

Part of the Republican Culture War is about how American History is being taught. Florida takes the lead, followed by most of the once slave-owning states, in attacking what they perceive as the leftist focus on America's original sin, slavery. They call this "critical race theory," and they do not want it taught even at university level.

They also attack leftist focus on crimes against women, trans-gender, same-sex marriage, and call all of these "woke" issues, in other words, if woke is the same as awareness, they want none of it.

I think they are dead wrong on their attempts to erase genuine parts of American history because they think it will make American children "hate their country" and "feel bad about what their ancestors have done." But there is another way of teaching history: balancing the recognition of bad acts with the amazing good we have also done for the world.

There is definitely a trend among the university elites to focus on the sins of the past (and some of the present), without any attempt to present another view of America's role in making the world better. Rational conservatives raise this issue, and I think they are right. The intolerance at university level is laid bare when students riot against hearing any speakers with a contrary position on American sins. To my horror, this has even happened in law schools, the very place where critical thinking is promoted.

There are several books I would recommend to AP high school students, along with the books that focus on the worst American sins (slavery, failure of reconstruction, abuse of women, attacks on the Chinese, genocide of Native Americans, and current attempts to prevent Black and young voters from casting votes in elections).

One book I have used in teaching is *The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World's Government in the 21st Century*, (2004-5) by Michael Mandelbaum. He was recipient of a Carnegie Scholars Program award to write this book, and is one of our countries most honored historians. His approach differs from today's preferred perspective on identifying our country's deeply flawed history.

One of the favorite parlor games among the intellectual elites in our country and Europe, newly rising rivals such as China, and our acknowledged enemies in the militantly Islamic world, is to condemn the United States as an immature bully. There is considerable hypocrisy in this bad-mouthing, considering how much the world benefits from our protection. We function, according to Michael Mandelbaum as a sort of de facto world government from which everyone benefits. Our sullen US allies and our obvious enemies, in private and in their actions, all recognize and depend upon America's hegemony. Mandelbaum's book charts those services provided by the US for the benefit of the world.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, questions were raised about why we should maintain an expensive Pacific fleet; there were those who thought that it was time to mothball that institution. When Congress recognized how our presence in the Pacific provided a stability and peace that would have otherwise been absent, there was bipartisan support for funding. Imagine the naval arms race that would rage among countries with long historic hostility to each other. But thanks to us, those east-Asian countries, most of them dirt poor, have thrived and become substantial contributors to the world economy and enjoy a growing middle class.

The same can be said of Europe, which has enjoyed more than a half-century of economic growth and socialist largesse under the security of the American umbrella's costs borne by the American public. Would this be so if those countries had been compelled to defend themselves against historically hostile neighbors? Despite the public disdain for the United States, people do (or should) know the role we play in their safety and economies.

Even in the Muslim world, which is viscerally hostile to the United States, the worst and most authoritarian leaders send their families to the United States and their children to our schools. The words are one thing, their actions quite another.

Next week, more books to recommend.

688 words

Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That?"
Contact her at Lfarhat102@gmail.com or www.globalthink.net.