

Where Are Teachers Getting Critical Race Theory? In Teachers' Colleges

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American educators don't need the government's encouragement to import these views into the classroom. CRT is in the pipeline, and doesn't seem to be going anywhere anytime soon.

By [Peter Kirsanow, Christopher Ross, and Maximos N. Nikitas](#)

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The critical race racket has become nearly ubiquitous in American education, as shown by the recent embrace of this radical ideology by America's two largest teachers unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

As Jason Riley of the Wall Street Journal [reports](#), “[a]t its annual meeting earlier this month, the NEA adopted a proposal stating that it is ‘reasonable and appropriate for curriculum to be informed by academic frameworks for understanding and interpreting the impact of the past on current society, including critical race theory.’” The NEA also vowed to “‘fight back against anti-CRT rhetoric’ and issue a study that ‘critiques empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society.’”

As Riley notes, the AFT has similarly embraced this radical orthodoxy sweeping academe, partnering with “Ibram X. Kendi, an activist-scholar who openly embraces racial discrimination against whites.” Riley points out the perverse irony of Kendi's assertion in “How to be an Anti-Racist” that “[t]he only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.” Some “anti-racism,” indeed.

The teachers unions' embrace of a radical ideology that until only recently was the preserve of faculty lounges at elite liberal arts colleges shows just how quickly this worldview has become mainstream — not only in leftist circles, but increasingly, in elementary and secondary education as well. The great work of Heather MacDonald and Christopher Rufo in exposing the seepage of this pernicious doctrine into academia, corporate America, and even the military has shown just how rapidly CRT has come to dominate the national discourse.

This, despite gaslighting from the likes of AFT President Randi Weingarten, who claimed simultaneously that CRT is not being promulgated in America's schools while pledging to defend, in a court of law if necessary, those teaching it. To better understand how far CRT has been embedded into American education, we viewed more than a dozen webinars and lectures by leading social justice educators, CRT proponents, legal scholars, and elementary and secondary educators. They included: ["How to Use the Books You Choose: Elevating the Status of Marginalized Identities in Children's Literature through Classroom Teaching."](#) a February 9 webinar hosted by Boston University's Wheelock College of Education; ["Anti-Racist Teaching Practice,"](#) a November 2020 webinar hosted by California State at Fullerton; ["White Fragility,"](#) a lecture by Robin DiAngelo (author of the noted book of the same name) hosted by the Family Action Network; and ["Impacts of Racism on PK-12 Classrooms,"](#) a February 2021 University of Iowa anti-racism professional development webinar series. The lectures ran the gamut geographically and covered education at every level, from pre-kindergarten to the graduate level. What they revealed was nothing short of pure indoctrination. To fully appreciate the destructive quality of intersectional education — particularly in early childhood, when minds are malleable and nuance and perspective are elusive — we highlight what until recently few outside conservative think tanks seemed to fully appreciate: Critical race theory is being adopted in education at the earliest possible age with remarkable zeal.

Teaching Teachers to Radically Transform Curricula

Several of the webinars we viewed, including those sponsored by the Wheelock School of Education, were designed for elementary educators. It's worth stressing that, lest one harbor any doubts about where American education is headed ideologically, these are programs that "teach the teachers." *What stood out is the nearly universal calls to radically transform, restructure, and reimagine curricula at every level to reflect critical race theory.*

Take for example "[Teaching History for Justice.](#)" an April 30, 2021, webinar from Wheelock with Kaylene Stevens, program director for social studies education at Wheelock, and Chris Martell, assistant professor of social studies education at the University of Massachusetts Boston, co-authors of "Teaching History for Justice, Centering Activism in Students' Study of the Past" (Teachers College Press, 2020). The webinar highlights the need to reorganize how social studies and history are taught.

For them, the "powerful individual"-based approach to teaching history, whereby students learn about leaders from Julius Caesar to Abraham Lincoln who have shaped history, is not only flawed but irredeemably grounded in white supremacy. What, then, should emerge to take its place?

For Stevens and Martell, the traditional approach must be supplanted by a movement-centered curriculum, one grounded in *activist thinking*, with the goal of encouraging students to become activists at the earliest possible age.

Traditional models of instruction that aim to teach students to "think like a historian" or "think like a democratic citizen" are inherently lacking; they must be supplemented with "thinking like an activist."

Figures they tell teachers are worthy of study, all cited approvingly, include Angela Davis (described as an "activist for racial and gender equity and democracy," a "prison abolitionist," and member of the Black Panther and Communist parties) and Marsha P. Johnson (an activist for queer and trans law

and founding member of the Gay Liberation Front and Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). If only Caesar had been an activist.

What's more, Stevens and Martell ridicule a 19th-century history textbook that deigned to praise Lincoln as "one of the greatest of men." Even more disturbingly, the authors lament that their book's recommendations only begin with kindergarten, since anti-racist work would ideally start in early childhood settings.

Finally, sources with which students engage should rely less heavily on written texts and more on oral history and artifacts to better capture certain communities. The upshot of this new mode of instruction is more activism and indoctrination and less rigor — all at the earliest possible age. But don't worry, they're quick to remind us that "Teaching History for Justice" is "political but not partisan." One can only help but wonder if some forms of activism are more encouraged than others.

As if this new mode of instruction is not bad enough, the luminaries at Boston University also determined that children's books can be harnessed for CRT indoctrination. In a seminar entitled "How to *Use* the Books You Choose: Elevating the Status of Marginalized Identities in Children's Literature through Classroom Teaching," Dr. Andrea Bien and Dr. Laura Jiménez explain the emotional damage visited upon primary school-aged children — particularly those that belong to "underrepresented" groups — due to a lack of self-representation in children's literature.

Jiménez states, "As a Latina lesbian, I did not see myself reflected in a book until I was 47 years old. . . . What that tells me is that my experience, my identity, my place in the world is not worthy of inclusion in literature." To right this supposed wrong, the speakers posit that including more politically correct stories in children's curricula must only come with the erasure of what they consider to be harmful or outdated books.

To the speakers, “The Rainbow Fish,” a children’s classic used by teachers nationwide to teach our youth about the values of friendship and sharing with others, ought to be promptly removed from classrooms. Why? Because the protagonist of the story decides to share his colorful scales—his unique and defining characteristic—with others as a token of friendship.

For Bien and Jiménez, this is not a kind and selfless act, but a harmful message to any child who does not fit the supposed societal norm that they must “mutilate” themselves to fit in. In the opinion of the speakers, the societal norm in the United States of America excludes any person that is not “white, straight, cis, Christian, male, and able[bodied].” “The Rainbow Fish” is, unfortunately, a singular example in this seminar’s hour-long crusade to reshape children’s literature in the United States for an alleged lack of attention to racial identities.

Make no mistake. The purpose of this seminar and countless others like it isn’t to simply engage in friendly discussion or debate. Rather, the purpose is to influence teachers from coast to coast to fundamentally reconstruct what and how America’s children are taught in schools.

Brazen Calls to Target Even the Youngest Children

What stood out as most striking across the board is how brazen social justice “educators” are in their calls for the transformation of America’s elementary education into little more than social justice bootcamps, while union leaders and liberal elected officials vociferously deny that CRT is being taught at all. After all, several of these “experts” contend that to refrain from this method of teaching is to set down a “hidden” or “implicit” curriculum, a tacit narrative inculcated by not teaching what *ought* to be taught. The message is clear: Teach this nonsense or you are complicit in oppression — or worse.

Another example of this weaponization of elementary education for ideological ends was a [social justice webinar](#) hosted by Be GLAD, a self-described “national organization providing professional development to states, districts, and

schools” serving as “a professional development model in the area of academic language acquisition and literacy.” Perhaps most concerning, Be GLAD boasts the imprimatur of being a “U.S. Department of Education Program of Academic Excellence.”

Designed to train elementary school teachers in social justice education, the webinar covered the usual topics of “systemic racism” and “microaggressions,” toeing the leftist line that virtually every facet of American life is saturated in racism — from the banking and housing systems, to criminal justice, public health, and education. Calls for “systemic anti-racism,” a supposed panacea for these ills, include some familiar appeals to “[d]ismantle[] barriers,” and some novel ones perhaps unfamiliar to a lay (read: “rational”) audience, such as “[d]ecolonization of the mind.” Well, that’s a tall order for 7-year-olds.

Most jarring of all is how the presenters lauded the use of a “Black Lives Matter Process Grid,” in which students map out their identities, presented in tabular form and replete with corresponding lists of those with a “power advantage” (unsurprisingly straight, white, Christian males) and those with “oppressed disadvantage,” broken down by age, social class, gender, race, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual orientation, and religion.

In nearly every webinar reviewed, the presenters go out of their way to dismiss the idea that this methodology constitutes indoctrination. It goes without saying that encouraging teachers to educate that colorblindness is inherently racist and that diversity can be oppressive hardly encourages independent thought.

Sadly, this approach seems to be working. For example, in a webinar hosted by Cal State Fullerton’s College of Education entitled [“Anti-Racist Teaching Practice.”](#) speaker Monique Marshall, an elementary school teacher, presented the audience a video clip of a 6-year-old student. In the video, when asked to define his “multicultural identity,” the young boy began his response by stating that the color of his skin defined his “outside identity,” which elicited smiles from the presenting speakers.

To be clear, there are people with whom we trust the education of our youth who actively encourage children to view the color of their skin as an individual's defining characteristic, thus dividing their students along the lines of race and identity. A far cry from "not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." After all, for CRT enthusiasts, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s noble aspiration is not merely impractical but a concession to injustice and oppression.

Grassroots Resistance Must Continue

So where does this leave us? These seminars and workshops show CRT is no longer "fringe" but is well within the mainstream of elementary and secondary education. It's no longer confined to post-secondary and graduate levels.

Therefore, recent grassroots efforts to combat this dangerous ideology are imperative. They symbolize that parents are finally giving the issue the attention it deserves.

While it may provide a minute's solace that the Biden administration's Department of Education removed express references to CRT from its July 19 [notice](#) in the Federal Register soliciting grant applications, these seminars demonstrate that American educators don't need the government's encouragement to import these views into the classroom. CRT is in the pipeline, and doesn't seem to be going anywhere anytime soon.

Continuing to expose its advance is necessary so American elementary and secondary education can escape the grips of a worldview that, despite its professed aim of racial progress, is deeply flawed and divisive.

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