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CRT Destroys Education

IS MATH RACIST?

by Carol Swain, a former professor of political science and professor of law at Vanderbilt University and author of *Be the People: A Call to Reclaim America's Faith and Promise*. Reprinted from tennesseestar.com

Critical Race Theory is the civil rights issue of our time. It eats away at our public, private, and Christian academies with its cancerous messages about white privilege, minority disadvantage, and perennial racism. Hardly a day goes by that I do not hear from parents and teachers about yet another school system where the cancerous roots of Critical Race Theory have taken hold or begun to appear under the guise of “culturally competent teaching and learning” or “educational equity.” No matter what they call it, they cannot hide its poisonous effects.

Consider the Oakland Unified School District with its Office of Equity, established expressly to end systemic racism. According to their website, “equity means providing each student with the academic, social, and emotional supports [students] need to prepare for college, career, and community success in the future.” However, as implemented by its advocates, their well-intentioned programs can destroy students’ opportunities if they include the abandonment of traditional teaching methods for learning fundamentals.

At OUSD, this looks like the

“Pathway to Equitable Math” curriculum funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates’ equitable math class operates on the apparent presumption that minority students are less capable than white students of learning math principles. Their solution is to lower standards and expectations for math learning. They theorize that minorities who feel good about themselves and angry at systemic racism will somehow acquire the skills to succeed in life.

It has nothing to do with teaching math. It is an empty vessel labeled “math” that aims to teach Critical Race Theory.

It indoctrinates students into believing that there are not any right or wrong answers in math. It teaches students that math is a form of white supremacy, and for that reason, teachers should not ask children to show their homework. If students do not have to show their homework, there is no expectation that it will be completed or evaluated. Even if teachers do assess the work, they cannot insist on correct answers. What has this curriculum done for OUSD? They are a district with 90% minority students, with a 27% proficiency rate in math and read-

ing. OUSD ranks in the bottom 50% of California schools for graduations.

By all measures, OUSD is an abysmal failure.

The sad fact is CRT can lower their proficiency and graduation levels even more.

Its impact is apparent. But what makes Critical Race Theory a cancer?

Critical Race Theory is a flowery form of racism that teaches children what to think, not how to think. It emphasizes conclusions without dialogue; children either cannot or are discouraged from critically thinking about complex issues. By comparison, academic subjects — like math — walk students through a process aimed at reaching correct answers.

Additionally, Critical Race Theory disincentivizes students. Minority students have it drummed into their heads that they are at a permanent disadvantage because of the color of their skin. When told that they are inherently and perpetually racist and oppressive, white students sometimes become crippled by guilt



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and shame about their race and ancestors. Why should we say to any child that their race and ancestors are inherently evil and undeserving of classroom success?

Students can become depressed, bitter, conflicted, and demoralized under these conditions. The classroom can become a hostile learning environment. Students grapple with racial narratives that should be debated rath-

er than force-fed as the gospel truth.

Critical Race Theory is a non-sensical approach, and it's racist. The only positive thing it does is benefit politicians wanting to stir the racial pot. Moreover, it provides teachers with a new excuse to justify their failure to attain decent proficiency rates in math and reading. It is much easier to blame social issues like white supremacy than to assume personal

responsibility for subpar proficiency rates and disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Critical Race Theory is a dangerous philosophy. Like cancer, Critical Race Theory will grow until it consumes schools. Ultimately, it will destroy opportunities for students of all races in those schools. That is unless communities take the initiative now to remove the cancer. 

A NEW RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

by William Barr, former Attorney General of the United States. He delivered this speech on May 20, 2021, as he accepted Alliance Defending Freedom's annual Edwin Meese III Award for Originalism and Religious Liberty.

The greatest threat to religious liberty in America today is the increasingly militant and extreme secular-progressive climate of our state-run education system.

Over the past 12 tumultuous months, there has been a great deal of discussion about the radical ideology being promoted in our schools, and what it means for national unity, public safety, and the health of our politics.

Much less has been said about an issue of perhaps even greater long-term consequence: what this indoctrination in public schools means for the rights of people of faith.

We reached the point at which the heavy-handed enforcement of secular-progressive orthodoxy through government-run schools is totally incompatible with Christianity and other religious traditions in our country. We must confront the reality that it may no longer be fair, practical, or even Constitutional to provide publicly-funded education solely through the vehicle of state-operated schools.

Throughout the history of Western Civilization, it has been generally

understood that a true education — as opposed to merely the conveyance of technical skills or vocational know-how — is inherently bound up with religion and morality. It necessarily deals with the big questions. Is there truth? How do we arrive at the truth? What is the end of life? How should we live? Civic Virtue, Moral Virtue, Religion, and Knowledge were always regarded as inextricably interlinked.

The notion that we can hermetically seal off religion from education is a relatively novel idea — and it is an idea that the experience of the past half century has refuted in rather spectacular fashion. For a time, a culturally homogeneous American society was able to finesse it — but today, the situation as it stands is clearly untenable.

The American approach to public schooling and its relationship to religion has proceeded in three distinct historical phases.

The early advocates for public education, particularly Horace Mann and the common school movement, saw public schools as performing at least two missions: common identity

through civic and cultural bonds and to build moral character in America's youth.

In the first phase, the advocates of public schools agreed that religion was integral to such an education. You could not separate moral education from religion.

So the early advocates of public schools explicitly incorporated religion into the schools. It was an anodyne form of Christianity that was composed of all the key articles of faith that Protestant denominations generally agreed upon. This "pan-Protestantism" was that schools should teach religion that was common to all, or at least all Christians.

It was the presence of this form of pan-Protestantism in the schools that led to the creation of separate school systems for the Catholics and religious Jews.

Up until the 1970s, the instruction received in the public school system openly embraced Judeo-Christian beliefs and values, and most certainly was not hostile to, nor fundamentally in conflict with, traditional religious beliefs. In short, religion and the public school system were compatible because the school system embraced a generally acceptable form of Christianity.

In the second phase of public schooling, the Left embarked on a relentless campaign of seculariza-

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William Barr

tion intent on driving every vestige of traditional religion from the public square. Public schools quickly became the central battleground.

The idea was that education should be completely secularized by stripping away all vestiges of religion or religious belief systems. It was secularization by subtraction.

Yet even as the schools were forcibly secularized, the notion of moral instruction did not simply go away. The rich Judeo-Christian tradition was replaced with trite talk of liberal values: be a good person, but without any underpinning for these values. What passed for morality had no metaphysical foundation. It is hard to teach that someone *ought* to behave in a certain way unless you can explain why.

“Values” in public schools became really nothing more than mere sentimentality, still drawing on the vapor trails of Christianity. They are a vain attempt to retain familiar sounding ethics and mores, but without God. When you take away religion, you have left a moral vacuum.

All of that seems quaint and even benign compared to what we are now witnessing in phase three of public education.

Now we see the affirmative indoctrination of children with a secular belief system and worldview that is a substitute for religion and is antithetical to the beliefs and values of traditional God-centered religion.

Purging schools of any trace of religion created a vacuum by eliminating the explanatory belief system undergirding moral values. Now, we are seeing the attempt to push into the schools an alternative explanatory belief system that is inconsistent with, and subversive of, the religious worldview.

While an astonishing number of public schools fail to produce students proficient in basic reading and

math, they spare no effort or expense in their drive to instill a radical secular belief system that would have been unimaginable to Americans even 20 years ago.

Earlier this year, an Iowa public school district taught transgenderism and homosexuality to students at all grade levels — including pre-school. As part of a “Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action,” the school district distributed a children’s coloring book page that teaches: “Everyone gets to choose if they are a girl or a boy or both or neither or someone else, and no one else gets to choose for them.”

Until very recently, virtually no one in America had even heard of these radical notions, yet they are now so thoroughly institutionalized in many public schools that in some states children are permitted to select a new gender in defiance of science or the consent of their parents.

These are not isolated ideas but a full-blown subversion of the religious worldview. While the secularist may view each lesson, such as transsexualism, as dealing with a discrete subject, those lessons embody broader ideas that are fundamentally incompatible with the religious viewpoint. Telling school children that they get to choose their gender — not just male or female, but anything else — and that no one else has anything to say about it, does not just contradict particular religious teachings on gender and the authority of parents; but it is a broadside attack on natural law, which is integral to the moral doctrines of most religious denominations.

As of this school year, about one-fifth of Americans live in a state that mandates an LGBTQ curriculum in public schools. In the absence of a statewide mandate, curricula are also frequently adopted in particu-

lar school districts. These new laws often lack any opt-out for religious families. In Orange County, California, the Board of Education issued an opinion that “parents who disagree with the instructional materials related to gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation may not excuse their children from this instruction.”

The progressive sexuality agenda only scratches the surface of what is now being taught in government-run schools.

Public schools across the country have rushed to embrace “Critical Race Theory.” CRT is nothing more than the materialist philosophy of Marxism substituting racial antagonism for class antagonism. It posits all the same things as traditional Marxism: that there are meta-historical forces at work; that social pathologies are due to societal conventions and power structures which have to be destroyed; that conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors provides the dynamic and progressive movement of history; and that individual morality is determined by where one fits in with the impersonal movement of these historical forces. Just like traditional Marxism, this philosophy is fundamentally incompatible with Christianity. It posits a view of man and his relation to society and to other individuals that is antithetical to the Christian view.

The Supreme Court has recognized nothing is more fundamental than the right of parents to pass religious faith to their children. It is monstrous for the state to interfere in that by indoctrinating children into alternative belief systems that are antithetical to those religious beliefs.

If a school teaches that a child



gets to pick a gender, they are infringing on the free exercise of religion unless they allow parents to opt out.

When we are no longer talking about simply stripping religion out of school curriculum, but now talking about indoctrination into an affirmative belief and value system — a new credo — resting on materialist metaphysics and taking the place of religion, then the question is whether this involves establishment of a religion. I am not the first to observe that the tenets of progressive orthodoxy have become a form of religion with all the trappings and hallmarks of a religion. It has its notion of original sin, salvation, penance, its clergy, its dogmas, its sensitivity to any whiff of heresy, even its burning at the stake.

Secular-progressivism has already been recognized as a religion in the courts when it suits the secularist cause. When non-believers sought conscientious-objector status during World War II, the Second Circuit construed the phrase “religious training or belief” to include beliefs that are “the equivalent of what has always been thought a religious impulse.” The Supreme Court followed suit in a similar case during the Vietnam War. Instead of “belief in a Supreme Being,” as the relevant statute required, the Supreme Court held that an objector to military service need only demonstrate a “belief that is sincere and meaningful [and] occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by [traditional religion].” In another case implicating the Free Exercise Clause, the Court referred in passing to secular humanism, Buddhism, and Taoism as examples of “non-theistic” religions. Many federal, state, and local agencies also recognize “humanism” as a religion.

But while secularism has been afforded the *protection* of the Religion Clauses, it has generally not

been subject to the *prohibitions* of the Establishment Clause. This creates an often-overlooked constitutional double-standard, particularly when it comes to education.

The Courts have foreseen the potential for secularism itself to become established as a state religion. In one of the first cases abolishing school prayer, the Supreme Court acknowledged that “the State MAY NOT establish a ‘religion of secularism’ in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus ‘preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.’” We have to consider that is exactly what our public schools, are doing.

If secular-progressivism indeed occupies the same space as a religion — as by all appearances it does — then how is it Constitutional to have a state-run school system fervently devoted to teaching little else? And how on earth can these same institutions be allowed to use the state to punish traditional religious doctrines as hate speech?

One of the main justifications for the common school movement was that they would be institutions to effectuate the melting pot — to promote our common identity, to promote a solidarity based on being an American. But now the schools have taken on the opposite mission of separating us, of teaching unbridgeable differences, of dividing us into many different identities destined to be antagonistic. It is all the more alarming and bizarre that the new state-sanctioned ideology challenges the very legitimacy of the nation itself — to the point of explicitly attacking its founding documents, principles, and symbols. If the state-operated schools are now waging war on the nation’s moral, historical, philosophical, and religious foundations, then they would seem to have forfeited their le-

gitimacy as the proper vehicle to carry out the mission with which Americans have charged them.

The militantly-secularist government-run school monopoly is a disaster. It has deformed and impoverished the very nature of the educational enterprise, first by purging it of any moral or spiritual dimension, then by trying to substitute for traditional religion an irreconcilable rival value system. Parents wishing to opt-out from the government’s secular-progressive madrassas are subject to a harsh penalty in the form of private school tuition that most cannot afford. As a result, our public schools have inevitably become cockpits for a vicious, winner-take-all culture war over the moral formation of our children.

It does not have to be this way. Public funding of education does NOT require that instruction must be delivered by means of government-run schools. The alternative is to have public funds travel with each student, allowing the student and the parents to choose the school — private, public, sectarian, or non-sectarian — that best fits their needs and the dictates of their conscience. [*Eagle Forum believes that eternal vigilance is required to keep private and home schools FREE from government regulations.*]

To save religious liberty, we must save our families and their children from the extreme secular-progressivism that pervades our current system of public schools. 

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