



EXPELLING EVIDENCE: STATE LAWMAKERS SEEK TO WHITEWASH FACT-BASED DISCUSSIONS OF RACE IN THE CLASSROOM



Here's how NEPC Fellow [Shaun Harper](#), of the University of Southern California, defines racism:

[I]ndividual actions (both intentional and unconscious) that engender marginalization and inflict varying degrees of harm on minoritized persons; structures that determine and cyclically remanufacture racial inequity; and institutional norms that sustain White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons.

These individual, structural, and institutional factors exist. They cannot be factually denied or treated as opinion. Here are just a few of the hundreds of examples that could be mentioned:

- [Experimental evidence](#) demonstrates that, even when given vignettes about fictional Black and White students engaged in the exact same misbehaviors, teachers are more likely to label Black students as troublemakers and to view their actions as part of an ongoing pattern.
- A [meta-analysis](#) of hiring discrimination examined every available field experiment in which resumes that are identical in every way except for the race of the applicant are submitted for job openings. This study, which incorporated a total of 55,842 applications submitted for 26,326 positions, found that not only do White applicants receive

36 percent more callbacks than Black applicants, but that these differences have not changed over time.

- [Quasi-experimental research](#) has found that racial discrimination explains two-thirds of the racial disparities in bail decisions in New York City.

Yet, in [at least eight states](#) across the country, legislators are trying to make it illegal for educators to teach students about the myriad ways that racial discrimination manifests itself in our nation in individual actions and prejudice as well as in the very institutions and systems that comprise the fabric of our society. Other targets of this silencing effort include sexism, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Critical race theory—or at least a false caricature of CRT—is a particular concern of these efforts, many of which borrow language from the Trump administration’s (since-rescinded) September 2020 executive order banning federal trainings on “divisive” diversity issues.

Rhode Island Republican Patricia Morgan [told *Education Week*](#) that critical race theory is “a divisive, destructive, poisonous ideology” that encourages people to judge each other by the color of their skin.

But NEPC Fellow [Adrienne Dixson](#) of the University of Illinois, who has edited books on critical race theory and education, [explained in that same *Education Week* article](#) that lawmakers had misunderstood the subject.

“Critical race theorists would say, absolutely, that people shouldn’t be discriminated against by virtue of their race or sex,” she said. “We don’t locate individuals as responsible for structural racism.” Instead, “scholars acknowledge that racism informed the country’s founding principles, and that some groups have to ‘agitate and organize and demand and protest’ to secure rights.”

[The *New York Times*’s 1619 Project](#) is another target of ire for many of these same state lawmakers. The ongoing effort of the Project, launched on the 400th anniversary of the start of American slavery, describes the history of the country by centering slavery, and tracing contemporary issues to its consequences.

A [report](#) by the Heritage Foundation recommended banning it from classrooms, a call that multiple state legislatures have echoed. But an [NEPC review](#) of the publication by Brown University historian Seth Rockman found it to be grounded in the same sorts of misunderstandings flagged by Professor Dixson. “Disconnected from the current scholarly literature on both American slavery and history pedagogy, the report commits the exact sin with which it besmirches the 1619 Project: substituting ideology and political motives for an accurate engagement with the past,” according to Professor Rockman.

Some efforts to scrub the stain of racial discrimination from the curriculum have already fallen by the wayside. In Arkansas, for instance, the [bill](#) to ban the 1619 Project was rejected by lawmakers.

Other efforts, however, have been more successful: In Idaho, for example, Governor Brad Little recently [signed into law](#) a bill banning critical race theory and related issues from pub-

lic schools after Republican lawmakers refused to pass education budgets out of concerns that educators were teaching students about that subject.

As a result, generations of students in that state and others that follow suit will receive an inaccurate and incomplete education concerning some of the most important and consequential issues of our nation's present and its past.

NEPC Resources on Critical Theory and Pedagogy

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