1950s and 1960s, their antiracist faculty and students could make even stronger arguments than some of their secular peers by pointing to their institutions' radical pasts. Nevertheless, while these evangelical institutions eventually became fully integrated again, they did so at too slow a pace to lead the wider evangelical world at that time.

Fundamentalist U does such a strong job of tracing the development of fundamentalist and evangelical colleges and universities that I wish Laats had turned his analytical eye more directly to the question of how these institutions affected the larger world of American higher education. He clearly demonstrates how trends at secular institutions affected Christian colleges; it would help to state more clearly how these dissenting institutions fed back to shape American higher education as a whole. At the very least, they offered collegiate education to students who may otherwise not have attended—and nurtured distinct bodies of scholarship, perhaps most clearly in the sciences, but also in the humanities. Elaborating on these effects would enhance Laats's argument for the wide significance of these institutions. Regardless, *Fundamentalist U* reshapes our mental landscape of twentieth-century American higher educational institutions and is essential reading for understanding both their history and their present.

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Johann N. Neem. *Democracy's Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. 256 pp.

Writing about the past with an eye on the present offers risk and reward. On the one hand, it provides historians with an easy answer to the "so what" question. Some of the most impactful syntheses have begun from a desire to understand something's origins, be it segregation, the urban crisis, the rise of the New Right, or the decline of the New Deal order. And yet, if this kind of inquiry enables historians to claim analytical significance, the dangers of using the past to engage with the present remain.

Democracy's Schools, Johann Neem's new history of the rise of public education in America, embodies this conundrum. For historians of

education, few questions are more important than those that Neem explores. Why did Americans decide to pay for the education of other people's children? What was it about American democracy that motivated citizens to create and sustain a common school system? Why did public schools emerge and take root between the end of the American Revolution and the onset of the Civil War? How did Americans navigate the inherent tensions between an education for citizenship and one that could meet the diverse needs of families, sects, and communities?

To understand the rise of public education in America, Neem argues, one must appreciate the relationship between schooling and democracy. As the title of his book suggests, Neem contends that common schools were "democracy's schools" in four key ways: "They were local in their origins; they promoted a curriculum designed to prepare people for citizenship and self-culture; disagreements over public schools became part of democratic politics; and citizens struggled to balance the needs of the broader community with the rights of religious and other minorities in a diverse society" (p. 2). In the aftermath of the Revolution, Americans, eager to guard their new republic, turned toward public education from a belief that democracy required an educated citizenry. By the 1830s, school reformers, in step with the "self-making" ethos of the age, championed public schools because of their cultural contributions. Reformers like Horace Mann contended that all children "deserved a liberal education, one designed to offer children the riches of knowledge and to enable them to seek higher learning if they were capable of doing so" (p. 3). Public schools existed for a multitude of purposes: to create a prepared and "productive" citizenry; to provide instruction in basic skills, like arithmetic and literacy; and to offer widespread access to the liberal arts—to "critical thinking, imagination, morality, and insight" (p. 55).

The genius of school reformers, according to Neem, rested in their ability to transform American understanding of education from a private to a public good. But this faith has remained fragile. For public schooling to remain "free and universal," all citizens, the privileged and the impoverished, must continue to patronize public schools (p. 30). For if, according to Mann, wealthy parents "turn[ed] away from the Common Schools" and toward "the private school or the academy," the poor would lose out, and education would descend into "welfare" (p. 140). And yet America's increasing diversity troubled reformers' efforts to promote universal education. Resistance from minorities, particularly Catholics uneasy with Protestant hegemony, threated public education. Tensions between individual prerogatives and national necessities would spark debate over school governance and curriculum for generations. In the end, Neem concludes, elite

reformers' aspirations to create schools that linked a liberal education to a prepared and capable citizenry collided with Americans' preference for local control and respect for community. The "positive result" of these "competing ideals," Neem suggests, was that public education entered its appropriate place at the "center of American political life," where, "given its importance to society, it belongs" (p. 174).

There is much about *Democracy's Schools* to appreciate. Neem has immersed himself in a wide array of archival sources. He renders sensible a multitude of dense, sprawling treatises and texts. He produces a well-written, provocative, and cohesive narrative accessible to a lay and scholarly audiences. Moreover, one cannot finish *Democracy's Schools* without understanding why Neem personally has great faith in public education.

But it is here that Neem's concerns with the present muddy his historical interpretation. Writing at a time when conversations about "choice" abound, when politicians threaten state investments in higher education and pundits challenge the utility of a liberal arts education, Neem fears that too many, across the political spectrum, have "lost faith" in public schools. Even more, he argues, historians of education have contributed to this crisis by being too quick to criticize. In his assessment, since the 1960s, historians including Michael Katz, Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis, and William Reese, among others, have emphasized the negatives and ignored the positives (p. 175). Even *Pillars of the Republic* (1983), Carl Kaestle's synthetic and generally "sympathetic" account of the common school movement, tells too harsh a story, according to Neem.

The issues Neem has with Kaestle, Katz, Reese, and others is not that they misinterpret the past or even that they misunderstand it. Rather, he worries their narratives enable contemporary critiques. Neem's desire to protect contemporary public education from its past history leads him to evade some fundamental truths.

Neem does not ignore the findings of earlier historians, but neither does he wrestle with them. Take, for example, his discussion of "social control." Neem notes that factories "required disciplined workers capable of spending hours working the factory floor." And he shares with readers that "scholars thus concluded that education was oriented towards social control rather than human freedom." Yet he writes, "Mann did not seek to create docile workers for American factories. Instead he hoped that education could counteract the degrading tendencies of modern work" (p. 21). At no point in this discussion, though, does Neem engage deeply with the evidence previous historians employed. Perhaps Neem chooses not to write a long historiographical discussion out of a desire to craft a synthetic and readable survey accessible to a general audience. But even if this were true, there are

too many times when his desire to restore contemporary faith in public education runs counter to historical fact.

No part of his argument is more problematic than his engagement with race. In *Democracy's Schools,* two incompatible assertions coexist without explanation. The first, which Neem repeats, is that "America's public schools were designed for all Americans, regardless of wealth, religion, or background. They were intended to turn a diverse society into a single nation" (p. 174). The second, which receives less attention, is that African Americans were "denied access to public schools" or "forced to attend segregated schools" (p. 141). To illustrate the latter, Neem provides readers with some quick demography. As of 1850, he observes, surveys suggested that "around 80 percent of eleven- to twelve-year-old white children were enrolled in schools in the Northeast, and a little over half of eleven- to twelve-year-old white children were enrolled in the South" (p. 2-3). By contrast, by the eve of the Civil War, "In the entire South … only 3 percent of free black children were enrolled" in public schools. School attendance rates for black and white children "did not equalize," he observes, "until 1970." (p. 3).

Even to the lay reader, such numbers suggest that the origins of public education probably had something to do with whiteness. Yet Neem characterizes school reformers' vision for public education as universal, even when his evidence, and some of the few African American actors he does include, tell him otherwise. Yet if reformers were arguing to educate every child, why did that distinction apply only to white children? Neem is not unaware of inequality and racism—though surprisingly, for a story about the antebellum era, slavery appears rarely, as does the forced removal of Native communities—but he does not reckon with them. Engaging with these paradoxes would not detract from the democratic contribution public schools made; if anything, it might highlight some of the messiness of American democracy that has historically impeded school reform. Moreover, it would also help readers to understand how and why democracy empowered some at the expense of others, and the role of public education in defining and delineating the boundaries of citizenship.

There is nothing inherently wrong in championing public schools. At the same time, a historian's primary responsibility is to engage with and interpret all evidence, even that which challenges one's hopes and aspirations. In the case of education, to ignore the relationship between public schooling and inequality is to miss an opportunity to understand how and why contemporary public schools have yet to live up to early nineteenth-century reformers' founding aspirations. Acknowledging how the roots of contemporary public schools'

failures and successes relate to tensions inherent in antebellum school reformers' founding ideologies does not jeopardize contemporary efforts for school reform. And even if it did, a historian's primary obligations are to his readers and his evidence. How readers make use of the past in contemporary politics supersedes historians' primary responsibilities.

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Matthew K. Shannon. *Losing Hearts and Minds: American-Iranian Relations and International Education during the Cold War*. Cornell University Press, 2017. 256 pp.

In recent years, scholars of international relations have awakened to a key historiographic blind spot in the field of diplomatic history: international education. That international education has long flown under the radar is not a reflection of its relatedness to official diplomatic practices—indeed, since at least the 1930s, officials in the US Department of State have cultivated a robust philosophy of soft power and cultural exchange in which international education is a crown jewel. Even before its official incorporation into public policy, educators, philanthropists, and religious leaders considered educating foreign students in US institutions of higher education a valuable opportunity to advance US interests by spreading American political ideals and forging international bonds of friendship and understanding. Yet because of traditional disciplinary and methodological divides between historians of education and historians of foreign relations, little is known about the actual geopolitical consequences of twentieth-century experiments in international education. In the past decade, a new cadre of historians of US foreign relations has sought to rectify this historical blind spot, and has thus crossed over into the realm of education history.

In *Losing Hearts and Minds*, historian Matthew K. Shannon offers a case study of tremendous import for those seeking to advance our understanding of international education beyond a comprehension of policy goals and lofty educational ideals. International education,