

POLICY NOTE

Governor Inslee: Don't impose divisive and harmful Critical Race Theory on our schools

By Liv Finne, Director, Center for Education

May 2021

Key Findings

1. In April 2021, the Washington state legislature passed four bills mandating staff in public schools, colleges and medical schools receive training in Critical Race Theory.
2. Critical Race Theory violates our core civil rights protections, the equal protection of the law, and the First Amendment to the Constitution.
3. Critical Race Theory teaches people their individuality is not based on their intrinsic worth as human persons, but as a member of a group based on perceived outward appearance.
4. Critical Race Theory teaches that if people are identified as white, Jewish or Asian, they are oppressors.
5. Critical Race Theory teaches that if people are seen as black, Hispanic or part of another group, they are oppressed.
6. Prominent scholars and civil rights activists say employing this racial lens is having a devastating effect on low-income people of all races.
7. This illiberal and intolerant ideology will perpetuate historic injustices and further divide us from one another.

Introduction

Washington Policy Center, the Center for Latino Leadership, Ethnic Chambers of Commerce Coalition President Mike Sotelo, and Washington Asians for Equality wrote the following letter to Governor Inslee. The letter appeared in nine major newspapers across Washington state on April 18, 2021: *The Seattle Times*, *The Spokesman Review*, *The Columbian*, *The (Everett) Herald*, *The Bellingham Herald*, *The News Tribune of Tacoma*, *The Olympian*, *The Tri-City Herald*, and *The Yakima Herald*.

Our Letter

Dear Governor Inslee,
April 18, 2021

We write to call on you to veto four harmful bills passed by the legislature which would require public employees in elementary and high schools (SB 5044), community colleges (SB 5194), state college and universities (SB 5227), and medical schools (SB 5228) to attend mandatory sessions in the controversial and dehumanizing concept known as “Critical Race Theory.”

The mandates these bills would impose violate the Washington Civil Rights Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the equal protections guaranteed under the 14th Amendment. These bills would require government educational entities to deny the fair and equal treatment that all people deserve regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity or national origin.

Critical Race Theory teaches people that their individuality is not based on their intrinsic worth as human persons, but as members of a group based on their perceived outward appearance.

Critical Race Theory teaches that if people are identified as white, Jewish or Asian, they are oppressors. If they are seen as black, Hispanic or part of another group, they are oppressed.

The illiberal and intolerant ideology required by these bills will create a hostile work environment in public institutions and allow the use of perceived racial identities to target and harass disfavored employees. This backward-looking policy will only serve to perpetuate historic injustices and further divide us from one another.



Liv Finne is the Director of the Center for Education at Washington Policy Center. She is the author of *An Option for Learning: An Assessment of Student Achievement in Charter Public Schools*, which in 2011 reignited the charter school debate in Washington state. She wrote “*Why parents will love charter schools*,” “*Why teachers will love charter schools*,” and many other publications during the 2012 public debate on Initiative 1240, the nation’s first charter school initiative. When charter schools came under attack from the state teachers union, she wrote “*Analysis: Why the state supreme court ruling against charter schools is wrong*.” She is also the author of Washington Policy Center’s widely-read education blog, and of Washington Policy Center’s Education Reform Plan: *Eight Practical Ways to Improve Public Schools*. Liv holds a law degree from Boston University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wellesley College. She retired from civil litigation practice to raise two children and work as business partner for a small business she owns with her husband.

Washington Policy Center is an independent research organization in Washington state.

Nothing here should be construed as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any legislation before any legislative body.

Published by
Washington Policy Center
© 2021

washingtonpolicy.org
206-937-9691

Prominent scholar and civil rights activist Robert Woodson says employing this racial lens is having a devastating effect on low-income people of all races. Other civil rights leaders like professors John McWhorter and Glenn Loury say that these trainings dehumanize and belittle children. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance in New York says Critical Race Theory is “today’s Chinese Exclusion Act” and that supporting it represents a “hate crime against Asians.” These trainings seek to “otherize” white people based on appearance, a clear violation not only of core civil rights protections but of the essential idea of fairness.

The authors of these bills fail to recognize that American society is becoming increasingly diverse and that the people no longer fall into the neat color categories envisioned by Critical Race Theory, if they ever did.

To oppose this ideology, many prominent black, white, Jewish and Asian leaders have formed the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR). They point to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision of nearly 60 years ago when he dreamed of a day when all persons are judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin.

If these reasons are not enough, we call on you to act out of basic human decency. Despite the political pressure you may feel to sign these bills into law, they will in fact divide us further. Do not let these bills turn back the clock to a time of conflict and segregation, when government officials used perceived racial identities to discriminate against and divide our communities.

We urge you to join with us in seeking ways to unite our citizens in a truly inclusive and respectful way.

Washington Policy Center

Center for Latino Leadership

Ethnic Chambers of Commerce Coalition/Mike Sotelo, President

Washington Asians For Equality