

Nikki Haley repeats old fairy tales about U.S. history

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Some observers found that an astonishing thing for her to say as chief executive of the first state to secede from the Union in defense of slavery, a state that embraced segregation until forced to change by the federal government.

Others observed that any fair reading of Haley's quote makes it pretty clear she was speaking only in the context of legal immigration.

They're right. The problem is, even if you concede that point, Haley is still grotesquely wrong. She thinks no immigration laws have been passed "based on race or religion"? What about:

The Naturalization Act of 1790, which extended citizenship to "any alien, being a free white person..."?

Or the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, whose title and intent are self-explanatory?

Or the Immigration Act of 1917, which banned immigrants from East Asia and the Pacific?

Or *Ozawa v. U.S.*, the 1922 Supreme Court decision that declared that Japanese immigrants could not be naturalized?

Or *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh*

Thind, the 1923 high court ruling that said people from India - like Haley's parents - could not become naturalized citizens?

So, yes, however you slice it, Haley is wrong and Haley is ignorant. But one wonders if Haley is to blame.

Americans, the historian Ray Arsenault once said, live by "mythic conceptions of what they think happened" in the past. And as school systems, under pressure from conservative school boards, retreat from teaching that which embarrasses the nation's self-image, as ethnic studies classes are outlawed, as textbooks are scrubbed of painfully inconvenient truths, as standards requiring the teaching of only "positive aspects" of American history are imposed, we find those mythic conceptions encroaching reality to a troubling degree.

Suddenly, slaves become immigrants and settlers. The Civil War has nothing to do with slavery. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. becomes a tea party member. And America has never passed laws "based on race or religion."

Yes, Haley's ignorance

might be willful. There's surely a lot of that going around. But it might also be that she's simply part of that generation that has been taught fairy tales under the guise of history. Such teaching will leave you comfortably indoctrinated in a kind of civic mythology - and wholly unprepared to interpret or contextualize what's happening before your eyes.

To wit: What makes Trump's proposed restrictions on Muslims troubling is not that they represent the coming of something new, but the return of something old, a shameful strain in the American psyche that we have seen too many times before. It is not a deviation from America, but the very stuff of America, an ugly scapegoating that has too often besmirched our character and beguiled us away from our most luminous ideals.

This is something all of us should know, but do not. As a state official, perhaps a candidate for vice president, perhaps eventually a president of the United States, Nikki Haley might someday change history. It would be good if she understood it first.

Leonard Pitts Jr., a columnist for the Miami Herald, appears in Opinion on Mondays.

is plummet to 28 degrees below zero.

Parts of Illinois were in the single digits. The National Weather Service warned wind-chill numbers could drop to near 30 degrees below zero overnight Sunday into Monday.

It was so cold in western

The Indianapolis Star reported that the state Department of Homeland Security would send anyone needing shelter from the weather Sunday and Monday to a Salvation Army facility.

Winter weather advisories were in effect along the east-

as with winds dropping to zero and 5 degrees below.

Eric Schminke, meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Wichita, said the low temperatures are temporary. The Wichita area is expected to reach a high temperature of 30 degrees by Monday afternoon.

"I'm amazed to see anybody got out of this alive," Manatee County Sheriff B. Steube said during a news conference.

Steube said that the victims of the tornado in Duette were asleep in their mobile home when the tornado struck.

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China's economy continues to decelerate - an ominous trend for U.S. companies, like heavy-equipment maker Caterpillar, that have significant business there. (Caterpillar shares shed 2.7 percent of their value on Friday.)

"For many of these companies, the narrative behind their growth and earnings prospects is China," Zandi said. "If you throw that narrative out, investors get nervous."

The disconnect between the actual economy and the price of stocks isn't new. From the waning days of the most recent recession into the tepid recovery that followed, stocks managed to gradually rise despite persistently high unemployment and tepid economic growth. Now, the opposite seems true.

"Main Street is better, and Wall Street is suffering," said

sound. GDP likely expanded 2.4 percent last year, according to JP Morgan Chase. Zandi foresees its growth hitting 2.8 percent in 2016.

The job market appears particularly robust. Employers added an average of 221,000 jobs a month during 2015 and 284,000 a month from October through December. The unemployment rate has sunk from 10 percent in 2009 to 5 percent, a level associated with a healthy economy.

Improved job security has helped embolden many Americans to shop. Consumer spending, which drives about 70 percent of U.S. economic activity, rose at an annual rate of more than 3 percent in the spring and summer. Auto sales hit a record last year.

Not that the U.S. economy has been left unscathed by the weakness abroad. Partly because a stronger dollar has made their goods more expensive abroad, U.S. manufacturers are suffering.

Industrial production fell in December for a third straight

Last year, factories added just 30,000 jobs, the fewest since the recession year of 2009.

What's more, energy companies are reeling from sharply lower oil prices. And though falling oil prices have helped boost consumer spirits and encourage spending, they also helped slow the overall economy last year by causing energy companies to slash investment.

In addition, the Federal Reserve has signaled that it expects to further boost interest rates this year after raising them from record lows in December, and some fear it will move too fast. Fed hikes were considered a trigger for three of the past four recessions.

Economists don't entirely understand the links among the world's major economies. The International Monetary Fund has acknowledged surprise over just how much China's slowdown has hurt other countries in the developing world.

And Paulsen notes that small- and medium-sized U.S. companies supply the multi-

show up in trade numbers.

Tumbling stock markets themselves can also cause economic damage, by making

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