

Most of us are familiar with the sarcastic definition of a committee: “a group of the unwilling, chosen by the unfit, to do the unnecessary.” The definition is partially incorrect. There are countless committees all over the country that have been chosen by the unfit to willingly do the unnecessary—rob our country of its collective culture. I recall a dark time in our history when many of my grandfather’s people were subjugated to cultural peroxide in what were known as Indian boarding schools. In 15 states and territories, 26 boarding schools required kids to leave their homes and indigenous cultures, cut their hair, wear Anglo clothing, give up their spiritual beliefs, and even their names, at the risk of corporal punishment. Among Native Americans, it can be still a controversial subject today. Certainly no one would argue the merit of that kind of social experiment in our current, mainstream culture. Or would they?

All across the country these days, a movement has been afoot to strip the American culture from our young people. Sometimes the effort is subtle; other times it’s more obvious. Here is an example that recently caught my attention. In early September 2018, *Texas Monthly* published an article that outlined how a Texas state Board of Education subcommittee had voted to make alterations in the seventh-grade history curriculum. Its “rationale” was to shorten the classroom discussion by 90 minutes, an outcome of standardized testing requirements (we wouldn’t want kids to learn anything beyond what the standardized test requires).

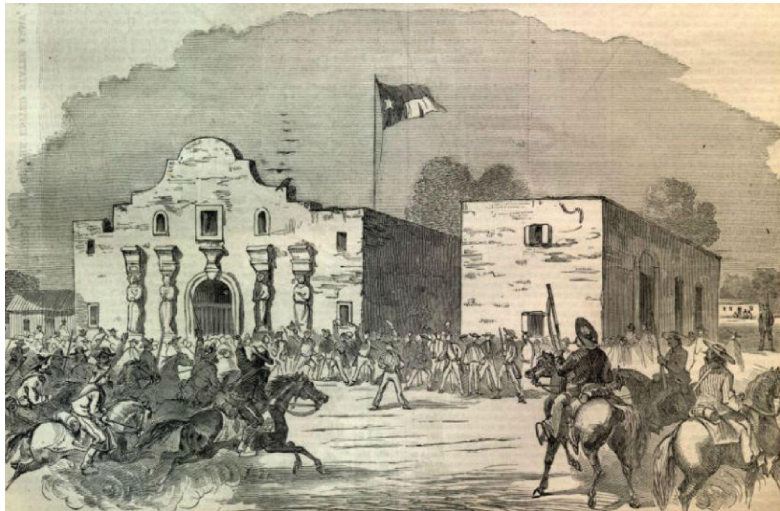
One history passage they voted to alter goes like this: explain the issues surrounding significant events of the Texas Revolution, including the Battle of Gonzales, William B. Travis’ letter, “To the People of Texas and All Americans in the World,” the siege of the Alamo and all the heroic defenders who gave their lives there, the Constitutional Convention of 1836, Fannin’s surrender at Goliad, and the Battle of San Jacinto.

After the alteration it reads: explain the issues surrounding significant events of the Texas Revolution, including the Battle of Gonzales, the siege of the Alamo, the Consti-

TALES FROM THE WASTELAND

Cultural Peroxide

To the people of Texas...
By Barry Perryman, Ph.D.



The Mission San Antonio de Valero was a Roman Catholic mission and fortress. It was abandoned in 1793. It became the Alamo. The Battle of the Alamo (Feb. 23-March 6, 1836) was a pivotal event in the Texas Revolution.



tutional Convention of 1836, Fannin’s surrender at Goliad, and the Battle of San Jacinto and Treaties of Velasco.

You will notice that the culturally important phrase, “and all the heroic defenders who gave their lives there,” was removed. The reasoning behind the removal was because “heroic” is a value-charged word, and “all defenders” is too vague. The committee also recommended deleting the current standard requiring that students be able to explain William Barrett Travis’ letter from the Alamo, which is often compared to Patrick Henry’s “Give me liberty or give me death” speech: “To the People of Texas and all Americans in the World: I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna.... The enemy has demanded a surrender...I have

answered the demand with a cannon shot...I shall never surrender or retreat.”—W.B.T.

As a kid, I learned that the Alamo was similar to the ancient Battle of Thermopylae, where a thousand Spartans and Thespians held off Xerxes’ 100,000 Persian soldiers for days before being annihilated. That is culture, my friends. It instills a sense of pride in anyone, not just Greeks. Heaven forbid that we

include a value-charged word like “heroic” in a historical context! Charged language has a purpose and should be used appropriately, but culture should stand as it is.

Culture is made up of both good and bad actions, and it takes both to tell the tale of us all—individually, regionally, and as a nation. Understanding the bad things of the past helps us plan a future course without falling prey to those mistakes again. Decreasing classroom discussion time seems a pretty slim excuse to cover up a stunt to ban

politically incorrect speech. It reminds me of 18th century French novelists who chronicled how a privileged, arrogant, aristocratic society only recognized the societal ethics that they themselves inserted into society. I have a problem when someone places his/her personal ethics or culture into the arena in order to suppress or dismiss another’s culture that developed over generations. It is not much different than the Indian boarding school experiment.

The good news is that most of these regents, curriculum committees, and state boards of education around the country are composed of elected individuals. That means you can vote them out and replace them. So educate yourselves on this cultural peroxide movement, and act accordingly.

It never ceases to amaze me how a committee can often make a decision that is collectively dumber than the sum of its members. ■

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