



SCHOLARS STRIKE BACK AGAINST ATTACKS ON ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION



The fall of 2020 has already been a fraught time for anti-racist education. In early September, President Donald Trump **threatened** to yank federal funding from schools that taught the *New York Times's* **1619 Project** curriculum, which traces the impact of slavery throughout American history up until the present. (The threat was **empty**, since the Every Student Succeeds Act prohibits the federal government from mandating what schools teach.) The President also **prohibited** federal agencies from using the curriculum and from referencing critical race theory during trainings. In the meantime, Trump **announced** a “1776 Commission” “to promote patriotic education.” **A few weeks later**, the U.S. Department of Education disclosed that it was investigating Princeton University after its president, in writing about efforts to combat systemic racism, **said** “racism and the damage it does to people of color nevertheless persist at Princeton as in our society.”

Education scholars are fighting back.

In September, the American Educational Research Association (the world’s largest group of education researchers) and the National Academy of Education (an organization of education scholars dedicated to employing research to improve policy and practice) issued, in conjunction with 16 other scientific societies, a *Statement in Support of Anti-Racist Education*.

“We need in essence more and better education about race and racism without the imposition of a federal government view about what it can and cannot include,” the statement reads. “Despite the progress that the nation has made toward racial equality, we recognize that we still have a long way to go.”

The statement notes that **research evidence** suggests that “exposure to a diversity of ideas and open inquiry about them leads all persons to better learning, more consensual deci-

sion-making, and a deeper appreciation of oneself and others” and also that “we have much more work to do to elevate understanding of racism in U.S. society, which is critical to its eradication.”

The current president of the National Academy of Education is a leading anti-racist educator, NEPC Fellow [Gloria Ladson-Billings](#) of the University of Wisconsin Madison, who spoke with us less than two months ago about the [racial-justice challenges](#) now facing our students and their schools.

In addition to issuing the statement, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) has partnered with the Society of Research on Adolescence and the Society for Research in Child Development to launch an initiative that will address the shortage of research on racism’s impact on children. The organizations have committed to publishing research on that topic in their scholarly journals in 2021.

“A problem as enormous and deeply entrenched as racism requires bold, multidimensional, and sustained collaboration,” said NEPC Fellow [Shaun Harper](#) of the University of Southern California, who is president of the AERA. With this coalition, he said, the AERA is poised “to do more with what we know as our organizations individually and collectively aim to dismantle racism in all its forms.”

NEPC Resources on Critical Theory and Pedagogy

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