

# Why Our Education System Failed to Teach that Nazis Are Bad

Last month's torchlight parade in Charlottesville represented, among other things, the utter failure of modern public education and much of modern public discourse.

## The Great Lesson

The clearest, most consistent message we have received from childhood on up is that "Nazis are evil." Hitler is cast, over and over again, as our civic religion's Satan. The Fuhrer's furious speeches, the salutes, the goose stepping, the jackboots, the SS, the camps, and yes the torchlight parades: these make up our iconography of evil. Munich, Auschwitz, Normandy, Hitler's Bunker: these are stations in America's great patriotic Passion Play.

All of this is established in elementary school, fleshed out in high school, and reinforced repeatedly in mass culture and mass media throughout our lives.

And the second-most clarion message is that white supremacy in general (especially of the KKK variety) is evil.

In spite of all that, in spite of the most thorough program of inculcating a single lesson, a torchlight parade of neo-Nazis and other white supremacists happened in an American public square. And this event was just an IRL manifestation of a proto-fascist subculture that has been fermenting online.

## The Lesson Didn't Stick

Faithful adherents of the civic religion are flabbergasted. "Didn't they get the memo? Didn't they read the catechism? Don't they know these thoughts are officially anathema?" To

the faithful, it should be sufficient to simply denounce the deviants with slogans and catchwords that invoke grade school lessons. So they sputter, “fascist, racist, Nazi, Hitler, hate!”

This is all they’re capable of, because they don’t really understand right-collectivism or its humane, individualist opposite. They don’t comprehend the “why” of morality and justice. They just know what they’ve been indoctrinated to accept as “decent” and “correct” versus “indecent” and “incorrect”; which ideological bubble to fill out on the scantron; which views won them a childhood pat on the head and which views got them a scolding.

But the magic words, the ritual denunciations accomplish nothing. The youthful identitarians have become immune to such upbraiding. They are bitter about having been brainwashed and browbeaten all their lives. And now that the indoctrination is broken, they have renounced the entire politically-correct program, both the bad parts and the good.

However, one thing they retain from their school training is a general conflict-oriented and collectivist mindset. Only now they have redrawn the battle lines and recast the opposing forces. They have adopted new mindless slogans to replace the old discarded ones.

### **Good Cause, Ineptly Defended**

As Frédéric Bastiat said, “The worst thing that can happen to a good cause is, not to be skillfully attacked, but to be ineptly defended.”

The worst thing you can do for humane values is to try to propagate them through compulsory, rote indoctrination and reinforce them through censorious shaming. Such compliance-based “education” is shallow, often doesn’t stick, and may actually backfire.

Humane values, like all other lessons, can only be truly learned through example, experience, reason, friendly presentation, and willing acceptance.

Let figures like Leonard Read, Ludwig von Mises, and [Daryl Davis](#) be your guide.

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