

ridiculous, Afro-centric teachers have recognized something that white teachers have forgotten: History has a point of view; it cannot be all things to all people.

Building a Nation

Blacks, then, are learning the kind of history that whites once learned—a history that builds identity and certitude. White children are learning that every interpretation is valid, that nothing is certain, that their nation's past is all paradoxes and unsolved problems. Patriotism will not grow in the heart of a child who cannot look back with pride upon his nation's past.

We have come a long way from schooling that made Europeans into Americans. We now make Americans into nothing at all.

Multicultural history is like affirmative action. Just as whites are to step aside to give hiring preferences to minorities, whites are to set aside their own point of view and study those of others. Non-whites, on the other hand, are free to promote their own interests and exclusionist histories.

Like affirmative action, multicultural history is possible only because the majority has abandoned its position at the center. If whites insisted on their own history as strongly as non-whites insist on theirs, the inevitability

of separate histories would have been recognized long ago. Nor will whites be willing to forego their own history for ever. They will eventually realize

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that only they are studying a past with no answers and no certainties. They will eventually see that there *cannot* be one history that satisfies all. And they will begin to wonder whether there can be one nation that satisfies all. ●

History for Everyone and No One

by Marian Evans

Five years ago, the California Board of Education adopted guidelines for a new history curriculum that would "accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society." Several book companies proposed texts to meet that requirement, and last year, Houghton Mifflin won approval for its series for grades one through eight.

The title of the fifth grade text tells the whole story. It is a line from a poem by the black writer, Langston Hughes: *America Will Be*. It is hard to imagine any other country publishing a history book that puts the nation in the future tense. Most nations want their children to look back on their people's history with pride. This book seems to suggest that the real, multicultural America is yet to come.

Of course, as the texts go to great pains to explain, America was always multicultural. A typical section is entitled, "A Nation of Many Peoples," and this does not mean Englishmen, Swedes, and Germans. One gets the impression that Europeans were a furtive side-show in a vast history that began with Indians and ends with Chinese, blacks, Hispanics, West Indians, and Native Americans.

Among the "moments in time" that the books illustrate with full-page portraits of people typical of a period, is a lasso-whirling, bronco-busting, Mexican lady-cowboy, or *vaquera*. Such an apparition would probably



have astonished the longhorns as much as this "moment in time" astonishes anyone over the age of twenty. In the 50 pages that one text devotes to the horrors of Negro slavery, there is a full-page portrait, not of a working slave but of an *escaping* slave.

This was not enough for the racial activists, for what they want is their own, exclusionist history. Houghton Mifflin officials, who expected praise and gratitude for their painstakingly "inclusive" history, were astonished by the accusations hurled at them. They

did not realize that, for the most part, it is only whites who want a multi-perspective history.

The overall director of the series, Professor Gary Nash, is a well-known leftist and a leading proponent of multiculturalism. He, too, was shocked by critics who called him a racist and a white supremacist. "If I'm the bad guy," he wanted to know, "who are your allies?"

Several majority-black school districts rejected the texts outright (see cover story). In San Francisco, where 82 percent of the public school children are non-white, the school board reluctantly accepted the books, but added a supplemental reading list with titles like *Black Heroes of the Wild West*, *Chinese*

Americans, Past and Present, and *Gays in America* (homosexuals were angry that these grade school texts said nothing about their contributions to America).

The battle over text books was especially bruising in California because, by 1995, a majority of its public school students will be non-white. Nevertheless, the white decline is rapidly moving East. The struggle for America's past is only warming up.

Some battles have already been lost. A 1983 study by Nathan Glazer and Reed Ueda of six leading history

texts found that blacks and Hispanics got at least four times as much coverage as European immigrant groups, and even trivial non-white successes were paraded as brilliant achievements.

The multiculturalists have already come a long way. As we noted in the December issue, more American 17-year olds can tell you who Harriet Tubman was than know who Winston Churchill or Joseph Stalin were. They

are more likely to know about her than to know that Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation or that George Washington commanded the American revolutionary army. ●

The White Man's New Burden

Frederick R. Lynch, *Invisible Victims: White Males and the Crisis of Affirmative Action*, Praeger Publishers, 1989, 238 pp., \$37.95 (Softcover edition, 1991, \$14.95)

reviewed by Thomas Jackson

Over the last 20 years, "affirmative action," or discrimination in favor of non-whites and women, has been pushed into nearly every corner of American life. It has gone largely unchallenged. *Invisible Victims*, by Frederick Lynch, is an attempt to understand how affirmative action came about and to assess the damage that it has done to white men. In an era of sustained, willful blindness on the subject of race, this sympathetic study of the inevitable casualties of officially sanctioned discrimination is a refreshing corrective.

Invisible Victims is also a good introduction to the history of affirmative action. Mr. Lynch explains how, in the legal half-light of ambiguous court decisions, racial activists instituted policies that were the very reverse of those required by the original civil rights laws. His book is filled with examples of affirmative action gone berserk: the California Highway Patrol advertises jobs in Mexico so as to get "Hispanic" applicants; the Los Angeles school district urges high schools to send mixed-race teams to scholastic contests because it looks bad when all-white teams win.

The Invisible Victim

Nevertheless, the genesis of this book, and its greatest strength, is original research on how white men react to racial and sexual discrimination. It is a pleasant surprise to learn that there are institutions willing to fund such research. With grants from the Earhart Foundation and the Institute for Educational Affairs, Mr. Lynch found and interviewed 34 men who had been denied promotions,



White males take a dive.

fired, or given poor assignments because of affirmative action.

Mr. Lynch located the men through an informal network of friends and colleagues. In a few cases, he could corroborate discrimination claims, but he relied mainly on what his subjects told him. Obviously, his study would have been more persuasive if he

America does not recognize discrimination against whites as injustice.

had had airtight proof of discrimination, but attempts to confirm subjects' stories would have violated the confidentiality that many demanded. Even if confidentiality had not been a problem, it would have been very difficult to get employers to confess to anti-white policies. Mr. Lynch had to endure enough hostility from his own colleagues to his research without the

added battle of trying to hunt down perpetrators of discrimination.

As one would expect from a work of sociology, *Invisible Victims* includes tables of the various ways in which subjects reacted to discrimination (acquiescence, defiance/protest, etc.) and of eventual outcomes (was transferred, quit, changed careers, was eventually promoted, etc.). Mr. Lynch can't resist the jargon of his profession—he tells us a lot about "cognitive dissonance" and "self-esteem,"—but he still gives us a clear picture of what goes on in the mind of an unsuspecting white man who walks into the teeth of an affirmative action program.

One of the greatest problems these men faced was that America does not recognize what happened to them as injustice. Since affirmative action is an unassailable good, and only white males can be oppressors, their plight was a logical impossibility.

After all, it is taboo to point out that favors for non-whites can come only at the expense of whites. Affirmative action is the law of the land, is practiced by America's most prestigious institutions, and is praised by a chorus of media partisans. It *must* be a good thing. Many government agencies and private companies even put on seminars designed to explain that anyone who objects to affirmative action is "racist." As a consequence, many whites have been so thoroughly stripped of common sense and self-respect that they cheerfully submit to discrimination.

But what of those who do not? Nothing is more demoralizing than to be grievously wronged and then to be told that one's injury is an illusion. Furthermore, a white man has no recourse. Unlike non-whites, who