



Loans get students through college.

Support reform that gets them through their loans.

FIND OUT HOW

Read our Ideas Contributors

Driving the Conversation:

Open Mic

Dean Baker on the insurance industry's 'study' in [Health Care Arena](#)

Friday's collector's Nobel Prize edition is [here](#)

Oct. 10-12, 2009

[expand all](#)



Roger Pilon, Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute:

Today is Columbus Day -- the day, traditionally, when Americans celebrated the founding of the New World. But with the advent of "multiculturalism" and "political correctness," that has changed.

Thus, an **AP story** this morning under the by-line of one Christine Armario, "A darker side of Columbus emerges in US classrooms," begins with students in a Tampa, Florida, kindergarten class -- kindergarten! -- learning "about the explorer's significance -- though they also come away with a more nuanced picture of Columbus than the noble discoverer often portrayed in pop culture and legend." Quoting teacher Jeffrey Kolowith: "I talk about the situation where he didn't even realize where he was," Kolowith said. "And we talked about how he was very, very mean, very bossy."

Not to be outdone by her Tampa counterpart, McDonald, Pa., fourth-grade teacher Laurie Crawford had her students at Fort Cherry Elementary "put Columbus on trial this year -- charging him with misrepresenting the Spanish crown and thievery. They found him guilty and sentenced him to life in prison." She adds, "In their own verbiage, he was a bad guy."

And reflecting on this deconstruction of Columbus, James Kracht, executive associate dean for academic affairs in the Texas A&M College of Education and Human Development, is quoted: "You don't hear people

using the world 'discovery' anymore like they used to. 'Columbus discovers America.' Because how could he discover America if there were already people living here?" Armario adds: "Kracht said an emerging multiculturalism led more people to investigate the cruelties suffered by the Taino population in the 1960s and '70s, along with the 500th anniversary in 1992." That sentence, whether from Armario or Kracht, suggests that a little linguistic correctness might be in order.

The teaching of grammar today aside, my good friend and Chicago attorney Joseph A. Morris, in a message to friends this morning, gives a straightforward answer to Dean Kracht's question: "If the rest of the world didn't know that there was a Western Hemisphere, and if the people already living in the Western Hemisphere didn't know that there was a rest of the world, there you have it. Columbus was the guy who conclusively introduced them to each other. 'World, Western Hemisphere. Western Hemisphere, World.'"

But Morris goes on at length to explode the Columbus "correctness" agenda. In barest summary: "Columbus's discovery made possible something that was entirely new. It was not the mere migration of various peoples to new places, nor the mingling -- sometimes amicable, sometimes brutal -- of native peoples with waves of, um, undocumented aliens. All that sort of thing had happened in many places many times before. Rather, it was how this whole episode in human history resulted in the establishment in America of a revolutionary, constitutional, republic that carried forward the fundamental principles of the West while rejecting all the old and failed structures of tyranny and slavery that had pretty much dominated every other corner of the world. This new land was based upon a vision that would admit to citizenship people of every color, race, faith, and origin, provided that they would pledge allegiance to each other and to a common commitment to liberty under law."

"Slavery rejected?" you ask? Yes. That institution, as ancient and ubiquitous as mankind itself, was rejected when America was born -- if not in fact, at least in principle, to which fact would eventually and ineluctably bend. Indeed, by declaring that all men are created equal, the Declaration of Independence, the foundation of American exceptionalism, established a "new order of the ages" (Novus Ordo Seclorum). "From that moment on," Morris writes, "slavery was doomed in America -- and, for that matter, everywhere else in the world."

Thus, he concludes: "The remedy for America's sins is not the deconstruction of America. Rather, it is the holding of America true to its definition. Can the same be said of any other nation on earth? Is any other nation on earth defined, not by race, religion, or ethnicity, but by a set of moral and political principles? Scoffers at American 'exceptionalism' take note. As a fair reading of the text adopted in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776 makes clear, the principles that define America are universal. What makes America exceptional is that the Americans were the first to embrace them. What a tragedy for humanity it will be if, in the course of human events yet to come, the Americans turn out to be the last."

[Full Archive List](#)

© 2009 Capitol News Company LLC

Please read our [Privacy Policy](#). By using this site, you accept our [Terms of Service](#).