

My generation is being raised to hate America — it's time to stand up for our history

Anthony Jones

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I gathered with the entire student body of Wyoming Catholic College on Sept. 17, 2019, for a mandatory celebration of Constitution Day. We began with the Pledge of Allegiance, witnessed a lively panel discussion between professors on the history and modern relevance of America's founding principles, and **concluded by singing patriotic songs.**

If you are a student at a typical American university, that description probably **sounds foreign** to anything you have experienced. **Anti-Americanism has spread across college campuses like a wildfire, igniting rage and resentment against anything perceived as oppressive** — even the American flag. As a result, most universities would likely shy away from a celebration of our nation's founding in favor of more “inclusive” events. And that's why university officials have been among the first to lash out at President Donald Trump's still vague calls for “patriotic education” in our schools.

Ashamed of America?

In a Gallup poll this June, **only 63% of U.S. adults** say they are either “**extremely proud**” or “**very proud**” to be American, the lowest level of patriotism ever recorded since Gallup first asked the question in 2001. Among members of my generation, the youngest surveyed, patriots are in the minority. Only 4 out of 10 respondents ages 18-34 claim to be extremely or very proud of being American.

Standardized testing: **University of California ordered to drop SAT, ACT scores in admissions.** That's a good start. Unfortunately, many people my age **do not believe that America is worth loving.** This position is certainly understandable. Recent riots, violence and corruption remind us that America is far from perfect. **Patriotism, however, does not claim a country is without flaws.** In fact, many people who identify as patriotic do not always feel proud of their government, their fellow citizens or even themselves.

Campus in Los Angeles in 2015.

As English author G.K. Chesterton explained, patriotism treats one's country like a family member — you love it simply because it is yours, and that love motivates you to mend any imperfections. **Today, that motivating force is rapidly receding.** But there's nothing new here. The medieval philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas once observed, “***Love follows knowledge.***” Love of country is no different; I believe **our lack of patriotism stems from a lack of knowledge.**

Missing, and misleading, history

You would think knowledge isn't in short supply, considering members of Generation Z have grown up with smartphones and, according to Pew Research Center data, are on track to be the most highly educated generation yet. Yet in a typical American university, a basic account of the nation's history is hard to come by. A 2016 report from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni found that more than two-thirds of top U.S. colleges **do not require history majors to take a single course on United States history.** Instead, several colleges require history majors to “complete coursework on areas outside the United States.”

Alternatives: Does the Covid pandemic spell the end of public schools?

This trend is disturbing, to say the least. This standard for history education is a cafeteria-style menagerie of classes that emphasize a global timeline over the events that have shaped America. **Without knowledge of our country's particular history, we lose a sense of our shared identity** and its characteristic values, including perseverance, integrity and freedom.

The problem extends well beyond a simple lack of information. A 2019 Title VI complaint filed against the UCLA **alleges a professor cited “killing people, colonialism and white supremacy” as American values.** On the contrary, they are stark departures from the goals of freedom and equality lauded in our founding documents. Some professors, however, are actively attempting to supplant the historical reality of those documents and the context in which they were written. In August, Adam Kotsko, a history professor at North Central College, tweeted that **“the design and effect of the Constitution, in all its iterations, has been racist.”** He later added, **“Same for capitalism, by the way!” These assertions strike at the very root of the American story and threaten to undermine an appreciation of its true values and goals.**

Education begins early

Now, even before college, children's minds will be indoctrinated with this alternative version of history. The 1619 Project, for example, includes a new grade school curriculum that **“aims to reframe the country’s history”** by placing slavery and its consequences “at the very center of our national narrative” and make 1619, rather than 1776, our nation's founding.

In this paradigm, **our Constitution was carefully crafted to protect the institution of slavery**, which was also (in this retelling) a major motivation for the Revolutionary War.

To be sure, slavery is an important part of our nation’s history and must be honestly addressed and taught, but **this is a misrepresentation of the facts and detracts from that objective**, as many prominent historians have argued.

Coronavirus:

Some school districts are willing to open up public schools — for a price

A 2014 revision of the College Board's Advanced Placement U.S. History framework was no better, as it omitted any mention of key American figures such as Benjamin Franklin and James Madison from history. And the 19 sample examination questions disproportionately **emphasize class struggles and discrimination, reinforcing a negative view of U.S. history** as the framework’s dominant theme. Thankfully, after much well-deserved criticism, the College Board revised the framework in 2015.

Promoters of these curricula may argue that we need to understand the flaws in American history and its leading figures. **This is true, but the American story and its flaws, like any individual person’s, should be presented in light of its inherent goodness. The United States is imperfect, but its imperfections are only a small part of an overall narrative that has championed individual freedom and increased prosperity for all its citizens.** The principles of the founding should be lauded as guiding stars amid the stormy sea of relativism, not extra weight to be thrown overboard.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Some colleges — like mine — offer a holistic perspective of American history and honor our characteristic values. If you are a proud American, consider attending or supporting these colleges and aspire to **continually fulfill the mission of our Constitution’s preamble: to “secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”** The stakes are higher than ever, and we hold the nation’s fate in our hands.

Anthony Jones is a research associate at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. He is a senior pursuing a bachelor’s in Liberal Arts at Wyoming Catholic College.