

Land and Liberty II: The Basics of Traditional American History

Basic Lessons, Essential Truths and Principles,
Defining Liberty and Freedom, Establishing
Citizenship Education, Understanding the
Declaration of Independence and U.S.
Constitution

David Warren Saxe
American History Project
The Pennsylvania State University

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*Land and Liberty II:
The Basics of Traditional American History*

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Contact Information:
American History Project
Penn State University
225 Chambers Building
State College, PA 16802

To Patrick Henry, who said what was needed; to Thomas Jefferson, who penned a declaration; to John Adams, who managed a war; and to George Washington, who won it—and to all those who shared then and continue now such battles: suffering, sacrificing, and enduring, and most importantly putting others ahead of themselves.

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PREFACE

REMEMBERING TRADITIONAL AMERICAN HISTORY IN AN AGE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth.” Diogenes

Until Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1438 (as near as we can tell), for more than 1,000 years medieval monks kept the lamps of learning burning. Copying one page at a time, a great storehouse of knowledge was gifted to the Western world. Without the monks’ perseverance, skill, patience, and most importantly, the will to complete this task, much knowledge would have been lost and our lives and history itself would have been altered in unimagined ways. It was upon this knowledge our Western Civilization was built and the pillars of the American nation were seated.

If the knowledge preserved by medieval institutions and accumulated since provides the foundations of Western Civilization, what was so special about this knowledge? More directly, how do we explain the rise of civilization in the West and the factors that established its virtual supremacy over all other peoples? To many, such questions are thought shockingly Eurocentric, yet, they remain as vital as they are vexing. Scholars such as Rodney Stark have suggested that the Church was responsible for the beginnings of freedom, capitalism, and Western success. Others place the focus on the creation and spread of knowledge, not capitalism, faith, or reason. While this book centers on the rise of the American nation, our British and European legacies are acknowledged and honored. In the spirit of

those whose efforts maintained reason in its many formulations and applications, traditionalists stand humbled and ready to serve posterity.

The preservation of knowledge is an obligation of humanity, to maintain what is known for future generations. While great libraries house millions of books, in time, these books shall turn to dust and the contents of the books shall be lost. To be sure, while nature will take its toll, much is being done to preserve knowledge in new electronic/digital forms. Yet, this too is vulnerable. While the storage of knowledge within our fixed and electronic depositories presents challenges, knowledge possessed by individual citizens raises new and different tests. Between informal and formal surveys and Jay Leno type man-on-the-street questions, Americans are as dumb as bricks when it comes to the history of their own nation. If true, I leave such numbskulls to their well-deserved fate (to be and become the servants of savvy others). Rather, this work seeks to preserve traditional American history for more willing others.

The paradox of twenty-first century education is that at one end we labor to preserve knowledge, while at the other schools and teachers are abandoning traditional knowledge—and worse, deliberately destroying knowledge, particularly the ideas and ways of our British-American heritage.

Why?

It is a common phenomenon throughout history; people destroy that which they do not like, consider useless, wrong, embarrassing, and/or dangerous. Often the destruction is not malicious or deliberate, just careless ignorance and stupidity (like my sister throwing out my 1950s-1960s baseball cards!), but at other times destruction is intentional. Notable examples include,

- Egyptian pharaohs defacing the images of displaced rulers from walls and statues;
- Romans destroying Carthage and everything connected to it, and then dumping salt on the remains to kill it forever;
- For whatever reason, someone or something destroying the cultural clues to the Cahokia mound builders;
- Spanish burning Aztec documents, effectively erasing histories of these ancient peoples;
- Catholics destroying Protestant works as if to end their protest;

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- Protestants destroying Catholic works as if to end their dominance;
- Hitler doing all he could to erase Jews from the face of the earth;
- Afghanistan Taliban destroying temples and eradicating remains of alien religions.

So, history and contemporary events demonstrate that man has a penchant to destroy such things—what else is new? Is it any different in the United States?

For the past forty years American education has taken a turn toward so-called more inclusive forms. Applying such euphemisms as multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice,—often with the best of intentions—cultural warriors replaced older forms of education that did not fit their liberalizing agenda.

Connecting the destruction of Aztec artifacts to the destruction of traditional American history might sound too harsh, but the result was similar—destroying the political/cultural heritage a people. The greatest danger to our sacred republic of rights is that today's teachers no longer teach the essential truths and principles of American history—this book is devoted to the revival of this lost form.

INTRODUCTION

“Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.” John Adams, 1765

If there is a theme that pervades *Land and Liberty: The Basics of Traditional American History*, it is John Adams’s dare in the pursuit of knowledge—knowledge that underscores our liberty. Here, American history is writ large, as it once was and as it should be. Here, history is told through traditional voices, the product of free expression, the highest and noblest art of academe. This work was not meant to please or placate any group or faction; in fact, it shall displease and offend many. Knowing that traditional accounts are viewed with distain and suspicion, the author assumes full responsibility for whatever errors this work contains (and stands cheerfully by for corrections). The author also accepts no credit for whatever blessings may be gleaned from these pages (as others have presented this story with greater style and better verse).

The essential question for public education is simple: What content is necessary for citizenship? Since the founding, history and civics have been central to the mission of citizenship education—the traditional approach being, to focus on such things as the founding principles, the words and deeds of great men and women, and seminal turning events, all centered on the grand narrative of American history.

The foundation for citizenship was laid at the beginning of the nation, but perhaps the best assessment and remedy for the challenges of government and education was given by Abraham Lincoln. A mere sixty-three years from the “shot heard ‘round the world” at Lexington-Concord and a scant twenty-three to the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter, Lincoln summarized:

I know the American People are *much* attached to their Government;—I know they would suffer *much* for its sake;—I know they would endure evils long and patiently, before they

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would ever think of exchanging it for another. Yet, notwithstanding all this, if the laws be continually despised and disregarded, if their rights to be secure in their persons and property, are held by no better tenure than the caprice of a mob, the alienation of their affections from the Government is the natural consequence; and to that, sooner or later, it must come.

Having described the potential dangers, Lincoln then poses the essential question, “how shall we fortify against [the destruction of our government]?” Lincoln’s answer:

Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor;—let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children’s liberty. Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges;—let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;—let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the *political religion* of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.¹

Until the past three decades, as delivered by teachers and underscored by history textbooks, traditional history modeled Lincoln’s inclusive requirements. This history was largely celebratory, but not to a fault. Nonetheless, it was intentionally designed to instill patriotism and love of country—two virtues essential to the health and welfare of this republic of liberty and freedom.

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Sadly such ideas, passion, and practice have gone out of fashion.

For public schooling, while the mission of citizenship through traditional American history and civics remains in form, since the 1970s an explosion of ideas and scholarship emanating from higher education has redirected this vital mission. The once common, uplifting traditional American history and civics fostering patriotism and love of country has been replaced with instruction that often engenders cynical attitudes about the United States, its past, its institutions, and its law. No one disputes the importance of skeptical and inquiring citizens, and the role of higher education to research American history should remain open. However, whatever American history and civics have become in higher education (a means to social justice activism, a reflection of diversity-multicultural politics, presentations of histories that highlight America's failures), basic education is obligated to the mission of producing citizens who not only know the grand narrative of American history, but understand (if not embrace) its founding principles.

This delicate division between the mission of basic and higher education should not and must not be dissolved. Certainly, as adults, citizens are completely free of public education and may pursue happiness as they will. However, public education cannot be expected to abrogate its traditional mission of instilling, fostering, and modeling a love of nation in favor of aping the sort of faux American history and civics commonly taught in higher education. Without flinching, understanding its place in public education to be unique, this book unabashedly embraces the mission of traditional American history for all American citizens.

On specific content, it has been said that nothing succeeds greater than an idea whose time has come. Liberty was such an idea, and the times—the struggle for American Independence—, provided its stage. Yet, ideas cannot be activated without the will, energy, and conviction of motivated men and women. The second paragraph of our Declaration of Independence has been hailed as the greatest expression of human liberty ever written. With the Declaration's words, a nation was founded. And from the Declaration's ideas, a new way of life was introduced. These core values can be found in the second paragraph of Jefferson's

amazing Declaration—words that inspired great thoughts and ideas that animated great deeds.

There is no greater lesson for our young citizens—indeed, all citizens—than to understand the inspired words and animating ideas found in the Declaration. Yet, knowing these words and ideas are not enough. Our young people must also learn the consequences of these words and ideas. More specifically, how these words and ideas, etched on a mere skiff of paper, have played out in the lives of Americans throughout our history—from the first heroes at Lexington-Concord to our valiant soldiers fighting oppression and tyranny today.

Land and Liberty highlights the premise that ideas have consequences—such as, that for all the glories of liberty have come the chains of slavery. When viewed at the personal level, there are few lessons that carry such weighty dilemmas for young minds. How is it that the birth of American liberty shielded the horrors of slavery? Clues to the answer, found in the Declaration, explain that the object of government was to *secure* liberty—that the idea of liberty embraced all (in theory), but it did not come to all at once (in practice). In time, through the workings of government operating under the Constitution, liberty was extended. For example, the franchise, at first held by few white males was later extended to all males white and black, then women, and most recently enjoyed by eighteen year-olds. Yet, as evidenced with our struggle for civil rights, securing liberty by name has been no guarantee of liberty in fact. On that point, the best means to protect our liberties is to remain knowledgeable and vigilant.

The reality of our human foibles, well-known from our Nation's beginnings, informs our instruction: “men are not angels” and our nation is a “more perfect Union,” not always perfect Union. These salient facts drive our instruction with the imperative that citizens must not only know our founding principles and the nature of our republican government, they must come to accept and embrace this model as the best available to secure liberty. The founding ideas, captured so elegantly by Jefferson and his colleagues, requires knowledge, but also respect—the respect to extend and support liberty and rights to others as much as to ourselves.

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In framing the work of *Land and Liberty*, the book is focused on the establishment and growth of liberty and freedom, our Nation's founding, the founders, the context of the founding, and, of course, its astonishing legacy. Following traditional American history content, the following themes are traced:

- The development and function of local, State, and Federal governments and citizens' responsibilities with respect to these institutions
- Significant issues, episodes, and turning points [of American history]
- How the words and deeds of individuals determined the course of the U.S.
- How principles of freedom and democracy articulated in the founding documents of the U.S. shaped the Nation's struggles and achievements

As noted, these features highlight American history writ large—the way American history and civics used to be taught. As suggested, since the 1960s American history and civics instruction have been slowly converted by such forms and themes as diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. This conversion of educational pursuits fosters a reflexive criticism and skepticism of government that unfortunately has been accepted as an unquestioned good. The rejection of such instruction and substitution of other forms does not promote the health and vitality of the republic.

While the infusion of inclusion in American history has produced a tremendous amount of scholarship that has enriched our understanding of the past, in the subsequent revision of American history, the emphasis on inclusion has distorted, and in some cases prompted a disregard for historical accuracy. That is, the history of our Nation's founding does not fit neatly into the modern-day diversity-inclusive paradigm. Consequently, our Nation's founding forged by white males of largely identical cultural, social, and class backgrounds is often misunderstood, dismissed, ignored, or distorted. In sum, an inclusive approach to the founding clouds and distorts the history to the point where young learners cannot and do not grasp the vitality of the founding itself. For example, rather than learning and embracing essential principles such as “all men are equal”—an idea that applies to

every citizen—students become lost, cynical, and/or disillusioned by instruction emphasizing that women and minorities were excluded in the writing of our founding documents. While obviously true in practice, it was not true in theory and not true in how the Constitution has played out over time. This subversive instruction overlooks the stunning changes that did occur—results so carefully documented by Alexis de Tocqueville who observed the Revolution’s second generation where “equality of conditions” prevailed—a legacy that continues to the present.

As opposed to prevailing models of instruction, a traditional approach to the founding and American history in general focuses on the significant, the turning points, the words and deeds of those who determined the course of American history, and most particularly, on the founding principles. While inclusive history remains important to study, citizens cannot understand, appreciate, and embrace America’s founding principles without first coming to grip with its grand narrative.

Land and Liberty: The Basics of Traditional American History presents the problem that legions of citizens face—history lessons mired in errors, misrepresentations, distortions, and lies. By providing an alert and traces of corrective information to permit further exploration and study, *Land and Liberty* applies an old teaching technique: stimulate the study of American history by presenting contrary information—information that stands in opposition to conventional American history teaching. With questions, information, and disconcerting puzzles in place, readers will be prepared to consider, study, and carefully reflect on American history. The result of this effort is aimed at citizens detaching themselves from prevailing ahistorical nonsense in order to embrace greater truths.

One final caveat is required before we launch into this corrective. The past is gone and cannot be recaptured or recreated in total or even in significant parts. At best, looking at the past is like peering into a darkened house on a moonlit night with a candle as guide. We see the house, but we cannot enter without a key. We find a key and enter, but cannot see very much or very well. We become easily mesmerized by mirrors we may find, pausing more to see our reflection than to witness what stands plain in front of us.

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While the how and why of history becomes tangled and tossed by each passing year, ideas endure and ideas lay at the bottom of this treatment—the traditional ideas that Lincoln so eloquently outlined and those ideas American citizens in any age cannot live without.

Introduction Notes

¹ Abraham Lincoln, (January 27, 1838). Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois

CHAPTER ONE

HALF-BAKED HISTORY: TOP ELEVEN MISTAUGHT LESSONS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

“Law and liberty cannot rationally become the objects of our love, unless they first become the objects of our knowledge.” James Wilson, 1790

Back in 1912, Professor Harold Hill attempted to teach the boys of River City, Iowa, to play band instruments with his improvisation of the “think system.”

“If you think the minuet in A, you can play it,” the crafty flimflam man told the boys.

While Meredith Willson’s charming Broadway and Hollywood hit *The Music Man* continues to delight audiences, the idea of know-nothing American history teachers is no laughing matter. However, the theatrical example of Professor Hill is instructive. Professor Hill used the “think system” to teach something he knew nothing about. Our American history teachers use the “believe system” to do the same.

As these teachers *must* believe that they are contributing to the civic education of the next generation of Americans, we must *also* believe that our American history teachers are preparing young people for citizenship. The idea that tens of thousands of American history teachers would deliberately deprive the two million plus students enrolled in American history every year of vital knowledge is a horrifying thought.

Rather than branding teachers willful knowledge snuffers, we must pardon the unprepared for their naiveté in *believing* they are

contributing to the civic education of the next generation. By definition, unprepared teachers cannot instill the truths and principles of American history because they do not know them. That violates the first rule of teaching:

“You cannot teach what you do not know.”

In schools, however, not knowing the truths and principles does not prevent the vast army of unprepared teachers from plowing through textbooks empty of truths and principles. When that happens, teachers violate the second rule of teaching:

“Students cannot learn what is not taught.”

Finally, teachers impose an understanding of American history that is incomplete, ill formed, and based on skewed ideology. Foisting such deficient history on impressionable students whose citizenship is merely embryonic, violates the third rule of teaching:

“Teachers do not own the mind of the child.”

Acting *in loco parentis* (in the place of parents), not only are teachers obligated to do no harm; they must refrain from all forms of indoctrination. The point is to teach students how, not what to think. This vital task involves providing the tools, forum, practice, and basic information necessary to explore issues. Schooling is not an opportunity to exploit captive audiences for partisan causes.¹ Even if tools, practice, and a forum are withheld, denying young people access to information vital to their citizenship is tantamount to criminal behavior. For this transgression, teachers bear an enormous responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Putting all your content and pedagogical eggs in the textbook basket with unprepared teachers, as too many administrators allow, renders the entire system of pre-collegiate teaching vulnerable to abuse and misuse. Rather than using education to free individuals from ignorance, to separate truth from fiction, to raise independent citizens capable of making informed judgments based on reliable evidence, those who know how to manipulate teachers and textbooks find ways to abuse and distort history as a means to further other ends.

Teachers unaware of this mischief and handicapped by their own ignorance of American history are unable to spot and neutralize proselytizing social engineers. When the social engineers have their way, the result is a distorted history incapable of producing fully aware and endowed citizens.

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Supposing a fox has taken the curricular hen house, taking advantage of poorly prepared teachers, what mischief has been cooked up with this half-baked history?

Every year, students and colleagues reveal horror stories about mistaught lessons. In chronological order, the following represent the top eleven lessons routinely bungled by thousands of teachers across the country every year.

Top Eleven Mistaught Lessons of American History

Topic	What's Taught	What Should Be Taught
1. Columbus	Evil racist who oppressed and murdered Native Americans	Columbus discovered the New World
2. Indians	Native Americans were exterminated by armies of evil racists whose government stole their lands	In the quest for land and Manifest Destiny, individuals, families, and groups of determined settlers fought and defeated disorganized adversaries
3. George Washington	Racist slave owner with bad teeth, claimed to be "father of his country: but was childless	"King" of United States who voluntarily walked away from his throne, launching a new nation
4. Thomas Jefferson	Racist slave owner who raped Sally Hemmings	Author of greatest political paragraph of all time, "We hold these truths. . ."
5. Declaration of Independence	Racist, sexist, contradictory document that excludes and oppresses and minorities, Native Americans, and women	Established United States as independent, sovereign nation, established life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as vital truths and set "all men are created equal" as its governing principle

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<p>6. Andrew Jackson</p>	<p>Racist president with big hair, sent Native Americans to certain death on Trail of Tears</p>	<p>Colorful general and president who invited common men and women into the White House</p>
<p>7. Nat Turner</p>	<p>Enslaved African American who led slave rebellion against racists</p>	<p>Psychotic murderer who methodically beheaded and dismembered ten-year-old children (among others) in the name of the Lord</p>
<p>8. Civil War (War Between the States)</p>	<p>Racist fight that led to more discrimination and oppression against minorities</p>	<p>632,000 Anglo-Saxons slaughtered in battle over liberty and freedom; independence was lost and federal control established</p>
<p>9. Plessy versus Ferguson</p>	<p>Racists Supreme Court justices continue the evil</p>	<p>Courts interpret the Constitution, legislatures make laws and majorities rule; it's called "separation of powers with "checks and balances"</p>
<p>10. Japanese Internment, Holocaust, Dropping A-Bomb</p>	<p>Three bad things that happened during World War II caused, of course, by racism</p>	<p>Japanese and Germans were enemies of the United States in WW II; the United States with its Allies destroyed these enemies of freedom and the American way of life</p>
<p>11. Joseph McCarthy</p>	<p>What bigots did to racial minorities, this U.S. Senator did to innocent American dissidents—McCarthyism is synonymous with sovereign loving, flag waving, stupid patriots</p>	<p>Hundreds of American citizens work as Communist "agents" of espionage and disinformation; heavily engaged in stealing American secrets and undermining American institutions and culture</p>

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Breaking down these representative samples, we find that each mistaught lesson provides valuable insight on key elements missing in American history. When students are given the opportunity to consider a more comprehensive picture of the past, they quickly realize that teachers and textbooks do not hold the patent on American history. Here the educational process begins. Young citizens should not be pointed in a single direction, but provided tools and a map to plot their own course for happiness.

Before we explore each topic, we notice the hammering theme of racism. Since the 1960s, at every turn, students are drilled on the themes of abuse, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. With few exceptions, withstanding the worst of these unhappy themes are minorities, Native Americans, women, and the occasional hapless white male. Next to nature, we are repeatedly told, the cause of these misfortunes is the racism and sexism of white males. The theory that drives this charge of white racism and male sexism, we are told, was that such racism and sexism was endemic in the past, and given that correctives were impossible to institute, it follows that this racism and sexism continues in the present. In fact, given that no cure for white racism and male sexism is possible, we can only work to mitigate results.

This racism/sexism theory is nonsense. It is merely an ideological invention of twentieth century Marxism meant to politicize the past for present political purposes. Such “history” has no place in the actual past. That is, past peoples had no operational or methodological concept of what is now supposed or labeled as racism or sexism—past peoples merely acted within the parameters of their own prevailing sensibilities. Any competent study of history reveals the painful truth of the racism myth. Witness the 632,000 men who died in the Civil War—in effect, white men deliberately and viciously killing fellow white men. In fact, most of America’s wars involved racial partners in bloody horrific battles to the death. We have to look for more plausible cause-and-effect explanations.

We start this historical corrective with glimpses of the eleven bungled lessons often mistaught in American schools.

Teachers ignorant of the past have no clue about Columbus, Jefferson, Turner, Indians, or anything else on the top ten (eleven) list. They only know what they have read and been told: the evil of

racism is the source of America's problems. Because they do not possess the knowledge, training, or experience necessary to teach the essentials and fundamentals of American history, they cannot help themselves or their students. Those ignorant of truth cannot recognize distortion.

Still, in practice, it does not matter if teachers are ignorant of history or deliberately manipulating students by withholding the truths and principles of American history. The results are the same. Manipulated history is distorted history. Distorted history is ripe with error. History filled with error is not history or "perspective," it is propaganda. Teachers who use propaganda as content are not teachers, but proselytizers. As remedy, the sunlight of truth is the only known solvent for propaganda and leveler of proselytizers.

Columbus: The First Deception

Beginning with Columbus, the point of the new history is to de-center (as the postmodernist say) the focus on Western Civilization. Columbus cannot bridge the Old World to the New because that would require exposing the English (European) roots of liberty and freedom. It would also open the floodgates to explore other political ideas, ways of living, common heritage, culture, and more. Columbus may introduce American history, but he must be remade from a pivotal transitional figure of American history (the last medieval man), to setting the stage for Europeans as harbingers of prejudice, abuse, oppression, racism, and death. All students need to know about Columbus is that he initiated the destruction of Native Americans and introduced slavery.

To set the stage for the social justice version of American history, the story of America must begin with Native Americans. Each of the contemporary textbooks reviewed for this book adopts what is known as the "Three Worlds Theory." However much these authors push the point, this fact remains: the Indians inhabited the Americas for thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of years without establishing a single democratic institution. Yet, within twenty years, English colonists had two (the beginnings of representative government in Virginia and self-rule in New England). By 1787, a fully formed Constitution of rights was

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created. The genesis of this incredible episode of human history cannot be found in the Americas among Indians.

Revising old histories, contemporary textbooks begin with wildly exaggerated Indian population figures that only Doctor Evil posing with his famous pinky would appreciate. One text claims the Indian population ranged as high as 112.5 million.² What is the point about population? The higher the population figures, the greater the destruction once Europeans are brought into the picture. The result? Tens of millions of deaths, enough to surpass the horror of Nazi treatment of Jews in WW II, in sum, the establishment of the American holocaust.

This “history” is, of course, skewed at best. It is undeniably true that the Indians were overwhelmed by the effects of Columbus’s discovery of the New World. Yet, it is nonsense to blame Columbus as if he and other Europeans had committed original sin by “discovering” the lands of “First Nation” peoples. The crossing and “discovery” of the New World were inevitable. Holding Columbus “responsible” for wholesale abuse, oppression, murder, slavery and so-called genocide of native peoples is vastly (and ideologically) misplaced.

A comprehensive study of slavery would reveal some interesting nuggets left out of the conventional stories heard in American schools, colleges, and universities. Namely,

- Every slave who came to the American colonies by way of Africa was first enslaved by African traders prior to sale to Europeans;
- Perhaps as many as half of all enslaved Africans gathered for sale to Europeans died while still in Africa in transit to African slave markets on the coast or perished awaiting sale in Africa or were murdered in Africa because they brought no buyers;
- The vast majority of slaves sent to the New World did not come to North America, and more importantly did not come directly from Africa;
- African slavery (when acknowledged) was not benign or preferable to “American slavery,” as any form of slavery, while then common throughout the world, was offensive to freedom. And finally, and most importantly,
- Europeans did not invent the slave trade.