



There Is No Apolitical Classroom

Max Eden

Do you know what's going on in your kid's school? If not, now would be a good time to take a look.

Here's what you're likely to find: According to the education establishment, the purpose of public education is no longer just to teach "the three Rs"—reading, writing and arithmetic; it is to awaken students to the fact that they live in a country that has been, remains, and will probably always be racist.

Here's how the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) recently described its mission: "...At a time of obscene inequities...merely trying to compensate is not enough... AASA's work... must go further and become actively anti-racist."

Being anti-racist sounds simple and laudable: treat everyone the same—a version of the Golden Rule. What could be wrong with that? Nothing. Except that's not what the educational elite means by "anti-racism."

Anti-racism, in its current formulation, does not mean equal treatment of others; it is an all-encompassing ideology that demands that white people accept that their behavior is either implicitly or explicitly racist—and has been for at least 400 years. The Catch-22 here is that to say you're not racist only proves how racist you really are; that is, you are so racist you don't even know it. And if this accusation upsets you, that's proof of your white fragility.

Education Week's "Classroom Q&A" blog tells teachers that, "As Ibram X. Kendi [the author of *How to Be an Anti-Racist*] would say, there is no 'not racist.' There is only racist and anti-racist. Your silence favors the status quo and the violently oppressive harm it does to black and brown folk everywhere."

What Kendi is saying is, if you don't voice active agreement with him, you are a racist. And if you treat people equally regardless of race, you're also a racist.

Anti-racists embrace racial discrimination—as long as it's done on their terms. As Kendi has said, "The only remedy to racist discrimination is anti-racist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination."

I understand how wrong this might sound. It turns the Martin Luther King concept of racial equality on its head. But that's exactly the point.

Lorena German, who chairs the Committee on Anti-Racism for the National Council on the

Teaching of English, makes this clear. At the height of the recent urban unrest, German wrote that arsonists should serve as a model for teachers: “Educators: what are you burning? Your White-centered curriculum?... The school’s racist policies? Your racist ass principal? The funding for the police in schools vs counselors? WHAT ARE YOU BURNING???!?!?!?”

German’s call to commit arson may have been metaphorical, but her call to get rid of the traditional school curriculum is not.

A lesson plan created by the New York City Culturally Responsive Education Working Group, “Transforming Our Public Schools: A Guide to Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education,” tells teachers that “the whole Western canon is rife with horrible stories and atrocities of who we are as people of color.”

For their part, the National Committee on Social Studies has promised to “flood our children with counter messages...until there is no racial inequality in economic opportunity, no racial inequality in education, no racial inequality in incarceration rates, and no brutality from police and others.”

If that sounds to you a lot more like political indoctrination than education, you would be right. New York State now encourages teachers to “incorporate current events, even if they are controversial, into instruction” and to “utilize tools... that encourage students to engage with difficult topics (power, privilege, access, inequity) constructively.”

We might all wish that as cultural and political polarization reaches into more and more areas of American life, schools could remain an apolitical oasis where children can learn to read, write, and develop skills of socialization. But if that’s what you want for your children, then just know that anti-racist educators think that you are part of the problem.

According to a writer for Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, “Anti-racist educators recognize that schools are doing exactly what they were built to do in this country: Exclude. Silence. Erase. Promote white supremacy... an anti-racist approach to schooling could very well mean an ending to schools as we know them.”

That is certainly true: The National Council on the Teaching of English insists “there is no apolitical classroom.”

The educational elite has a very clear lesson plan in mind for your children. If you’re okay with it, you can send Johnny and Jennifer off to school with a glad heart. If you’re not okay with it, better talk to the principal.

Or get ready with a Plan B.

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