

TESTIMONY
Opponent HB 322/327
Testimony of Mindy D. Hedges, Private Citizen

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government Committee:

Critical race theory is an academic concept that is more than 40 years old. The core idea is that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies.

CRT ideas grow out of longstanding, tenacious intellectual debates. Critical race theory emerged out of postmodernist thought, which tends to be skeptical of the idea of universal values, objective knowledge, individual merit, enlightenment and rationalism.

Scholars who study critical race theory in education look at how policies and practices in K-12 education contribute to persistent racial inequalities in education, and advocate for ways to change them. Among the topics they've studied: racially segregated schools, the underfunding of majority-Black and Latino school districts, disproportionate disciplining of Black students, barriers to gifted programs and selective-admission high schools, and curricula that reinforce racist ideas.

Many educators support, to one degree or another, culturally relevant teaching and other strategies to make schools feel safe and supportive for Black students and other underserved populations. Students of color make up the majority of school-aged children. But they don't necessarily identify these activities as CRT-related.

As one teacher-educator I asked put it: "The way we usually see any of this in a classroom is: 'Have I thought about how my Black kids feel? And made a space for them, so that they can be successful?' That is the level I think it stays at, for most teachers.

A good example of Critical Race Theory is when, in the 1930s, government officials literally drew lines around areas deemed poor financial risks, often explicitly due to the racial composition of inhabitants. Banks subsequently refused to offer mortgages to Black people in those areas.

Knowing this, the goal should be to teach our children and young adults that it is not appropriate behavior to hate! So we need to teach them what happened in their past, so they can try to help us all make it better for the future. This doesn't mean they are told they are bad, by any means. It tells them that what happened in our past, in certain situations, weren't

good, and we can do better in the future. How can they assess what is better if they can't assess it against what to measure it against what possibly went wrong?

I'm from NY City, born and raised. So when I moved to Ohio, I was particularly shocked by how much segregation there is. It's obvious to our children as well, and that's, in part, why they are moving away as soon as they can. If we do not help them understand why, and help us turn this around while continuing to teach them about our past, they won't understand and help to make our world and our country the best it can be. These detrimental learning processes will cut their learning, their maturity/growth and their futures if information that is their right and their need to know is kept from them.

How will they react when they learn about the Tulsa 1921 Race Massacre when they turn 60, like me? I didn't know because I was a privileged white girl, and one who actually lived among people of color. But yet, they didn't teach "those things" in our privileged, private school classrooms.

I was and am still angry once I learned. I was and am still sad once I learned. And I am also done with being angry and sad at this type of teaching. I was hopeful we were out of this negative, insulated, and patronizing instruction process, and have thankfully graduated with a more inclusive, knowledgeable, and educated system once I got out of that environment on my own. Now you are actually considering this draconian law. But I still can't understand, for what purpose?

Here's a helpful illustration to keep in mind in understanding this complex idea. In a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court school-assignment case on whether race could be a factor in maintaining diversity in K-12 schools, Chief Justice John Roberts' opinion concluded: "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." But during oral arguments, then-justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said: "It's very hard for me to see how you can have a racial objective but a nonracial means to get there."

There are two stories that I have recently heard that should make you all stop and really concentrate on what is under consideration!

Here are some of the crazy organizations that continue to stir the soot in our society to pull up all the ugly prejudice:

One conservative organization, the Heritage Foundation, recently attributed a whole host of issues to CRT, including the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, LGBTQ clubs in schools, diversity training in federal agencies and organizations, California's recent ethnic studies model curriculum, the free-speech debate on college campuses, and

alternatives to exclusionary discipline—such as the Promise program in Broward County, Fla., that some parents blame for the Parkland school shootings. “When followed to its logical conclusion, CRT is destructive and rejects the fundamental ideas on which our constitutional republic is based,” the organization claimed.

The scary part of this, to me, is that it is beginning to sound a bit like the beginnings of Nazi Germany. Anyone but white Aryan humans should exist, is what Hitler demanded. And he, too, changed what could be taught in “his” schools. All the rest of history and culture was destroyed or not allowed to be taught while he was in power. Here is what Hitler wrote in Mein Kampf: it was “the sacred mission of the German people...to assemble and preserve the most valuable racial elements...and raise them to the dominant position.”

In Worthington City Schools there is a school board member who had been threatened by supporting the freedom of her schools to teach the history as it happened, without prejudice, and without elimination. I will share her explanation of why she voted to keep her school honestly educational. But there were threats to herself, her family and others on the school board, from people who clearly have no reasonable, reliable or sane reasons for keeping historical and real information from our students.

This Ohio writer, who was not a citizen of the Worthington school district, felt the need to write this horrible trash:

“You and others need to go. The sooner the better – we are going to make all your lives so miserable if you don’t – we demand CRT be removed from all schools. We will come to the board meetings – we will demand to see and be a part of every meeting. We want to be a part of selecting the curriculum for our children. We will protest in front of your homes day and night – we demand transparency in the classrooms. We will run citizens who love America against all of you when your term is up. And you can tell all the teachers, principals, administrators, the superintendent, and the sick little Mayor and/or City Managers of your deranged little town. We are coming after all your pensions or what you have all allowed to take place in our schools and cities. All Americans know the schools have become indoctrination centers for Marxism. You have become our enemies and you will be removed one way or another.

Have a miserable, miserable day for the rest of your life you filthy traitor

Signature Of Letter Writer

WE ARE COMING AFTER ALL OF YOU STINKING TRAITORS OF AMERICA

Her follow-up letter to her school district said:

To be clear; I am on the receiving end of threats and intimidation like this because I follow science-based guidance from public health experts who are currently recommending the use of masks to contain the spread of Covid 19...guidance that seeks to ensure as many students as possible can attend school, in person, so they can receive the quality, public education they deserve. I am on the receiving end of threats and intimidation like this because I support equity and inclusion in education...because I support the development of a district-wide diversity, equity and inclusion policy...because I support education curriculum that included a range of perspectives and experiences, particularly of historically underrepresented groups. I am on the receiving end of threats and intimidation like this because I advocate for proactive, evidence-based protocols-including mental health resources, social services and restorative justice – to protect the safety of and support the growth and success of all students. I am receiving threats like this because I am committed to ensuring that our school policies do not detrimentally impact students of color, members of our LGBTQ+ community, and other students whose needs have too often, historically, been overlooked.

She said it better than I ever could, being in the heart of our education system. You need to listen to all of them, sitting at the Ohio Department of Education on Broad Street on Tuesday, September 21st, in silence, reading from educational materials that will be blackballed in Ohio; sitting quietly, but with purpose, honesty, and humility.

There is nothing in our upbringings, including our new or old testaments, that teaches us to not accept and encourage equality: The second commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. ‘There is no commandment greater than these.’

Please, you have to help stop these terrible rumors and awful threats. Teaching our history is not scary. It is reality. And we can also be proud of the good things we did that are a part of these teachings as well.

You can't be a part of the solution if you are part of the problem, and also continue to multiply it by creating bills like this that only fuel the fire. Please vote against HB322/327!