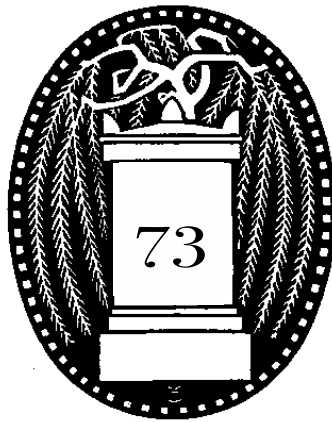


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# “As American as Apple Pie”: Attacks on the Teaching of History and Social Science, from Social Reconstructionist Opposition to Divisive Concepts Legislation

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## **Philosophy’s Role in Society and Education**

Last year first author Matthew Shiloh, who works in an urban public high school in Atlanta, co-taught two U.S. history classes. As a general-education history teacher for the past decade, his co-taught classes were shared with a special-education teacher routinely present in his classroom. He had worked with this special-education teacher for several years, and while Shiloh strongly disagreed with his politics, they nevertheless managed to create interesting classes together. This amicable situation changed, however, when Critical Race Theory (CRT) became an often-repeated fiendish talking point on Fox News (this co-teacher watched *Tucker Carlson Tonight* every night). On the topic of race, Shiloh incorporates readings such as Frederick Douglass’ *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* (2021/1852), Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens’ *Cornerstone Speech* (1861), and the first section of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me* (2015), to encourage students to think critically and historically about one of U.S. history’s most contentious issues. Then, while teaching a class on the Atlanta Race Massacre of 1906, the co-teacher, without a word, abruptly left the room. Later in the week, Shiloh learned that the co-teacher had walked directly to the chair of the department of special education and told her that he had left the classroom because he believed Shiloh was teaching something “CRT-ish.” Fortunately, the special education department chair, an African-American woman, told the co-teacher, “I taught U.S. history with Mr. Shiloh, and I agree with him 100%.”

Because Shiloh teaches in a racially diverse high school just east of downtown Atlanta, he sees himself as protected, to some extent, in his school’s environment, but he wonders what might have happened had he been teaching in another part of the state, perhaps in Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene’s district just a 45-minute drive to the north? Or

what if he had been teaching in another state altogether, such as Florida? It is not hyperbole to say that he might have been fired, or at least placed on a Professional Development Plan (PDP), if the special education department chair disagreed with what he taught or if she had not known Shiloh's teaching at all. A few miles to the west of Shiloh's school, a Cobb County fifth-grade elementary teacher of gifted students was given notice of termination in early June 2023 for reading to her students the a book *My Shadow Is Purple*, a book about gender identity. The teacher, Katie Rinderle, had purchased it at her school's Scholastic book fair and her students requested she read it (Tamsett et al., 2023). Rinderle was cited for violating Georgia's divisive concepts law, known as HB 1084. Now, "divisive concepts" legislation can be found across at least 36 states and some reports claim that number is as high as 44 states (Schwartz, 2023; Stout & Wilburn, 2022). Teachers can be fined or even jailed if, in their teaching, they are found to cause "discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress" to any particular student. In fact, Sylvia Goodman (2022), writing for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2022), asserts Delaware is the only U.S. state that has yet to have a single anti-CRT bill introduced.

The purpose of our article is to trace the origin of attacks on the teaching of history and social science, and the lingering impact of these attacks on contemporary teachers such as Shiloh and Rinderle, as well as historic attacks on past educators such as Harold Rugg and Rachel Davis DuBois. In particular, we explore the political animus toward social reconstructionist Harold Rugg and the social studies textbooks he developed, and McCarthyite claims of un-American activities of intercultural educator Rachel Davis DuBois, comparing them to contemporary "anti-CRT" or "divisive concepts" legislation that restricts the academic freedom of history and social science teachers in the classroom. We believe current attacks on teachers may be more injurious than those in the past because of standards, accountability, and legislation that could lead to penalties, job loss, and possible imprisonment. In addition, recent attacks have become more numerous because of the large number of states that have considered or passed "anti-CRT" or "no divisive concepts" legislation. And while such legislation is aimed at restricting any school personnel from promoting or encouraging divisive concepts, the impact on history and social science curricula is assuredly more pronounced than on other school curricula. These content areas, along with Literature, are focused on humanity—and humans have disagreements (e.g., wars, corrupt leaders, social problems, etc.). At the heart of these recent attacks is concern for what teachers should be teaching. But, if education is life itself (Dewey, 1938) and everyday living is full of divisiveness, should not teachers be equipping students to learn the skills of civil disagreement upon which life and democracy rest?

### **Attacks on Social Reconstructionists and Intercultural Educators**

Attacks on those who teach history and social science and on U.S. teachers in general, unfortunately, are not a recent development (Frank

& Latts, 2021). Dana Goldstein (2015) traces the history of attacks on teachers, as does Diana D’Amico Pawlewicz (2020). Often, teachers have become collateral damage of the culture wars. Culture wars involve struggles over differing ideologies, concentrated on what is now called political polarization. There have been documented disputes over ethnicity and the teaching of immigrant students, over race and sectionalism, over textbooks, over religion in public schools, over science and human origins, over sex education, and “cold wars” over teacher loyalty oaths (Zimmerman, 2002). In addition, there have been wars over the nature of teacher work which include: teacher unionization, teacher strikes, teacher tenure, teacher working conditions, teacher merit pay, teacher evaluation, teacher salaries, and even student test scores—never mind fights over the content and pedagogy employed in U.S. public school classrooms (Goldstein, 2015). The “wars” over the teaching of history and social science are particularly pernicious, as Matthew Shiloh discovered. But, why? David Blight (2001) argues that historical memory matters. Indeed, he begins his book *Race and Reunion* by quoting James Baldwin, who says, “History...does not refer merely to the past...history is literally *present* in all that we do” (Baldwin as quoted in Blight, 2001, p. 1). Thus, how people understand the U.S.’ past is a reflection of its present.

History and social science/social studies teachers appear to be more susceptible to attacks than many other academic disciplines, as the very nature of the content they teach can be divisive. For example, the common core standards address math, science, and English but leave out history and the social sciences altogether. Ron Evans (2006) traces the history of social studies, beginning at the origins of the field in the late 1800s. In 1884, several historians came together at the American Social Science Association in Saratoga, New York and founded a separate American Historical Association (AHA) as history had only recently emerged as a distinct field of study (AHA, 2023; Bohan, 2004; Boozer, 1961). At that time, historians considered it an important endeavor to offer guidance on the teaching of history in the K–12 curriculum (Bohan, 2003). Just as the AHA was organizing, the leaders on its executive council established committees to investigate and write reports about how history and government should be taught in schools, and from the very start there was disagreement between advocates of traditional history versus those who favored more-progressive history. New history advocates, such as Lucy Maynard Salmon, maintained political and military history had been overemphasized at the expense of social history (Bohan, 2004).

The field of social studies was firmly established in 1916 with the publication of the *Report on the Social Studies Committee* written by a subcommittee of the National Education Association’s Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. Thomas Jesse Jones, who authored the 1916 report asserted that history should be replaced by social studies (Evans, 2006; Woyshner & Bohan, 2012). Most Social Foundations scholars

agree that Jones' social studies curriculum, which he developed while at the Hampton Institute, had negative racial overtones, such as emphasizing the importance of manual labor for Black children because of his belief that Black children were not intellectually capable of engaging and learning democratic education (King et al., 2012). By 1921, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) was founded. Evans (2006) claims that this new approach to social studies education and the establishment of NCSS would not have occurred without the growth of progressive education.

As Kliebard (2005) and others point out (Davies, 2002; Krug, 1964, 1972), there were several different strains of progressive education, although the term "progressive education" itself is difficult to define and subject to historical and contemporary debate. Lawrence Cremin (1961, p. vii) defines the term "progressive education" as "the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large." Thus, he connects the educational movement to the political movement. Cremin's definition has been scrutinized by radical revisionists (Apple, 2019; Hlebowitsh, 1993), but it serves as a means to provide clarity to a somewhat amorphous term. The "varieties" of progressivism in education include: administrative progressives, life adjustment /social efficiency experts, mainstream progressives, child-centered progressives, and social reconstructionists (Evans, 2006; Kliebard, 2005). Evans argues that of those members of the latter group, also known as social meliorists, Harold O. Rugg was the leading progressive educator.

A substantial body of secondary literature on Harold Rugg has emerged since his passing in 1960 (Bohan, 1997; Dorn, 2008; King et al., 2012; Nelson, 1975; Robinson, 1983). Rugg was born in 1886 in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and the bulk of his professional career spanned from the 1920s through the 1950s (Bohan, 1997; Evans, 2006). Rugg was of modest background, but strong intellect; he graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in civil engineering. When working as an instructor of engineering at James Millikin University, he became interested in how students learn. Continuing his education, Rugg earned a Ph.D. in education and sociology at the University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign under the guidance of one of the foremost educators of the early 1900s, William C. Bagley. He initially worked at the University of Chicago School of Education, but five years later accepted a position on the faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University. At Teachers College (TC), he worked with many progressive educators, including Bagley, his former mentor, and former graduate student colleague, George Counts, as well as William Heard Kilpatrick and John Dewey. Rugg, along with his brother Earle Rugg, helped to found NCSS.

During his tenure at TC, Rugg was a prolific author who produced 74 books and more than 150 journal articles (Bohan, 1997). He contributed regularly to *The Social Frontier*, a journal affiliated with the Progressive Education Association (Bowers, 1964; Kilpatrick, 1934). He also worked with several doctoral students to produce social-studies pamphlets. Their

pamphlet series appeared as a themed set of booklets under the title, *Man and His Changing Society*. Over 75,000 copies were sent to teachers and districts in the first years of its initial release, during which time Rugg oversaw production. Then, after Ginn & Co. began marketing the series from 1929 to 1939, approximately 1,317,960 copies were sold in addition to 2,687,000 workbooks (Bohan, 1997; Dorn, 2008). The book series made Rugg a wealthy man.

Many contemporary scholars of Rugg's view his textbooks as novel for their time (Bohan, 1997; Evans, 2006; King et al., 2012). Rather than focusing on rote memorization of military and political history, Rugg organized the books around problems of society. His focus was an issue-centered approach meant to prepare students for life's activities. Advocating for societal change through public education had an obvious appeal during the Depression era. Rugg repeated this theme throughout his life (Rugg, 1931, 1941, 1943, 1947). For example, various books in his series call attention to the disparity between the rich and poor in the U.S., the changing role of women, the abuses of big business, and the preservation of the U.S.' natural resources (Bohan, 1997). Clearly, his books reflect concern for a society that experienced unemployment and poverty as a result of the Great Depression, an event singular in its economic impact. More-recent scholarship criticizes the Rugg textbook series for its failure more fully to highlight Black people's intellect, Black people's accomplishments, agency, and resistance to enslavement (King et al., 2012). Rugg wrote his books at the height of the Jim Crow era when racists in many states lynched Black people. His essential silence on matters of race in U.S. life is revealing. Certainly, his perspective is typical of several progressive white male educators who ascribed to the theory of recapitulation. From a contemporary perspective, these views were inherently ethnocentric and tinged with racism but were reflective of the context of the times (Fallace, 2015; Yacovone, 2022). Indeed, Donald Yacovone (2022) argues in his investigation of educational textbooks from the colonial era to the present that white supremacy has deep-seated roots. Yet, not all progressive-era educators ascribed to white supremacy. Indeed, Jane Addams worked directly with immigrants at Hull House, Chicago, and Rachel Davis DuBois advocated for intercultural education throughout her life (Hight & Bohan, 2019).

As the U.S. armed for entry into World War II, Rugg's books became the center of controversy and conservative groups organized opposition to their use in schools. By the late 1930s and 1940s, these critics became numerous, including the American Legion, the Advertising Federation of America, and the National Association of Manufacturers (Bohan, 1997; Conner & Bohan, 2014; Evans, 2006). Several local school boards across the country, in locations such as Englewood, NJ; Atlanta, GA; Los Angeles, CA; Philadelphia, PA; and Bronxville, NY voted to censor or discontinue the use of the Rugg textbook series. *The Cleveland Press* provides an account

of a book burning during which Rugg textbooks were destroyed (Rugg, 1941). Although several organizations defended Rugg's work, such as the NCSS and the National Society for the Study of Education, the impact of the conservative reaction was profound. As a result, the series diminished in popularity. Rugg specifically replies to his critics in his book, *That Men May Understand* (1941). In 1942 the Federal Bureau of Investigation opened a file on Rugg, discovering correspondence that included accusations Rugg was sympathetic to Communism and had tried to make students think favorably towards Communist political ideology. Interestingly, the current anti-CRT/no divisive concepts legislation has also led to fury at local school board meetings as well as book bannings and book burnings. Bess Levin (2021) writes in *Vanity Fair* an article on today's book burnings. These book bannings and burnings, she notes, are part of the right wing of the GOP's nationwide push against teaching about race and sexuality in schools. Indeed, Henry Giroux (2023) argues that the current political climate is reminiscent of the rise of Nazi-era facism, which Rugg witnessed in the 1930s.

Rachel Davis DuBois was an intercultural educator, who worked during approximately the same time period as Harold Rugg. She too was accused of Communist sympathies. Born in 1892 in Woodstown, New Jersey, she came from a strong Quaker background. She attended the First International Conference of Friends in London in 1920, and that experience profoundly shaped her career. After teaching briefly at Glassboro High School, she traveled to the U.S. South with the Pennsylvania Committee on the Abolition of Slavery in the South, met George Washington Carver and was introduced to W.E.B. Du Bois (who was no relation to her). She resumed her teaching career at Woodbury High School where she implemented the Woodbury Project, consisting of several school-wide intergroup assemblies designed to foster interracial harmony (Bohan, 2007; Hight & Bohan, 2019). She expanded the Woodbury Project while engaging in doctoral studies at TC and founded the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education in 1934. Her concern for African Americans later grew to include all immigrant groups in the curriculum materials she developed. DuBois's curriculum work led to a CBS radio show in 1938 called *Americans All, Immigrants All* (NYPR archive, 1938; Pinkerton, 2015).

However, by the 1950s Rachel Davis DuBois's Intercultural Education work came under investigation by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Un-American Activities Committee (Bohan, 2007; Cattell, 1971). Although Senator McCarthy eventually apologized, the investigation damaged DuBois's reputation and hurt her ability to obtain further curriculum work. Like Rugg, DuBois (1984) defended her work in the last book she wrote. Nonetheless, ideological attacks on teachers and teacher educators can create lasting harm. We argue the contemporary attacks on Critical Race Theory and the ensuing divisive concepts legislation is designed purposefully to scare teachers and to inflict harm on those who try to circumvent the intent

of the law. These laws create an atmosphere of fear so that teachers will self-censure. We now turn our attention to recent attacks.

### **Recent Attacks on Critical Race Theory**

It is of interest, then, that the current debate over Critical Race Theory is not, in fact, simply an argument about conservative or progressive politics playing out in the nation's classrooms. For all the right's hand-wringing about Critical Race Theory and its alleged assault on conservative values, historically CRT emerged as a *critique of liberal ideologies* regarding race. Derrick Bell, an African-American attorney and professor who worked for the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund, began to form the tenets of Critical Race Theory as a challenge to *his own liberal views* of U.S. race relations, as well as to his work fighting school segregation for the NAACP in the early 1960s. Bell's thesis emerges from a school integration case in Harmony, Mississippi, where, as a young civil rights attorney for the NAACP, he joined the fight to integrate Southern schools. He soon realized that court rulings to desegregate schools "sparked white flight from the public schools and the creation of private 'segregation academies,' which meant that Black students still attended institutions that were effectively separate" (Cobb, 2021). Bell began to realize that despite the apparent gains of the civil rights movement, achievements for African Americans—in terms of income, schooling, economic mobility, and home ownership—remained largely stagnant. He concluded that white supremacy had not, in fact, been overcome through the brave efforts of civil rights heroes such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, or Diane Nash, but rather remained a tumorous, intractable presence in U.S. institutions. Because of this intractability, Bell called "for racial realism or an orientation that recognizes racism as an indisputable force in policymaking" (Buras, 2013).

So, Bell's belief, later articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Cobb, 2021), a student of Bell's, is that racism is both intractable and permanent. Crenshaw adds that "the so-called American dilemma was not simply a matter of prejudice but a matter of structured disadvantages that stretched across American society," (Wallace-Wells, 2021). CRT began as Critical Legal Studies (CLS) before Crenshaw termed it Critical Race Theory in the 1980s. Other aspects of CRT include the use of counter narratives, calling upon the voices of marginalized people to revise narratives that only include dominant cultural voices, as well as interest convergence, meaning that Black people only gain civil rights when white interests converge with what Black people want. So how did the U.S. move from a little-known academic theory taught in a few law schools to its present-day, very public attacks on CRT use in education?

A lot of this shift has to do with a man named Christopher Rufo. Born in Sacramento, educated at Georgetown University, and now living in Seattle, Rufo was worried about the anti-racist messages in professional



development training for local, state, and federal employees. On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, Christopher Rufo appeared on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*. “It’s absolutely astonishing how *critical race theory* has pervaded every aspect of the federal government,” Rufo said, while Carlson’s face was set in his signature furrowed brow. Rufo continued,

Conservatives need to wake up. This is an existential threat to the United States. And the bureaucracy, even under Trump, is being weaponized against core American values. And I’d like to make it explicit: The President and the White House—it’s within their authority to immediately issue an Executive Order to abolish critical-race-theory training from the federal government. And I call on the President to immediately issue this Executive Order—to stamp out this destructive, divisive, pseudoscientific ideology. (Wallace-Wells, 2021)

The next morning, Mark Meadows, Trump’s Chief of Staff, called Rufo on behalf of the President. “He saw your segment on ‘Tucker’ last night,” Meadows said, “and he’s instructed me to take action” (Wallace-Wells, 2021). Then Meadows flew Rufo to Washington D.C. to help write an Executive Order that limited what federal contractors could talk about in diversity seminars; it was issued on September 22, 2020. The order says, among other things, “This ideology is rooted in the pernicious and false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country; that some people on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans” (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). The document also coined the phrase “divisive concepts” a term now used in legislation across the U.S. “Divisive concepts” means concepts cannot be taught that claim,

(1) one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex; (2) the United States is fundamentally racist or sexist; (3) an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously; ... (8) any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex; or (9) meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist, or were created by a particular race to oppress another race. (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020)

One particular tweet from Christopher Rufo shows how Rufo and others project a kind of *obscure* legal lens into something that becomes part of the culture wars. His tweet reads:

We have successfully frozen their brand—“critical race theory”—into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put *all of the various cultural insanities under that brand category*. (Rufo, 2021, emphasis added)

It should be no surprise, then, that in the three and a half months that followed Rufo's first appearance on *Tucker Carlson, Fox News* used the term Critical Race Theory nearly 1,300 times (Lahut, 2021). It also should not be surprising that many conservatives do not seem to know the definition or tenets of CRT. Cheryl Harris, a UCLA law professor who teaches a course on CRT states that, "it's a myth that critical race theory teaches the hatred of white people and is designed to perpetuate divisions in American society" and argues Republicans rely on fear-based attacks on CRT so they can win upcoming elections (Anderson, 2021).

There is one other person behind a lot of legislation and state school boards' resolutions: Stanley Kurtz. On June 3, 2021, the Georgia State School Board issued a resolution that affects the state's public high school history teachers, where Matthew Shiloh teaches American history. Allegedly, the resolution is a heartfelt response to Georgia's governor Brian Kemp, who asked the State School Board to "take immediate steps to ensure that Critical Race Theory and its dangerous ideology do not take root in our state standards or curriculum" (Kemp, 2021). However, it is imperative to analyze the *roots* of the policies that are put forth in the resolution. The resolution is not a sincere response to a controversial topic, but rather "copied in large part from a model resolution called 'The Partisanship Out of Civics Act,' authored by a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center," (Tagami, 2021) Stanley Kurtz. To analyze the formation of the policies set forth in the school board resolution, it is important to know who Kurtz is—a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC), a lobbying organization for the Religious Right. The homepage of the EPPC website states, "Founded in 1976, the Ethics and Public Policy Center is Washington, D.C.'s premier institute working to apply the riches of Judeo-Christian tradition to contemporary questions of law, culture, and politics, in pursuit of America's continued civic and cultural renewal" (<http://eppc.org>). Kurtz and the EPPC seem to epitomize what Michael Apple (2006, p. 45) calls authoritarian populism—the ideology of religious right activists that "public schooling thus is itself a site of immense danger."

The Georgia State School Board's resolution purports to be a neutral response to the "indoctrination" of radical, left-wing ideology in classrooms. Therefore, it is worth noting that Kurtz wrote a book entitled, *Radical-in-Chief: Barack Obama and the Untold Story of American Socialism* (2010), as well as the articles "How Dems Will Push Protest Civics and CRT on Schools" (2021) and "Ron DeSantis Can Save America's Universities" (2022). In other words, the author of "The Partisanship Out of Civics Act," the document largely cribbed by the Georgia State School Board in their "honest response" to the CRT debate, is partisan himself. Knowing that Kurtz has a religiously motivated, right-wing agenda, and that he is anything but nonpartisan, we use Critical Race Discourse Analysis (CRDA) as a methodology to analyze several passages of the purportedly neutral school board resolution largely written by Kurtz.

In their resolution, the Georgia State School Board declares,  
 ...we will not support, or impart, any K–12 public education resources or standards which (i) indoctrinate students in social, or political, ideology or theory, [but also that the board] believes the United States of America is not a racist country, and that the state of Georgia is not a racist state. (2021, p. 2)

A teacher stating the U.S. or the state of Georgia is racist could potentially be considered to be engaging in indoctrination, and that is part of the reason most teachers would never teach this to their students. Instead, teachers should let students read conflicting perspectives on what occurred in U.S. history (including many racist acts and events that they have rarely been taught), allowing students to come to their own conclusions regarding the U.S.' racism or innocence. But a critical analysis of the resolution must ask whether, if it is indoctrination for a teacher to claim that the U.S. is racist, why is it *not* indoctrination for educators to claim that the U.S. is *not* a racist country? Even more deceptively, the Georgia State School Board is suggesting that not only is making a claim for U.S. racial innocence not indoctrination, but does not constitute an ideology.

The resolution also states that the Georgia State School Board:

...believes that no teacher, administrator, or other employee in any state education agency, school district, or school administration shall approve for use, make use of, or carry out, standards, curricula, lesson plans...or instructional practices that serve to inculcate in students...that, with respect to their relationship to American values, slavery and racism are *anything other than* deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality. (2021, p. 3, emphasis added)

Their wording is specific and deliberately misleads. According to the State Board of Education, teachers cannot teach that slavery and racism are anything other than a divergence from the U.S.' founding principles. To be sure, no one is arguing that torture, rape, family separation, and humiliation of enslavement were not a *profound* betrayal of that alleged, first principle of our country: that *all* men are created equal. But critical discourse analysis encourages us to sit for a moment with the words *anything other than*. Is the State Board of Education suggesting, then, that teachers cannot teach students that enslavement is embedded in the very cornerstone of the country's foundation, the U.S. Constitution? Should teachers redact the U.S. Constitution before they hand out copies of it to their U.S. history students? Should teachers black out Article 4, Section 2, which states:

No person held to service or labor in one State, escaping into another, shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein,

be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due[?]

Should teachers not mention that the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Compromise delivered the presidency to Thomas Jefferson, a slaveholder, because it gave states like Virginia more electoral votes based on a population that included 60% of residents whom white people had enslaved (and who had precisely *zero political* voice or rights)? If so, to what end? To prove that the U.S. is, in fact, *not racist* as State Board members claim? But, again, how is *leaving out facts* any less of an indoctrination than including previously untaught facts that are uncomfortable? Perhaps the reason the right finds it so outrageous to claim white supremacy is embedded in any current U.S. institution is that they cannot admit that it was embedded in the U.S.' very founding.

### Conclusion

Attacks on the teaching of history and social science and the recent anti-CRT/divisive concepts legislation have long histories rooted in U.S. culture wars. These attacks on teachers are not new, as Dana Goldstein (2015) carefully documents and Diana D'Amico Pawlewicz (2020) demonstrates. For example, in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, Harold Rugg's progressive textbook series was attacked by the American Legion and other organizations and banned in several states. By mid-century, Senator Joseph McCarthy led a Communist witch hunt that seeped into education and caused approximately 600 U.S. teachers to lose their jobs. As we note, Rachel Davis DuBois and her Intercultural Education Movement came under investigation from McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee. Is this early-21<sup>st</sup> century attack on teachers any different? Time will tell.

As professionals in the realm of educational history and policy, it is clear that there are many excellent U.S. K–12 public school teachers working diligently despite restrictive, divisive concepts laws proposed, pending, or passed in approximately 44 states. One way to assist teachers as they navigate legislation that imposes regulations on their teaching and curricula is to offer professional development that is academic and content specific. For history teachers, curricula should include the use of primary source materials, artifacts, and field-based locations, as well as provide teachers with opportunities to engage with content-area experts. In the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute for Teachers, “Courting Liberty: Slavery and Equality Under the Constitution, 1770–1870,” the authors, along with historians and visiting scholars, created an academic opportunity for teachers (<https://sites.gsu.edu/nehcourtingliberty/2021/11/22/welcome-to-courting-liberty/>). In addition, we used a book by Bohan et al. (2022) based upon the ideas of an NEH Institute which offers chapters on various topics, such as Slavery in Colonial America, African Cultural Retention, Abolition, and Enslavement

and Resistance. In addition, this book provides contemporary historical analysis and corresponding lessons with compelling questions and excerpts from primary-source documents. Because primary-source documents can be difficult for teachers to utilize and students to understand, Bohan et al. offer easily accessible historical content along with pedagogical explanations in each chapter, as well as sample lesson plans that connect to the history. Education for teachers and solidarity can ameliorate the attacks.

In this article, we briefly trace attacks on the teaching of history and social science in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries through the lens of teacher educators and teachers. We find these critiques to be routine and cyclical, ergo “as American as apple pie.” We argue the way to address anti-CRT and “divisive concepts” legislation is with education. Teachers do not need to tell students what to think in their U.S. history courses. They can present students with primary-source documents and allow students to determine how to think historically. Students need to be asked to read, analyze, and contextualize primary sources, to identify the limitations of those sources, and to identify contradictions. Fostering historical consciousness and in-depth understanding is the best way to counter attacks on teachers by those who favor limits on academic learning in the name of a false patriotism. In addition to education, the voices of teachers and students need to be heard in state legislatures where such policy has been turned into law.

In the summer of 2021, Matthew Shiloh assigned the first 25 pages of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me* to his AP U.S. history class during the first week of school. Written as a letter to Coates’ son, the book is partly a memoir about Coates’ life and partly a composition questioning both U.S. history (as it was taught to him) and American ideals. Shiloh expected some angry emails from parents, notably because Coates is one of the authors whose writing has been connected with CRT. However, he only received one email; it came from an African-American mother of one of his students. The mother had read *Between the World and Me* and thanked him for teaching the class (and her daughter) this important text, and told him that her daughter had been talking nonstop about his history class. We wonder what will happen to teachers and to administrators who are presumed guilty for teaching (or allowing educators to teach) divisive concepts. We should also remember that many students, as well as their parents, are expecting their teachers to challenge them to think in ways they have not before and to teach all of the parts of our nation’s history, including deeply unsettling facts, so as to not repeat those errors again. The first amendment must prevail.

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