



IDAHO FREEDOM FOUNDATION

NOT FINISHED YET: RACIST CRITICAL RACE THEORY, ACTIVIST PEDAGOGY IMPOSED ON IDAHO TEACHERS BY STATE AGENCIES

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Idaho's education agencies require teachers to engage in social justice and critical race theory activism, and neither the newly-signed House Bill 377 nor the new proposed budget for K-12 teachers does anything to stop it.

Extreme leftist ideology in Idaho schools is not the fault of teachers; it is the result of pedagogical guidance from state agencies used to convert teachers into activists. State education agencies have made critical race theory and a commitment to social justice a required part of Idaho teacher certification.

Under House Bill 377, administrators and teachers can still be required to undergo anti-racism or culturally responsive training if they wish to obtain or keep a job in the public school system.

At the very least, Idaho's state education agencies require teachers to understand and know how to implement cultural responsiveness into classrooms to become certified.

The State Board of Education's Rules Governing Uniformity require that certified "teacher leaders" must be trained in "culturally responsive pedagogy for diverse learners."¹

The State Department of Education and State Board of Education define cultural responsiveness based on the work of critical race theorist Gloria Ladson-Billings.²

Culturally responsive training developed from activist pedagogy and as the name implies trains educators to make sure students grow up to be activists deconstructing the society in which they live.

HB 377 does not protect teachers. Conservatives need to defend teachers by ensuring the next K-12 budget includes specific language that prevents the use of public funds for social justice activism.

The Idaho Department of Education (SDE) and State Board of Education (SBOE) "Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel"³ require educators to understand and use Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. The document references "social justice" three times.

These standards state that a teacher must:⁴

- "Demonstrate the ability to create a culturally responsive classroom environment."
- "Understand culturally responsive pedagogy and the necessity of utilizing it to create the most inclusive learning environment."
- "Actively engage the school environment, families and community partners to enact culturally responsive pedagogy."
- Be "committed to culturally responsive teaching."
- "Know how to collaborate with general educators and other colleagues to create safe, inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments."

The school principal must "understand how to implement and align coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and beliefs of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with academic standards, and are culturally responsive."

So what is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy?

The SDE and SBOE cites Critical Race Theorist Gloria Ladson-Billings definition of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.⁵

Ladson-Billings argues we should use "critical race theory as a framework for educational equity ... to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions to addressing it."⁶

According to Ladson-Billings, racism is perpetuated by whiteness⁷ and is endemic and deeply ingrained in American society.⁸ People taken with "white fragility," convinced they are innocent of racism, need culturally responsive education to discount any views a white person expresses that do not make race and racism a central feature of their analysis of society, especially in any case of disparate outcomes.

As Ladson-Billings explains, a "race-neutral" or colorblind perspective "purports to see deficiency as an individual phenomenon" in the classroom. Instead, racism must be made "explicit" in the classroom "so students can recognize and struggle against ... oppression."⁹



To dismantle this supposed oppression, teachers must be trained to instill what Ladson-Billings calls a “critical consciousness” into students. Establishing a critical consciousness in students means they will “challenge the status quo of the current social order” and participate in “social action” or activism.¹⁰

Critical race theorists contend that narrative stories and stories of personal experience must replace instruction about facts. In an influential 1998 article from *Qualitative Studies in Education*, Gloria Ladson-Billings wrote, “The use of voice or ‘naming your reality’ is a way that CRT links form and substance in scholarship.”¹¹

She added, “Much of reality is socially constructed.” Aligned with the foundational ideals of CRT, Ladson-Billings said, **“Critical race theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script.”**¹²

This culturally responsive pedagogy is not just a single element of Idaho’s requirements for teacher certification. It is foundational.

Outgoing SBOE President Debbie Critchfield recently stated, “Every student is entitled to a position-neutral education.”¹³

But teachers cannot be “position neutral” when the SDE and SBOE require them to be trained or become fluent by other means in the activist pedagogy of cultural responsiveness. All districts and educators are influenced by this pedagogy, although some may emphasize it more than others.

This, perhaps, explains why several advertisements for public teaching jobs today in Idaho require teachers to show a dedication to social justice. For example, an ad for a classroom teacher at the Palouse Prairie Charter School requires the applicant to be willing to “emphasize themes or big ideas of social studies, often focusing on engaging social issues, cultural diversity, and social justice.”¹⁴ Ads for the Project Impact STEM Academy say the school is looking for applicants “deeply dedicated to social justice.”¹⁵

Ladson-Billings wrote that theorists “may have to defend a radical approach to democracy that seriously undermines the privilege of those who have so skillfully carved that privilege into the foundation of the nation.”¹⁶

This is not a “position neutral perspective.”

Critchfield and incoming SBOE President Kurt Liebich claimed critical race theory has not infiltrated Idaho schools.¹⁷ Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said, “Political agendas have no place in our classrooms.”¹⁸ Do these public officials not know what their own policies require?

Idaho teachers need to be given a foundation for understanding that America is



a country worth celebrating – and is a nation that belongs to all of us. Instead, educators are certified based on their absorption of activist pedagogy developed by a critical race theorist.

Conservatives must recognize radical lesson plans and actions of individual schools are symptoms of a poison forced upon educators and administrators from the top down.

The best educators will embrace an antidote freeing them from the constraints of progressive dogma.

As one Idaho teacher wrote, “As a teacher, I don’t want to be forced into being indoctrinated or to indoctrinate children. So, please write the intent language well, so professional development money can’t be spent on indoctrination. It may not be in every grade, or every school, or every district, but it is real and turning a blind eye to it isn’t going to make it go away.”¹⁹

The wording of HB 377 might be persuasive, but money affects real change.

Conservatives need to defend teachers by ensuring no public funds can be used in the K-12 budget for social justice activism.



ENDNOTES:

1. Rules Governing Uniformity, 08.02.02(15)(iii) See untitled (idaho.gov).
2. See pg. 24 Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel.
3. Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel.
4. Ibid.
5. See pg. 24 Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel.
6. Ladson-Billings (1998) Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11:1, 7-24 Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? (arizona.edu).
7. Ladson-Billings, *Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations: A Critical Race Theory Perspective* Review of Research in Education, Vol. 24 (1999), pp. 211-247 Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations: A Critical Race Theory Perspective (cvusd.us).
8. Ladson-Billings (1998) Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11:1, 7-24 Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? (arizona.edu).
9. Ibid.
10. Ladson-Billings, *But Thats Just Good Teaching! The Case For Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*. THEORY INTO PRACTICE, Volume 34, Number 3, Microsoft Word - Ladson-Billings (theavarnagroup.com).
11. Ladson-Billings (1998) Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11:1, 7-24 Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? (arizona.edu).
12. Ibid.
13. See State Board of Education Plays Ball With Lawmakers, Will Review Policies Around Academic Freedom | Boise State Public Radio.
14. Ads found at edjobsidaho.com on April 25, 2021.
15. Ibid.
16. Ladson-Billings (1998) Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11:1, 7-24 Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? (arizona.edu).
17. See Facebook also see State Ed Board: No evidence of 'indoctrination' | Eye on Boise | idahopress.com.
18. See State Superintendent Ybarra weighs in on 'social justice' debate | ktvb.com
19. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures (idahoednews.org)

