

Critical Race Theory Defined

By Carole Copeland Thomas

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an academic and legal framework created by law experts and scholars in the 1970s and 80s that has blown up into a controversial hot topic around the country. CRT is now tied to educational efforts as either an ideological concept or a threat to the "freedom" of our nation. Despite the naysayers, CRT has never been used as the educational foundation for public school systems around the United States, nor has it been the principal framework used by diversity experts in the country.

The NAACP Legal Defense Funds articulates it this way:

Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is embedded in laws, policies, and institutions that uphold and reproduce racial inequalities. According to CRT, societal issues like Black Americans' higher mortality rate, outsized exposure to police violence, the school-to-prison pipeline, denial of affordable housing, and the rates of the death of Black women in childbirth are not unrelated anomalies.

Because most people do not understand its theoretical origins, CRT has been politicized and demonized by conservative organizations across the United States as anti-American and a form of race-baiting. Increased awareness of CRT was generated with the September 2020 Executive Order signed by then-President Donald Trump banning diversity training programs by Federal agencies and Federal contractors. Although the Trump ban was eliminated when President Joe Biden came into office, the anti-CRT conservative base continued to propagate its destructiveness around the country.

To date, more than 34 states created anti-CRT legislation impacting public school systems and job sites in New Hampshire, Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, and several others. Florida's ruling has been called the "Don't Say Gay" law, impacting grades Kindergarten through Third Grade, and bans any specific discussion about gender identity or sexual orientation in the classrooms. It has passed the state Senate and was signed by the Governor of Florida on Monday, March 29, 2022.

In New Hampshire, a pending law prohibits specific discussions about race or sex as mandatory student or employee training. Teachers can lose their license if caught teaching about race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The bill was slipped in under the state budget without the benefit of the full range of discussion or hearings.

The jury is out on the long-term effect of these anti-CRT laws. Public outcries of dissension are needed to reverse this high level of censorship that will remove more than 50 years of diversity and civil rights progress in America. It is a form of legislative hysteria and censorship this country simply does not need.