

Approved: J. Lawrence
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on March 19, 1997 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Hensley

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Rep. Cliff Franklin, Bill Sponsor
David Payne, Executive Director, KS Family Research Institute
Scott D. Waters, Ph.D. Emporia State University

Others attending: See attached list

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting to order and called on Rep. Cliff Franklin, sponsor of **HB 2285--** school districts; curriculum, accreditation, pupil assessment, school site councils, American history documents

Rep. Franklin distributed copies of his testimony (Attachment 1) and thanked the Committee for holding a hearing on the bill. He directed attention to the last page of testimony wherein was contained a thumbnail sketch of the bill. He said the main crux of the bill was to initiate more parental and community participation. Studies have shown that parental involvement has enhanced education performance.

Rep. Franklin stated the main point of the bill is to see if there is a correlation between parental involvement and academic performance and to try and encourage those schools and school districts with lower parental involvement to get involved in the public schools. There is a reporting function of this bill that would have nationally normed test scores - 5 year graphical trends, school district budget and enrollment - 5 year graphical trends and Kansas Assessment test scores - 5 year graphical trends. These would be available for public consumption - newspapers and whoever would like to have it. This information is important for legislators.

In looking at test scores, Rep. Franklin stated it has been very hard for him to determine whether there is improvement, whether staying flat, or whether we are going downhill; he thinks, although it is just a guess, that testing is either staying flat or possibly going up. What he would like to see is a nationally normed test administered statewide to see the 5 year graphical trends along with the Kansas assessment. This will give people information on what the districts budgets are, what the tests scores are, and how involved the community is in the public schools and see if there is any opportunity for improvement. There will also be trends for violence, truancy and dropout rates in which he thinks the local newspapers are interested.

Rep. Franklin stated that at this time a variety of different tests are given in different school districts such as the Iowa Basic Skills test and the California Achievement test and others. What he thinks would be beneficial to lawmakers is to have a test given statewide so the children could be state normed and nationally normed to find out how the state is doing against the rest of the country. Basically what norm means is where there is a comparison against the average. If something is nationally normed, than a Kansas child's test score is based on how they achieve versus an average student around the country. The benefit of this is that regardless of whether the tests change from year to year, the norm of the child versus the average in the rest of the nation shouldn't fluctuate as much as the specific test scores. The test scores can go up and down, but the norm will be what is looked at.

Rep. Franklin stated the last part of the bill is probably the most controversial part, historical documents. The board of education of each school district may authorize all certificated employees of the district to read and post in any school building or classroom or at any school event any historical documents such as the pledge of allegiance, Kansas constitution, and so forth. Other documents are named on page 5 of the bill. What it does is shift the liability from the teacher to the State Board.

Suggested Amendments: 1. Include guidance counselors, school nurses, utilities, classroom materials, books, cafeteria staff, and para professionals with teachers as direct budgetary costs in a school district.

Rep. Franklin stated a lot of things in the bill were deleted in House Education and the bill has been scaled back quite a bit from what it originally was.

Representative Franklin ended his presentation and asked if there were any questions.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ROOM 123-S-Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 19, 1997.

Rep. Franklin was asked what grade levels and what subjects would he suggest be tested.

Rep. Franklin responded that he would leave that up to the State Board of Education. The important part of this would be meeting the national norm; Kansas kids should take the same norm test that is taken throughout the nation.

Rep. Franklin was asked what was different about item number one in his testimony and what is being done now.

He replied that what he was trying to do there was to say that local schools prescribe objectives and goals etc. and the State Board of Education is there to assess whether they are achieving academic performance. No body would be measuring its own performance.

With regard to number 4, Rep. Franklin stated that had been taken out in House Education. Now it is only provided to local boards. The fiscal note is his own calculation of \$187,000.

Rep. Franklin was asked about number 5 in his testimony. His response was that this was also amended in House Committee, on page 3, line 22 of the bill "60% of their working". This provision is in there to try to get some feel for the amount of direct costs and the amount of overhead in the school districts to provide information to legislators and newspapers.

Rep. Franklin was asked if a particular test was given to every student in every school district of the state, is the funding going to be picked up at the state level.

He replied that it is a \$1.2 million fiscal note to fund it from the state if a line item is put in the appropriations budget.

The comment was made that this may not be valid because no one has determined at what grade levels the test would be given or what subject matters would be covered; the same test would have to be administered throughout the state. Everyone would have to be taking the same test to achieve the desired result.

Rep. Franklin responded that this is why implementation of this would be delayed until October 15, 1998, to give districts a chance to come into conformity.

Rep. Franklin added that a norm test is typically a standardized computational based test that is not geared towards criteria set up by districts. He cited something that Dr. Poggio had said with regard to testing. It is a triangular method with the state assessment; national norm test and classroom performance. The three together give a much better idea of how a school district is performing. He stated that those schools that are not doing a national norm test are not showing themselves and their patrons the complete picture. It takes classroom performance, national norm testing and basic computational skills.

Several further comments were made and the Chairperson asked Rep. Franklin to return tomorrow for further discussion on the bill.

The Chairperson called on David Payne, Executive Director, Kansas Family Research Institute, to give his testimony on the bill. Mr. Payne appeared as a proponent of the bill and provided testimony to the Committee. (Attachment 2) Mr. Payne gave his background as an educator, having 17 years as a teacher and an administrator. He said that this bill is of particular interest to his organization because it is a consumer bill. It helps one to be a better consumer of education. They support the use of a single nationally norm-referenced test. A Post Audit report last year indicated that the Kansas state assessment tests are not a good measure or indicator that can be relied upon for state by state, district by district, or school by school comparisons. One of the most useful aspects is that the data obtained from the national norms test is something readily usable and understandable to parents. The state assessment test is something difficult for parents to understand because it is new and different.

Mr. Payne had a few reservations, one of which was the addition of 'critical thinking skills' to the list of areas to be tested under the Kansas State Assessment Tests that is on page 2 of the bill. These skills can be taught as part of the core curriculum and not as a separate part of the curriculum. A number of reservations regarding the State Assessment program were listed in his written testimony. He feels that Kansas is a long way from having valid and reliable assessments. He voiced support for the national norm-referenced test as the best to communicate to consumers what is trying to be done in education. His organization also supports efforts to increase parental involvement in the schools as part of the bill. Parents are often seen as unwelcome intruders instead of welcome partners in education. Research has indicated this partnership with parents is one of the most vital aspects of any effective school. He cautioned legislators and the State Board to avoid burdening both schools and school districts with yet another monitoring and reporting requirement. Support was voiced for accountability to patrons, taxpayers, and the community through the publication and broad dissemination of school district trend data.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ROOM 123-S-Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on March 19, 1997.

The organization also supports exposing students to primary source documents.

Mr. Payne was asked if his organization works with parents who do home schooling. He replied his organization is involved in a coalition that includes home schooling. The children go to a test site and have a national norm test.

Mr. Payne was asked if he has taken this issue to the State Board. He replied that he has suggested this to the members of the state board.

The question was also asked if it would be his preference to do away with the state assessments and instead do a national norm reference test. He replied in the affirmative. He would agree with Rep. Franklin's original language which involved scaling back the state assessments by 50%. There is too much time, energy and money involved with the current state assessments. If there is evidence that state assessments can be brought back within a reasonable period of time to the point where they are useful to the state or school districts, that would be beneficial. With regard to the writing, some of the evaluations of the writing assessment indicate evaluations all over the map as to way the teachers have graded the writing component of the test. The subjective nature of that draws that into question. On the other hand, writing is a very critical aspect that should be measured.

Mr. Payne was asked if there was broad support across the state from parents and educators for this type of legislation. His response was that his organization deals with a broad spectrum of parents throughout the state who have school age children. There is general support for the use of a national norm reference test. Providing the consumers of education this information on a statewide basis would be helpful.

Scott Waters, Ph.D., Emporia State University, appeared on the bill. (Attachment 3) He referred to an article that appeared in a newspaper yesterday about the state's first charter school. One of the things mentioned in the article was that students will be taught those qualities and characteristics that the founding fathers determined to be important - personal responsibility, self discipline, loyalty, honesty, compassion, hard work, etc. He thinks that what is happening with this charter school leads into the historical documents portion of the bill. What Mr. Waters would speak to today refers to the historical documents portion of the bill; primary source documents. The actual letters, writings, speeches and so forth of historical figures not omitting or editing documents merely because of religious content. There seems to be confusion about what to teach in American history. Recently there has been an attempt to write history standards for the nation. There was a lot of controversy regarding this. The United States Senate rejected the standards 99-1. Within the last few weeks, a rewrite of those standards was also rejected. One of the criticisms of those standards was the lack of use of historical documents. Mr. Water has noticed that textbooks are containing fewer references to the founding historical documents. This bill encourages teachers to emphasize the use of these documents.

Mr. Waters stated that he has testified on this legislation several times and people tell him that teachers can use historical documents now, but this aspect of the bill issues a strong encouragement and affirmation as teachers that historical documents are important. It sends a message that schools should put emphasis on such documents. The charter school will emphasize the documents of our founding fathers. Schools now are not devoting the time to focusing on these documents that they did in the past.

Another issue being raised is that this bill is trying to "sneak in" religion. In Mr. Waters' estimation this is not the case. He is not aware of any organized effort to get religion in the classroom by stealth. He does think people are concerned about the editing of materials, censoring of materials, omitting materials, and rewriting history. What happens is that when people see these documents they realize that it is not an accurate history; this is not a true picture of our country. This is what raises questions in people's minds. This bill affirms the legitimate objective discussion of the role of faith in our country's heritage. Related to this the question has been raised that perhaps this marginalizes other faith communities. An attempt by some to impose their religious beliefs on other faith communities. He is not aware that there is any attempt to do this.

Mr. Water's testimony contained several examples of primary source documents.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Waters thinks the use of historical documents is so valuable because it lets the students be the interpreters of history, not a teacher.

He also said that there is a declining number of these types of documents in books in the libraries; they are just not available anymore. It is increasingly difficult to find speeches and documents from the times of the founders.

Mr. Waters was asked to provide the Committee with the title and publisher of the history book that has eight pages of Marilyn Monroe and only two on Washington.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 1997.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: March 19, 1997

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STATE OF KANSAS



TOPEKA

HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

MEMBER: EDUCATION
FEDERAL & STATE AFFAIRS
TAXATION

House Bill 2285
The Community in Education Act
March 19, 1997

Madam Chairman and members of the Senate Education Committee, it is with enthusiasm that I bring forward the "Community in Education Act" for your consideration. In my first 2 years in the House I have talked with some of you about possible methods for improving public education. Some conclusions which I have arrived at are as follows: parental involvement in the public school system is the most important ingredient for success, local boards are in a better position to make decisions for their schools, and the state board should make assessment of local districts to make sure all are achieving academic success. HB 2285 is an omnibus of improvement ideas that I have derived from each of you on this committee.

The following 7 points summarizes HB 2285.

1. *State Board of Education shall accredit and monitor local school districts. The state board shall delegate curriculum design and general supervision to local school boards.*
2. *Local board of education shall develop measurable goals that shall include truancy levels, national normed test averages, and community involvement.*
3. *The state board shall select one nationally normed test to administer across each local school district. The test shall be have a wide distribution such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills ITBS, The Metropolitan Achievement Test MAT, the California Achievement test CAT, or NAEP.*
4. *The state board will provide each registered voter 5 year graphical trends of parental and community involvement in the public school system and the local districts nationally normed composite test score for each appropriate grade. The packet shall also include a separate 5 year graphical trends of local district total budgets, w/ administrative cost trends, w/ student FTE trends. Administrative costs shall include*

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5. *any school district employee that does not spend a minimum of 6 hours a day teaching students.*
6. *Allows local school boards to post and teach historical documents such as the national anthem, the United States Constitutions, the speeches/writings of our founding fathers, the speeches/writings of the United States Civil Rights Leaders.*

Suggested Amendments:

1. Include guidance counselors, school nurses, utilities, classroom materials, books, cafeteria staff, and para professionals with teachers as direct budgetary costs in a school district.

Thank you for consideration of this bill and I stand ready for questions.



The Community In Education Bill

Gives Local Control to Local School Boards

- ◆ Initiates more parental and community participation
- ◆ Initiates local control of school curriculum and goal selection
- ◆ Allows for posting and teaching of historical documents

Gives assessment responsibilities to the State Board of Education

- ◆ State Board will create indices to measure parental involvement
- ◆ Measure community involvement
- ◆ Measure & select a nationally normed test
- ◆ Measure classroom performance
- ◆ Measure school violence, truancy, and drop-out rates

Assigns State Board to supply academic/budget information to the public

- ◆ Parental and community involvement - 5 year graphical trends
- ◆ National normed test scores - 5 year graphical trends
- ◆ School district budget & enrollment - 5 year graphical trends
- ◆ Kansas Assessment test scores - 5 year graphical trends



Testimony Before the Senate Education Committee

House Bill 2285

March 19, 1997

Submitted by:

**David Payne
Executive Director**

*Senate Education
3-19-97*

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of House Bill 2285. I believe that there is general agreement today among all stakeholders in the education of our young on the importance of striving for academic excellence, establishing measurable standards, and improving accountability. I believe that House Bill 2285, if passed, would be a step in the right direction toward meeting these important goals. We support House Bill 2285 for the following reasons:

- We support the use of a single nationally recognized norm-referenced test.
 - The proposed use of a single nationally recognized norm-referenced test in House Bill 2285 is consistent with the findings of the Legislative Performance Audit Report “Reviewing the Use of State Assessment Tests In Kansas”. The use of a norm-referenced test such as the ITBS, CAT, MAT, or the SAT would enable school districts and policy makers to accurately report state by state, district by district, and school by school comparisons.
 - We also support the use of standardized norm-referenced tests because they are more familiar to the general public and thus make it easier to communicate results. This point should not be under-emphasized given the importance of communicating clearly to the public in order to restore confidence and insure some perceived level of accountability. The use of criterion-referenced tests, while desirable in some respects, may be akin to changing the grading system from the easily understood “A, B, C, D, F” to something unfamiliar and therefore meaningless to parents.
- We oppose the addition of “critical thinking skills” to the list of areas to be tested under the Kansas State Assessment Tests (page 2, line 2).
 - While no one can argue with the importance of students’ developing critical thinking skills, there is no general agreement about exactly what those skills are or how they should be taught, much less how they should be tested. These skills can and should be taught and tested as part of the other core academic areas already delineated in the bill.
- We recommend that the Legislature carefully monitor and evaluate the Kansas State Assessment Tests. We specifically recommend that the

Legislature consider dropping the group or individual projects as part of the performance assessments.

- The recent experience of other states indicates that developing reliable and valid state assessments is difficult indeed. Both California and Arizona scrapped their state assessment programs because the tests did not measure what they were intended to measure and/or test results were used to inappropriately assess individual student performance. Kentucky's state testing program is undergoing intense scrutiny after an audit in that state found that the tests were "seriously flawed." The report also states that "the public is being misinformed about the extent to which student achievement has improved statewide."
- Dr. George Cunningham, a specialist in educational testing and professor at the University of Louisville in Kentucky said in an article published in the Louisville Courier Journal, "Performance assessment was an interesting idea back in 1989, but outside of classroom applications, there is little evidence of its effectiveness."
- Although the Legislative Post Audit found that "appropriate steps" had been taken to insure that the Kansas State Assessment Tests are reliable and valid measures, taking appropriate steps is not the same as certifying that the tests are indeed reliable and valid. And the more subjective the measure—such as the performance assessments—the more difficult it is to determine reliability and validity of test results. Perhaps dropping the group or individual projects as part of the performance assessments would be one possible suggested alternative to reduce the scope of the assessments.
- We support efforts to increase parental involvement in the schools.
 - Too often parents feel they are unwelcome intruders instead of welcome partners in the education of their children. Research on effective schools has consistently demonstrated the positive benefits of increased parental involvement. Emphasizing parental involvement by giving parents a greater role on site councils and including simple indices to measure parental involvement as an integral aspect of accreditation are steps in the right direction. We would, however, caution legislators and the State Board to avoid burdening local schools with yet another monitoring and reporting requirement. Any change in this area should be implemented with extreme sensitivity to the concerns of local schools.

- We support accountability to patrons, taxpayers, and the community through the publication and broad dissemination of school district trend data.
 - Objective measures such as the norm-referenced Iowa Test of Basic Skills have their limitations, but they are at least one objective measure that should be made available to the public. We believe that other data should be taken into consideration when reporting test results such as socio-economic indicators, attendance and drop-out rates, and unique aspects of the curriculum (i.e., magnet school that emphasizes a particular subject area).

- We support exposing students to primary source documents.
 - We may not be able to stop textbook publishers and special interests from continuing down the path of historical deconstructionism, but we can encourage exposure to the actual writings and speeches of our nation's founders and others who played central roles in our nation's history. Let students decide for themselves what our founders thought about this "noble experiment" we call democracy.

 - We are particularly discouraged and dismayed by the past opposition of some of our Jewish friends to this portion of House Bill 2285. Of all people, we would expect the Jewish people to be sensitive to modern attempts to rewrite history, including some who say the Holocaust was a hoax. Historical revisionism is robbing us all of our heritage. We may be repulsed, ashamed or proud of some aspects of our history, but we should not patently ignore it or revise it to suit our purposes. Exposing students to unedited primary source historical documents is one way to let students decide for themselves what our founders and other important historical figures valued and believed by reading the actual documents. Only those with an "agenda" could find this harmful.

Proponent Testimony for HB 2285

By: **Scott D. Waters, Ph.D. Emporia State University**
Box 4037, Emporia State, Emporia, KS 66801

Chairperson and Committee Members:

My name is Scott Waters. I am on the faculty at Emporia State, in the Teachers College. My specific responsibility is in the area of social science teaching methods. I train teacher education majors, who will eventually teach social studies; thus my interest in this particular bill. I became involved with this bill about two years ago when I learned of its purpose in promoting use of primary source materials in teaching American history. As a teacher educator, I am constantly reviewing textbooks and strategies for teaching social studies. In that vein, I have become increasingly concerned about a trend I have seen emerging in the teaching of history. That trend I speak of is teaching history with less and less attention being assigned to our founding documents, with less and less attention being paid to historical accuracy, and less and less reference to our rich religious heritage. The result of this trend is twofold: students who are being given a distorted and incomplete view of history, and students who are leaving our schools with a dreadfully inadequate understanding of U.S. history.

Why Is This Bill Needed?

Textbooks today too often do not include the foundational documents, quotes, or themes they once did. Perhaps the best example of this would be George Washington's Farewell Address. This address, written as Washington was leaving office, regularly appeared in textbooks and was sometimes even printed as a separate text. The most recent textbook I have found that includes it is this 1941 publication of the National Education Association, The American Citizens Handbook.¹ It includes the full text of Washington's remarks to the citizenry about what had brought the United States to greatness, and what would keep her on that path. Several of Washington's admonitions speak directly to spiritual and moral issues. Students studied, analyzed and memorized parts of this address as a key component of their history studies. In an analysis of social studies textbooks used by Kansas 5th, 8th, and 11th graders, I found no textbook that included more than a few paragraphs of the address, and many that included not reference to the speech at all.

Let me share another example of what teachers experience. This short book, titled The Bulletproof George Washington,² is an account of Washington's miraculous survival during an ambush in the French and Indian War. During a two hour battle, of eighty-six British and American officers, sixty-three were casualties. Washington was the only officer on horseback not shot down. Following the battle, Washington wrote a letter to his brother in which he readily and openly acknowledged: *"By the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet I escaped unhurt, although death was leveling my companions on every side of me!"* This account of God's care of Washington and of Washington's open gratitude for Divine intervention could be found in virtually all student textbooks until 1934; today, few have ever heard it. Are we not giving our children a very distorted and incomplete history. This bill encourages and authorizes teachers to use primary source documents, and to not omit or edit documents simple because they include mention of religious themes. While it is true the teachers are already free to use these documents, I would see passage of this bill as an affirmation of the crucial role they play in students' understanding of our heritage, including our religious heritage, and an encouragement to teachers to use them in their classrooms.

In addition to the fact that many texts do not include primary source documents, a second reason why I believe this bill is needed is because of the inaccuracy and distortion of historical facts that is becoming so prevalent. You are probably aware that the recently developed U.S.

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History Standards for public schools were viewed as being so distorted they were rejected by the U.S. Senate by a 99 to 1 vote. It is my understanding that the House is also moving toward a similar rejection of the standards. One of the chief criticisms was the lack of mention of founding primary source documents such as the constitution.

Perhaps the most alarming trend is the outright rewriting of history. A February 28, 1994 *U.S. News & World Report* article titled "The Junking of History,"³ and an article from the October 1995 issue of *Social Education* titled "Denial of the Holocaust,"⁴ discusses attempts to discount the Jewish Holocaust. The Nazi slaughter of 6 million Jews is exhaustively documented. Many of the killers, survivors and soldiers who liberated the camps are still alive. Yet the people who deny the Holocaust occurred have made great headway, simply by stating their claim loudly and often. All of us should be shocked and spurred to action by this development. A Truth in History Bill would go a long way toward addressing the problems these examples illustrate. Encouragement of use of primary source documents, including ones with religious content, would be a step in the right direction toward producing students who have a solid understanding of their history. Additionally, I would like to address a criticism of this bill that has surfaced. It is my understanding that some believe this bill is designed to marginalize those of the Jewish community, and is somehow anti-Semitic. My response is to simply refer you to a cordial exchange of letters that took place in 1790 between George Washington and one of the leaders of a Jewish congregation. Students of our day need to be able to read primary source documents of this type, and see for themselves the role of faith in our country's history. Far too often they never have that opportunity.

Conclusion

There seems to be confusion about what to teach about history these days. I see no better way to solve this confusion than to let primary source documents speak for themselves. Why not encourage teachers to put the actual speeches, quotes and documents in the hands of students, and let them be the interpreters of history. Thank you for your time. I would be very happy to attempt to answer any questions you might have.

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1. *The American Citizens Handbook*, (1941), Arranged by Joy Elmer Morgan, National Education Association of the United States, Washington, D.C.
 2. *The Bulletproof George Washington*, (1990), David Barton, Wallbuilder Press, Aledo, Texas.
 3. The Junking of History, (February 28, 1994), *U.S. News & World Report*.
 4. Denial of the Holocaust, (October 1995), *Social Education*.

The junking of history

Time Warner's Home Box Office, joined by PepsiCo, is having a bit of trouble celebrating Black History Month in a truthful way. An HBO-Pepsi poster and advertisement honoring black achievement features a large picture of the pyramids, and many smaller images, including one of the Sphinx.

This means that two of America's best-known corporations have officially bought into the historical howler believed by many Afrocentrists: that blacks built the pyramids and have been robbed of credit for it. Quoting the lyrics of a song, the poster says: "We are the builders of the pyramids, look what you did . . . so much to tell the world, the truth no longer hid."

Worse, this stuff is being injected into the schools. HBO and Pepsi sent the posters and other materials to 20,000 predominantly black schools and community groups. So honest teachers in these schools now have to explain the corporate seal of approval given to a historical claim that isn't true. ("Sounds like we need a history lesson," the chairman of HBO said when his Black History poster was described to him.)

This is no isolated example. The culture is now seriously plagued with deeply felt assertions that aren't true but are slowly sliding toward respectability anyway. Think back over the assertions that have won a measure of acceptance in the past year or two: the denial of the Holocaust; Oliver Stone's notion that the mafia and many government officials conspired to kill President Kennedy; the idea, depicted in a TV documentary, that a black U.S. Army regiment liberated Dachau and Buchenwald (tough-minded, honest veterans of the regiment stood up and said it wasn't true), and the supposedly strong influence of Iroquois thought on the U.S. Constitution, now taught in many schools.

Truth beyond fact. Behind the rise of rhetoric and pure assertion is a growing contempt for facts. "What we are witnessing is the transformation of facts into opinion," wrote the editors of the *New Criterion*. Not the number of times that commentators argue that the facts don't really matter. When the Tawana Brawley hoax was revealed, the *Nation* ran an article saying, "In cultural perspective, if not in fact, it doesn't matter whether the crime occurred or not." The facts were irrelevant, it seems, because Brawley's story line reflected the broader reality that whites have abused blacks over centuries. In other words, forget about facts. Just tell stories that convey emotional truth.

This is the climate HBO and Pepsi responded to, probably without much thought. Under different condi-

tions, the corporations might have been just as willing to assert that the Irish invented jazz and the Cherokees developed styrofoam.

"We're in a day and age in which I can make any claim I want," says Deborah Lipstadt, a professor at Emory University. "I can say I believe the Buffalo Bills won the Super Bowl. Then I say that it's my opinion and I have a right to it, and you're supposed to back off." Lipstadt should know. She is the author of *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

The Nazi slaughter of 6 million Jews is exhaustively documented. Many of the killers, survivors and soldiers who liberated the camps are still alive. Yet the people who deny that the Holocaust occurred have made great headway, simply by stating their claim loudly and often. A

Gallup poll last month showed that 33 percent of Americans think it seems possible that the Nazi extermination of Jews never happened.

"Good students come in and ask, 'How do we know there were gas chambers?'" Lipstadt says. "Not that they become deniers, but what happens is that in a subtle way, the attackers put history on the defensive." Denial slowly becomes just one more familiar and alternate way of thinking

about Jews and Nazis. In a talk-show culture, all talkers have equal status, flat-earthers and round-earthers, Holocaust deniers and Holocaust historians, people who speak regularly to interplanetary aliens and people who don't.

Holocaust denial is only the most spectacular example of a broader assault on knowledge, facts and memory that is sweeping through the culture. A lot of it comes from some disastrous intellectual trends on campus. Deconstruction and its allied movements say that knowledge is constructed, texts are biased. Values and truth are nothing more than arbitrary products of a particular group. History is not true, merely a story imposed by the powerful on the weak. (Time Warner managed to pick up this theme in a Warner Bros. Records ad celebrating Black History Month. "History is written by the winners," the ad said, quoting Alex Haley.)

At the extreme, some of these theories say there is no external reality at all, merely consciousness, and some say that personal experience or stories are the only source of truth. This is all intellectual junk, but it's having a profound effect in the real world. Everything is up for grabs now. Like the black veterans who challenged the false TV documentary, it's important for honest people to take a stand and not let lies slide by. Otherwise, reasoned discussion in America will descend further into a fact-free opinion fest. ■



DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST

SCOTT MILLER

Holocaust deniers claim that the Holocaust never happened—that there was no “Final Solution” or systematic plan by the Nazis to exterminate all Jews. “Hard deniers” claim that the estimated five to six million murdered Jews were actually never killed,¹ and that the Holocaust, or at least the greater part of it, is a hoax. In other versions of denial, generally referred to as “soft denials,” it is contended that, while some atrocities took place, there was still no plan to annihilate the Jews. “Soft deniers” try to attribute the high death rate among Jews and others to the nature of the war itself, citing factors such as disease and starvation, which themselves are sometimes attributed to atrocities inflicted by the Allies on the Germans.

Holocaust denial is not a position based on the facts. It has no historical support. The typical denier is driven by political motivations, and in most cases espouses a right-wing, racist ideology with affinities to National Socialism. The memory of the Holocaust, which is widely regarded in the western world as the epitome of evil, is a major threat to the spread of such doctrines. Another important source of denial is the historical chain of anti-Semitism, with its recurrent inventions of conspiracy theories against the Jews, such as those contained in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Denial of the Holocaust, and the allegation that it is a Jewish-created “hoax,” are modern versions of accusations of a Jewish conspiracy.

For teachers, the problem of Holocaust denial can be quite complex, for several reasons. First, deniers call themselves “revisionists,” which is a respectable academic term in the study of

history—even though in this case, they are not revising but denying.² Unfortunately, their appropriation of a legitimate term has caused confusion. Moreover, deniers are denying facts, not opinions, and school curricula are not oriented toward dealing with the denial of facts. This often leaves teachers in a quandary as to how to deal with issues of denial, which can only be fully resolved by thorough knowledge of the facts of the Holocaust.

The Deniers

The key to understanding Holocaust denial is the world outlook of the deniers. Denial is inextricably linked with racist, anti-Semitic ideology. The deniers lack academic credentials for the study of the Holocaust.

The central institution of Holocaust denial in the United States is the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), located in southern California, and founded (with a deceptively scholarly name) by Willis Carto. Carto was previously a founder of the Liberty Lobby, an ultra right-wing and anti-Semitic organization. Other individuals associated with IHR and Holocaust denial are Lewis Brandon, the first director of IHR; Tom Marcellus, his successor as IHR Director; and Mark Weber, editor of the *Journal for Historical Review* (the IHR journal). Not one of the four has academic credentials relevant to the study of the Holocaust.³

Anti-Semitism is clearly evident in Carto's thinking. Carto once wrote: “If Satan himself had tried to create a permanent disintegration and force for the destruction of nations, he could have done no better than to create the Jews.”⁴ In another memo, Carto termed the Jews “public enemy No. 1.”⁵

Admiration for Hitler is also

widespread among IHR officials. The Liberty Lobby under Carto's influence has been described as “infiltrated by Nazis who revere the memory of Hitler.”⁶ In a deposition under oath in 1979, Carto acknowledged his agreement with the principles of Francis Parker Yockey, who consistently proclaimed that the Holocaust was a myth created by the Jews. In his book dedicated to Hitler, *Imperium—The Philosophy of History and Politics*, Yockey called for the establishment of an empire of Aryan nations, claiming that the Jews “live solely with the idea of revenge on the nations of the white European-American race.”⁷

A number of IHR officials have been active in neo-Nazi groups. Lewis Brandon (also known as William David McCalden) was once an officer of the British neo-Nazi National Front Party. Irish-born and educated in England, Brandon has edited a number of anti-Semitic and racist publications,⁸ and actively promoted the view that no Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. Mark Weber is the former editor of the *National Vanguard*, the journal of the anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi organization National Alliance.

Appeals to white racism are a common theme among these Holocaust deniers. Carto has expressed the belief that “Jews and Negroes” are at the heart of America's problems.⁹ In a letter to the racist author Earnest Sevier Cox, Carto complained about the “Niggerfication of America.”¹⁰ Fearing this “niggerfication,” Carto organized the Joint Council for Repatriation, which advocated the return of all Blacks to Africa.

In a 1989 interview, Weber told the *University of Nebraska Sower* that he feared the United States was becoming “a sort of Mexicanized, Puertoricanized country,” due to the failure of White

Americans to reproduce adequately.¹¹ Brandon's successor as IHR director, Tom Marcellus, has criticized acceptance of the Holocaust "hoax" on the ground that it does damage to the "self-image of White people."¹²

Predictably, prominent members of the Ku Klux Klan are also Holocaust deniers. In the *Crusader*, the publication of David Duke's organization, the National Association for the Advancement of White People, Duke termed the Holocaust a "historical hoax."¹³ These words of a former Grand Wizard of the KKK highlight the affinities between Holocaust denial and classical American racism (an association that may appropriately be pointed out by teachers in the classroom).

Admiration for the white supremacist doctrines advocated by Hitler is also visible among prominent foreign deniers of the Holocaust. For example, Ernst Zundel, a German citizen with immigrant status in Canada, has advanced the claim that Jews were not killed in the gas chambers. Zundel is the author of the book *The Hitler We Loved and Why*, which praises Hitler and his white supremacist ideology.¹⁴ Zundel has no academic credentials relevant to the study of the Holocaust.

Among the "soft" deniers is David Irving, a British popular historian (the only well-known denier with a knowledge of history, though without adequate academic historical credentials). Irving argues that about 500,000 to 600,000 Jews died as victims of war,¹⁵ and claims that Hitler did not know about the Final Solution. His view of Hitler is reflected, according to Lipstadt, by his having "placed a self-portrait of Hitler over his desk," and having described his visit to Hitler's mountaintop retreat as a "spiritual experience."¹⁶ In 1994, David Irving stated "I think the Jews are largely to blame for themselves by the knee-jerk responses [to anti-Semitism]... Goebbels himself said that, in fact."¹⁷

Combating the Denial of the Holocaust in the Classroom

Denial is a position contrary to the facts, and should not be treated by teachers as a matter of opinion repre-

senting one side of a debate. The most effective way to deal with the deniers is for teachers to thoroughly learn, and then teach, the storyline of the Holocaust. An extraordinary amount of Holocaust documentation exists, enabling teachers to eliminate arguments of denial by citing the facts and sharing their awareness of the documentation with students.

The Scale of Documentation

Due to the nature of German record keeping, the Holocaust is one of the more thoroughly documented historical events in the annals of humanity. For example, at the World War II Records Division of the National Archives in Alexandria, Virginia, Holocaust related material fills 28,000 linear feet of shelves. This includes mostly military documents, some SS documents, and some documents of the civil administration. And here we are only speaking of the Holocaust material in a single location.

Documentation of the Holocaust exists all over the world. There are hundreds of thousands of orders, decrees, memos, letters, blueprints, and memoirs. Eyewitness testimonies abound. There are graphic photographs and clips of documentary footage, taken by both military officials and civilians, of atrocities such as the *Einsatzgruppen* (Mobile Killing Units) shootings. Particularly dramatic is the testimony of the Nazis themselves. The major perpetrators of the Nazi crimes, on trial at Nuremberg, did not deny that the Holocaust took place, though they did try to place the blame for it on other Nazis.

Contrary to popular belief, there is an abundance of material dealing with the gas chambers. Many believe that since the Nazis themselves destroyed the gas chambers and crematoria (out of fear of retribution), there remains no evidence of the gas chambers. However, documentation exists. For example, remains of the gas chambers were found at the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek death camps (at Majdanek, in fact, not all the gas chambers were destroyed). Blueprints of the gas chambers exist in the archives at the Auschwitz Museum as well as in

Moscow, and now in the archives at the Research Institute of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. There are Allied aerial photographs of the crematoria, as well as clandestine photographs of the crematoria and of people walking to the gas chambers. Deniers claim that the gas chambers were only used for delousing. But even the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Hoess, made no attempt to deny the gas chambers. In his autobiography, Hoess described the gassing process:

Then, very quickly, the door was hermetically sealed, and a can of gas was immediately thrown onto the floor, through an opening ... in the ceiling of the gas chamber, by the disinfectors, who were standing ready. This led to the immediate release of the gas ... those who were near the opening died immediately ... a third died within a moment. The others began to struggle, to scream, to choke ... after a few minutes all were on the ground. After a maximum of twenty minutes, nobody moved.¹⁸

Other testimony comes from camp guards and from survivors of Auschwitz (members of the *Sonderkommando* - Jewish prisoners assigned to work at the crematoria). In the case of the Belzec and Sobibor death camps, as well as at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a vast quantity of gassing victims' shoes, clothing and other personal belongings was discovered by Soviet soldiers at the war's end. At the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Soviet troops also found over 15,000 pounds of human hair. Other documents record the ordering and supply of Zyklon-B gas.

Much of the written documentation on the Holocaust is now available in English, and is useful for teachers. Raul Hilberg, this country's pre-eminent historian of the Holocaust, has collected much of this material in *Documents of Destruction*. Hilberg also documents decrees and deportations in his momentous *The Destruction of the European Jews*. John Mendelsohn has published an eighteen-volume compendium of Holocaust documentation entitled *The Holocaust*. Daily accounts by German

army officers of mass shootings of Jews and others, as well as lists of areas made *judenrein*, "cleansed of Jews," have been translated into English as *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*. Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle* (805 pages), is now available in English. It contains the Nazi daily records of Auschwitz down to the smallest details—construction of gas chambers, deportations, arrival numbers and numbers gassed. Perhaps the best overview of operations at Auschwitz is the newly released *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Yisrael Gutman.¹⁹

Also available in English are the proceedings of the Nuremberg and other post-war trials.²⁰ These are an extraordinarily useful tool in verifying the historicity of the Holocaust, because here the perpetrators of the crime gave first-hand evidence. Unlike today's Holocaust deniers, the perpetrators never denied that the crime took place. Some tried to justify their actions by expressing their fear of Jews; some claimed "orders from above," while others acknowledged what happened while claiming that others did the actual killing. But never did they deny the Holocaust. As Hilberg concludes "... there was no denial obviously among any of the people who were in any way even close to these [killing] operations—no denial in the railways, no denial in the finance ministry, no denial in the SS, and so on and so forth."²¹ Should students request that the "Nazi point of view" be taught, the testimonies of the perpetrators offer the best answer to such a request.

Inquisitive students will no doubt ask whether any of the many historical documents on the Holocaust have been forged. Unlike some other major historical phenomena, the study of the Holocaust has not faced the problem of false documents. In an interview by Michael Berenbaum, director of the Holocaust Museum's Research Institute, Hilberg states that he has never in his "45 more years of research in this field found a forged document."²² Students may need to be shown that forgery of historical documents is somewhat more sophisticated than the kind of forgery students may know from personal experience. As Hilberg points out:

It sounds easy, but it is very, very difficult if one were to attempt it. For one thing, it is a matter of the right paper, the right type-writer, but even more, it is the proper language. One would have to be extraordinarily knowledgeable about the nature of the administrative operations to be able to feign the document and put it as though if it were real...²³

Forgery on the enormous scale of the Holocaust documentation would be impossible. The documents are too numerous, their sources too diverse, and the time period of their discovery too limited for such massive, coordinated forgery to take place. And there was no conceivable reason for the discoverers of most documents, the victorious World War II Allies, to fabricate the vast quantity of documents about the Holocaust.

A Key Resource: The Holocaust Museum
In the United States, the most thorough pedagogical documentation of the Holocaust, which presents the historical timeline of the Holocaust from beginning to end, is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.²⁴ Almost all the contents of the Museum's permanent exhibition are actual artifacts—objects, photos, oral histories, eyewitness evidence, including the testimony of survivors, and documentary footage. These objects tell a story, a history of the Holocaust, from its beginning through its middle to its end making, the Museum an important pedagogical tool.²⁵ Though the purpose of the Holocaust Museum is to teach a lesson and preserve memory, and not to answer the claims of those who say the event never happened, the institution ends up doing this as well.

Inscribed on the walls of the building and repeated at the beginning of the Museum's permanent exhibition are the words of General Eisenhower after witnessing the Ohrdruf concentration camp following its liberation—the first publicized testimony by an American on the atrocities of the Holocaust:

The things I saw beggar description ... the visual evidence

The Issue of Holocaust Denial: Basic Books

The most valuable sources on the issue of the denial of the Holocaust are Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), and Kenneth Stern's *Holocaust Denial* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1993). Other leading sources on the topic are Pierre Vidal-Naquet's *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Shelly Shapiro's *Truth Prevails: Demolishing Holocaust Denial: The End of "The Leuchter Report"* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1990); and Marc Caplan's *Hitler's Apologists: The Anti-Semitic Propaganda of Holocaust "Revisionism"* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1993).

and verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were overpowering...I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations to propaganda.²⁶

Adding to the pedagogical and documentary value of the Museum is the Wexner Learning Center, a multi-media center where visitors can access, on a single screen, various media of original documentation on the Holocaust—documentary footage, photos, survivors and eyewitness testimonies, music, maps and a daily Holocaust chronology.

Teachers at the high school level can take advantage of the various archival collections of the Holocaust Museum's scholarly division—the United States Holocaust Research Institute. The Institute's archive consists of a Documents Archive, Photo Archive, Oral History Archive, Film and Video Archive, Library, and Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. The notion of "archives" should not be treated as an unfriendly concept by classroom educators. The access to primary sources that they provide offers teachers at all levels a major opportunity.

A notable resource of the Research

Institute is its especially rich archival collection of materials from Eastern Europe, Germany, and the former U.S.S.R. Much of the material captured by the Red Army in 1945, and then sequestered for forty-five years in Soviet archives, has been made available to western scholars with the dissolution of the Communist bloc. A significant part of this material is in the Research Institute's archives, making it one of the largest repositories of Holocaust documentation.

The Education Department of the Museum also offers teacher training workshops for educators wishing to incorporate the Holocaust into their curricula, and a teacher's Resource Center, equipped with teaching guides arranged according to specific topics, e.g. ghettos, camps, etc. and various media useful for Holocaust education. During the two years since the museum's opening, the Resource Center has responded to more than 70,000 requests from educators.

Conclusion

Teachers can teach the Holocaust by utilizing all the objective sources and scientific methodologies appropriate for teaching history. The singularity of the Final Solution in human history makes it an emotional subject, but emotion and historicity are not mutually exclusive. As with other historical events, the Holocaust has had its share of historiographical debates. The facts about the Holocaust are not, however, a matter of debate, and teachers need not hesitate to point out the racist ideologies and lack of academic credentials of deniers of the Holocaust. In the words of Deborah Lipstadt, truth does not have to "be on the defensive."²⁷ ■

Notes

1 Perhaps the best known case of a claim that Jews were never gassed was that of Fred Leuchter, a self-described engineer from Massachusetts (Leuchter has no engineering credentials). Leuchter spent three days at Auschwitz and one in Majdanek to determine whether systematic gassing occurred there. Upon his return, he published his finding in *The Leuchter Report: An Engineering Report on the Alleged Execution Gas Chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Majdanek, Poland*. Leuchter based his finding on "forensic samples" he gathered while inspecting the remains of the gas chambers. His findings were dismissed by engineers, historians, and officials of

the State Museum at Auschwitz.

- 2 There are revisionist schools on some of the major historical events of this century. Among the best-known are those on the origins and outcomes of World War I and the Cold War. However, the revisionist schools revise the traditional historiography of these events. They interpret, but do not deny, the fact of their existence.
- 3 Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying The Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993).
- 4 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 5 *Ibid.* Cited in Richard Harwood's 28-page booklet *Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth At Last*.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 7 Cited by Lipstadt from John C. Obert, "Yockey: Profile of an American Hitler," *The Investigator* (Oct. 1981): 8.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 138. As a result of his "racist politics," Brandon (McCalden) was denied membership into the English National Union of Journalists.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Cited in Michael Shermer, "Proving the Holocaust: The Refutation of Revisionism and the Restoration of History," in *Skeptic* 2, no. 4 (1994).
- 12 Lipstadt, *Denying The Holocaust*, 143.
- 13 In 1986, David Duke, who denied that Jews were killed in the gas chambers, declared that "Jews deserve to go into the ash bin of history." Jason Berry, "Duke's Disguise," *The New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1991.
- 14 Lipstadt, 158. Zundel established a publishing house, Samisdat Publications, which has reprinted and distributed anti-Semitic and racist literature.
- 15 David Irving, *Hitler's War* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).
- 16 Cited in Robert Harris, *Selling Hitler* (New York: 1986)
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Rudolf Hoess, *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess*, (Cleveland: World Press, 1959), 166. Hoess was arrested in 1946. In the Krakow jail where he was held, Hoess wrote an autobiography in which he described the implementation of the Final Solution. At the Hoess trial, held before a Polish war crimes tribunal from March 11 to 29, 1947, the sending of Jews to the gas chambers was reconstructed by Hoess's testimony.
- 19 Raul Hilberg (ed.), *Documents of Destruction* (London: W.H. Allen, 1972); John Mendelsohn (ed.), *The Holocaust: Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982); Y. Arad, S. Krakowski, S. Spector (eds), *Einsatzgruppen Reports* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989); Danuta Czech (ed.), *Auschwitz Chronicle* (New York: H. Holt, 1990); Michael Berenbaum and Yisrael Gutman (eds.), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- 20 Publications on the postwar trials, including the minutes of the Nuremberg and other trials of major war criminals, as well as secondary accounts, are widely available in public and university libraries. Documentary footage of the Nuremberg and other postwar trials, notably the Eichmann trial, is also available. One outstanding published source on the Nurem-

berg trials is International Military Tribunal, *The Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, Blue Series* (Nuremberg: 42 volumes, 1947-1949).

21 "What Do We Know About the Holocaust," interview with Raul Hilberg. Conducted by Michael Berenbaum, Director, United States Holocaust Research Institute (of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), February 1994.

22 *Ibid.* Berenbaum interview with Hilberg.

23 *Ibid.*

24 The Holocaust Museum opened in April 1993. It has since had approximately three million visitors. According to a survey, over 60% of the visitors are not Jewish.

25 Following a 1980 Congressional vote mandating the establishment of a memorial in Washington, D.C. to all the victims of the Holocaust, it was initially decided to build a "memorial" in the Washington sense of the word—a monument. This posed a pedagogical problem. One does not learn a complete story, or any story, from a monument. Monuments memorialize stories that are already known. The story of the Holocaust was not known to the majority of Americans. Therefore, it was decided, for pedagogical reasons, to build a chronological exhibit to document the story of the Holocaust.

26 Eisenhower visited the site of Ohrdruf concentration camp on April 4, 1945. See Judah Nadich, *Eisenhower and the Jews* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1953). Eisenhower's statement is an illustration of the fact that much documentation of the Holocaust is from American and other Allied sources. Much of the documentation is currently in American archives, such as the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

27 "What Do We Know About Holocaust Denial." Interview conducted by the author with Deborah Lipstadt, February 1994. This interview was conducted as part of an effort by the Research Institute of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to educate university students with the facts on Holocaust denial. This effort was in response to a string of advertisements by Holocaust deniers which were printed in university newspapers throughout the country in 1994. In addition to an interview with Lipstadt, students receive an interview with Raul Hilberg and a letter from Walter Rockler, a leading attorney and prosecutor at Nuremberg Trials, who demonstrates that the printing of denial ads is not a civil liberties issue. Newspapers are under no obligation to take money to publish the opinions of racists.

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Document 1

A letter from Moses Seixas, Warden of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Newport, Rhode Island, to President George Washington, August 17, 1790

Source: Papers of George Washington, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

To the President of the United States of America.



Permit the children of the Stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person & merits - And to join with our fellow citizens in welcoming you to our Coast.

With pleasure we reflect on those days - those days of difficulty & danger when the God of Israel, who delivered David from the peril of the sword - directed his head in the day of battle: - And we rejoice to think, that the same Spirit, who assisted in the bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel enabling him to baffle over the Thrones of the Babylonish Empire, will and ever will rest upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of Chief Magistrate in these States.

Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free Citizens, we now find with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty dispenser of all events, a Government, erected by the Magistrates of the People - a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance - but generously affords a bold liberty of conscience, and immunities of Citizenship: - admitting every one, of whatever Nation, Colour, or Language, equal parts of the great governmental Machine: - This ample and extensive Federal Union which is the result of Liberty, Mutual Confidence and Union: - Hence, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the great God, the result in the Remus of Heaven and among the Persuasions of the Earth, being what ever we wish him good.

Document 1 (continued)

For all the Blessings of civil and religious Liberty which we enjoy under an
 and benign Administration, we desire to send up our Thanks to the Author of Days, the
 great Preserver of Men - reflecting him, that the Angel who conducted our
 through the Wilderness into the promised Land, may graciously conduct you through all
 the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life. - And when like Joshua, full of Years
 and full of Honor, you are gathered to your Fathers, may you be admitted into the
 Heavenly Paradise to partake of the Water of Life, and the Tree of Immortality.

Done and Signed by Order of the Hebrew Congregation in
 Newport Rhode Island August 17th 1790.

Moses Seixas, Warden

Transcription of Document 1

A letter from Moses Seixas, Warden of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Newport, Rhode Island, to President George Washington, August 17, 1790

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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With pleasure we reflect on those days, of difficulty and danger, when the God of Israel, who delivered David from the peril of the sword,—shielded your head in the day of battle:—and we rejoice to think that the same Spirit who rested in the bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel, enabling him to preside over the Provinces of the Babylonish Empire, rests and ever will rest upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of Chief Magistrate in these States.

Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free citizens, we now (with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty dispenser of all events) behold a Government, erected by the Majesty of the People.—a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance—but generously affording to All liberty of conscience, and immunities of Citizenship:—deeming every one, of whatever Nation, tongue, or language equal parts of the great governmental machine:—This so ample and extensive Federal Union whose basis is Philanthropy, mutual-confidence and Publick Virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the Great God, who ruleth in the Armies of Heaven and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, doing whatsoever seemeth him good.

For all the Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal and benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the ancient of days, the great preserver of men—beseeking him, that the Angel who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised land, may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life:—And, when like Joshua full of days and full of honour, you are gathered to your Fathers, may you be admitted into the Heavenly Paradise to partake of the water of life, and the tree of immortality.

Done and signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in NewPort Rhode Island, August 17th, 1790.

Moses Seixas. Warden.

Document 2

A letter from President George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, August 21, 1790

Source: This document is on long-term loan to the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Museum, Washington, D.C. Used by permission of the Morganstern Foundation.

To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport
"Rhode Island.

Gentlemen.

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your Address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of Citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and a happy people.

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal

Document 2 (continued)

policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All profess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the

the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations ^{useful} here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. Washington

Transcription of Document 2

A letter from President George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, August 21, 1790

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The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

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G. Washington

In his reply, Washington endorsed the Congregation's definition of a government that "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." But he went much further, telling the Jews that liberty of conscience is not a gift of the government, but their "inherent natural right."

This full liberty of conscience, so movingly espoused by the "Father of our country," remains the first principle of the American way of life. For the first time in history, a nation committed itself to move beyond persecution, and even beyond toleration, to "free exercise" of religion. Though America's history has been marred by outbreaks of persecution and religious bigotry, the United States has achieved a degree of religious liberty unprecedented in the world's history. Religious liberty, freedom of conscience, remains America's greatest gift to world civilization.

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Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities. (1986). *The Legacy of Roger Williams*.

Suggestions for Using the Documents

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between "toleration" and "free exercise of religion?" Why was this distinction particularly significant for the first American Jews?
2. How does Roger Williams' conception of "soul liberty" differ from other ideas of liberty?
3. What is the meaning of the phrase "inherent natural rights"? What are our natural rights?
4. Why did most societies of the 17th century view freedom of conscience for people of all faiths or none as a dangerous idea?
5. Religious liberty or freedom of conscience has been called America's "first liberty." Why?
6. Although religious liberty is guaranteed by the First Amendment, has America always lived up to this ideal? Discuss positive and negative chapters in America's experiment with religious liberty.

Extension Activities

1. Assign four students to prepare brief oral reports about the biblical characters mentioned in the Hebrew Congregation's letter (Abraham, David, Daniel, and Joshua). After the reports are given, have the class discuss how each of these characters is used in the letter. What is the point being made in each case?
2. President Washington ends his letter with a quote from the Hebrew scriptures (Micah 4:4). Ask the class if anyone recognizes the reference. If not, send the class on a detective hunt to find the source and identify the exact text.
3. Ask students to discuss with their parents the Hebrew Congregation's letter and Washington's reply. How has religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, been important in their lives or the lives of their ancestors?

Research Topics

1. What were the religious convictions of George Washington?
2. Why were the Jews persecuted in Europe for centuries?
3. Baptists consider Roger Williams one of their founding fathers. How did Williams shape the Baptist view of religious liberty?
4. Investigate the history of the Jewish community in Newport, Rhode Island. What is the status of the congregation there today?
5. When and how did the Jews of New Amsterdam finally enjoy full religious liberty?

Additional Resources

Cousins, Norman, ed. (1958). *In God We Trust: The Religious Beliefs and Ideas of the American Founding Fathers*. New York: Harper and Brothers. A useful collection of writings concerning religion by Washington and other Founding Fathers.

In Search of Tolerance. (1978). Del Mar, Calif.: McGraw-Hill. A film that discusses the European background of religious groups whose search for freedom brought them to America. Includes Anabaptists, Huguenots, Puritans, and Quakers.

Jews in America. (1973). New York: Anti-Defamation League. A two-part filmstrip and discussion guide covering 300 years of Jewish life in the U.S.

Morgan, Edmund. (1987). *Roger Williams: The Church and State*. New York: W. W. Norton. The best discussion of Roger Williams' views on religious liberty.

ANALYSIS OF 5TH, 8th, and 11th GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTS FOR INCLUSION OF KEY HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

At a recent National Council for the Social Studies conference, held November 18-22, 1993 in Nashville, Tennessee, 5th, 8th and 11th grade history texts from every major publisher of textbooks were analyzed to document the inclusion of historical documents. Such documents include the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Mayflower Compact, George Washington's Farewell Address, etc.

5th grade summary:

* Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution - Included in:
Our Country, 1993, Silver Burdett Ginn, pgs. 650-681.

Exploring America's Heritage, 1991, Heath, pgs. 560-591.

The United States: Its History and Neighbors, 1993, Harcourt Brace Javanovich, pgs. R 4-37.

* Mayflower Compact - Mentioned (no text of complete document) in:

Our Country, p. 162.

Exploring America's Heritage, p. 165.

The United States: Its History and Neighbors, p. 177.

* Washington's Farewell Address - Not mentioned in any of the above texts.

** Silver Burdett Ginn texts are most widely used in Kansas 5th grade classrooms.

8th grade summary:

* Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution - Included in:
One Flag, One Land, 1990, Silver Burdett Ginn, pgs. 152-156 and 194-219.

The Story of America, 1991, Holt Rinehart Winston, pgs. 158-161 and 200-218.

A More Perfect Union, 1991, Houghton Mifflin, pgs. 636-659.

* Mayflower Compact - Included in:

One Flag, One Nation, p. 77.

The Story of America, pgs. 53-54.

A More Perfect Union, p. 663.

- * Washington's Farewell Address - Mentioned in:
The Story of America, pgs. 251-253.
 Not included in Silver Burdett Ginn or Houghton Mifflin texts.
- * Alexis DeTocqueville's Democracy in America - Some references from this book found in Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. No reference to family life or the moral climate of the country, a prominent observation of DeTocqueville in writing the book.
- ** Silver Burdett Ginn is most widely used in Kansas 8th grade classrooms. Holt Rinehart Winston, and Houghton Mifflin are also widely used.

11th grade summary:

- * Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution - Included in:
History of the United States, 1991, Houghton Mifflin, pgs. 92-95 and 138-164.
America's Story, 1990, Houghton Mifflin, pgs. 180-183 and 206-235.
The Americans: A History, 1991, McDougal Littell, pgs. 121-123 and 156-172.
- * Mayflower Compact - Full text included in:
History of the United States, p. R 16.

Mentioned in:

America's Story, p. 80.
The Americans: A History, p. 25

- * Washington's Farewell Address - Mentioned in:
History of the United States, p. R 18.
The Americans: A History, p. 221.

** Houghton Mifflin texts are one of the most widely used in Kansas 11th grade classrooms.

Social Studies Textbook Use in Kansas:

Approximately 1/4 of Kansas School Districts were surveyed to determine what textbooks are used to teach Social Studies.

Analysis of texts done by:

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