Kendra Wright on The 1619 Project

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What's at Stake

The 1619 project seeks to redefine the country's history by emphasizing slavery's consequences and black Americans' contributions. These are my arguments on why this projects ideals are too narrow.

"Moreover, the breadth of 400 years and 300 million people cannot be compressed into single-size interpretations; yet The 1619 Project asserts that every aspect of American life has only one lens for viewing, that of slavery and its fall-out."
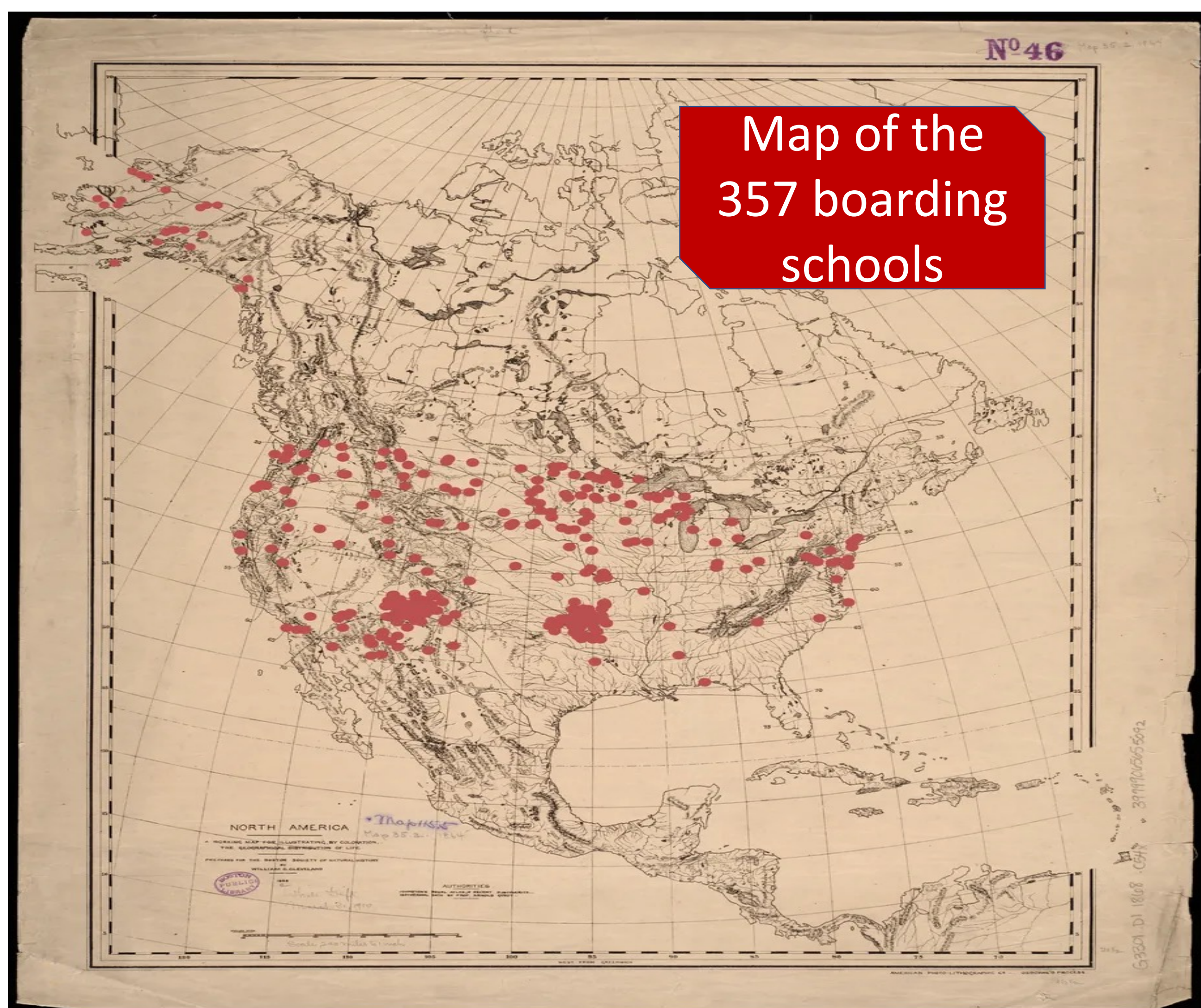— William B. Allen et al, letter to the *NY Times*

Treatment of Indigenous People

Map of the 357 boarding schools

English settlers enslaved indigenous people from 1619, and some colonists later owned both American Indian and African slaves, says Ashley Atkins Spivey, anthropologist and modern-day member of the Pamunkey nation (Powhatan's tribe).

Other Laborers

Nikole Hanna-Jones states that slave labor built this country while she is not wrong, she forgets that there were other types of laborers who were treated unfairly and like property. There was a tiered system within the laborers. The free laborers, the indentured servants and redemptioners and lastly the slaves.

Founding Ideals

Hannah-Jones asserts that African Americans helped this country live up to its founding ideals through centuries of resistance and protest. But while they have helped, they are not the only ones to contribute to positive changes made in this country.

Takeaways

The most important claim that comes from this essay is that our schools are doing a disservice when teaching history. The history taught needs to be more inclusive and accurate. We need a national standard for the history taught in school.

"During the late 1980s early 1990s, there was an effort to put forward national history standards. Lynn Cheney was then the head of the NEH, and she thought that those standards… [were] too negative and that discussing slavery was too negative,…and so she kyboshed the whole thing."
–Leslie Harris