

Senate Education Committee

House Bill 1527

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Chairman Beard & Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel.

I am a historian who lives in Bismarck.

In the aftermath of World War II, author George Orwell published his classic novel *Animal Farm*. Toward the end of his novel, the original ideals of the farm animal revolution became corrupted into:

*All animals are equal,
but some animals are
more equal than others.*

This is the essential question we face about Holocaust education.

The historical focus of House Bill 1527 is Europe First. It focuses on an atrocity against Jews in Europe at the expense of everyone else.

Nazism under Adolf Hitler was animated by the idea that some people were more important than others. Moreover, Nazism was animated by the eugenic ideal that some people deserved to live and other people were “life unworthy of life.” Expendable, at best.

If we ignore the German genocide against the Herero in Namibia, Leopold II's genocidal reign of terror over Congo Free State, Cambodia's genocide under the Khmer Rouge, the genocide in Rwanda against Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994, Japan's Rape of Nanking, Japan's Rape of Manila, and the Ukrainian Holodomor, we then fall into the very same moral trap that the Nazis fell into.

If we refuse to understand the Holocaust in universal terms, we then fall into the very same moral trap that the Nazis fell into.

Nazism was anything but alone in promoting eugenics or sadistic experimentation on human beings. It was part of a general trend that North Dakota was also part of. Nazis also targeted Romani (Gypsies), black soldiers, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals. Nazism was a specific form of racism that promoted the annihilation of entire peoples, celebrated wanton cruelty, and sought to eliminate what they called "false humanity" – what we might call empathy or compassion. It wasn't the only ideology to do this.

Nazi vilification of Jews had its roots in the writings of Martin Luther and Immanuel Kant, the Russian massacre of Jews at Kishinev in 1903, and the Russian publication of the libelous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Nazism was also inspired by Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent*. Adolf Hitler praised Henry Ford in *Mein Kampf*.

We should be able to talk about institutional racism not only in the context of Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa, but also about other parts of the world. We should be able to talk about how Nazi stigmatization of empathy and compassion is a case study in evil.

Nazi Germany instituted *Gleichschaltung* (or Synchronization) to coordinate every level of German society. Nazi Germany accomplished this by subordinating every sector of German society to the direction of Nazi political commissars. Part of this coordination involved instituting a cult of personality to idolize Nazism's deified leader – Adolf Hitler. It was also about forming a regime of institutional racism that not only promoted individual bias, prejudice, and outright hatred against Jews, but also systematically embedded anti-Semitism throughout German society through weaponizing its legal system to discriminate against Jews.

Let me make this clear – I want the Holocaust to be taught because it is important history, not because state law demands it.

If our Century Code mandates teaching about the Holocaust, but not about slavery, Indian boarding schools, or withholding smallpox vaccine from Indians in what has become North Dakota, our laws then make it clear that some people are more equal than others.

Children need to learn *universal* lessons from the Holocaust. Children need to learn the *universal* relevance of this atrocity as a case study in depravity and a warning against arbitrary power.

House Bill 1527 has good intentions. It is paved with them. It is too prescriptive and too problematic to put into the Century Code.

Please give House Bill 1527 a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation.

Thank you. I am open for questions from this committee.