4.

Beloved

Toni Morrison's haunting novel tells the story of Sethe, a former slave haunted by the ghost of her baby daughter, Beloved. This Pulitzer Prize-winning book explores the enduring trauma of slavery,

the complexities of motherhood, and the struggle to reclaim one's past and identity. It is a deeply moving and essential work in understanding the legacy of slavery on the American psyche.

5.

The Fire Next Time

James Baldwin's incendiary essay collection delivers a searing critique of racial injustice in America. Baldwin writes with urgency and poetic grace about the Black experience, the hypocrisy of American society, and the potential for both destruction and redemption. His powerful prose remains incredibly relevant in discussions of race relations today.

6.

Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880

W.E.B. Du Bois's groundbreaking historical analysis challenges prevailing narratives about the Reconstruction era. He meticulously details the significant contributions of Black Americans to the political and social rebuilding of the South after the Civil War. This book is vital for understanding the historical context of Black political power and the forces that sought to undermine it.

7.

The Color Purple

Alice Walker's deeply moving novel follows the life of Celie, a poor, uneducated Black woman living in the rural American South in the early 20th century. Through her letters, Celie narrates her journey from abuse and oppression to self-discovery, independence, and empowerment. The novel is a testament to resilience, sisterhood, and the transformative power of love and voice.

8.

Blues People: Negro Music in White America

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) traces the evolution of African American music, from its roots in slavery to its impact on mainstream American culture. This influential work connects the development of blues, jazz, and soul music to the social, political, and economic conditions faced by Black Americans. It's a critical cultural history that highlights music as a vital form of expression and resistance.

9.

Race, Rights, and Justice: The Law and the Black Experience in America

This collection of essays examines the intricate relationship between law, race, and the African American experience throughout US history. It explores landmark legal cases, the impact of discriminatory policies, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights and equitable justice. The book provides crucial legal and historical context for understanding systemic inequalities.

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