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Walter Williams column: White privilege and other fables

By Walter E. Williams Oct 13, 2017



Some academics would have you believe people in Communist countries, like this man fixing a car in Cuba, have it great.

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FAIRFAX As George Orwell said, “some ideas are so stupid that only intellectuals believe them.” Many stupid ideas originate with academics on college campuses. If they remained there and didn’t infect the rest of society, they might be a source of entertainment, much in the way a circus is. Let’s look at a few stupid ideas peddled by intellectuals.

During the Cold War, academic leftists made a moral equivalency between communist totalitarianism and democracy. Worse is the fact that they exempted communist leaders from the type of harsh criticism directed toward Adolf Hitler, even though communist crimes against humanity made Hitler’s slaughter of 11 million noncombatants appear almost amateurish.

According to Professor R.J. Rummel’s research in “Death by Government,” from 1917 until its collapse, the Soviet Union murdered or caused the death of 61 million people, mostly its own citizens. From 1949 to 1976, Communist China’s Mao Zedong regime was responsible for the death of as many as 78 million of its own citizens.

On college campuses, the same sort of equivalency is made between capitalism and communism, but if one looks at the real world, there’s a stark difference. Just ask yourself: In which societies is the average citizen richer — societies toward the capitalist end of the economic spectrum or those toward the communist end? In which societies do ordinary citizens have their human rights protected the most — those toward the capitalist end or those toward the communist end? Finally, which societies do people around the world flee from — capitalist or communist? And where do they flee to — capitalist or communist societies?

More recent nonsense taught on college campuses, under the name of multiculturalism, is that one culture is as good as another. Identity worship, diversity and multiculturalism are currency and cause for celebration at just

about any college. If one is black, brown, yellow or white, the prevailing thought is that he should take pride and celebrate that fact even though he had nothing to do with it. The multiculturalist and diversity crowd seems to suggest that race or sex is an achievement. That's just plain nonsense. In my book, race or sex might be an achievement, worthy of considerable celebration, if a person were born a white male and through his effort and diligence became a black female.

Then there's white privilege. Colleges have courses and seminars on "whiteness." One college even has a course titled "Abolition of Whiteness." According to academic intellectuals, whites enjoy advantages that nonwhites do not. They earn higher income and reside in better housing, and their children go to better schools and achieve more. Based upon those socioeconomic statistics, Japanese-Americans have more white privilege than white people. And, on a personal note, my daughter has experienced more white privilege than probably 95 percent of white Americans. She's attended private schools, had ballet and music lessons, traveled the world, and lived in upper-income communities. Leftists should get rid of the concept of white privilege and just call it achievement.

Then there's the issue of campus rape and sexual assault. Before addressing that, let me ask you a question. Do I have a right to place my wallet on the roof of my car, go into my house, have lunch, take a nap and return to my car and find my wallet just where I placed it? I think I have every right to do so, but the real question is whether it would be a wise decision. Some college women get stoned, use foul language and dance suggestively.

I think they have a right to behave that way and not be raped or sexually assaulted. But just as in the example of my placing my wallet on the roof of my car, I'd ask whether it is wise behavior.

Many of our problems — both at our institutions of higher learning and in the nation at large — stem from the fact that we've lost our moral compasses and there's not a lot of interest in reclaiming them. As a matter of fact, most people don't see our major problems as having anything to do with morality.

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