Court Bans Bizarre Curriculum in New York Schools

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Parents have won another remarkable victory over the psychological abuse of children that takes place in public school classrooms. It isn't the court decision that's so remarkable; it's the evidence of what was actually going on inside the schools.

A federal district judge in White Plains, NY, ruled last month that the Bedford Central School District must stop requiring schoolchildren to create paper images of a Hindu god, to make toothpick and yarn "worry dolls" to ward off anxiety, and to take part in Earth Day worship services. Third graders had been required to make clay and construction paper cutouts of the elephant-headed Hindu god, Ganesha.

Judge Charles Brieant ordered the school district to (1) "prevent school sponsorship of worship of the Earth" and North American Indian animism or nature worship, (2) "remove the worry dolls from the school system" and "refrain from suggesting that (such) tangibles have supernatural powers," (3) prohibit "any direction to a student to make a likeness or graven image of a god or religious symbol," and (4) "direct the adoption of a published policy containing clear instructions (about religion) to teachers and others."

The school was engaging in what the judge called "truly bizarre" Earth Day celebrations. He said that these events "take on (many) of the attributes of the ceremonies of worship by organized religions."

According to the parents who filed the lawsuit, "student and senior citizens, who have also become part of earth worship services, sit in concentric circles around a giant inflated globe placed atop a bamboo tripod. The elderly people form the inside circle, symbolizing that they are closer to the earth and will return to it to nourish it."

A chorus of tom-tom drums plays throughout the ceremony, while teachers and school officials read speeches. The ceremony pretends that the earth is deified, and students are urged to "do something to make Mother Earth smile."

Evidence submitted in this case included an audiotape (Exhibit 62) entitled "Listening to Nature," which intersperses prayers and invocations sonorously uttered along with background sounds of forest and ocean. The plaintiff parents particularly objected to the fact that the tape, which they characterized as "nature worship and guided imagery," was played in science classes.

The accompanying book contains this creed: "This is what we believe. The Mother of us all is the Earth. The Father is the Sun. The Grandfather is the Creator who bathed us with his mind and gave life to all things. The Brother is the beasts and trees. The Sister is that with wings."

(The school must have failed to clear this gender stereotyping with the feminist in charge of political correctness.)

During one Earth Day ceremony, a school official told the assembly that there are "too many people on the earth and we need to do something about it." Another Earth Day activity involved having the children mark tombstones with the names of extinct birds and animals.

Page 65 of the book instructs children that, when they need to cut down a tree or remove a plant from their garden, they should pray to Mother Earth. The children are supposed to "ask your permission, your consent for this killing."

The attorney representing the school district complained that "the judge went further than any court in the country in directing the behavior of an individual school district." It surely sounds as though this school district does need some adult supervision.

The school district is expected to appeal the decision in this case, Altman et al. v. Bedford Central School District. If it does, the parents should appeal the failure of the court to throw out the offensive classroom activities involved in the use of the card game called "Magic: The Gathering."

It was this card game that alerted the plaintiffs to contest the peculiar classroom activities. They objected to the "Magic" card game because it is steeped in satanic imagery, signs, and rituals such as human sacrifice and the casting of spells.

The object of the game is to accumulate "mana," which is "power that comes from the earth." The plaintiffs contend that the card game "initiates children into satanism using perversion of actual Bible verses."

One card, depicting a man about to be sacrificed with a knife about to plunge into his heart, carries this strange message: "Sacrifice one of your creatures to add to your mana pool a number of black mana equal to that creature's casting cost." Another card shows a terrified woman with a hand holding her head down and a huge knife at her throat.

The parents charged that the card game is part of a New Age curriculum that includes yoga lessons, cult worship, and religious activities. "The cards represent a billion dollar industry," attorney Mary Ann DiBari said, "and our children are paying the price with indoctrination in the occult."

Where are the ACLU and the separation-of-church-and-state activists when we need them? Even as we speak, People for the American Way is probably writing up this case for its annual survey of alleged "censorship" and "book burning" by "narrow-minded, right-wing fundamentalist" parents.