

# What the Marxist Zeitgeist Has Wrought

We are tasting the bitter fruits of more than a half-century of the “zeitgeist” – the Marxist theory of history – reigning supreme in our public schools. This pedagogy replaced the “Great Man” approach, which teaches that history is catalyzed by individuals of unusual personal strength and rare attributes.

“Great Man” history studies bravery, wisdom, uncommon prudence, unparalleled fortitude (and sometimes unsurpassed vice) alongside historical events, with biographies and diaries featured prominently in history class. The underlying assumption is that uncommon virtue and personal excellence are what make great men and women, and the actions of these unique people are what move and shape history.

Thus, George Washington is remembered as a great man who, upon winning the Revolutionary War, refused to entertain even a suggestion that he be crowned king of the United States of America. His countrymen thought him deserving of a crown, but he refused the idea, thinking them deserving of self-rule and freedom instead. Washington’s modesty, humility, and prudence changed the course of history and enabled the United States to be a true republic. Had it not been for his special virtue, his country might have become just another monarchy complete with an aristocracy, titles, and all the rest.

Though horrendously out of fashion, the Great Man theory of history is still operative today, tolerated only outside the realm of the official Marxist historical narrative taught in public schools. Fawning biographies of industrialists like Steve Jobs or Howard Hughes remain, but the greatness of these men is only allowed to explain economic changes or improvements in our standard of living. Stories of true

justice and geopolitical change are reserved for groups of the aggrieved and oppressed, beginning with indigenous peoples, through women's rights, civil rights, gay rights, and finally the transgender and nonbinary rights movement of today. This "zeitgeist" enjoys total dominance in the nation's schools.

## Perceived Helplessness

Marxist history teaches children that consequential historical events are brought about by large groups of people engaging in civil disobedience, unrest, or violence, usually featuring the Democratic Party as the savior of the oppressed group, with the passing of landmark democratic legislation as the capstone of each particular chapter of history. Thus, the public school student of today could be entirely forgiven for believing that history is simply a series of movements by aggrieved groups, and "historical events" are simply those public agitations sufficiently deserving of notice and legislation by the Democratic Party, the great Keeper of History. There is no "1978 taxpayer's revolt history month," for example. Only mobs agitating for leftist policy outcomes need apply.

The more aggrieved and therefore in need of official Democratic Party (and increasingly corporate) sponsorship the group happens to be, the better. This is why transgender and nonbinary Americans, though very small in numbers, receive more attention and support than groups like the Tea Party or California farmers. The salient fact is not the size of the group or even the nature of the group's grievance: it is the *perceived helplessness* of the group without the sponsorship of the Democratic Party.

On the surface, the zeitgeist theory offers a more democratic view of history – instead of a few great, mostly white, aristocratic men, history now remembers groups of people who did great things together. Indeed, the true merits of the Civil Rights Movement or the Women's Suffrage Movement are the

reason the group history narrative is so powerful. Yet alongside the benefits of teaching history as a series of things otherwise ordinary people achieved together, there are significant downsides.

For example, one convenient aspect of the Marxist approach is that the group can be absolved from any wrongdoing perpetrated by its individual members, such that the personal problems and vices of [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), [Margaret Sanger](#), or [Malcolm X](#) are expunged from history entirely. The focus is on the good the group did together, not the bad character traits individual group members may have had. Separately, they are sinners with imperfections and peccadilloes. Together, the movement is innocent, pure, and without stain.

This teaches children that group action is the only means to be pure, just action can only be found in the mob, and the sole means of forgiveness for one's mistakes is membership in an entitled group. For what imperfect individual can stand alone and suffer the unforgiving gaze of historical scrutiny?

How could Frederick Douglass possibly measure up to the Civil Rights Movement? How could the flesh-and-blood version of Joan of Arc survive in comparison with the Woman's Rights Movement?

## **Compulsory Mis-education**

The most unfortunate consequence of the dominance of zeitgeist theory, therefore, is the opportunity it affords public schools to brainwash millions of kids into thinking that great acts of heroism, achievement, or virtue are only possible in a group. And, when only groups espousing the Democratic Party's *particular zeitgeist* are remembered in history classrooms, it doesn't take many decades before the public has simply forgotten that there was ever any virtue to aspire to outside of the mob.

The Marxist view of history ensures that children – who are

hardwired to need heroes and who naturally look for virtuous paths to follow – aspire only to mimic liberal heroes, and they identify only with those appointed heroes who share their skin color, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic group. If they don't happen to spring from a so-called oppressed circumstance, then shame is their badge of honor.

The scores of wealthy white women virtue signaling on Instagram since the start of the BLM protests are neither spontaneous nor novel; rather, they are the fruit of an [education system](#) purposely designed to render American kids as useful to radical Leftist causes as possible.

The death of George Floyd inspires a cry for justice in every person who watches the video of his horrific death; yet rather than volunteer to heal racial strife in one's own community, among one's own friends or family, or in one's own local school district, the overwhelming instinct is to become a part of a large group agitating for justice, and to prove one's membership in this clan by immediately parroting any and all slogans passed among the group's members.

Even when agitating for justice requires members of the group to do absolutely nothing and have no part in any real action, still people will choose this over acting alone.

The message was clear from the start: privileged whites were not welcome in the actual BLM movement, but were expected to stay in their homes, blackout their Instagram profile pics, and “listen” to the voices of color around them. Even when the Left is telling white Americans that the only thing they are allowed to do to help the cause of justice is to remain completely silent and watch as members of other races “make history,” the old public school training that virtue, justice, and change are only achieved via membership in a large group is so strong that millions of people are brainwashed into believing that sitting at home while doing and saying nothing is indeed “making history.”

Worse, they feel they have contributed to the cause of justice by posting on social media and remaining completely silent while their cities and neighborhoods are burned to the ground.

## **Sham Justice Cannot Last**

The silver lining, if there is any, is that the support for BLM and the civil unrest of the last several weeks may be viewed as the American public's attempt to participate in history, right wrongs, and exhibit virtue, in what is, truly, the only way many of them have ever been taught possible. The instinct to join the mob, though misdirected, is born of good intentions. Yet at some point, the invitation to sit on the sidelines of history, ashamed, guilty, and silent will induce despair. The knowledge that one is merely a bystander to History – or worse, born guilty and existing as an impediment to the progress of History – is soul-crushing.

Today there is no script available to individuals who aspire to be great men and women on their own account. If there can be no lives of consequence outside of mob history, then many ambitious and talented Americans will revolt against the zeitgeist narrative and seek alternative – and not always salutary – means of distinguishing themselves.

As of now, the public school system and the Left have cornered the market on virtue and justice. But their picture of justice is a sham, and their narrative of how history happens is incomplete; for no matter how moving the sight of millions of people marching together to achieve a common good is, the course of history inevitably is composed of more than those few episodes which are politically expedient for the Democratic Party.

Despite the spirit of the age, the personal virtue and uncommon excellence of great men and women of all races will continue to change history and chart the course of the nation. The Left's monopoly on history will crack, and the American

child's innate desire to *matter* and to sacrifice for the *greater good* will find an alternate path to glory, far from the madding crowd.

—

This [article](#) has been republished with permission from American Greatness.

Dear Readers,

Big Tech is suppressing our reach, refusing to let us advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#) and Gab [@CharlemagneInstitute!](#)

Image Credit:

Flickr-M.o.B 68, CC BY-SA 2.0