

**ANTI-CRITICAL RACE THEORY ACTIVISTS  
COMING TO YOUR SCHOOL BOARD?**

Seasoned GOP activists—who have no ideas of merit to present for an honest debate—are increasingly grabbing the megaphone to disrupt school board meetings in some U.S. communities over the teaching of critical race theory in K-12 classrooms. These latest antics by GOP operatives are due to a purposeful set of lies they tell regarding what critical race theory is.

Right-wing activists were emboldened by former President Donald Trump’s executive order last September banning diversity training in federal institutions. That ban prohibited the use of critical race theory in such training. Trump likely issued that order, at least in part, as a reaction to the publishing by the *New York Times* of the 1619 Project in August 2019.

The 1619 Project is designed to bring the consequences of slavery to the forefront of the U.S. history narrative. Days before Trump left office, he commissioned the 1776 Project as a reaction to Jones’ work.

The 1776 Project clearly justifies slavery in U.S. history, stating that “the institution of slavery has been more the rule than the exception throughout human history.” President Joe Biden rescinded Trump’s executive order on his fifth day as President and halted work on the 1776 Project.

According to the American Bar Association (ABA), the concepts of critical race theory (CRT) emerged in the legal academy in the 1970s and spread to other disciplines, such as business and education.

According to the ABA, CRT is a vehicle to critique how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers of society. CRT recognizes that race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender and others.

CRT recognizes that racism is not a bygone relic of the past. Instead, it acknowledges that the legacy of slavery, segregation and the imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans and other people of color continue to permeate the social fabric of this nation.

Now, back to those local school boards.

Last summer, during the activism following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, a school superintendent in Cumberland, Maine, faced protesters, accusing the district of teaching CRT. Protesters were not satisfied with the superintendent’s statement that CRT was not being taught in that district and that the district merely was on record denouncing White supremacy. A year later, this group of angry parents continues to fight with the superintendent and the school board.

In late June this year, 200 people protested at a Fort Worth, Texas, school district, demanding that the district not implement CRT in its curriculum and that the superintendent be fired. That school board did not have any CRT-related items on its agenda that day and insisted it does not have such a curriculum.

Also, in late June this year, a Loudon County (Virginia) school board meeting was declared an unlawful assembly as hundreds of parents, protesting that board’s agenda item regarding restroom accommodations and the use of pronouns for transgender students, became rowdy. The meeting morphed into a protest about the teaching of CRT, which was not even on the agenda.

NBC News reports that there have been more school board recall elections in the first six months of 2021 than in any year tracked thus far. In addition, organizations such as No Left Turn in Education are masking their efforts as local, grassroots fights, yet they are funded by large, national-scale, right-wing, dark money groups. NBC News also reports that four states have banned the teaching of race and racism and other states are considering similar laws.

One of Merriam-Webster’s many definitions of the term *critical* says that it is “exercising or involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation.” A recent *Fresno Bee* opinion by Fresno State philosophy professor Andrew Fiala states: “Rather than censoring CRT, let’s encourage students to listen carefully to what critics have to say about racism.” One can only hope that if our local school boards are confronted by any such groups, trustees will resist the temptation to fall into their trap.

**DANGEROUS SPREADING VIRUS OF  
VOTER SUPPRESSION LAWS**

GOP legislatures—which have no ideas of merit to present for an honest debate (sound familiar?)—continue to pass sweeping laws that restrict access to voting. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, as of late June, 17 states had enacted 28 new laws this year that restrict access to the vote.

With some state legislatures still in session, more such laws will certainly follow. Currently, at least 61 such bills are moving through 18 state legislatures. Of those, 31 have passed at least one state house chamber and another 30 have had some sort of committee action.

Overall, lawmakers have introduced 389 restrictive bills in 48 of the 50 states in 2021 legislative sessions. Surely, Stalin is laughing in his grave, and Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping are, at the very least, sporting sardonic smiles.

As expected, on June 23, the U.S. Senate voted 50-50 along partisan lines on a procedural vote to open debate on the For the People Act, the sweeping voter reform bill that passed the House months ago. Of course, because of the filibuster rule, 60 yes votes were needed to advance debate on the measure in the Senate.

This bill, along with the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act—also passed by the House—would do much to restore the portions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that were gutted by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* decision. In reaction to the vote, protests were staged at the U.S. Capitol.

It’s unlikely there will be much action on those two bills until after mid-July, when both chambers return from the nearly two-week July 4 recess. Although Democrat Joe Biden is the President, and Democrats hold slim majorities in both chambers, the bowels of government continue to be blocked by Senate Republicans and the tradition of the filibuster—an archaic rule that isn’t even in the Constitution.

Sadly, we’re stuck with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) until at least January 2027. So, the only hope of bringing a good dose of psyllium to the Senate is if Democrats gain Senate seats in the 2022 midterms, giving Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) some breathing room. Of course, ridding the Senate of the filibuster would be historic, but unlikely.

The Brennan Center reports that local (nonpartisan) election officials across the country are feeling the heat from right-wing activists who continue to tell the “big lie.” A survey of local election officials in the United States reveals that one in three feel unsafe because of threats from such groups.

The *Rachel Maddow Show* recently reported that in San Luis Obispo County, County Clerk-Recorder Tommy Gong resigned, in part, due to continued racist threats from members of the local Republican Party—threats that materialized during and after the contentious 2020 election.

**CONTINUED BRAVERY OF KINGSBURG  
CITY COUNCIL MEMBER JEWEL HURTADO**

Local GOP activists—who have no ideas of merit to present for an honest debate (sound familiar? again?)—are mounting a recall effort against first-term Kingsburg City Council Member Jewel Hurtado. According to the *Fresno Bee*, the group filing the recall alleges Hurtado’s “Marxist/socialist agenda in her activities and actions, which does not represent her constituency.”

No doubt, this is in response to Hurtado’s motion last month to fly the Gay Pride flag at Kingsburg City Hall, which failed to move forward for lack of a second. The story even reached the *New York Times*, in a June 24 article by Jill Cowan headlined “Where Flying the Pride Flag Wasn’t So Simple.” However, there is redemption in this story.

Moved by the personal stories of Hurtado and Fresno City College President Dr. Carole Goldsmith during a Gay Pride flag raising at FCC, Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer, who at first objected to allowing the Gay Pride flag being flown at Fresno City Hall, did a “180” on his stance.

The Fresno County Democratic Party proudly supports Hurtado as she represents all the people of Kingsburg.

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