



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Correction request

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 26, 2023 at 2:41 PM

To: truthometer@politifact.com

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

After two days of withering criticism, PolitiFact has yet to correct or retract its "Mostly True" rating gifted to Vice President Kamala Harris for her false claim that Florida education standards teach kids slavery was a benefit to slaves.

Well, here's a formal request for a correction or retraction, based on incontrovertible fact.

There is a distinction to be made between slavery and learned skills. Harris erased that distinction. You bought it (why?). And you found a handful of scholars, three of whom have [given heavily to Democrats over the years](#), to also go along with it. You printed reasonable explanations from those who helped develop the standards, yet offered no rebuttal except to arbitrarily prefer the criticisms from the biased experts you polled.

One of your experts said picking cotton was pretty much the only skill slaves learned. Another said white slave owners benefited from the knowledge Africans brought over for cultivating rice, sugar and tobacco. So, which is it? Why publish that pair of paradoxical expert opinions?

That nobody at PolitiFact and none of the five experts upon whom you relied coherently addressed Harris' equivocation (slavery not the same as skills learned) defies belief. What Harris said was false and should therefore be theoretically ineligible for a "Mostly True" rating, if the definitions count for anything. The objections of your experts are best explained by their apparent partisanship and not their expertise.

The supposed fact check says "Russell-Brown said the standards offer 'no discussion' of people who enslaved others."

Her claim seems obviously false ([for example](#): "Clarification 4: Instruction includes the shift in attitude toward Africans as Colonial America transitioned from indentured servitude to race-based, hereditary slavery (i.e., Anthony Johnson, John Casor)") Did you fact check Russell-Brown's claim, or simply accept it at face value?

The section teasing the supposed misleading nature of the one line in the Florida standards never delivers on its promise. The supposed experts offer no reason to see the standard as misleading (if we don't count the missing context that wasn't missing). Their arguments that the standard counts as offensive end up based on reading "skills" as "slavery" and implicitly pretending that learned skills *generally* (instead of "in some instances") served to benefit slaves.

Don't share in Harris' lie. Fix your gigantic and multifaceted error.

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Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
editor
zebrafactcheck.com