



Brenda Diaz photographed in the Bronx where she grew up. (Courtesy of Brenda Diaz)

PREMIUM **US**

# Radical New Curriculum a Factor that Drove Maryland History Teacher to Quit

‘You know something is wrong by the way students react,’ she says

By [Douglas Burton](#)

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A dream career as a high school social studies teacher in Maryland’s upscale Montgomery County ended this summer when Brenda Diaz saw the school’s new curriculum.

The new content was “insidious, deceitful, and divisive,” said Diaz.

The tenured teacher with seven years of teaching experience in the county said that the COVID mandates also were a factor guiding her to get out of the public schools.

“True, medical mandates were the tipping point for me to quit, but I was already on the verge of quitting because of the new curriculum,” said Diaz.



Brenda Diaz doing a selfie with her social studies students. (Courtesy of Brenda Diaz)

Born and raised in a working-class Latino neighborhood in New York, Diaz had climbed academic heights before landing at Gaithersburg High School as a social studies authority. She got into Georgetown University and right out of the blocks was selected as a White House intern.

She went on to graduate from Georgetown with a major in International Relations from the School of Foreign Service and earned her master’s degree in Secondary School Education at George Washington University (GWU).

Fellowships and grants were hers for the taking: graduate school at GWU was financed by a prestigious fellowship aimed at the elite secondary school educators.

“I was so happy when I got accepted to teach in Montgomery County Public Schools where the competition for social studies teaching jobs is fierce,” she said.

But three years ago, the bloom on the rose started to fade.

“Previously, they were hiding critical race theory in the curriculum, now they aren’t hiding it,” she said.

Teachers at Montgomery Public Schools will deny that they teach critical race theory (CRT), insisting that they teach “anti-racism,” but the teaching guides show otherwise, according to Diaz.

When guiding her honors U.S. History Class in 2019 at Gaithersburg High, Diaz noticed that the lessons were demoralizing her white students: “You could see the shame and embarrassment on their faces.

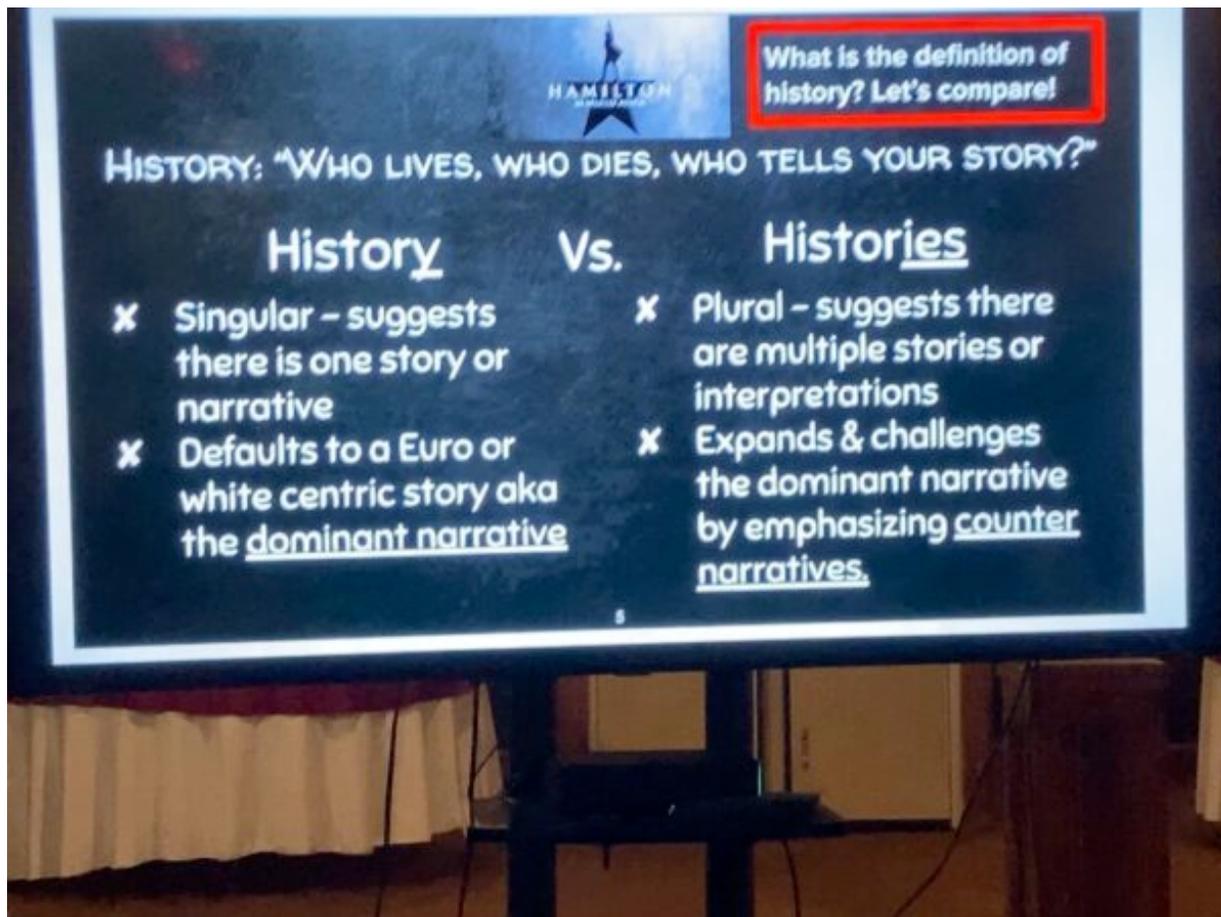
“You know something is wrong by the way children react. They cower. They hide,” she said.

“I took the initiative to show kids that white heroes had championed the abolitionist movement and took up leadership roles in the Civil Rights movement.”

One slide on the Teacher Resources Guide for Seneca Valley High School is entitled “Critical Race Theory Tenets” which includes subheadings such as The Permanence of Racism, Acceptance of ‘Racism as a Permanent Part of American Life, and Racist Hierarchical Structures Govern Political, Economic, and Social Domain.

“On the other hand, there are parts of the new social studies curriculum that I love, especially that it emphasizes the range of diverse voices, including Native Americans, Blacks, Latinos, and women.”

But the new content insists on seeing all of American history through the frame of racial oppression, Diaz said.



Teacher resource slide for social studies teachers in Montgomery County Public School System.  
(Courtesy of Montgomery County Public School System)

“The foundational lesson for high school students views everything through the lens of race,” she said.

“When you constantly emphasize the framework of race you give the picture to the student that ‘my race has always been oppressed, I can’t be more,’” says Diaz, who had risen out of the shadows of the working class.

“A teacher has to do a delicate balancing act to avoid this problem. And it didn’t help that the Social Studies department where I taught is very woke, she said, adding: “I was constantly at odds with colleagues in my department.”

“The American history lessons don’t allow the students to do independent thinking but actually steered them to conclusions, instead of encouraging questioning and debate.”

A diagram in one teacher's guide called "Wheel of Power/Privilege" is foundational to the new curriculum, she says.

The diagram illustrates that the whole of society can be seen as a wheel in which power, privilege, aspirational body shape and white race are at the center whereas people of color, poverty, and undesired body shape are at the perimeter.

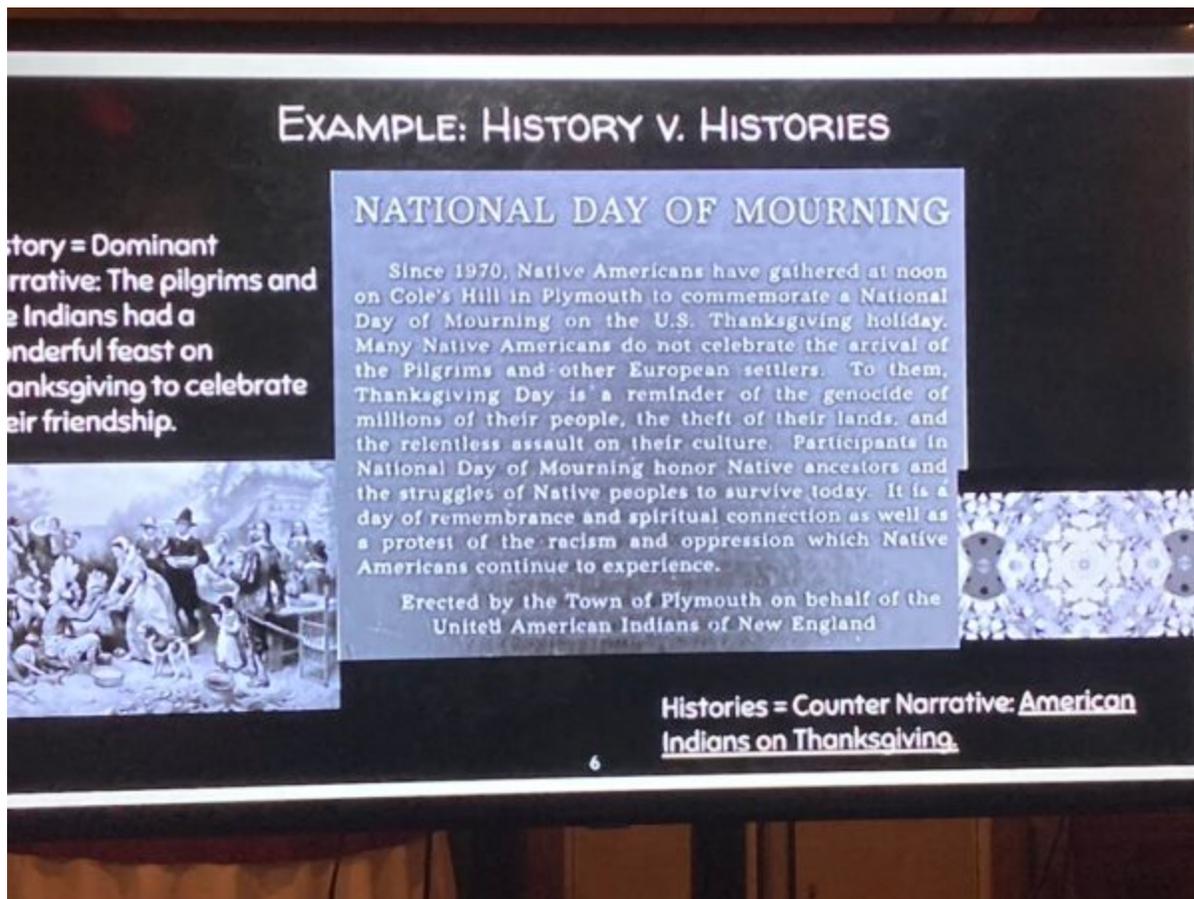
"Why are they teaching this way? Diaz asks. "It's because somebody wants to turn us against each other."

Resources for Teachers at Seneca Valley High include a unit titled "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," by Peggy McIntosh.

McIntosh's 50 examples of white privilege include this observation: "I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me."

Her stated objective is to attack "the unwillingness of males to grant that they are overprivileged."

The new curriculum encourages high school students to differentiate between the "dominant history " of the [United States](#) in contrast to "counter narratives."



Teacher resource slide showing contrasting views of the Pilgrim landing. (Courtesy of Montgomery County Public School System)

One slide contrasts the received convention of Thanksgiving as a “wonderful feast the pilgrims and Indians had to celebrate thanksgiving and to celebrate their friendship,” with a historical plaque that deplores the pilgrim event as a “Day of National Mourning.”

Diaz says the new materials, which she helped edit and critique two years ago, have moved the students from learning facts to seeing all versions of history purely as narrative.

To make things worse, she says there are strict rules for keeping to the curriculum only.

“Until recently I had some leeway in how I presented the lesson plans in the classroom, but the leeway now is so small. The administrators closely watch you now to make sure you teach exactly the lesson plan. They are scripted, and you have to follow the script,” she said.

A one-time Democrat and Bernie Sanders supporter, Diaz says she learned to distrust the Democrat Party and now calls herself an independent voter.

“After seeing how the Democratic Party treated Sanders, I am now an independent. I don’t believe in government anymore, but I am no Republican,” she said.

Having left her teaching job with Montgomery County in July, Diaz now applies herself to tutoring and consulting work.

“Yes, I know that many doors have closed since making the decision to leave the public school system,” she says, “but I also believe that some new doors are going to open.”