

HIS-100 1-3 A Tale of Two Historians

Perspective 1: Howard Zinn

The sections below provide more information about historian Howard Zinn's assumptions, beliefs, and values.

Assumptions:

"When I actually sat down to write [A People's History of the United States], it took less than a year to write it. I wrote it because after the movements of the sixties people had been radicalized and people became dissatisfied with the traditional history, and wanted histories that showed working people and black people and Native Americans and women. And I was aware that no such book existed, that no such history existed. So I decided that I would try to fill that gap."

Beliefs:

"I don't believe in neutrality because the world is already moving in certain directions and wars are going on and children are going hungry. Terrible things are happening. And so to be neutral in a situation like this when things are already moving is to collaborate with the world as it is. **I want to intrude myself. I want to participate in changing the direction of things** (last sentence is in bold type).

Values:

I was just a seventeen-year-old kid, going to Times Square to participate in this **left-wing** (the words left-wing are in bold text) demonstration. I really didn't know what was going on. But it seemed good. The signs were for peace and justice and so on. But then at this peaceful demonstration, I was attacked by police mounted on horseback and on foot. Before I knew it, I was clubbed and knocked unconscious. You might say I woke up with a new consciousness. I woke up realizing that things my radical friends had been saying to me were really true, that the police and the government were not detached bystanders, that freedom of speech did not really exist for dissenters, for radicals, for troublemakers. So it gave me a radical view of the United States, a critical view of the role of the state and of the instruments of the state-the police, the Army, and so on-as not being neutral at all in political battles, but being generally against workers and against striking people, against dissenters of all kinds."

Quotes excerpted from:

Zinn, H. (2004, October 27). Interview with Howard Zinn. Retrieved from:

https://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/a_peoples_history_of_howard_zi/

Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Howard_Zinn_at_lectern.jpg

Perspective 2: Larry Schweikart

The sections below provide more information about historian Larry Schweikart's assumptions, beliefs, and values.

Assumptions:

"Just 35 years ago, [A Patriot's History of the United States] would have simply been called, A History of the United States." Today, virtually all of the so-called "mainstream" texts range from moderately biased to completely and overwhelmingly biased against a free-market, limited-government perspective. Their slant is sometimes blunt, often clever and always varied to make absolutely certain that if one technique doesn't work on unsuspecting students, another will.

Beliefs:

"Likewise, despite 40 years' worth of regulatory attack, the American economic system still remains the most productive in the world, due to a higher degree of private property rights and competition. In our book, we celebrate those who created and cultivated these pillars, while at the same time deconstructing numerous myths of the **Left** (the word left is in bold print). The result is that any student reading "A Patriot's History" will have a hard time suppressing pride in being an American."

Values:

"The history of the United States is not only inspiring; it is essentially "conservative," in that it reaffirms many of those values that conservatives (and many libertarians) today hold dear. And the best news is that one does not have to distort the evidence to tell the story of a great country. Ultimately, learning "just the facts" of the American past leads a student to inevitably conclude that the United States is the best place on earth, and that it has acted, for the most part, far better than any other nation at any other time. If that generates a feeling of patriotism – or makes one a patriot – so be it."

Quotes excerpted from:

Schweikart, L. (2005, June 9). Why Student's Need "A Patriot's History of the United States." Retrieved from: <https://www.mackinac.org/713>

Image Source:

<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/4BnxorN4VzQ/makresefault.jpg>