

TAGLINE:

1City:2Schools is an investigative podcast series dedicated to telling two stories set in Poughkeepsie almost exactly one hundred years apart; 1) an unsuccessful attempt by a group of Black families to create an all-Black school called Toussaint Louverture College in 1870, and 2) in 1970, the very successful attempt by a group of mostly white, mostly affluent families to create their own school district, segregated in everything but name, called Spackenkill.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Historically known as a great multi-racial center going as far back as the time when the great river from which it was birthed was called Mahicannituck, Poughkeepsie provides two unique examples of how the past is never dead – it's not even past.

Both stories, that of Toussaint Louverture College, which could have become the North East's only HBCU, and that of Spackenkill and its historic battle against consolidation with the larger Poughkeepsie City School District, are parallel stories that many of us seem to know, but no one seems to talk about.

By interviewing local historians, educators, administrators and parents, the purpose of this project is to ask a seemingly simple yet damningly complex series of questions: Why do our schools look the way they look? What makes a "good school" a "good school"? What makes a "bad school" a "bad school"? And more specifically, what does the number of little brown and black faces in a classroom have to do with the quality of the school they're in?

Just as New York State's 1827 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery never abolished institutionalized forms of servitude, and "Urban Renewal" never really renewed anything, it is obvious now, perhaps more than ever, that *Brown v. Board of Education* never separated us from "separate but equal."

The purpose of this project is not to indict any particular person. Rather, it is the historic injustices such as "redlining" and its concentration of poverty, as well as the resulting "white flight" that further exacerbated the poverty of neighborhoods that became increasingly blacker and browner – these are the events this podcast finds worthy of indictment.

Surely, both Toussaint Louverture College and Spackenkill High School thought of themselves as "good" schools. The question is: Are some of the things we do to make a "good school" a "good school", the same things that contribute to making a "bad school" a "bad school"? The creation of one school could have had the effect of creating something historic. The creation of the other, however, may have had the effect of creating a sustained historical, intergenerational injustice that perpetuates to this day. By making these relatively recent historical anomalies and racial disparities in our own backyard open and accessible to all who are willing to participate and listen, this podcast series seeks to perform an informative and potentially reparative service which aims to be of interest to local and national audiences.

OPEN CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS:

1City:2Schools, a spin-off from the local *Beaconites!* podcast series, is seeking to interview local historians, educators, administrators and parents to tell the story of two schools many in the Poughkeepsie area seem to know but never talk about: the unsuccessful story of an all-Black school called Toussaint Louverture College in 1870, and the successful story of Spackenkill's battle against consolidation with the larger Poughkeepsie City School District since 1970.

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BIO:

Jean-Marc Superville Sovak is a multidisciplinary artist and teaching professional whose work represents silent narratives of multi-racial identities that make up the DNA of this country, as well his own. Jean-Marc's public art projects include retracing speculative steps on the Underground Railroad at Wilderstein Historic Site in Rhinebeck, and creating monuments to 17th-century Afro-Dutch pioneers in Rockland County. As Visiting Artist and Lecturer, Jean-Marc has used his work as a platform to discuss topics such as "The American Picturesque in the Age of Abolitionism" at Vassar College, SUNY New Paltz, Bard College, Columbia University, Ramapo College of New Jersey, and Olana State Historic Site. Jean-Marc is a graduate of Bard College's M.F.A. Program in Film/Video. He currently serves on the Education & Outreach Committee at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art and is an Executive Board Member at Unison Arts Center in New Paltz, NY.