

EDUCATION REPORTER

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The NEA is a Social Justice Organization

The Orlando National Education Association (NEA) Representational Assembly further cemented the teachers union's standing as a social justice organization. Educating students seems almost a sideline to the union goals of changing societal values and governmental regulations to reflect what the NEA thinks they should be. Whether it is promoting a radical LGBTQ agenda, climate-change activism, UN globalism, anti-capitalism, sex education and abortion rights, unfettered immigration policies, gun control, or any other liberal, progressive agenda item, the NEA fights at the forefront.

In her opening speech as NEA union President, Lily Eskelsen García said, "We truly, truly are the NEA. We are the rabble-rousers. We are the activists." She spoke about her first time as a delegate at an NEA convention, saying, "I had this sense: we're going to do something. We're going to do something important. The people in this room are going to come together and something will be better for someone else's child." That's a grand sentiment, but unfortunately most of what the NEA does and believes in doesn't translate into making it "better" for anyone's children. In fact, harm occurs when the union forces radical social-justice ideas down the throats of the nation's families.

Promoting social justice themes was the subject of delegate-adopted New Business Item 10. NBI 10 says, "the NEA will use its communication tools to highlight examples of NEA members who incorporate social justice into their teaching practice or community engagement." The union will promote curriculum developed by those who teach social justice and tell the stories of those members who take activist roles in their communities.

NEA Executive Director John Stocks, who is often referred to as a social justice warrior, gave his traditional July 4th address to the assembly. He promoted challenging "institutional racism," spoke of his own experience benefitting from "white privilege," and said American systems are failing.

"Simply said, America is not working for most Americans and that has a tremendous impact on our students, our schools, and our future," according to Stocks. But many would disagree with Stocks about why America doesn't "work" for some. Stocks fails to realize his union's focus on social justice causes instead of teaching students is one of the main reasons that students and communities fail. If teachers focused on teaching students the fundamentals that would allow them to rise out of ignorance and poverty, the nation would be a better place.

Instead, Stocks told the delegates, "Sisters and brothers, I've been an organizer all my life. I've been a part of progressive causes and social justice organizing my entire career." Maybe Stocks doesn't understand that social justice organizing doesn't help students learn. Maybe he doesn't care.

Stocks tried to rouse delegates by speaking of a “New American Majority.” He said, “This movement is fueled by growing income inequality, the scourge of racial injustice, attacks on our voting rights, a political system rigged to benefit the wealthy and powerful, the corporate takeover of our public school system, and the threat of global climate change.”

Stocks praised radical groups, calling them “new organizational formations.” He specifically promoted “Occupy Wall Street, Freedom to Marry, Moral Mondays, Black Lives Matter, The Fight for \$15, the Dreamers, and NextGen Climate.” Stocks says, “All of these organizations have at their heart a desire for social, racial, economic, and environmental justice; and the real possibility of uniting our nation in a grand alliance.”

Human and Civil Rights Award Winners

The social justice theme carried over into the NEA dinner held on July 2, to honor the 2015 Human and Civil Rights (HCR) Award winners. The theme of the \$75 a plate dinner was “Justice For All: Never Forget, Never Give Up.”

The winner of the 2015 NEA César Chávez Accion Y Compromiso HCR Award is a theater troupe based in Colorado and headed by James Walsh, a teacher who “grew frustrated with the traditional way of teaching — lecture and discussion and taking exams and using textbooks.” Fulfilling his goal of throwing away textbooks, he began “using poetry, drama, and music to tell the stories of oppressed and marginalized people.” The Romero Theater Troupe aims to “[interpret] history through dramatic theater” and to “resurrect stories that have been lost.” In his acceptance speech he said of his productions, “No one leaves unchanged” and that the group inspires “audience members to become activists.”

Another Human and Civil Rights (HCR) award winner was the creator of BlackPast.org. The website is “an online encyclopedia with more than 3,000 entries,” somewhat like Wikipedia. It is a compendium of information that is created not solely by experts or historians, but by assorted “contributors.” The website is used in classrooms instead of a textbook. The day before the NEA dinner honoring the winners, BlackPast.org was approved for use by the New York City Board of Education. In accepting the award, Dr. Quintard Taylor said, “There is a racial crisis in America right now”; he also spoke about “police brutality.”

The NEA Leo Reano Memorial Award celebrating someone who impacts American Indian affairs was given to Denise Juneau, the Montana Superintendent of Public Education. Juneau, an American Indian, said in her acceptance speech that when she recites the Pledge of Allegiance, after the words, “With liberty and justice for all,” she adds the word “someday.” Apparently Juneau, who attended Indian reservation schools and eventually graduated from law school, is dissatisfied with her country. She said she hopes American children eventually won’t have to add “someday.”

Ms. Juneau is proud of the fact that there are very few private schools and no charter schools in Montana. She says, “We have a group of people who want to privatize public education in our state, and we consistently fight it back” (ALEC’s 2013 *Report Card on American Education* rates Montana’s education policy climate a D+.) Ms. Juneau is in line with the NEA convention delegates who solidified their anti-school choice stance by adopting New Business Item 38, a renewed vow to fight Education Savings Accounts and vouchers that help students attend private schools, claiming they have a “negative impact on public education.”

Another NEA HCR award winner is the You Can Play Project, which has the goal of promoting locker room safety by changing attitudes in sports. The NEA says, “Our society is undergoing a historic cultural shift regarding the acceptance of gay people. You Can Play is spearheading that change in one of the last bastions of homophobia.”

The HCR President’s Award was given to Eliseo Medina, a former board member of the United Farm Workers and former executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union. He is now an immigration activist,

proposing citizenship for those here illegally. Since 2010, Medina has been an honorary chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, the largest socialist organization in the United States, and the principal U.S. affiliate of the Socialist International.

Award banquet literature indicates that "social justice instructional lesson plans" based on the 2015 NEA HCR award winners will be available at the union website in a section titled Lessons Learned From NEA Social Justice Advocates. Teachers are encouraged to use the curriculum in their classrooms.

The NEA and their HCR award winners seem to agree that America is an inferior nation, found to be lacking and insufficient. A grand alliance of leftist activists united behind a liberal agenda is the solution to all America's problems, according to Stocks, García, the NEA union, and their award winners. This is what they aim to teach American schoolchildren.