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Efforts to eliminate DEI bordering on the ridiculous | Charita Goshay



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In a mission to purge diversity, equity and inclusion policies from the government, someone at the Department of Defense recently made a fool of themselves by erroneously flagging images of the World War II bomber "Enola Gay" to be scrubbed from the DOD's website.

Why? Because the Enola Gay includes the word "gay."

I only wish I were kidding.

The Enola Gay, flown by Paul W. Tibbets of Columbus, released an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6, 1945, ushering the end of World War II.

As was the custom, Tibbets named his plane after a special woman; in this case, his mom, whose name was ... Do I even have to type it?

Need a break? Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle.

No words: Enola Gay pilot's granddaughter decries 'shameful' Trump Defense Department DEI word purge

Task & Purpose, a military news outlet, has reported that in a bid to comply with the Trump administration's death-to-DEI directives, educational materials that included ethnic references of service personnel, and women buried in Arlington National Cemetery — including Medal of Honor recipients — have been deleted from the cemetery's website and its walking tour.

Task & Purpose reports: "Gone from public view are links to lists of dozens of 'Notable Graves' at Arlington of women and Black and Hispanic service members who are buried in the cemetery. About a dozen other 'Notable Graves' lists remain highlighted on the website, including lists of politicians, athletes and even foreign nationals."

But context matters. The "Navajo Code Talkers" were able to thwart the Axis during World War II precisely because they were Navajos and spoke a language no one else did.

How can you omit that fact?

Context also matters because many of the men and women who fought and died for this country, did so in segregated units, serving with courage and certainly with more honor than they're currently receiving.

Many served fully cognizant that they were fighting for the freedom of others, without having enjoyed their own. They did it because they had an unrequited love of country, and saw themselves as fully American, even if no one else did.

The Germans couldn't eliminate the Tuskegee Airmen and the the WASPs (Women Airforce Service Pilots), but DEI nearly did, when the Air Force removed their histories from its basic training curriculum.

Both groups included a number of Ohioans, such as the late Harold White of Canton, who performed gallantly in spite of the doubts and obstacles placed in their way.

What's more American than that?

Only a public outcry brought the Air Force to its senses.

There has been an erasure of any mention of the ethnicity of Ira Hayes, a Navajo who helped raise an American flag during the bloody battle at Iwo Jima; a moment immortalized by the Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington, Virginia.

A page dedicated to Army Second Lt. Jackie Robinson — yes, that Jackie Robinson — who was court martialed for refusing to accept segregated seating on a military bus was removed and then restored.

How does removing such history make us safer? Better?

What's next, sanding off Stars of David and Islamic crescents from headstones in military cemeteries? Pretending that Rosie the Riveters and the Six-Triple-Eight never existed? What happens to the Brigadier Gen. Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers Memorial which is part of the National Park Service in Wilberforce?

There's an undercurrent of arrogance in the insistence that we are a colorblind country because it diminishes and dismisses the experiences of people whose stories prove otherwise.

Denial of our shared history implies that the accomplishments of certain people weren't achieved through meritocracy, that they somehow enjoyed special treatment when all they really received was a chance to level the playing field a bit more for future generations.

Every program and policy can always be improved, and some do indeed have expiration dates, but demonizing DEI has become the latest blunt instrument in beating back the notion that diversity offers value.

Next Christmas, don't be at all surprised if there's an executive order banning any performance at the Kennedy Center that includes the lyric, "Don we now our gay apparel."

Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.

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