

Racism In Education

There are hardly any realms of the modern world left unscathed by the thrashing whip of racism. One of the most significant sectors of life that has definitely fallen victim to the stinging lash of racism is that general, precious field of study - EDUCATION. Racism is manifesting itself daily in all aspects dealing with formal education in the American public school system.

Scholars have long conceded that humans are capable of possessing a "double-consciousness" or a "dual-education" - one is taught to you by others and the other is taught to you (self-education) by yourself. Of the two types, the latter is preferred. For example, Black activist Malcolm X saw it fit to educate himself while confined in a prison cell. In Southwestern Texas in the 1960's, Jose Angel Gutierrez and his political party, La Raza Unida, called for bilingual education in neighborhood public school systems.

Despite these diligent efforts to procure equal and self education which is free of racial bias, the evergreens of formal schooling still burn with the withering flame of racism.

Evident in most textbooks is the distortion of and conscious disregarding of actual history. Blacks, mainly, continue to receive little, if any, education on African and African-American history. This neglect has led to the perpetuation of ignorance to a history that many scholars - Black and white - have found and acknowledged as the greatest in the world. These historical distortions have fueled the fire of disconnection with Africa.

For example, in Kush's What

They Never Taught You In History Class, it is revealed that Greek mathematician Pythagoras actually did not originate the mathematical theorem with which he is credited. According to Kush, it was actually taught to Pythagoras by African scholars at the Egyptian University of Karnak, where he went to study. In the textbook, The United States : A History of the Republic, it states - in reference to the Emancipation Proclamation - that "[Abraham] Lincoln recognized the growing call for abolition and was willing to respond...so that emancipation would be seen as a bold, new policy." According to Journey of the Songhai People by the African organization PAFO, it is revealed that Lincoln was pressured into issuing the proclamation because the North was losing the Civil War and there were Blacks who were ready to fight and take out their frustrations on the southerners who enslaved them; moreover, Lincoln said in his inaugural address that he had "no intentions of interfering with the institution of slavery."

Many more historical distortions of this type can be found in textbooks all over America and are promoting racism through their constant glorification and racial exaltation of the majority group here in America.

The progress of other groups (e.g. Chicanos, Latinos, Asians) in America has also been limited in its revelations to the rest of mankind. However, the problem is not as severe for Chicanos, Latinos, and Asians who immigrate to America because they have their own nation and direct connection

Wayne Hodges

with their culture, customs, and language.

Blacks in America do not have this connection because of the denial of education on Africa, especially in the antebellum days of slavery.

However, the distortions in basic education are nothing when compared to the misrepresentation of ethnic groups in standardized tests. Standardized tests, although not the only key, have become the first key one needs in order to unlock the doors of higher education.

Perhaps the most important of these college entrance examinations is the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Known to all who take the test is that it consists of two parts: verbal and mathematics. Unbeknownst to most is the fact that although the mathematics is universal, the verbal is, the majority of the time, racially biased. The questions and reading passages that compile the verbal section are usually conceived by white Europeans, taken from white European literature, and/or geared towards a white European lifestyle.

Since this lifestyle is not part of minorities, they severely augment their chances of failing or obtaining a "less-than-standard" score on the verbal section. This, in effect, lowers minorities' chances of entering an institution of higher learning.

Most colleges take a profound look at applying students' SAT scores. A simple, but serious thing such as social bias can make the most intelligent student appear ignorant or incompetent. Race and education do not, and should not coincide. Race knows education but

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education does not know race. Race can hinder, distort, or totally disregard education. Education cannot do the same to race.

Despite the validity of that statement to some extent, the minorities in America - mainly Blacks - however, have not known education - an education of one's self particularly - is the first step in achieving true prosperity. This statement is not intended to imply the disregarding of the historical progress of other races. That type of hypocrisy would not be advocated by minority groups here in America. As Dr. Carter G. Woodson states in Miseducation of the Negro, we must "hold on to the real facts...as they are, but complete such knowledge by studying...races and nations which have been purposely ignored."

- Wayne Hodges

The "future" and "careers" for which American students now prepare are...intellectual and moral wastelands. This chrome-plated consumers paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children. But an important minority of men and women coming to the front today have shown that they will die rather than be standardized, replaceable and irrelevant.

Mario Savio, 1964

Can Race Be A Unifier In The 21st Century?

Kimberly Smith

To even suggest that race can be a unifying theme is ludicrous. Face it, there are no possibilities of this happening within the next decade, no magical cures that could possibly fall from the sky and cause human beings to lose consciousness of the separate but unequal concept of race that sailed over with the Mayflower.

The concept of separating people into various racial categories is a European concept. It grew from a white aristocratic vine of thought and was subordinately consumed by all. The aim of dividing people by race was not to bring unification, it was to separate. As long as groups remain separate, they have less power. To take pride in race, at the exclusion of all other races, is to forget the ultimate race, the human race. This kind of thinking feeds right into the biased system that breeds racism.

Racism is not just a black and white issue. There is a grey area that is

ofttimes excluded from media coverage. Asians and Hispanics are numerically growing at a rate that far exceeds all other groups in the United States. This growth has led to expanded affirmative action, which in turn has fanned the flames of racism in their direction. Blacks and women feel they have been discriminated against for so long, that it is time for them to reap the benefits of society. They feel they have been standing in line long enough and that they deserve equality before these other groups take their place in line. Thus, this amounts to discriminated groups discriminating against others. This seems an unbreakable cycle as long as people that comprise these groups are willing to accept the labels given them.

Children are not born with prejudices or racist tendencies; these aspects of personality are direct results of socialization. As long as children are tententiously taught these views, these

views will remain a focal point in society. The United States is a multi-cultural mix of people of many colors. In such a heterogenous society, radical tensions will always exist, whether due to social or political differences.

History cannot be changed; what was has already been, but what will be can be influenced by redirecting energies. Blacks are not the only group that have experienced racism and prejudice in America. Not all whites are direct descendants of slave owning Rhett Butler and Scarlet O'Hara types. American history cannot be erased to exclude these events because they are painful, but history can be taught in ways to make learning more advantageous to all groups. It is of utmost importance that history be taught to include all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, not just a predominantly white European version. When history is slanted this way, everyone is cheated

regardless of race, color or creed. It is one small step that could lead to large progressive steps in helping narrow the racial lines that separate one group from another. Ignorance is not bliss; ignorance leads to discord. With America becoming a predominantly mixed nation, where whites are becoming more of a minority, it only makes sense to teach children of all races about all races. Perhaps if children are the future, there may yet be hope for the future as far as race relations go.

All people discriminate in some shape, form or fashion, and this is not a practice that is exclusive to Americans. It is a world wide phenomenon. Think about it: blacks, whites, Native Americans, Asians, Latinos, Haitians, Cubans, and all the other racial groups discriminate against and amongst each

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