

Napoleonic wars would be an absurdity, and everyone knows it. And yet, it would be no more absurd than the history books American children use today.

Non-whites have a much keener sense of their group interests than whites. They see very clearly that the future will have its winners and losers, just as history had them. Thus, while virtually every school district with a white majority is trying to square the circle by teaching a history that is everything to everyone, school districts with black majorities are beginning to replace the old "Euro-centric"

curriculum with one that is openly "Afro-centric." They are not interested in supplementing the traditional history with different points of view. They want a single, African point of view.

In Atlanta, where 92 percent of the public school students are black, history and social studies courses have been rewritten from an "African-American" perspective. New York's public schools recently authorized a curriculum revision based on an openly anti-white position paper drafted, in part, by the black-supremacist professor, Leonard Jeffries (see *AR*, Oc-

tober, 1991). In California, school districts in heavily-black Oakland and East Palo Alto started the 1991/1992 school year *without social studies textbooks*. They decided to develop their own black-centered materials because they could find nothing suitable.

Private black schools have gone the farthest (see sidebar). Some reject America, and teach their pupils that they are the African diaspora. Many teach patent nonsense, claiming that the ancient Egyptians and even King Solomon were black. Nevertheless, even if some of their material is

A is for Ashanti... B is for Black...

Private schools based on an Afro-centric curriculum are springing up all across the country. The students and teachers are all black, and much of the teaching is based on unproven, even preposterous claims of African achievement (see *AR*, May 1991). More significantly, the teaching is explicitly racist, even supremacist.

As *Newsweek* reports without so much as a raised eyebrow (9/23/91), every morning the students of Shule Mandela Academy in East Palo Alto (CA) pledge to "think black, act black, speak black, buy black, pray black, love black, and live black." At Visions for Children in a Cleveland suburb, the Fourth of July is not a holiday but Emancipation Proclamation day is. Halloween has been replaced by Africa Day. Children learn in groups that are named for African tribes. In Afro-centric schools, children often recite a Pledge to African People, rather than the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ujamaa School is the oldest private, Afro-centric school in Washington (DC). Every Friday, it holds a Family Night, which is open to parents and to anyone else who is black. Baba Zulu, founder of the school, reminds his listeners, "We are not African-American; we are not Afro-American; we are African people born in America." At one meeting, a young man introduced the evening's speaker with a 10-minute chant about revolution and black salvation. The audience joined in the



chorus: "People get ready, there's a war a-coming The last white dog must die."

It is not possible to know how common are such overtly separatist and anti-white sentiments. Nevertheless in 1979 and 1980, the National Survey of Black Americans asked blacks whether they felt closer to black people in Africa or to white people in America. Fifty-six percent said they felt closer to Africans, 20 percent said neither or both, and only 24 percent said they felt closer to white Americans. This means that more than twice as many blacks say they feel closer to people whom they have never met, and *with whom they have nothing in common but race*, than they do to their fellow American citizens. A survey today would probably show an even higher identification with Africa.

If at first it seems shocking that some blacks would celebrate Africa Day and not the Fourth of July, a moment's reflection makes it less shocking. What was Independence Day to slaves who remained slaves? Why pledge allegiance to the flag of

a nation that captured one's ancestors? It is not clear what the practical and political implications of Afro-centric thinking may be, but many blacks are preparing themselves psychologically for a complete break with white America. They dismiss any pretense of loyalty to the United States. Their allegiance is openly and unapologetically to their race. Can we tell them with complete confidence that this is wrong?

The only unexpected aspect of black nationalism is that the harder whites try to pretend race does not matter, the more blacks assert its primacy. The more whites try to open their society to blacks, the more firmly blacks close theirs to whites. The more whites try to teach a multicultural history that includes everyone, the more blacks insist on a history for Africans.

One of the clearest manifestations of this is the current push, by blacks, to establish all-black (and sometimes all-male) public schools with a consciously racial curriculum. Milwaukee, Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Newark, and New York City have all taken steps to establish such schools, though civil rights groups have balked at explicit racial segregation, and some plans have been held up by the courts. The most common solution is likely to be the one that the city of Atlanta hit upon: simply switch the curriculum to Afro-centrism and watch the non-black remnant in the schools dwindle to nothing. ●

ridiculous, Afro-centric teachers have recognized something that white teachers have forgotten: History has a point of view; it cannot be all things to all people.

Building a Nation

Blacks, then, are learning the kind of history that whites once learned—a history that builds identity and certitude. White children are learning that every interpretation is valid, that nothing is certain, that their nation's past is all paradoxes and unsolved problems. Patriotism will not grow in the heart of a child who cannot look back with pride upon his nation's past.

We have come a long way from schooling that made Europeans into Americans. We now make Americans into nothing at all.

Multicultural history is like affirmative action. Just as whites are to step aside to give hiring preferences to minorities, whites are to set aside their own point of view and study those of others. Non-whites, on the other hand, are free to promote their own interests and exclusionist histories.

Like affirmative action, multicultural history is possible only because the majority has abandoned its position at the center. If whites insisted on their own history as strongly as non-whites insist on theirs, the inevitability

of separate histories would have been recognized long ago. Nor will whites be willing to forego their own history for ever. They will eventually realize

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that only they are studying a past with no answers and no certainties. They will eventually see that there *cannot* be one history that satisfies all. And they will begin to wonder whether there can be one nation that satisfies all. ●

History for Everyone and No One

by Marian Evans

Five years ago, the California Board of Education adopted guidelines for a new history curriculum that would "accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society." Several book companies proposed texts to meet that requirement, and last year, Houghton Mifflin won approval for its series for grades one through eight.

The title of the fifth grade text tells the whole story. It is a line from a poem by the black writer, Langston Hughes: *America Will Be*. It is hard to imagine any other country publishing a history book that puts the nation in the future tense. Most nations want their children to look back on their people's history with pride. This book seems to suggest that the real, multicultural America is yet to come.

Of course, as the texts go to great pains to explain, America was always multicultural. A typical section is entitled, "A Nation of Many Peoples," and this does not mean Englishmen, Swedes, and Germans. One gets the impression that Europeans were a furtive side-show in a vast history that began with Indians and ends with Chinese, blacks, Hispanics, West Indians, and Native Americans.

Among the "moments in time" that the books illustrate with full-page portraits of people typical of a period, is a lasso-whirling, bronco-busting, Mexican lady-cowboy, or *vaquera*. Such an apparition would probably



have astonished the longhorns as much as this "moment in time" astonishes anyone over the age of twenty. In the 50 pages that one text devotes to the horrors of Negro slavery, there is a full-page portrait, not of a working slave but of an *escaping* slave.

This was not enough for the racial activists, for what they want is their own, exclusionist history. Houghton Mifflin officials, who expected praise and gratitude for their painstakingly "inclusive" history, were astonished by the accusations hurled at them. They

did not realize that, for the most part, it is only whites who want a multi-perspective history.

The overall director of the series, Professor Gary Nash, is a well-known leftist and a leading proponent of multiculturalism. He, too, was shocked by critics who called him a racist and a white supremacist. "If I'm the bad guy," he wanted to know, "who are your allies?"

Several majority-black school districts rejected the texts outright (see cover story). In San Francisco, where 82 percent of the public school children are non-white, the school board reluctantly accepted the books, but added a supplemental reading list with titles like *Black Heroes of the Wild West*, *Chinese Americans, Past and Present*, and *Gays in America* (homosexuals were angry that these grade school texts said nothing about their contributions to America).

The battle over text books was especially bruising in California because, by 1995, a majority of its public school students will be non-white. Nevertheless, the white decline is rapidly moving East. The struggle for America's past is only warming up.

Some battles have already been lost. A 1983 study by Nathan Glazer and Reed Ueda of six leading history