



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



VOL. 44, NO. 4

P.O. BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

NOVEMBER 2010

What's Happened to Public School Curriculum?

The most widely used history textbook in U.S. public schools is *A People's History of the United States* by the late Howard Zinn. It has sold a million and a half copies since it was published in 1980. It is required reading in many high schools and colleges.

This history textbook by Howard Zinn is a very leftwing version of U.S. history, full of multicultural, feminist, and class-war propaganda. It is based on the thesis that America is not a republic but an empire controlled by a few white men. Its heroes are anti-establishment protestors. The book debunks traditional heroes, such as Christopher Columbus and Andrew Jackson, and doesn't mention great Americans such as Thomas Edison.

Zinn's textbook deprives young readers of the opportunity to learn that they are part of the great story of American exceptionalism. His book inspires guilt and the belief that success comes only through exploitation. He belittles patriotism, never allowing pride in America. Zinn told one interviewer that his goal in writing this textbook was to start a "quiet revolution" of people taking power from within the institutions.

After several decades of use in schools and colleges, new information emerged about the author. In 2010, the FBI released 400 pages of files on Howard Zinn, and it turns out that he was an active member of the Communist Party. He was vice president of a group in Brooklyn, New York run by the Communists and attended Communist Party meetings in Brooklyn five nights a week. He was so important in the Communist Party that he taught a class to his comrades on "basic Marxism."

The FBI interviewed many fellow Communists who confirmed Howard Zinn's longtime Communist Party membership. Publicly, Howard Zinn lied and denied his Communist Party membership, which was the common practice of Communist Party members in those years.

Howard Zinn's textbook is worse than anything he ever did as a member of the Communist Party. His textbook was specifically written to present a Marxist version of U.S. history based on the Communist strategy of the "class war."

Barack Obama's goal of "redistribution of the wealth" (first announced to the public in his remark to Joe the Plumber, and then carried out by his extravagant spending programs) is the

modern label for the basic Marxist ideology of the "class war."

Parents and citizens should check their local school and find out if the kids are being taught U.S. history from Howard Zinn's textbook.

National Standards: A Bad Idea

Having taken over major parts of the banking industry, the mortgage industry, the automobile industry, the college student-loan industry, and the health-care industry, the Obama Administration is now trying to take over the \$600 billion public-school industry with taxpayers' money from the Stimulus package.

Having admitted that the Stimulus funds didn't provide any "shovel-ready jobs" as Barack Obama promised, he now hopes that Stimulus dollars will stimulate the takeover of our children's minds under "Common Core Standards," which is the label for forcing national curriculum standards on all public schools.

Imposing common-core national standards sounds alluring to those who look to the Obama Administration to solve all our problems. We would get rid of our messy, different 50-state variations of standards and enable students to better compete in the new global economy.

Much of the argument for Common Core Standards is that our decentralized, 50-state control of curriculum is so unlike educational systems in most other countries. But so what! Americans honor our exceptionalism and our federalism, and we don't want to be "fundamentally transformed" into European-style socialism. Most foreign countries have a long tradition of central government control, whereas the United States has strong traditions of parental authority, limited government, and state (not federal) control of education.

A major argument of those promoting national standards is that the countries which score higher on international tests than U.S. students have national standards. That argument won't fly because dozens of countries that score worse than U.S. students also have national standards.

Control of public school curriculum is a very desirable prize for those who seek to control the future. Jimmy Carter's Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Joseph Califano, once admitted that "national control of curriculum is a form of na-

tional control of ideas.”

The imposition of national standards isn't constitutional. Nothing in the U.S. Constitution authorizes the federal government to exercise any control over education. The Obama Administration plans to do an end-run around the Constitution and the federal law by tying the Common Core Standards to the granting or denying of federal appropriations, both the \$4 billion Race To The Top money and even Title I funding. That is an effort to make Common Core Standards compulsory because state politicians are not likely to turn down billions of dollars.

So far, at least 36 states plus the District of Columbia have adopted Common Core Standards. Only Texas and Virginia have indicated reluctance to adopt.

There is absolutely no assurance that parents or the public will approve the content of the proposed Common Core Standards. Many so-called education “experts” openly advocate imposing curriculum standards on content that parents find offensive, such as non-phonics in reading instruction and left-wing and feminist propaganda in literature and social studies, and on methodology such as deliberately not teaching facts or basic arithmetic skills in order to emphasize creativity.

The better way to go is toward what is known as school choice, *i.e.*, allowing parents to choose the school and/or the curriculum they want for their children, a.k.a. the free market in education. Private choice would sort out the curricula that do the job of making kids smart.

Children will never be adequately educated under a system run by bureaucrats handing out money and the teachers unions (the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers) spending the money in the classroom. The NEA and the AFT also have extraordinary millions of dollars extracted from their members to lobby for policies they want to have enacted by Congress, state legislatures and school boards and also to elect their favored political candidates.

Un-American American History Courses I

Arizona has passed a new law that bans schools from teaching classes designed to promote solidarity among students of a particular ethnic group. This law bans classes that “promote the overthrow of the United States government” or “promote resentment toward a race or class of people.” This law is based on the proposition that schools should treat all pupils as individual Americans.

The issue that prompted the law was that the Tucson School District offers courses in Mexican-American Studies (known locally as Raza Studies) that focus on that particular group and its influence. Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, says the basic theme of the Mexican-American studies program is that Latino students “were and continue to be victims of a racist American society driven by the interests of middle- and upper-class whites.”

Among the goals listed for the Mexican-American Studies are “social justice” and “Latino Critical Race Pedagogy.” Pictures of the classroom showed the walls decorated with “heroes” such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

Tucson also offers courses especially for African-American and Native-American students. Such classes obviously divide the student population by race, a practice we thought was not supposed to be tolerated anymore.

The law doesn't prohibit any of these classes so long as they are open to all students and don't promote ethnic resentment or solidarity.

Greta van Susteren of Fox News interviewed a former Tucson high school teacher, John A. Ward, who was removed from teaching the class for Mexican Americans and re-signed because he questioned this Raza curriculum. Because he raised concerns, Ward was called a racist and, since he himself is of Mexican heritage, he was also called *vendido* (Spanish for sellout).

The state of Arizona requires students to take a course in American history in order to graduate, but Ward said this course is actually not about American history at all. He said it focuses solely on the history of the Aztec people, which is the group to which Mexican-American activists ascribe their lineage.

Others who have looked at the books used in these courses say they refer to Americans as “Anglos” or “Euroamericans” rather than as “Americans.” The books do not recognize the United States as a country, but claim Arizona is part of “Aztlán, Mexico” (even though the Aztecs never lived in what is now the United States).

Un-American American History Courses II

The Mexican version of history is not the only foreign propaganda masquerading as American history in public school courses and textbooks. Five chapters promoting Islam were inserted in a world history textbook that is authorized and recommended for seventh-grade students by the state of California.

This world history textbook, called *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*, gives the history and beliefs of Islam lengthy and favorable treatment far above and beyond what is given to every other religion, according to scholar Stephen Schwartz in the *Weekly Standard* (August 9, 2010).

The textbook uses what he calls a “sanitized vocabulary” to conceal Muslim practices that are criminal in the United States. These include forced marriage, forced divorce, marriage to children, polygamy, and punishments imposed by Sharia law such as public beheadings, amputations, cruel floggings, and stonings.

Muhammad is the only person in this world history textbook who rates an entire chapter. Jesus gets only one sentence, and the contrast between the treatment of Islam and

Christianity is shocking. The book gives an entirely positive account of Muhammad's teachings, saying, for example, "He preached tolerance for Christians and Jews as fellow worshipers of the one true God." It says nothing about Jesus's teachings, but does describe examples of Christian persecution of non-Christians.

This textbook tells students that the first year in the Muslim calendar is "the year of Muhammad's hijrah" (his escape from Mecca to Medina in the year 622). The book doesn't say from what event our Christian calendar dates. The textbook replaces A.D. with the trendy term "C.E." (Common Era).

William J. Bennetta, editor of the *Textbook Letter*, published a detailed analysis of this textbook's distortions, which he calls "pseudohistory." Bennetta documents how it was influenced by a Muslim pressure group, the Council on Islamic Education, which boasts of successfully "collaborating" with "K-12 publishers" to present a benign view of Islam to impressionable American schoolchildren.

A new book called *The Trouble with Textbooks — Distorting History and Religion* by Gary A. Tobin and Dennis R. Ybarra contains other information about how school textbooks are turned into tools of propaganda for special-interest groups.

The Muslim lobby is particularly adept at influencing textbooks. The founder of the Council on Islamic Education calls this a "bloodless revolution . . . inside American junior high and high school classrooms." It's one thing for us to be careful about Muslim sensitivities, but this book presents evidence that school textbooks proselytize for Islam. Islam is repeatedly described in textbooks as historical truth, whereas Christianity and Judaism are described as mere notions of their believers.

Here is how it's done. Textbooks relate Christian and Jewish religious traditions as mere stories attributed to some human source, whereas Islamic traditions are presented as indisputable historic facts. In one textbook, you can read that Moses claimed to receive the Ten Commandments from God, but that Muhammad simply "received" the Koran from God. Another textbook instructs students that Jesus of Nazareth is "believed by Christians to be the Messiah," but states that Muhammad actually "received revelations from Allah." Another textbook relates that "Christians believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah," but on the other hand the Koran "is the collection of God's revelations to Muhammad."

The Texas State Board of Education recently adopted a resolution that warns publishers against printing textbooks infused with anti-Christian, pro-Islamic bias. The resolution declares that "pro-Islamic/anti-Christian half-truths, selective disinformation, and false stereotypes" have been inserted in some social studies textbooks. Pages of footnotes document the "patterns of pejoratives toward Christians and superlatives toward Muslims." Some of the textbooks describe Chris-

tian Crusaders as "aggressors, 'violent attackers,' or 'invaders' while euphemizing Muslim conquest of Christian lands as 'migrations' by 'empire builders.'"

Other complaints cited in the Texas School Board resolution criticize disproportionate coverage, with some textbooks devoting twice as many lines to Islam as to Christianity and barely even mentioning Judaism. The resolution also expresses concern about "sanitized definitions of 'jihad'" that omit the religious intolerance and violence toward non-Muslims that are espoused by Muslim terrorists worldwide.

The American Textbook Council, an independent research organization, verified the findings cited in the Texas School Board resolution by reporting that U.S. textbooks generally present a view of Islam "that misrepresents its foundations and challenges to international security."

Parents should check out how American history is taught, and **not** taught, in their local public schools. Are Islamic and Mexican propaganda masquerading as "American history"? Is it too much to ask that *American* traditions and faith get equal treatment with other faiths and traditions in public school textbooks and classrooms?

Texas Kicks Out Liberal Textbook Bias

For years, liberals have imposed their revisionist history on our nation's public school students, expunging important facts and historic figures while loading the textbooks with liberal propaganda, distortions and clichés. It's easy to get a quick lesson in the virulent leftwing bias by checking the index and noting how textbooks unfairly describe President Ronald Reagan and Senator Joseph McCarthy.

When parents object to leftwing inclusions and omissions, claiming they should have something to say about what their own children are being taught and how their taxpayers' money is spent, they are usually vilified as "book burners" and belittled as uneducated primitives who ought to allow the "experts" to make all curriculum decisions. The self-identified "experts" are alumni of liberal teachers colleges and/or members of a leftwing teachers union.

In most states, the liberal education establishment enjoys total control over the state's board of education, department of education, and curriculum committees. Texas is different; the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) is elected, and the people (even including parents!) have a voice.

Texas is uniquely important in textbook content because the state of Texas is the largest single purchaser of textbooks. Publishers can hardly afford to print different versions for other states, so Texas curriculum standards have nationwide influence.

The review of social studies curriculum (covering U.S. Government, American History, World History and Economics) comes up every ten years, and 2010 was one of those years. The unelected education "experts" proposed their his-

tory revisions such as eliminating Independence Day, Christopher Columbus, Thomas Edison, Daniel Boone and Neil Armstrong, and replacing Christmas with Diwali.

After a public outcry, the Texas State Board of Education responded with common-sense improvements. Thomas Edison, the world's greatest inventor, will be again included in the narrative of American history. Schoolchildren will no longer be misled into believing that capitalism and the free market are dirty words and that America has an unjust economic system. Instead, they will learn how the free-enterprise system gave our nation and the world so much that is good for so many people.

Liberals don't like the concept of American Exceptionalism. The liberals want to teach what's wrong with America (masquerading under the code word "social justice") instead of what's right and successful. The SBOE voted to include a description of how American Exceptionalism is based on values that are unique and different from those of other nations.

The SBOE specified that teaching about the Bill of Rights should include a reference to the right to keep and bear arms. Some school curricula pretend the Second Amendment doesn't exist. Texas curriculum standards will henceforth accurately describe the U.S. government as a "constitutional republic" rather than as a democracy. The secularists tried to remove reference to the religious basis for the founding of America, but that was voted down.

The Texas Board rejected the anti-Christian crowd's proposal to eliminate the use for historic dates of B.C. and A.D., as in *Before Christ* and *Anno Domini*, and replace them with B.C.E. (as in *Before the Common Era*) and C.E. (as in *Common Era*).

The deceptive claim that the United States was founded on a "separation of church and state" gets the ax, and rightfully so. In fact, most of the original thirteen colonies were founded as Christian communities with much overlap between church and state.

History textbooks that deal with Joseph McCarthy will now be required to explain "how the later release of the Venona papers confirmed suspicions of Communist infiltration in U.S. government." The Venona papers are authentic transcripts of some 3,000 messages between the Soviet Union and its secret agents in the United States.

Discussions of economics will not be limited to the theories of Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, and Adam Smith. Textbooks must also include two champions of free-market theory, Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek.

History textbooks will now be required to cover the "unintended consequences" of Great Society legislation, affirmative action, and Title IX legislation. Textbooks should also include "the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s."

Texas textbooks will now have to mention "the impor-

ance of personal responsibility for life choices" instead of blaming society for everything and expecting government to provide remedies for all social ills.

Colleges Are Guilty, Too!

The failure to teach American history in public schools is reflected in a similar failure in colleges and universities. History courses now deemphasize great people and events, often ridiculing them as DWEMs (Dead White European Males). The number of college history professors has doubled, but the growth has been in specialties such as women's or gender history.

Many professors want to teach history the way they wish it had happened instead of the way it did happen. Students should learn about the accomplishments of America, its ingenuity, its freedom and abundance. We want our young people to become informed and optimistic, grateful to our ancestors, respectful of our values and institutions, proud of our heroes, and patriotic so they can pass this knowledge along to the next generation.

A new evaluation made by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni discovered that most elite colleges no longer require students to study American history. Colleges often allow students to take worthless classes to satisfy core curriculum requirements. For example, at California State University, Monterey Bay, students can count the History of Rock and Roll as their required course in U.S. History. Emory University allows students to choose among 600 courses to fulfill the History, Society and Culture requirement, including one called Gynecology in the Ancient World.

It's no secret that the people who control public schools are at war with our nation's history, culture and achievements. Since taxpayers foot the bill, it is long overdue for state boards of education to correct many textbook myths and lies about our magnificent national heritage and achievements.

Pulitzer-prize winning historian David McCullough believes that the ignorance of American history among U.S. high school students and teachers is a threat to national security. He told a Senate committee that "we are raising a generation of people who are historically illiterate." Thomas Jefferson said: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be."

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PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002

ISSN0556-0152

Published monthly by the Eagle Trust Fund, PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Periodicals Postage Paid at Alton, Illinois. Postmaster: Address Corrections should be sent to the Phyllis Schlafly Report, PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Phone: (618) 462-5415.

Subscription Price: \$20 per year. Extra copies available: 50¢ each; 10 copies \$4; 30 copies \$8; 100 copies \$15; 1,000 copies \$100.

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