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Pseudo-education

Eighth grade civics was a circus. My grades may say otherwise, but I do actually remember quite a bit of that class. Most strikingly, I was taught that communism is an inherently flawed ideology. Ms. Nelson's Quizlet said it was because communism offers no incentive for more intensive work — and for the longest time I believed her.

Later, in Advanced Placement United States History, there was one self-proclaimed “communist” in our class. I'd laugh with my friends every time he brought up the Communist Manifesto in class discussions. I convinced myself I would never read that load of garbage, because Ms. Nelson had already taught me all I needed to know.

It was here at UC Berkeley in History 171C that I was forced to read the Communist Manifesto. I remember thinking to myself, “Darn, this Marx guy makes one hell of a compelling argument for someone so looked down upon.” Soon, I developed my own opinion, instead of single-mindedly accepting what Ms. Nelson had taught me as the full truth.

The point is our public education system sucks. And as much as I *want* to blame my depraved civic knowledge on Ms. Nelson, she was simply teaching me what she had been taught.

Public school curriculum is determined by state and local authorities. This leaves subject material, such as science and history, to the school district and region's discretion, with

some broad guidelines. In essence, each state has the power to pick and choose the information it feeds to its children.

In a slightly scary way, this means that much of the stuff you learned growing up was probably biased information. It's a bit hard to accept that just because you learned something in school doesn't mean it's inherently correct, but acknowledgement of our misteachings is crucial in order to form a coherent and well-informed political opinion.

Our chronic miseducation can be resolved by giving federal structure to our learning. There needs to be federal guidelines for curricula to ensure clarity and multidimensional analysis in historical and scientific knowledge, and to hone critical thinking skills in students.

I definitely could have used some of this clarity, but I don't think I got the educational closure I deserved until, well, fairly recently. Part of the problem was a lack of specificity in history and civics that left me with a textbook full of information, with scattered missing blanks. Sure, I learned about Christopher Columbus — the cool guy who discovered the wondrous Americas, right?

Nope. He was a genocidal incendiary directly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Indigenous people. And I don't think it was a coincidence that we were never taught this in school.

This is just one example of misleading information we're pseudo-educated through as children. Educational inconsistencies vary from school district to school district, and are likely one of the main reasons for [regional variances](#) in political opinion.

A thorough civics curriculum, or lack thereof, is a political pawn played by our government to reinforce partisan influence over certain electoral regions. This curriculum is presented under the guise of “[encouraging political engagement](#),” when in reality many states’ broadly structured civics education solely serves the purpose of strengthening nationalistic attitudes.

In the long run, holistically educating people on our country’s past would go a much longer way in terms of patriotism. We cannot blindly push this “America is the greatest nation” narrative because it paves the way for dangerous rhetoric and distracts from unification. We simply cannot move forward as a nation without first consolidating the “we.”

Collectively navigating around the ever-present threat of partisan influence in education will be difficult. But separating from such intense polarization is a necessity — without providing our citizens clarity in their education, we are denying them their honest independence.

Be wary though — this education issue extends far beyond just public schools.

Take UC Berkeley’s economics major, which doesn’t *require* any courses on economic theory. When you get a degree in economics that neglects to require dialectical materialism as part of its curriculum, you are being indoctrinated, *directly*, by your university.

Economic theory, in conjunction with historical knowledge, presents us with the tools needed to examine certain systems of economics and whether or not they work out to be good or bad in practice. You *should not* be able to earn an economics degree without

studying [dialectical materialism](#), as it is undeniably critical to understanding material wealth — whether you agree with it or not.

Learning economics without any acknowledgement of other forms of economic theory as legitimate (like feudalism, mercantilism and even communism) isn't *economics* per se. You might as well start telling people your major is in capitalism.

In cases where the solution is as simple as an added requirement — such as in the economics major — this problem seems nonthreatening. But since this looming presence of partisan bias extends into mandated primary and secondary school education and influences the thought processes of even the youngest of children, the solution is a bit more complex.

Because we have to simultaneously integrate structure in our curriculum and buffer against partisan influence, access to quality education in public schools will be an uphill battle. But if we begin to acknowledge our blatant curriculum bias through lobbying our representatives (or simply a class revolution), we can begin to collectively enlighten our people.

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