

Bullying in nation's DNA

Written by Fred Easter

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Nobody asked me, but I can't help being amused, or maybe it's bemused, when I see efforts to stamp out bullying in our schools and neighborhoods.

While I'm adamantly anti-bullying, the inescapable fact is that this is not just a nation of bullies, it is a nation that has DNA glazed with the bullying gene.

Most Americans cannot realize the true nature and character of their country because of the ethno-centric manner in which American history is taught at the public school level. The history of America's natives and slaves is largely separated from "American history" and viewed as the sad history of other, lesser peoples. But, it is surely the kernel of America's history. The study of American history through high school level curricula seems focused on passing on the myth of American superiority and love of freedom. The gory history of this country's treatment of its natives and slaves is sanitized and discounted. Likewise the enormous contributions of a horde of these marginalized citizens are omitted all together.

The implication is that the current condition of those we call minorities, underrepresented, underprivileged – you pick the euphemism, is due to some inherent weakness in their cultures. Americans can't make the connection between the centuries long treatment of natives and slaves on these shores and current issues such as the achievement gap or the burgeoning prison population. They certainly don't see the persistence of these issues as the continuation of that oppressive treatment. It is no surprise that conservatives in Texas are pressuring textbook manufacturers to soften the harsh realities of slavery. This is "spin" on steroids.

Some of Webster's definitions for bully are: to domineer, intimidate and tyrannize the weak.

This country's history is the poster child for bullying.

The natives, who welcomed Pilgrims to these shores and taught them how to survive a New England winter, have been thanked at the barrel of a gun. As they were driven from their homes, "freedom loving" Americans provided them with blankets recycled from army hospital smallpox wards.

I could go on for pages and my blood pressure won't even allow me to chronicle the centuries long maltreatment of African-Americans during slavery and reconstruction. Suffice it to say, there were entire decades, plural, where, on average, at least one brother was *lynched every*

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. It ain't over.

The fat lady is still back in "the greenroom."

What we are witnessing today is the last ditch bullying of the shrinking "super minority" of aging white men and blue haired women whose sense of unquestioned prominence is slipping. Their response is to limit the voting rights of people of color and keep young white women shoeless in winter and pregnant in the summer.

"Oh, for the good old days."

In addition, their plan is to obstruct economic recovery, except for themselves, and tell the middle class that it's the fault of the poor. Prisons have been built in rural white towns.

The prison population is counted as part of the town's, so the voting strength of the townspeople is swelled by the numbers of inmates who, incidentally, will not be allowed to vote when they return to their home communities. So, prisoners are only counted as people when others are exercising their rights. College students, on the other hand, are not counted as the population of their college towns and are finding the rules for absentee ballots more and more stringent.

The bottom line is, no one fights harder than when their back is to the wall. The Republican right has pulled out all the stops. If the ever more liberal progressive left prefers not to return to life in 1935, we better wake up and smell the coffee and feel the wall at our backs. Our churches can't just be driving folk to the polls. They need to be the polling places. Sleeping through the 2010 election cycle is part of the reason we're in this mess.