



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 13, 2011

School District Uses Tax Dollars to Purchase Social Justice Manuals

Entitled [The Cultural Proficiency Journal: Moving Beyond Ethical Barriers Toward Profound School Change](#), the manual is dubbed as a “manifesto on cultural awareness.”

According to the manual, the federal government and other institutions “channel wealth and power to white people,” and therefore calls upon educators to “take action on social justice.”

The *Omaha World-Herald* [reports](#) on some of the shocking contentions found in the manual. “Only those educators who acknowledge the existence of white privilege in America, that ‘white’ is a culture in America and that race ‘is a definer for social and economic status’ can reach proficiency,” the *Herald* notes. The manual then goes on to ask those educators what they will do “to align yourself with the values expressed.”



The manual also insists that readers must reject the idea of being “color blind.” According to the *Omaha World-Herald*:

The book says teachers must overcome irrational fear of homosexuality and reject the “color-blind” approach to teaching in which teachers treat all children the same. Instead, the group identity of students of color should be recognized and esteemed, the authors say.

The authors ask readers to reflect on several hypothetical cases, including that of a gay “teacher of the year” afraid to post family photos of his male partner for his school’s Family Day, an African-American parent upset by a sixth-grade Early-American Day because African-Americans were enslaved in those days, and a principal whose attempt to reach out to Muslim students backfires when he announces over the intercom that students should welcome Muslims though they “might believe in violence.”

The manual was approved by the Omaha school board in April and is being distributed to all employees of the school, including janitors.

Naturally, the purchase has garnered some criticism, both over the content of the manuals and the misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Paul Peterson of the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University, remarking on the notion of “cultural proficiency” that is being advocated by the manual, said, “I would like to know whether the teachers are proficient in the subject they’re going to be teaching. It would be nice, if



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they're going to be teaching science, to be proficient in science, or math, to be proficient in math."

School board president Sandra Jensen admits that the district does not agree with all of the assertions made in the manual, but says it is intended to encourage open discussion. "The purpose of providing this resource is to help staff see that people come from a multitude of different backgrounds which cause them to respond differently to the same set of facts, depending on their personal perspectives," she said. "Recognition that one might have a certain perspective is critical to treating all people equally."

Peterson refutes these assertions and asserts that the manual is clearly intended to push a political agenda. He calls the book's message "derivative, intellectually muddled, [and] extraordinary arrogant in its presumptions."

According to one of the manual's authors, Franklin Campbell Jones, the book is also being used in school districts in New York, California, Maryland, Kansas, and Minnesota, as well as some areas in Canada.



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