

Protect Our Youth

There are hundreds of thousands of conspiracy theories, ideas, and claims of a powerful hierarchy controlling our planet. Is it possible to cover up evidence by obtaining and manipulating the competence of wealth, power, and fame? Does it ever cross your mind that maybe something seemed a bit suspicious happening in the world, but the information released by government officials and the press seems to be a bit peculiar? We all ponder the mindless question, are aliens real? Logically speaking, we have no idea what is out past our solar system, therefore the simple answer, we don't know. However, there are several questions in which we can ponder, and most definitely find a conclusion. With that being said, I took the broad perspective of disasters, aliens, powerful hierarchy theories, and so much more, and I pulled one main question from them all; How accurate is the information being provided in the American school systems?

This question has always been somewhat in the back of my mind, causing extreme frustration in high school especially. I recall a biology teacher assigning a project for the students to build life-size and model scale insects, yet I noticed spiders and scorpions included on her list of examples. I immediately raised my hand out of extreme confusion, and stated that spiders and scorpions have eight legs, therefore they are arachnids, not insects. The teacher then dismissed my comment and said that it was fine for this project, but it made me wonder what if there were students who truly didn't understand the difference and were then taught inaccurate knowledge. She was setting us up for failure, and either she didn't realize it, or she didn't care.

We all remember the saying "in 1492 Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue." That little chime was mindlessly drilled into our brains as children and adolescents. I learned that

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saying in elementary school, and at 18 years old I am sure I will never forget it. Remember belting out that tune with your classmates, and making sure to remember it for the social studies quiz? I sure do; however, I don't remember them telling me that he slaughtered the natives who lived here before he "discovered" the Americas. Nevertheless, it gets better, he's not even the first European explorer to discover the Americas, yet previous explorers had enough courtesy and sense to leave the natives and their land alone. Tragically, I never learned these things in school up until graduation, it was never a topic discussed.

I learned all these horrific facts doing my research, out of my curiosity. Therefore, leading me to dive into the accuracy and legitimacy of what they are teaching our youth in the American school system. Children and adolescents are more prone to manipulation due to the simple fact that their brains have not yet fully developed. Is there a possibility that someone could be taking advantage of these children by spreading false knowledge to them? We need to know if our youth is at risk, if we are being lied to, and if our nation is being manipulated.

The first key piece of information that is incorrectly provided in the American school system includes the celebratory actions associated with Christopher Columbus. Five hundred years before Columbus was born, a group of European sailors discovered an unfamiliar land. The crew dropped their anchor, led by expedition leader Leif Eriksson, they headed ashore. Within this Norwegian group, there were 35 men aboard the ship that landed in present-day Canada around A.D. 1000. (Klein).

There are two specific sagas, or Icelandic legends, recalling the voyage of Leif Eriksson. One of which being "Saga of Erik the Red", where the story describes how the crew accidentally ended up in North America while intending to return to Norway. The second saga, "Saga of the Greenlanders", recalls the voyage and the landing in the Americas, a purposeful, yet secretive

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action. This story goes on to explain that Leif Eriksson heard about the new world from an Icelandic trader, Bjarni Herjolfsson, who had seen the land from his ship at sea but didn't go ashore. Unfortunately, these sagas were passed along from generation to generation by word of mouth, and there is no official documentation of these stories until the 12th and 13th centuries, leaving no proof of such a voyage (Klein).

Luckily, in 1960, Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad went searching for any possible physical remains left in the area around Newfoundland, Canada to support these sagas. In result, an international archeologist team needed to be called in to unearth the remains of Viking origins, dating back to around A.D. 1000. These skeletal remains were eventually able to be identified as one of the Vikings led by Leif Eriksson, as told in the sagas (Klein).

Although much less known than Columbus, Eriksson is known to be the first actual European to discover the Americas. Leif Eriksson was born in Iceland in A.D. 970, and he was born into a family of great explorers with his father being Erik the Red, who founded the first European settlement of Greenland. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed a proclamation declaring October 9th as Leif Eriksson Day in honor of his monumental voyage to the Americas. Although Eriksson never could return to America before he died, several Norwegian ships were sent to the new world to gather various supplies, nonetheless they didn't intrude on the land. One reason to explain this is the violent accounts with the indigenous people recalled by Leif Eriksson, stating that his brother was slaughtered by the indigenous people. Leif Eriksson was the first European to discover the Americas, not Christopher Columbus (Klein).

Whilst on the topic of Christopher Columbus, it must also be realized that the people have begun speaking against this controversy. After hundreds of years of praising one singular man for discovering the Americas, there are doubts if we should continue the celebration. Could

this be because more and more people are beginning to realize the true events that have occurred on this side of the world? Perhaps it has become more evidently clear for onlookers to see that Columbus is a negative and horrendous figure. Hundreds of documents, research, articles, etc., support the evidence shown here; Columbus was a cruel and greedy man. Is this the role model we want our children to worship with the utmost respect?

Luckily, there are those people who see the treacherous things Columbus was responsible for, as well as the faulty truths attached to the legacy. Historians, archeologists, scientists of all fields, and many others have been able to conclude that there were native people who lived in all parts of the Americas until each portion was colonized. It's common knowledge for most that the Native Americans roamed this land before any settlers were able to place it on a map, nonetheless, it still slips through the cracks of what exactly happened to these natives. However, historians have found three specific controversial subjects in which they defy the true treatment of the natives, why it causes such controversy, and what parts of history that our education left out. ("Why Columbus Day Courts Controversy")

Firstly, Columbus's first reaction to the natives within this new land was thankfully written in his journal, allowing our current generations to have viable evidence from a time so long ago. As told by History.com, "he believed they would be good servants" ("Why Columbus Day"). His first impression of being amongst people unlike him was the feeling of turning them into slaves, forcing them into labor, stripping them of their lives. These people lived in their settlements and/or as nomads across the land their whole lives, until one day a European decided he wanted to be in complete control. Not only cruel, but downright evil is also how I would describe any person(s) who capture, enslave, and destroy a whole population of people due to their greed.

The International Slave Trade began when Christopher Columbus had his “brilliant” idea to take his new slaves back to Spain to be sold off. The natives were crammed into tiny spaces and horrific conditions on slave ships to be carried back to the mainland where they would await their fate. Thousands of the Taino tribe, native to the Island of Hispaniola, would be taken from their home to Spain during Columbus’ treacherous reign of terror. As could be predicted, many died in route due to the poor conditions, neglect, and abuse amongst the slave ships. Christopher Columbus went from enslaving six natives on his first day to nearly causing the extinction of an entire tribe within 60 years. (“Why Columbus Day Courts Controversy”)

The two other controversial topics discussed when thinking of Columbus include his acts of forcing Christian conversion on the natives, as well as introducing a slew of diseases. Considering history has a long track record of violence surrounding religious conversion, it doesn’t make it surprising to know that this situation wasn’t any different. Furthermore, when the innocent Taino tribe began to revolt and protest for their lives, Columbus ordered extreme crackdowns, creating an even worse life for the already miserable natives. Many natives were killed during the rebellions to show a sign of power, to show the natives that if they disobey him, he will murder them. Nevertheless, many Taino lives were lost to battles with diseases their immune systems were unaccustomed to. The Europeans brought all sorts of bacteria and germs with them from Spain, although their bodies may have been biologically adjusted and immune to these bacteria, the natives had never experienced anything like it. There was no possible way to get any kind of treatment once one was ill, either, the natives did not know about what was happening to them, other than their people would get extremely ill and die. Sadly enough, the Taino tribe would not be the only people affected by the explorer’s diseases. Over some time,

many populations would face losses in devastatingly high amounts from these new diseases, foreign to the land itself (“Why Columbus Day”).

All in all, the Columbian exchange (known as the trading of goods and slaves from the east to the west, cultivated from Columbus’ “discovery”) was successful in trading many goods, plants, and animals from the east of the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Additionally, the slave trade, although horrific, was extremely successful for its time, allowing one to decide that the Columbian exchange was not an overall good thing. (“Why Columbus Day Courts Controversy”)

Conclusively, most of the information taught in the American school system surrounding Christopher Columbus is equivocal, biased, or a complete lie. I bet you didn’t know in 1500 the king and queen had him arrested for mismanagement and threw Columbus and his brothers in prison back in Spain (“Why Columbus Day”). Columbus then lost his power, rights, and his ability to control the Americas, leaving him poor and irrelevant. Ironical how we were never taught what his monarch thought of him.

Now, all of America’s problems cannot be blamed on one man himself, and Christopher Columbus is not the only topic that is falsely taught in American school systems, nor is it a major issue compared to the other hundreds of issues schools face. However, the accuracy of the information is indeed a serious concern as well as the statistics that can support that our education is being ‘dumbed down’ for us. The average American GPA in 2009 was 3.0 and the average American GPA was up to 3.11 in 2019. Although this may sound like a reputable statistic proving the accuracy of the information, there has also been a drastic decrease in the math grades produced by students who were taking a vigorous course at the same time (Schneider 2). High school students are obtaining more credits than ever before in academic subjects specifically, which appears as a good thing, but “students with a 4.0 GPA in advanced

science have an average score barely within the NAEP proficient range”, as told by Mark Schneider, author of *Education Runs on Lies*. It is quite evident here that the high grades, and more credits students are receiving, are taking the time away from learning and mastering other subjects. When students take excelled classes with high homework loads and tons of extra stress, they tend to begin lacking in other classes that were not prioritized. The biggest problem here is the educators themselves, if you push a student to excel at a certain subject without them fully understanding, you are neglecting that child of a fair education. The numbers show that student assessment scores are not increasing. These students should have the ability to excel and be successful in life, instead their education is pinpointed for them. The most likely cause of educators nudging students into honors classes and specialty classes is the school system trying to cheat their way into funds by manipulating test scores. Ironically, schools manipulate test scores more than you might believe (Schneider 1-2).

Regardless of the lies and false information spread, educators would never downright manipulate a child without the child’s benefit in mind, right? If you believe that statement, then you are completely misunderstanding the magnitude of this issue. Leon County Public School district in Florida manipulated their students to a different extent with what they did at Godby High. Amanda Claire Curcio, a reporter for the *Tallahassee Democrat*, had noticed something extremely intriguing about the test scores of the students at Godby High, and luckily looked further into it. Amongst her initial examination, Curio was able to notice that Godby High fell well below the proficient level in math and reading, however their social studies scores were well above the proficiency line and those of other schools. These social studies scores weren’t just higher than other schools, three times higher than other schools, which was very peculiar considering this was a school populated with mostly black kids below the poverty line. After

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carefully analyzing the situation, Curio was able to conclude why these social studies scores were so high, how this was achieved, and the reasons behind it (Mattox 76-77).

Firstly, Godby High ceased to provide standard and honors social studies classes, forcing all students to enroll in the Advanced Placement (AP) history class as an alternative. Ironically, all students placed into AP history are exempt from taking the state history exam in Florida, which would not let the student's grade point average (GPA) be affected by their test taking ability on the subject. It is considerably obvious that withholding the evaluation process from a student's education can disguise the fact that the student doesn't truly know the material. Conclusively, if the students scored well throughout the class period, and then did not have to take the exam covering the material, their scores would drastically increase. In the case of Godby High, the scores rose well above these students' other subject scores as well as other schools' social studies scores (Mattox 77).

Next in the twisted plot of the school officials of Godby High, they chose a few individually picked individuals to represent their school and take the state exam. The only factor in deciding who would take this overall exam of the material was how the school officials felt the students would do. They trusted the students, who they believed were the most intelligent amongst these adolescent students. With specific students taking the exam, the school hoped that those students would do well enough to help boost the school's overall score. Unbelievably, their plan worked, and the few students selected to partake in the state exam scored an average 91% proficiency on the material. With all these high-test scores and advancing statistics, the school was awarded. Nevertheless, why did they go through all the trouble of changing the entire school's curriculum to create false data concerning test scores? (Mattox 77).

These school officials and educators jeopardized the education of several students over their greed, money. The Godby High School officials manipulated their students into taking specific courses by eliminating other courses, and then continued to manipulate these students into producing the data that they wanted. Absurdly, less than 3% of students showed proficiency in the subject of U.S. history compared to the evidence that every student was awarded either a grade letter “A” or “B” for the class. The students didn’t even understand the material and had no business taking an AP class whatsoever, however, they were forced to. After taking all the data obtained from these social studies scores, Godby High was rewarded \$126,700 in state funding, as well as \$50 awarded to any AP teachers, per student who passed the exam (Mattox). The amount of money this school was able to profit from their students, while sacrificing their education, is disgusting.

Ultimately, we cannot accuse every high school of manipulating the scores and grades of their students, against their students’ interest. Contrarily, “it would be naïve to assume that the AP U.S. History scheme at Godby High is the only case of data manipulation by public education officials eager to create a false impression of success”, written by William Mattox, author of *Manipulation of Education Data Sacrifices Best Interests of Students*. In the case of Godby High, intense measures were taken for this school to attempt to cover their tracks, including having justifications as to why what they were doing was acceptable. Nonetheless, we should be more worried about what is happening to our youth inside schools, a place we are supposed to be able to trust with our children. Although not every school system would intentionally impose destruction of this kind on their students, we must be wary that it is a proven possibility.

Now that we've analyzed false statistics, let's observe a few genuine stats surrounding the education systems of America. In a news article, Matthew Lynch collected and organized a list of 18 reasons why the U.S. school system is failing. Before acknowledging the content of the article itself, I first must acknowledge the website I found it on. The Advocate, a website that I found to be dedicated to student success, is much more than just an educational site. This website specifically arranges a composition of articles detailing the explanation to any question a student may have, kindergarten through college level, everyone's questions can be answered. Therefore, combining the material with the name, this site supports a second point of wonder in the back of my mind; even educators within the school systems, school officials, and school board members recognize this terror to our youth. Nonetheless, it is truly inspiring to know that there are people out there fighting and trying to help young and adolescent children.

Regarding Mr. Lynch's piece, there were a few specific points that truly stuck out to me and made me consider even what I experienced in the school systems growing up. Firstly, the National Center for Education Statistics concluded that 14% of schools in the U.S. are at maximum capacity. Take into consideration, historically, the effects of overcrowding in any space. The consequence of overcrowding typically leads to understaffing and shortages, violence, illness, and so on. Now consider that this isn't prisons, mental asylums, and dungeons, like we learn overcrowding to be. These are children just like our brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins, etc., simply going to school, like the government requires. How come the government can't help these students in any way? Secondly, there is a humongous gap of diversity in talented education. This topic specifically makes me reminisce of my times in middle school. I recall telling my mom that I was one of four black kids in my science class, and the only black kid in my math class. The little-to-no presence of minority kids in my advanced

classes was something I had always recognized, but it was something I didn't understand until I was about 17 years old. I knew several smart black and Latino kids who never got to go to the science fair, or the Cedar Point trip, or build mechanisms from scratch. It hadn't occurred to me until later in life truly how expensive the curriculum was in those classes. My dad worked in a factory and could afford my materials, my trips, everything, a lot of students' parents couldn't (Lynch 1-2).

Converting into my next topic, teachers are using expired teaching methods to get knowledge across to students. Methods that once worked for teachers aren't as effective as they were twenty-five years ago. Children are becoming more and more exposed to violence, crime, murder, war, politics, amongst various other mature problems. The reason being, technology and the media spread news stories like wildfire amongst all citizens of this country, allowing these children to be more sophisticated than previous generations since they have been exposed to more, at a younger age. Which leads me to wonder, why are we using older teaching methods with more advanced students? (Lynch 5)

Finally, I conducted two separate interviews on two separate individuals using the information obtained from the various articles I have found throughout my research. I have arranged eight different questions surrounding the material previously discussed. I asked these questions to my father, a forty-eight-year-old man who went through the American education system, and my brother, a fifteen-year-old boy, currently enrolled in the American education system. The first question I asked them was, what day is Columbus Day? My dad, Mario, answered October tenth, whereas my brother, Julius, answered September twenty-second. The correct answer could be considered anywhere from October 9th to October 12th, considering Columbus Day falls on the first Monday of every October. Mario had learned and memorized the

importance of Columbus Day, but Julius hadn't had a clue and made his best estimate. Secondly, I asked them what day Leif Eriksson Day fell on. Mario answered November 11th and Julius answered August 29th. Ironically, neither of them had ever heard of Leif Eriksson Day and made their best estimate, although the correct answer was October ninth. Next, I asked how much the average GPA in America improved between the years of 2009-2019. Julius and Mario both answered with an estimate of 0.5, with the correct answer being 1.1, showing that they were unaware of the statistics of education in their own country. Furthermore, I asked what percentage of U.S. schools were at max capacity. I received an answer of 30% from Mario and 60% from Julius, the answer is 14%. They both assumed the amount of school at max capacity was higher than the actual total. After that, I asked if they believed it was possible to manipulate students into getting higher test scores to receive more financial funding, in which they both replied yes. After collecting the required data from each person, I told them the story about Godby High to emphasize the danger of something this matter, and to my surprise, neither of them were the least bit startled. Next, I asked the guys to guess the ratio of Taino tribe before Columbus compared to after Columbus' reign of terror. Mario believed the ratio to be 500,000:50,000 whereas Julius estimated the ratio to be 5,000:2,000. They were both astonished when I told them the correct answer was 250,000 to only a few hundred. Continuing, I asked a multiple-choice question about the fate of Christopher Columbus and what the King and Queen of Spain thought of his actions. The choices listed included a.) Praised Columbus and gave him wealth. b.) Imprisoned Columbus and stripped him of his governorship. c.) Executed him. d.) Forbid him from returning to Europe. Julius and Mario both answered A for this question, with the correct answer being B, the Queen and King were very upset with Columbus for the horrendous acts he fulfilled, yet Americans teach him as a positive figure. My final question to this quiz was, did Columbus visit

America again before he died? Julius and Mario both answered correctly with the answer of yes (Patterson, Mario. Patterson, Julius).

Comparing the answers of both my brother and my dad, it is very clear to me that over the past 30 years, America is still feeding our youth the same lies. My father was never taught the correct information, and after all this time, the correct information is still not available for my younger brother. One key difference that can be observed here, however, was the fact that Columbus was indeed less prominent in Julius' education experience than Mario's. Although Columbus is only one figure of several hundred that lived a legacy they did not deserve.

Conclusively, it is extremely evident that there are several false truths to be sorted out, gaps to fill, and students to help in the American education system. After all the information gathered here today, it is fair to conclude that the information taught amongst the American school system is not reliable. Furthermore, it isn't just the content of the information that is crumbling, there are several factors. So, are we going to let our youth be lied to and manipulated, or are we going to stand up and do something about it?