



RESEARCH REPORT | Constitutional Litigation Partnership

CRT SUBVERTS PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION, DEFORMS CITIZENSHIP, AND THREATENS AMERICA'S FUTURE

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TOPLINE POINTS

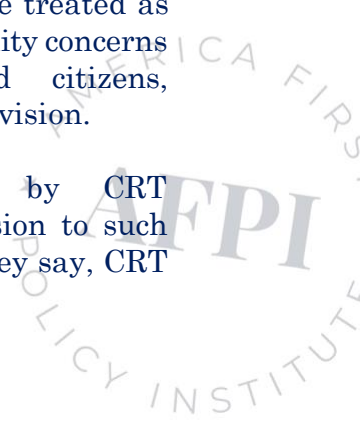
- ★ An essential purpose of public school education is to prepare students for citizenship in our Republic.
- ★ CRT subverts the citizenship purpose of public school education by rejecting classical liberal principles.
- ★ CRT is about indoctrination and replacing the American constitutional order.
- ★ Parents and school boards have a right to preserve the Republic by rejecting CRT in the classroom.

“Children should be educated and instructed in the principles of freedom.”
– John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions*, 1787

The teaching of critical race theory (CRT) in classrooms across America has raised the ire of parents—and for good reason. CRT’s principal claim is that America is systemically racist and incapable of racial justice, and its constitutional, legal, and political systems were designed to perpetuate a corrupt white

supremacist power structure. CRT is a wholesale ideological assault on the American experiment and disputes its commitment to self-declared founding principles—namely, that “all men are created equal” and should be treated as such under the law. Its ubiquity concerns parents, specifically, and citizens, generally, who object to this vision.

The standard response by CRT apologists to parental aversion to such ideas is to gaslight. First, they say, CRT



is not really what its critics say it is. Second, even if it is what its critics say it is, CRT is not being taught in schools. Third, even if it is being taught in schools, CRT is necessary to understand and interpret America's racial past, present, and future. This strategy of obfuscation has been successful because evidence of CRT's spread in American schools has been largely anecdotal. Until now.

A new Manhattan Institute study gives the lie to this narrative. The study asked “a nationally representative sample of 1,505 18- to 20-year-old Americans—a demographic that has yet to graduate from, or only recently graduated from, high school” whether they have been taught or made familiar with CRT and related concepts. The answers are troubling. Sixty-two percent report being taught or hearing in class that America is a “systemically racist country”; 57 percent report learning that “white people have conscious biases that negatively affect non-white people”; and 67 percent report hearing that “America is built on stolen land.” Among the students surveyed, 82.4 percent attended public schools.

In the realm of ideological adventurism, CRT is uniquely subversive because it corrupts our future citizens. Thus, its dissemination in public schools threatens the survival of the American regime.

An Essential Purpose of a Public School Education Is to Prepare Students for Citizenship in Our Republic.

The United States Supreme Court has explained that the “role and purpose of the American public school system” is to “prepare pupils for citizenship in the Republic.” The public school system, the Court reasoned, is essential, alongside other forms of K-12 schooling, to “the preparation of individuals for participation as citizens, and in the preservation of the values on which our society rests.”

Republican citizenship requires strength of character, cultivated virtue, moral seriousness, facility with reasoning skills and deliberation, and a commitment to ordered liberty and individual rights. It requires citizens who are willing to defend the liberal democratic order that is their inheritance from those who would undermine its foundations.

Civic republicanism—America's public religion—builds affection across immutable identities, divergent regions, and successive generations. Citizenship in the Republic compels us to advance the common good and make sacrifices in the service of our country and countrymen—past, present, and future. To appropriate Edmund Burke's gloss on the social contract, American citizenship serves as “a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”



The curriculum is the primary means of cultivating republican citizenship in public schools. As the Supreme Court opined, “curricular requirements” reflect “the ways a public school system promotes the development of the understanding that is prerequisite to intelligent participation in the democratic process.” Indeed, V.O. Key, Jr., a leader in the behaviorist school of political science, observed that “the school system functions as a powerful molder of politically relevant attitudes and as a means for induction into citizenship.” In recognition of these weighty influences on America’s future, the Supreme Court wrote approvingly of New York’s one-time curriculum mandate: “to promote a spirit of patriotic and civic service and obligation and to foster in the children of the state moral and intellectual qualities which are essential in preparing to meet the obligations of citizenship in peace or in war.”

These observations are not the product of judicial navel gazing but are a modern reiteration of ancient wisdom. As Aristotle reportedly stated, “The most effective way of preserving a state is to bring up the citizens in the spirit of the government and, as it were, to cast them in the mold of its constitution.” The first United States Commissioner of Education, Henry Barnard, thought it integral that the government “encourage a system of education which shall harmonize with republican ideas and republican civilization.”

This unbroken thread of reasoning from Aristotle to the Supreme Court demonstrates that public schools must

foster in their young, impressionable charges allegiance to republican citizenship and instill in them the knowledge necessary to maintain the liberal democratic order. A curriculum that does not meet these ends is derelict, at best—subversive, at worst.

This is not simply a matter of pedagogical preference; it is a question of regime continuity. “Liberal regimes must have the power to take reasonably necessary steps to ensure their own survival,” observed Law Professor Stephen Gilles, because “a liberal state devoid of loyal, law-abiding citizens is unlikely to remain liberal for very long.” The American constitutional order cannot be understood apart from republican virtue, and our freedom must not be exploited to provide “for the free operation and development of a force specifically designed for [its] own destruction,” as political theorist James Burnham wrote in *The Struggle for the World*.

CRT Subverts the Citizenship Purpose of Public School Education By Rejecting Classical Liberal Principles.

Critical race theory is anathema to preparing students for republican citizenship. CRT’s chief interpreters and ideological enforcers, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, to their credit, do not hide its illiberal ends: “The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars” who “question[] the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.” They reject America’s colorblind



principles in favor of “aggressive, color-conscious efforts to change the way things are” and defend racial quotas as a “determined attack on the idea of merit.” By definition, CRT seeks to eradicate what the Supreme Court has called the “fundamental values necessary to the maintenance of a democratic political system.”

This is not surprising, given CRT’s revolutionary inheritance. As one commentator put it: “Much as Marx described human history as a permanent conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat,” CRT adherents “view American society as a zero-sum conflict between the powerful white males and powerless minorities that cannot be mitigated by other affinities or commonalities.” As they seek to upend America’s liberal regime, they are naturally hostile to “another liberal mainstay, namely, rights.”

Critical race theory activists target schools precisely because, as CRT Godfather Derrick A. Bell acknowledged, they “hope that scholarly resistance will lay the groundwork for wide-scale resistance.” This is accomplished by teaching impressionable children that our country “is beyond redemption, that whites are irredeemably racist and that the principles of the liberal legal system are false promises.” The agitators would depose our liberal democratic order and replace it with an authoritarian racial spoils, neo-segregationist, and economic redistributionist system. Playing the long game, they have internalized this Jesuit adage for maximum political gain: “Give me a child for his first seven years, and I’ll give you the man.”

CRT’s tenants subvert American civilization and the traditional ends of public school education. As the Manhattan Institute study found, “those who report being taught CRT-related concepts are not only more likely to endorse them but also more likely to blame white people for racial inequality, to essentialize white people as ‘racists,’ and to support ‘equity-oriented’ race-based policies.” Put another way, students leave the CRT classroom convinced they have a duty to treat others differently based on skin color and that government policy must do the same. A citizenry that internalizes these attitudes will cease to be republican—and will cease to enliven their institutions with a liberal and tolerant spirit—because they will have abandoned their commitment to the equal dignity of all men and women.

American schoolchildren will only be ready for meaningful participation in our political system when they have a firm grasp of the 4Rs; a common belief in self-government, fundamental civil rights and liberties, the rule of law, constitutionalism, the separation of powers, federalism, equality of opportunity, and honest American history; and a shared sense of citizenship, without regard to immutable racial characteristics.

CRT Is About Indoctrination and Replacing the American Liberal Order.

Thus, critical race theory, an ideology that seeks to discredit and replace classical liberalism, is not about education but indoctrination. It is anti-republican because it rejects as false the



virtues of America, its founding principles and Constitution, and the corresponding obligation of good citizenship. It is anti-education because, as eminent legal scholar and jurist Richard Posner wrote, it “turns its back on the Western tradition of rational inquiry, forswearing analysis for narrative,” and “[r]ather than marshal logical arguments and empirical data, critical race theorists tell stories—fictional, science fictional, quasi-fictional, autobiographical, anecdotal—designed to expose the pervasive and debilitating racism of America today,” all the while “reinforc[ing] stereotypes about the intellectual capacities of non-whites.”

When parents and school boards resist the implementation of CRT into the curriculum, they do so in an act of citizenship, patriotism, and love. By extension, they vindicate the American experiment’s essential and eternal creed, as articulated by President Calvin Coolidge in Philadelphia on the 150th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence:

If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final. No advance, no progress can

be made beyond these propositions. If anyone wishes to deny their truth or their soundness, the only direction in which he can proceed historically is not forward, but backward toward the time when there was no equality, no rights of the individual, no rule of the people.

The American regime’s survival depends upon its future citizens internalizing these permanent and self-evident truths.

With the forces of anti-liberalism and repudiation on the march in academia, the legacy media, and the corporate boardroom, the last thing American children need in the formation of their character is a false ideology that destroys the natural and deserved affinities they have for their homeland and fellow citizens. While CRT proponents may think they are recruiting future revolutionaries for a long-deserved regime change, they are instead inflicting insidious harm that transcends the political. This is spiritual degradation: they are impoverishing the souls of America’s children. Parents have a moral obligation to resist. To do otherwise is parental neglect and, worse, what may well be what Ronald Reagan called “the first step into a thousand years of darkness.”

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