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## MY AMERICA: IMMIGRATION, HISTORICAL EDUCATION AND VISION OF NATIONHOOD

### Abstract

Ever since the United States of America was founded as a more perfect union, it has struggled to find a balance between a narrow, ascriptive, Eurocentric vision of nationhood favoring an explication of rational and/or divinely-sanctioned nation-building, and one that acknowledges the struggles and contributions of its ever-renewing immigrant citizenry in shaping its vision of self. This contrariety has played itself out in classrooms and textbooks where historical narratives of nation compete with societal reality; and in state houses where citizen-educators rather than academics seem to know history best. Whereas one can attribute this disconnect to curriculae catching up with changing demographics, in actuality, US History education's de-facto role as the Great Americanizer has made it a factional battleground of what it means to be American; and a victim to the perversion of the very principles it seeks to instill. As a result, primary and secondary-school US History ranks amongst to lowest amongst subjects in terms of student proficiency and teacher competency. This article discusses the origins of the fraught relationship between vision of nationhood and citizenry education in the United States; and the necessitated steps to give renewed relevance and competence to historical education in developing the critical, informed citizenry fundamental to a well-functioning democracy.

**Key words:** immigration; historical education; nationhood; the United States of America

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Streszczenie

Od chwili, gdy Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki stały się doskonalszą unią, kraj ten z mozołem szuka równowagi pomiędzy wąsko askryptywną eurocentryczną wizją bycia narodem, która sprzyja budowaniu narodu sankcjonowanemu racjonalnie i/lub przez boskość, a wizją, która uznaje obywatelski wysiłek i wkład imigrantów w kształtowanie jej własnego obrazu. Ta sprzeczność rozgrywa się w salach lekcyjnych i w podręcznikach, w których historyczne narracje o narodzie konkurują z realiami społecznymi, jak też w tonie instytucji państwowych, w których najlepiej znają historię, jak się wydaje, raczej obywatele – edukatorzy niż środowiska akademickie. Jakkolwiek tę rozłączność można przypisywać temu, że programy nauczania doganiają przemiany demograficzne, to jednak w rzeczywistości rola historii USA jako wielkiego amerykanizatora stała się w istocie polem zmagania o to, co to znaczy być Amerykaninem. Stała się też ofiarą przewrotności samych zasad, które chce wdrożyć. W rezultacie jako przedmiot nauczania historia Stanów Zjednoczonych zalicza się w szkołach podstawowych i średnich do tych przedmiotów szkolnych, które w kategoriach umiejętności uczniów i kompetencji nauczycieli mają najniższą rangę. Artykuł analizuje przyczyny tego brzemiennego w skutki związku między wizją bycia narodem a edukacją obywatelską w USA i docieka, jakie należy podjąć kroki po to, by poprzez rozwój krytycznej, świadomej postawy obywatelskiej o fundamentalnym znaczeniu dla kraju, przywrócić nauczaniu historii właściwą rangę i kompetencje. [Trans. by Jacek Serwański]

Słowa kluczowe: imigracja; edukacja historyczna; naród; Stany Zjednoczone

Upon taking the Oath of Allegiance during their naturalization ceremony, newly sworn United States citizens are handed a citizen's almanac. It explains amongst others, what it means to be American: *E Pluribus Unum* - out of many, one—as the revolutionaries exalted upon declaring their independence from Britain, and subsequently enshrined into the Seal of the United States. A nation of immigrants, that in the words of its past Presidents have not only welcomed “the opulent & respectable Stranger, but the oppressed & persecuted of all Nations & Religions” (Washington, 2017) in the knowledge that “Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart (...) and never was, a matter of race and ancestry.” (Roosevelt, 1943) “Let us at all times remember” Abraham Lincoln proclaimed upon his election, “that all American citizens are brothers to a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.” (Lincoln, 1953, pp. 142–143)

Risen from resistance to subjugation and religious persecution, the United States' Founding Fathers<sup>1</sup> envisioned “a more perfect union”<sup>2</sup> in which as Thomas Jefferson phrased it “strangers unused to think freely and to speak and to write what they think” can “unite in common efforts for the common good.” (Jefferson, 2006, p. 148) But how does a nation of mainly immigrants—and an ever-renewing citizenry<sup>3</sup>—forge a common identity? And how does one instill this sense of nationhood in future generations? Historically, the United States prides itself to be a melting pot of cultures; an amalgamation of ethnicities whose desire for (religious) freedom and democracy shaped its com-

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<sup>1</sup> The Founding Fathers or the United States—those who authored the Declaration of Independence, and were instrumental in shaping the US Constitution and preserving the Union—are generally considered to be John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington.

<sup>2</sup> Preamble to the United States Constitution (1787) (U.S. Const. Preamble).

<sup>3</sup> 13.2% of the 2015 US population was foreign born. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

mon narrative. "THAT all national distinctions shall be forever abolished among us, and that we will carefully cherish a spirit of equality and friendly intercourse with each other, without which there is no true happiness" proclaimed the Association of Adopted Sons of Pennsylvania in 1786. (Association of the Adopted Sons of Pennsylvania, n.d.) Whereas this lofty ideal may have rung true in America's early formative years, today, American society—and by extension the American classroom—is more culturally diverse, politically divided, and social-economically stratified than ever before.

Naturally every young nation faces the challenge of defining a common vision of self. America's turbulent legacy of inequity, civil war, and ethnic strife serve as are exemplars that nationhood is forged through experience rather than explication. Whereas early theorists initially sanctified the ethno-racial divides the founding fathers so carefully had sought to avoid, the threatened demise of this more perfect union over slavery eventually brought acceptance to the uneasy notion that there is not one America - or one American. (Ross, 2005) The United States since has wrestled to find a balance between the abstract and ascriptive (Eurocentric) Americanism of its founding principles and its creed to be a nation for all. Gaining renewed luster during the Civil Rights era of the late sixties, its principles of universal immigration have now been firmly enshrined.<sup>4</sup>

Contrary to many a European nation, the United States does not formally integrate its new-gained citizenry; instead relying on "the self-regulating forces of economy and society." (Joppke, 1999, p. 147) This is in part because out of a naïve notion that those who come to its shores clamor to be part of its perceived more perfect (and thus superior) union, and in part out of the tacit understanding that being American comes with a hyphen of original origin (i.e. African-American, Irish-American); often to the benefit or detriment of the bearer. Whereas national angst may spur patriotism and lay bare divisions in concept of common country—anti-German and Japanese-American sentiments during the World Wars; anti-Muslim-American sentiments after September 11, 2001—overall, Americans think of nationhood more in practical than conceptual terms: a place of opportunity where hard work is rewarded and law regulates the playing field. To be American—contrary to the European notion of nationhood—is to value individual liberty and initiative over collective welfare; and (constitutional) rights over common accommodation. (Wike & Simmons, 2015) Thus the United States has persevered as a union; a nation shaped by a population that is as diverse in its own historical memory as America is in the sum of its people.

Needless to say, historical education plays an essential role in forging the fraternal feeling of common county as Lincoln so famously proclaimed, by explicating the historical foundation of the United States, and demonstrating the evolving notion of nationhood. "Americans, unshackle your minds, and act like independent beings" American lexicographer and textbook pioneer Noah Webster erstwhile summoned the young Republic: "Education, in a great measure, forms the moral character of men, and morals are the basis of government... Information is fatal to despotism."<sup>5</sup> Yet, the American classroom<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) abolished the nation quota system established in 1924, and focused on family reunion and skilled labor instead. The Legal Immigration Act (1990) sought to redress the inherent regional imbalance of skilled-based immigration by increasing annual immigration worldwide. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986) sought to curtail illegal immigration while in the meantime avoid adverse effects on the US economy and society. The Immigration Control and Financial Responsibility Act (1996) placed further guarantees in the application process that immigration applicants do not become (welfare) burdens to society. (Joppke, 1999, pp. 25–44, 57–61)

<sup>5</sup> Noah Webster, "On the Education of Youth in America," *American Magazine*, New York, December 1787. Accessed: National Humanities Center: *America in Class*. Full print version: Webster, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> In the United States, History is taught as a standalone subject in High School (9-12th year) and as part of Social Studies in primary (1-6th year) and middle/junior high school (7-8th year). Social Studies was conceived in 1916

seems frozen in time: textbooks espousing stilted, glorified Euro-centric visions of nation (with African-American bylines) that are far removed from societal reality and often directly compete with student experience. With a traditional emphasis of fact over analysis and doing over thinking, US history education has rapidly lost relevance in developing the critical, informed citizenry that is so fundamental to a well-functioning democracy.

Whereas this deficiency can be easily attributed to textbooks and curricular practices catching up with rapidly altering demographics,<sup>7</sup> the roots of this disconnect are far more structural and ominous in nature. Factional motives and economic forces rather than historical expertise and didactical innovation have come to shape the American history curriculum. Standardized testing, waning contact hours, and wanting didactical preparation, have made teaching history a cynical, incentive-based exercise. In essence, history education has fallen victim to the perversion of the very principles of American democracy and nationhood it seeks to instill.

To understand how America shapes (or misshapes) its memory of past, one needs to return to one of its fundamental founding principles: a nation for the people and by the people; where the majority of decisions are taken on a local rather than national level. As of today, Americans continue to elect their local sheriffs, judges, municipal officers, and school boards; a practice of Revolutionary Era-rooted mistrust of big government and the populist belief that citizens know best—3% of America’s children continue to be homeschooled by their parents. (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016) While most peer nations have nationally mandated and/or specialist-designed concentric-integrative curricula, in the United States, classroom content continues in essence to be a local layman’s affair: 50 state boards of education and over 14,000 local school boards—all citizen-elected—set curricular standards for each subject and approve textbooks for use in their schools.<sup>8</sup>

Where one may argue that such a citizen-driven effort makes for a nimble curriculum that reflects the evolving, geographically varying perceptions of nationhood, in practice, the opposite is often the case. For a democratized educational system to work properly, it has to rely on competent volunteers elected by an informed citizenry—the basis of the American principle of nationhood. Studies have shown that functional schoolboards with clear common student-focused visions can indeed succeed—especially in suburban, high achieving school systems. (Plecki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006; Rice et al., 2001). However divergent interests, micro-management, and/or abundance of ill-informed or politically-motivated opinion can make citizen-educators obstacles rather than conduits in defining what it means to be American—and turn schoolboard meetings into litmus tests of socio-political and/or religious tolerance; or in many cases intolerance.

In 1923 for example, at the height of American Isolationism and populist perception that Britain had drawn the United States into the Great War, New York Mayor John F.

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as the study of subject matter that directly relates to the organization of and development of human society to cultivate good citizenship under secondary education-age children. It seeks to offer a multidisciplinary explanation of (wo)man and its environment drawing primarily from history and politics/government; with contributions from economic, geography and behavioral sciences. (National Education Association of the United States Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, Committee on Social Studies, 1916)

<sup>7</sup> In 2012, Caucasian students made up 51% of the public-school population. By 2024, the majority of students will be non-white. (United States Department of Education, 2016)

<sup>8</sup> The Tenth Amendment to the US Constitution effectively relegates control over education to the states. Whereas there is no national curriculum, the US Department of Education does mandate that each state formulates its own standards, and recommends that the latter follow the guidelines of national disciplinary organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies. National accountability standards tied to federal funding has given the US Department of Education more sway over school governance, but these seldom address curricular issues. For an international comparison see: Stephens, Warren, & Harner, 2015.

Hylan bristled at the less than heroic textbook portrayal of the American opponents to British colonialism in the city's classrooms. "It is amazing" Hylan said, "that any publication for the use of school children should refer to our early patriots as 'hot-headed mobs,' 'smuggler's,' and 'pirates.'" Our children "must not be inoculated with the poisonous virus of foreign propaganda."<sup>9</sup> Efforts to remove eight textbooks from city schools on charges that they were complicit in a British plot to make the United States once more part of the British Empire, pitted offended scholars against indignant board members. "Feelings ran so high that blows were struck"<sup>10</sup> noted the *New York Legislative Record* of that day. However, when prominent black educator William Pickens reminded the board that "Negroes have suffered greatly from [their] 'omissions' [from] American history, even where he has been an agent of outstanding achievement,"<sup>11</sup> his complaint was swiftly dismissed. The African-American narrative would not get its due meed in general American History textbooks until well after the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>12</sup>

While such interpretative spats seem trivial in the larger debate of how history education shapes nationhood and vice versa, political activism and economy of scale can swiftly distort academic notions of self. Independent school boards were conceived in the early nineteen-hundreds to inoculate education from political interference. However, low voter interest in educational matters and/or socio-geographical district delineations have allowed special interest and motivated minorities to disproportionately shape the educational landscape on local and state levels. (Plecki, McCleery, Knapp, & Hochschild, 2005, pp. 324–338) In 2010 for example, the (white) Republican majority on the Texas State Board of Education rebuffed expert recommendations to increase the number of Latino role models in the Social Studies curriculum; even though Hispanic students outnumber their white peers by nearly two to one in the classroom. The board voted instead to "balance" its history curriculum by placing conservative values—in particular capitalism and Christianity—in a more prominent and positive light. One such action was to list the biblical Moses amongst Enlightenment thinkers as informing the Founding Fathers in the creation of the United States. Another was to omit Declaration of Independence author (and later President of the United States) Thomas Jefferson from these notable men as he had interpreted freedom of religion to mean separation of church and state. (Jefferson, 2009) The Board also replaced the terms "capitalism" with "free enterprise" and "imperialism" with "expansionism;" viewing both movements as integral to the nation's divinely-sanctified (manifest) destiny.<sup>13</sup> Whereas one should guard against reductionist narratives that fail to hierarchize the historical framework fundamental to the United States—a union conceived and structured by Europeans and built through and by the labor of many—the Board's racial exceptionalism, moral interspersions, and historical singularity and jingo-

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<sup>9</sup> As quoted in Schlesinger, 2000, p. 50. Hylan's action was promulgated by Charles Miller's *Treason to the American Tradition: the Spirit of Benedict Arnold Reincarnated in United States History Revised in Textbooks. An Exposure of Ten Anglicized School Histories* (Miller, 1922). See also Brundage & Cosgrove, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> "School histories controversies", 1921. Hylan's actions were emblematic of reactions to the New History Movement in which (mostly Anglo-Saxon) professional historians had sought to portray the American Revolution in a more realistic light. See also Moreau, 2003, pp. 175–180.

<sup>11</sup> As cited in Wilson, 1999, pp. 46–47.

<sup>12</sup> Prior to public school desegregation, black educators created their own African-American history narrative. See for an extensive discussion King, 2014, pp. 2–11, 2017, pp. 14–18; Moreau, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Other issues were the inclusion in the curriculum of the conservative resurgence in the 1980, the characterization of the Black Panther Movement as example of violent black civil rights protest, a discussion of the adverse effects of equal rights protections; justifications for the McCarthy anti-communist hearings; and an emphasis on the virtues of the free-enterprise system (capitalism). Texas is the largest of twenty states where the state school board oversees textbook adoptions for primary and secondary education—California requires such oversight for its first through eighth grade curriculum. (McKinley, 2010; Nobao, 2011, pp. 44–45; "Rewriting history in Texas", 2010; State Board of Education, n.d.).

ism undermine the very concept of American statehood; and by extension the integrity of history education. Jefferson in his inaugural address erstwhile warned that the young nation would gain little if it would replace religious intolerance with a political one.<sup>14</sup>

Often ridiculed for its inaccurate and biased edits, the Texas State Board's curricular decisions nevertheless have had an outsized impact on American historical education. Even though few states follow Texas' example of edited history, with nearly 5.3 million students in its primary and secondary schools, textbook publishers are keen to conform their national offerings to Texas' standards; de facto having its State School Board dictate what an estimated 50 to 80% of students in the entire United States should learn. (Bragaw, 2010, pp. 158–160; Collins, 2012; Texas Education Agency, 2017)

Furthermore, with multimillion-dollar adoptions in the balance, publishers tend to avoid an overly critical treatment of America's past; instead opting for cheery Eurocentric celebrations of unified nation building—"we-ness" as one researcher termed it (VanSledright, 2008, p. 114)—heavy on facts and visuals, but light on critical analysis or opposing viewpoints.<sup>15</sup> Textbooks thus tend to gloss over the scars of race and class divisions that in part shaped America in convoluted and/or redeeming narratives; one publisher characterizing slaves as migrant workers from Africa in a textbox on immigration patterns. While historically understandable—until the 1960's textbooks solely expressed the views of the leading class(es) what it was to be American; minorities had to write their own narratives (Moreau, 2003, pp. 22–23)—in aggregate, these edits of America's past distort the dialectic nature of history, and perpetuate the staid, singular notion of nationhood; not to speak of depriving various student constituencies of their historical voice and meaning.

Whereas Texas may be emblematic of the citizen-historian gone awry in developing a representative vision of nationhood for the classroom, there remains little consensus under lawmakers elsewhere in the nation to the method by which history education is to shape a formative narrative beyond its founding. This has as much to do with varying interpretations of what history is (or ought to be), as what makes the United States the United States. Generally, laymen educators tend to regard America's past as a factual record rather than an evolving interpretation of nationhood; the State of Florida going as far as to legally enshrine this static view.<sup>16</sup> With US History taught in hybrid form in the lower grades and as a one-year singular course in high school, this linear approach welcomes little analysis; let alone critical interpretation of self. The most recent national analysis of state US History standards, the conservative-leaning Thomas Fordham Institute failed twenty-five states for having overly broad, one-sided, or insufficiently rigorous requirements; only seven states won praise. (Stern & Stern, 2011)

Needless to say, these fractured visions of American nationhood and mainly singular approaches to America's historical legacy in school textbooks, pose formidable challenges to educators in making history relevant and enjoyable to its diverse student body. Such efforts are often further impeded by state-mandated quantitative testing (often linked to teacher performance; resulting in teaching to the test), prescriptive pacing guides, decreasing contact hours, inadequate training, and competing priorities. Pressed for time and/or creative license, many teachers have thus little choice but to resort to a read-the-

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Jefferson first inaugural address as printed in *National Intelligencer*, March 4, 1801 (Jefferson, 2006, pp. 148–152).

<sup>15</sup> To make US history narrative more engaging, textbooks contain a significant number of sidebars filled with biographies, trends, anecdotes, and factoids (Lavere, 2008, pp. 3–8).

<sup>16</sup> "American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation of a new nation based largely on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence." *Florida House Bill 7087* lines 1159-1163 (State of Florida, 2006).

book and-do-the-work style of approach in the classroom and train their pupils to a-critically memorize the historical textbook narrative. (VanSledright, 2008, p. 118) It is thus no surprise that students scored poorly in US history on the most recent US Department of Education National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reviews; the lowest of all subjects in terms of attained aptitude. On the high school assessment, more than half of students failed to reach basic competency; just over a tenth attained proficiency.<sup>17</sup>

So how does the United States give (renewed) meaning to its vision of nationhood in curriculum and text books; and restore relevance and student performance in the classroom? This is as much a problem of the American vision of self as one of American education. As an immigrant nation, one logically should think of the sum of the *Pluribus* shaping America rather than the aggrandized and singular place its founding narrative often takes in the current US History and Social Studies curricula. Needless to say, given America's highly diverse memories of past, to create such a curriculum is a daunting task. How daunting illustrates the State of California's decades-long effort to establish a mutually agreed inclusive narrative.

Starting with the premises that history should be a coherent story that recognizes the centrality of Western civilizations as the source of American statehood and the contributions of its diverse population in furthering it, authors were invited to develop texts that offered an integral and diverse narrative of self—one publisher went as far as to title its textbook *America Will Be*. However, when presented for public hearing, the proposed texts were not shouted down for lack of diversity, but for not emphasizing each individual strand of diversity well enough: Native-Americans still felt their original settler status reduced to stereotypical tepees and buffalos, while African-Americans saw their long-fought inclusion in textbooks diminish at the cost of Latino and Asian immigrant narratives. Indian and Pakistani-Americans argued over the proper geo-political terminology of their land of ancestry, and so forth. Likewise, demands for a full accounting of the nation's not so proud history turned out to stop shy of each constituency's own actions. (Reinhold, 1991) The hang for a glorious interpretation of nationhood is thus not confined to the often-criticized Eurocentric narrative.

And within this lies the first disconnect between nation and classroom, namely what the United States is versus what it perceives itself and/or wishes to be. Whereas any historian will point to the widely diverse, dynamic, sometimes contrarian, and ever evolving interpretation of American nationhood, citizen-educators have long sought to sanctify a central, purposeful, narrative—whether nativist, populist, or redemptive in nature—that corresponds with their (political and/or moral) vision. This constructed if not prescriptive approach to history has led the State of Arizona to try to outlaw hyphenated history (Mexican-American Studies) as un-American and the State of California to include GLBTQ<sup>18</sup> history as American.<sup>19</sup> “We the People” can indeed take on very differing meanings; not all reflective of the reality in the classroom.

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<sup>17</sup> 55% of 12th graders scored below basic and 12% at the proficient level. For 8th graders, these numbers were 29% below basic and 17% proficient. 4th Graders scored 27% and 20% respectively. Middle and High School figures are from 2010; Middle School figures from 2014. (United States Department of Education, 1994–2014)

<sup>18</sup> Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer history.

<sup>19</sup> Arizona Revised Statutes 15-112 (State of Arizona, 2010) *Prohibited Courses and Classes: Enforcement*. Federal Court invalidated this statute in December 2017 on grounds that it violates the first and fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution; California Senate Bill 48, Chapter 81 (State of California, 2011).



The desire for this formative narrative has placed US history education in a dualistic role. Whereas history should teach students how to critically analyze the past (and present) whatever the outcome, in reality the US History curriculum has functioned as the Great Americanizer; a de-facto integration course for students native and foreign-born. This onus has made every lawmaker an expert historian keen to imbue its vision of America—whether the latter is evidence-based and rests on professional consensus or not—and textbooks to cheerlead convoluted, unifying narratives of self. It has also created resistance to curricular change amongst those who feel that the traditional (Eurocentric) vision of nationhood is under siege, and resentment under others still waiting to feel their contributions duly represented. This deadlock is hard to overcome. A 1992 national blue-ribbon effort between lawmakers, historians, and educators to develop common standards in US and World History infamously ended four years later in reproaches of multi-cultural excess and nativist protectionism.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the United States undertrains and undervalues history teachers in preparing a critical citizenry for the challenges of the twenty-first century. With teacher education fractured between disciplinary departments and schools of education, teachers often lack the symbiotic expertise and/or support necessary to develop innovative inquiries of nationhood that actualize student experience. Only 40 percent of America’s high school history teachers have a history degree while more than a third also serve (and sometimes prefer to serve) at the school’s athletic coaches or trainers; an adverse confluence of licensure requirements and the persistent misnomer that everybody can teach history.<sup>21</sup>

If the United States were to give renewed relevance to the role history education plays in shaping a vision of nationhood within the current curricular and political restraints, it should shift its focus from origin to application: *why* America is the way it is, rather than what it was conceived and/or envisioned to be. The task of history after all is to make students interpreters of time: critical thinkers and problem solvers rather than root learners; with the historical record serving as a source of interpretation rather than one of dictation as is too often the case in America’s schools. College preparatory curricula like the Advanced Placement and the International Baccalaureate program, have recently started to emphasize historical application in their history curricula; as well as to expose students to historiography—that events have multiple interpretations and that historians (and text books) may not always be right. Freed from local factionalism while utilizing college-style textbooks, these rigorous programs however are self-selective and require a clear commitment from student and teacher alike.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to a shift in historical approach, primary and secondary historical education should actualize student experience. Whereas every American ought to have a thorough understanding of the formation of nationhood, the creed of the United States rings hollow if one cannot see oneself reflected in time—past or present. Actualized history—discern-

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<sup>20</sup> National Center for History in the Schools, 1996. For the ensuing controversy, see Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997. Two national standards of note are the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies NCSS* (1994), and the *U.S. History Framework for the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress NAEP* (2014). The NCSS is hindered by its vague, thematic definitions of History—an effort to encapsulate disciplinary standards in a social studies framework. The NAEP is a congressionally mandated effort to measure teaching efficacy and student competence on a national basis, using a wide range of measures and statistics to account for variances.

<sup>21</sup> Whereas social studies licensure generally requires coursework in US and elective history, it does not require a history degree. Social studies licensure is often the preferred path for coaches and training to meet teacher eligibility requirements. (Hansen & Quintero, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> In 2017, 505,302 out of an estimated 16,451,000 High School students took the Advanced Placement US History exam, with roughly half of the participants receiving college equivalency credit. Private school participation is on average triple that of public school participation.



ing roots, meaning, parallels, values, etc. to one's current experience—through active, inquiry-based learning restores the relevance of history to the classroom, and trains students in the skills essential to a well-functioning democracy; especially in light of the current onslaught of digital (dis)information.

Finally, the academic community should (better) support primary and secondary level teachers in developing the rich and diverse source content necessary for these innovative student-driven investigations of conceptions and demonstrations of nationhood. University-school partnerships like the Yale Initiative and the Charlotte Teacher Institute have brought primary, secondary, and tertiary teachers together around broad and multi-applicable themes of history, blending tertiary-level content resources and expertise with primary and secondary-level didactical application and curricular needs. These collaborations effectuate intellectual exchange, and optimize the continuum of teaching and learning.

Nationhood in the United States is no longer as self-evident as Thomas Jefferson once envisioned, or as singular one had once hoped it to be. Rather than out of many one (*E Pluribus Unum*); the United States is one nation of many; a continually shifting heterogeneous paradigm of new citizens and changing ethnographies in a common pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. Whereas it was indeed Western Civilization that laid its governing foundations, the United States has struggled to accurately define itself since, or to define nationhood to its children. This battle over identity and values has played itself out in school books, on school boards, and in state houses; with little regard to the *face* of the nation present in the classroom. Despite the dismal competency scores, the state of US History is unlikely to change anytime soon. A perversion indeed of principles of democracy and nationhood history education is charged to instill, and a clear sign that the United States may certainly be a sum of many, but never *E Pluribus Unum*.

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