

How Dare He Pick on Communism?

Once again, Florida's Ron DeSantis proves he has all the right enemies.



by Bruce Bawer

If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, you just might be named Ron DeSantis.

Let's recap. On April 22, the Florida governor signed the "Stop WOKE Act," which, in the words of [USA Today](#), "prohibits any teaching that could make students feel they bear personal responsibility for historic wrongs because of their race, color, sex or national origin."

The law was necessary because, as you can see in any number of YouTube videos of school-board meetings around the country, young children have indeed been taught, in accordance with critical race theory and other poisonous postmodern pap, that if they're white or male they're oppressors, bearing guilt for

the actions of long-dead people who looked like them, and if they're black or female, by the same logic, they're victims.

Six days later, DeSantis signed the "Parental Rights in Education Act," which forbids kindergarten teachers in Florida from talking to their pupils about such topics as masturbation, ejaculation, and oral sex—an act his enemies dishonestly dubbed the "Don't Say Gay" bill.

This law was necessary too, because, as you can see in other videos (many of which have been curated on the "Libs of TikTok" Twitter account) young schoolchildren are indeed being taught all kinds of things about sex that nobody, until the day before yesterday, would have considered remotely appropriate.

Then, on May 9, DeSantis signed a third bill. It designates November 7 of each year as "Victims of Communism Day" and mandates that schoolchildren in Florida be taught about Communism for at least 45 minutes a year.

Like the two laws before it, this one, too, was necessary. All American schools teach about Nazism, and make it clear to students that Hitler was evil.

But Communism? Stalin? Not so much.

The Holocaust? Horrible. The Gulag? The what? Mao's Cultural Revolution? *Huh?* An October 2020 YouGov poll [showed](#) that 64 percent of Americans don't know that Communist China killed more people than Nazi Germany, that 49 percent of Americans (up from 40 percent in 2019) view socialism favorably, and that 18 percent of Americans belonging to Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) prefer communism to capitalism.

Disgraceful, then, but no surprise, that at the *Jezebel* website you could find one Kylie Cheung, a 2019 graduate of the University of Southern California with a bachelor's degree in political science who [writes](#) "about

gender, power, and identity at the intersections of culture and politics," [responding](#) to Florida's anti-Communism with ridicule.

DeSantis, Cheung sneered, "will have you know he is a strong proponent of freedom. Within mere weeks of signing legislation to all but prohibit the word 'gay' from being uttered at Florida schools"—*an utter falsehood*—"and trying to pull books out of classrooms for mentioning anything having to do with race"—*another lie*—"DeSantis on Monday signed a bill to establish Nov. 7 as 'Victims of Communism Day.'"

Quoting DeSantis to the effect that communism's death toll "exceeds 100 million," Cheung mocked that as a "random number, which he and other conservatives frequently pull out of thin air." So much for the 65 million killed in Communist China, the 20 million killed in the USSR, and the millions more killed in North Korea, Cambodia, and elsewhere.

With a name like Cheung, you'd think the girl, despite her tender age, might happen to be aware that it was a Communist Chinese leader, Mao Zedong, who racked up the highest number of kills in human history. And she might not be quite so glib about it.

"For any impressionable Florida kids that may be reading this," writes Cheung, "please note that there have never been any 'true' communist countries, owing largely to violent intervention from the US and other western superpowers. But that hasn't stopped American propagandist and revisionist histories from slapping the label on really any country the US doesn't like."

Shocking. And yet, not really. These days, if you send your brat to a "top" college like USC, that's pretty much the picture of 20th century history they'll leave with.

Which, as it happens, is exactly why Florida needs the "Victims of Communism" Law.

You may be inclined to dismiss Cheung's article as the work of a brainwashed kid writing for a crazy feminist website. But her view of DeSantis' law on communism seemed to be widely shared.

At *Orlando Weekly*, Ryan Dailey and Alex Galbraith [joined](#) Cheung in questioning the figure of 100 million victims, although they attributed the number to "the widely discredited [Black Book of Communism](#)." This is like quibbling over whether Hitler killed 6 million Jews or merely five-and-a-half million.

In a [news story](#) about the new law, Danielle J. Brown of the *Florida Phoenix*, which reports on political developments in that state's capital, felt obliged to interject: "Keep in mind that it is legal to be a Communist in America."

[Reprinting](#) the *Phoenix* piece, the *FlaglerLive* website paired a photo of DeSantis with one of Joe McCarthy, implying that teaching about Communism was tantamount to McCarthyism.

In *Esquire*, Charles P. Pierce also harked back to the McCarthy era, [commenting](#) that "Florida parents may soon be sending their children to public school in 1956 This is Cold War Crazy come out of hibernation."

Meanwhile, Paul Blest's [article](#) at *Vice* begins:

Acknowledging that queer people exist and have human relationships? Bad. Nuanced conversations about America and race in school and the workplace? Also bad. Nearly hour-long nakedly political lessons on the "victims of communism"? Good—and mandatory, if you're a public school in Florida.

So addressing ignorance about the deadliest ideology in human history is "nakedly political." I guess it is, if you're a Democrat who thinks Communism is keen.

At the *Palm Beach Post*, Richard Rampell [recalled](#) taking "a

required high school course called 'Americanism vs. Communism' at my segregated high school" 55 years ago, a course he now recognizes as "nothing less than naked propaganda due to anti-communist hysteria at the time," taught by a man who "told us he would not sell his house to a black family because he 'wouldn't do that to his neighbors.'" So because that teacher was both anticommunist *and* racist, anticommunism is somehow intrinsically linked to racism? For DeSantis to require lessons about communist atrocities, complained Rampell, "is rich," given that he "doesn't want children to learn of the horrors of our history of slavery."

(Who is Richard Rampell? His LinkedIn page shows that he recently retired as manager of "the largest CPA in Palm Beach, FL," focusing on "high net worth individuals and families, businesses, nonprofit and governmental organizations and forensics." Funny how eager many *uber*-capitalists these days are to defend the name of communism.)

At the website of WJCT News in Jacksonville, Cyd Hoskinson was flippant: "Nov. 7 was already National Bittersweet-Chocolate-with-Almonds Day, National Canine Lymphoma Awareness Day and National Retinol Day. Now it's Victims of Communism Day in Florida."

Finally, get a load of what ran in the *Miami Herald*, south Florida's newspaper of record. Fabiola Santiago, a veteran journalist who escaped Cuba in her childhood, actually likened Florida under DeSantis to Cuba *under Castro*.

Under the obscene headline, "Wait until students figure out that DeSantis' Florida and communism are bedfellows!" Santiago accused DeSantis of Havana-style "school indoctrination for political purposes." And she compared American parents who've opposed textbooks containing propaganda—such as math books in which critical race theory is ham-handedly jammed into arithmetic problems—to Cuban communists.

For Santiago, in other words, *opposing* propaganda is equivalent to *pushing* propaganda.

Like Cheung and some of the others I've cited here, Santiago simply lied about DeSantis' "WOKE" and "Parental Rights" laws. "Nothing that makes whites uncomfortable," she asserted, can be taught in Florida classrooms. Ridiculous. Also prohibited is anything "about being gay or trans." No: a teacher is perfectly free to tell kids whether he's gay or straight; but from kindergarten to third grade, Florida draws the line at graphic classroom discussions of actual sex acts.

"It all reminds me," claimed Santiago, outrageously, "of the atmosphere of repression during my elementary school education in Cuba." *Right*.

As for the victims of communism law, Santiago asked, how dare DeSantis insist on lessons about the "poverty, starvation, migration, systemic lethal violence and suppression of speech" under communism while forbidding lessons about "the 'poverty, starvation, migration, systemic lethal violence and suppression of speech' to which Blacks have been—and still are—subjected to in this country"?

In fact, Florida schools don't hide the darker side of U.S. history from kids. Nowadays, no American school does. Surely Santiago knows this. Surely she knows, too, that it's obscene to compare the lives of black Americans today to people who were oppressed, jailed, tortured, and murdered under Stalin and Mao.

I didn't attend elementary school in Castro's Cuba. But José, my best friend in middle school, did. He'd escaped Cuba with his family—including his father, who, like Santiago, was a journalist. In fact, he was an anti-Castro journalist, and had been thrown in one of Castro's prisons, where he was tortured and permanently blinded. Communists did a lot of that sort of thing to opposition journalists. I suspect that Santiago knows

that, too. And if she really believed for a second that DeSantis is even remotely comparable to Castro, she'd have high-tailed it out of the Sunshine State the morning after his election.

On her Twitter page, by the way, Santiago describes herself as a "world traveler"—a label she'd never have been able to claim, needless to say, if she'd spent her life on Castro's island prison.

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