



## Racial Discrimination in and out of the Classroom

### Description

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### Author's Memo

Looking at critical race theory, we come to understand the terms in which we know as voodoo or a non negotiable topic that becomes too political. In today's classroom, teachers struggle to help students engage in their learning, further, refuting to teach about our nation's history in terms of race and gender issues. When looking at critical race theory, they created the term to create hysteria for what is going on in the classroom when the term is another way of looking at text for analysis using a racial/ethnic lens. Politics aside, teaching about race is the foundation of any history lesson and shows students of all races and ethnicities that there has been a stigma in society, leaving one party to believe they are better than the others. The issue is this: by not allowing multicultural texts in the classroom, students struggle to understand the larger picture.

The work of this thesis is here to show that the benefits of reading multiple texts in the classroom, each from a different perspective provides opportunities for students to understand the systemic racism, to understand the failures that come from being an American, from being a person of color, and how politics are owning the topic. Taking away the students' ability to read these texts, to give them the tools in order to form their own opinions is what we as educators should be doing. The autoethnographic part of this research comes from teachers who see the differences that teachings books makes in a students life – impactful.

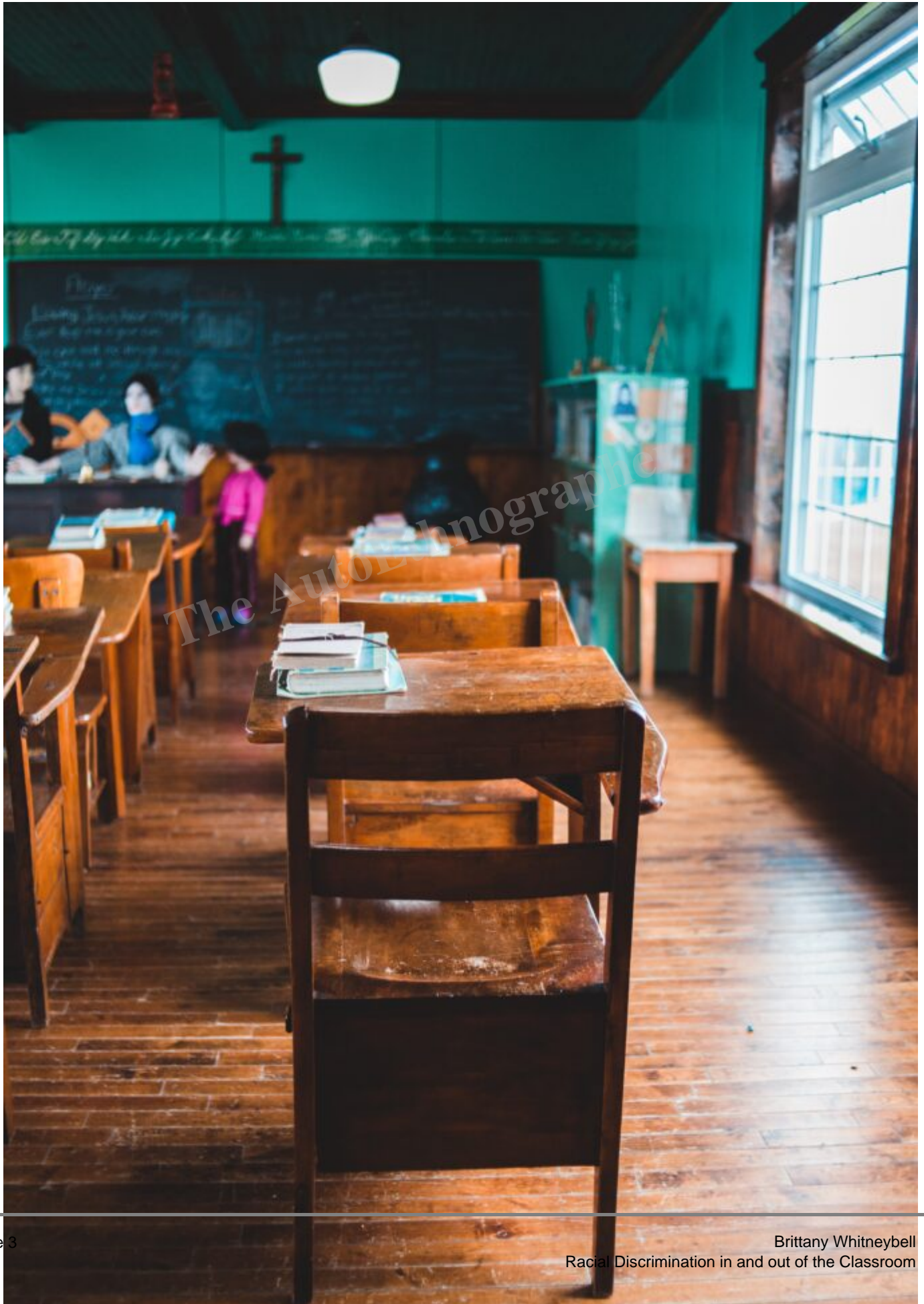
**‘The work of this thesis is here to show that the benefits of reading multiple texts in the classroom, each from a different perspective provides opportunities for students to understand the systemic racism, to understand the failures that come from being an American, from being a person of color, and how politics are owning the topic.**

When looking at the state of our nation and how one party is so invested in keeping ideas out of the classroom, there truly is a way that this hinders our students and keeps the framework of learning at a minimum, furthering the idea that it is more harmful to do so because of how society acts and behaves. Providing students with the necessary resources to analyze texts of all sorts gives power to create an understanding in Bloom’s Taxonomy that exceeds more than we as educators could ever want in a class. Students are able to learn about an author, learn about history, learn about cultures and ethnicities, to then go into vocabulary building and reading of a short story or novel that only gives them the horizon in terms of formulating an opinion and then using that knowledge to cite and source those ideas.

**‘Autoethnography helps because it adds the views that we need to see, the perspectives, and the ideas and how things counter with another and so on, so forth.**

Those are the skills that our students need, and Republicans have determination to pull these ideas out of the classroom. I further my idea by showing my perspective and my limited view from being the stereotypical white woman who only sees the Republican party bashing and doing whatever it is they can to take lessons from students that would only benefit them. I do not see from a black American perspective, and I don’t see from the Republican side of the manifests enacted. With my limited point of view, relying on the autoethnography really helped because it brings in multiple voices. I tend to look at a TedTalk via YouTube, “The Danger of a Single Story,” which shows that my story does not have limitations from my perspective, but also, only allowing students to read from a white perspective also hinders their learning as well.

Autoethnography helps because it adds the views that we need to see, the perspectives, and the ideas and how things counter with another and so on, so forth. Lastly, because this piece is so lengthy, I am opening to breaking these sections down into their subsections and turning them into multiple pieces over the course of several weeks.







By Erik Mclean for Unsplash

# Racial Discrimination in and out of the Classroom

## Abstract

Education has always understood racial and ethnic lines, teaching them in a K-12 classrooms. Teaching about the civil war to the civil rights and everything in between, students gain foundational understanding in terms of the treatment of a culture or race versus the others. Looking at other races, we can also understand the troubles that they also go through and look at them in a comparative manner to formulate and evaluate our understanding of history. Further, looking at texts from various perspectives in terms of race, ethnicity, and cultural background aids in the comprehension of perspective.

By reading multiple views on a black perspective, or a Native American perspective, students see various aspects within the cultures. Looking through autoethnographic terms, we can see the creation of critical race theory and how it creates a negative connotation for ethnic literary lenses. By taking this away from the classroom and our students, we are not teaching them about our nation's history which in turn is hindering both the students, and our nation.

**Keywords:** multicultural, critical race theory, autoethnographic, education, politics, diversity

Teaching in a classroom today requires skill of class management, the use of tools and resources in the classroom, and teaching the analysis of text through citation and a strong thought process. Students today have the internet at their disposal and often in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, classrooms have equipment like laptops or iPads with a one to one ratio. Even if this is not the case, students have technology readily available to use for research and workshopping. Teachers learn how to be equitable with students and giving them resources when needed to help give them a one up in class. They learn to be inclusive and provide a multitude of texts, papers, and activities that match various cultures, races, and ethnicities. And finally they learn to adapt for a diverse classroom ranging in different mixes of races, cultures, and ethnicities.

The government has pushed propaganda that prevents teachers from using banned books in the classroom, alters sex education classes for all grade levels, and more recently, wants to take away critical race theory in the classroom. The objective is to understand if these policies that regard the use of critical race theory with multicultural texts are helping students, or if this is a hindrance in the classroom.

**'Looking at other races, we can also understand the troubles that they also go through and look at them in a comparative manner to formulate and evaluate our understanding of history.'**

From a personal standpoint, teaching an AP Literature and Composition class at a college prep high school, a colleague was teaching a novel and was in discussion with students for an observation. During this observation, she began to ask students about how race would change or alter the story. While I do not know the novel she was teaching, our principal was not happy about the discussion taking place and these were lesson plans that another one of our teachers, who also teaches AP gave. I also had a similar experience, but teaching *Pygmalion* with my seniors in an honors English literature class. After finishing the play, I was working through the questions in the text and was asking a question about history and comparing it to the characters if they were of a different race or culture.

They were engaging in how different races and ethnicities would change the story and using the story and personal experiences to support their answers. I loved this conversation because the level of comprehension and civil discourse in the classroom was absolutely incredible and students loved the conversation.

Our principal came into my room during the conversation and pulled me aside and asked what was going on. I had to tell my principal that this was in fact, a piece of my curriculum and I am only teaching what is in the text and ask questions that are alike to gauge level of interest, comprehension, and add to the level of engagement, but nonetheless, I was teaching what was in the College Board book. I had to stand up for myself and my students because our principal did not like the fact I was using a particular lens to engage in conversation with the students.

**'From a personal standpoint, teaching an AP Literature and Composition class at a college prep high school, a colleague was teaching a novel and was in discussion with students for an observation.'**

The unsettling piece is that my first big lesson with students is a power point that takes one, sometimes two days to go over and it goes over the literary lenses. Seniors take notes and list examples of these lenses and I go in-depth with ideas and how they inter-relate to one another. This creates a basic foundation in the following units as we go over *Handmaid's Tale*, *The Giving Tree*, *Othello*, and *Pygmalion* in senior English. We often use gender or feminist perspective, historical, society, and racial/ethnic based lenses to observe with different perspectives.

The idea with teaching with a multitude of lenses allows students to see the text from a different viewpoint, which is a step above citing and answering the questions to the text. Students gain a wider knowledge by using the lens and may adapt the lens to best fit the novel they are teaching. Critical

race theory is a term for a literary lens, most commonly known as the cultural and/or ethnic lens. So, what's wrong with it?

## History of the Classroom

The typical teacher, depending on state requirements, has to obtain a teaching certificate through a school and completes student teaching successfully. Other times, teachers can pass a test for an endorsement and still teach in the classroom. The third route, is to have a degree in a school topic, and then provide a substitute certificate to teach that topic. Further, when teachers are working on their degree, they specifically learn that the use of diversity, equity and inclusion should be the foundation of their lessons, with differentiation and scaffolding sprinkled in the lessons. In order to achieve the objects, we have to look at other short stories, poems, or novels so that they have an opportunity to gain understanding that is relevant to them. It may make more sense for a Hispanic student to read something from Gabriel Garcia Marquez versus Amy Tan who focuses on Asian culture.

When teachers begin their training in the program of their choice, most often times, the courses revolve around cultural diversity or multiculturalism, 504s and IEPs, lesson planning, and how to use those lessons in the culturally diverse classroom. When I first started teaching, my classroom was ninety percent white and the other ten percent were Hispanic students. And when I moved across the country, my classroom has now turned into fifty percent white, fifteen percent black, fifteen percent Hispanic, ten percent Asian, and the other ten percent Pacific Islander. In order to teach effectively, they should embrace the characteristics of the students' needs, and understand that cultures should have removed limitations, allowing every student the same opportunity. The educational term for this is culturally responsive pedagogy, or the ability to understand the diversity of the students and create a culture that molds to fit everyone.

**'It may make more sense for a Hispanic student to read something from Gabriel Garcia Marquez versus Amy Tan who focuses on Asian culture.'**

By sustaining the ability to be consistent in practice, students no longer feel the need to feel as if they are not understanding, feeling unequal, or do not have the ability to evolve as humans. "Students need to have a classroom space where they feel safe to discover and express themselves, a place to explore their own culture while learning more about the diverse backgrounds of their peers" (Barrios and Kohler, 2020, p. 20). Equipping the classroom with the proper tools with help the teacher and the students. The foundation in any sort of teaching is social emotional learning, or the ability to have social awareness of oneself, the peers and the teacher.

By creating the safe space, students feel more comfortable in the community that is the classroom. It also teaches students to have empathy and respecting others perspectives instead of forcing opinions and bashing others with the assertion of an idea. Students do not feel safe and will not open up if there are students who feel they remain supreme and their idea or opinion is the only one. Suggested

activities to create the open classroom would be to start with an ice break of some sort that allows students to put themselves in different cultures. It does not have to be racial or ethnic, but a single mom household, or future college student, or only student to go to college, language spoken, hobbies, etc. Students can then see other students who have interest in the same things, or raised in the same type of household.

**'By creating the safe space, students feel more comfortable in the community that is the classroom.**

This creates a community in the classroom versus students feeling singled out or alone. When zooming out and looking in, there are several statutes of limitation in the classroom, but also serve society as well. The freedom of speech is one of the rules in place that allow students to gain an opinion upon research and synthesizing their own opinion based on the evidence. Class discussions have foundations on these ideas.

The civil rights act of 1964 covers those within the school walls; allowing students the ability of free speech and expressions, separation of church and state, racial segregations, and the education of disabled students to name a few of the several topics. These laws in place continue to support a student to speak freely on the ideals of society, of the novel, and of the discussion at hand. Students do know that there is a separation of church and state, and they tell teachers this day in and day out. Teachers do not have the ability to preach anything in the bible, but students so have the opportunity to pray before their meal in the morning or at lunch, perhaps both. Students are fully aware of the stipulations of being on school grounds and continue to act based solely of these requests of the government.

**'This creates a community in the classroom versus students feeling singled out or alone.**

President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind, NCLB, act in 2001 and the law requires teachers to have more accountability when it comes to the success of student outcomes. In December of 2015, they replaced this act with the Every Student Succeeds Act by President Barack Obama and it moves in a different direction. No Child Left Behind focused more on federal demanding of requirements whereas Every Student Succeeds Act allows the states themselves to make the choices that affect students around the state. Sawchuck (2021) goes in depth about the law and the list of restrictions and allotments within the act so that states can pick and choose based off student performance.

The term critical race theory is simply a term that points out how racism has shaped society, and how to potentially not repeat the previous era where slavery was a part of society, and black Americans



were inferior. The race/ethnic lenses opt for the same framework and understanding a societies motives with the treatment of African Americans. For instance, a school district in Washington State may have several goals, a long-term, a short-term and interim goals and these goals look at state testing, English language proficiency as well as graduation rates. There are several other pieces, but this shows that states provide goals and schools have an opportunity to follow them based on their demographics.

**‘The term critical race theory is simply a term that points out how racism has shaped society, and how to potentially not repeat the previous era where slavery was a part of society, and black Americans were inferior.**

With Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, students must perform to the best of their ability. Students are reported if they fall under the bottom five percent performing students in their schools, if the graduation rate is below sixty-seven percent, and those with special education documents such as 504’s and IEPs, individualized education plan, only ten percent of them have permission to take an alternative test, which is one percent of the entire student body. In order for teachers to make these numbers happen in their school, teachers learn to adapt to a low performing student to give them the best chance at success, or allowing a student to choose to do a PowerPoint instead of writing an essay.

**‘With the laws in place, such as Every Student Succeeds Act, formally No Child Left Behind, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, IDEA (individual disabilities education act), amongst others, suggest that law makers are attempting to help teachers and students for the better.**

With the laws in place, such as Every Student Succeeds Act, formally No Child Left Behind, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, IDEA (individual disabilities education act), amongst others, suggest that law makers are attempting to help teachers and students for the better. The idea of Brown versus Board of Education is understandable, and so is IDEA, which allows students with disabilities the right to an education as well. Every Student Succeeds Act creates a gray area because teachers focus on creating students that perform to tests and not focus on the material. While teachers dive deep in content, it is often surface level information, and the focus is predominately on how to take a test.

Teachers learn in their preparation programs that it is important to allow native language, to allow student experiences to shine through when having class discussions, communicating the expectations for students, creating a student-centered classroom, to understand the classroom environment and make changes if a student seems to need assistance and learning a few words in a students’ native language. By creating these basic ideas within the walls of a classroom, students will set goals for themselves, but also feel comfortable with who they are because their teacher is attempting to

understand them, and wants them to share a little bit of their culture so they can learn.

### **‘Teachers are always having to adapt to a culturally responsive classroom...**

Teachers are always having to adapt to a culturally responsive classroom, while “The investigation of formalized education structures to prepare educators to be culturally relevant” (Wilson and Soslau, 2022, p. 58) because the students, especially at high school level, are always rotating. Creating a multicultural classroom is nothing new that teachers do not have preparation for when working on their certification. One important thing is that culturally responsive teaching, as we learn in our programs, does not mean relying on test data, or what the school says, or what the issues are at home. It comes to the teacher making connections with students so that students feel safe so that they can open up and have a conversation with their teacher.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The above recorded laws help distract around the nation to look at their data, change goals and adapt to the needs to best fit student learning. Diversity, equity and inclusion have several definitions to create one larger picture. Diversity creates variety, and the diverseness comes in the form of students from different races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation, and the rest. Equity is being fair and impartial. This has often representation in a graphic that many have seen; three kids all on a box, one can see, one can barely see, and the other cannot.

Equity allows the smallest to have two of the boxes, and the middle to have one, while the tallest can already see over the fence. Inclusion refers to the act of being in the group, class, or structure. With these definitions in place, let's look at an English classroom. All freshman are working on reading *Romeo and Juliet*, but several, because of IEPs, are struggling to understand the text.

### **‘Diversity, equity and inclusion have several definitions to create one larger picture.**

With D.E.I. in place, students can use the *No Fear Romeo and Juliet*, a simplified version of the text without the Shakespearean vernacular. Students may also work with others who have a better understanding of what is taking place which closes the gap on comprehension. Students may also read a short story that is similar to or modernized to help them understand the scenes. Some of this could be showing clips from *Gnomeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story*, or listen to an audio version of the text for listening.

By allowing students opportunities to figure out the events taking place, they become more engaged.

By not providing these materials will cause several students to struggle, fall behind, and give up. The main reason why diversity, equity, and inclusion are a part of the classroom is to create an even level playing field so that students can achieve the goals and objectives with the tools that they need.

**‘Diversity creates variety, and the diverseness comes in the form of students from different races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation, and the rest.**

Now that they have formed a foundation, looking at multicultural texts are an integral part of learning various concepts. While students can cite and support evidence using any text, there are chances that the student is unable to make a connection because it is not relatable nor relevant to them. When using diverse texts, we are creating connections and practices. In observing oral and written skills, students have “demonstrated the hybridity of young children’s oral and written texts and argued for the relevance of hybridity to culturally responsive pedagogies that seek to make school practices more congruent with the practices of children’s home cultures as a way of bridging school practices” (Solsken et al., 2000, p. 179). As children develop in elementary school, they learn to read and there is a focus on literacy.

**‘When using diverse texts, we are creating connections and practices.**

When teachers give the school-aged appropriate text to the child, they become excited because there is a connection between their culture or racial background and the text. The example provided by the author, Jo-Anne, as she was teaching in an urban elementary school where she had fifty-three percent Puerto Rican, twenty-three percent African American, and twenty-four percent European American. In order to achieve the goals for these students, reading *Beverly Clary* or *Magic School Bus* are a couple ideas, but it is important to find something that the students will understand and feel like they connect with it because the character is also Puerto Rican, or African American.

It is the idea of creating a culturally diverseness that supports D.E.I. and creates better comprehension and understanding beginning at a young age and the “work thus provides valuable support and insights for culturally responsive pedagogies” (Solsken et al., 2000, p. 180). This goes back to teacher training, and creating a culturally responsive classroom, which then ties back to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**‘If we migrate into a high school, the diverseness will still be a part of the classroom as these**

**high schools are often a main hub for several feeder schools.**

If we migrate into a high school, the diverseness will still be a part of the classroom as these high schools are often a main hub for several feeder schools. The high schools “are often depicted as overcrowded, under funded, and marked by severe economic disparities. They also have a higher rate of ethnic, racial, linguistic, national, and religious diversity than their suburban and rural counterparts” (Connor et al., 2009, p. 3) which creates struggles for teachers. These struggles connect back to racial and ethnical diverse texts, but also, there needs to be compassion for the students in the economic disparities, it becomes harder to engage students; a lack of funding, age appropriate texts and materials are hard to come by meaning that teachers spend much of their time preparing the materials or purchasing what is needed.

Diversity is also key because we have various races and ethnicities in a classroom and teachers are to accommodate to these students. The use of diversity, equity and inclusion in the classroom was not founded upon until the civil rights act of 1964, more specifically Title VII which specifically prohibits the discrimination against sex, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and color. Not only should teachers respect their students regardless, the government, when making these laws, tend to not think about the previous civil rights act that has been enacted.

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As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century as students and teachers, with successful implementation of inclusion, “African American and other students of color are still disproportionately placed in special education, receive the most segregated special education placements, have the poorest postschool outcomes and continue to be segregated from their White and nondisabled peers” (Zion and Blanchett, 2011, p. 2187). Students of color, seem to be misplaced in the special education system for various reasons. We can assume because of the past, and the systemic racism that this has something to do with their education, but to what degree falls on the student?

In 1954, *Brown versus Board* made it legal for students of color to attend white schools, to no longer be segregated in a public education setting. From here, the questions created new ideas of what inclusion, race, equity, and equality look like in a classroom. It was not until IDEA, individuals with disabilities education improvement act, and No Child Left Behind created new regulations to make sure that all students received the same education, making it more equal to them. Unfortunately, these new regulations, put in place, thought to be helping students, has hindered students because there is pressure to address the inequalities in our education system.

**'In 1954, *Brown versus Board* made it legal for students of color to attend white schools, to no longer be segregated in a public education setting.**

"Among the most significant issues that have been on the table for resolution are disparities in achievement between students of color and White students' disproportionality in special education referral, identification, and placement; high dropout rates for students of color; disproportionate discipline and referrals for students of color, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, students from immigrant families, and students in urban areas" (Zion and Blanchett, 2011, p. 2188); simply stated, teaching about our nation's history, about racism, and the impact that it has both on a psychological and stereotypical aspect, perspectives may change which may alter and change course in the classroom. With the diverse classroom, the issues with providing an equitable and equal education for students, teachers and administration fail to exceed to the expectations of *Brown versus Board*, yet, the government is continually attempting to change laws and regulations in education, thinking that this will help our students.

**'Not only should teachers respect their students regardless, the government, when making these laws, tend to not think about the previous civil rights act that has been enacted.**

While inclusion, diversity, and equity for students comes from a multitude of areas that best help students, often times, holding students accountable, and treating them as equals, providing appropriate materials that will help that student and differentiating has often been helpful for students. The point is acts like No Child Left Behind are "holding schools accountable for improving the performance of historically low-achieving students, particularly students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with limited English proficiency, and students with special education backgrounds" (Zion and Blanchett 2188).

By taking away a lesson with a novel, for instance, where the main character is a former slave and having discussions about our nation's history is allowing students an opportunity to learn the facts about white supremacy and the overreach with black Americans. It is looking at a novel where the main character could be Native American and Mexican and he is struggling with the identity of who he is, as we see in *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko.



**'Providing appropriate materials that will help that student and differentiating has often been helpful for students.**

The story follows Tayo after he returns from the war and he begins to feel the effects of post-traumatic stress, and struggle with his identity. Both of his cultures have different values, one of them being a medicine man from his Native American side of the family, to the western style of treatment. He turns to fellow military members to escape from his reality, but also turns to several people as he learns himself. A novel like *Ceremony* adds to the classroom not only because it is a coming of age story, but it follows the journey of the struggle, learning about society and how changes have taken place, thus affecting those around.

Students could be a mix of two or more races and unsure of who they are, and which culture they want to predominately represent. With understanding both sides, Tayo came into himself and began to realize life as a whole; students can relate to this idea and have various responses.

### **Multicultural Students and Texts in the Classroom**

Multiculturalism is simply various cultures, or a cultural pluralism that began in the 1900s, and well into the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Multiculturalism looks at Native American, black American, Chicano, Asian Americans, and many other minorities. Often times, and in more present day, this could also include literature and groups within the LGBTQ+ community. We should note that all races have different instances that affect them in a diverse classroom; but the perspective of a black American, comprehending that history and society has not been kind to them should be the foundation.

Looking back at slavery during the civil war, to the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, the minority struggles due to fear of repeating itself. Black Americans are socially vulnerably due to the impact and social recovery. Breen (2022) suggests that "Minorities and the poor tend to suffer the worst outcomes as a result of natural disasters due to predisposing factors, their actual experiences during and in the aftermath of the disasters, and their limited capacity to recover" (Breen, 2022, p. 229).

**'Multiculturalism is simply various cultures, or a cultural pluralism that began in the 1900s, and well into the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.**

While slavery was over one hundred and fifty years ago, students in present day classrooms may not know much other than what is in their history textbooks. The civil rights movement on the other hand could be more relevant because the 1960s was sixty years ago. This could mean that their mom, dad,

or a grandparent was marching on Washington Street, or on the bus rides, or sitting at a Woolworths lunch counter.

The chances are these students know the stories that they have been telling as well as the treatment and disrespect that has occurred to that person. That family has struggled to gain acceptance, or help coping with history because of their skin color. To help this specific population as a teacher, being honest, being respectful to these students is the start to accepting the social vulnerability and fear that this could happen again based on the events in society that presently occur.

**‘Black Americans are socially vulnerably due to the impact and social recovery.**

When teaching any literature course for students, using texts that focuses on white, straight, and potentially Christian characters deprives students of thinking outside of the box. The class, assuming it is all white, or primarily white, students will be successful in understanding the literature before them. With classrooms being more diverse today than they were fifty years ago, adding diversity in the lessons and texts are important.

Adding novels and short stories like *Fish Cheeks* by Amy Tan, a poem about being attracted to a non-Chinese person and trying to fit in to the “white” culture, while mom wants her to embrace her Chinese culture; *Absolute Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie that follows a young man who leaves a reservation school and starts at a white school in the farmlands with an Indian mascot; and *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko. Presently, per data in a recent survey from over 200 other English teachers, most of the teachers had fifty percent African American students leaving the other a solid mix of white, Puerto Rican, Mexican, to name a few. With many of these teachers having a diverse classroom, they should accommodate students and be inclusive.

**‘Teaching literature with a white perspective and sticking to that idea is not beneficial because students are not able to make the connections to the text that allow them to grasp deeper concepts.**

Teaching literature with a white perspective and sticking to that idea is not beneficial because students are not able to make the connections to the text that allow them to grasp deeper concepts. Out of the 200 teachers, roughly eighty-six percent of them are able to choose their own novels to use in the classroom, leaving the other fifteen percent sticking to what the school district is giving them. If we, as educators, are unable to teach students the distinction between races and the history, “if we try to avoid these issues and fail to educate students on how to navigate them, we risk reinforcing existing inequality, inequities, and systems of oppression” (Brainard, 2021, p. 312).

Not only is the government responsible for this, there are teachers that are unaware of why this is potentially hindering our students. In the conducted survey, teachers mentioned how critical race theory was a college level course, or an idea taught at college level. No one in any research that I have found claims to have any legality to it other than the banning in appropriate states. These states, assumed to be mainly red states, follow the conservative ideas that teaching race allows for the white population to be superior to the rest. Other teachers are afraid that they will get backlash from their principal or parents due to the district they teach in and would rather keep a job versus lose it over teaching a basic concept.

**If teachers stick with texts with white main characters, there is a chance that if the classroom is diverse, the students will not connect to it.**

In lieu of using multicultural texts, if teachers stick with texts with white main characters, there is a chance that if the classroom is diverse, the students will not connect to it. This is a term teachers tend to use, and it is low academic achievement. With the low academic achievement, students are becoming engaged with material and students tend to fall off if they are not getting the support that they need. I should also note that figuring out when a student is not engaged is not the easiest. When teachers do any sort of training, multicultural training and the use of multicultural texts tend to lead the way so that teachers can use material that will benefit students in a diverse classroom.

“Some studies reported that because the education system of students’ cultures are different from the culture of their new classroom, the academic achievement of students may be low or bad” (Alsubaie, 2015, p. 87). Any student could be successful in one classroom because the demographics and the culture and use of texts are on point. They could walk into a room where they are the only Mexican, black, or white student in that room and the texts and the culture in the room have nothing to do with that student.

**‘When teachers do any sort of training, multicultural training and the use of multicultural texts tend to lead the way so that teachers can use material that will benefit students in a diverse classroom.**

The example given by Alsubaie (2015) is a Chinese student who experienced relocation to a Western educational classroom. The student asks the teacher to not ask him direct questions. The reason for this is because this is not a part of his culture in a Chinese classroom and he also does not have someone he can turn to if he is stuck. Instead of the teacher getting frustrated, or watching that student struggle, it would be smart for the teacher to pair him with another student and do what we know as think, pair, and share.

**‘Any student could be successful in one classroom because the demographics and the culture and use of texts are on point.**

The students are asked a question, they pair with their table partner or small group, and one student reports back on the final answer. This can be on a small white board, or spoken verbally, often times added into a google form or poll. Teachers can then use that data for comprehension and work from there. Alsubaie says that when students are moved into a new classroom, “East Asian students are reluctant to participate in activities or speaking in the multicultural classroom because they are learning in a new environment that is unfamiliar with them” (87).

Teachers can expect slight anxiety from the students because they are around a population that they do not normally know, especially when moving into a new school, or a feeder school which houses multiple smaller schools. The other form of anxiety could come from the single story that they will hear, a white perspective, blond hair, and blue eyes.

**‘Ted Talk speaker Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speaks about “The Danger of a Single Story” and adding layers to how and why we should add diversity in the classroom.**

The single story refers to the one perspective, from one person which represents the one group of people. Students are unable to learn from one story. Instead, they must read various novels, short stories, and poems that highlight what one culture is and how it is represented.

Ted Talk speaker Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speaks about “The Danger of a Single Story” and

adding layers to how and why we should add diversity in the classroom. Adichie refers to her childhood and young boy, Fide, who helped in the house, but were also poor. Her mother would bring supplies to the next village for the family. Adichie expresses that with her mother explaining that they were poor when they did not eat their dinner, how families like Fide's could benefit from the food that she did not eat. That one perspective formed her overall idea of Fide. It was not until she went to the village with her mother that she saw beautifully woven baskets. Adichie gathered that while yes, they were poor, they were also hardworking.

Providing one story in the classroom only provides students with one opportunity to gather an opinion and other ideas on the race or cultural being represented. Adding more multicultural texts pushes more ideas towards students so that there is also no stereotyping, but also can make stronger inferences.

**'Providing one story in the classroom only provides students with one opportunity to gather an opinion and other ideas on the race or cultural being represented.'**

Continuing to use a Chinese student for the examples, if the teacher assigns a book with a white character, the student may not understand or relate to the text as the culture is unrelatable and/or irrelevant in some shape or form. If the teacher was to provide a novel or short story by Amy Tan for instance, the student is familiar because it is a part of their culture and have a better connection or understanding of the text. "When the curricula, approaches, activities, and policies are concordant between the teachers and students of several cultures, students will be comfortable and aware of the importance of the multicultural education in their lives because they practice them directly" (Alsubaie, 2015, p. 88). This typically happens when the right texts are being used, discussions are happening, and the other students can see inside the other culture.

Rotating with a diverse classroom helps the students understand and comprehend those cultures. Using various texts with different races and ethnicities is one thing, but another would be using a literary lens with a racial or ethnic lens with a close reading model, students gain a better understanding. By using close reading, students learn methods "of examining literature by paying heightened attention to the language, form, and details of a novel, story or poem" (Wakefield, 2016).

**"When the curricula, approaches, activities, and policies are concordant between the teachers and students of several cultures, students will be comfortable and aware of the importance of the multicultural education in their lives because they practice them directly" (Alsubaie, 2015, p. 88).**

Understanding form, language, and the small details that support how races and ethnicities talk, think,



and feel, all deepening a reader's perception. Wakefield's interview with English Professor Paula Moya, and she explains how using these lenses can teach us, and the rest of our world, is shaped by race. Moya claims, "Race is a complex, multivalent, and persistent social phenomenon. It's not going away and we need to do a better job of understanding and talking about it" (Wakefield, 2016). Readers have the ability to be attentive and gain cultural awareness and make decisions based on what they know.

When society understands that, according to Sleeter (2017), eighty percent of teachers are white, and with their teaching program, they learn to make sure that there is equity and equality in the walls of their classroom. It also needs to be understood that "white students complete university programs at considerably higher rates than students of color" (Sleeter, 2017, p. 156) and when in observance of the psychology behind that, people of color tend to have lower incomes, less confident, and have shown that they do not perform to the standards of their white counterparts. How does this create equality in the classroom?

**Readers have the ability to be attentive and gain cultural awareness and make decisions based on what they know.**

First off, by creating the stigma that black Americans are incapable of completing programs, but also treating them as inferior members of society affects mindset and will divide people by political perspective. Teachers work hard at creating a gap based off their teaching, and teacher "candidates do persist in learning to become strong teachers of racially and ethnically diverse students, the literature also continues to support White resistance to and fatigue from talking about and working with race" (Sleeter, 2017, p. 156). Denying the access to students of different colors and races hinder education. Referring to the education of teachers, just that data shows a struggle with race and employment, that tends to carry over in the classroom and affects students.

## **The Use of Critical Race Theory**

The Legal Defense Fund, of the LDF, defines critical race theory as "an academic and legal framework that denotes systemic racism is part of American society...recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice" (LDF). Critical race theory also shares the same idea when looking at a race or ethnic lens with literature, comparing differences and making connections. The race and ethnic literary lens observes social perceptions of one's race or culture, and about the history of races during the lifespan of the United States of America. This is the same as taking the framework and analyzing how it compares to other cultures in American society.

The idea of critical race theory expands from education to housing, to employment, to healthcare and looks at the issues that occur with black Americans, that observation or analysis is critical in understanding the how and why this is happening, just as the racial/ethnic lens does.

The LDF also says, "Attempts to ban CRT are really attacks on free speech, on discussions about the

truthful history of race and racism in the U.S., and the lived experiences of Black people and other people of color” (LDF). Denying the idea that race has been an issue in our society is creating the idea that white supremacy is and had been a main topic of our society. By banning the ideas of critical race theory, there is a denial of free speech, which talks about the past, the experiences, and how we need to change our mindset. Further, there is a graphic that shows the bans on critical race theory in the classroom. Students face hinder when making connections and learning about history and understanding why the author wrote that specific work.

**‘The Legal Defense Fund, of the LDF, defines critical race theory as “an academic and legal framework that denotes systemic racism is part of American society...recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice” (LDF).**

The other idea that people may be confused with is culturally responsive pedagogy which is simply the idea that “teaching includes cultural references and recognizes the importance of students’ cultural backgrounds and experiences in all aspects of learning” (Samuels, 2018, p. 22-23). Samuels creates the idea that teachers should be able to look at different races and cultures in society and allow students to compare the differences and talk about them. Learning these differences and cultural backgrounds emphasizes how there are moral and intellectual differences, leaving the white population to think they reign over all other students. Critical race theory should be used as a lens for analysis so that students understand those subtleties.

In reference to the legislation, “limited to banning the teaching of these ideas, therefore does not actually ban the core tenets of CRT, namely that: racism is ordinary and every day. White people benefit from racism and thus have little incentive to eliminate it” (Gutzmann, 2022, p. 338). In latent terms, the government, whenever they decide to work on these types of laws and regulations, are creating the idea that if you are white, you benefit because students are not being taught about history and how racism affects society. By looking at these issues, students can learn that history repeats itself, allowing students to think for themselves, to learn about accepting and caring for one another.

**‘It could be stated that the teacher preparation programs are created to support the emotional needs of students and not so much the needs of student culture or background.**

On the other side of the classroom, the teacher, having to teach the material should have a solid idea how to connect literature to society, the different races and cultures, so that students have an opportunity to create their own ideas based on the information. In no way should the teacher be forcing an idea to the student to allow them to think that hating or accepting someone is the way to go. Using any literary lens allows students to see from a different perspective. Sleeter points out that with

multicultural education, the structure and coursework are not at their best. In recognition of the syllabi, “more than half to stress celebration of difference rather than systemic inequalities; only 29% of the syllabi explored issues of oppression, racism, and systemic power relationships” (Sleeter, 2017, p. 158).

In order to meet the credentials as an educator, students needs to understand these moments in history and how they relate to society. In order to meet these standards is meeting the standards to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, or the NCATE. It could be stated that the teacher preparation programs are created to support the emotional needs of students and not so much the needs of student culture or background.

### **Government and School Based Regulations on Literature**

Republicans are stir crazy over the term critical race theory. When President Donald Trump was in office, he signed Executive Order on Combatting Race and Sex Stereotyping (Also known as Executive Order 13950) in September of 2020. Trump writes in the order, “Thanks to the courage and sacrifice of our forbearers, America has made significant progress toward realization of our national creed, particularly in the 57 years since Dr. King shared his dream with the country” but says “people are pushing a different vision of America that is grounded in hierarchies based on collective social and political identities rather than in the inherent and equal dignity of every person as an individual” (Trump).

The foundation of this order indicates that race should not matter based on the “false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country” (Trump) and ignores everything progressive that has happened in terms of equity and equality since the end of the civil war.

### **‘Republicans are stir crazy over the term critical race theory.**

The freedoms that black Americans have been able to gain after the civil war, from the end of slavery, to voting rights, to the end of segregation and the civil rights act of 1964. These acts and laws in that have been a part of our society in the last one hundred and fifty years are not meant to divide us, but to unite so that everyone is treated equally. If we look back at the civil rights act of 1964, students of color then did not have permission to be in the same school as their white counterpart. Teachers were able to talk about hard topics and teach students about our history in hopes that we would not repeat ourselves.

The concept for classrooms is that teachers did not have permission to teach about diversity and teachers did not have permission to have any sort of workplace training on the matter.

**'Republicans are stir crazy over the term critical race theory. When President Donald Trump was in office, he signed Executive Order on Combatting Race and Sex Stereotyping (Also known as Executive Order 13950) in September of 2020.**

When President Joe Biden took office, on January 20, 2021, the order was revoked, which gave the ability for multicultural and diversity lessons and workplace training. During the spring of 2021 following the revocation of Executive Order 13950, according to Gutzmann, Fox News used the term, critical race theory, or CRT, more than 1,900 times and has been the main focal point in the political world when looking at education. With the critical race theory being a "buzzword," nine states have put a ban of teaching race theory or race literary analysis with literature in the classrooms.

There are nineteen other states, at the time of this article posting, that are planning to follow the path of the other nine and ban critical race theory in the classrooms. In a few of the states, "school boards in four additional states have introduced new guidelines prohibiting race related discussions" (Gutzmann, 2022, p. 334). For example, a teacher is reading *Pygmalion* with his or her seniors. A piece of the discussion or the leading question is "how would the story change or alter if the lead character was of a different color?"

**'Creating these discussions allow students to analyze and critique perspectives, but also bridge from one culture or race to the next.**

Students will not be able to think outside the box and talk about how the story would change if the character was of a different race or ethnicity. Creating these discussions allow students to analyze and critique perspectives, but also bridge from one culture or race to the next. In another perspective, by teaching a novel, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, was inspired by a woman during the civil war who ran from her owner, with her children. When the soldiers find the family, she kills one child so that they did not have to experience slavery.

The novel *Beloved* follows a slave woman who has been freed and works on claiming that sense of self through various relationships, yet reminisces of life back on the plantation. Having conversations about this book would be banned because the character is a person of color, and not white. Secondly, the English teacher does not have permission to go back and provide any background to then connect how the book and history relate to one another.

**‘A piece of the discussion or the leading question is “how would the story change or alter if the lead character was of a different color?”**

The government is not stopping there as “twenty-four other states have seen some kind of effort to restrict education on racism, bias, or the history of some ethnic or racial groups” (Gutzmann, 2022, p. 334). By banning the ability to teach about the past, starting from the civil war, all the way through civil rights movement, and even present day black lives matter movement, teachers are being told they cannot teach about race and its history.

Currently, they point the fingers as “conservatives believe are being taught by radical leftist teachers” (Gutzmann, 2022, p. 335) and the order has been continued to be struck down by the federal court system and defined as unconstitutional. If the federal court system is denying a ban that regulates what goes on in the classroom as unconstitutional, it is clear that there are no laws that tell teachers they do not have permission to teach these literary lenses, and focus on the historical perspective, or the racial lens.

**‘Students may know of someone generations prior that were involved with something like this, or has relics in the household, but also understanding that basic history during the civil war and the treatment of African Americans is critical in their understanding.**

English teachers have the ability to explore texts such as *The Autobiography of Frederick Douglas* that is a direct perspective of his life and what he had the ability to do once he learned to read and write, keeping in mind that slaves did not have permission to read and write or *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison who struggles to be seen as a person, hence the term invisible, and using “a narrative and storytelling are key components of CRT” (Baker, 2022, p. 99).

Frederick Douglas is a great example because as a slave, he had the ability to learn how to read and write, and was set free. Being a free slave allowed Mr. Douglas to travel and speak on behalf of Black Americans, detailing the lives of the oppressed. Students may know of someone generations prior involved with something like this, or has relics in the household, but also understanding that basic history during the civil war and the treatment of African Americans is critical in their understanding.

**‘Frederick Douglas is a great example because as a slave, he had the ability to learn how to read and write, and was set free.**



Baker (2022) also says, “The life experiences exposed in an autoethnography narratives permit a more rational exploration of oppressed individuals and potentially the communities in which they live” (p. 99) by that one firsthand account. Baker uses his experience as “white-trash” to show how racism was an issue throughout his life. He understands that all throughout his life, black Americans have been predominant in his upbringing, including high school where “their hate was based on color, not character, or behavior” (Baker, 2022, p. 101), which we could tie to Dr. King’s *I Have a Dream Speech* in 1964, where they would judge his children by their character and not the color of their skin.

In a continuation of his education, he observed that those around him, when Dr. King set out and gave his infamous “I have a dream” speech, but many people rejected the words and wanted to follow a more “radicalized” ideology. From experience, Baker notes that critical race theory seems to be based more in opinions rather than facts and they should use it with a true critical analysis where people can communicate about specific ideas together.

**‘By banning the ability to teach about the past, starting from the civil war, all the way through civil rights movement, and even present day black lives matter movement, teachers are being told they cannot teach about race and its history.**

Baker has a set purpose, now that he has identified that critical race theory is not based on facts, but rather opinion. His first point is that of two authors, Delgado and Stefancic where they wrote “racism is ordinary and...not acknowledged” (Qtd Baker p. 104). Baker’s counter is that there is no data to support this claim whatsoever. His idea has support from that of how children at school age play together at recess, and how the rift grew between two races, therefore, “racism, prejudice, and discrimination were learned” (Baker, 2022, p. 104).

Supporting data indicates that post education, people who marry, families would typically oppose interracial relationships; in 2000, it was 31%, 2017 it was 10% of those would accept interracial marriages. Finally, Baker contends the idea that racism is difficult to address, as it is not a hard topic to cover by any means, nor is it hard to address. In relation, teachers can use the texts presented to talk about the past and create an understanding of one culture to the next, thus being culturally responsive in his or her work.

**‘In relation, teachers can use the texts presented to talk about the past and create an understanding of one culture to the next, thus being culturally responsive in his or her work.**

To support this, a teacher from the above survey said, “They dissuade teachers from teaching any works by diverse authors because of FL laws. Teachers are afraid that the school might fire them if someone challenges curricular choices. Minority students are being marginalized even further and teachers are being threatened” (Whitneybell). One teacher speaks up and provides that perspective on how the laws and the schools in the state of Florida interfere with the classroom. Another teacher responds, “The government and/or angry group of citizens has no place in curriculum planning” (Whitneybell) meaning that the government should not be in the classrooms telling teachers what they can and cannot do.

Much of this is because those in office have not spent time in the classroom, nor have they received any training on what it takes to be a teacher, let alone the foundation of skills a teacher acquires from this training and/or education. Further, with these new laws that are affecting the classroom, it is affecting teachers as well. Teachers, throughout the year, depending on the schools, have to go through so many hours of professional development. With the ban on critical race theory ideologies, teachers do not have permission for training when it comes to antiracism or learning how to incorporate ethnic study courses for students, let alone including them into learning standards.

**‘With the ban on critical race theory ideologies, teachers are prohibited on training when it comes to antiracism or learning how to incorporate ethnic study courses for students, let alone including them into learning standards.**

In a map provided by Chalkbeat, there are 36 states that have “adopted or introduced laws or policies that restrict teaching about race and racism” (Imadali, 2022). The states that have banned or restricted are Arizona, Washington, Florida, Ohio, and Arkansas; these states do not conform to one political party or the other. Washington State identifies as a democratic state, Ohio is a flip state, and usually target when on the campaign trail, and Arizona is a Republican state. The assumption could be the relationships with former President Donald Trump, but it could also be that one party decided to out vote when creating these policies per state.

There are seventeen states that are wishing to expand education on race, racism, and any sort of bias that could potentially contribute to these groups. When looking at these maps side by side, there are a few states that have been in both, Washington and Maine being two of them. The *1619 Project* was a plan that was to implement race and teach students about the history of our nation. Former President Donald Trump, via Twitter, threatened that if this was the case, as the Department of Education was looking into this, then they would not give them fund. Shortly thereafter is when the Executive Order on Combatting Race and Sex Stereotyping took effect, merely twenty-one days after the tweet.

## **From the Black American Perspective**

As a white woman, I can only see one side of the issue, much of it being that one political party is hindering society by reprimanding teachers for wanted to teach the foundation of our history. Racism is embedded in American culture and hindering teachers is formatting to the idea that one political party feels that racism “doesn’t matter” or “race doesn’t exist” in our society. The Executive Order signed by former President Donald explains that people should be their own person. Elizabeth McDonald (2021), in her autoethnography, she explains that CRT is a foundation to her framework as it was developed in legal studies, but as we have mentioned, it now relates to various concepts including education. “The first tenant of CRT explored through this research is the idea that racism is normalized in American institutions” (McDonald, 2021, p. 97).

These American institutions could include the schools in which we are referencing, but also places of business, political offices, and groups. McDonald continues to say that people of color, in 2022, experience racism and it is a near daily occurrence, if it is not daily. In the classroom, referencing the history teacher, they often are silenced when teaching about the history of the United States, or have permission to go in depth about people of color and even the text books that students use often misrepresent black Americans. “Lastly, in order to improve the educational experience and outcomes of Black and Brown students, race must be considered” (McDonald, 2021, p. 98). We must consider race when working in education because it goes back to the educational framework; diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diverse classrooms must be equitable in their teaching and towards students and be inclusive with all students.

**As a white woman, I can only see one side of the issue, much of it being that one political party is hindering society by reprimanding teachers for wanted to teach the foundation of our history.**

National Public Radio recently interviewed Nikole Hannah-Jones, the author of the *1619 Project*. From her experience in high school, she signed up for a Black studies elective and learned about the history behind the year 1619 and the ship, White Lion, that carried enslaved Africans into the British colony of Virginia. Hannah-Jones says in her interview, “Every American child learns about the Mayflower, but virtually no American child learned about the White Lion” (NPR). Learning about the White Lion is symbolic in its history and how slavery came to be in the United States. It is also symbolic in knowing how erasing this information from the student body is powerful to the white population and treating history as if it does not exist.

Hannah-Jones’ *1619 Project* “argues that slavery is a foundational American institution. It is one of the oldest American institutions, and that the legacy of the first 250 years of slavery still, of course, permeates throughout society in a variety of ways” (NPR). With the publication of the book is the beginning of Former President Donald Trump and his ability to take something important from students, the ability to learn about our nation’s history, to understand what black Americans feel when people explore this topic, or when not disclosed information is under discussion in the classroom.

**With the publication of the book is the beginning of Former President Donald Trump and his ability to take something important from students, the ability to learn about our nation's history, to understand what black Americans feel when this topic is explored, or when information that is not disclosed is discussed in the classroom.**

Proof lies in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Saving American History Act of 2020, which “prohibits the use of federal funds by an elementary or secondary school to teach the 1619 Project or by a local educational agency (LEA) to support its teaching in public schools” (Congress). Teachers across the nation are unable to look at history and teach the foundational knowledge of race to students. The ACLU says that the bill “targets efforts to provide education about gender and race discrimination, including critical race theory, an academic concept and practice that recognizes systemic racism is deeply ingrained in American society and examines how our systems promote inequality” (Sykes and Hinger).

“Systems promote inequality” meaning teachers do not have permission to be inequitable or they risk losing their job. It also hinders the education of a teacher and their training when we learn to be inclusive with our students. In being equitable and inclusive, we include all students an opportunity to understand our nation's history and there is no hiding what our nation has foundations upon.

**‘Hannah-Jones says in her interview, “Every American child learns about the Mayflower, but virtually no American child learned about the White Lion” (NPR).**

The ACLU furthers their work about Tennessee passing a bill that opposed critical race theory and hinders teachers by telling them that they do not have permission to teach concepts like white privilege. Idaho banned the instruction of critical race theory, Louisiana banned teachers and claimed that the concepts presented are divisive. Lawmakers are claiming that critical race theory hinders our students and is a harmful ideology when the truth is that hiding the information is hindering students and burying the information. Imagine a history teacher going through the civil war or the civil rights movement and that teacher does not have permission to use terms like “systemic racism” when looking at slavery; the teacher is unable to look at white privilege or even white supremacy.

This ideology furthers with the Black Lives Matter movement and it shows that people of color proves that systemic racism is alive and well in our nation. If teachers were able to step back and teach about the year 1619, the White Lion, and then into the Mayflower, students would have a better understanding of what happened to create this foundation of hate towards black Americans. The psychology shows that the black American population hinders in all forms, income, medical issues,

employment, and so forth. There is no alternate version of history to teach, and if we as educators were to take the information from someone like Nikole Hannah-Jones, we would have an idea that racism exists and the term critical race theory is a mere term to create mass hysteria.

## End Thoughts and Conclusion

Facts are showing the teachers need to be teaching about the history of the United States of America and should not deviate from that norm. Teaching about our history means that we will not repeat such things and hopefully retrack on a new path that will allow students to learn about the White Lion, about the civil war, the civil rights movement, and how black lives matter movement is relevant because of these issues. Hiding the racial and ethnic lenses is the same as hiding critical race theory and shows how one party wants white people to be supremacists. Adichie experiences hiding stories that elaborate on the lives of people and how enriching it is to read, to hear, to feel the emotions of races from differentiated perspectives. Everything in the circle correlates and if we take one thing out, the stack falls.

Our students will struggle. While this is an extreme idea, test scores could fall because students are unable to comprehend why characters like Tayo in *Ceremony* return from the Vietnam War, no uniform, and have to stand in the back of the line and allow every single white person to check out first. A character like the Invisible Man and how he tries to conform to one idea over another, and carry a piece of a chain shackled on an ankle of a fellow Brother.

**'Hiding the racial and ethnic lenses is the same as hiding critical race theory and shows how one party wants white people to be supremacists.'**

Students reading the *Diary of Anne Frank* because she is Jewish and looking at World War II, Hitler, and the Concentration Camps help the comprehension of a different group being inferior. *The Biography of Frederick Douglass* and his tales of being a slave, being set free, learning to read and write, and using that knowledge to help others as an abolitionist. Students can take these pieces of literature, both in parts or the whole work, and use that to compare it with other stories of people of the same race and ethnicity. Only allowing one of the stories is a danger to students and to society. In the end, we need to change our future generations.

I have always said that humanity should only get better. We as parents climb a ladder as we move through life, experience different milestones, and raise our children. At some point, we lift our children up over our heads and allow them to continue that climb. We teach about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for not one, but all.

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### Author

bwhitneybell