

A Century of Teaching Racism in Public Schools

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For good reasons it is a rare textbook today that openly teaches racism, but it was very commonly taught in the past. The first major scientist to openly teach racism was Charles Darwin. His racist worldview is even evident in the title of his most famous book, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. Darwin's 1871 book, *The Descent of Man*, Chapter Seven titled, "On the Races of Man" contains forty pages that covers in detail his racist conclusions about humans.

Darwin concluded from his interactions with the Tierra del Fuego natives that it was hard to believe "how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man." Darwin concluded that the gap was "greater than between a wild and domesticated animal... Viewing such men, one can hardly make oneself believe they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world. At night, five or six human beings, naked and scarcely protected from the wind and rain of this tempestuous climate, sleep on the wet ground coiled up like animals" (Darwin, 1839, p. 238).

Furthermore, Darwin added, "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races" as part of the process of evolution by natural selection (*The Descent of Man*, 1871, p. 201). Darwin also wrote in 1893 that in the future, "an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilized races throughout the world." (Darwin, *Charles Darwin: His Life told in an Autobiographical Chapter*, p. 69).

Humans that Darwin concluded were clearly “inferior” to White Europeans included Hottentots, Negroes, New Zealanders, and Australians. The “superior” races included the Europeans and those superior individuals that evolved by natural selection “from barbarians” (1871, p. 404).

Darwin also noted that he believed the Hottentots were evolutionarily even lower than the Negro, and *“If it could be proved that the Hottentot had descended from the Negro, I think he would be classed under the Negro group, however much he might differ in color and other important characters from Negroes.”* (*The Origin of Species* 1859, p. 424).

Darwin, one of the most esteemed scientists that ever lived, greatly influenced science textbook writers. Some examples from only one category, geography, include Steinweher’s 1870 textbook titled *Primary Geography* (Van Antwerp, Bragg & Co., Cincinnati, OH). He wrote in Lesson 12 titled “The Races of Men” that *“There are five races. ... the white and the black, the red, the yellow, and the brown races. The white or Caucasian race is superior to all, and exceeds any other race...The greater proportion of the civilized people live in Europe and America, and belong to the white race. They know more than other nations. This is the reason why they are more powerful, and live more comfortably.”* The author then discusses the “*Half-civilized people...and the Savage, or uncivilized people.*” (pp. 16-18).

Another leading geography textbook, *Eclectic Physical Geography* (1888) by Professor Russell Hinman (American Book Company, New York, NY), wrote that of *“The mental development ofthe woolly-haired and brown skin type.... as a whole is lower than that of the other [racial] types...All races of this type are native in the southern hemisphere, which is thus characterized in its human, as well in its animal inhabitants, by a relatively low state of development.”* The *“mental development [of the] straight-haired type of mankind... ... is higher as a rule than in the woolly-haired type.”* (pp. 359-361).

One other example, also by Professor Russell Hinman, in *Eclectic Elementary Geography*, (American Book Company, New York, NY, 1883) concluded that *“The Ethiopian race lives principally in Africa. The black people are called negroes....The Caucasian race or white race is superior to all [other races].... and exceeds every other race in numbers.”* (p. 14). One last example is from the text *Essentials of Geography: First Book* by Professors Albert Perry Brigham and Charles T. McFarlane (American Book Company, New York, NY 1916). The authors opine about Blacks that

“Most of the African natives are still savage and ignorant in spite of efforts made to educate them.” (p. 240).

These racist statements, although an enormous embarrassment today, reveal the harm of rejecting the conclusions of the clear teaching that Adam and Eve were our first parents, and that all men have descended from them. Thus, all men are brothers, and there is only one “race,” the human race.

These statements also help explain why so many well-educated persons became active in the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations that opposed basic civil rights for all Americans. True science has now vindicated the teaching of the Bible and has rejected the racist teaching of evolutionism.

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