

# THE REALITY OF EDUCATION

By Julia Stuart and staff

Schools across the country face fines or loss of funding, and teachers could be suspended as lawmakers across the United States move to limit teaching about race and racism in American society.

Critical race theory, a once-obscure academic concept, has become the focus of fierce debate over how to teach U.S. students about their country's history and race relations, sparking protests and classroom bans in some states.

House file 802 prohibits school curriculum and mandatory diversity training from including certain concepts that Republican lawmakers identified as divisive. Among the prohibited topics are the concepts that Iowa or the United States are "fundamentally or systemically racist or sexist," or that any individual is inherently or unconsciously racist or sexist due to that person's race or gender. "Critical Race Theory is about labels and stereotypes, not education," Kim Reynolds said in a recent news release. "It teaches kids that we should judge others based on race, gender or sexual identity, rather than the content of someone's character."

The law faced significant opposition as it passed through the statehouse. Democrats said the legislation would create a chilling effect for teachers, causing them to shy away from controversial topics. Hundreds of Des Moines Public School students, teachers and parents gathered on the Capitol steps in late April to oppose the legislation, arguing it would make it more difficult to address societal issues of racism and discrimination.

Maria Alonzo-Diaz, a newly inducted school board member for DMPS feels critical race theory is vital to get the proper education students need and deserve. "I think it's time that children, students learn history, thoroughly. I think it's good for students to know the impact that the history had, and how it continues to impact lives today," said Alonzo-Diaz.

Alonzo-Diaz needed representation on the school board, as a Latina immigrant and mother of three. "Noticing the disconnect between the community and the school district and the experiences I heard for nine years," said Alonzo-Diaz. In Alonzo-Diaz's opinion the change that needed to happen for her kids wasn't going to get done unless she ran for school board.

Steven Schappaugh, the new principle at Roosevelt High School has come to learn about CRT as the discussion becomes more prominent in conversations about education.

"I think that we need to teach students about the history of our society and the current reality that they are experiencing. However, CRT, to me, is a collegiate level course for law students. While I do not think we should be teaching CRT in schools, that doesn't mean that we should not be teaching students about moments in history or current examples where discrimination exists. I don't think that means we should not expose students to the real obstacles, barriers, and injustices that so many people have experienced and overcome or continue to persevere through," says Schappaugh.

Schappaugh became Roosevelt's new principle shortly after house bill 802 was put in place. House bill

802, as well as the ever-changing political climate of the United States have raised questions about how difficult questions are approached in the classroom.

Teachers are often tasked with the overbearing responsibility of addressing and sometimes even introducing students to complex topics like race, gender, and sexual orientation—to name a few. An immense amount of pressure is placed upon teachers to address such subjects without influencing students and telling only one side of the story.

But how exactly are teachers supposed to approach bias in the classroom? How are teachers meant to teach the other side on issues of ethics? In an era where political affiliations are so heavily intertwined with morals, to what standard should educators be held?

"I think teaching is the most noble and hardest profession there is. We should be wrapping teachers around with support and cheering them on for the incredible work that they do. Teachers who are teaching students about the history of our society,



Parents rally in favor of Critical Race Theory in Clarke County, August 27 after school board recent ban on CRT. Photo taken by flagpole magazine

exposing them to multiple viewpoints, and creating space for students to share their perspectives should be rewarded, not punished," said Schappaugh.

Teachers gathered in more than 115 cities August 28, 2021, according to ABC News, to "Teach Truth" in protest of the anti-critical race theory legislation being proposed across the country.

The Days of Action, from Aug. 27 to 29, is part of the Teach Truth pledge, which has been signed by more than 6,600 teachers nationwide. "We, the undersigned educators, refuse to lie to young people about U.S. history and current events," the pledge reads.

"Students won't learn the real history of what this country has endured," Schnique Rembert, a former

teacher at East High School in Waterloo, told KCCI News. "It would sugarcoat reality."

"I think it's ok to present aspects of all kinds of theories and thinking into the classroom. It's up for the students decides their own opinion on how things work in this country. Do I outright teach CRT, no. In fact, I've never used that term in front of my students. Do I mention topics that are slightly related to some of the findings presented in CRT? Yes. It's important that I bring in many perspectives in my classroom. I realize the challenges faced by people of color in the history of our country and it's our job to lay out the evidence and let students discover their own opinion about our past," says Paul Sams a History Teacher at Roosevelt High School.

More than 60% of American parents want their kids to learn about the ongoing effects of slavery and racism as part of their education, according to a new

USA TODAY/Ipsos poll.

But just half of parents support teaching critical race theory in schools even though the theory's main premise is that racism continues to permeate society. About 4 in 10 parents support restrictions on schools' ability to teach critical race theory.

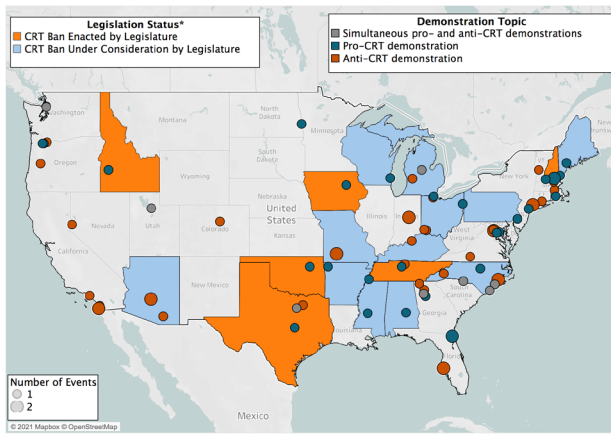
That disconnect underscores the heated feelings parents have about race-related conversations and how teachers should be handling that and other delicate topics. And, not surprisingly, the issue is firmly politicized: More than 8 in 10 Democrat parents believed their children should learn about the lingering impact of slavery and racism in schools, compared with fewer than 4 in 10 Republican parents, according to the poll's findings.

despite its prominence within mainstream media and in state legislatures, CRT's effect on demonstration trends within the United States has been limited compared to movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), Stop Asian Hate, and Cancel the Rents.

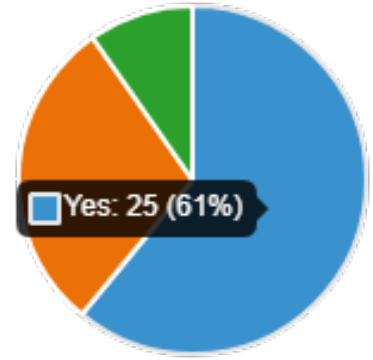
ACLED records 78 total demonstration events related to CRT as of early July 2021. This is fewer than 1% of all demonstrations recorded in the country since the first CRT-related demonstration was recorded on 30 October 2020 in Lewiston, Maine. Additionally, although nearly 70% of CRT-related demonstration events occurred in June 2021, they still account for fewer than 5% of all demonstration events reported around the United States that month. CRT-related demonstrations have largely been independent from other protest movements. For instance, fewer than 5% have included demonstrators associated with the BLM movement. Teachers and students account for the largest portion of associated actors, having participated in over 25% of all CRT-related demonstration events, 95% of which have been in support of teaching CRT in schools.

Slightly over 60% of CRT-related demonstration events have broadly opposed the teaching of the theory in public schools, while slightly under half have supported the theory or opposed legislation designed to ban its teaching. Although demonstration events in opposition to CRT have been greater in number, demonstrations in support of CRT are

Anti-CRT Legislation and Demonstrations in the United States  
(1 January 2020 – 2 July 2021)



\*Data on the legislative actions regarding CRT drawn from Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/hsj/fkqov/2021/07/02/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/>



Data on Legislative actions about CRT nation wide. Photo from ACLED and data from bookings.edu

slightly more widespread geographically: anti-CRT demonstrations have been reported in 22 states, while pro-CRT demonstrations have been reported in 24 states and Washington, DC.

Approximately 20% of all CRT-related demonstration events have occurred in the six states that passed legislation to ban CRT in publicly funded schools. In these states, more than 70% of the protests have been in favor of CRT, while another 7% have included both supporters and opponents counter-demonstrating one another.

Meanwhile, over a third of all CRT-related demonstration events have occurred in the 16 states that have prefilled or proposed legislation to ban CRT in public schools. Approximately 50% of the demonstrations in these states have opposed teaching CRT in public schools, while another 14% have included both supporters and opponents counter-demonstrating. North Carolina accounts for the most demonstration events related to CRT of any state — over 10% of all CRT demonstration events — and accounts for 33%

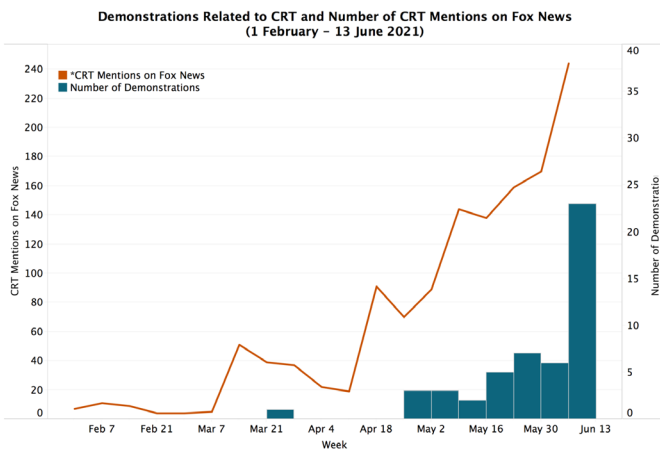
of events with both pro-CRT and anti-CRT contingents counter-demonstrating against each other, pointing to its polarizing effect in the state. North Carolina also accounts for the most anti-CRT demonstration events of any state — nearly 15% of all anti-CRT demonstration events — and shares the lead with New Hampshire for the most pro-CRT demonstration events — each at slightly over 10% of all pro-CRT demonstration events recorded in the country. Over 60% of CRT-related demonstration events in North Carolina occurred in the days leading up to the 3 June 2021 commencement of the state GOP convention, during which former President Trump referred to CRT as “toxic” (PBS, 24 June 2021).

In at least three events, militias and other militant

right-wing actors have directly reacted to the perceived threat of CRT — engaging in 6% of anti-CRT protests in the country — though all anti-CRT events involving these actors have remained peaceful. Militia and militant right-wing engagement include III% adherents who participated in an anti-CRT event in Kentucky on 22 June, members of the Proud Boys who participated in an event in New Hampshire on 23 June, and armed members of the United American Defense Force who participated in an event in Colorado on 24 June. Through participation in such demonstrations, militias and militant social movements normalize their activity around populist and conservative issues.

Although CRT demonstration rates are unlikely to return to their June 2021 peak, a recent torrent of school board recalls over CRT-related issues may keep the topic on the political agenda, in turn driving further protest activity through the end of the summer. With the school year resuming in August and September and prefilled bills up for debate in

adjourned state legislatures several months later, CRT



\*Source of data for CRT mentions on Fox News from Media Matters: <https://www.mediamatters.org/fox-news/fox-has-mentioned-critical-race-theory-nearly-1100-times-past-31-months>

demonstrations may see a resurgence this fall and winter.

A recent survey preformed at Roosevelt High School showed that 10% of the staff and student body doesn't know what CRT is, 29% thinks that CRT should not be taught in the classroom, and 61% thinks that CRT should be taught in clases. The objective of this survey was to see if people understood CRT and their thoughts on teaching it in schools. Kelly Cocks a teacher at Roosevelt High School participated in the survey. “Maybe as an elective but not as a requirement,” Said Cocks. Out of the 41 responses 25 people voted yes to CRT in school. “Critical Race Theory should be embraced as a framework to develop laws and policies that can dismantle structural inequities and systemic racism. Building a more equitable future requires an examination of how the shameful history of slavery, caste, and systemic racism were foundational to laws and institutions that exist today,” says Charles Zanders. Howard Hewlett a teacher at Roosevelt was one of the 29% who voted no. His reasoning was, “Students don't have the depth of knowledge to appreciate what CRT is. That is for college Social Studies related students,” said Hewlett.