

American Studies Association Resolution

Unanimously passed by the ASA Executive Committee on January 31, 2022

Resolution on Defending Academic Freedom Against Attacks on “Critical Race Theory”

WHEREAS state legislative proposals are being introduced across the United States that target academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities under the guise of banning “critical race theory;”

WHEREAS the ASA affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities in alignment with the American Association of University Professors’ [1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#);

WHEREAS faculty have responsibility for the curriculum at their colleges and universities;

WHEREAS attacks on curricula and pedagogies addressing histories and legacies of gendered antiblack chattel slavery, segregation/U.S. apartheid, genocidal conquest and colonization, heteronormativity, patriarchy, and other oppressive power relations attempt to repress and intimidate educators, undermining their capacity to explore a wide variety of topics based on a rigorous approach to social and historical knowledge and the development of essential critical thinking skills;

WHEREAS education about systemic, historical forms of oppressive violence and power relations based on race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, citizenship, and other social/cultural/political identities is inseparable from the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century and is a basic pedagogical responsibility to students and multiple communities;

WHEREAS over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), issued the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) (June 16, 2021) stating their “firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities . . . In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning;”

WHEREAS the ASA is the oldest and largest association devoted to the interdisciplinary study of American culture and history;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the ASA resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to college and university faculty to restrict or dictate college and university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial, gender and social justice, and will firmly oppose encroachment on faculty authority by legislatures, boards of trustees, and similar or analogous bodies;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ASA stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the U.S. who may be affected by this pernicious legislation when they seek to teach truthfully in U.S. history, civics, literature, and other courses;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ASA calls on relevant college and university administrators, including provosts, presidents, and chancellors, to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate college and university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial, gender and social justice, and will firmly oppose encroachment on faculty authority by by legislatures, boards of trustees, and similar or analogous bodies;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ASA affirms the [Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism](#), authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.

Background:

- [Scholarly Groups Condemn Laws Limiting Teaching on Race](#)
(New York Times, June 16, 2021)
- [Texas 'critical race theory' bill limiting teaching of current events signed into law](#)
(ABC13, June 16, 2021)
- [Republicans Want Federal Funding Cuts to Schools Using '1619 Project'—But There's a Twist](#)
(Education Week, June 15, 2021)
- [Critical race theory battle invades school boards — with help from conservative groups](#)
(NBC News, June 15, 2021)
- [Teachers across the country protest laws restricting lessons on racism](#)
(Washington Post, June 12, 2021)
- ['Children deserve to be taught': Teachers in 22 cities are planning protests over laws restricting racism lessons in schools](#)
(USA Today, June 11, 2021)

- 'Critical Race Theory Is Simply the Latest Bogeyman.' Inside the Fight Over What Kids Learn About America's History (TIME Magazine, June 24, 2021)
 - [Uncovering Who Is Driving The Fight Against Critical Race Theory In Schools \(LISTEN\)](#) (Fresh Air, June 24, 2021)
 - [How the media's helping GOP fuel critical race theory hysteria](#) (Press Run, June 23, 2021)
 - [Critical race theory has been around for decades — why's it a powder keg now? \(LISTEN\)](#) (Marketplace, June 22, 2021)
 - [VIDEO: Creator of term 'Critical Race Theory' Kimberlé Crenshaw explains what it really is](#) (MSNBC/The Reid Out, June 21, 2021)
 - [VIDEO: The truth about 'critical race theory': co-founder breaks down GOP gaslight](#) (MSNBC/The Medhi Hasan Show, June 20, 2021)
 - [Fox's anti-"critical race theory" parents are also GOP activists](#) (Media Matters, June 17, 2021)
 - [Critical Race Theory: What It Means for America and Why It Has Sparked Debate](#) (Wall Street Journal, June 17, 2021)
 - [Why are states lining up to ban critical race theory?](#) (University World News, June 12, 2021)
 - [The New York Times' Culture-War Definition of Free Speech](#) (Melissa Gira Grant, The New Republic, June 8, 2021)
 - [Guest Blog: Where Does the Bizarre Hysteria About 'Critical Race Theory' Come From? Follow the Money!](#) (Inside Higher Ed, June 3, 2021)
 - [Opinion: Why Conservatives Really Fear Critical Race Theory](#) (Christine Emba, The Washington Post, May 26, 2021)
 - [\(VIDEO\) What critical race theory is really about](#) (CNN/Don Lemon Tonight, May 17, 2021)