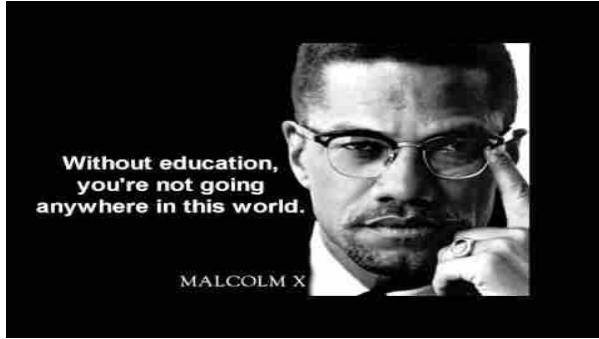


March 16, 2015



THE LEFT GUILD

a club at Los Altos High School

**201 Almond Ave
Los Altos, CA 94022**

Dear Superintendent Torlakson,

In light of the student protests last fall in Jefferson County, Colorado, over the AP US History curriculum, a committee of students and one US History teacher at Los Altos High School in Los Altos, California have extensively reviewed the United States History standards in California for the 11th Grade. We have deemed these standards to be sanitized and misrepresentative of the actual historical record. The standards consistently obfuscate and/or outright ignore the crimes against humanity upon which the United States was formed and continues to function.

Additionally, the standards de-emphasize and ignore the role of militant struggle by the oppressed in achieving true gains in human rights, social justice, and ecological sustainability. The net result of this curricular marginalization and exclusion is to breed passivity within today's youth toward the need to confront and overcome unpleasant truths.

In particular, the current US History standards in California fail to adequately address the following realities. For each topic, we reference notable scholars and historical research that can be utilized to responsibly transform the state standards.

- The history, culture, and larger role of Native American civilizations in what today is called the "United States." ^{5, 18, 19, 28, 31}
- The scale, depth, and details of the European settler land theft from and genocide of Native Americans in North America. ^{16, 18, 19, 21, 27, 28, 31}
- The centrality of slavery to the development of US capitalism and the genocidal realities of US slavery. ^{4, 18, 22, 30, 31}
- The centrality of imperialism and brutal conquest to the expansion of US "territory" during the 19th and early 20th centuries, including the invasions and occupations of Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, Central American countries, Haiti, and many others. ^{5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 18, 20, 24, 28, 31}

March 16, 2015

- The true extent of US war crimes during WWII, particularly the massive firebombing of Japanese cities and the absolutely unjustifiable dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.^{3, 5, 6, 14, 18, 31}
- The actual holocaust inflicted on the “third world” by the US government in the decades following WWII, resulting in the needless deaths of hundreds of millions from US soldiers, CIA operatives, and US-backed security forces, as well as from conditions of poverty maintained and expanded by US-enforced global capitalism.^{5, 7, 10, 17, 18, 31}
- The full record of repression—including frame-ups, torture, and assassinations—by the US government against “third world” and anti-imperialist activists within US borders during the 1960s and 1970s.^{5, 7, 18, 28, 31}
- The recent wars of aggression and major war crimes committed by US government in the Middle East.^{5, 18, 28, 31}
- The racism of the War on Drugs and the realities of mass incarceration and police brutality in the US today.^{1, 2, 23, 28, 31}
- The depth and extent of white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia, and class exploitation throughout US history in shaping the structures and practices of power in this country.^{2, 4, 11, 13, 18, 23, 28, 31}
- The centrality of protest movements, radicalism, and civil disobedience to achieving greater rights in U.S. history, including labor, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, feminist, and youth movements.^{1, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 31}

Beyond the omission or marginalization of the aforementioned topics, we object to the *authoritative* style of depiction employed in numerous textbooks. The textbooks do not provide any citations for their sources and present highly biased statements as one-dimensional “facts”. We seek uncertainty; that is, textbooks should not speak with confidence on issues that are still in dispute today.

We appreciate your progressive educational leadership in our state. We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss these matters in person. Moreover, we request that you advocate for a new commission of scholars—particularly progressive and feminist historians of color—to revise the US history standards for our state so that what is taught in California’s classrooms begins to more effectively match reality and thereby empower students to transform our society for the better. This is, as stated by the American Historical Association, the reason we study history: “[so that] we emerge with relevant skills and an enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, critical thinking, and simple awareness.”

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or if we can be of assistance in resolving this matter.

March 16, 2015

Sincerely,

Vishnu Bachani, Student, Los Altos High School
vishnurahi@googlemail.com

Eli Colbert, Student, Los Altos High School
el.dougco@gmail.com

Elizabeth Kristian, Student, Los Altos High School
e.a.kristian@gmail.com

Keith Osterheld, Student, Los Altos High School
keitho2000@gmail.com

Seth Donnelly, Teacher, Los Altos High School
Seth.Donnelly@mvla.net

SOURCES

1. Acuña, Rudolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. London: Pearson Education, 8th Edition. 2014.
2. Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012. Print.
3. Alperovitz, Gar. *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996. Print.
4. Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. Print.
5. Blum, William. *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2004. Print.
6. Memorandum from Vannevar Bush and James B. Conant, Office of Scientific Research and Development, to Secretary of War. September 30, 1944. Top Secret. Source: Record Group 77, Records of the Army Corps of Engineers (hereinafter RG 77), Manhattan Engineering District (MED), Harrison-Bundy Files (H-B Files), folder 69.
7. Chomsky, Noam and Herman, Edward S. *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism (The Political Economy of Human Rights - Volume I)*. Boston: South End Press, 1999. Print.
8. Croix, Sumner J. La, and Grandy, Christopher. "The Political Instability of Reciprocal Trade and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom." *The Journal of Economic History* Vol. 57, No. 1 (Mar., 1997). Print.
9. Davis, Angela Yvonne. *Women, Race, and Class*. London: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.
10. Everest, Larry. *Oil, Power, & Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda*. Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2003. Print.
11. Equal Justice Initiative. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. Montgomery: Equal Justice Initiative, 2015. Print.

12. Foner, Philip S. *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism*. Vol. 1. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. Print.
13. Galeano, Eduardo. *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997. Print.
14. Ho, Fred. *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*. Oakland: AK Press, 2001. Print.
15. Hoover, Lamar. *Lessons from the Damned: Class Struggle in the Black Community*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973. Print.
16. House of Representatives Section Chapter 148, *An Act to Provide for an Exchange of Lands with the Indians Residing in any of the States and Territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi*, Statue 1, 21 Congress, 411 (1830) (enacted)
17. Katsiaficas, George. *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968*. Boston: South End Press, 1987. Print.
18. Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: Touchstone Books, 2007. Print.
19. Magliocca, Gerard N. "The Cherokee Removal and the Fourteenth Amendment." *Duke Law Journal*, Dec. 2003. Print.
20. Martinez, Elizabeth. *500 Years of Chicano History: In Pictures*. Albuquerque: SouthWest Organizing Project, 1990. Print.
21. Meyers, Jason. "No Idle Past: Uses of History in the 1830 Indian Removal Debates." *The Historian* 63.1 (2000): p. 53. Print.
22. Moraga, Cherríe and Anzaldúa, Gloria. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1984. Print.
23. Nunn, Kenneth B. "Race, Crime and the Pool of Surplus Criminality: or Why the 'War on Drugs' Was a 'War on Blacks'" *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 381-445, 386-412, 422-427 (Fall 2002) (519 Footnotes Omitted). Print.
24. *The Diary of James K. Polk During His Presidency, 1845 to 1849*. "May 9, 1846: A Continent Divided: The U.S.-Mexico War." Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1910. Print.
25. Springer, Kimberly. *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. Print.
26. Stannard, David E. *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1993. Print.
27. For documentation on this genocide, see *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* by David Stannard (Oxford University Press, 1993); *Settlers: the Mythology of the White Proletariat* by J. Sakai (Morningstar Press, 1983); and *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon Press, 2014).
28. Stone, Oliver and Kuznick, Peter. *The Untold History of the United States*. New York: Gallery Books, 2013. Print.
29. *!Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords*. Dir. Iris Morales. New York: Third World Newsreel, 1996. Film.
30. Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944.
31. Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005.