

Michael Brown: Grammar Is Racist, Math Is Racist and So Are You

Have you heard the latest? Grammar has now been deemed racist, as has math. And should you dare question these new insights, that makes you a racist too. Obviously!

Fact checkers have challenged last month's claim that "Rutgers University declared grammar to be racist." But such claims have been made before.

As noted in a Feb. 21, 2017, article, "The University of Washington produced an 'antiracist' poster which insists American grammar is 'racist' and an 'unjust language structure,' promising to prioritize rhetoric over 'grammatical correctness.'"

As explained on the university's Tacoma-based website, "Racism is the normal condition of things. Linguistic and writing research has shown clearly for many decades that there is no inherent 'standard' of English. Language is constantly changing. These two facts make it very difficult to justify placing people in hierarchies or restricting opportunities and privileges because of the way people communicate in particular versions of English."

But there's more. As reported by professor Walter Williams on *The Daily Signal*, Sept. 11, 2019, "Just when we thought colleges could not spout loonier ideas, we have a new one from American University.

"They hired a professor to teach other professors to grade students based on their 'labor' rather than their writing ability."

The newly hired professor is Asao B. Inoue, who, interestingly enough, has also served as a professor at the aforementioned University of Washington in Tacoma.

Williams notes that, "Inoue believes that a person's writing ability should not be assessed, in order to promote 'anti-racist' objectives. Inoue taught American University's faculty members that their previous practices of grading writing promoted white language supremacy."

Inoue is also affiliated with Arizona State University, where he serves as "a professor and the associate dean for academic affairs, equity and inclusion in the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts at Arizona State University. His research focuses on antiracist and social justice theory and practices in writing assessments."

Reflective of professor Inoue's work is a lecture on, "Creating Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies in Writing Courses." All clear.

So while the headline about Rutgers may have been inaccurate, the claim that "grammar is racist" was not.

To be sure, students who are deprived of solid educational opportunities in their earlier years will likely have poorer grammatical skills when they reach college. And many of those students are people of color.

But one of the purposes of education is to correct the errors we picked up through our environment and upbringing as well as to sharpen our skills in reading, writing, comprehending and communicating. To declare proper grammar racist is as wrongheaded as it is counterproductive.

As for math, a story posted Aug. 9, 2020, on *Campus Reform* announced that, "Math professors and academics at top universities, including Harvard and the University of Illinois, discussed the 'Eurocentric' roots of American

mathematics on Twitter. They asserted that the statement '2 plus 2 equals 4' is rooted in Western definitions of mathematics."

As Ben Zeisloft reported, "Laurie Rubel, who teaches math education at Brooklyn College, says that the idea of math being cultural neutral is a 'myth,' and that asking whether 2 plus 2 equals 4 'reeks of white supremacist patriarchy.'"

To quote her in full: "along with the 'of course math is neutral because $2+2=4$ ' trope are the related (and creepy) 'math is pure' and 'protect math' reeks of white supremacist patriarchy. I'd rather think on nurturing people & protecting the planet (with math in service of them goals)."

She added, "the idea that math (or data) is culturally neutral or in any way objective is a MYTH. I'm ready to move on with that understanding. Who's coming with me?"

These sentiments were confirmed by other professors and graduate students, as cited by Zeisloft.

But of course!

How could we miss something so obvious? It's as clear as $2 + 2 = 4$. (Oops! I just exposed my inherent racism. Of course, my use of proper grammar throughout this article already revealed my innate white supremacy.)

But this claim that math is somehow racist is also not new.

According to Lee Ohanian, writing for the Hoover Institution on Oct. 29, 2019, students in Seattle schools "will be taught how 'Western Math' is used as a tool of power and oppression, and that it disenfranchises people and communities of color. They will be taught that 'Western Math' limits economic opportunities for people of color. They will be taught that mathematics knowledge has been withheld from people of color."

In response, Ohanian commented, "If you are struggling to

understand the logic of this, you are not alone. For the life of me, I don't know how the Pythagorean theorem, for example, or Euclidean geometry, more broadly, oppress people or communities of color, or how these foundations of mathematics have been appropriated by Western culture." (For the alleged racist way in which data is processed and used in America, see [here](#) and [here](#).)

But the claims that grammar and math are racist should come as no surprise. That's because subjects like geography were already branded misogynist several decades ago, out of which the field of "feminist geography" arose. And so, under the guise of objectivity, an extreme form of subjective scholarship began to arise on our campuses, continuing in different forms to this day.

As conveniently summarized on Wikipedia, "Feminist geography emerged in the 1970s, when members of the women's movement called on academia to include women as both producers and subjects of academic work. Feminist geographers aim to incorporate positions of race, class, ability and sexuality into the study of geography."

Not surprisingly, "The discipline has been subject to several controversies." (Who would have thought?)

There was a day when education started with the so-called three R's, "Reading," "[w]Riting" and "'Rithmetic."

Today, the three R's might better be described as "Revisionist," "Radical" and "Ridiculous." Am I exaggerating?

I say we do our best to provide solid education for all of our citizens, thereby leveling much of the playing field, rather than chase academic chimeras.

It's as simple as A-B-C. {eoa}