

# Giving multiculturalism a good, swift kick

The very first book I was assigned to read when I went to college was a slim little tome entitled "Patterns of Culture," a major work by a leading American anthropologist, Ruth Benedict. Benedict's thesis was what is now called "cultural relativism," the theory that no culture is any better or worse than any other. Benedict died in 1948, but she would have been happy in Tavares, Fla. — at least up until this month.



**Samuel Francis**

Benedict would have been happy in Tavares because between 1991 and this month, the local school board required "multiculturalism" to be taught in its schools, with the stated goal of eliminating "personal and national ethnocentrism so that they [the students] understand that a specific culture is not intrinsically superior or inferior to another." The concept for this tip-toe into Cultural Suicide 101 came, of course, from the local teachers' union.

But this month, the school board decided that they didn't have to do

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what the teachers wanted after all, so they changed the policy and gave cultural relativism a swift kick in the loincloth. Now the teachers must make sure their instruction "shall also include and instill in our students an appreciation of our American heritage and culture such as: our republican form of government, capitalism, a free-enterprise system, patriotism, strong family values, freedom of religion and other basic values that are superior to other foreign or historic cultures."

Well, a tip of the war bonnet to the Tavares school board. In Tavares you won't be hearing too much anymore about Ruth Benedict's beloved Kwakiutl Indians, whose culture centered on acquiring honor by giving away most of the material possessions they had, nor about the other charming savages Benedict pothered and pondered over. For some reason, come to think of it, you don't hear too much about the Kwakiutl Indians anyway because there aren't too many left. Maybe they acquired so much honor by giving things away they virtually went extinct. Maybe that suggests that some cultures are superior to others after all.

In fact, that is precisely what the teachers think, despite all their smug sneers at their own culture and country to the contrary. The teachers' insistence that all their cute little code words like "tolerance" and "understanding" are — well — superior to intolerance and ignorance gives the lie to their own

ideology of cultural relativism.

The teachers' union is threatening to sue the school board to make sure "cultural relativism" stays absolute, and the school supervisor is urging a delay, and maybe Janet Reno will send in the FBI to investigate the locals who actually want

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to teach their children that their way of life is better than that of headhunters and cannibals.

But whatever the teachers have to say about other cultures, they have a mouthful to tell about America's, and most of it would scare the scalp off an Apache. That's because the whole point and purpose of "cultural relativism" is not to teach respect for other cultures but to destroy your own. By instilling in students the ideas that other cultures are just as good as theirs, you weaken their commitment to their own way of life. If you regard their way of life as repressive, exploitative, racist and

violent, which a lot of teachers have been taught to believe, weakening students' commitment to it seems like a progressive step.

But of course, no one, including those who teach it and want it taught, believes in cultural relativism, the idea that no way of life is better than any other. On its face, it's an absurd doctrine, even though teaching that is precisely what the 1991 law required.

Some cultures (like that of Europe and its descendants) survive and flourish and even drive out other cultures, in part because they have a better grip on reality, a better and truer vision of reality. Some cultures are better than others, and if you think that sounds mean, consider that you won't find too many multiculturalists moving to places like Rwanda these days.

"Cultural relativism" is one of the many Big Lies with which the 20th century mind has wasted itself, but if it's useful for anything, it helps gain power for those who peddle it. It enables those whom a traditional culture has rejected as losers to discredit that culture, invent excuses for themselves and impose a different culture that makes them look important.

That, I suspect, is why the American intellectual class, the biggest gang of losers since Gen. Custer's 7th Cavalry, has been so enamored of it. Tavares was right to kick these losers' lies out of its schools. Now it and other Americans need to stick by their decision and take their culture back from those who teach its destruction.

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