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Santa Monica High's Multicultural Fistfights

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The social experiment that Santa Monica High School has become is yet one more example of the dismal failure of leftism and the delusions and paranoia of its architects. Once a beacon of public education to which families and their kids flocked, this beachside high school has in recent years become a center of political indoctrination.

The Left has created the false reality of institutional racism at "SamoHi," thereby fostering a sense of hopelessness in students. The students have, in turn, acted on that hopelessness. Racial disharmony is rampant at the school, manifest in the unchecked self-segregation found at so many of our nation's public schools. This has caused a greater potential for violence. It was not surprising when a huge, out-of-control race brawl took place on the campus. What was surprising was the response of school board member Oscar De La Torre, who nearly started a second riot just days later when he brought known gang members onto campus and refused to remove them, defying and mocking the police officers on the scene. Rather than being punished or reprimanded, this school board member will continue to be allowed to play a key role in instituting an aggressive new wave of leftist initiatives to address the racial animus.

When asked about his decision to bring gang leaders onto the high school's campus, De La Torre claimed that they were "businessmen," not gang members as the police department alleged. One has to wonder what kind of "businessmen" wear gang clothes, have gang tattoos, and are suspected by the police department of being gang leaders. Only in De La Torre's radical leftist world can such people be considered no different than the corner grocer.

As an alumnus of SamoHi, I felt compelled to personally contact Superintendent Deasy, who refused to criticize De La Torre's actions. This was another act of cowardice on the part of Mr. Deasy, who, leftist or not, had to realize that De La Torre's actions endangered the student body with whose care he has been entrusted. I also contacted the school's principal, neither would she rebuke De La Torre. Other district officials and De La Torre's fellow board members also remained silent.

In a school board meeting the following day, De La Torre further contributed to the problem by failing to reproach the students who engaged in violence, instead giving them a blanket excuse for their reprehensible conduct. Resorting to the unsupported leftist claim that all blacks and Hispanics – even those in a city as P.C. as Santa Monica – are inherently the victims of some mysterious "institutional racism," De La Torre explained that "youth violence is a complex social problem that stems from marginalization and disenfranchisement."

I had the displeasure of meeting Oscar De La Torre during one of the Santa Monica city summits where all the leftist student leaders, parents, district officials, and community activists get together to see who can use the most left-wing buzzwords in a single sentence. During my day at the summit, I probably heard the words "exploited," "marginalized," "oppressed," and "disenfranchised" more than most people will in their natural lives. Every problem was chalked up to the larger villain of institutional racism, and all discussion centered on how to combat it. That no one could provide concrete examples seemed to make no difference.

I pointed out that it was incredibly damaging to put all this energy into convincing minority students that they were victims of discrimination and that if they tried to succeed or do something with their lives they would inevitably be held back. I argued that this would only encourage and increase delinquent behavior and that we needed to dispense with this illusion. Instead, we need to explain to minority students that if they applied themselves to their studies and stayed out of trouble, they would find a vista of opportunities. I was quickly labeled a racist, and after the session De La Torre became combative. He, like countless others during my time at Santa Monica High, tried to convince me that blacks and Hispanics were all victims of inescapable discrimination, deeply ingrained in the white ruling class and all public institutions. For many leftists such as De La Torre, this belief is central to their worldview. A belief in racial oppression has become an article of faith, beyond question or reason, invulnerable to rational discussion.

Nonetheless, it is still amazing that it has not occurred to anyone involved with the district that it is the leftist victim mentality and its unchallenged progressive initiatives, and not the mysterious villain the Left call institutional racism, that is in fact causing and worsening the problem.

In this case of vicious institutional discrimination, the "whitewashing" of administrators and counselors apparently inspires delinquent behavior. Someone should have pulled Perez aside and pointed out that he is a district leader and also Hispanic, and that, moreover, the organization which he heads is a bilingual committee that specifically caters to the peculiar needs of the Hispanic community.

Another case of blaming institutional racism for poor behavior arose during my junior year, when it became public knowledge that black and Hispanic students were suspended almost twice as often as white students. The superintendent ordered the security guards (many of whom were themselves black and Hispanic) to undergo sensitivity training, in order to discover how their cultural biases affected the administration of their duties. No one dared suggest that black and Hispanic students might be getting suspended twice as often because they committed twice the infractions. De La Torre's simplistic reasoning suggested something quite different: "If 30 percent of the population is Latino, than they should make up only 30 percent of the dropouts or 30 percent of expulsions and suspensions. There should be proportional representation in the good and in the bad."

To counter institutional racism, SamoHi, in lockstep with the leftist orthodoxy, insists on referring to every group through a hyphenated pseudonym, further emphasizing different nationalities. This multicultural mindset is nurtured and handed down from those in charge, like Oscar De La Torre himself, who claims:

"In elementary school I remember celebrating Cinco de Mayo...as a Mexican child it was something that I could relate to. Cinco de Mayo was the best time for me, of all the activities we had at school, the most fun. But we didn't experience anything in the curriculum; we didn't talk about different Chicano Studies-oriented material or Black Studies or even anything that was more Progressive...now there is a little bit more. We have a Latino literature class, Chicano Literature, and African American Literature. At the high school, we acknowledge Cesar Chavez Day. There is more now than there was before, but it's still not an integral part of the curriculum and not institutionalized to the point that all students experience [the other cultures]. So we are better in our district than we ever were, but we still have a long way to go."

Assimilation is anathema to leftists like De La Torre because the resulting unity would eliminate the need for their policies and programs. To a disturbing extent, this indoctrination has been successful. I have spoken with a number of minority students during my time at SamoHi who claimed that they thought of themselves as Mexican, or Honduran, or Guatemalan first, and American second. De La Torre describes the successes of the Left in instituting ever more multiculturalism over the years; yet, the result has been the development of an anti-Americanism that also contributes mightily to racial tensions. A scientific poll I conducted while at SamoHi revealed that nearly one in every two students felt that America was an unjust nation, and more than one-third of the student body was not proud to be American. In turn, the vast majority of students wanted to reduce military spending, increase gun control, redistribute the nation's wealth, and expand government. At this one high school alone, the Left has trained thousands to continue building its failed utopia.

De La Torre is working with the student groups MEChA (a radical national Hispanic group that believes in racial superiority and returning the southwestern United States to Mexico to create a "bronze nation") and the Black Student Union, along with leftist parents and community activists, who have formed a coalition to implement a ten-point plan they believe will solve the problem of black and Hispanic underachievement, violence, and racial tension. It is just more of the same, a declaration of institutional racism followed by extreme plans for re-education and multiculturalism. Its leftist illusions and destructiveness are self-evident, yet both the superintendent and the principal have agreed to work with the coalition and incorporate their ideas.

The Left has caused and deepened the distressing problems we find in Santa Monica High School and countless other schools in this nation by refusing to answer student misbehavior with discipline, by failing to hold individuals accountable for their actions, by justifying any and all poor conduct, by excusing black and Hispanic misbehavior by holding those students to a lower standard, by drilling into them the belief that they are inherently victims, by proffering multiculturalist solutions to problems that don't exist. The political Left is like a doctor who stays in business by keeping his patients sick. According to leftist logic, if the leeches aren't making the patient healthy, then more leeches need to be applied. The doctor in the case of the racial illnesses at Santa Monica High School is the problem. It's time to put him out of business.