

IS PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION “MISCHIEF”?

In his Forum piece, Red Jahncke claims progressive education is “mischief.” He supports his opinion by misrepresenting the work of “infamous” Professor Ibram X. Kendi, vilifying the NEA and the AFT, and making wild, unsupported claims that “controversial and divisive...CRT and the associated radical ideological theories” are being taught in Greenwich public schools “under the cover of darkness.” Let me alleviate his concerns.

The study of History, aside from its inherent interest, has always been about criticism, not “repudiation.” We study History because we like it- and also because we want to learn from it, to make the present and future better by avoiding past mistakes. But we can’t learn from History if it is not completely truthful. As a child, I read Landmark books. As an adult, I supplemented my knowledge of what happened by reading scholarly books. This did not teach me to “repudiate” America or Americans- or myself. It opened my eyes to how all sides feel. When I learned, for instance, that the Pilgrims found and ate seed corn, it did not make me despise them. Landmark painted quite a different picture- but if we deny the Indians were robbed, how can there be any meaningful discourse or peaceful coexistence with them?

The “R” part of CRT refers to race. Instead of attacking Dr. Kendi, Jahncke would benefit from what genealogists tell us: that all humans are 99.9% genetically equivalent. No one is “supreme” in a democracy. If we apply the logic of his hysterical claim that “‘critiquing’ equals repudiation, and repudiating capitalism is the same as advocating socialism, and opposing a ban on CRT is the same as promoting CRT” to his complaint that teachers “‘...incorporate anti-racist practices into teaching and learning,’” we wind up with the same old white supremacy we have been dealing with since 1619. We need, at the very least, to tell and accept the truth if we expect to get along. That’s CRT’s mission.

Let’s not shatter the melting pot. Let’s shatter the ceiling.

Gene Burshuliak