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CHAPTER 3:

AMERICAN CIVICS

You may, or may not, be aware that the educational system in America is dismal. What was considered basic knowledge for a high school graduate 30 years ago is no longer mastered by students. Most public schools either no longer teach civics or only touch upon them. When they do touch upon them many of the lessons are inaccurate or filled with anti-American propaganda. Instruction on the United States Constitution is often limited to discussion of slavery and the "separation of church and state". Students are simply not being taught civics, by which I mean their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a free nation.

When I was a working policeman I occasionally helped teach classes to high school students. I was shocked at how little high school juniors and seniors knew about civics. They operated under misinformed ideas. Many believed that no person, even the police, was allowed to place hands upon them, even to make an arrest, because they were minors. Many thought that the police were not permitted to speak to them without a parent being present. Others thought they had a right to phone a parent upon being stopped by the police.

None of this is true. It seems they were being taught a great deal about what the police are not permitted to do, but very little about what the police are permitted to do and why. They certainly were not being taught their *responsibilities* as citizens.



Photo credit: Author's personal collection.

A young American takes a break from her ice cream bar to pay respect to the American flag.

I now teach university students. Many of them are woefully ignorant of the design and proper function of the American system of government. If you ask them about a teacher bringing a Bible to school and setting it on her desk, they suddenly sound like a civil rights attorney from the American Civil Liberties Union. On that they are prolific. In contrast, ask them basic questions about the United States Constitution or the 3 branches of government and they are confounded. At this point, several generations have graduated knowing little about civics. The disturbing result is that many of those entrusted with teaching our children have themselves never had any formal instruction on the proper role of a free citizen, the functions of government or the United States Constitution.

This lack of understanding of civics causes problems for policing both from inside the profession and from the citizens we serve. On the inside we have young police officers who don't properly understand their role in society. On the outside are citizens who don't understand what the police are, and are not, permitted to do. Everyone seems adrift.