

TO: Purdue University Fort Wayne Senate
FROM: Mary Ann Cain (ENGL) and Steve Carr (COM Faculty Member)
RE: Resolution: Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory
Date: 15 December 2021

WHEREAS the American Association of University Professors estimated that beginning in 2021, 26 states including Indiana introduced legislative proposals across the United States targeting academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities ([AAUP](#)); and,

WHEREAS eight of those states have succeeded in censoring teaching about race and racism, including legislation in Idaho and Oklahoma banning the teaching of these subjects at the university and college levels ([AAUP](#)); and,

WHEREAS the American Association of University Professors, PEN America, and other organizations advocating for basic human rights, free expression, and other principles vital to a functioning democracy have determined these legislative efforts amount to what they call “educational gag orders,” defined as coordinated attempts to restrict teaching and training in K-12 schools, higher education, and state agencies and institutions. The majority of these bills target discussions of race, racism, gender, and American history, banning a series of “prohibited” or “divisive” concepts for teachers and trainers operating in K-12 schools, public universities, and workplace settings. These bills appear designed to chill academic and educational discussions and impose government dictates on teaching and learning. In short: They are educational gag orders” ([PEN America](#)); and,

WHEREAS our [University Principles](#) affirm the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities consistent with the American Association of University Professors’ [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#); and,

WHEREAS faculty have responsibility for the curriculum through our governing body, as stated in VI.B. of The [Constitution](#) of the Faculty of Purdue University Fort Wayne; 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](#) (16 June 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 Purdue University Fort Wayne’s [Mission](#) is to “educate and engage our students and communities with purpose by cultivating learning, discovery, and innovation in an inclusive environment;” and,

WHEREAS the University [Diversity Statement](#) calls for “creating an environment that enhances learning by recognizing the inherent worth of all individuals,” by encompassing “differences of culture, background, and experience among individuals and groups,” which can include but not limited to “differences of race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression” and other identities; and,

WHEREAS in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of the histories of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); or of the histories of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGTBQIA); or of the history and the policies that have contributed to social inequities and the targeting of these and other identities simply on the basis of who people were; Purdue University Fort Wayne has both a responsibility and an opportunity to help build equity and social justice through our curriculum and teaching;

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Senate resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies either from or external to the faculty to impose educational gag orders meant to chill academic or educational discussion by restricting or dictating university curriculum on any matter related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or by the Boards of Trustees when they violate norms and principles of collaboration and shared governance; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by pernicious legislation simply because these educators seek to teach the truth in U.S. history and civics education; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Senate calls upon President Mitch Daniels, Chancellor Ronald Elsenbaumer, and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Carl Drummond all to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies either from or external to the faculty to impose educational gag

orders meant to chill academic or educational discussion by restricting or dictating university curriculum on any matter related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Boards of Trustees when they violate norms and principles of collaboration and shared governance; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that 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 Bogyman.' 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)