

America, As We Know It, Is At Risk
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AHEF Addresses the Need for Civic Education in America

AHEF, along with many professional historians and educators, recognize the need for civic education among students and citizens. Recent studies have indicated the need for civic education at all grade levels. America is in such significant social, cultural, philosophical, governmental, and educational decline, experts affirm, that if such educational neglect continues, the country will not survive as it was founded.

Unlike countries governed by dictatorships or state-controlled systems, America was founded on ideas, on principles and values such as God-given individual rights and Freedom, Unity, Progress, and Responsibility. These principles appear in our Declaration of Independence, U. S. Constitution, and other founding documents. They are also found in the philosophical ideas and values of Western Civilization and Judeo-Christian thought. The understanding of these principles and values is declining or disappearing in K-12 schools and in colleges and universities. Yet a nation built on philosophical ideas and principles cannot survive if those principles are not taught, learned, and reinforced in schools and institutions.

With small beginnings in 1995, AHEF has been working to address this problem--to strengthen civic education among students and citizens--in order that America can survive and prosper philosophically, socially, culturally, and economically. AHEF has become a leader in providing free K-12 lesson plans to educators and parents on America's founding principles to kick-start the (re)education of citizens and young people in the noble principles and values of our constitutional republic. AHEF is working hard to reach more students and citizens with its tested, quality educational resources and with new programs, resources, and partnerships currently underway.

Recent Studies Indicate the Need for Civic Education at All Grade Levels

- In 2006 and 2007, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) found in its respective studies *The Coming Crisis of Citizenship* and *Failing Our Students, Failing America* that most graduating college seniors failed a basic civic literacy test on America's history and institutions.
- In 2008, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) found in its study *Our Fading Heritage* that 71% of Americans of all backgrounds, incomes, and education failed a basic civic literacy test.
- In 2008, the Bradley Foundation conducted a study called *E Pluribus Unum* to assess America's national identity. It found that though most Americans believe we share a unique national identity, more than half believe this identity is weakening. This "identity crisis" in America is

very problematic because “a nation founded on an idea is inherently fragile.” The study points out that “the next generation of Americans will know less than their parents know about our history and founding ideals. And many Americans are more aware of what divides us than of what unites us. We are in danger of becoming not ‘From Many, One’--E Pluribus Unum--but its opposite, ‘From One, Many.’” It also says that “historical ignorance, civic neglect and social fragmentation might achieve what a foreign invader could not.” The study concludes that Americans are in danger of losing their national identity due to ignorance and apathy and that America’s founding principles and history must be taught and learned. Americans must (re)learn the nation’s values of liberty, civic education, rule of law, respect for property, patriotism, and strong civilian military, to name a few. The study further asserts that civic education “is central to the perpetual renewal of American self-understanding” and calls for schools to renew their civic commitment.

- In 2011, the National Association of Scholars (NAS) conducted a study called *The Vanishing West: 1964-2010: The Disappearance of Western Civilization From the American Undergraduate Curriculum*. The study traces “the decline and near extinction of the Western Civilization history survey course in America’s top colleges and universities from 1964 to 2010.”
- In 2011, the National Assessment Governing Board released the 2010 Nation’s Report Card in Civics. Its findings revealed the need for civic education among K-12 students.
- In 2012, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) conducted a study called *Fault Lines in Our Democracy* that revealed a lack of civic knowledge among K-12 students.
- In 2013, the National Association of Scholars (NAS) conducted a study called *Recasting History: Are Race, Class, and Gender Dominating American History?*. The study found that many university history courses “gave strong emphasis to race, class, or gender social history, an emphasis so strong that it diminished the attention given to other subjects in American history (such as military, diplomatic, religious, intellectual history). The result is that these institutions frequently offered students a less-than-comprehensive picture of U. S. history.”
- In 2014, the National Assessment Governing Board and National Center for Education Statistics conducted its National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or Nation’s Report Card, in U. S. History, Geography, and Civics. The report showed that only 18% of 8th-grade students are proficient in U. S. History, 27% are proficient in Geography, and 23% are proficient in Civics. Its findings indicate a continuing, great need for civic and history education among K-12 students. See www.nationsreportcard.gov.

Experts Agree on the Need for Civic Education
Experts Explain and Analyze the Crisis in America
(Published Excerpts)

“We are raising a generation of people who are historically illiterate’ and ignorant of the basic philosophical foundations of our constitutional free society. ‘We can’t function in a society if we don’t know who we are and where we came from.’”

“So many of the blessings and advantages we have, so many of the reasons why our civilization, our culture, has flourished aren’t understood; they’re not appreciated. And if you don’t have any appreciation of what people went through to get, to achieve, to build what you are benefiting from, then these things don’t mean very much to you. You just think, well, that’s the way it is. That’s our birthright. That just happened. But it didn’t just happen.... And at what price? What grief? What disappointment? What suffering went on? I mean this. I think that to be ignorant or indifferent to history isn’t just to be uneducated or stupid. It’s to be rude, ungrateful. And ingratitude is an ugly failing in human beings.”

David McCullough

Historian and President, Society of American Historians

cited respectively in George Archibald, “Ignorance of U. S. History Is Called Threat to Security.” Washington Times, 14-20 April 2003, and George Archibald, “‘Amnesia’ to History Is Called Threat to Liberty,” Washington Times, 21 May 2003.

“We’re not conveying to young people forcefully enough the American Heritage, the American way of life.... [The “Education for Democracy” report of the nonpartisan Albert Shanker Institute] puts strong emphasis on the inadequacy of our civic knowledge and our civic engagement.”

Lee Hamilton

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

“What is already happening to America is that we are being neutralized in terms of our effectiveness as a nation. Perhaps better said, we are neutralizing ourselves. We are at the beginning of a slow-motion breakdown, not unlike, actually, the odd slow-motion disintegration of the Soviet Union. America’s is a disintegration that is political, social, and economic, but above all moral and philosophical. It finds its most ready example in citizenship, since that is the only bond we have that involves every American in a commitment to every other one; and, as it occurs on every possible level of the national debate, it takes many public forms.”

“Americans have allowed themselves to be afraid and often even ashamed to expound their national principles. At the time when the American experience and experiment constitutes the living civics class for mankind, Americans are embarrassed to take pride in their own work. America will not make the simplest moral or even security decision if it involves employing authority against someone, as in the crucial decision of how many new immigrants they want to let in . At every turn they have divorced morality and ethics from civic life—‘made naked the public square,’ as the eloquent Father Neuhaus sadly describes the melancholy emptiness where the American soul once was. All but gone is the very civility that is so essential to citizenship, what social thinker Charles Murray has described as ‘deference or allegiance to the social order benefitting a citizen.

Above all, there is the shocking dumbing-down of just about everybody. A recent Washington Post poll shows that today’s high school graduates appear to know less about government and politics than their educational equal of five decades ago.”

Georgie Anne Geyer
Fulbright Scholar, Syndicated Journalist, Author
Americans No More: The Death of Citizenship

“...[A] nation that does not know why it exists, or what it stands for, cannot be expected to long endure.”

“Effective, cohesive, and positive self-government in a free democratic republic such as America requires an informed and educated citizenry for the survival of our participatory democracy.”

“We are in danger of forgetting this lesson. For years, even decades, polls, tests, and studies have shown that Americans do not know their history, and cannot remember even the most significant events of the 20th century. We are in danger of having our view of the future obscured by our ignorance of the past. We cannot see clearly ahead if we are blind to history. Unfortunately, most indicators point to a worsening case of America amnesia.

I’ll give just a few examples. One study of students at 55 elite universities found that over a third were unable to identify the Constitution as establishing the division of powers in our government, only 29% could identify the term ‘Reconstruction,’ and 40% could not place the Civil War in the correct half-century.

The recent National Assessment of Educational Progress test found that over half of high school seniors couldn’t say who we fought in World War II. And lest you think I’m picking on students--and hey, I’m a former professor--a nation-wide survey recently commissioned by Columbia Law School found that almost two-thirds of all Americans think Karl Marx’s dogma, ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,’ was or may have been written by the founding fathers and was included in the Constitution.

Such collective amnesia is dangerous. Citizens kept ignorant of their history are robbed of the riches of their heritage, and handicapped in their ability to understand and appreciate other cultures.

If Americans cannot recall whom we fought, and whom we fought alongside, during World War II, it should not be assumed that they will longer remember what happened here on Sept. 11.

And a nation that does not know why it exists, or what it stands for, cannot be expected to long endure. We must recover from the amnesia that shrouds our history in darkness, our principles in confusion, and our future in uncertainty.”

Dr. Bruce Cole
American Revolution Center
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

“Our schools are failing our children. We are not teaching the basic information necessary to maintain our democratic society.”

“My son is a high school teacher. In one of his classes he mentioned to his students that Latin is a dead language, no longer spoken. One girl raised her hand to challenge my son’s claim. “But what do they speak in Latin America?” she demanded. More and more young people don’t know things we assume they know. What they do know is ephemeral and narrowly confined to their own generation. Many young people lack the information that writers of American books and newspapers have traditionally taken for granted among their readers. We have long accepted literacy as a paramount aim of schooling. But only recently have some begun to realize that literacy is far more than a skill, and that it requires large amounts of specific information. To grasp the words on a page, we have to know a lot of information that isn’t on the page. Several reading specialists have observed that ‘world knowledge’ is essential to the development of reading and writing skills. I call this knowledge cultural literacy, the network of information that all competent readers possess. It is background information that enables them to read a book or an article with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the point, grasping the implications. Clearly our schools have failed to fulfill their fundamental responsibility to provide students with this world knowledge. Cultural literacy lies above the everyday levels of knowledge that everyone possesses and below the expert level known only to specialists. It is that middle ground of cultural knowledge writers assume to be possessed by the ‘common reader.’ It includes information that we have traditionally expected our children to receive in school, but which they no longer do. It is the American public school’s cafeteria-style curriculum, combined with our unwillingness to place demands on students, that has resulted in a steady diminishment of commonly shared information between young people themselves. Those who graduate from the same school have often studied different materials even when their courses have carried the same titles. It would be hard to invent a better recipe for cultural fragmentation.”

Dr. E. D. Hirsch, Jr.
Founder, Core Knowledge Foundation
Author and Distinguished Professor of English, University of Virginia

“To a very large extent, American universities have fallen down on the job of transmitting values to students. Other institutions are also falling short, but the universities’ failure is especially serious because historically they have had the task of imparting the essentials of the Western tradition to the leaders of tomorrow. Now young people in universities are generally offered a smorgasbord curriculum that fails to convey any sense of their own heritage.

Adding the study of new groups and new traditions to the curriculum and new diversity to the student body have been very healthy phenomena. But there has been a tendency to create courses of study that contain no values whatsoever.”

“All of this occurred because major research universities became dedicated to specialization somewhat in imitation of the industrial process on the assembly line, where everyone has a specialized function. While you can produce a whole car through specialization, you cannot produce a whole person that way. And without whole people who have strong civic involvement and deep personal convictions and commitments, democracy cannot function.”

“The failure of the universities to transmit traditional values has left the field wide open to ideologies and methodologies--those modern substitutes for religion. Certain points of view accepted in academic guilds have become the values transmitted by higher education. Schools impart values under the guise of imparting none. That is a form of dishonesty corrosive of a healthy democracy, which requires a pluralism of values contesting in an open market rather than the pretense of no values at all.”

“Universities often unintentionally convey to young people the sense that self-indulgence is not only permissible but even desirable.”

“Granted that the old restrictions and rules may have been difficult to enforce--and some may have been unduly repressive--but you cannot bring together thousands of adolescents and have neither role models nor the proclamation of standards. With no one publicly defining a norm, the modern university drifts into a kind of conformist nonconformism. As a consequence, universities end up producing, on the whole, very lonely people held together more by animal ritual than by a sense of richer human community.”

“Because of all of these developments, we are seeing a growing split between those who are morally concerned but not intellectually trained and those who are highly articulate but morally insensitive. That is very serious for democracy: It may not survive a full generation of that kind of polarization.”

“If life is just a matter of style, one style is just as good as another; another is probably better, and one after another is no doubt best of all. But no one can live that way, and no society will long endure or

even cohere without some basic moral standards. Sooner or later, they will be imposed from without if they are not found within.

That's why it's important to get basic moral standards and commitment back into the highest levels of our intellectual effort. After all, it was the combination of spiritual, moral, and civic concerns with exacting intellectual activity that really built this country and made democracy work on a continental scale."

Dr. James H. Billington, Author, Librarian of Congress,
Director, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars,
former Professor of History, Princeton University
("Universities Have Fallen Down on the Job' of Teaching Values." U. S. News & World Report, Oct 1, 1984)

"If you believe in individual freedom--social, economic, political, mental, and spiritual--you are likely to defend the freedom of each and every individual to maintain his cultural heritage, that is, his language, customs, art, history, and religion. You will favor the right of parents to impart their religious values to their children and send them to day schools studying the Gospel or Torah. Multi-ethnicity is an American ideal which does not in the least demean your American citizenship or diminish your love of America, the beautiful.

Present day multiculturalism is a different matter. It does not seek the preservation and promotion of many cultures; it is a vicious attack on the Judeo-Christian culture of the West. It elevates race and gender above the basic moral standards that guide Western society. It is a multi-morality, not multi-ethnicity. In fact, it is a counter-culture which attempts to destroy the moral foundation of American society.

The basic axiom of Western culture always has been the belief in one God and His moral law. The Ten Commandments serve as complete and reliable guides on all questions of life in society. The second table sets the ethical standards. It affirms the general principles of justice or righteousness. It is no command 'to do good,' but instead an order 'to restrain evil.' In order to avoid the bad, it says: abstain from coercion; do not commit adultery; do not lie; do not steal; do not covet. Aside from these admonishments, you are free to pursue your own interests."

"Multiculturalism rejects all thought of Judeo-Christian moral law, of right and wrong. Its champions loathe it. The better educated, the more secular they are, the more likely they are to spurn it. They accept neither one God nor one moral standard; they prefer to be guided by other considerations such as class, race, or gender.

The American brand of multiculturalism springs from European roots which have given rise to much evil. More than one hundred years ago Marxism launched a powerful assault on Judeo-Christian

monotheism and monomorality. It elevated man to the position of God and made the interests of the working class, as seen by the Marxists, the motive power of the moral order.

Countless millions of human beings perished in the labor camps of this moral order. In his novels Alexander Solzhenitsyn described the human tragedy in the vast camp system of the Soviet Union.”

“In the footsteps of Communism, Nazism developed its own brand of multiculturalism. It taught that the races of man are guided by their own principles of morality. Races determine right and wrong. The Aryan race, according to the doctrines of Nazism, was the superior race destined to rule mankind; its morality was to prevail over all others.”

““The American versions of multiculturalism are not guilty of any crimes against humanity, but their reasoning is flawed and potentially harmful as that of the class or Aryan race culturalists. They, too, reject any transcendent source of morality. To them, only that which furthers the cause of the race or gender is moral.

While white racism is widely discredited and rejected by American society, black racism receives much applause. It can be found in most classes on African-American studies at many universities and with a small criminal underclass which preys on black and white victims. Yet, both the discredited white racists and the celebrated black racists are intellectually and morally alike.”

“All levels of government are adding their weight to the sway of multiculturalism. In the name of separation of state and church, the legislators pass laws, the bureaucrats write regulations, and the judges issue orders that seek to ban Judeo-Christian values from public life. Most public school teachers now believe that the Ten Commandments--and even references to Christian holidays or tradition--are illegal.”

Hans F. Sennholz

Economist, Author, former President, Foundation for Economic Education

(“Multiculturalism is Anticulturalism.” Foundation for Economic Education, Oct 1993.)

“It is difficult, and even dangerous, to talk candidly about ‘multiculturalism’ these days. Such candor is bound to provoke accusations of ‘insensitivity’ at least, ‘racism’ at worst.”

“Though the educational establishment would rather die than admit it, multiculturalism is a desperate--and surely self-defeating--strategy for coping with the educational deficiencies, and associated social pathologies, of young blacks. Did these black students and their problems not exist, we would hear little of multiculturalism. There is no evidence that a substantial number of Hispanic parents would like their children to know more about Simon Bolivar and less about George Washington, or that Oriental parents feel that their children are being educationally deprived because their textbooks teach them more about ancient Greece than about ancient China.”

“But most adult Hispanics and Orientals do not have any such concern. They are fully preoccupied with the process of ‘Americanization.’ The ‘roots’ these groups seek are right here in the U. S., not among the Aztecs or in the Ming dynasty.”

“Multiculturalism comes in varying kinds and varying degrees of intensity. A child may come home from elementary school knowing more about Harriet Tubman than about Abraham Lincoln. This can be disconcerting to white parents and baffling to Hispanics or Orientals, but presumably they can shrug it off as a transient phenomenon. The question is: Do such trivial pursuits of worthy but relatively obscure racial ancestors really help black students? There is no evidence that it does. In theory, it is supposed to elevate their sense of ‘self-esteem,’ as individuals and as blacks. But genuine self-esteem comes from real-life experiences, not from the flattering attention of textbooks.

In fact, as is well known by now, the problems of young blacks do not arise in our schools, nor are they remediable there. They are the product of their homes and environments--a terrible social problem, not an educational problem. But this does not prevent our overly ambitious educational establishment from engaging in a pretense of offering ‘solutions.’ In addition to promoting self-esteem among young blacks--our white students already have a wildly inflated notion of their academic capabilities, as researchers have demonstrated--it seeks to promote appropriate ‘role models’ in the school. ‘Role models’ and ‘self-esteem’ are now crucial terms in the psychobabble of the educational world.”

“It is in its most intense and extreme form, however, that multiculturalism is on its way to being a major educational, social, and eventually political problem. This version is propagated on our college campuses by a coalition of nationalist-racist blacks, radical feminists, ‘gays’ and lesbians, and a handful of aspiring demagogues who claim to represent various ethnic minorities. In this coalition, it is the blacks who provide the hard core of energy, because it is they who can intimidate the faculty and the administration, fearful of being branded ‘racist.’ This coalition’s multiculturalism is an ideology whose educational program is subordinated to a political program that is, above all, anti-American and anti-Western.

It is no exaggeration to say that these campus radicals (professors as well as students), having given up on the ‘class struggle’--the American workers all being conscientious objectors--have now moved to an agenda of ethnic-racial conflict. The agenda, in its educational dimension, has as its explicit purpose to induce in the minds and sensibilities of minority students a ‘Third World consciousness’--that is the very phrase they use. In practice, this means an effort to persuade minority students to be contemptuous of and hostile to America and Western civilization as a whole, interpreted as an age-old system of oppression, colonialism, and exploitation. What these radicals blandly call multiculturalism is as much a ‘war against the West’ as Nazism and Stalinism ever were.”

“It is now becoming ever more common within the American educational system for increasing numbers of young blacks to learn that what we call ‘Western civilization’ was invented by black Egyptians and feloniously appropriated by the Greeks, or that black Africa was a peaceful, technologically advanced continent before the white Europeans devastated it. Such instruction can only inflame an already

common belief among blacks that 'white America' and its government are deliberately fostering drug addiction and diabolically tolerating the AIDS virus in the black community. Multiculturalism, as its most ardent proponents well understood, is a technique for 'consciousness raising' by deliberately stroking this kind of paranoia.

One does not wish to be apocalyptic--though thoughtful and honest teachers may be forgiven for thinking their world is coming to an end. Most of those who tolerate or even advocate multiculturalism in our schools and colleges have educational, not ideological, intentions. But the force is with the extremists, who ride roughshod over the opposition by intimidating it with accusations of 'racism.' So the opposition timidly makes concession after concession, while seeking shelter in anonymity."

"There is no doubt that today, multiculturalism is beclouding and disorienting the minds of tens of thousands of our students--mainly black students. It is not an educational reform. It is an educational--and an American--tragedy."

Irving Kristol

Distinguished Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

Historian and Recipient, Presidential Medal of Freedom

President, National Affairs, Inc.

Editor, The Public Interest

("The Tragedy of Multiculturalism." Wall Street Journal, Jul 31, 1991)

"For the second year in a row, America's elite universities and colleges have failed to rise above a 'D plus' on tests of basic knowledge about civics and American history, maintains a study commissioned by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI)."

"ISI's final report entitled, 'The Coming Crisis in Citizenship: Higher Education's Failure to Teach America's History and Institutions,' presented four pivotal findings:

1. The average college senior knows very little about America's history, government, international relations, and market economy. Their average score on the civic literacy test was 53.2 percent. 'No class of seniors scored higher than 69 percent, or D plus.'
2. Prestige doesn't pay off. 'An Ivy League education contributes nothing to a student's civic learning. ...There is no relationship between the cost of attending college and the mastery of America's history, politics, and economy.'
3. Students don't learn what colleges don't teach. 'Schools where students took or were required to take more courses related to America's history and institutions,' says the ISI, 'outperformed those schools where fewer courses were completed. The absence of required courses in American history, political science, philosophy, and economics suggests a negative impact on students' civic literacy.'

4. Greater civic learning goes hand-in-hand with more active citizenship. ‘Students who demonstrated greater learning of America’s history and its institutions were more engaged in citizenship activities such as voting, volunteer community service, and political campaigns.’”

“In 1777, John Adams wrote to his son about the importance of education. He said it was necessary to teach the next generation about America’s founding principles in order to preserve the freedom and independence so many of his fellow countrymen sacrificed to achieve. Only when we know and embrace those principles can we pass on to a new generation that which we inherited from the past. The ISI study reveals severe cracks in that foundation; cracks that need immediate attention and repair.”

Cal Thomas, Syndicated Columnist
 (“Colleges are cheating their own students.” 2007)

“I spend a lot of time with teen-agers, and frequently conduct focus groups to learn about their attitudes. ...I have not yet found a single student who could tell me the years when the Civil War, World War I, and World War II were fought. Not one could name all the Presidents since World War II. Only one could even place the correct decade in which Dwight Eisenhower was President. Of the teen-agers with whom I work, only two could approximately identify Thomas Jefferson. Only a few could articulate in any way at all why life in a free country is different from life in a non-free country. In a state of such astonishing ignorance, young Americans may well not be prepared for even the most basic national responsibility--understanding what the society is about and why it must be preserved.”

Benjamin J. Stein
Writer, Lawyer, Actor
in Political Opinion, cited in Readers’ Digest, 1987

“I suggested to the freshmen of Yale College that they would be wise to make the study of Western civilization the center of their pursuit of a liberal education. I pointed out the devastating effects of ethnic conflict and disunity around the world and the special problems and opportunities confronting the U. S., a country that was never a nation in the sense of resting on common ancestry but one that depends on a set of beliefs and institutions deriving from Western traditions. I argued that the unity of our country and the defense of its freedom required that its citizens understand the ideas, history, and traditions that created them.”

“As man is the best of animals when perfected, so he is the worst when separated from law and justice. For injustice is most dangerous when it is armed, and man, armed by nature with good sense and virtue, may use them for entirely opposite ends. Therefore, when he is without virtue man is the most unscrupulous and savage of the animals.”

Dr. Donald Kagan, Bass Professor of Classics, History, and Western Civilization, Yale College

“A core curriculum like Columbia’s is of special value to those of us who immigrated to these shores or whose families were newcomers or have been marginalized here. Indeed, one good reason to preserve Western civilization programs is to benefit and liberate minorities. Columbia teaches us that a student’s religious, racial, or ethnic identity is no barrier to entering the ranks of the educated. Columbia does not define its academic program on the basis of our backgrounds. Those who yield to pressures to reject a Western civilization curriculum do minorities a singular disservice, by depriving us of the great opening to the world represented by this sort of curriculum. We are demeaned by the intimation that we are now and forever alien to the Western heritage. Indeed we are isolated and marginalized even more by being deprived of engagement with the texts that have influenced humanity for centuries. If relentless cries for relevance and diversity should ever lead to dismantling the program of common studies in Western civilization, then all students—including minority students--will be left ill-prepared for the role we all face as participants in a democratic society. Our system of government under law--itself a triumph of the Western tradition--will inevitably suffer.”

“What is forgotten in the current date (about Western Civilization) is that one of the original purposes of the Columbia core curriculum was to benefit students form immigrant and less-privileged backgrounds. It was for this socially diverse undergraduate body in the wake of the the Great War (WWI) that Columbia’s faculty required a common course of study for all freshmen introducing all of its students to the culture they would all inherit and share. By effectively placing all of its students on equal footing, the new curriculum made it possible for underprepared public school students to compete with graduates of elite private schools. Indeed, one good reason to preserve Western Civilization programs is to benefit and liberate minorities. Those who yield to pressure to reject a Western civilization curriculum do minorities a singular disservice by depriving us of the great opening to the world represented by this sort of curriculum.”

Jose A. Cabranes

Puerto Rico Native, New York Public School Attendee, 1961 Columbia University Graduate,
U. S. Circuit Judge for Second Circuit

“Schools’ central purpose is the development of children’s knowledge and character. A school that attended only to its students’ intellectual development without regard to their character would be seriously defective. Nineteenth-century public schools took very seriously their responsibility for character formation; schools in the late twentieth century scarcely know how to think about the problem. If children do not read the great works of world literature in school, they may never make the effort on their own. If they never study Western European history, they will never know where we got the ideals by which we judge ourselves. If they never study American history, they will never comprehend what is worth preserving in our system of government. If they are ignorant of the historical development of other societies, the events of the world they inhabit will make little sense. Technicization occurs when teaching emphasizes abstract skills over course content, when children are

taught procedure but not a common core knowledge. This tendency has been particularly invidious in the teaching of literature and history and has produced students who have mastered the basic skills but have little knowledge of great literature of the major events, ideas, and individuals that have shaped our history.”

“Technicization and cultural fragmentation will continue to be a serious problem until the school curriculum is reconstructed along lines that are both common and pluralist. What we need are courses and textbooks incorporating the various strands that have forged the American culture. Students should study the development of Western civilization in order to understand where we got the ideals by which we judge ourselves. They must learn about the development of institutions, the laws, and the democratic values that all Americans share. In studying American political, economic, and social history, they should understand that all of our ancestors, whatever their race, ethnic group, or gender are part of the common story of the nation.”

Diane Ravitch

Adjunct Professor of History and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

“The Schools We Deserve”

“My wife and I took our 16-year-old daughter and her girlfriend to see some colleges over spring break-- 10 campuses in five days, all in New England. If this is Tuesday, it must be Amherst, or is it Wesleyan? Each college offers an ‘information session,’ usually followed by a tour. Out of deference to my daughter, I was on my best behavior at the information sessions, suppressing my instinct to ask embarrassing questions. Here’s the question I managed not to ask at Brown University: Isn’t it racist, if not racist, to hold a separate freshman orientation for minority students? (Yale does the same thing. Call it basic training in identity politics.)

At Yale, I did not ask why the university refused to accept a \$20 million donation from the Bass family of Texas for studies in Western civilization. Yale delayed and delayed until the Bases, sorely provoked, tried to force the issue. Yale took this opportunity to announce it could not be pushed around by contributors and turned down the money. But you can bet that if the \$20 million had been earmarked for courses in ‘queer theory,’ or a new department of gender studies, Yale would have snatched the check from the Bass lawyers before the ink was dry.”

“The American campus is very different from what it was 15 or 20 years ago--heavily politicized, doctrinaire, obsessed with race and gender, contemptuous of all things white and Western. Do the fresh-faced students and their parents have any inkling of what they are getting into? Or are they chiefly interested in colleges as brand-name credentialing machines that happen to teach a few courses on the side?”

“The college tour is obviously awkward for parents who realize that the modern American university is rooted in a distasteful new value system quite antagonistic to their own. ‘We are like a warrior caste

that sends its children away to be raised by pacifists monks,' says Norman Podhoretz, the critic and editor.

Why are the warriors paying the monks up to \$36,000 a year to do this? Because they don't know what's going on, or because they don't know what else to do."

John Leo

Author, Syndicated Columnist, former Professor

("Empty college syndrome." U. S. News & World Report, Apr 19, 1999)

"America is losing its national memory. This would be serious enough in any country, but it is deadly for a unique historical entity such as the United States, whose very existence and coherence depend upon the perpetuation of an idea.

As we exhaust ourselves patting our backs over our unprecedented prosperity, we can see the signs and symptoms of national forgetfulness. They are no longer subtle."

"In this self-congratulatory amnesiac haze that we seem to be living in, it is easy for Americans to slough all this off. But almost without our knowing it, I think we have turned a corner. Those rosy assurances that 'everything will be all right,' as our dear mothers would assure us as children, just don't wash anymore."

"America never was made up of bloodlines, like most countries. It was a nation based upon the common ideas of personal liberty and responsibility, representative government, equal justice before the law, and the idea mankind can evolve constantly to higher states of prosperity and happiness.

In short, America is based upon ideas. And the knowledge of those ideas is exactly what we are losing."

"And if national memory loss implies a loss of direction, what will be the consequences for our future as a people and as a civilization? Indeed, can any culture have a viable future if it has lost touch with its past?"

"More and more, too, America is becoming a 'process nation,' a country obsessed with forms while the substance fades away. That should surprise no one. That is what happens when a nation forgets its history--and it is worst of all when the citizens do this to themselves.

The reasons for the death of history in America are not hard to find. Part of it is due to public culture, part to a wantonness that often takes over peoples at particularly prosperous times. But part of it is also the intellectual fracturing within the history profession as a direct result of the Cold War and of the infiltration of our culture by Marxist and leftist ideologues. Since so many cannot agree on what American history means, they prefer not to teach it at all."

Georgie Anne Geyer

Author, Historian

("Time to refresh our national memory." The Washington Times, May 29-Jun 4, 2000)

"The history of the world has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples. Modern communication and transport accelerate mass migrations from one continent to another. Ethnic and racial diversity is more than ever a salient fact of the age. But what happens when people of different origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, inhabit the same locality and live under the same political sovereignty? Ethnic and racial conflict--far more than ideological conflict--is the explosive problem of our times. On every side today, ethnicity is breaking up nations. The Soviet Union, India, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Iraq, Cyprus, Nigeria, Angola, Lebanon, Guyana, Trinidad, you name it--are all in crisis. Is there any large multi-ethnic state that can be made to work? The answer to that question has been, until recently, the United States. 'No other nation,' Margaret Thatcher has said, 'has so successfully combined people of different races and nations within a single culture.' How have Americans succeeded in pulling off this almost unprecedented truth? We have always been a multi-ethnic country. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, who came from France in the 18th century, marveled at the astonishing diversity of the settlers. 'What then is the American, this new man?' And he gave a famous answer: 'Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men'--E Pluribus Unum (From Many One). In the 20th century, new immigration laws altered the composition of the American people, and a cult of ethnicity erupted both among non-Anglo whites and among non-white minorities. Pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has unhealthy consequences. It gives rise, for example, to the conception of the U. S. as a nation composed not of individuals making their own choices, but of inviolable ethnic and racial groups. It rejects the historic American goals of assimilation and integration. And in an excess of zeal, people seek to transform our system of education from a means of creating 'one people' into a means of promoting, celebrating, and perpetuating separate ethnic origins and identities. The impact of separatist pressure on our public schools is more troubling. If separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation, and tribalization of American life."

"The growing diversity of the American population makes the quest for unifying ideals and a common culture all the more urgent. In a world savagely rent by ethnic and racial antagonisms, the U. S. must continue as an example of how a highly differentiated society holds itself together."

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

Historian, Author

"The Cult of Ethnicity, Good and Bad"

"Since 1965, Americans have spent hundreds of billions of dollars, millions of hours, and an immense amount of political capital trying to improve our underperforming public school system. Charles M. Payne sums up the payoff as 'so much reform, so little change.' Why are the results so limited? There

are multiple reasons, of course. But the biggest one is that America has yet to muster the courage, and the political will, to confront the major barrier to authentic public education system reform: the National Education Association (NEA) and other self-aggrandizing teachers 'unions.' Until we as a nation face up to their systematic efforts to thwart meaningful change, all the billions of dollars, millions of man hours, and immense political capital spent on public education reform will be--to borrow from Shakespeare--'but a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' The problem is, big teachers' unions like the NEA don't want the current system to change. In fact, they are deeply threatened by the idea. Why? Because the status quo is working extraordinarily well for them. They experience no consequences for school failure, and they have no incentive to improve student performance. Their major goal is to collect union dues. They don't collect more union dues if student achievement improves. My concern is not with the existence of teachers' unions, or unions in general. My concern is with their leaders' behavior in blocking meaningful and urgently needed change. The union establishment is also very careful to use rhetoric designed to convince an unquestioning public that they act on behalf of children. But the reality is that unions exist to advocate on behalf of the unions' interests, not the children. By providing information about teachers' unions, my hope is that we, the public, will decide to pay more attention to their activity in our schools, and rise up and challenge them when their actions threaten to keep our children from getting the education they deserve."

Dr. Roderick R. Paige
U. S. Secretary of Education
Superintendent, Houston Independent School District

"It's time to admit that public education operates like a planned economy, a bureaucratic system in which everybody's role is spelled out in advance and there are few incentives for innovation and productivity. It's no surprise that our school system doesn't improve: It more resembles the communist economy than our market economy."

Albert Shanker
former President, American Federation of Teachers