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Your “Right” to Comfort Limits my Right to Learn: Whiteness, Victimization, and Attacks on Race-Centered Curricula

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**Your “Right” to Comfort Limits my Right to Learn:
Whiteness, Victimization, and Attacks on Race-Centered Curricula**

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Abstract

The current attacks on Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Studies, and DEI- centered education are a manifestation of a racial backlash - or a whitelash. This paper uses colorblind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2003/2021; Leonardo, 2020) and White emotionalities (Zembylas, 2020) to explore how White racial comfort plays a central role in said attacks. We then show how these White emotions play a central role in three pieces of legislation aimed at eliminating race-centered/race-engaged forms of education: Trump’s Critical Race Theory ban, Florida’s H. R. 7 (i.e., “Stop W.O.K.E.” act), and Arizona’s H. B. 2281 (i.e., the banning of Mexican American Studies in Tucson). It does this by first demonstrating the historical predictability of whitelash. It then explores the emotionalities of Whiteness, in particular comfort/discomfort, demonstrating how they are frequently divorced from empirical reality yet we continually cater to them through policy and discourse. We then show how these forms of education, which are the subject of said bannings, are actually educationally effective, which leads us to explore why they are continually attacked. We conclude with ideas about defending race-centered education, minimizing the impacts of whitelash, and supportive movements for educational self-determination.

Keywords: White supremacy, Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Studies, DEI/Diversity-Equity-Inclusion, whitelash, H. B 2281, Stop W.O.K.E. Act/H. R. 7

Your “Right” to Comfort Limits My Right To Learn: Whiteness, Victimization, and Attacks on Race-Centered Curricula

Explicit White racial outrage is becoming more and more common under the second Trump Administration. For example, at a December, 2025, Turning Points, USA event, Vice President J.D. Vance publicly declared, “You don’t have to apologize for being white.”¹ In addition, Elon Musk, a White South African, offered a similar sentiment in a Tweet simply stating, “No more White guilt.”² This is a dramatic shift over the past few years. From the 1990s through the 2010s, the hegemony of Whiteness was so entrenched that for White people to maintain systemic power, all they had to do was adopt discursive ways to dance around race in what Bonilla-Silva (2003/2021) refers to as *colorblind ideology*. In a Trump Era, Leonardo (2020) extends Bonilla-Silva’s theorizing by arguing that while the power of color blind ideology remains in explaining contemporary racial inequities, there is a pronounced rise in White aggrievement.

These proclamations are not simply about “defending White people.” Instead, White grievance - sometimes known as *whitelash* (Cabrera, 2024; Embrick et al., 2020) - serves two social functions. First, it distracts from the true nature of White supremacy by focusing on imagined racial victims (i.e., White people) instead of those actually targeted by racism (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) peoples; Bonilla-Silva, 2021; Cabrera, 2014, 2019; Leonardo, 2020). Second, it gives license for White people to go on the offensive and attack because they see it as only “defending” themselves instead of being on the offensive (Lippard et al., 2020).

The racial dynamics of *whitelash* have been central to the current attacks on DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and Critical Race Theory (CRT), as well as any type of education that is race-conscious and/or race-centered. To develop this argument, we will begin by providing a brief historical overview of *whitelash* and how it has been manifest - especially after substantive gains have been made by BIPOC populations. We will then demonstrate how these same dynamics are currently at play in the current educational landscape, particularly how

¹ The Economic Times. (2025, December 21). ‘You don’t have to apologize for being white...’: Vance’s controversial take on DEI at TPUSA event [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6UHAS5zOwU>

² Musk, E. [@elonmusk]. (2025, December 9). No more White guilt [Post]. X. <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1998489428881219937>

White comfort plays a central role in said attacks. We will then demonstrate how these attacks are specifically focused on educationally *effective* educational practices, which undermines the public discourse where eliminating DEI is framed as increasing educational excellence (see, for example, Birnbaum, 2024). We conclude by exploring methods to minimize the impact of whitelash and support BIPOC communities’ efforts for educational self-determination.

The Predictability of Whitelash Historically and Contemporarily

Carol Anderson (2016) wrote the modern classic *White Rage*, where she meticulously documented how whitelash in the form of explosive anger is a normal, consistent response to minoritized people’s progress during the course of U.S. history. Within this context, we consider “White Rage” as a specific manifestation of whitelash. Returning to Anderson, she begins with Reconstruction and traces this predictable White response to the manufactured outrage against the Obama Presidency. Reconstruction was a particularly interesting time because newly freed Black people were immediately viewed as a threat (Anderson, 2016; Byman, 2021). They were viewed, in the White imagination, as being mentally inferior to White people - almost childlike (Cross Jr., 1998; Thomas, 1993). In addition, there were also White fears of Black men raping White women (Sommerville, 1995; Thomas, 1993), that “overly sexual” Black women would seduce White men (Anderson et al., 2018), and also the direct fear of Black political power (Greenberger, 2022).

While the institution of slavery was abolished, the underlying racial ideologies remained (Hartman, 2022; Kendi, 2016). These ideologies provided justification to implement formalized segregation, in particular through the Jim Crow laws, while also giving rise to the establishment of the KKK (Gates Jr., 2020; Harman, 2022). All of these were created under the guise of “protecting” the White population, even though they were actually the violent aggressors. This ideology was so pervasive and popular that the first film ever shown in the White House, *Birth of a Nation*, both valorized the KKK, and overtly demeaned Black people as being lazy and intellectually simple, while having a horrific scene of an attempted rape by a White man in Blackface against a White woman (Franklin, 1979). Again, the whitelash occurred in response to very important, yet modest racial progress - the end of the institution of slavery.

There are few ends to the lengths White folks will go to in order to (1) claim victim status and (2) to thereby justify racial aggression against non-White peoples. As Cabrera (2024) offered an historical list showing the consistency of Whitelash in response to BIPOC progress:

The Whitelash against Reconstruction

The Whitelash against affirmative action

The Whitelash against voting rights

The Whitelash against educational integration and bussing

The Whitelash against Ethnic Studies in general and Mexican American Studies in

Tucson specifically (pp. xvi-xvii)

Without getting lost in the weeds, the overall point is that Whitelash is historically predictable when BIPOC peoples make substantive, and sometimes even modest gains. This is why most White people in the 1960s believed BIPOC people were fighting “too hard” for their rights (Wise, 2010). It is also why Presidents Nixon and Reagan were able to gain considerable political gain by framing White people as victims of Civil Rights legislation and movements (Ehrenberg, 2022; Wise, 2015).

Thus, contemporary White grievance that leads to White violence is nothing new. The magnitude is amplified in Trump’s presidencies (Piazza & Van Doren, 2023), but it is a very common occurrence historically in what Gómez et al. (2022) refer to as the psychological rages of Whiteness. Thus, Trump saying “When looting starts, the shooting starts” (Gómez et al., 2022, p. 15), is playing off a more than century-old ideology and psychology whereby White people are continually “victimized” by racial progress, thereby justifying their violence against BIPOC peoples. From this context and specific to education, we explore White entitlement to social comfort that becomes a justification to attack BIPOC educational opportunities.

The Role of White Racial Affect (Comfort) in Racial Inequities

“Facts don’t care about your feelings.”

-Ben Shapiro

Conservative activist Ben Shapiro coined the saying in the epigraph as a way of deriding liberals, and in particular “snowflakes.” We ironically quote him here because so much of contemporary racial violence is predicated upon White emotionalities and perceived

victimhood, that are largely divorced from empirical reality (Anderson, 2016; Cabrera, 2024; DiAngelo, 2018). This dynamic is what DiAngelo (2018) refers to as *White fragility*, and even though she put a name to this concept, it has been historically documented. For example, in James Baldwin’s (1965) classic *White Man’s Guilt*, he is fiercely critical of White people’s evasiveness on racial issues when the realities of the Black experience are presented to them. He noticed that White men were frequently uncomfortable and almost incoherent when beginning to explore the horrific realities of race in the U.S. Baldwin (1965) offered, “The nature of this stammering can be reduced to a plea. Do not blame me. I was not there. I did not do it. My history has nothing to do with Europe or the slave trade” (p. 47). That is, instead of engaging with the realities of racial violence, the White men in Baldwin’s life spent their energies trying to distance themselves from it. Their discomfort prevailed over truth.

While White people learning about race and their complicity in the system of White supremacy can be uncomfortable, prioritizing said comfort only serves to reify systemic racism (Applebaum, 2010, 2017). For example, Leonardo and Porter (2020) explored “safe spaces” on college campuses, in particular as an agreement within intergroup dialogues. They argued that given the nature of White supremacy, that the notion of safety does not actually apply to BIPOC peoples, and therefore, this community agreement frequently means in practice catering to White comfort. In contrast, several critical scholars have argued that pedagogies of White discomfort are actually the pathway forward to racially just (Cabrera, 2019), decolonial (Zembylas, 2020), and even anti-colonial feminist education (Chadwick, 2021). In this case, discomfort is directly rooted in disrupting White epistemologies of ignorance, promoting the subsequent “racial growing pains” that accompany said awakening (Cabrera, 2019; Mills, 2014). Unfortunately, many White people are so invested in their Whiteness that they will go to extreme lengths to avoid these discussions, distancing themselves from the problem (DiAngelo, 2018; Lipsitz, 2006). Instead of dealing with this central problem of White emotionalities, perceived victimhood, and structured ignorance (Mills, 1997; Zembylas, 2020), the power of Whiteness allows the previously outlined discomfort to become enshrined contemporary in law through the examples of Florida’s H.R. 7, Trump’s Executive Order 14190, and Arizona’s House Bill 2281 - all of which restricted what could be taught in public schools.

White Grievance Enshrined in Law

A core rationale for the current attacks on DEI and CRT is the perception that such approaches to education hurt White students and engender White guilt. Thus, attacks on multicultural education (broadly defined) are largely about relieving White responsibility. Additionally, they are also about mandating White people's right to comfort. For example, Florida's H.R. 7 (also known as the "Stop W.O.K.E. act") was clear on this point in the text of the bill:

bears personal responsibility for and must feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress because of actions, in which the individual played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, sex, or national origin.
(H. R. 7, p. 4, underline original)

The danger of H.R. 7 is that it essentially enshrines the right of White people to not feel uncomfortable in classroom discussions or content that involves race. This way of talking about race is all-too-common, we frequently talk about under-representation without talking about over-representation or poverty without affluence. It is very common to teach about the evils of slavery without directly addressing the structures of White supremacy and Capitalism that facilitated its development. Essentially, we frequently have racial conversations separating *cause* and *effect* (Cabrera, 2022).

The same pattern also occurred in earlier federal attempts to eliminate DEI work. Before H.R. 7, Trump, in his first term, created a federal ban on the use of Critical Race Theory in trainings and programs. The language is, not coincidentally, strikingly similar to the Stop W.O.K.E. Act. Specifically, Executive Order 13950 (2020; "Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping") framed its prohibitions through the concept of "divisive concepts" and "race scapegoating." By reframing the justice-based discussion and action in terms of "divisiveness," the order began shifting attention away from academic discourse and toward a moralized framing of national cohesion.

Then, five years later, when the Executive Order 14190 (2025; "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling") directly interfered with K-12 Schooling, the wording had been upgraded to the more aggressive "radical indoctrination" and "discriminatory equity ideology." Relying on broad and ambiguous political descriptions rather than directly writing the name of a specific theory, the legal text conveniently misleads the public by conflating CRT and

other issues (e.g., so-called *anti-American ideologies* as stated in Executive Order 14190), thus inflaming discomfort that is divorced from empirical reality.

Similar to HR 7 Florida, Executive Order 14190 enshrined white grievance using certain negative emotion words, in its definition of *Discriminatory equity ideology*:

An individual, by virtue of the individual’s race, color, sex, or national origin, bears no responsibility for, should feel *guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress* because of, should be discriminated against, blamed, or stereotyped for, or should receive adverse treatment because of actions committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, sex, or national origin, in which the individual played no part;
(Executive Order 14190, p. 2, italics ours)

The dangerous nature of this statement in Executive Order 14190, which also occurred in H.R. 7, is its logic. In order to maintain White supremacy and inflame Whitelash, the law gives White people the right not to feel uncomfortable.

The blueprint for these attacks began in early 2010s Arizona (Cabrera & Chang, 2019, 2025). Long before the H.R. 7 and Executive Order 141905, then Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed H.B. 2281 bill into law in 2010. There are a lot of similarities between the structure of H.B. 2281’s language and later federal executive orders. Although H.B. 2281 did not specifically mention guilt or anguish, one of the core words of the bill is resentment. Specifically, the bill prohibited courses that “promote resentment toward a race or class of people.” Again, the “resentment” as described in the legislation implicitly meant animus against White people (Orozco, 2011). However, the real purpose of the legislation was to eliminate the Mexican American Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District, according to the then-state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne (Santa Cruz, 2010). Transforming emotional reaction into a legal criterion, the discomfort of White people became established as the center and the default normative emotional baseline (Orozco, 2011). What is so striking is how divorced these feelings are from the realities of what DEI and ethnic studies actually offer in practice.

Reading, Writing, and ‘Rithmetic: The Irony of Eliminating Ethnic Studies and DEI

A common refrain regarding attacks on race-forward curricula, in addition to framing them as bastions of “reverse racism,” is to create a false binary - that students can *either* learn

the basics of education (i.e., reading, writing, and 'rithmetic) or they can have race-forward/race-centered curricula (see, for example, Birnbaum, 2024). Tom Horne, a central architect of the attacks on MAS in Tucson, used this binary as foundational to his platform as he is again running for State Superintendent of Public Instruction as he offers, "Tom Horne has a record of fighting wokeness and getting the emphasis back on Academics in the schools."³ He is very clear, one can either have "woke" or academically rigorous education, and this is a very common contemporary discourse. In light of these proclamation, we examine this binary in terms of empirical scholarship. If race-forward curricula damage academic excellence, then attacks on ethnic studies could be understood, at least on their own stated terms.

However, in contrast to these polemic pronouncements, more than 2 decades of research demonstrate that ethnic studies is a particularly important educational approach for students' identity construction, academic achievement, and cultural identification (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). In fact, by helping students connect with their own cultural identity, ethnic studies allow students to become more confident, thus indirectly contributing to their academic achievement. For example, Chavous et al. (2003) study found that Black high school students' racial consciousness and acceptance of their cultural identity were positively correlated with their grades or likelihood of advancement. Besides, a number of studies based on curriculum or project experiments, such as Thomas et al. (2008), Belgrave et al. (2000), Halagao (2010) have similarly found that by involving the culture of the target student group in schooling, students who participated in relevant experiments had higher motivation and self-identity than those who did not participate.

One effective approach where using an ethnic studies supported curriculum content renovation is to connect students with the cultural or community-based knowledge, thereby increasing the relevance and intellectual engagement of the curriculum (e.g., Lipka et al., 2005; Kisker et al., 2012). For example, the Math in a Cultural Context (MCC) program incorporated Alaska Yup'ik cultural knowledge into mathematics instruction. Studies by Lipka et al. (2005) and Kisker et al. (2012) later both demonstrated that Yup'ik students who used traditional knowledge to aid in their understanding of math concepts achieved better grades.

³ From his campaign website: <https://www.electtomhorne.com/> (retrieved 2/24/26)

Moreover, and directly undermining the aforementioned discourse regarding DEI or academic excellence, both McCarty (1993) and Lee (2014) found that community-based and culturally sustaining curricular models improved students’ language proficiency as well as math and reading achievement. Within Mexican American Studies, Cammarota and Romero (2009) and Cabrera et al. (2014) demonstrated that participation in the Tucson MAS program was associated with higher graduation rates and stronger academic outcomes compared to traditional curriculum pathways. Similarly, research on African American curriculum indicates that culturally relevant texts and pedagogical practices enhance student engagement, reading comprehension, and overall academic performance (Copenhaver, 2001; Rickford, 2001; Tyson, 2002; Duncan, 2012).

Adjusting pedagogical methods through the lens of ethnic studies is another important method employed to improve student achievement (López, 2016, 2018; Sharif Matthews & López, 2018). For example, from an asset-based perspective, López (2018) defined students’ heritage cultural knowledge as an intellectual resource that bridges home and school contexts. According to her research, teachers’ culturally responsive instructional behaviors are positively associated with students’ reading achievement (López, 2016), and honoring students’ heritage languages while integrating culturally relevant content into instruction is linked to stronger mathematics performance (Sharif Matthews & López, 2018). Thus, focusing on DEI (broadly defined) actually supports academic achievement instead of inhibiting it.

More broadly, ethnic studies serve as a conceptual foundation for developing new teaching methods, and these are frequently framed as threatening to White people (Cabrera & Chang, 2025). For example, using students’ everyday vocabulary and cultural practices (such as the Black media or Black churches) as cultural frames of reference for academic language has benefited students leading to higher levels of engagement and comprehension (Lee, 2006). Similarly, eliminating bias against students’ dialects (Krater et al., 1994) and using traditional knowledge learning models rooted in students’ cultural communities (Au & Carroll, 1997) could affirm students’ identities and eventually make them more intentional and confident about their own use of knowledge.

While there has been a long-standing tension between metrics for traditional academic achievement based on standardized tests and ethnic studies (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), ethnic studies has played an important role in increasing student performance in these areas as

well. Cabrera et al. (2014) conducted the first longitudinal, quantitative assessment of the relationship between taking ethnic studies courses and student academic achievement. Using data from the Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD) Mexican American Studies classes, they found that taking Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD) Mexican American Studies classes was significantly related to an increased likelihood of passing state standardized tests after initial failure and high school graduation. Additionally, Cabrera et al. (2014) found that the critical point was taking two Mexican American Studies classes. Dee and Penner (2017) made similar findings regarding the San Francisco Unified School District's Ethnic Studies offerings. They found that students who took these classes, relative to similarly situated students, had increased GPAs, attendance, and credits earned in 9th grade. In the follow-up study, Bonilla et al. (2021) found that students who took Ethnic Studies classes were significantly more likely to graduate from high school, have increased attendance, and were more likely to attend college.

Overall, the evidence contradicts the popular discourse that ethnic studies in particular, and critical multicultural studies in general, are academically unrigorous. Thus, we do not have to choose between (1) academic rigor or (2) racial inclusivity. In fact, it shows the opposite - that critical, racial inclusivity, equity, and diversity, are pathways to increased academic achievement and development (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Therefore, the underlying question becomes: Why do these attacks persist if advancing educational achievement is not the purpose?

If Education is Not the Reason, Then What is?

We are not mind readers, and therefore cannot definitively say what is motivating these attacks on education in general, and DEI-oriented in particular. However, we can link the effects of education to the current administration's policy agenda, which is what we do in this section. First, it is not coincidental that President Trump has publicly proclaimed, "I love the poorly educated" (Giroux, 2019) as a large part of these people vote for and support him. However, the dynamic is deeper than this. In Timothy Snyder's now classic text *On Tyranny* (2017), he is clear that an educated populace is one of the most important vanguards against authoritarian rule.

This is not to say that education is a silver bullet against tyranny, but rather, it is a critically important component of the resistance. Trump said he wanted to be a dictator on day

one of his presidency (Baker, 2023), and it seems like this is a promise he intends to keep. Assuming Snyder’s (2017) formulation is correct, then one of the clearest paths forward to establishing tyrannical rule is to attack educational institutions (and media, and the courts, etc.), which is what is currently occurring. Thus, attacks on education make a lot of sense as they have historically been a vanguard against tyranny (Snyder, 2017), which is precisely the direction Trump is taking the country (Giroux, 2019; Knuckey & Hassan, 2022).

Second, DEI, multicultural, and ethnic studies-oriented approaches to education are not just about increasing BIPOC student educational achievement. They are also important components in addressing the incredibly complicated ways that educational institutions, K-12 and higher education inclusive, have historically been engines of racial inequality (Carnevale et al., 2020; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Russel-Brown (2023) went so far as to claim these attacks fundamentally amount to an anti-literacy campaign, and Orozco (2011) argued they are a manifestation of protecting the property value of Whiteness. The foundational issue, regardless of rationale, is that the educational opportunities of BIPOC students are regularly sacrificed if and when they disrupt White comfort (Applebaum, 2010, 2017; Cabrera, 2019; DiAngelo, 2018).

Resisting Educational Whiteness

As we continue to move forward in these dangerous and uncertain times, there are a few educational lessons that we can glean from whiteness and the emotionalities of Whiteness. We offer these as setting the lay of the land - the actual local strategy will vary from context to context. First, it is critically important that we accurately frame the context of the problem. We return to Ben Shapiro’s saying, “Facts don’t care about your feelings.” In this context, White comfort is currently being prioritized over BIPOC educational opportunities, and those defending race-centered forms of education need to be clear on this point when engaging in the policy and public discourse.

Second, it is important to remember that precompliance is a losing strategy (Farber, 2025). In response to Trump’s Executive Orders 14151 (2025; “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing”) and 14173 (2025; “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity”), Draughon et al. (2025, August 7) showed the incredible lengths universities went to in order to comply with Trump’s anti-DEI executive

orders. Recently, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) won a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Trump's executive orders against DEI (Kelly & Shivers, 2026, February 17). The Department of Education did not appeal the ruling, meaning that DEI continues to be legal (Binkley, 2026, January 21). More importantly, *it was never illegal in the first place*. Not to be too simplistic, but just because Trump declares something illegal does not therefore make it so and precompliance is not a strategy - it is a surrender.

A similar dynamic occurred in 2010 when the state of Arizona banned Mexican American Studies in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD; Cabrera & Chang, 2019, 2025). While Arizona did pass legislation that allowed for the banning (H.B. 2281), a federal judge eventually found the law to be unconstitutional on both 1st and 14th amendment grounds (Cabrera & Chang, 2019). Unfortunately, TUSD chose to eliminate one of the most highly successful K-12 Ethnic Studies programs in the country at the time instead of appealing the state's findings of non-compliance. Thus, even though the law was unconstitutional, students in the district lost the program and it was never able to be reassembled. While this was not exactly an example of pre-compliance, similar dynamics are still at play.

Thus, in the current political climate, it is critically important to fight back and challenge this right-wing overreach which conflates their discomfort with something being illegal. Trying to appease these demands only invites similar attacks in the future. While this is not the fight that educators and administrators want, it is the one we are currently facing. The alternative to challenging these attacks is the systematic elimination of the very educational programs and approaches that support the needs of our BIPOC students (Cabrera & Chang, 2025). It is always much more difficult to rebuild, assuming rebuilding is even possible, than to defend existing programs and policies.

Third, whitelash only occurs after important racial victories have been won (Embrick et al., 2020; Lippard et al., 2020). During the 1990s and early 2000s, times of relative stagnation and some retrenchment on racial inequities, it was only necessary for White people to evade, downplay, and avoid meaningful engagement with race in order to maintain White social dominance (Bonilla-Silva, 2003/2021). The late 2010s and early 2020s brought about #BlackLivesMatter, #StopAsianHate, Native resistance at Standing Rock, and the Summer of Racial Reckoning to name a few. Thus, the current whitelash we are experiencing is both

predictable and a statement that the recent work has actually moved the needle on racial justice. If it had not, we would simply be ignored by the powers that be. We remind the readership of this issue as it is easy to get lost in the persistent attacks and forget the recent victories.

Fourth, it is critically necessary to, instead of White people avoiding racial discomfort, they need to lean into it (Zembylas, 2020). There are two core issues at hand in this dynamic. By catering to White emotions, especially an entitlement to comfort, educators will only recreate White supremacy (Cabrera, 2019). Second, centering White comfort in racial issues, as previously demonstrated, limits educational opportunities for non-White students (Applebaum, 2017; Cabrera & Chang, 2025; Zembylas, 2020).

Conclusion

Conservative activist Christopher Rufo has led the charge to eliminate CRT and any related concepts from being taught, and it was his advocacy that Trump relied on in developing his federal banning (López et al., 2021). This propaganda plays off White grievance, using a decades-old playbook to create racial fictions that justify anti-BIPOC violence (Anderson, 2016; Gómez et al., 2022). To the extent that DEI, CRT, and ethnic studies actually show truthful accounts of racial realities and offer methods toward racial justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), the inverse of the popular discourse is the true problem. It is not that we have too much CRT in schools; it is that we do not have enough.

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