

**MICHEL**

**DEGRAFF:**

You know, so why this hashtag for the course? The hashtags, Stay Woke? Well I love it, because in a way, it's one of these phrases that take a very complex concept, and that makes that accessible to the larger public. Because Stay Woke is a way to talk about critical consciousness. And what we've seen in the past elections is this increase of quote-unquote "fake news."

And one thing which I've been trying to share with the students is that this concept of fake news isn't at all a new phenomenon. So in fact, if you look at the way history is taught in the US-- if you look at, say, Howard Zinn's book about history-- it tells us how our history books are filled with fake news. So the point is that, it's not just fake news that's fake. And what the students get to see through, for example, the Haitian revolution is that, in the textbooks, most of them-- actually, almost all of them, maybe, except for one or two-- they got to learn lots of details about the French Revolution. And then the American Revolution. So they know all the things about that.

But almost none of them knew about Haiti. But if you think of what revolution means, this revolution has had much more impact when it comes to human rights, civil liberties, than both the US revolution and the French one. And the question that I ask them is, why is it that they went through the elementary school, the high school, some of them most of the college years, without ever hearing about the Haitian revolution? Right? Which, in fact, it has been much more potent than both the French one and the US one.

And to me, that was a great way to introduce to them the idea that, you have to stay woke. You have to understand why history is being taught in such a biased way, that excludes the one revolution that actually allowed this concept of equality among all human beings to become true. Because both in France, and in the US, when they were claiming liberty, equality, fraternity, there were still people who were in chains.

You know, in fact, blacks were still in slavery. Women couldn't vote. It's only in Haiti that revolution took its really meaning in really changing the world order. And in creating this possibility for all human beings to be equal. But yet, it's not taught in the classroom in the US. And to me, that's one of the most blatant cases of fake news that's become so much a part of the way children are educated in the US.

So Stay Woke means to be alert to this kind of propaganda that passes for history. That's Stay Woke. And of course, we look at other examples where they, themselves, participate in these hierarchies of knowledge that actually subserve hierarchies of power. That's Stay Woke.