



Black Higher Education: A Historiography of Perseverance and Triumph

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Abstract

Numerous policies and practices undermine Black access, equity, and justice in American higher education today. The Supreme Court recently struck down how race can be used in college admissions decisions, and some state legislatures are attempting to dismantle faculty tenure. Many states are defunding diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and others are banning the teaching of some aspects of Black history at all levels of education, while the nation’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) operate against decades-long underfunding and neglect. These contemporary issues facing Black people and American higher education grow from historical developments in Black education. In this chapter, we analyze the historiography of Black higher education. We first examine how historians and other scholars have studied Black firsts (e.g., students and faculty) on majority-white campuses. Next, we appraise research about HBCUs, demonstrating how the study of these institutions has evolved since the late 1800s. Then, we turn to how historians and others have written about Black struggles for access, equity, and justice in higher education. After appraising more than 100 years of scholarship, in the conclusion we make recommendations for new directions in future research on Black higher education.

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Introduction

There is an intricate relationship between Black people and American higher education. It is a relationship that has existed since before the founding of the United States. The forced labor of enslaved Black people was critical to the development of the colleges founded in colonial America and many other institutions established within the nation's first century (Wilder, 2013). The enslavement of Black people also made institutions of higher education a social and political battleground over racial equality. Prior to the Civil War, the campus became a critical site for debate as scholars, state and federal officials, abolitionists, and others flocked to the halls of the academy to argue over abolishing slavery (Brophy, 2016; Sugrue, 2000). After the war, new debates emerged over Black access to higher education as the recently freed Black people equated learning with citizenship and immediately sought formal education in antebellum America (Anderson, 1988; Baumgartner, 2019; Williams, 2005). Black churches and white missionary societies and philanthropic organizations founded private Black institutions, while federal legislation expanded access by establishing public Black land-grant campuses. State and local practices, however, often limited Black access. This push-and-pull relationship between Black people and education was so prevalent that Walter Herbert Mazyck, a Black attorney who was educated at Howard University, argued in 1926: "One of the virulent factors in strengthening the grip of racial prejudice against the Negro in North America is its system of education" (Mazyck, 1926, pp. 7–8). Mazyck's searing appraisal of race and education is useful nearly 100 years later, as American higher education continues to affect nearly every aspect of Black life. There are decades-old legal challenges to affirmative action programs, and the June 2023 Supreme Court ruling on race-conscious admissions decisions has heightened concern about Black student admissions at many historically white institutions (Bellamy-Walker, 2022; *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, 2023). As federal officials receive calls for loan forgiveness, Black people have accrued a disproportionate amount of student debt (Grabenstein & Khan, 2022). The burden of student debt that Black people carry reflects income disparities that have increased further due to campus expansion efforts that have inflated nearby property values. Empirical or Interpretive displaced thousands of people, particularly Black households (Baldwin, 2021). Furthermore, school boards and state legislators in most states have proposed or passed policies and laws that ban the teaching of "critical race theory" (CRT) in K-12 through higher education. CRT was developed in law schools as a sophisticated framework for understanding how the law can oppress people of color and maintain racist systems of inequality (Crenshaw, 1998, 2001; Crenshaw et al., 1995). However, some

opponents use CRT as a catchall term to refer to instruction on some aspects of Black history, which they seek to halt (Blain, 2022; Steinberg, 2022). Those laws and policies attempt to ban histories that explain important aspects of American higher education's complicated relationship with Black people: how prominent colleges and universities influenced federal housing policy that negatively affected Black neighborhoods near campuses (Cole, 2020); how the nation's oldest colleges profited from the institution of slavery (Wilder, 2013); how law enforcement officials and social scientists manipulated or used faulty crime data to expand police presence in Black communities (Muhammed, 2010); and how several states' officials spent decades withholding billions of dollars from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Adams & Tucker, 2022; Harris, 2021; Lumpkin et al., 2022). Yet, despite a contentious relationship with the broader higher education system, HBCUs have provided Black people with opportunities for upward social mobility (Hammond et al., 2021).

The contemporary issues facing Black people and American higher education have grown from historical developments in Black education at all levels. Therefore, scholarly attention to the development and evolution of Black education is important, as previous historiographies have demonstrated. For example, in 1988, Ronald E. Butchart published "Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World': A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education." Butchart (1988) explained how the first historical studies of Black education had two conflicting themes: "Black historians dominated one tradition, writing corrective histories; white southern historians dominated the other, producing white supremacist accounts" (p. 334). These first histories were written between the 1890s and the Great Depression. Afterward, "a new generation" of scholars spent the 1930s through the 1960s creating "new interpretive foundations" of the previous period (Butchart, 1988, p. 341). While Butchart (1988) credited historians of the mid-twentieth century for scrutinizing Black industrial education, he also pointed out that this "second generation" of historians "generally failed to study systematically the differences between rural and urban schooling" (p. 342). That said, Butchart (1988) determined that the third period – which started in the 1960s – had scholarship that "featured great diversity in approaches, methodology, foci, and premises" that offered "unparalleled richness" in the field (p. 352). Historians in that latter period studied Black education beyond the South, scientific racism, and the perils of white philanthropy, while also producing institutional histories (Butchart, 1988). This historiography was pivotal because Butchart (1988) not only assessed where Black educational history had been but also issued a challenge to historians in the field: "While African American education history is and will remain an independent, autonomous field of research, the field must begin to enrich other fields with its insights and findings if it is to have any impact on the historical profession, on educational practice, and on the society" (p. 363).

Butchart's call for future histories to enrich other fields is reflected in recent historiographies. Adah Ward Randolph's 2013 History of Education Society presidential address – titled "African American Education History: A Manifestation of Faith" and later published in *History of Education Quarterly* – offered a

historiography on Black education and faith. To Butchart's (1988) comment that "Like schooling, history, too is inescapably political" (p. 333), Randolph (2014) added: "I would argue further that for oppressed people, not only is history of education all of those things, but for African Americans in slavery and in freedom education was spiritual" (p. 4). Randolph (2014) shed important light on the development of Black education by demonstrating the role of faith and spirituality among Black educators. She focused on studies that highlighted faith in self-determination (i.e., enslaved Black people's fight for literacy), foot soldiers (i.e., the work of Black teachers during segregation), and communities (i.e., collective belief in social advancement) (Randolph, 2014).

Randolph (2014) presented a model response to Butchart's challenge to historians because she connected Black educational history to religious studies, Black theological studies, and Black studies writ large. Other historians have taken parallel approaches to historiographies of Black education. In 2022, Michael Hines and Thomas Fallace published "Pedagogical Progressivism and Black Education: A Historiographical Review, 1880–1957," an analysis of how historians discussed the development of progressive teaching methods in schools that merged educational history with philosophy. In 2023, Derrick P. Alridge, Adah Ward Randolph, and Alexis M. Johnson's "African American Historians of Education and the Griot's Craft: A Historiography" focused on Black historians of education specifically and explained how those scholars advanced Black educational history and Black studies. These historiographies are valuable assessments, but they focus primarily on histories about Black education at the primary and secondary levels. Few historiographies of Black education have focused on higher education, and among those that have, the emphasis is on only one aspect of Black higher education (see Gasman, 2007a; Kinchen, 2014).

This chapter offers a more comprehensive historiography of Black higher education. It examines past scholarship – books, journal articles, book chapters, and the occasional dissertation or thesis – on Black higher education history. We define Black higher education broadly, exploring research about Black people at historically white institutions and HBCUs, inclusive of 2-year and 4-year institutions. Based on this across-the-board approach, we have organized this chapter's analysis of historical scholarship into three themes, which we present in three sections.

The first theme recaps how scholars have discussed the first Black people – students and faculty, and Black areas of study – in higher education. Black people long sought formal education even when laws outright banned Black education or severely limited Black educational opportunity. Therefore, this section on Black firsts is important because it highlights that historians have always found Black trailblazers an important area of study. We demonstrate how historians in the first 30 years of the twentieth century presented overviews of the first Black students at historically white campuses but rarely named the individuals or provided any biographical information about them. Through the middle of the twentieth century, however, historians' writings evolved to start naming Black firsts – students and, occasionally, faculty – alongside presenting previously absent biographical information and acknowledging the first Black adult education programs. Starting after

civil rights and Black Power protests, historians' study of Black firsts shifted to center how racism shaped the experiences of the first Black students and faculty on white campuses. In total, this section demonstrates the sustained and shifting scholarly interests in the first Black people to overcome racial barriers in higher education.

The second theme discusses the robust body of scholarship on the origins, development, and role of Black colleges and universities. This is the longest section because American higher education has been formally or informally segregated throughout most of its history. Historians' earliest work during the early 1900s in the origins, development, and role Black institutions of higher education was mostly descriptive. Scholars first documented founding dates, curricular offerings, and other general information about Black colleges and universities. From the mid-1930s into the 1970s, historians – and education researchers in their then-contemporary studies – started to evaluate Black institutions' histories in the context of federal court cases that challenged segregated higher education. Those studies often focused on the contributions of Black colleges and universities to demonstrate Black colleges' important role in American higher education. By the mid-1970s through the 1990s, historians answered a call for deeper study of Black institutions by producing scholarship that focused on new perspectives and new discoveries. Histories during that period explored Black institutions' innovative teaching techniques, how Black women had been overlooked, and how laws impacted HBCUs, among other views that occasionally demonstrated how racism shaped those campuses. Finally, by 2000, at a time when some elected officials and political pundits questioned the continued need for HBCUs, research interests focused on tracing the history of how those campuses have served as social engines – and benefited society at large.

The third and final section of this historiography investigates research about Black access, equity, and justice in American higher education. We find this section valuable because it demonstrates how historians – particularly Black historians – have studied Black higher education from an equity-centered perspective, not purely as an objective exercise. Since some historical studies under this theme focus on HBCUs and/or white campuses, the research discussed in this section could fit within the first or second sections; however, we included said studies here because of their broader focus on access, equity, and justice. In doing so, we find that, starting in the 1930s, historians forcefully critiqued the history of white control of Black colleges and universities. By the 1970s through the 1990s, as more Black students and faculty entered white campuses, historians turned attention toward histories of racial discrimination in the professoriate, Black student protests, and Black women administrators' activism. Finally, and more recently, the 2000s presented new histories that recount the student activism of the 1960s and 1970s and elevate previously overlooked individuals' (e.g., Black women activists and college presidents) collective contributions to Black people's struggles for educational access, equity, and justice. The equity-centered focus enhances the historiography by demonstrating how Black historians in particular have led the evolution of the study of Black higher education.

This historiography offers a far-reaching snapshot that centers Black people in historical research about American higher education. Within each theme, we follow key scholarly arguments in chronological order. This approach allows us to demonstrate how the study of Black higher education evolved over time. In the process, the chapter argues that Black access is the most contested idea in American higher education because the historiography reveals constant Black struggle for access and opportunity in higher education. This is evident in the study of Black firsts; the systemic underfunding of Black colleges and universities; and Black campus protests over racism. The chapter displays the critical role of history in understanding Black higher education today. Past scholarship – and the past more generally – provides a guide for how to make sense of the present, and this historiography pinpoints how Black people have persisted and achieved enormous successes throughout the history of American higher education.

The Firsts: Black People in Higher Education

Black people sought formal education in the United States even before the Civil War and emancipation (Anderson, 1988; Baumgartner, 2019; Williams, 2005). They made these efforts despite many southern states' laws forbidding Black education (Span & Anderson, 2005). Following the war, Black people led the campaign for universal, public education in the years when formal education at the secondary level was woefully limited for most Americans (Anderson, 1988), and access to American colleges was even more limited and, for all intents and purposes, nonexistent for Black people. Those circumstances explain why historians have long focused on Black firsts: doing so was crucial at a time when Black access to education was nonexistent or severely limited. It was important to celebrate these firsts, and starting in the early 1900s, historians offered broad overviews that looked at the first Black people to earn bachelor's degrees from colleges and universities. By the middle of the century, as Supreme Court decisions desegregated some southern white law schools, historians turned their attention toward documenting the first Black people to earn graduate and professional degrees, the first Black adult education programs, and the first Black faculty on white campuses. From the late 1970s to the present, historians occasionally built upon that national focus by producing regional histories that charted Black firsts, and, as more archival evidence has become available, historians' scholarship on Black firsts has added more depth to this area of study – enhancing the story of Black triumph and perseverance in American higher education.

Our analysis of scholarship about Black firsts must be framed within the context of the broader debate regarding Black higher education at the turn of the twentieth century because scholarship on Black firsts highlights firsts in the more professional realm of higher education. Historians have commonly framed that debate by the views of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. In summary, Washington was born enslaved and eventually became the leader of Tuskegee Institute and promoted industrial education, while Du Bois was born shortly after the Civil War, earned

degrees from Fisk and Harvard universities, and promoted a liberal, classical education for Black people. Over the past century, historians have added more nuance to this simple dichotomy in their ideas. Norrell (2009) noted that the two men were friendly before a series of events led to the perception of disagreement. There was an attempted “truce,” but it failed, and “the estrangement between the two was personal before it became ideological” (Norrell, 2009, pp. 224–228, 268). Kendi (2012) later argued that the debate between Du Bois and Washington had been “overplayed” by previous historians, and that the overriding issue with Black higher education was “the pervasive sway of white capitalists and paternalists. . .” (p. 17). The capitalist, economic-centered view shaped broader racial perspectives around whether Black people should pursue professional or vocational and industrial jobs, and scholarly attention on Black firsts in American higher education began in this context.

In 1913, Edward T. Ware published one of the earliest scholarly accounts about the first Black people within American higher education. His article, titled “Higher Education of Negroes in the United States,” provided historical context to Black people’s limited access to higher education. It was important scholarship as many Americans debated whether Black people should or could attain higher education. Ware (1913) reported that the first three Black people to graduate from American institutions of higher education attended Bowdoin College, Middlebury College, and Ohio University during the early 1800s. It was a rarity for most Americans to attend and graduate college prior to the Civil War, and that feat was even rarer among Black people. “Only 34 Negroes were graduated before emancipation, and over two-thirds of these from Oberlin College” (Ware, 1913, p. 209). Historians later recognized that Oberlin in Ohio was among the first American colleges to openly admit Black students (Bigglestone, 1971); however, Ware (1913) did not specify why Oberlin was important in his article. Nonetheless, Ware’s writing about the first Black students was an important early attempt to document Black higher education at a time when scholars had largely ignored Black presence – as students or as enslaved labor – in higher education.

Shortly after Ware’s 1913 article, historian Carter G. Woodson helped accelerate the study of Black people and education. In 1915, Woodson published his landmark book, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*. His goal was “a small volume [of] the leading facts of the development of Negro education” (Woodson, 1915, p. iii). While Woodson’s book focused on primary and secondary education, it was important because he sprinkled in some facts about Black firsts. For example, Woodson (1915) noted that, in 1828, John Russwurm became the first Black college graduate when he earned a degree from Bowdoin College in Maine [historians later noted it was 1826]. Two years later, the 1830 Colored Peoples Convention in Philadelphia sought to “establish a Manual College at New Haven” where Black people could attain a classical education (Woodson, 1915, p. 260). Woodson did not elaborate on why the college never came into fruition, but Banks (1996) and other historians later noted white residents’ opposition blocked the project. By 1840, according to Woodson’s account, racism still limited Black access to higher education. As a result, no more than “fifteen Negroes were admitted to higher education institutions in this country before 1840” (Woodson, 1915, p. 265).

Woodson's book had a tremendous impact on the study of Black education and Black life in general, as did the *Journal of Negro History*, which he founded in 1915, and the Associated Publishers publishing company, which he established in 1920. Soon, many other Black scholars accepted Woodson's call for the study of Black history, and some took up the study of Black higher education. By the late 1930s, however, scholars' attention to Black firsts shifted from general accounts that acknowledged the institutions that graduated the first Black college undergraduates to more expansive investigations that named Black people. That shift coincided with the Maryland Court of Appeals' January 1936 ruling in *Raymond A. Pearson et al. v. Donald G. Murray*. The court decision resulted in Murray, a Black man, being admitted to the segregated University of Maryland Law School. The court stated: "The case, as we find it, then, is that the state has undertaken the function of education in the law, but has omitted students of one race from the only adequate provision made for it, and omitted them solely because of their color" (*Raymond A. Pearson v. Donald G. Murray*, 1936).

The lack of equality in educational provisions, particularly for Black adults seeking training beyond traditional undergraduate age, was important to some scholars. The same year as *Pearson v. Murray*, Ira De Augustine Reid published a short book, *Adult Education Among Negroes*, that examined the first adult education programs for Black people. Although adult education was different from traditional higher education, the lingering effects of the Great Depression warranted scholarly attention to economic recovery through various forms of education. Reid (1936) acknowledged that some Black people had formal education beyond primary and secondary education, but observed, "in spite of all this, there has been no group program of adult education for Negroes" (Reid, 1936, p. 17). Reid's study asserted that rural adult education, typically supported by college extension services for Black farmers, was a form of adult education that worked well for Black people. Otherwise, when it came to Black adult education in urban centers or for non-farmers, the nation lacked group programs before the 1930s (Reid, 1936). This historical study of adult education is interwoven with the evolution of colleges and universities. For example, Reid (1936) said the first Black adult education programs were launched with support from the American Adult Education Association. In 1931, grants totaling \$46,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Julius Rosenwald Fund were used for 3-year adult education programs in Black neighborhoods in Atlanta, Georgia, and New York, New York (Reid, 1936). Reid (1936) argued that these first two Black adult education programs revealed that more effort was needed to secure additional private and public funding, adjust programs to better meet people's needs instead of expecting people to adjust to the program design, and encourage more guidance from institutions of higher education (Reid, 1936). The latter point – about guidance from colleges and universities – further demonstrated how studying the first Black adult programs enhanced understanding of higher education's historic role in expanding Black access to higher education.

Two years later, Fisk University sociologist Charles S. Johnson published his book, *The Negro College Graduate*. It was a comprehensive study of the history of Black graduates of college and professional schools, as well as a contemporary

assessment of Black graduates' residential locations, earnings, and motivations for attending college (Johnson, 1938). Like Woodson (1915), Johnson (1938) also acknowledged that John Russwurm was the first Black person to graduate from a college in the United States when he completed his studies at Bowdoin College – although Johnson stated the degree was conferred in 1826 and Woodson said 1828. Johnson's book also augmented the data that that Edward T. Ware had provided 25 years earlier. Whereas Ware (1913) stated that 34 Black people earned college degrees prior to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Johnson (1938) noted that by 1860, a total of 28 Black people had earned college degrees. Regarding Black firsts during that period, Johnson (1938) explained that no region or location was better than any others when in providing higher education opportunity: "The Negro population, however, even in the free northern states, was separated from this intellectual luxury not only by a cultural chasm of formidable proportions but by economic and social restrictions of a most compelling sort" (p. 7). "So severe were these restrictions" that James McCune Smith – an American – had to travel abroad to become the first Black person to earn a professional degree; Smith earned a doctorate in medicine at the University of Glasgow in Scotland in 1837 (Johnson, 1938, p. 7).

Johnson's study was significant in that it further quantified the first Black college graduates. Also, in studying Black firsts, Johnson (1938) specifically focused on Black college graduates more than Ware (1913), who was focused on Black colleges and institutions. Furthermore, Johnson's (1938) research was timely in that it was published the same year the US Supreme Court in *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* ruled in favor of Lloyd Gaines, a Black man. The court declared that the state of Missouri must provide its Black residents with an option to study law since the University of Missouri Law School – the state's only law school – was a segregated white institution (Endersby & Horner, 2016). Johnson (1938), alongside the Supreme Court's ruling, spurred a series of other studies exploring Black firsts. For example, one study was by Marion Thompson Wright, who, in 1940, became the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in the field of history (Hodges, 2021). In 1941, her dissertation-turned-book, *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*, was published by Teachers College Press as a broad study of the first educational opportunities for Black people in New Jersey (Wright, 1941).

While Wright focused on first opportunities in a single state, Harry Washington Greene (1946) built upon Johnson's study of Black college graduates and Wright's trailblazing scholarship in his book, *HOLDERS of Doctorates Among American Negroes*. Greene's ambitious book focused on the years 1876–1943, and it was the culmination of five previous articles he had published regarding Black people who had earned a Ph.D. (Greene, 1928, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1937). Greene (1946) acknowledged Johnson's 1938 book, *The Negro College Graduate*; however, as a scholar who had studied Black graduates at length, Greene considered Johnson's work in that area "quite inadequate and incomplete in their treatment of the particular problem at hand" (p. 16). The problem, Greene argued, was the struggle for Black colleges and universities to earn and maintain accreditation, and faculty with doctorates were essential to addressing the problem. As Greene (1946) explained, "standardization or accreditation of colleges among Negroes is a recent

development” (p. 139) since the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS) rated its first Black college in 1930. Therefore, Greene (1946) presented an overview of Black doctorate holders’ specializations, honors and awards, and research in various disciplines and fields of study. Its wide scope aside, Greene’s most important contribution was that he compiled lists of the first Black doctorate holders by field or discipline into a single volume. In 1895 at Harvard University, W. E. B. Du Bois became the first Black person to earn a Ph. D. “in the field of social science” (Greene, 1946, p. 46). The University of Pennsylvania awarded the first doctorate in economics to a Black person when Sadie T. Mossell Alexander earned hers in 1921, while the first Black doctorate in the field of history was awarded to Charles H. Wesley at Harvard in 1925 (Greene, 1946). Greene (1946) presented similar Black first doctorate holders in many other fields. In education, Charles H. Thompson earned a doctorate at the University of Chicago in 1925, and the first Black women to do so in the field were Alethea Washington at Ohio State University and Jennie Porter at the University of Cincinnati, both in 1928 (Greene, 1946). In other professional fields, Greene (1946) noted that Julian H. Lewis earned a medical doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1915; Charles Hamilton Houston earned Doctor of Juridical Science from Harvard in 1923; and John Wesley Edward Bowen earned a doctorate in religion from Boston University in 1887.

Greene (1946) presented similar Black firsts in physical sciences, literature, biological sciences, and philosophy, among other fields and subfields. The book was the most comprehensive study of Black firsts in higher education in the first half of the twentieth century. Starting with Edward T. Ware’s 1913 article that only briefly mentioned the colleges that educated the first Black college graduates and ending with Harry Washington Greene’s study of Black doctorate holders, scholarship that identified Black firsts had moved from brief sketches of Black firsts nationally to become more comprehensive. Greene (1946) was also attentive to gender by highlighting the first Black women to earn doctorates in certain fields. That more expansive approach continued even as, by the late 1940s, significant legal challenges to segregated education were culminating before the US Supreme Court.

For example, in 1950, Robert L. Gill, a professor of history and government at Morgan State College, published an article about the first Black professors on many predominately white campuses. Gill (1950) focused on more recent history and offered short biographical overviews of some of the professors mentioned, expanding the study of Black firsts in higher education. Prior to that point, most attention was directed toward Black firsts as students (as well as the first Black adult education programs). Gill (1950) emphasized how the recent decade, the 1940s, had created more Black firsts within the professoriate. Gill (1950) added: “The Negro professors [at] non-segregated colleges and universities are fortunately no longer rare birds. Indeed, they now form rather a large flock with representatives at schools as distant geographically as Harvard and the University of California. . .” (p. 8). Gill (1950) recorded that W. Allison Davis, when hired by the University of Chicago in 1942, became the first Black person to be hired as a full-time professor. “The Negro college professors in mixed universities are no longer guinea pigs,” Gill (1950)

wrote, adding, “They have proven themselves” (p. 29). Gill (1950) was optimistic in his appraisal, as future historians further demonstrated that the first Black professors on white campuses were, in fact, treated like “guinea pigs” and “rare birds.” This reality was true at a time when racial segregation in American education was at the forefront of national conversations, and in 1954, the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling deemed school segregation unconstitutional.

Despite the significance of *Brown*, historical research on Black firsts did not see a notable shift immediately following that Supreme Court decision. Historians continued to provide comprehensive accounts that named Black firsts. For example, Walter Crosby Eells published “The Higher Education of Negroes in the United States” in 1955. The article began with a series of questions, including: “Do Negroes in America have a chance for higher education?” Eells framed that as a common question heard by American citizens when abroad, particularly after World War II as the United States touted global democracy but maintained racial segregation. This question was important since the central focus of the article was Black colleges and universities, but Eells also highlighted the limited access Black people had to predominately white institutions. For example, Eells stated that, in 1876, the first Black person to earn a Ph.D. from an American university was Edward Alexander Bouchet at Yale University (Eells, 1955; Mickens, 2002). In 1921, three students became the first Black women to earn a Ph.D. from American universities (Eells, 1955): Georgiana Rose Simpson from the University of Chicago; Sadie T. Mossell Alexander from the University of Pennsylvania; and Eva Beatrice Dykes from Radcliffe College (Banks, 1996; Eells, 1955; Evans, 2007; Perkins, 1997; Presidential Committee, 2022). While the earliest scholarship in this area did not typically name individuals, Eells’s (1955) work reflected the period since the 1930s as named individual Black people in discussing Black firsts.

The previous eras featured historical accounts of Black firsts that did not interrogate the experiences of the first Black students and faculty, but by the civil rights unrest of the late 1950s and 1960s, scholars discussed Black firsts alongside the racial conditions that awaited them on white campuses. One notable book – Henry Allen Bullock’s *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (1967) – attempted to make sense of racial conditions in the United States by looking to the past. Just prior to the publication of Bullock’s book, in 1961, 1962, and 1963, three segregated white southern institutions – Universities of Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama – were the center of national attention as segregationists publicly, and sometimes violently, opposed desegregation (see Cohadas, 1997; Cole, 2020; Daniels, 2001; Doyle, 2002; Hollars, 2013; Lambert, 2010; Tilford, 2014). Bullock (1967), in a chapter titled “The Bid for Desegregation,” briefly discussed the first Black students who enrolled at formerly segregated white universities after successful lawsuits filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Bullock (1967) noted that, “beginning in 1935 and with the border states where resistance was believed to be softer,” a series of attempts were made to desegregate white institutions (pp. 226–227). Bullock (1967) discussed first Black students in the context of the previously mentioned *Pearson v. Murray* (1936) at the University of Maryland. The court ruling, Bullock (1967)

argued, meant “the NAACP had broken an important link in the chain of segregation” (p. 227). Bullock (1967) also discussed Supreme Court cases in 1948 and 1950 that resulted in Ada Lois Sipuel and Heman Merion Sweatt – like Murray at Maryland and Gaines at Missouri – being admitted to the law schools of the University of Oklahoma and the University of Texas, respectively.

Bullock (1967) presented and named Black firsts, but he paid more attention to the civil rights challenges that the said Black firsts faced. This was an important departure from prior scholars who had only named Black firsts, and other historians soon adopted a similar approach. For example, in 1974, Barbara Lewinson used a regional lens in studying the first Black graduates of nine colleges in the Northeast. Among them, Herman Dreer graduated from Bowdoin College in 1910 (Lewinson, 1974). Dreer was still one of the first Black students at the college despite graduating nearly a century after John Russwurm in 1826 (Lewinson, 1974). The article, titled “Black Students in Eastern Colleges, 1895–1940,” also discussed Black firsts at Amherst College, Bates College, Dartmouth College, and Brown University, among other northeastern colleges. Lewinson (1974) observed, “what these men have accomplished beginning with their college days can be considered even more significant than the achievements of other students since they had many additional pressures which resulted from the color of their skin” (p. 87). In doing so, Lewinson (1974) – like Bullock (1967) – situated the discussion of Black firsts within the context of racism on white college campuses.

Over the next two decades, the most notable contribution of histories about Black firsts was how those studies of the past informed contemporary studies. By the 1970s and 1980s, the immediate post-segregation years resulted in increased numbers of Black students enrolled on white campuses. As a result, scholars in the 1980s who assessed Black higher education frequently, albeit briefly, cited historical facts that historians had uncovered. One example is Charles V. Willie’s and Donald Cunnigen’s 1981 literature review on Black college students. The study focused on 1965 to 1980, but Willie and Cunnigen (1981) also noted John Russwurm, as the first Black college graduate, as a way to acknowledge that “black participation in American higher education has been determined by the changing status of blacks in the society” (p. 117). It is important to note that not much historical research about Black firsts happened during the 1980s and early 1990s. Most Black higher education research during that period focused on HBCUs, as will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Scholars were able to identify issues facing Black students in the 1980s and 1990s and use histories of Black firsts to demonstrate how racism had been prevalent for centuries.

The use of Black firsts to frame present-day assessments remained common through this period, but the most significant contribution to the historiography came nearly 20 years later when Linda M. Perkins published a *Harvard Educational Review* article focused on the first Black women enrolled at the Seven Sisters colleges – a group of private, historically women’s liberal arts in the Northeast. Like Bullock (1967) and Lewinson (1974), Perkins (1997) also discussed Black firsts within the context of their racial experiences as trailblazers. Perkins (1997) also broke important ground in paying historical attention to long overlooked Black

women in white academic spaces. Prior to Perkins (1997), most histories only acknowledged Black women's firsts by noting when they had graduated, paying more attention to Black men. Perkins (1997) discussed the Black women who first graduated from this collection of elite institutions. She explained that, in 1887, Harriett Alleyne Rice became the first Black graduate of Wellesley College, and in 1898, Alberta Scott achieved the same feat at Radcliffe College (Perkins, 1997). Martha Ralston earned a college degree from Mount Holyoke in 1898, while Otelia Cromwell became Smith College's first Black graduate in 1900 (Perkins, 1997). Perkins (1997) also discussed Black firsts at Bryn Mawr College, Vassar College, and Barnard College.

Perkins (1997) not only named Black firsts, however. She offered a more complete understanding of Black higher education history by analyzing the racial climate that awaited those Black women. For instance, Perkins (1997) uncovered how in 1903, a Black woman named Jessie Fauset finished at the top of her high school class in Philadelphia and received a scholarship to attend Bryn Mawr College, but "when it was discovered that Fauset was Black, President [M. Carey] Thomas raised money for Fauset to attend Cornell [University] (Thomas's alma mater) rather than have a Black woman attend Bryn Mawr" (p. 733). Regarding Vassar College, Perkins (1997) said campus officials "felt that the presence of African-American women, even those with a slight tinge of Black blood, would detract from the image it sought to project as an institution for the aristocratic and genteel woman" (pp. 737–738). Perkins (1997) also explained that the discrimination did not stop at admissions or in campus housing. Postcollege opportunities were limited for the first Black women graduates due to their race. "It was sometimes believed by the administrations of these institutions that most of the African American women graduates would be employed in a Black setting," and they "routinely faced discrimination in hiring and had little choice but to go South to teach in segregated high schools" (Perkins, 1997, p. 749). The article was important to expanding and reframing how historians discussed Black firsts (see also Perkins, 1998).

Following Perkins, other historians expanded upon the study of Black firsts by adding more racial context to the discussion. Noliwe Rooks's 2006 book, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education*, focuses on curricular Black firsts. Similar to Reid's (1936) work on adult education, Rooks (2006) discussed the first Black studies programs and Black intellectual thought in her study focused on the role of white philanthropy in shaping Black studies programs in the United States. Yet, unlike Reid (1936), who simply discussed the first Black adult education programs, Rooks (2006) provided rich context around racism, student unrest, and political changes that shaped the moment that birthed Black studies programs. Therefore, Rooks (2006) not only discussed Black firsts in terms of access but she also acknowledged firsts in terms of curricula and academic programs built for Black students.

Similarly, in 2007, Stephanie Y. Evans's *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850–1954* provided further insights into Black women pioneers in higher education. In the same ways as Perkins (1997) discussed Black firsts and their racial

challenges, Evans (2007) explored Black firsts through Black women's intellectual contributions. The book was divided in two parts: Educational Attainment and Intellectual Legacy. The initial part discussed firsts among Black women in American higher education within the context of their racial experiences. For example, Evans (2007) explained that "Oberlin College was a beacon of light for antebellum black scholars, but in a geographically limited sense: the majority of students came from the North or Midwest" (p. 21). Her inclusion of that fact demonstrated how, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, historians discussed Black firsts by offering a more robust and critical understanding of context – even for institutions previously celebrated as antebellum safe spaces. In part two of the book, Evans (2007) demonstrated how Black women – many of them being the firsts in various roles – were intellectual contributors to research, teaching, and service.

These three works – Perkins (1997), Rooks (2006), Evans (2007) – are critically important to the historiography of Black higher education, and they highlight how the study of Black firsts evolved over time. The legacy of racial discrimination in formal education explains scholars' consistent interest in the study of Black firsts. This area of research calls attention to the pioneering Black people who, despite various formal and informal barriers, entered American higher education as students and faculty. The earliest histories about Black firsts often acknowledged the institutions that admitted and educated the first Black students but did not name the individual Black graduates. Starting in the 1930s, however, historians and other scholars started to name the first Black graduates at the undergraduate and graduate levels, provide biographical background on said graduates and the first Black faculty, and highlight specific programs for Black people (e.g., adult education). The last 50 years – following the racial unrest of the 1960s and 1970s – has seen the historiography on Black firsts evolve to include the racial experiences and other societal influences that came along with being a Black first in American higher education. In summary, historians have demonstrated that Black firsts – students, faculty, curriculum changes, adult education, and other aspects – had been difficult to achieve throughout American higher education history. Furthermore, uncovering the stories and names of many Black firsts remains difficult because, as Perkins (1997) explained, some Black students' skin complexion allowed them to pass for white. Additionally, institutions did not always welcome Black people, and, in turn, archival records did not record their presence. These challenges explain why, despite Black firsts being critically important to the field, the bulk of scholarship on Black higher education has been on the institutions that did admit Black students.

Black Colleges and Universities: Origins, Development, and Role

When studying Black higher education, most researchers have focused on Black college campuses – known today as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This section is longer than the previous section because historians and other scholars have written at length about the origins, development, and social role of Black colleges and universities. To manage the volume of research on HBCUs,

this section examines how researchers have made sense of the origins, development, and role of Black institutions by briefly highlighting significant publications prior to the *Brown* decision in 1954 and primarily focusing on research after that Supreme Court ruling. Embedded within this scholarship are debates over social status, curricular offerings, inequitable funding, and governance of those campuses – issues scholars have grappled with for more than a century. The earliest histories from the late 1890s to 1935 were primarily descriptive and initially described basic facts about Black institutions. Historians and other scholars during the period focused on founding dates, founding entities, and other general information regarding the origins of these institutions. From the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s, studies started to evaluate the numerous contributions of Black colleges and universities to demonstrate their essential role in American higher education. This research was important since several federal desegregation cases emerged during that period that raised questions about the necessity of Black institutions. From the 1970s through the 1990s, historians responded to a call to further expand the research on Black higher education by preparing studies that accounted for new perspectives and discoveries. These new perspectives and discoveries occasionally revealed how systemic racism stifled Black campus development, and within the last 20 years, scholars have explored the history of the larger social influence of Black colleges and universities and how those institutions have positively influenced society – not just academia.

Historiography: 1898–1935

The historiography on Black colleges and universities begins with W. E. B. Du Bois's 1898 article titled, "The Study of the Negro Problems." The article was a broad call for the sociological analysis on the status of Black people at the end of the nineteenth century, but his essay was also rooted in the importance of history. Du Bois (1898) argued, "One cannot study the Negro in freedom and come to general conclusions about his destiny without knowing his history in slavery" (p. 12). To address challenges faced by Black people, Du Bois (1898) said, "it would seem to be the clear duty of the American people, in the interests of scientific knowledge and social reform, to begin a broad and systematic study of the history and condition of the American Negroes" (p. 15). The study of history was the first step, and Black colleges were essential to conducting such historical study (Du Bois, 1898). Du Bois (1898) added:

We hear much of higher Negro education, and yet all candid people know there does not exist to-day in the centre of Negro population a single first-class fully equipped institution devoted to the higher education of Negroes; not more than three Negro institutions in the South deserve the name of college at all; and yet what is a Negro college but a vast college settlement for the study of a particular set of peculiarly baffling problems? (p. 22)

The Black college would be essential to solving "the Negro problem," but the history of those institutions was interwoven with neglect by white actors in the public and private sector. Therefore, Du Bois (1898) concluded: "Without doubt, the first effective step toward the solving of the Negro question will be the endowment of

a Negro college which is not merely a teaching body, but a centre of sociological research. . ." (p. 22).

Two years later, Du Bois accepted his own challenge when, in 1900, he published *The College-Bred Negro*, his first study of Black colleges and universities. Du Bois (1900) evaluated which Black institutions offered college-level coursework, but before doing so, he offered a historical overview of when and why those institutions were founded. Du Bois (1900) explained, "Omitting all institutions which have not actually graduated students from a college course, there are today in the United States thirty-four institutions giving collegiate training to Negroes and designed for this race" (p. 6). Among those 34 colleges, Lincoln University and Wilberforce University were founded "before the war and represent the Abolition movement," as they were established by Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and African Methodists in Ohio, respectively (Du Bois, 1900, p. 6). Du Bois (1900) categorized 13 other Black colleges, including Fisk, Howard, and Atlanta universities, as "Freedmen's Bureau Schools" (p. 6). The bureau was established by Congress in 1865 with the responsibility of aiding newly freed Black people in various aspects of life, including education (Du Bois, 1900). The remaining institutions among the 34 colleges listed were categorized by their founding as "Church Schools," "Schools of Negro Bodies," and "State Colleges" (Du Bois, 1900, p. 7).

Most of Du Bois's (1900) book was an evaluation of Black colleges and universities at the turn of the century, but the study is important to Black higher education historiography because it compiled, perhaps for the first time, an overview of what entities founded those institutions within the context of the Civil War. Du Bois conducted a follow-up study, also titled *The College-Bred Negro*, in 1910 with Augustus Granville Dill. Du Bois's historical research on Black colleges was primarily descriptive as he focused on establishing basic facts about the institutions (e.g., founding entities and founding dates), but he laid the foundation for other historical studies that followed.

In one of the first studies that followed Du Bois's evaluations of Black colleges and universities, Ware (1913) opened his article on the first Black college graduates in the United States by stating: "Since 1823, there have been graduated from American colleges about 5,000 Negroes, 1,000 from Northern colleges and 4,000 from colleges established especially for Negroes in the South" (p. 209), thus noting the significant role that Black colleges and universities played in expanding educational opportunity. Despite comprising a small percentage of American colleges, by 1913, Black colleges had bestowed 80% of the college degrees that Black people had earned (Ware, 1913).

Like Du Bois, Ware (1913) provided a descriptive history of Black colleges and universities. Ware (1913) credited the Freedmen's Bureau, missionary societies, and state governments for establishing Black institutions. Wilberforce University in 1856 became the first Black institution to establish a "college department" and the only one to do so before the Civil War (Ware, 1913, p. 211). It was important to document when some Black institutions had developed from secondary schools to legitimate institutions of higher education. Other universities followed Wilberforce and established college departments, including Lincoln University in 1864, Howard

University in 1868, Straight University (now defunct) in 1869, Leland University (now defunct) and Shaw University in 1870, Fisk University in 1871, and Atlanta University in 1872 (Ware, 1913). A total of 11 Black colleges had college departments by 1880 (Ware, 1913). Ware (1913) also briefly explained the amount of money private entities and state governments earmarked for Black higher education. For example, in 1912, the state of Alabama appropriated \$17,000 to the Alabama State Normal School while the state of Florida provided \$12,000 to Florida A&M College (Ware, 1913); however, Ware (1913) did not discuss or analyze how those appropriations compared to those for similarly sized white colleges and universities in those states.

Du Bois (1900), Du Bois and Dill (1910), and Ware (1913) reflected the concern of the earliest histories of Black colleges and universities with basic facts and milestones. This was a simple, yet important, approach to studying Black higher education. As Du Bois (1898) explained, the first step in solving the problems facing Black Americans was to study history, and Black institutions with their focus on expanding access to higher education were critical to that study. Therefore, scholars' earliest attention was geared toward documenting the origins and development of those institutions – and such focus remained prevalent for the next two decades.

By the 1930s, historians and other educational specialists took an even greater interest in Black higher education, likely due to the Great Depression and its dramatic impact on the lives of all Americans and organizations. Scholars continued to produce mostly descriptive histories of Black higher education, but again, those studies had great significance. In 1930, Ullin W. Leavell published the book *Philanthropy in Negro Education*. Leavell (1930) traced the history of white philanthropy toward Black people since 1619 – the year that 20 enslaved Africans became “the first group of Negro slaves that was sold in the colonies. . .” (p. 1). After a brief overview of Black education during enslavement, Leavell (1930) focused on Black education after the Civil War, and he emphasized five private, white-run funds – George Peabody, John F. Slater, General Education, Anna T. Jeanes, and Julius Rosenwald – that supported educational access. He reported, “Administrative forces have been established and maintained by these agencies in order to reach the southern Negro directly and to assist in the development of adequate facilities for the colored race” (Leavell, 1930, p. 59). Although the book did not offer much delineation between Black primary and secondary education and higher education, Leavell (1930) provided a list of those private funds' expenditures and receipts for training schools and high schools, the construction of teachers' homes, and buildings and property. As mentioned earlier, many Black colleges began as secondary schools before developing college departments. Therefore, the book measured the financial significance of the private entities that Du Bois (1900) and Ware (1913) recognized for founding future Black colleges and universities.

Two years later, in 1932, Theophilus E. McKinney Sr., dean at Johnson C. Smith University, a private college for Black students, coordinated a celebration for the 25th anniversary of Henry Lawrence McCrorey serving as that institution's president. McKinney ensured that the ceremony's eight public addresses – the first of which was delivered by Woodson – covered “practically every aspect of the higher

education of the Negroes in the United States during the last quarter century” (“Theophilus Elisha. . .,” 1932, p. 502). Afterward, McKinney published the addresses in the edited volume, *Higher Education Among Negroes* (McKinney, 1932). In addition to Woodson’s address, titled “Twenty-five Years of Higher Education Among Negroes,” other notable Black educators Kelly Miller, Mary McLeod Bethune, and James Ward Seabrook also spoke (“Theophilus Elisha. . .,” 1932). McKinney’s (1932) volume was foundational to history of Black colleges and universities as it was a comprehensive volume that brought together multiple voices interested in documenting various foundational facts about Black institutions.

In 1933, Fred McCuistion, executive agent of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS), published a report titled *Higher Education of Negroes: A Summary*. As the titled suggested, the report summarized enrollment data as of 1932. McCuistion (1933) noted that 109 Black colleges and universities reported offering college-level courses, and on these campuses, enrollments spanned from as few as 10 college students at Coleman College in Louisiana (now defunct) to roughly 2000 at Howard University in Washington, DC. Offering an assessment of the current state of Black institutions, McCuistion (1933) reported that in 1932, SACS rated 6 four-year Black colleges as “Class A” and 22 as “Class B” (Leavell, 1930). Like Du Bois (1900), however, McCuistion’s (1933) work was important to the historiography because it was among the first evaluations of Black higher education by SACS – a white-run accrediting agency. SACS had refused to rate Black colleges and universities until 1930 when it rated Fisk University as a Class “A” institution, a significant milestone because accreditation meant that graduates of Black colleges could be admitted to predominately white graduate schools without having to repeat some undergraduate coursework (“Talladega College Given ‘A,’” 1932).

The decision by SACS to rate Black colleges and universities prompted other studies of Black institutions. For instance, also in 1933, Ambrose Caliver published “A Personnel Study of Negro College Students” in the *Journal of Educational Research*. As more Black colleges were deemed actual “colleges,” Caliver (1933) evaluated Black college students’ career interests and home lives. He noted that most Black people who attended college during that era came from a “fairly substantial economic background” (p. 132). Related to this line of scholarship, Frazier (1933) assessed the status of graduate-level course offerings and observed the common objectives of graduate education at Black colleges and universities. While these first attempts to evaluate Black institutions were not historical studies, Caliver (1933) and Frazier (1933) remain valuable because both enlightened scholars who soon conducted historical studies on how Black colleges arrived at their status in the 1930s.

Shortly afterward, a few Black soon-to-be presidents of Black colleges and universities published history books about Black higher education. One of them was Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose book *The Evolution of the Negro College*, was the first major history of Black colleges and universities. Holmes (1934) aimed to

present, within the limits of a single volume, the circumstances surrounding the establishment and development of the Negro college, in order to furnish an integrated background upon which to project the problems that arise from an inquiry into the present place and function of this group of schools in the scheme of American higher education. (p. 3)

Holmes (1934) studied history with the goal of better understanding the present. To do so, the book explored private and public Black institutions alike while acknowledging the role of “organized philanthropy” (Holmes, 1934, p. 163), although not to the extent that Leavell (1930) did. Still, Holmes (1934) broke new ground with his wide scope, as he discussed Black colleges, philanthropic organizations, missionary groups, and federal legislation such as the Morrill Acts that established land-grant colleges in 1862 and 1890. Instead of focusing solely on basic facts, Holmes (1934) acknowledged the role of racism as evident by segregated higher education, explaining that “there are seventeen land-grant colleges for Negroes at the present time, one in each of the states that maintain a dual system of schools” (p. 150).

Holmes (1934) divided the history of Black colleges into four periods: 1860–1885, 1886–1916, 1917–1928, and the then-current period. Holmes (1934) also used history to make recommendations for the future: “This study has been made as an historical investigation, for the purpose of recording what has happened in the past rather than to project the future.” Holmes (1934) added, “The findings, however, exhibit conditions which seem to justify further comment, followed by forecast and recommendation” (p. 208). In his assessment of the present, Holmes (1934) determined that many Black colleges lacked “definite and clear-cut objectives” and most had “an entirely inadequate income” (p. 209). This approach – a thorough investigation of the past to appraise current conditions – was the most comprehensive response to the challenge Du Bois (1898) issued three decades earlier. This era included the first institutional histories of Tuskegee Institute (Thrasher, 1901) and Hampton Institute (Peabody, 1922), but the work was most valuable in providing an initial comprehensive study that future historians then used when writing more detailed histories. By widening the scope and acknowledging racism, Holmes closed the era of histories of Black colleges and universities that were primary descriptive, and other works soon expanded the historical study of Black institutions.

Historiography: 1935–1975

As previously mentioned, the *Pearson v Murray* (1936) and *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938) decisions were significant blows to segregation at the University of Maryland and University of Missouri, respectively; other federal rulings in favor of desegregation in the 1940s through the 1960s raised urgent questions about Black higher education across the entire South. The primary question was whether Black colleges and universities remained relevant in a desegregated society, and historians and scholars answered in the affirmative by revealing the historical contributions of Black college graduates, how those institutions provided rare opportunities for Black people to attain graduate-level studies, and how Black colleges had long produced most Black teachers, among many other contributions. In total, the studies during

this period highlighted Black institutions' various contributions to demonstrate the essential place they held in higher education, regardless of whether American colleges and universities desegregated.

One of the first examples of this new scholarly focus was Charles S. Johnson's *The Negro College Graduate* (1938). Johnson (1938) evaluated the accomplishments of the graduates of Black institutions, and in the first two-thirds of the book, he primarily assessed Black college and professional school graduates' residential locations, earnings, professional occupations, and motivations for attending college; however, in the latter third of the book, he offered a detailed historical account of the founding of the Black colleges that educated most of the Black college graduates. Johnson (1938) featured chapters dedicated to the founding of private Black colleges, including discussion of the major donors to each college prior to 1908; the development of Black teachers, especially for secondary schools; and the history of Black doctors, dentists, and lawyers. Johnson (1938) used that history to conclude: "Negro college graduates are most likely to disturb the custom on social and racial matters and also most likely to contribute constructively to social adjustments" (p. 355).

Johnson (1938) is a clear example of scholars' historical shift from fact-finding histories to analyses geared toward arguing that Black colleges made important contributions. It was a fitting study, too, considering the context of legal challenges to racial segregation across southern states. Over the next decade, three Supreme Court cases – *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma* (1948); *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* (1950); and *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) – successfully challenged segregated white graduate programs in Oklahoma and Texas, while indirectly highlighting the underdevelopment of Black colleges in those states. Following Johnson (1938), alongside the Supreme Court rulings, historians also produced state-level histories of Black colleges and universities that discussed those institutions' contributions. For example, the first half of Range's (1951) history of Black colleges in Georgia provided a general description of the origins and development of Black higher education in the state (similar to the earliest studies of Black institutions); however, the latter half discussed the contributions of the state's Black institutions. For example, Range (1951) said:

...out from the [Atlanta University School of Social Work] went graduates to become case workers, medical workers, probation officers, Urban League secretaries, settlement residents, institutional managers, day nursery heads, employment secretaries, school attendance officers, government administrators, and workers in education, health societies, religious social service, community centers, travelers' aid bureaus, and YMCAs. (p. 179)

This history of Black higher education in Georgia also noted that 70% of the state's graduates of Black colleges "remained to live and work in the state" (Range, 1951, p. 209). As with Du Bois (1900) and Holmes (1934), Range (1951) used a state-level history to highlight Black institutions' academic and economic contributions.

Three years later, in 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown* that the "separate but equal" doctrine in education was unconstitutional. Yet, the Court's ruling against

educational segregation did not level the playing field in higher education. Therefore, the study of Black colleges and universities continued with important studies that documented the various contributions of these institutions. For example, one of the first important inquiries following *Brown* occurred in 1958 when Aaron Brown, a project director for the Phelps Stokes Fund, published an article titled “Graduate and Professional Education in Negro Institutions” in the *Journal of Negro Education*. Exploring the challenges faced by Black colleges and universities in providing graduate-level education, Brown (1958) pointed out that many of these institutions originated as church-related ones and later transitioned into public funded institutions (Brown, 1958). Therefore, the institutional names did not always reflect the range of academic programs they offered. Brown (1958) discussed how, until the mid-twentieth century, few Black colleges met the standards set by white accreditation bodies. Despite this reality, notable institutions like Howard University and Atlanta University emerged as pioneers in offering graduate programs. Gaining financial support, improving facilities, and being free from political pressures in segregated southern states were crucial for promoting higher education opportunities for Black students (Brown, 1958).

Among the numerous challenges faced by Black colleges and universities in providing graduate-level education, Brown (1958) specifically addressed hurdles in program development, faculty recruitment, student enrollment, and overall support systems, all of which were further exacerbated by the racial climate prevalent in southern states even after formal racial segregation had been deemed unconstitutional. Brown (1958) surveyed 22 Black institutions, revealing that 15 offered graduate programs, with 12 specializing in professional fields. The study drew attention to notable institutions, such as Howard University, which had a rich history of offering graduate programs as early as the late nineteenth century (Brown, 1958). Brown also highlighted Atlanta University’s development of graduate programs in 1930, alongside the university’s earlier-established School of Social Work. The study illuminated the historical challenges encountered by Black institutions in providing advanced education, while emphasizing the significant contributions made to advance graduate-level education opportunities for Black students.

Also in 1958, Charles H. Thompson published “The Negro College: In Retrospect and in Prospect,” which examined the origin, development, and future of Black colleges and universities. First, Thompson (1958) discussed the history of Black colleges as products of segregation. He explained how, despite some white people who viewed Black higher education as a waste of resources, visionary leaders persisted to establish Black colleges. Financial support – something that Brown (1958) also identified – was a crucial factor in the history and development of these institutions. In using history to first establish context, Thompson (1958) later addressed how some Black leaders and college officials feared that funding and support for Black colleges might decline and potentially pose additional strains for these institutions (Thompson, 1958). In turn, Thompson (1958) offered a hopeful outlook regarding the prospects of a few institutions, and he provided valuable guidance for Black colleges and universities in navigating the changing educational landscape to continue to make valuable contributions.

Studies by Brown (1958) and Thompson (1958) both highlighted various contributions of Black colleges. But among the publications in 1958, Frenzie A. Logan's "The Movement in North Carolina to Establish a State-Supported College for Negroes" was the most focused on history. The article explained why the concerns highlighted in Brown (1958) and Thompson (1958) existed by chronicling the efforts to create a state-supported college for Black Americans in North Carolina during Reconstruction. Logan (1958) highlighted key individuals and organizations who advocated for the college, including Black congressmen James E. O'Hara and John A. Hyman. Additionally, Logan recounted a plea made in 1885 by a Raleigh public school teacher to establish a state-supported college specifically for the Black residents. However, the proposal faced opposition from most white North Carolinians, who were reluctant to allocate funds for Black higher education (Logan, 1958).

Logan (1958) noted that 6 years after the initial campaign for a college for Black Americans, and 1 year after the passage of the Second Morrill Act in 1890 provided federal funding for the establishment of land-grant colleges for Black people, North Carolina Governor Daniel Gould Fowle recommended the establishment of an agricultural and mechanical college for Black Americans. Fowle recognized the need for accessible educational opportunities in the absence of viable alternatives (Logan, 1958). Despite the initial rejection of bills proposed by Isaac Alston, a Black legislator from Warren County, a separate bill – proposed by white North Carolina elected official John Dillard Bellamy Jr. on March 5, 1891 – eventually gained legislative approval (Logan, 1958). Approximately 6 months later, Greensboro was selected as the college's permanent site (Logan, 1958). In providing a comprehensive historical account of establishing a state-supported college for Black people in North Carolina, Logan (1958) illustrated the advocacy, challenges, and eventual success in securing legislative approval for a Black college. In doing so, Logan's (1958) was the first history post-*Brown* that provided in-depth context to explain *why* Black institutions' contributions were remarkable.

In another state-level history of Black colleges and universities, Leedell W. Neyland (1964) discussed the slow development of Black institutions in Florida. His 1964 article, "State-Supported Higher Education among Negroes in the State of Florida" provided the history of Florida A&M University in the context of an overview of the growth and progress of state-supported Black higher education in the state. Although Neyland (1964) did not emphasize white resistance to Black higher education like Logan (1958) had, he explained how Florida A&M began as a normal school in the 1880s and evolved into a 4-year college in 1909 (Neyland, 1964), although Anderson (1988) later noted that Florida A&M offered few collegiate-level courses at this point. Nonetheless, Florida A&M eventually achieved university status in 1953, and Neyland (1964) highlighted key leaders and the institution's growth, including curricular expansion, the addition of agricultural and mechanical programs, and how it gained financial support. This Florida history, like Logan's (1958) history of North Carolina, was important to framing why Black institutions' contributions were significant.

Continuing the exploration of the history of Black colleges and their impact on communities, Felix James's 1971 article, "The Tuskegee Institute Movable School," explored the pioneering efforts of Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute in uplifting rural Black Americans in the South. Booker T. Washington, the prominent educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute, played a pivotal role in advocating for Black education and vocational training. Under his leadership, Tuskegee Institute became a beacon of hope for Black students, offering practical education that emphasized industrial and agricultural skills. Washington's philosophy centered on economic self-sufficiency, racial harmony, and the uplift of the Black community through education and hard work. The Tuskegee Institute's extension department, as highlighted by James (1971), further exemplified Washington's vision by reaching out to underserved rural communities. James (1971) focused on the establishment of the extension department and the creation of the Movable School, an itinerant program designed to provide agricultural education and resources to Black farmers. James (1971) detailed the initiatives the Movable School undertook, including practical demonstrations, mass meetings, and the promotion of land ownership and self-sufficiency. James (1971) emphasized the Movable School's importance in transforming Black farmers' lives and fostering positive race relations in rural communities. He stated, "The school destroyed the superstitions that were so prevalent among the blacks and served as a council of human relations between the two races. The movable school did much in gaining for the New South a more intelligent, peaceful and contented citizenry" (James, 1971, p. 209). By examining the establishment of the extension department and the creation of the Movable School, James offered a unique perspective on the transformative initiatives undertaken by Tuskegee Institute to provide agricultural education and resources to Black farmers (James, 1971).

Published in *Agricultural History*, this article made a significant contribution by centering the innovative approach of the Movable School and its impact on rural Black Americans' economic stability and self-sufficiency. James (1971) highlighted the financial support received from the General Education Board and the involvement of Seaman A. Knapp, the originator of the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work, in facilitating the expansion of the Movable School. The article also acknowledged the role of Thomas Monroe Campbell, the first Black Demonstration Agent, in disseminating improved agricultural methods and inspiring confidence among Black farmers. Furthermore, the article underscored the significance of federal support through the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which played a crucial role in advancing agricultural education and outreach across the United States. The Smith-Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service, a partnership between the federal government and land-grant universities, with the objective of disseminating agricultural knowledge and research findings to farmers and rural communities. This federal support paved the way for the expansion of the Movable School, amplifying its impact on rural Black Americans and contributing to their economic stability and self-sufficiency (James, 1971). Overall, James (1971) enhanced the understanding of the efforts and various contributions made by Booker

T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute in uplifting Black farmers and fostering progress within rural communities in the New South.

In the same year, St. Clair Drake published “The Black University in the American Social Order.” It was a groundbreaking article that not only pointed out the contributions of Black institutions but it also more forcefully discussed the racist structures that these campuses combatted in order to make their contributions. Specifically, Drake (1971) emphasized the role of slavery and racial prejudice in shaping the development colleges and universities. It served as a call to action, advocating for collective efforts to mobilize communities, build coalitions, and strive for structural integration to ensure continued progress and success (Drake, 1971). Through his research, Drake shed light on the historical context and, similar to previous scholars, he considered the contributions of Black colleges and universities in the educational landscape. According to Drake (1971), these institutions contributed to the fight to overcome racial barriers – an argument akin to Johnson (1938). In closing, Drake (1971) used history to call for a collective effort to uplift and empower Black colleges and universities so that they could continue to contribute to a more equitable and thriving educational system.

In 1973, the University of Massachusetts Press posthumously published *The Education of Black Americans: Ten Critiques, 1906–1960*, a collection of speeches and essays by influential scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois (Du Bois, 1973). This collection offered a rich historical perspective and provided thought-provoking insights on Black institutions’ historical contributions despite the challenges faced by Black higher education over several decades. Du Bois (1973) delved into ten critiques that illuminated critical issues within the history of Black higher education. His work addressed the limited access Black students had to higher education due to segregation and discriminatory practices, emphasizing the struggles faced in attending historically white institutions (Du Bois, 1973). Simultaneously, he highlighted the chronic underfunding of Black colleges and universities, which resulted in disparities in resources, facilities, and faculty salaries, and shaped the growth and development of these institutions (Du Bois, 1973). An essential aspect of his critiques was the need for a more well-rounded and inclusive curriculum at Black institutions, one that recognized and valued the cultural heritage and contributions of Black Americans (Du Bois, 1973). For Du Bois (1973), the Black college and university made its greatest contributions by fostering intellectual and cultural development among Black individuals, empowering them to thrive academically and contribute to their communities (Du Bois, 1973). Du Bois’s body of work did not focus on Black institutions’ contributions as providers of graduate-level study, graduates who challenged racial norms, or alumni who helped local economies by not leaving the South. Instead, Du Bois emphasized Black institutions’ intellectual contributions.

In 1974, J. Irving Scott’s *The Education of Black People in Florida* explored the educational experiences of Black Americans in the Sunshine State, building upon Neyland’s (1964) earlier work that focused on the history and progress of state-supported Black higher education there. While Neyland (1964) provided an overview of the growth and development of Florida A&M University in the context of state-supported Black higher education, Scott (1974) delved deeper into the

broader educational experiences of Black individuals in Florida, including their access to primary, secondary, and higher education opportunities. The book comprised chapters addressing different aspects of Black education in the state, including a chapter titled ▶ [“Development of Higher Education for Negroes in Florida.”](#) After emancipation, Black Floridians faced the challenge of securing access to primary, secondary, and higher education opportunities. In response, Black churches and church organizations played a significant role in supporting higher education for Black individuals. Three out of the four Black institutions of higher learning in Florida were originally organized by Black churches and continued to receive support from the church (Scott, 1974). The main purpose – and main historical contribution – of Black higher education in Florida, particularly in the early stages, was to train teachers for the growing Black school population (Scott, 1974). As a result, the four Black colleges and universities discussed in the chapter – Edward Waters College, Florida Memorial College, Bethune-Cookman College, and Florida A&M University – played a vital role in producing a significant portion of Black teachers in Florida (Scott, 1974). Scott (1974) thus highlighted the enduring contributions of these Black colleges and universities in training teachers and shaping the educational landscape for Black students in Florida.

The mid-1970s concluded the period in which most histories of Black colleges and universities focused on documenting the many contributions of those institutions. The period included far-reaching studies that chronicled the contributions of Black college graduates, Black graduate and professional schools, and state histories of Black colleges. Yet, embedded within the histories from the mid-1930s to mid-1970s were frequent acknowledgments of how those contributions were made despite how race and racism negatively affected the development of Black colleges and universities. The next period in Black higher education historiography moved the discussion from assessing contributions to emphasizing new discoveries and perspectives about Black colleges and universities.

Historiography: 1975–2000

By 1975, American higher education had started to settle from more than a decade of student unrest on campuses. Black students at Black colleges led civil rights boycotts and sit-ins during the early 1960s, and their Black contemporaries who enrolled at historically white campuses joined them by the late 1960s and early 1970s in confronting a host of racial issues in society and on campuses. The impact of those moments – as well as the broader, off-campus societal unrest – helped shift historians’ focus in their examinations of Black colleges and universities. The ensuing period from 1975 to the turn of the century featured new histories of Black higher education that moved beyond highlighting the many contributions of Black colleges to demonstrate their value within American higher education. In many ways, the social unrest was a reaction to the unwelcoming experiences of Black students as their numbers increased on predominantly white campuses, which, by comparison, demonstrated the value of Black institutions. Therefore, historians shifted to focus on different aspects of Black institutions, such as their pioneering teaching techniques, role of racism in shaping Black colleges and universities, and

how the law had stifled growth on those campuses. In short, this period offered more complex histories. Up until this point, there had been a proliferation of historical research about Black institutions, but new discoveries in research further helped the historiography evolve.

There were two bibliographies published that coincided with historians' shift. In 1975, Lenwood G. Davis, an instructor in the Ohio State University Black Studies program, published *A History of Blacks in Higher Education, 1875–1975: A Working Bibliography*. The bibliography provided a list of references on the history of Black people in higher education during the previous 100-year period. The bibliography included various sources: general reference works, Black periodicals, and books and articles on the history of Black colleges and universities. Davis (1975) also discussed doctoral dissertations about Black institutions, highlighting their limited scope and lack of student perspectives, which he attributed to historical biases and the prevailing emphasis on administrative viewpoints. However, Davis (1975) recognized the importance of Black schools' histories and called for more attention to be given to them.

Building upon the work of Davis (1975), Frederick Chambers' *Black Higher Education in the United States* provided a selected bibliography on Black higher education and Black colleges and universities. Chambers (1978) included chapters about doctoral dissertations, institutional histories, periodical literature, master's theses, books, and miscellaneous entries. The bibliography served as a valuable resource for researchers exploring the history and scholarship of Black higher education (Chambers, 1978). Combined, Davis (1975) and Chambers (1978) served as a valuable resource for researchers by compiling a comprehensive bibliography covering a century of Black higher education history and, more importantly, encouraging further exploration of the contributions of Black colleges and universities to Black communities and American society. Davis (1975) and Chambers (1978) marked a significant shift in the approach of scholars reevaluating existing perspectives on Black colleges and universities, and soon thereafter, historians started publishing studies beyond the traditional narrative about Black institutions' contributions.

Among these shifts, *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, edited by Vincent P. Franklin and James D. Anderson in 1978, stands as a prime example. This volume aimed to foster dialogue and promote advanced research in Black Americans' educational history, covering both K-12 and higher education. The book featured a collection of essays that offered fresh insights and explored various aspects of Black education in the United States. The essays covered a range of topics, including the founding and significance of Black institutions, such as the Institute for Colored Youth, Fisk University, Howard University School of Law, and Meharry Medical College, and the climate of systemic racism in which these colleges operated.

In one notable essay in the Franklin and Anderson (1978) volume, Linda M. Perkins dove into the history of the Institute for Colored Youth (now Cheyney University) in Pennsylvania from 1852 to 1903. Perkins highlighted the Institute's vital role in providing educational opportunities for Black individuals during a crucial period in American history. Her essay not only shed light on the historical

significance of the Institute but also underscored its impact in shaping the lives and aspirations of Black students. In another compelling essay, James D. Anderson explored the influential role of northern philanthropy in the training of Black leaders at Fisk University. He showcased how white trustees and philanthropists played a pivotal role in shaping the institution's trajectory to maintain social stability within the context of racial tensions and inequalities. Anderson's examination of Fisk University's history provided valuable insights into the complexities of Black higher education and the interplay between philanthropic support and the pursuit of Black leadership and progress – a perspective not previously explored. Together, these essays in the Franklin and Anderson (1978) volume emphasized the crucial roles these institutions played in educating Black individuals and shaping Black leadership. Through their fresh perspectives, the authors encouraged further research and discussions on the intricate and often overlooked aspects of Black education in the United States.

Also published in 1978, *Black Colleges in America: Challenge, Development, Survival*, edited by Charles V. Willie and Ronald R. Edmonds, aimed to challenge the practice of having the majority speak for the minority. The book featured a diverse range of contributors, including Black and white individuals, and younger and senior scholars, who addressed various experiences in Black schools and colleges. In their comprehensive work, Willie and Edmonds (1978) thoroughly analyzed the significant role and impact of Black colleges and universities. They highlighted the institutions' remarkable achievements and innovative educational methods that fostered academic excellence (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). One of the innovative approaches employed by these institutions was the emphasis on cultivating a supportive and nurturing learning environment (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). Black colleges and universities prioritized providing personalized attention and mentorship to students, ensuring that they received individualized guidance to excel in their studies and personal growth (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). Additionally, Black colleges and universities were early pioneers in implementing experiential learning opportunities (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). They emphasized practical, hands-on training and real-world applications of knowledge to complement traditional classroom instruction. This approach aimed to empower students with the skills and experiences needed to succeed in their chosen fields after graduation (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). Furthermore, these institutions emphasized the importance of community engagement and social responsibility (Willie & Edmonds, 1978).

Previous studies had not emphasized community engagement and responsibility, nor assessments on Black college faculty pedagogical approaches. Therefore, the Willie and Edmonds (1978) volume introduced new perspectives about Black institutions. Black colleges and universities encouraged students to actively participate in community service, racial justice initiatives, and civic engagement (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). This approach aimed to instill in students a strong sense of social consciousness and a commitment to making a positive impact on their communities and society at large (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). Overall, the innovative educational methods implemented by Black colleges and universities not only nurtured academic excellence but also fostered a sense of identity, empowerment, and social

responsibility among their students (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). Black colleges and universities strongly emphasized racial advancement and participation in democratic processes, setting them apart from many predominantly white institutions (Willie & Edmonds, 1978). By employing an open admissions policy from their inception, Willie and Edmonds (1978) argued, Black colleges and universities provided a form of liberation through education.

In the article “State Leadership and Black Education in Florida, 1876–1976,” Arthur O. White (1981) built on and extended the historiography (see Neyland, 1964; Scott, 1974) of Black education in Florida. Specifically, White (1981) examined the historic role of state leadership in shaping the educational opportunities and experiences of Black Americans. White (1981) delved into Florida’s political and social context from the Reconstruction era to the mid-twentieth century. He closely analyzed the actions and policies of state officials concerning Black education, revealing how white leaders implemented practices that perpetuated racial segregation in education, disenfranchised Black voters, and limited the resources and opportunities available to Black schools (White, 1981). White (1981) provided a detailed historical analysis of state leadership’s negative impact on Black educational opportunities, uncovering discriminatory practices while highlighting the resilience of Black educators and activists in their fight for equal access to quality education. White (1981) identified the specific policies implemented by state leaders in Florida that perpetuated racial segregation in education and limited opportunities for Black schools. These policies included enforcing separate but unequal facilities, which maintained a stark divide between Black and white schools, with Black schools often receiving inadequate funding and inferior facilities compared to their white counterparts. Moreover, the article highlighted the disenfranchisement of Black voters, a strategy used to further marginalize the Black community and hinder their ability to advocate for improved educational opportunities. Furthermore, White (1981) explored the influence of educational leaders like William N. Sheats, whose paternalistic racism endorsed the philosophy of industrial education promoted by Booker T. Washington. This approach emphasized vocational and manual training for Black students, reinforcing narrow societal roles and limiting their access to broader academic and intellectual pursuits. Through an examination of these discriminatory policies, the article shed light on the systemic barriers faced by Black students and educators, illustrating how these policies hindered their educational progress and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Compared to Neyland (1964) and Scott (1974), White (1981) presented a more direct analysis of how racism affected Florida higher education. Despite those racial challenges, White (1981) also highlighted the resilience of Black educators and activists who, in the face of adversity, persevered and fought for equal access to quality education, paving the way for progress and change in Florida’s education system.

In 1982, the landscape of new histories of Black higher education saw a significant advancement with the groundbreaking article by Spelman College professor Beverly Guy-Sheftall titled “Black Women and Higher Education: Spelman and Bennett Colleges Revisited.” This pioneering work provided a gender analysis within the context of Black higher education and shed light on the often-overlooked

history of Black women's education in America. Guy-Sheftall (1982) pointed out the glaring omission of Spelman and Bennett Colleges from authoritative works on women's higher education, despite their pivotal role in shaping Black women's educational opportunities and achievements. The article specifically focused on the unique educational experiences provided by these single-sex colleges in the South and their emphasis on training Black women for leadership roles, particularly in teaching (Guy-Sheftall, 1982). It highlighted the profound impact of these institutions on their alumni, who played significant roles in their communities, further underscoring the importance of their education. Despite growing dissatisfaction with single-sex education and the trend of many women's colleges beginning to accept male students and elite men's colleges accepting women, Guy-Sheftall (1982) argued that Spelman and Bennett Colleges continued to meet the specific educational needs of Black women in ways that coeducational institutions could not. By offering this gender analysis and delving into the unique contributions of Spelman and Bennett Colleges, Guy-Sheftall's (1982) article provided a comprehensive and much-needed perspective on the history of Black women's higher education, advancing critical scholarship in the field.

Also in 1982, Jean L. Preer examined issues surrounding Black higher education from educational and legal perspectives in *Lawyers v. Educators: Black Colleges and Desegregation in Public Higher Education*. Preer (1982) examined landmark cases, such as *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938), *Sipuel v. Board of Regents* (1948), *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), and *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control* (1950), focusing on their implications for equal access and opportunity in Black higher education (Preer, 1982). In this analysis, Preer (1982) offered fresh perspectives and insights on the law and challenges faced by Black colleges and universities during the desegregation efforts, distinguishing this work from other books that discussed these cases. Preer (1982) also explored the influence of key pieces of federal legislation, including the Morrill Act of 1890 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, on the status and development of Black colleges and universities. These legislative acts shaped the financial support and legal framework for racially separate, state-supported land-grant colleges, contributing to the dual systems of higher education (Preer, 1982). The book highlighted the constitutional question of whether states could deny access to publicly supported colleges based on race and the problem of inadequate funding and limited educational roles faced by separate Black colleges and universities (Preer, 1982). Preer (1982) argued that the inability of Black educators and Black lawyers to distinguish between the legal aspects and the educational aspects of public higher education presented a unique challenge for the Black educators left to navigate between legal requirements and educational policy, emphasizing the significance of equal access and the advancement of Black institutions (Preer, 1982).

In *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935*, historian James D. Anderson (1988) contributed to the critical reinterpretations in Black educational history by focusing on the Reconstruction period through the start of the Great Depression. Anderson (1988) meticulously charted the development of formal Black education at all levels from its early stages to the 1930s, shedding light on a unique

public and private education system that emerged during this time, specifically designed by and for Black southerners. This system set Black educational institutions apart from those of other Americans due to the distinctive social context in which Black individuals lived. Through his analysis, Anderson unraveled the motivations, strategies, and ideologies that influenced the organization and content of Black education. In doing so, Anderson highlighted the interplay between education and the politics of oppression. He delved into the complex dynamics surrounding philanthropic efforts, the roles of private institutions like Tuskegee Institute, and the establishment of public land-grant Black institutions. Three significant groups emerged as key supporters of Black higher education. First, northern philanthropists and religious missionaries were among the first champions of Black higher education in the South by establishing and funding schools, colleges, and universities for Black students motivated by religious and humanitarian concerns. Second, newly emancipated Black communities played a pivotal role in supporting and advocating for Black higher education, recognizing the importance of education for social and economic advancement while pooling their own resources to establish and sustain schools and colleges. Finally, the federal government, particularly during Reconstruction, became a crucial source of support for Black higher education, driven by political and civil rights considerations, with initiatives like the Freedmen's Bureau assisting in the creation of educational institutions and federal laws ensuring equal access to higher education for Black students. Anderson's exploration of these groups' contributions and motivations offers valuable insights into the complex and evolving landscape of Black higher education in the South, emphasizing the intersection of education, politics, and social progress during a period marked by racial discrimination and systemic oppression. By examining the ideological debates about the social purposes of Black education, Anderson illuminated structure, ideology, and content of Black education to reveal how these educational institutions were fundamentally different from those of other Americans due to the racist social system in which Black individuals lived and their efforts to restructure and control their lives in the face of oppression. Anderson's history of Black education presented a new perspective – one that focused on Black agency, not just the contributions of white philanthropists. Anderson concluded: “The ex-slaves split with their closest allies, Yankee missionaries, over the question of who should control the educational institutions for Black children. Black southerners entered emancipation with an alternative culture, a history that they could draw upon, one that contained enduring beliefs in learning and self-improvement” (p. 281).

Five years later, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Place in American Higher Education*, by Komandur Murty and Julian Roebuck, continued to add new perspectives to the study of Black colleges and universities. The authors addressed the history and development of Black colleges and universities, their current structure and functions, and the ongoing debate surrounding their place in higher education (Murty & Roebuck, 1993). For example, the book started by synthesizing the existing literature on Black colleges, offering a history of these institutions divided into five periods: the antebellum period (preceding the Civil War), the postbellum period (1865–1895), the separate but equal period

(1896–1953), the desegregation period (1954–1975), and the modern period (1975–1993). Murty and Roebuck (1993) also explored current demographics, academic programs, enrollment patterns, and faculty composition of Black colleges and universities.

Among Murty and Roebuck's more unique contributions, however, was their presentation of data on race relations among Black and white students and faculty at Black colleges and universities, and their argument that the unique student-teacher relationships were characterized by a close-knit and supportive learning environment, where faculty members often served as mentors to students, fostering a sense of community and mutual respect (Murty & Roebuck, 1993). The teaching methodologies employed in Black colleges emphasized experiential learning, active class participation, and a focus on the practical application of knowledge to real-world issues faced by Black communities (Murty & Roebuck, 1993). This approach allowed for a more culturally responsive and inclusive educational experience, enabling students to connect their academic learning to their lived experiences and societal challenges. Additionally, the authors emphasized how the multifaceted composition of the faculty in these institutions, which encompassed individuals from diverse racial and national backgrounds, as well as visiting scholars, political figures, business leaders, and artists, contributed to a richer exchange of ideas and perspectives. This diverse mix of faculty members promoted a more inclusive and transformative educational environment for all students, regardless of their racial background (Murty & Roebuck, 1993). Advancing the Willie and Edmonds (1978) focus on Black institutions' teaching techniques, Murty and Roebuck (1993) used history to frame the discussion about teaching methodologies, adding further depth to the study of Black colleges and universities.

From the mid-1970s through the 1990s, the most significant studies of Black colleges and universities emphasized new perspectives on these institutions. Prior to that period, most historians and other scholars highlighted these institutions' contributions to demonstrate their important role within American higher education; however, from 1975 to 1999, research emphasized telling new stories about Black colleges and universities. Some historians explored the dynamic in-class experiences that accompanied the unique teaching methods employed at Black colleges and universities. Other scholars focused on how laws and racist state leaders affected the growth and development of Black institutions, while additional researchers added more nuance to the study of these campuses by reconsidering Black women in their analysis. These approaches led to new discoveries about Black agency to sidestep white philanthropy and control their own institutions. In total, this period witnessed more complex study of Black colleges and universities from previously overlooked perspectives.

Historiography: 2000–Present

Since 2000, an important shift has occurred in histories of Black colleges and universities. As previously demonstrated, many histories from 1975 to 2000 made new, exciting discoveries that highlighted old debates or critically focused on structural racism and discrimination and how both affected Black colleges and universities. Many of the topics that emerged in the mid-1970s through the 1990s

from scholarship about Black institutions (e.g., philanthropy, gender, and law) continued to be prominent after the year 2000 as new scholars added new depth to areas that scholars like James D. Anderson, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Charles V. Willie had uncovered; however, the new century's most important studies of Black higher education shifted away from new perspectives on specific aspects of Black institutions and turned their attention toward how those colleges and universities influenced society at large. A few important studies illustrate this new focus.

The first notable study to take this approach was M. Christopher Brown's and James Earl Davis's exploration of the unique role and contributions of Black colleges. In their article, "The Historically Black College as Social Contract, Social Capital, and Social Equalizer," Brown and Davis (2001) used history to frame their argument that Black colleges and universities served as "social agencies" fulfilling a social contract by providing equal educational opportunities for Black Americans and all students (Brown & Davis, 2001, p. 33). The article added a historical dimension to the discourse about Black colleges and universities by highlighting the concept of social capital and emphasizing how these institutions distributed and reproduced social networks and resources for their students and graduates. Brown and Davis (2001) explained that Black institutions from before the Civil War through the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 acted as intermediaries between the broader nation and Black America, facilitating educational attainment and equal access to education (Brown & Davis, 2001). They emphasized "the role of HBCUs as a source and generation of social capital" (Brown & Davis, 2001, p. 44). Brown and Davis (2001) thus represented an important turn in the study of Black colleges and universities, past and present. Whereas during mid-twentieth century, particularly from 1935 to 1975, historians and other scholars focused on Black institutions' contributions to show the value of those institutions within the broader higher education landscape, Brown and Davis (2001) invited scholars to think about those campuses' social influences even beyond academia.

The same year, in 2001, Henry Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, in their book *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* focused on 45 private historically Black 4-year colleges to highlight the significant role of private Black colleges and universities in providing educational opportunities for Black Americans during a time of segregation when their access to mainstream white institutions was limited. By examining the founding principles and philosophies of private Black colleges and universities, Drewry and Doermann (2001) underscored those campuses' commitment to academic excellence, cultural preservation, and leadership development among Black students.

The authors – like many scholars before them – highlighted private Black colleges' unique challenges, such as financial difficulties and limited resources, and the creative strategies that they employed to secure funding, such as philanthropy, partnerships, and alumni support. Through their analysis of the curricula and academic programs offered by private Black colleges, Drewry and Doermann (2001) showcased the emphasis they placed on liberal arts education, professional training, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. They also highlighted the significant contributions of private Black colleges to the education and

development of Black students by featuring successful alumni in various fields. Drewry and Doermann's (2001) book highlighted the essential role of private Black colleges and universities in fostering a strong sense of community, cultural identity, and social responsibility among students – which, in turn, influenced society at large. Their historical research emphasized how community engagement initiatives contributed to the holistic development of Black students, adding to the existing historiography celebrating the transformative impact of these institutions. Drewry and Doermann (2001) enriched the historiography on Black colleges and universities by emphasizing their vital role in empowering Black students and communities throughout history.

Six years later, in their 2007 article “Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Honoring the Past, Engaging the Present, Touching the Future,” Walter R. Allen, Joseph O. Jewell, Kimberly A. Griffin, and De’Sha S. Wolf reviewed the existing literature on Black colleges by discussing how these institutions evolved over time within the broader sociohistorical context. In a section titled, “The Origins of the Black College (1865–1950s),” Allen et al. (2007) explained the wide range of Black students who attended Black institutions. Previous histories, the authors argued, “reveal that students being educated at HBCUs, due to the open admissions policy, were quite diverse, particularly in terms of academic ability and socioeconomic class” (Allen et al., 2007, p. 268). Enrolling such a wide range of students positioned Black colleges and universities to fulfill their mission of educating the Black community (Allen et al., 2007). Allen et al. (2007) argued that these institutions provided equal educational opportunities and attainment for all students, but especially Black Americans. Furthermore, they highlighted the role of Black colleges and universities in generating social capital, which included the distribution and reproduction of social networks and resources that benefited their students and graduates (Allen et al., 2007). Allen et al.’s (2007) work marked a significant shift in the historiography by celebrating the strengths of Black colleges and universities as “social equalizers” within a racist, hierarchical society (Allen et al., 2007, p. 273).

This brief section highlighted how recent scholarship has focused on how Black institutions provided educational opportunities to historically marginalized individuals and promoted their full social participation. This historiographical shift represented a departure from the previous period of 1975–1999, in which historians primarily focused on new discoveries and perspectives about Black institutions. While the histories of the last 20 years has offered more depth to such discoveries, the most important recent studies specifically about Black institutions emphasized the empowering role of Black colleges in fostering social equality and opportunity. The empowerment of Black students and Black communities and, in turn, society at large are valuable takeaways from recent studies of the history of these institutions. Yet, while these scholars have demonstrated the social influence of Black colleges, another group of historians has focused more explicitly on Black access, equity, and justice.

The Fight for Black Access, Equity, and Justice

For nearly a century, historians and other scholars have written about inequities and the subsequent activism regarding Black people's experience and fight for justice on college campuses. While racism played a role in determining "firsts" in Black higher education and increasingly appeared as a factor in the historiography of Black colleges and universities, this section reviews historical research that has directly confronted the various ways that racism has shaped the Black collegiate experiences and the power of Black protest in higher education. This review discusses scholarship focused on both Black and primarily white college and university settings and demonstrates how histories of Black access, equity, and justice have expanded rapidly in the last 20 years.

While more recent Black higher education histories have especially focused on racism and Black agency in the face of racism, Black scholars have long questioned inequities and injustices in American higher education. In 1933, Carter G. Woodson, in the previously mentioned *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, criticized white control of Black colleges and universities. "It is often said, too, that the time is not ripe for Negroes to take over the administration of their institutions, for they do not have the contacts for raising money," Woodson (1933) recounted, "but what becomes of this argument when we remember what Booker T. Washington did for Tuskegee and observe what Robert Russa Moton and John Hope are doing today?" (p. 30). Woodson (1933) argued that Black academic leaders were successful, and the failure of Black colleges to produce Black leaders was an indictment of the white leaders who had led Black colleges.

Woodson was not alone in his appraisal. John W. Davis, the president of West Virginia State College, echoed such sentiment. Davis was among the few Black presidents of Black colleges at the time Woodson wrote. In 1933 and 1938, Davis published assessments of the struggles facing Black land-grant colleges. These were not simply historical overviews of the origins of those institutions. Instead, they were indictments of the low levels of state and federal funding, and they called out the inequities in American higher education (Davis, 1933, 1938). For example, Davis (1933) emphasized whites' racial resentment: "It cannot be set forth enthusiastically that many of the states in which land-grant colleges for Negroes were established were fully committed to the complete educational development of the colleges" (p. 317). Five years later, Davis (1938) assessed that, unless federal government were to ensure equitable land-grant appropriations, "the Negro will get little or nothing of the educational program or of the money which is appropriated to support the program" (p. 285). Davis also made his critiques plain in public speeches, once stating: "For the good of America, racial segregation must go" ("Gov. Lane Hints," 1948). Woodson (1933) and Davis (1933, 1938) are early examples of scholars who engaged in serious, critical scholarly inquiry into Black higher education, but few other scholars would follow suit through the middle of the century (see Boykin, 1957; Jenkins, 1952).

By the 1970s, however, Black access, equity, and justice had become the focus among more historians as well as scholars in other fields. One of the most valuable

contributions in this area was made by Michael R. Winston, a longtime Howard University professor and administrator. Winston (1971) provided a detailed study of the racism Black academics faced throughout American history. The article started by recounting how, in 1939, historian Rayford W. Logan, a Howard professor, was informed that he and his fellow Black colleagues would have to “enter through the back door” of the segregated New Orleans hotel hosting the national meeting of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (Winston, 1971, p. 678).

Through such examples, Winston (1971) argued that three things controlled the “fate of Negro scholars in America: racism, the development of Negro colleges, and the nascent mobilization of Negroes for ‘intellectual self-defense’” (p. 679). Furthermore, Winston (1971) noted that 317 Black people earned the Ph.D. between 1930 and 1943, but the 3 universities that awarded the most doctorates to Black scholars – the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and the University of Pennsylvania – refused to hire their Black doctoral graduates. Winston (1971) added, “. . .white schools still excluded Negro scholars (only three Negro Ph.D.’s were employed by white universities in 1936). . .” (p. 695).

Two years later, in 1973, Allen B. Ballard offered an equally searing assessment of Black opportunities in higher education. In his book, *The Education of Black Folk: The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America*, Ballard (1973) argued that the “explosion in the Black student population in white colleges over the past five years was a phenomenon for which neither the colleges nor Black intellectuals were prepared” (p. 80). While he briefly presented an early history of Black higher education, Ballard (1973) focused more on higher education after 1960 and stated, “The history of the Black struggle for higher education is punctuated by the basic complacency of the white university. . .” (Ballard, 1973, p. 142). Ballard (1973) added, “The problems of educating Black youth in higher education have changed very little over the years” (p. 142). The contemporary critique preceded by brief history has remained insightful for understanding the long struggle toward Black access and equity in higher education.

The long struggle was the focal point of Raymond Wolters’ 1975 book, *The New Negro on Campus*. In the aftermath of widespread campus Black power protests in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Wolters (1975) provided important context for understanding Black student resistance. In his book, Wolters (1975) highlighted Black student activism on Black college and university campuses during the 1920s, which coincided with the New Negro Movement – a cultural movement of Black, outspoken expression in art that challenged segregation. Wolters (1975) credited W. E. B. Du Bois, who is a consistent figure in this historiography, for igniting such outward resistance on Black college campuses: “The spirit of W. E. B. Du Bois hovered over the black college rebellions of the 1920s. The editor of the *Crisis* instigated the confrontation at Fisk University and publicized and celebrated collegiate protest throughout the land” (p. 18). Focusing on equity, Du Bois had grown tired of the paternalism that stifled Black intellectual growth as several private Black colleges – Fisk, Howard, Hampton, and others – were led by white administrators and had majority or almost all-white faculties. Therefore, many of these campuses adhered to racist norms despite their Black student body (Wolters, 1975). In the

1920s, Wolters (1975) explained, many Black students rebelled against white leaders in demanding fair treatment and a just education. The rebellions were significant because they demonstrated “a growing racial consciousness and a larger ambition” among “black students and alumni” (Wolters, 1975, p. 340).

Winston (1971), Ballard (1973), and Wolters (1975) presented timely studies regarding the history of Black access, equity, and justice in higher education a decade after the first affirmative action programs in higher education had been implemented. In July 1963, US President John F. Kennedy was forced to take immediate action about racial segregation, in part because it had become a foreign policy embarrassment to the United States that belied the nation’s stated commitment to democracy (Cole, 2020). Kennedy asked academic leaders of Black and majority-white campuses to implement “special programs” to address civil rights problems (Cole, 2020, p. 283). The goal was for affirmative action to address the legacy of racism in the United States, and one approach was for white campuses to actively consider race to admit Black students. By the late 1970s and 1980s, however, Americans witnessed the first formal attacks on affirmative action programs in higher education. In 1978, the Supreme Court ruled in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* – a case that challenged racial considerations in college admissions – that colleges and universities could not use racial quotas (e.g., reserve a certain number of admitted slots) but could consider race as one factor among many in admissions.

During the same period, historians published a series of books and articles that put the history of racism in higher education at the forefront of discussions. For example, John E. Fleming published the book *The Lengthening Shadow of Slavery: A Historical Justification for Affirmative Action for Blacks in Higher Education* (1976). This history traced, from enslavement to the present, various past white actions aimed at denying Black people equal educational opportunity. Because of this history, Fleming (1976) argued, “affirmative action should be utilized in all aspects of American employment, but especially in the area of education” (p. 124).

Three years later, Marcia G. Synnott published “The Admissions and Assimilation of Minority Students at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900–1970” in *History of Education Quarterly*. The article focused on student admissions by religion and race at “the Big Three” of the Ivy League institutions: Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (Synnott, 1979, p. 285). Synnott (1979) first discussed the history of religious quotas in admissions during the 1920s into the 1930s. World War II, however, demonstrated that “The United States could remain a superpower only if it utilized the talents of all individuals, regardless of ethnic, racial or social background” (Synnott, 1979, p. 286). This realization ignited a slight uptick in the Big Three expanding the scope of who they were willing to admit. As a result, “the first minority groups to benefit conspicuously from these opportunities were Catholics and Jews, but vigorous recruitment programs also opened up the educational ladder to newer groups, especially to blacks” (Synnott, 1979, pp. 286–287). The study’s most valuable contribution to understanding Black access and equity is its attention to affirmative action’s impact on these campuses. For example, Yale received 37 applications from Black students in 1960 but that number increased to 755 in 1970 (Synnott, 1979).

As histories by Fleming (1976) and Synnott (1979) focused on equity and access to white colleges and universities, other historians wrote state-level histories exploring the same issues at Black colleges and universities. For example, in 1980, Martha Settle Putney published an insightful study about the history of Black colleges and universities in Maryland. Of all states, Maryland was the last to offer public higher education for its Black residents (Putney, 1980). “The state founded no postsecondary schools for blacks; belatedly it assumed control of existing black institutions” (Putney, 1980, p. 341). Putney (1980) chronicled Maryland’s white officials’ resistance to investing in Black colleges and universities. In one instance, some Black campuses were not allowed to “institute a standard normal curriculum” until after “agitation by blacks for more equitable facilities in higher education” (Putney, 1980, p. 336). Putney used these facts to support the argument that it was Black people who “petitioned, agitated, remonstrated, lobbied, brought law suits, and boycotted” to have Maryland provide Black residents with access to higher education (p. 341).

Two years later, Spivey (1982) also focused on state neglect in an article about Oklahoma and its only public Black institution, Langston University. Spivey (1982) argued that scholars were “neglecting one of the most crucial issues in American society: the crisis facing this nation’s one hundred and twenty black colleges and universities” (p. 430). Spivey (1982) focused on Langston’s history as the only Black college or university to attempt to gain “complete autonomy” from the state (p. 430). As the 1980s featured debates about inequitable funding for Black colleges and universities, Spivey (1982) outlined how Langston was founded in 1897 in an all-Black Oklahoma town focused on separatism. The article also shed light on white resistance to Black control of Black institutions. Spivey (1982) explained, “White Oklahoma opposed the premise of equal opportunity for black Oklahoma” (p. 434). In the face of this resistance, Spivey (1982) emphasized, “The Langstonites wanted an institution that would give unlimited educational opportunity to black Oklahomans, a university free from the traditional limitations associated with the ‘Negro’s place’ in society. . . .” (p. 434).

White resistance to Black access, equity, and justice remained a central theme in the 1990s as historians continued to expand their study of Black higher education. For example, historian James D. Anderson (see also Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Anderson, 1978) discussed race and meritocracy in the professoriate in 1993. It was a fitting topic considering how meritocracy had long been raised as a point of concern when Black people entered the white academy (see Cole, 2020; Johnson, 2020). Anderson (1993) discussed how, despite old legal debates that focused on “‘color-blind’ laws, procedures, and policies” (p. 150), other policies and practices still limited equity for Black scholars. Anderson (1993) noted that in 1940, no white universities in the United States had any full-time Black scholars as faculty “no matter how qualified, how many degrees he or she had earned, or how many excellent articles he or she had published” (p. 153). White academic leaders, particularly at non-southern institutions, denied any prejudicial practices while acknowledging that they had not hired any Black scholars despite, as Winston (1971) noted, several Black scholars having earned graduate-level training from those same white institutions.

Anderson (1993) presented copious details on the qualifications of Black scholars to demonstrate the inherent racism in meritocracy. For instance, Anderson (1993) discussed how the Rosenwald Fund once compiled a “list of African American scholars who were qualified for faculty posts at northern white colleges and universities [that] was certainly impressive” (p. 160). The list included Black scholars in nearly 30 fields and disciplines, with several of them having earned doctorates from the leading research universities: University of Chicago, Harvard University, Columbia University, University of Michigan, Yale University, Cornell University, Radcliffe College, Brown University, and others. As a result, Anderson (1993) assessed, “The scholars as a class were highly qualified to hold faculty posts in any American college or university” (p. 161). Anderson (1993) added, “By the 1940s, there were scores of African American social scientists and historians who were eminently qualified to serve on the most distinguished faculties in northern colleges and universities” (p. 163). Anderson (1993) laid out in great detail not only Black scholars’ educational credentials but also their robust experiences working in various industry jobs, federal roles, or at Black colleges while being denied opportunities to teach and research at white universities – further expanding the historiography of Black higher education and issues of equity and access.

Linda M. Perkins picked up this idea 3 years later in a study of Howard University’s Lucy Diggs Slowe, the first Black woman to serve as a dean of women. Like the Black people that Anderson (1993) mentioned, Slowe took her graduate-level degree from a white university, yet her only option for working in academia was at a Black college or university. Slowe was valedictorian of the Howard University class of 1908 and later earned her Master of Arts from Columbia University in 1915 (Perkins, 1996). In 1922, she was promoted to dean of women at Howard and became president of the National Association of College Women (NACW) (Perkins, 1996). Although Slowe was the “first formally trained student personnel dean on a black college campus,” her contributions to creating equity in Black higher education were not limited to the area of student affairs (Perkins, 1996, p. 91). For example, during her NACW presidency, the organization formed a Committee on Standards to assess Black colleges’ academic programs (Perkins, 1996). Slowe had the committee assess the colleges by enrollment, admissions and graduation criteria, faculty credentials, financial status, and physical plant (Perkins, 1996). NACW also surveyed presidents of Black colleges. “Standards and leadership for black college women were paramount issues of the NACW under Slowe’s leadership” (Perkins, 1996, p. 91). The ongoing themes around access and equity were hallmarks of Slowe’s career, and, as Perkins (1996) found, “Slowe did not hesitate to address issues of racism as well as sexism” (p. 101).

As historians entered the twenty-first century, their focus on student activists expanded in scope and depth. In many ways, the next wave of scholarship about access, equity, and justice in Black higher education stood on the intellectual shoulders of Anderson and Perkins as scholars – now 30–40 years removed – looked back at the 1960s and 1970s with fresh perspectives. In 2003, Joy Ann Williamson’s (now Williamson-Lott) *Black Power on Campus* used the University of Illinois as a historical case study to understand student unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Zeroing in on equity, access, and justice, Williamson's (2003) first sentence captured the essence of historians' focus for the next two decades: "The history of Black students at predominantly white colleges and universities is a complicated one of discrimination, racism, protest, and resilience" (p. 1). The book went on to use Illinois – a campus not often associated with the most pivotal moments of the Black Power campus era – to understand Black student organizing on that campus and beyond (Williamson, 2003).

Williamson (2003) contextualized Black students' demands of the 1960s by first providing a brief history of Black students on white campuses generally and at the University of Illinois. The mid-1960s, as Williamson (2003) explained, "continued to be difficult for African American students at the University of Illinois in terms of numerical isolation and alienation from campus social activities" (p. 35). That climate ignited Black student protests when, as a result of a special program, more than 500 Black students arrived at Illinois in 1968. Williamson (2003) also analyzed gender dynamics in Black students' demands for racial equity on campus. Among a group of Black students arrested in protests that fall, "almost half" were women since "Black women were neither absent nor subservient" (Williamson, 2003, p. 108). Williamson (2003) added that "women often initiated and dominated the discussion of gender roles" (p. 109). *Black Power on Campus* served as a model for rigorous historical study of Black equity on a single campus and introduced a gendered analysis of Black Power movement.

Two years later, Deidre B. Flowers also focused on gender to study the Greensboro, North Carolina, lunch counter sit-ins in 1960. On February 1, four young Black men enrolled at North Carolina A&T launched a sit-in at a whites-only lunch counter. Flowers (2005) wrote, "While much has been written about the sit-ins, primarily concentrating on the four young men from NCA&T who participated in the February 1st sit-in, little attention has been given to other participants in the Greensboro protests" (p. 56) and made an eloquent argument that the women enrolled at nearby Bennett College, a private Black women's college, were the actual long-term organizers of student civil rights activism in that city. Flowers (2005) chronicled the month-by-month participation of Bennett women until the lunch counters were desegregated in July and explained how Bennett President Willa B. Player, the first Black woman to serve as president of a 4-year college, supported the students' sit-ins. Flowers (2005) surmised that "younger generations of African Americans, including black women attending Bennett College, were not as tolerant of the slow pace of social change in the United States" (p. 60).

In 2005, Katrina M. Sanders also emphasized social change and Black higher education in her history of the Fisk University Race Relations Institute. Focused on the years 1944 and 1969, Sanders (2005) stated that the institute was guided by four research areas: "race and racial theories," "racial aspects of social problems," "methods, techniques, and community planning," and "the role of personal religion in human relations" (p. 41). The institute was the brainchild of Fisk sociologist Charles S. Johnson, who wrote *The Negro College Graduate* in 1938. Sanders (2005) explained that Johnson wanted the institute to be a space "where social scientists, educators, and community leaders could come together and work to

build racial tolerance” (p. 23). Although it engaged in a different type of activism than what Williamson (2003) and Flowers (2005) discussed, Sanders (2005) showed how the institute’s regular convenings and research studies that refuted racist ideas demonstrated the central role of Black scholar-activists in shaping society and advancing Black equity, access, and justice.

Aside from Sanders’s (2005) analysis of the activism of Black intellectuals in general, most historians that followed focused on Black student activism and its effects on Black and white college campuses. The next year, Noliwe Rooks published a book about the influence of the Ford Foundation in shaping and developing the first Black Studies programs following Black student protests across the United States. Rooks (2006) focused on protests of Black students in the 1960s that led to many Black studies programs, but also explained how the dependence on white money devastated the growth of the newly formed Black studies programs. “Although described as innovative,” Rooks explained, “most [Black studies programs] were dependent on traditional department for support, funding, and legitimacy, and that reality, while fully supported by Ford, was having a destabilizing impact on the field as a whole” (p. 114).

Rooks (2006) offered a clear connection between Black campus activism and curricula, and 2 years later, Joy Ann Williamson continued that focus in *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower*, a history of Black colleges and Black freedom struggles in Mississippi. The book not only chronicled mid-twentieth century Black activism on private and public campuses but it also analyzed how that activism affected academic freedom and faculty activism. Williamson (2008) wisely demonstrated that inequities in a state like Mississippi were campus-wide regardless of field or discipline. Additionally, whereas a prevailing narrative in earlier studies of civil rights framed public Black colleges as under more state pressure than private Black colleges (see Chafe, 1981; Zinn, 1964), she demonstrated that, in Mississippi, even a president of a private Black college was fired by their board of trustees (Williamson, 2008). Therefore, Williamson (2008) further complicated historical understanding of state politics, academic freedom, and Black activism using Mississippi as a case study.

In 2009, Stefan M. Bradley’s *Harlem vs. Columbia University* continued attention on Black student activism with a riveting history of how Black students at Columbia University challenged campus policy, and by proxy federal housing policy, as the university displaced residents in nearby and predominately Black Harlem. Whereas Rooks (2006), for example, focused on Black inequities in the classroom, Bradley (2009) made it clear that these issues existed outside of the classroom, on and off campus. Bradley (2009) unveiled new historical perspectives on campus expansion and underscored how questions of Black access, equity, and justice have never been confined to Black people affiliated with colleges and universities. “While black resentment of white America had accompanied the first slave ship that arrived in the English colonies, Harlem’s resentment of Columbia University developed mostly in the 1950s and 1960s” (Bradley, 2009, p. 21), when news broke that Columbia University had acquired part of Morningside Park – a public park that served Harlem and Morningside Heights residents. That a wealthy,

white university was about to use public land and space to build a gymnasium sparked widespread protests. “In the late 1960s, the gym in the park became more than a symbol; it also provided a rallying point for black people in the community and at the school to gain a say and some power in predominately white America” (Bradley, 2009, p. 40).

Bradley (2009) demonstrated that the fight for Black access, equity, and justice in higher education was not confined within campus borders, and like most historians in the early 2000s, he used a case study to make that argument. However, in 2012, two books – Martha Biondi’s *The Black Revolution on Campus* and Ibram X. Kendi’s (then Ibram H. Rogers) *The Black Campus Movement* – offered national accounts of the Black student protests of the late 1960s and 1970s. While similar in historical focus and timeframe, each made a unique contribution to Black higher education history. For Biondi (2012), the inclusion of Black activism on community college campuses as important to the national movement departed from the usual focus on 4-year campuses. Stating that “in many cities, the Black student movement was based, to a large degree, at community colleges,” (Biondi, 2012, p. 101), Biondi highlighted that the first Black studies program in California was offered at Merritt College, a 2-year institution in Oakland, before she chronicled Black activism at Crane Junior College (now named Malcolm X College) in Chicago. This framing was important in shifting understanding of Black activism. One of Kendi’s (2012) major contributions was the contextualization of Black student activism within the long history of Black student activism on Black college campuses – dating back to the 1800s. “Just as the traffic for civil rights and black power did not begin in the 1960s, neither did the mass, concerted activism of black collegians” (p. 29). These two national histories – both published in 2012 – helped set the foundation for important, far-reaching studies over the last 10 years that have further expanded the Black higher education historiography.

Within the last decade, however, perhaps no book has shaped academic dialogue and administrative actions more than Craig Steven Wilder’s *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities*. Wilder (2013) revisited the history of American higher education by looking at how its oldest colleges actively benefited from the enslavement of Africans. Whereas most histories of American higher education rarely, or only briefly, mentioned enslaved Black people on campuses (see Geiger, 2014; Lucas, 2006; Rudolph, 1962; Thelin, 2004; Thwing, 1906; Westmeyer, 1985), Wilder (2013) placed that fact front and center. He argued that enslaved Black people’s free labor was essential to the physical development and maintenance of these earliest colleges, and, furthermore, that the colleges’ trustees and other donors profited from various aspects of global enslavement (Wilder, 2013). In turn, Wilder (2013) demonstrated that the oldest – and often wealthiest – universities along the eastern seaboard grew large endowments because of enslavement. This research prompted dozens of college leaders to launch formal investigations into how their institutions also profited from forced Black labor.

In the last 5 years, several acclaimed books have further reshaped how Black higher education has been viewed in terms of equity, access, and justice. Stefan M. Bradley’s published *Upending the Ivory Tower: Civil Rights, Black Power, and*

the Ivy League (2018) offered an examination of the eight Ivy League campuses and Black students' activism between the 1940s and 1970s. Bradley (2018) explained, "Where some scholars have focused mostly on Black presence and admissions in the Ivy League, *Upending the Ivory Tower* delves into the activities and activism of black students" (p. 6), which were significant because the Ivy League is socially influential. In the same year, Joy Williamson-Lott's *Jim Crow Campus* also took an expansive look at race and the social influence of higher education. Whereas Bradley (2018) focused on the Northeast, Williamson-Lott (2018) focused on the South. In doing so and in studying how higher education was used to maintain social order in southern states, Williamson-Lott (2018) challenged some "familiar assumptions" that previous historians had perpetuated (p. 3). For Williamson-Lott (2018), historians had assumed that the primary means for studying white supremacy in higher education was through examining the mid-twentieth century battles between states and the federal government. Other assumptions included seeing on-campus student activism as largely confined to a limited period of 1964–1970; and understandings of faculty, academic freedom, and anti-communist sentiment that did not account for regional differences (Williamson-Lott, 2018). Focusing on anti-communist sentiment demonstrated a global understanding that Black access, equity, and justice were not confined to the United States and that American campuses have been important to understanding the international struggle against communism.

In 2019, two books picked up on Williamson-Lott's (2018) idea. First, Joshua M. Myers's *We Are Worth Fighting For* focused on the global South African conflict, apartheid, and the student protest at Howard University in 1989. Howard – like many Black colleges and universities – was a critical location for campus and community work and for raising social awareness. "Since community organizers considered Howard a strategic location to house discussion, debate, and consciousness-raising, this necessarily affected the students on campus and, just as significant, the surrounding DC Black community" (Myers, 2019, p. 63). Second, Jelani M. Favors's *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* charted the full history of Black student activism on Black campuses. Notably, the book's first chapter focused on the Institute for Colored Youth (now Cheyney University) and explored Black student activism in antebellum America as part of the abolition movement (Favors, 2019). While Favors (2019) covered the early 1800s through the 1970s, the decision to emphasize the international struggle to abolish enslavement was insightful because it centered Black college students' activism within the global freedom struggle. Additionally, Favors (2019) introduced the "second curriculum" concept to explain how Black colleges and universities also prepared their students to serve and demand racial justice.

In 2020, Eddie R. Cole's *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom* reversed the historical lens regarding Black access, equity, and justice. While other histories on Black student activism on Black or white campuses commonly framed college presidents and university chancellors as adversaries to Black activists, Cole (2020) focused on how college and university presidents shaped racial policies and practices during the mid-twentieth century. This shift in focus demonstrated how academic leaders were not simply reactive to Black

protests but, on the contrary, were quite proactive. In many instances, white presidents of white institutions maintained racist systems through federal housing policy, free speech practices, and affirmative action programs (Cole, 2020). But most notably, Cole's (2020) first chapter explained how Black presidents – those leading private and public institutions – used silent networks among themselves to challenge white supremacy and dismantle racial segregation. Black presidents frequently met with each other during regional conferences, sent letters, or spoke on each other's respective campuses to deliver messages they were unable to voice on their own campuses due to white surveillance. "It is this 'quiet' work of Black presidents that is most important in understanding how these academic leaders were able to shape racial practices beyond the gaze of white state legislators, governors, and trustees" (Cole, 2020, p. 65).

Cole's (2020) attention to the covert, silent networks among Black administrators notably shifted how Black presidents appeared in the historiography. Earlier scholarly accounts often framed Black leaders as deferential pawns of white powerbrokers (again, see Zinn, 1964); however, Cole (2020) challenged that notion by framing many Black academic leaders as activists within their own right while many other Black people were unable to adopt visibly public activist roles. Cole (2020) and other historians have continued to uncover new aspects of the history of Black access, equity, and justice in higher education.

In 2021, Jarvis R. Givens expanded upon Cole's (2020) chapter about Black networks with his book *Fugitive Pedagogy*. Givens (2021a) offered a thorough investigation of how Carter G. Woodson's early twentieth century call for the study and teaching of Black history shaped how Black teachers taught Black children. As previously mentioned, Woodson (1933) was critical of white control of Black higher education, and Givens (2021a) demonstrated how that critique influenced the daily activities of Black educators, who found ways to use their own networks to teach honest accounts of Black history without white school officials being aware that such instruction was occurring. Although the focal point of Givens (2021a) was K-12 classrooms, the book served as a reminder that Black colleges and universities trained and prepared the Black teachers who went on to use liberating teaching pedagogies. Givens (2021a) broke new ground and built upon decades of research into Black higher education by rethinking the scope, nuance, and strategies that Black people had historically deployed to achieve access, equity, and justice.

Black access, equity, and justice is an important theme that emerged from the historiography on Black higher education. From Woodson (1933) to Givens (2021a), the histories discussed in this section could easily be situated within the previous sections about Black firsts or the origins of Black colleges and universities. However, these historians focused more explicitly on the ongoing contest for Black freedom as those struggles unfolded within the halls of Black or white college campuses. In the 1970s, historians shed light on the past struggles for college access in the context of that decade's Supreme Court decision on affirmative action in college admissions. By the 1980s, scholars published state-level histories of the inequalities faced by Black colleges and universities. The 1990s featured histories

that uncovered how campuses in the Northeast and Midwest were as racist as those in the South toward Black students and academics, while historians in the 2000s looked at Black student activism from varying perspectives. Finally, the last decade offered critical histories that reframed what was known about slavery, international freedom struggles, college presidents, and Black educators.

Conclusion: Black Perseverance, Triumph, and Next Steps in Higher Education History

This historiography has demonstrated that contestation over the idea of Black access shaped the history and historiography of Black firsts, Black colleges and universities, and Black equity and justice. This is the overarching theme throughout historians' and other scholars' various discussions, arguments, and analyses of many aspects of Black higher education history. To recap, we have discussed the scholarship on Black firsts – the first Black college graduates and faculty, the first Black adult education and Black studies programs, and the first Black graduates' experiences on historically white campuses; research on the origins, development, and role of Black colleges and universities; and histories about the fight for Black access, equity, and justice in higher education. These subjects have been prevalent across more than 130 years of historical research about Black higher education.

While we have tried to be comprehensive, we have not discussed every published study about Black higher education. We have omitted discussion of the following categories of scholarship: specific, narrow Black institutional histories written for local audiences; biographies and autobiographies of key Black higher education leaders; and histories of Black higher education organizations. There are numerous and valuable scholarly contributions that fit within these categories, and we want to acknowledge some of them. Many relevant institutional histories aid our understanding of Black higher education. Regarding current public Black colleges and universities, see histories of Tennessee State University (Lamon, 1973; Lovett, 2012), Florida A&M University (Neyland & Riley, 1963), Texas Southern University (Pitre, 2018), Langston University (Patterson, 1979), Central State University (Goggins, 1987), Cheyney University (Conyers, 1960), and Southern University (Lane, 1970), among others. There are far more institutional histories of private Black colleges and universities. One of the earliest is about Tuskegee University (Thrasher, 1901). Others include histories of Hampton University (Peabody, 1922), Howard University (Dyson, 1941; Logan, 1969), Wilberforce University (McGinnis, 1941), Atlanta University (Bacote, 1969), Tougaloo College (Campbell, 1970; Campbell & Rogers, 1979), Fisk University (Richardson, 1980), Talladega College (Jones & Richardson, 1990), and Meharry Medical College (Summerville, 1983), among others. These institutional histories of Black colleges and universities complement the numerous biographies or autobiographies of the same institutions' prominent leaders and faculty, such as Benjamin Elijah Mays (Cook, 2009; Jelks, 2012; Mays, 1971; Roper, 2012), Mordecai Wyatt Johnson (Edge, 2008; Mays, 1978; McKinney, 2000), Lucy Diggs Slowe (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2022; Miller &

Pruitt-Logan, 2012; Perkins, 1996), Fanny Jackson Coppin (Perkins, 1982a, b), and Jacob Lorenzo Reddix (Reddix, 1974). We also could have included histories of Black organizations, such as the United Negro College Fund (“79+ Years Strong,” n.d.; Gasman, 2007b).

Even though it excludes institutional and organizational histories and biographies, this historiography of Black higher education offers a central analysis of Black people and higher education across multiple periods, institutional types, and thematic areas. As mentioned in the introduction, previous historiographies of Black higher education focused on specific moments or themes, but our approach provides a comprehensive overview of Black higher education history. Furthermore, we argue that the historical study of Black higher education is essential to understanding American higher education writ large. Considering the roles that Black people have played in higher education, from enslavement to the present, histories of higher education should account for how race and racism have influenced all aspects of university life. Therefore, our historiography also contributes to the study of the broader history of higher education through the direct connections it suggests between the Black past and several contemporary issues in higher education.

For example, our careful analysis of Black firsts demonstrates how historians, in only the last 30 years, have started to more fully contextualize the achievements of Black trailblazers within the context of their racist academic experiences. The isolation of being the first, or among the few, Black students or faculty resounds throughout experiences today. Furthermore, whereas historians first studied Black colleges and universities in descriptive terms, we explain that scholars eventually started to focus historical attention on structural racism and these institutions’ societal contributions despite decades of underfunding. The remnants of decades-long funding inequities looms over HBCUs today after the recent Supreme Court decision to strike down the direct use of race in college admissions. Finally, this chapter’s attention to historians’ focus on Black access, equity, and justice is also timely. As state legislators across the United States consider legislation that limits the teaching of Black history, our historiography highlights dozens of histories that could *likely* be banned from instruction. Therefore, our comprehensive approach in this chapter is modeled after many of the early scholar-activists who also wrote about Black higher education. Just as Du Bois (1898) argued that solutions to Black issues must be paired with investment in Black higher education, we argue that future historians must understand and acknowledge American higher education’s oversized influence in maintaining racial inequalities on campuses and beyond.

The past-to-present connections are evident in historiography discussed throughout this chapter. Across our three themes, historians have further developed their studies of Black higher education through advances in research methods and perspectives shaped by national moments. Regarding methods, archival records have naturally advanced over the past 150 years alongside new discoveries. An extraordinary example of this development is the 2009 discovery of the papers of Richard T. Greener, the first Black Harvard graduate, in an old home being demolished in Chicago (“First Black Alumnus’s...,” 2012). Such discoveries of well-known and lesser-known Black figures have helped advance Black higher education history

over time. Similarly, historians have brought new perspectives to old topics in exciting ways. Therefore, the historiography has developed as scholars have asked new questions about old materials, and often significant social moments (e.g., *Brown* decision, civil rights unrest, and *Bakke* decision) have shaped and invited new perspectives over time.

This historiography also presents opportunities for new historical directions and perspectives on Black higher education moving forward. Regarding Black firsts, we invite future higher education historians to continue to pursue this area of study. For as many names and histories that we do know, there are many more remarkable stories to be told. New histories of Black firsts can also elevate new topics and subjects. For example, we know there were once segregated regional accrediting agencies, such as the Association of Colleges and Schools for Negroes (Walker, 2009). Histories that center Black people's first strategic, self-contained academic organizing would further expand the study of Black firsts. Furthermore, new types of histories about Black firsts, such histories of the first Black organizations in various fields, would move research away from a focus on "firsts" within only white academic spaces.

There are numerous opportunities to write new histories about HBCUs despite the several studies that currently exist. New directions could include attention to Black intellectual thought regarding desegregation. Historians have evaluated how desegregation affected HBCUs after *Brown* (see Gasman, 2004; Samuels, 2004), but that scholarly approach focuses on reactions among HBCUs; however, many Black academic leaders and faculty were proactive in raising potential concerns about desegregation before the *Brown* decision. Rich intellectual analyses in this area would help to further understanding of HBCU history in new ways. Similarly, with few exceptions like Myers (2019), most HBCU histories end at the 1970s. We invite scholars to grapple with the history of more recent decades and bring the history of these institutions into the twenty-first century.

Finally, regarding new histories that center Black access, equity, and justice, we are excited about recent scholarship in this area. Like Wilder (2013), the new perspectives from Favors (2019), Cole (2020), and Givens (2021a) have received widespread engagement across education, history, and Black studies as well as broad public interest – with each scholar using their historical research to speak on contemporary issues (see Cole, 2021, 2023; Favors, 2023; Givens, 2021b, 2023). Similarly, historian Crystal R. Sanders has a forthcoming book, tentatively titled *America's Forgotten Migration*, that presents a history of how southern states funded Black college students' education through out-of-state scholarships instead of desegregating all-white universities. Scholars for decades have mentioned these out-of-state programs, yet it is only now that Sanders has taken on the heavy, complicated work of analyzing how those programs and funding worked as a method to limit Black access and equity across the South.

These critical perspectives – on Black firsts; HBCUs; and equity, access and justice – are steps toward rethinking and reevaluating long accepted narratives about American higher education, because it is important for historians to make plain the deliberate attempts to undermine Black higher education. New histories may tarnish,

or at best complicate, the legacies of long-celebrated white historical figures, institutions, and scholars. But as Du Bois (1935) argued, “We have too often a deliberate attempt so to change the facts of history that the story will make pleasant reading for Americans” (p. 584). The history of Black higher education is an extension of the history of Black America, and its facts are not always pleasant to read. For centuries, aspects of that history have been *whitewashed* and scrubbed of remnants of white supremacy, while for just as long, critical historians – often Black historians – have produced counternarratives. Our historiography demonstrates this dynamic, and in doing so, it serves as a reminder that Black higher education is truly a story of perseverance and triumph.

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