

**If English was good enough
for Jesus then it's good
enough for me***



Robert Donat as Mr. Chips, 1939

by [Nikos Akritas](#) (March 2022)

"...just because something is done in the name of diversity doesn't make it un-fascist. It just makes it a nicer form of fascism." [\[i\]](#)

Contrary to popular opinion, it's quite easy to claim a teacher is incompetent and bully them out of post. The shameful irony is that good teachers, who speak up about corruption and poor decisions affecting children's education, are the ones actually got rid of. They are lost by schools that so badly need them. Conversely, poor teachers often keep

quiet about poor standards and practices, if they recognize them at all, or see their way to promotion by actively supporting them.

The second UK primary school I taught at, Willowthrush, had a functionally illiterate head teacher, who could hardly compose a letter that made sense; a deputy head teacher and literacy coordinator who were hardly any better, not knowing the difference between singular and plural possessive apostrophes; and more than one teacher who taught decimal multiplication by getting children to bring the decimal point down in line with the decimal point of the numbers being multiplied, so a sum such as 0.5×0.5 would yield a result of 2.5. Becoming embroiled in disagreements over such matters wasted precious time but far more time was wasted having to un-teach what these imbeciles had filled children's heads with.

Another waste of valuable time was a disagreement I had with the head teacher, Vlaka, who, having proofread my reports before they were to be sent parents, insisted I change *practise* to *practice* when I recommended children practise a certain skill more. When I pointed out that would be to incorrectly substitute a noun for a verb her eyes glazed over, clearly not understanding my point. She interjected that in this particular case she supposed either spelling would do and hurriedly left the room.

Another edit she insisted on was no comma before the word *and*. When I pointed out this was a common misconception and that there were cases, such as the one in question, where commas separated a list of items and one before the final *and* helped differentiate the last two items as separate entities she huffed, turned to another teacher (who spoke English as a second language) and sought her approval. This teacher, Ifeoma, agreed with Vlaka, who triumphantly stated I was wrong, she was right. I pointed out this was correct use of the Oxford comma, for which I was labelled 'difficult'.

Vlaka ended up complaining to the Chair of Governors who, in my discussion with him, excused and defended her to the hilt but refused to be drawn into a conversation about correct usage. So I was accused of being awkward for disagreeing, but my disagreement was the problem, not the issue that gave rise to it. This is no pedantic point. To defer to authority in such situations would lead to incorrect use of words, punctuation and grammar (basically the English language) – in correspondence from a school! It was as though Humpty Dumpty had been put in charge, the physical resemblance notwithstanding, as everything ultimately rested not on correct use of words and grammar but who was to be master.

Unfortunately, in many cases, it is a question of *do what you're told even if I have no idea what I am talking about and you clearly do*. But this is how many of our UK primary schools are being run. The few examples given illustrate the substandard knowledge of some teachers in primary schools. There were many more such encounters and I dread to think of the things I didn't witness. Schools employ many teachers who are below an acceptable standard because the sheer number of teachers needed and the salary paid means it is an attractive profession for those who manage to scrape a degree but cannot do much else (mass higher education, and the resultant lowering of standards, has only compounded the problem). And so there is a large number, even if only a small percentage in proportional terms, of incompetent teachers in the system.

As for Ifeoma, this was a teacher who, on another occasion, claimed incorrect pronunciation of her name was tantamount to racism. When I suggested that people were not purposely mispronouncing her name but that it was difficult for those who were not native speakers of her first language and that accent played a large part, she dismissed these as convenient excuses. To point out her accent resulted in her mispronunciation of many English words would, I am sure, have resulted in an official complaint of racism against me. The

race card is played too often by such people. And by such people I mean incompetent ones who silence their critics by *ad hominem* attacks rather than address the issue at hand – often their incompetence.

Along with liberal (no pun intended) accusations of racism, and concomitant with the self-esteem, child-centred approach which has taken hold of our schools, comes the misguided concept of multiculturalism and its insistence on equality, which has had bizarre repercussions and led to situations of anything but. For example: *Black History Month*. When I moved to Willowthrush this was one of the first politically correct initiatives, directly affecting the curriculum, I came across. Black History Month is dedicated to aspects of *black history*, where black historical and contemporary figures are celebrated throughout schools, as a corrective to the Eurocentric, *white view* of history.

If there is a need for incorporating more *black history* into the curriculum this is not the way to do it. Not many people are aware of the ancient Nubian civilization, which built more pyramids than Egypt and actually ruled Egypt as the 25th dynasty (although there is a room dedicated to it in the British Museum); or of ancient Ethiopia and its crucial role in the wars between East Rome and Sassanid Persia before the advent of Islam; or even the medieval Malian king, Mansa Musa, who distributed so much gold on his way to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage that it devalued the metal and caused an inflationary financial crisis in the 14th century. But so what? *If* there is a robust argument for a *Black History Month* why not an *Indian History Month* or a Chinese one? This is an example of identity politics, where a particular pressure group has pushed an agenda which has found its way into mainstream schools, 'succeeding' to the exclusion of others.

Singling out a particular group for special treatment is prejudicial itself, not to mention the fact that those from Asian ethnic groups, at 7.5% of the population, are more than

double those from Black ethnic groups, at 3.3% (according to the 2011 Census for England and Wales[\[ii\]](#)). In some schools the definition of what constitutes *black* has evolved over time to *include* any person of *non-white* description. But who, exactly, has decided this? And are Asians, of whatever description, happy to be incorporated into the catch-all term of *black*. Similar problems exist with the term *Black and Minority Ethnic* (BME) and census categories which are a mixture of colour, ethnicity, nationality and geographical place names. This is even before we consider religious affiliation, many Muslims seeing this as a more important marker of identity than colour or ethnicity. Indeed, Muslims, at 2.8 million or 4.4% of the population,[\[iii\]](#) number more than any one particular ethnic group. Should we, rather, be celebrating *Muslim History Month* in our schools?

But who were these people coming into schools, providing literature and resources for *Black History Month*? Nobody of any academic authority as far as I could tell. I remember one poster depicting ancient Egypt as a Black civilization, with a chronology stretching further back than anything known from historical evidence, and Cleopatra as Black. It seemed to me, the Afrocentrists I had encountered at university twenty years earlier had made their way into state schools. It was pure identity politics and a form of multicultural brainwashing; I say multicultural but it was only promoting one form of identity. The multiculturalists, though, do not see an issue with that. It ascribed all sorts of inventions and ideas to people of Black origins, some of which I am sure were true but who, of any trustworthy authority, was checking the authenticity of these claims?

I discussed the whole idea of Black History Month with a few of my colleagues (an ethnically diverse bunch) and none of them were comfortable with it, agreeing that certain elements could be incorporated into a wider teaching of history but that to purposely concentrate on one group of people was to

exclude others. Some parents had also expressed discomfort with it whilst I was doing my teacher training, as did my mentor in my first year of teaching, but what is amazing is that none of us felt we could raise the issue openly. To have done so would have been, once again, to draw accusations of racism or prejudice or harbouring some sinister agenda. It would make far more sense to incorporate any of these issues into the broader sweep of history – such as 40% of British troops during WWI came from colonies – which would allow for children to make connections between peoples and civilizations across time in a much less polarized way.

But the multiculturalists' confused obsession with celebrating diversity in the way they do, in the pursuit of raising children's self-esteem, does not end with colour. All groups, whatever their 'identity' must be *included*. All groups, that is, except the host culture. And so, in the spirit of inclusion, Eid, Diwali, Hannukah and a host of other festivals are celebrated at schools in the UK. But when it comes to Christmas, well, that's a different story. Christmas, after all, is a Christian celebration and Christianity, by association with Europe, is viewed as patriarchal and imperialistic. It is an inextricable part of *white* European history and so is suspect and associated with oppression. It must be consigned, well, somewhere else; somewhere other than our schools (where it could contaminate our children) and preferably to oblivion.

This is part of the self-loathing of western liberals, a phenomenon borne of *white guilt*. Aside from the issue with defining 'white' (who *exactly* counts as white? Those like David Webb^[iv] aside), who are these liberals to decide who is to feel guilty and for what? To associate Christianity with that sin of all sins *white privilege* (but what exactly are the privileges? Do all 'whites' benefit from these same privileges to the exclusion of 'non-whites'? and is privilege, once it has been defined, something to feel guilty about or even

punished for?) is to be woefully ignorant of Christianity's history and its various denominations. I can assure Western liberals that those adhering to the Oriental and Orthodox Churches, at least, do not identify with the West nor have they benefitted in any way from a shared Christian heritage – in fact, quite the opposite. Eastern Christians (which include whites of South-eastern Europe, the Middle East and north Africa), with a long history of persecution from both Western Christians and those of non-Christian faiths (including non-whites), have often been the victims of imperialism, not the beneficiaries

Compounding the prejudice against Christianity in our schools is the denial that this prejudice exists. An advocacy group which claims to campaign against racism and fascism, *Hope not Hate*, reported, "People told us they sometimes felt that they had been made to pander to Muslim sensibilities, as part of a 'PC agenda'. We were told in a number of citizens' panels that schools are no longer allowed to put on nativity plays at Christmas or celebrate Easter because of the Muslim community, despite no evidence that this was true." [\[v\]](#) *Hope not Hate* may not have any evidence that schools avoid celebrating Christian festivals in order to avoid offending non-Christian sensibilities but that this state of affairs exists is undeniable, as I witnessed first-hand.

Neither school I worked at in the UK acknowledged Christian celebrations. The last school I taught at, with a high proportion of ethnic minorities (which included Christians), representing almost every faith under the sun, made huge fanfare about non-Christian religious festivals. But when it came to Christmas there was to be no religious element associated with any event taking place. No religious-themed Christmas carols, no Nativity play and definitely no mention of God and Jesus. Instead, the celebration was billed as *being good to one another and showing our appreciation of each other* – couching the whole occasion in secular speak. But if these

are messages worth celebrating, surely the source of these messages and their religious background is worth knowing too. And I say this as an avowed atheist.

Equality, when it comes to religion and culture means, for the liberals running our education system, celebration of the *other* and obscurity, if not condemnation, of the host culture. Another example is something that is now firmly ensconced in many schools, *International Day*. A day of celebrating the world's many cultures and differences, of diversity – except, of course, the UK's.

When *International Day* was announced at a staff meeting, earnest discussion ensued about how to celebrate the upcoming event. One of the ideas proffered was for all children to come to school dressed in the colours of their 'home country'. Examples were given of 'national costume' and, if children did not possess such a thing (why would they? liberals have a very quaint view of how those from ethnic minorities might dress at home or back in the 'home country') they should be encouraged to wear clothes reflecting the colours of the flag of *their* country.

I listened to all of this in disbelief. We definitely had a high proportion of children from ethnic minority communities but most of them were born in the UK. I was not opposed to children celebrating their ethnic identity but where in all of this, in anything we did at school, was a fostering of belonging in the UK? Of a sense of Britishness? As the meeting drew to a close, I announced I would have to see if I could find a T-shirt with a Union Jack printed on it. The room fell silent. Vlaka, and one or two others, gawped at me, horrified. "What? I'm British," I smiled back at them. There was no response. The meeting was over and I left the room. Goodness knows what conversation followed.

This liberal mind-set and aversion to celebrating Britishness or seeing anything good in being associated with the UK has

serious ramifications for integration. I grew up in a very multi-ethnic environment, at a time when those from ethnic minorities were a tiny percentage of the UK population and racism was overt in British society. Ethnic minorities, understandably, usually operated under a siege mentality. Immigrants sought protection and comfort in holding onto an identity they had brought with them and passed this on to their children. Although UK born I was proud to be Cypriot, not British, even if I was discriminated against by 'my own' for being of darker hue. Britain was just somewhere I lived. In fact, I had a problem with the English. I considered them a nation of racists, as my experiences growing up seemed to confirm, who had 'colonised' and exploited the land of my parents and the lands of many others. But my views about identity changed over the years and, by the time I became a teacher, I understood how problematic such views were. They are not only detrimental to community cohesion but disadvantage those who hold them. They are, essentially, self-imposed views of being *other* and a *foreigner* and they encourage a disposition towards victimhood.

So now, here I was teaching children who were not only first but second generation born in the UK, in addition to those who had just immigrated. These children saw themselves as Pakistani, Turkish, Jamaican, Albanian, Nigerian, etc. but not British. British was something else, not an identity they subscribed to. When I overheard a discussion taking place amongst children on their return from break one day and one of them said he was *going home* for the summer, I asked what he meant by home. He explained he was, "Going home to Albania."

"Oh, I thought you were born here."

"I was."

"So isn't this your home?" My question caused most children to burst into laughter, as this was clearly a ridiculous question on my part.

"I'm Albanian."

"But you were born here?"

"Yes."

"And you live here."

"Yes."

"And do you have an Albanian or a British passport?"

"British."

"So you're British."

This assertion elicited gasps all around. Some children were clearly offended and objected to what they clearly found an offensive remark. I turned to one of the more vociferous boys, who was clearly having none of it.

"So what do you regard yourself as?"

"Turkish."

I turned to another.

"And you?"

"Nigerian."

Now I addressed both of them.

"Ok, where were you born?"

"Here."

"Where have you lived most of your life?"

"Here."

"From which country do you have a passport?"

"Britain."

I could now see the horror spread across their faces, as the implication of their answers to my questions dawned on them.

"What is your first language? The one you mainly speak and are most fluent in?"

"English."

"In which country have you been educated?"

"England."

"You're British," I beamed.

"No!" came the objections, not just from these two but from many others around the class. It was as though I had insulted them.

The Polish girl in the class, who had been in the UK just a few months, although having very little English, seemed to grasp the gist of the conversation and found it highly amusing, smiling throughout. "Look," I said to them, "You're born here, educated here, hold British passports, most of you speak English as a first language, go to school here and have lived most, if not all, of your lives here. You are all British."

More cries of objection. I thought some children were going to cry. The more adamant were calling out in confusion, "But I'm Turkish," or "I'm Albanian."

"You're those things too," I continued. "You're ethnically Turkish, or Albanian, or Nigerian, or Jamaican. You have a link back to those countries through your parents and that's part of your heritage. But you are also part of this country and enjoy the rights and privileges living in this country bestows. The benefits of living here are why your parents came here, don't you want those benefits?"

Now I was met with silence, although the children looked very distressed at the realization that they were British in addition to whatever other identity they claimed. I expected complaints from parents after that discussion, but none came. I wasn't too concerned about objections from colleagues, if they learned of my discussion with the children, as the government was just beginning to push the need for addressing community cohesion in schools. In actual fact, the one or two colleagues who did come to learn of it completely agreed with my stance. They were also, like me, the children of immigrants to the UK but felt uncomfortable addressing the issue. From then on, I took the opportunity, whenever it arose, to challenge any adult or child at the school who objected to being seen as British. Schools must do a lot more in promoting a British identity in UK primary schools, especially amongst ethnic minority groups, and especially when it comes to appreciating the host culture, Christianity included.

The pursuit of *equality* is not limited to issues of identity. Take, for example, school *Sports Day*. Given the politically correct standpoint that competition is inherently bad because of the negative feelings it ultimately leads to for some, competition is avoided. Instead, activities are set up in which all children at school participate. The children are placed in teams but they do not compete against each other and usually there is no point-scoring. The activities are, in effect, mindless. There is no ultimate goal. It is just mass participation in short bursts of physical movement. All children run, throw, jump or whatever the activity might be until the allocated time is up and on they go to the next one. Some schools do keep a tally of how many 'wins' each team scored and announce this at the end of the day – there are no individual winners. But many schools have even done away with this and award points for effort, team spirit and happiness! Genuine competition is anathema.

Winning is bad because it makes losers feel like, well,

losers. And this is to be avoided at all costs. So physical effort, sportsmanship, learning from defeat and building resilience, real team effort, and winning and losing gracefully, are not deemed of value. Aside from a shocking blindness to all the positive things that can be learned through physical competition, there is a very cruel and inherent contradiction in this outlook. The mere act of learning entails a competition of sorts, as children progress at different speeds. However, one tries to mask this, if that is what one is trying to do, children more or less know who is good or better at what – whether it be reading, writing, maths or whatever else. So academic ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ are allowed but not sporting ones. It is often the case that those who excel at physical pursuits are not the most academically inclined. They are the ones being denied the opportunity to shine. Only intellectual success, and in a warped and twisted way, is valued.

Sometimes I question the efficacy of tests like SATs for children of primary school age, but I always come to the conclusion that the government is right to pursue testing. Otherwise, what has happened to competitive sport in schools would also be the fate of educational standards. Promoting equality by undercutting success leads to no achievement and no progress. Everybody suffers – we become equally deficient.

Political correctness and multiculturalism, which have done so much to damage community cohesion in the UK, are agendas championed by liberal progressives. They are examples of how good intentions, badly thought through and pushed with ideological zeal, can do more damage than good. Encouraging immigrants and their children to identify and take pride in their ethnic backgrounds but at the exclusion of understanding British values and integrating within the UK is disastrous for everybody. Celebrating children’s identities as *other* is constantly obsessed over by progressive liberals running our schools, failing to recognize that raising *self-esteem* in this

way is actually counterproductive. It leads to self-imposed polarization and disadvantages those affected, hampering their ability to participate in opportunities wider society has to offer.

Schools subscribing to all these politically correct ideas also subscribe to an unwritten policy of 'positive discrimination'. Unfortunately, this often results in promotion, due to factors other than ability, of incompetents. Such practices only further damage 'race' relations and community cohesion. They serve as perfect examples of unjust promotion. It is possible to reach the position of head teacher and higher, for example borough advisor, through such politically correct agendas and many have. However, once such individuals are in positions of responsibility, they feel threatened by those who report to them and *are* competent, as the latter see the poor decision making and incompetence for what they are. The ambitious (competent or otherwise), support such incompetent head teachers no matter what, sensing from what they witness that they too can achieve similar levels of promotion – as competence is not an issue and incompetence no bar.

Schools led by incompetent head teachers very quickly become awash with incompetent staff. The high numbers of poor teachers in primary schools, even if a small percentage, unfortunately coalesce into a few schools and so are disproportionately represented in them. Politically correct borough councils and teacher unions then 'conspire' to keep such people in post. It becomes a Kafkaesque world of incompetence and illogical decision making. Good, competent teachers are eventually seen as a threat to the 'harmony' that is established, for they question the lunacy that goes on around them. Such schools, in such boroughs (not all schools and not all boroughs) are a travesty and ruin the education and futures of thousands of children year after year.

*These words are attributed to a governor of Texas, Ma Ferguson, and cited in Hitchens, Christopher *God Is Not Great* [Hachette Book Group](#) 2007.

[i] Goldberg, Jonah *Liberal Fascism*, Doubleday 2008.

[ii]

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest>.

[iii] <https://minorityrights.org/country/united-kingdom/>.

[iv] CNN Analyst Areva Martin Scolds David Webb For 'White Privilege.' He's Black.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThiEENXyiwg>.

[v] *State of hate 2019 People Vs The Elite?* HOPE not hate Ltd <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/state-of-hate-2019-final.pdf>.

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Nikos Akritas has worked as a teacher in countries across the Middle East and Central Asia as well as in Britain. He has had articles published in *BBC History*, *History Today* and other small circulation magazines and newspapers. Born to Greek Cypriot immigrants to the UK, having Armenian relatives, appearing South Asian, having a Turkish partner and growing up in a very ethnically diverse area of London have conspired to provide him with experiences not only encountering prejudice but also of being able to recognize it in various claims, regardless of the colour, ethnicity, creed or gender of those espousing them.

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