

Joint Statement from Faculty and Administration on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History

Approved by Faculty Senate on February 2, 2022

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS, state legislative proposals are being introduced across the United States that target academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, the Ohio legislature has similarly proposed in HB 327 to ban academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, our Faculty Personnel Policies (3344-11-01 through 3344-16-14), often referred to as the Green Book affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities, citing the American Association of University Professors' [1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) and our Faculty Senate's "Resolution of the Faculty Senate on Freedom of Expression and Tenure" (October 31, 2018); and

WHEREAS, faculty of each college and the Faculty Senate have responsibility for the curriculum at Cleveland State University, as stated in Bylaws of the faculty senate 3344-13-01; and

WHEREAS, the term "divisive" is indeterminate, subjective, and chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics based on subjective criteria that are inapposite from the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills; and

WHEREAS, educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy based on race or gender should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century to produce engaged and informed citizens; and

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

WHEREAS, the mission of Cleveland State University is for: "Empowering students, creating knowledge, engaging communities, shaping our world," and our vision is to "be a nationally recognized and student-focused public research institution that provides accessible, affordable, and engaged learning opportunities for all, . . . a beacon institution whose vitality attracts diverse and talented students,

faculty, and staff from within and outside the region, thereby enhancing our distinctive and inclusive living, learning, and working environments”; and

WHEREAS, the CSU Faculty Senate and Administration approved a joint statement on Persistent Institutional Inequality September 9, 2020; and

WHEREAS, we reaffirm the commitment of the CSU Faculty Senate and Administration, as presented in a September 2020 joint statement, to recognize the dignity, humanity and personhood of all members of the CSU community, and beyond, without regard to their racial, political, or other identity or social category; and to continue a conversation among CSU faculty, staff and students about what is necessary to identify and address areas of inequity throughout Cleveland State University. Many students face significant barriers based on their race, ethnicity, income, class, disability, social and family structure, geographical background, and/or sexual orientation and the intersections of these categories, and therefore we are committed to educating our students about these matters of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender equity;

RESOLUTION:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University and Faculty Senate believe the prohibitions against and penalties for teaching “divisive concepts,” like any other content-based limitation, represent an existential threat to public higher education in the state of Ohio as it abridges the academic freedom granted to public universities, faculty, and students by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University and Faculty Senate resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to teaching about racism, gender inequities, and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on University and faculty authority by the legislature or other outside bodies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University and Faculty Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by legislation that seeks to restrict our ability to educate students on US history, civic education, or any other academic subject.

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

Background:

- [Scholarly Groups Condemn Laws Limiting Teaching on Race](#) (New York Times, June 16, 2021)
- [Texas 'critical race theory' bill limiting teaching of current events signed into law](#) (ABC13, June 16, 2021)
- [Republicans Want Federal Funding Cuts to Schools Using '1619 Project'—But There's a Twist](#) (Education Week, June 15, 2021)
- [Critical race theory battle invades school boards — with help from conservative groups](#) (NBC News, June 15, 2021)
- [Teachers across the country protest laws restricting lessons on racism](#) (Washington Post, June 12, 2021)
- ['Children deserve to be taught': Teachers in 22 cities are planning protests over laws restricting racism lessons in schools](#) (USA Today, June 11, 2021)
- ['Critical Race Theory Is Simply the Latest Bogeyman.' Inside the Fight Over What Kids Learn About America's History](#) (TIME Magazine, June 24, 2021)
- [Uncovering Who Is Driving The Fight Against Critical Race Theory In Schools \(LISTEN\)](#) (Fresh Air, June 24, 2021)
- [How the media's helping GOP fuel critical race theory hysteria](#) (Press Run, June 23, 2021)
- [Critical race theory has been around for decades — why's it a powder keg now? \(LISTEN\)](#) (Marketplace, June 22, 2021)
- [VIDEO: Creator of term 'Critical Race Theory' Kimberlé Crenshaw explains what it really is](#) (MSNBC/The Reid Out, June 21, 2021)
- [VIDEO: The truth about 'critical race theory': co-founder breaks down GOP gaslight](#) (MSNBC/The Medhi Hasan Show, June 20, 2021)
- [Fox's anti-"critical race theory" parents are also GOP activists](#) (Media Matters, June 17, 2021)
- [Critical Race Theory: What It Means for America and Why It Has Sparked Debate](#) (Wall Street Journal, June 17, 2021)
- [Why are states lining up to ban critical race theory?](#) (University World News, June 12, 2021)
- [The New York Times' Culture-War Definition of Free Speech](#) (Melissa Gira Grant, The New Republic, June 8, 2021)
- [Guest Blog: Where Does the Bizarre Hysteria About 'Critical Race Theory' Come From? Follow the Money!](#) (Inside Higher Ed, June 3, 2021)
- [Opinion: Why Conservatives Really Fear Critical Race Theory](#) (Christine Emba, The Washington Post, May 26, 2021)
- [\(VIDEO\) What critical race theory is really about](#) (CNN/Don Lemon Tonight, May 17, 2021)