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POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: AMERICA THROUGH THE EYES OF THE SMITHSONIAN

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of new york

in the house of representatives

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Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, did you know that the United States is under constant oppression by the narrow, exclusionary and overly rational dominant culture? Well, many college campuses have been spewing forth this unfounded rhetoric for years, but now the Federal Government has joined them through the sponsorship of a plethora of historical and scientific exhibits in Smithsonian museums.

Yes, an American family from my rural, farming district in upstate New York can come to Washington, DC, to visit our wonderful Smithsonian museums. However, this visit will be only to learn that their dear grandfather who was an American fighter pilot in World War I was responsible for the vast slaughter of civilians and soldiers because he used stealth and surprise rather than dramatic dogfights to shoot down enemy planes. The Air and Space Museum portrays these beloved relatives as unfair, imperialistic warmongers who slaughtered innocent civilians rather than the heroic defenders of democracy fighting the expansionist, totalitarian and anti-democratic regimes of Central and Eastern Europe.

This World War I exhibit is not a solitary incident, but a shining example of the type of politically correct and inaccurate messages that the Smithsonian sends to tens of millions of people every year. Fortunately, veterans of World War II were able to thwart the Smithsonian's most recent attempt to broadcast revisionist history through the Enola Gay Exhibit. Living participants of this event were able to correct the grave misstatements and gross inaccuracies by our national science museum. I fear these museums' interpretation of those events for which there are no living participants to plead their case. The results of such circumstances can already be seen in many existing Smithsonian programs and exhibits.

I commend to your concerted attention the following article by John Leo, entitled ``The National Museums of PC'' in the October 10, 1994 issue of U.S. News and World Report, which further details the flood of **political correctness** through our national museums.

Congress possesses the power of the purse. Perhaps this power must be utilized as Congress reauthorizes and appropriates funding for the Smithsonian during the 104th Congress. I know that I will be following this issue closely and will act accordingly.

[From U.S. News and World Report, Oct. 10, 1994]

The National Museums of PC

By John Leo

The Enola Gay controversy at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington is no isolated incident, just the most publicized example so far of the politically correct make-over underway at the various museums of the Smithsonian Institution.

The folks at Air and Space went way too far with plans for next year's exhibition on the end of World War II and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, arguing that America was conducting a racist war of vengeance against Japan, while ``for most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism.''

That perverse view of the war and American motives, running through hundreds of pages of early draft versions of the show, was bound to attract attention from veterans and historians who know better. But the same dark vision of America as arrogant, oppressive, racist and destructive increasingly runs through the Smithsonian complex.

Part of the new Smithsonian strategy is to keep stressing the negatives. The end of America's most honorable and successful war is celebrated by focusing on the morally ambiguous act of bombing Japanese cities. At the National Museum of American History, the 200th anniversary of the Constitution was celebrated by an exhibition on the document's most spectacular violation--the interment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. It's a good show and Americans ought to know about the internments, but that was it--nothing else from the Smithsonian on the bicentennial of a stupendous **political** achievement.

The current ``Science in American Life exhibit at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History is another exercise in accentuating the negative. It's a disparaging, politically loaded look at American science, concentrating single-mindedly on failures and dangers: DDT, Three Mile Island, the ozone hole, acid rain, the explosion of the Challenger, Love Canal, nonbiodegradable plastics, possible threats in genetically altered foods.

weird science

A reconstruction of an 1876 chemistry lab features two chemists arguing bitterly over who deserves credit for the discovery of saccharin. One of the few scientific achievements the show praises is the birth control pill, but even here a sign says: ``Some African Americans . . . believed there were two kinds of pills: one for white women and one for us, and the one for us causes sterilization.''

This notion, that sterilization pills were secretly distributed to blacks, is left un rebutted.

An ``Avenge Pearl Harbor'' poster at the science exhibit makes the same point that the Enola Gay text does: that the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan was an irrational act of vengeance. The exhibition veers well away from science to

remind us that armed forces were still segregated in World War II, with a black soldier decrying America as a ``so-called democracy.'' IQ tests, discussed in the same sentence as phrenology, presumably to disparage IQ testing, were sometimes ``used to rationalize racism.''

At the Air and Space Museum, a show on World War I is essentially used to indict the airplane and technology in general for the vast slaughter of civilians and soldiers over the past 75 years. The show is impatient with the idea of military valor: Famous fighter pilots should not be considered heroes or ``knights of the air''--even Germany's famous ``Red Baron'' downed many pilots by ``stealth and surprise,'' not in dramatic dogfights as many imagine.

Up in the Air and Space planetarium, a film on Exploring New Worlds, recently closed, was even more heavily politicized. Exploring the heavens was linked to ``the frantic exploration and exploitation'' conducted on Earth by Columbus and Europeans in general. A walk-through exhibit-- ``Where Next, Columbus?''--raises the question of whether the West will repeat this alleged exploitation in space. A lighted display asks the vexing question, ``Does Mars Have Rights?'' Below, the display says: ``Historically, the arrival of explorers has not always been benign.''

Large sections of the Museum of Natural History are closed to the public, presumably for renovation. Meanwhile ``dilemma labels'' on the walls apologize for older, unreformed exhibits. One dilemma label complains that in these displays, ``Humans are treated as more important than other mammals,'' which is obviously incorrect.

Over at the Museum of American History, a highly multiculturalized exhibition on America from 1780 to 1800 treats Indians, blacks and Europeans as three equally excellent cultures, with Indians and blacks perhaps a bit more excellent because they ``studied nature in order to work in harmony with it--not to control it'' and they ``developed sophisticated methods of systematizing their knowledge . . . and elaborate technologies.''

On a recent two-hour trek through the history museum, I noticed very little celebrating American achievement, nothing about the Founding Fathers, the idea of America or what Americans have in common.

Instead, the emphasis is on separateness and the alleged need to resist the constant oppression by the narrow, exclusionary and overly rational dominant culture. This is the familiar ideology of campus **political correctness**, imported whole into our national museum structure. Your tax dollars at work.
