

Rubio's Greece speech traces the foundation of democracy

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Back in my college days (American University, Washington, D.C.), required reading included the works of Greek playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Long after graduation, they remained on my bookshelf. For generations, people believed these men, along with philosophers Plato, Cicero and other great minds, could teach us.



Many of today's colleges and universities offer courses in LGBTQ+ history and, according to Campus Reform, a 2023 course at Harvard "aimed to teach students how to prepare for a diversity, equity and inclusion-filled future." Harvard is not alone in pushing woke courses.

Into this intellectual chasm stepped Secretary of State Marco Rubio last week. Standing in front of the Acropolis in Athens, Rubio recalled how the Greeks laid the foundation for democracy. Eighty years ago, this would have sounded so obvious that the speech would seem unnecessary. Today's college students seem to know less about the past and get their information mostly through social media. As reflected in test scores, we have discarded the past as one might toss ancient ideas down what George Orwell called the "memory hole."

Rubio's opening lines set the stage for the rest of the speech: "... time has a tendency to dull the senses: great victories and catastrophic defeats ... seem to shrink to become like a footnote in a textbook, another fact for our schoolchildren to memorize and forget. But the Greeks of antiquity ... seem to have an almost mystical hold on our memory. They call us back to them, again and again."

We in the West used to believe that looking back at what those who came before us had learned was required before moving forward. This was to ensure their mistakes wouldn't become our mistakes and their triumphs might be replicated in our successes.

What we used to call oratory when we had orators and not dull politicians repeating talking points and poll-tested themes was on full display when Rubio said: "The history of America, the history of my country, is covered with the fingerprints of antiquity."

Anyone watching or reading this speech cannot help but see the contrast between the name-calling and demeaning of others by President Donald Trump and the seriousness and statesmanlike behavior of the secretary of state.

Greece is literally carved into the architecture of our government: in the towering columns, in the domes and the monuments across our capital city. The city where our Constitution was born — Philadelphia — is itself a Greek name."

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In hearings before House and Senate committees, when Rubio disagrees with Democrat members, he brandishes a rhetorical "sword of truth," without stabbing them.

That quality was on display in Athens when he sounded like a professor at a university that used to teach such things: "The men who founded my country were fascinated by the heritage we inherited from yours. They were exceptionally well-read in history — they were vividly aware of their unique place in it — but no other age of the past held their attention or their imagination quite like that of antiquity. Many, many people are surprised to learn that the most commonly cited author in 'The Federalist Papers' was not an Enlightenment philosopher or political theorist. No, the most commonly cited author in 'The Federalist Papers' was Plutarch, the Greek biographer of Greece and Rome's great men."

There's plenty more in Rubio's address that should be required reading, especially by young people.

"What is past is prologue," wrote William Shakespeare. That profound statement is engraved on the base of the "Future" statue outside the National Archives Building.

Rubio has said he won't run for president in 2028 if Vice President JD Vance runs. He should change his mind.

Rubio has all the qualities one should desire in a president. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle taught that true leaders must possess arete — a mix of high competence, moral character and active service to the common good. Who, except the most partisan, would disagree that Rubio has all of them?