

# The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

Vol. 15 No. 6

June 2022



## LOOKING BACK!

Born in 1928, I was a depression baby. The immediate decade before I arrived was an era of extravagance, discrimination as well as lawlessness. It was the age of prohibition and it was the age of anti-immigrant sentiment. Adults of the time had headstrong opinions about immigrants, especially those from southern and eastern Europe and any of Asian or African descent. Jews also were on this list. The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act) legitimized many of these opinions. It limited immigration from various areas considered to be undesirable.

Much of this discrimination was based on a pseudo-science called Phrenology, very popular in the 19th century. It was based on an idea that the size and shape of one's head determined their intelligence.

The immigration Act established quotas and made it difficult for certain people to enter the U.S. The "undesirables" were Asians, Italians, Poles, and the Slavic peoples of Eastern and Southern Europe.. English, Irish, German, and Scandinavians were welcome. This law came about as a result of a wide spread idea that the white race had become superior through evolution. The undesirables were not suitable to become American citizens.

Many people, including my own parents and grandparent accepted the idea that the white race was the epitome of God's creation and all others were inferior. Hunkies, Dagos, Africans, and Asians were all less intelligent and unfit to be considered equal to the rest of us.

Going to school in the thirties in Western Pennsylvania, our mostly Anglo-Saxon and Irish student body was joined by the children of the 'undesirables" who had been imported to break strikes and do work no one else would do. In school, I was often shocked to find that Dagos were not dishonest and Pollocks weren't stupid. Some spoke funny but as time went on, everyone became familiar and certainly were not threatening.

But the adult population retained much of its prejudice. I heard immigrant families referred to as Hunkies, Dagos, Wops, and Spics plus a few other choice words that would have gotten my mouth washed out with soap if I had uttered them. As more young people graduated from High School, some of these views began to change, although the older generation continued to hold their prejudices until the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Now the Japs would become the people to hate. As the military expanded, it was all inclusive. No matter if you were a Hunky, Dago or Pole, Uncle Sam wanted you and took you. The military now also became a place where assimilation took place. That guy beside you would look out for you and you for him. Schools were very important in assimilating people of different origins into one society but the military also helped.

One immigrant group was not represented in most schools of Western Pennsylvania in the 1930s. Children of Asian immigrants were not found on class rolls and stereotypes of Chinese and Japanese people continued. Pearl Harbor did much to increase hatred and misunderstanding of Asian peoples. The Chinese Laundryman was still the major stereotypical Asian in town, with restaurants placing second. This absence led to a continuation of misunderstanding of Asian immigrants, some of which we see today.

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## Soldiers & Sailors Hall!

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum houses a vast collection of primary and secondary documents and military artifacts. It is their mission to promote the use of these educational items and create an understanding for all groups who visit the museum. They provide a rich learning experience for all people by exploring the deeds and sacrifices of ordinary citizens during extraordinary circumstance

Education Department 412-621-4253-Ex.210

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**To learn about Soldiers & Sailors sponsorship opportunities,**

**please contact Sarah B. Galiotto**

**VP, Director of Development & Community Relations**

**at [sarah@soldiersandsailorshall.org](mailto:sarah@soldiersandsailorshall.org)**

**Thank You!**

## Classrooms Without Borders

**Confronting the Complexity of Holocaust Scholarship:  
Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of Holocaust  
Studies**

**Wednesday, June 8, 2022**

**3PM ET**

**Zoom | Registration required and closes 30 minutes  
prior to the start of the program**



**USING ANIMATIONS TO TEACH ABOUT THE  
HOLCAUST: Teacher Training with Echoes & Reflection**

**Tuesday, June 14, 2022**

**3:00pm-4:00pm ET**

**[More Info »](#)**

*I changed the face of comedy. I used to be funny.  
Gilbert Gottfried, comedian, 1955-2022*



# The Point

For  
Western Pennsylvania  
Social Studies Educators  
EDITORS  
Leo R. West  
John Larner

*The Point* is the  
e-newsletter  
of the former WPCSS  
issued monthly via e-mail.  
WPCSS was a non-profit 501c  
organization dedicated to promoting  
the teaching and learning of social  
studies in Western Pennsylvania

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Social Studies is...

- The study of how people have interacted with each other and their environment over time.



## How educators can teach history that is ugly, upsetting

Almost all countries have histories that include atrocities, and research shows that any uncomfortable emotions that students feel can help them reevaluate their own -- and society's -- beliefs and practices, writes Natasha Robinson, a research fellow in the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. Robinson details several considerations about teaching students about the ugly and shameful parts of history and how teachers can embrace discomfort. **Full Story:** Chalkbeat/Tennessee (5/5)

## Strategies to help teachers combat misinformation

Teaching students to decipher fact from fiction amid a deluge of online information can be daunting, according to Kimberly Rues, a librarian in Lee's Summit, Mo. In this commentary, she suggests a number of resources to help teachers get started, including The News Literacy Project. **Full Story:** EdSurge (5/5)

## How "Mister Rogers" helped district's teachers shine

Superintendent Sue Mariani took the helm of the 430-student Duquesne City School District near Pittsburgh in 2018, discovering that "the talent was all there" but "[t]he right people were just not in the right places." Mariani explains how some personnel shifts -- and celebrating every teacher on Teacher Appreciation Day by giving them a book by Fred Rogers -- helped turn things around quickly. **Full Story:** District Administration (4/29)

## Cemetery project offers glimpses of the past

Massachusetts middle-school students learned about local history and civic pride while cleaning up area cemeteries, said social studies teacher John Webber. In addition to learning how to restore damaged headstones, students gain insight into area life in past centuries. **Full Story:** The Daily News (Newburyport, Mass.) (4/29)

## Our Worlds app puts spotlight on Native American history

The Our Worlds app -- winner of the 2022 SXSW EDU Launch Competition -- teaches Native American history via virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence. The app also includes geolocation features that tailor Native history to where the user is located. **Full Story:** The 74 (5/10)

## Professor argues for social studies in public education

The time devoted to social studies has decreased as time spent on "reading, 'writing and 'rithmetic" has increased in schools across the US, writes Kenneth Anthony, associate professor of elementary education at Mississippi State University. Anthony explores the importance the Founding Fathers placed on an educated population and argues that the reduced time spent studying civics disproportionately affects students of color and can lead to increased voter apathy. **Full Story:** The Conversation (5/18)

## Why Should We Teach Civics? Why Should I Adopt a Civics Diploma Seals Program?

Democracy by nature requires an informed and engaged electorate. Research<sup>1</sup> tells us that it is critical that students participate in civic learning that includes:

- the 21st-century skills of collaboration, cooperation, and consensus-building;
- an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and
- knowledge on the roots of our democracy.

Civics diploma seals are tangible symbols of the value of comprehensive and research-based civic education practices in schools. A diploma seal is an endorsement that indicates exemplary performance in a specific area of study, and a civics diploma seal can signify a student's competency in civic knowledge, responsibility, values, and engagement. Seals send a signal to colleges and employers that a student has excelled in an area of study.

*NCSS is a proud member of the [CivXNow Coalition](#) and releases the Seal of Civic Readiness Toolkit in support of [#Civics4CommUNITY Awareness Week](#), which raises awareness for the importance of civics as the core to the health of our constitutional democracy*

### Speaking Out

Oral communication is a major way people communicate in any workplace, and employers rank oral communication as one of the top skills they need in employees. Yet few schools or curriculums emphasize teaching speaking skills. Erik Palmer argues that we need to teach all students the skills of effective speaking and shares strategies and resources to help do so in the May issue of Educational Leadership.

### Alma Lopez on Teaching Them to Dream Big in Middle School

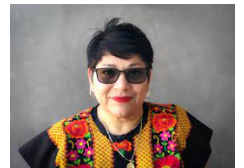
If we're not introducing students to college and career options by middle school, we're doing them a disservice, says Alma Lopez, the 2022 National School Counselor of the Year. As a first-generation college student and daughter of Mexican immigrants, Lopez hopes to inspire her students -- many of whom come from a similar background -- to think big early on. Read more in the new issue of EL.

### US teachers support Ukrainian students online

Teachers at Arizona State University Prep Digital, which provides online K-12 courses, are helping their 44 students from Ukraine respond to Russia's attack on their country. ASU Prep teachers have reached out to families, extended the spring semester, assembled video messages and created spreadsheets to keep track of students' situations. **Full Story:** Education Week (5/10)

### Is an enslaved woman the hero in Benedict Arnold's story?

Recent archival discoveries -- made by researchers taking a fresh look at historical documents -- are shedding light on the life of Liss, a Black, enslaved teenager, who later escaped to freedom and might have spied on the British. This article details how Liss, who lived in New York with the family of Culper Spy Ring member Robert Townsend, may be the heroic figure responsible for actions -- previous credited to a white woman -- revealing the treasonous plot by Benedict Arnold. **Full Story:** Smithsonian (5/16)



### **3D model reveals record-breaking cave art discovery**



Using photogrammetry -- a process of building 3D models from digital photographs -- archaeologists have discovered several early Indigenous American cave paintings dating back some 1,000 years, according to a report in *Antiquity*. Among the discoveries in the unnamed Alabama cave is a 3-meter-long rattlesnake thought to be the longest known piece of cave art ever documented in the US. **Full Story:** [Live Science \(5/3\) X](#)

### **More 3,000-year-old statues found in Italy**



Archaeologists have uncovered two additional torsos that may be part of a group of 7-foot-tall statues erected 3,000 years ago in a necropolis in Sardinia, Italy. Discovered in 1974, statues of 16 boxers, five archers and five warriors have been found in the area. **Full Story:** [Smit](#)

### **Report details US legacy of Indian boarding schools**



Between 1819 and 1969, tens of thousands of Native American children were mandated to attend 408 federal Indian boarding schools across 37 states or territories, where they were forced to assimilate to Western culture and abused, according to a report from the US Department of the Interior. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American to hold a cabinet position, says the issue has caused intergenerational trauma. **Full Story:** [The Arizona Republic \(Phoenix\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(5/11\)](#), [Education Week \(5](#)

### **Some schools in Canada face history of their names**



Some higher institutions of learning in Canada are reexamining the histories behind their names and some are changing them, such as Ryerson University, named for Egerton Ryerson, who promoted racially segregated schools and residential schools for Indigenous students in Canada. The institution's name has been changed to Toronto Metropolitan University, and this article explores the history of such names and why the changes are happening now. **Full Story:** [CBC News \(Canada\) \(5/3\)](#)

### **Va. district decides to keep social studies textbook**



A photograph of a Black Lives Matter protest on the cover of a textbook slated for use in Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools in Virginia at first prompted the district's board to refuse the book because of complaints, mostly about the photo. The decision was later reversed, allowing the textbook to replace books that were approved for use more than a decade ago. **Full Story:** [The Virginian-Pilot \(Norfolk\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(5/21\)](#)

*Love is the big booming beat which covers up the noise of hate.  
Margaret Cho, stand-up comedien*

### Lawmakers seek to restrict school library databases

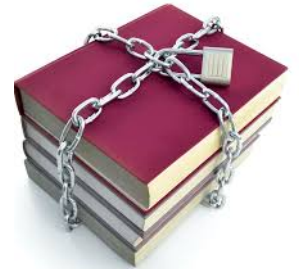
Lawmakers in some states have passed or are considering legislation that would restrict students' access to school library databases. Tasha Bergson-Michelson, a school librarian in Palo Alto, Calif., says the databases are an important tool for students that expand students' access to resources. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (5/10)\



### Students file suits, start book clubs to protest banned books

The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (5/3) Districts look to current students as future teachers

A growing number of school districts are adopting grow-your-own programs to help strengthen the pipeline of new teachers. An effort in Tennessee is being touted as a potential model for such programs, as the state has become the first in the country to sponsor a federally approved teaching apprenticeship program. **Full Story:** Higher Ed Dive (5/6)



### Is fiction better than nonfiction for language skills?

Four research studies indicate that students who read fiction rather than nonfiction are likely to have better language skills, perform better at school, get more education and be more successful at work, writes psychology professor Raymond Mar. In this commentary, Mar suggests that educators try to encourage students to read fiction for pleasure starting at a young age. **Full Story:** The Conversation (



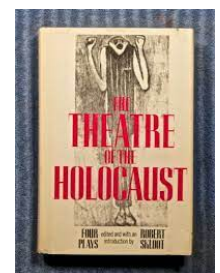
### Foundation, relatives of slaves unite to run Montpelier

The Montpelier Foundation this week has elected 11 of 20 nominees submitted by the Montpelier Descendants Committee to serve on the board that manages the plantation home of fourth US President James Madison. The board, which will now have 10 white members and 15 members who are people of color, has been embroiled in controversy after rejecting "structural parity" efforts with the descendants group and firing some senior staff, who the board says will be rehired. **Full Story:** Culpeper Star-Exponent (Va.) (5/16), The New York Times (5/16)



### Middle-schoolers learn about Holocaust from book, theater

About 300 middle-school students in Duluth, Minn., attended a matinee theater production based on "The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank as part of nonfiction reading that pairs with global history lessons about the Holocaust and World War II. After reading Frank's book and seeing the play, eighth-grade teacher Angela Piore says students will be learning more about writing memoirs. **Full Story:** KBJR-TV (Duluth, Minn.) (5/17)



*The best way to predict the future is to invent it.  
-Alan Kay, computer scientist (b. 17 May 1940)*

**Looking Back-**                      **Continued from Page 1**

Because of the depression, my family moved to a rural area, where dad could get a farm job. This led to an experience in a rural one-room school where I was the smartest kid in third grade, as I was the only one. One-room schools had some advantages. Younger students often learned from lessons being taught to older ones. But over all, there was little or no assimilation of immigrants in many rural areas. Few immigrants settled in rural areas of PA. Farm families were third and fourth generation and held on to traditional values and viewpoints. Rural areas continued to hold stereotypical ideas of urban areas and immigrants. Unfortunately today, we seem to be repeating the errors of 1924 in immigration practice and other aspects of assimilation.

Whether it was a matter of survival or an undervaluing of education, farm families had a different idea of the usefulness of school. There were students in grade 6 or 7 just waiting to reach age 16 so they could drop out. Some evidence of this was the day I joined other students for recess and across the fence on a tractor was one of our classmates, an 11 year old, plowing the field. This was a school day but the sun was shining and it was a good day to plow.

At least in towns the schools helped to integrate immigrants into society and the military also contributed to this process. But one group was left out of this procedure. African Americans were subject to separate but equal education in the south and were mostly in segregated schools in slum areas of various northern cities. The military also had segregated units during WWII. The Korean War integrated the military but black and white generally segregated themselves, especially during the Korean period in occupied Europe and bases in the U.S. Following the Korean War, with the civil rights movement and the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated schools, things began to slowly change. However since many communities had neighborhood schools, segregation continued. While buses were employed to combat this, many city schools remained mostly black.

Why was it necessary to integrate the schools? My experience in grade school suggests why! Stereotypes disappear when students interact in a classroom. They learn from each other and prejudice and stereotypes disappear. But even busing for integration does not end segregation. Many black student have been classified as having learning disabilities and assigned to special classes. Often this will result in segregated class memberships, defeating the purpose of busing. While designing special classes for students who are below grade level is laudable, the end result was defacto segregation. Integration allows for learning about each other from each other. To achieve racial equality, it is clear we must eliminate exclusive or near exclusive black classes and create mixed classes where students can learn from and with each other.

Observing current protest groups, one sees that some schools have done their job. Many young white people have joined in protests across the country. While this is not proof that classes have been successfully integrated, it certainly suggests it. When students come together in classes, they learn from and about each other and stereotypes are dispelled. As Asian immigrants increase, perhaps hate crimes against them will end.

—Leo West

**The impact of resegregation on Black children**

A study involving 1,248 Black children from data from the Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics found that Black children who attend racially segregated schools may have behavior problems due to "reduced school quality and increased exposure to racial discrimination," researchers of the study, published in Pediatrics, wrote. The researchers highlighted the need to support Black youths attending segregated schools and promote school racial integration. **Full Story:** [Healio \(free registration\) \(4/18\)](#) A study involving 1,248 Black children from data from the Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics found that Black children who attend racially segregated schools may have behavior problems due to "reduced school quality and increased exposure to racial discrimination," researchers of the study, published in Pediatrics, wrote. The researchers highlighted the need to support Black youths attending segregated schools and promote school racial integration. **Full Story:** [Healio \(free registration\) \(4/18\)](#)