



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 2, 2016

Politician Calls Declaration of Independence's Words a "Lie"

Nothing could be less controversial than having schoolchildren learn a passage from the Declaration of Independence, right? Guess again. Because a recently proposed Louisiana bill requiring just that was shelved last week after a lawmaker implied it was racist and characterized it as a "lie."

Breitbart reports on the story, [writing](#) that state Representative Barbara Norton (D; shown) "led the charge against [HB 1035](#), a measure that would require local school boards of education to have students in grades four to six recite a specified section of the Declaration of Independence after the current daily period of silent prayer or meditation and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance." The bill was introduced by State Rep. Valarie Hodges (R), and the passage the children would have recited follows:



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Apparently, though, Rep. Norton is no fan of lofty ideals. Here's what she had to say (video below) while agitating against the bill:

Representative Hodges, I'm not really sure what your intent is, but one thing I that I do know is, all men are not created equal. When I think back in 1776, July the 4th, African-Americans were slaves. And for you to bring a bill to request that our children will recite the Declaration, I think it's a little bit unfair to us, to ask those children to recite something that's not the truth. And for you to ask our children to repeat the Declaration, stating that all mens are free, I think that's unfair. In 1776 Dr. King was not even born. African-Americans were in slavery. So since they were in slavery in the Declaration of Independence day, we were all created equal? We were not created equal because in 1776, July the 4th, I nor you nor any of us were born, nor was Dr. King born, so we were in slavery. And to have our children to repeat, to repeat, again and again documents that were not even validated, I don't think that that's fair because we're teaching them a lie.

Tragically, Norton's reasoning ability and grasp of history are as wanting as her grammar. While she cited Martin Luther King twice, she apparently knows little about him because he [called](#) the principles



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of the Declaration “magnificent words” in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Norton also clearly doesn’t grasp the obvious distinction between being *created* equal by God and being *treated* equally by man.

Norton’s complaint also reflects the general leftist idea that things born of antebellum America are invalid. But if tolerance for slavery disqualifies ideas, we’re going to have a problem because slavery was once ubiquitous throughout the world — until finally outlawed by *European civilization*. We couldn’t cite Aristotle, Plato, Socrates or other ancient Greeks because the Greeks practiced slavery. We couldn’t study Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Confucius, or Sun Tzu because the Romans and ancient Chinese practiced slavery. Why, slavery is still present in Africa today.

So following Norton’s “logic,” we’d have to dispense with virtually all of the past. It’s the kind of thinking that gives you French Revolutionaries starting history anew in 1789 or the Khmer Rouge and their “Year Zero.”

Norton also complained that the Declaration was “not even validated,” which might have been her way of saying that we hadn’t yet lived up to it. But that’s always the case with the loftiest ideas — people don’t live up to them. As I [explained](#) in 2004:

Let’s say that there was a standard of morality that was the Truth, and by this I mean the very embodiment of perfection. How then could mere human beings, imperfect as they are, ever hope to live in accordance with it? They couldn’t of course. This tells us something very important: while the failure to live up to a standard isn’t in and of itself proof of it being the Truth, the ability to do so is most certainly proof that it cannot be.... It’s ironic, but anyone who can truly practice what he preaches isn’t practicing anything worth preaching.

So Norton is confusing the validity of beliefs with the virtue of believers. But beliefs don’t have to be “validated” (to take the term literally) by believers; they stand on their own merits.

It’s hard to imagine that all of the above could escape Norton were her mind not clouded by emotion. She would do well to worry less about the sins and prejudices of the past and examine her own prejudices. As for the Louisiana Legislature, the majority Republican chamber ought to be ashamed of itself for not laughing Norton’s inane remarks right out of Baton Rouge.



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