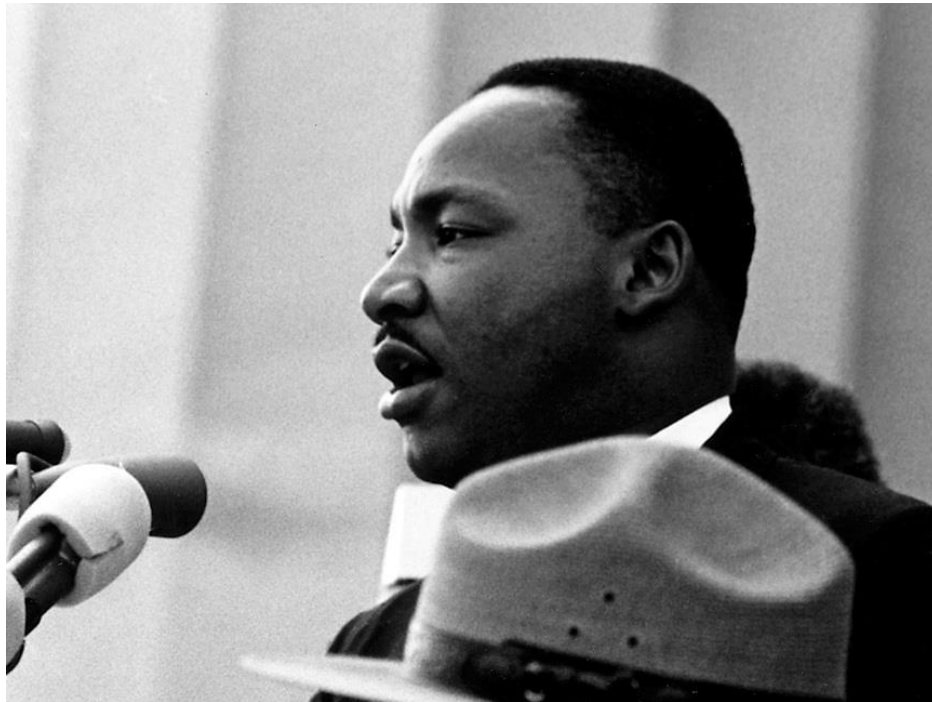




MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR  
**PUBLIC POLICY**

Combating  
**Critical Race Theory**  
in Mississippi



*"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."*

– Martin Luther King Jr

## Executive Summary

- Critical race theory is an ideology that maintains that the United States is founded on racial supremacy and oppression.
- Critical race theory reformulates the old Marxist idea that society is divided between the oppressors and the oppressed, replacing the class categories of bourgeoisie and proletariat with the identity categories of white and black. This makes it a divisive ideology as well as an extremist one in that it seeks to overthrow the existing economic and political order and fundamentally change America.
- The first step to combating critical race theory in Mississippi’s education system is to take seriously the evidence that it is being taught in publicly funded schools and colleges in our state.
- Several departments at public universities explicitly espouse critical race theory. Examples of this are as follows:
  - Mississippi State’s English Department website refers to “systemic racism” perpetuating “white supremacy” in America. The department demands “structural change” to achieve “racial justice.”<sup>1</sup> The department goes on to explain how it has “begun re-envisioning our curriculum to address its emphasis on white authors and literary traditions” and how it is responding to the fact that the “demographics and dynamics” of the department are those of a “Predominantly White Institution (PWI).”<sup>2</sup>
  - University of Mississippi’s Department of Writing and Rhetoric teaches courses that explore “how whiteness is constructed.” Students analyze “whiteness as it has evolved over time” and consider the relationship between white identity and “white nationalism, white supremacy, white privilege and whiteness.”<sup>3</sup>
  - The University of Southern Mississippi’s Division of Student Affairs appears to actively promote critical race theory. In bold print at the top of the webpage appears a graphic that states, “Silence Is Not an Option;” it also has a picture of a man holding a sign that states, “White Silence is Violence.”<sup>4</sup>
- Within K-12 public education, there is evidence that suggests critical race theory and the ideas behind it are being taught. For example, the Mississippi Department of Education recommends teachers to make use of professional development resources that clearly promote critical race theory.<sup>5</sup> These include the following:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.english.msstate.edu/news/mississippi-state-department-english-statement-protest-against-racism-and-police-violence/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.english.msstate.edu/news/mississippi-state-department-english-statement-protest-against-racism-and-police-violence/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://rhetoric.olemiss.edu/courses/liba102/whiteness/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usm.edu/student-affairs/waysyoucanhelp.php>

<sup>5</sup> See APPENDIX A for details of the Mississippi Department of Education’s recommended social studies resources for teachers.

- The Zinn Education Project, which advocates for the abolition of Christopher Columbus Day and shows teachers how they might teach students to advocate for legislation to provide reparations to African Americans.
- Facing History and Ourselves, which promotes work by Ibram X. Kendi (author of *How to be an Antiracist*) and asserts that the “bigotry and hate that we witness today are the legacy of brutal injustices of the past.”
- The term critical race theory is often used by those who oppose it. This means that even when educators are teaching critical race theory, they can be reluctant to characterize what they are doing as teaching critical race theory. Therefore, it is essential to look beyond any labels and consider if students are being invited to believe any of the following:
  - Racism in America is systemic.
  - Race defines beliefs and behavior.
  - White people are privileged.
  - Meritocracy is a myth.
  - Equity is preferable to equality.
- Given that critical race theory is well-established in higher education and is already prevalent in K-12 education in a number of other states, Mississippi leaders need to take the following steps to combat critical race theory now:
  - a. **Changes to the curriculum:** Mississippi’s Board of Education should conduct an urgent audit of the curriculum with an aim to remove from the curriculum requirements to teach both critical race theory and the divisive ideas behind it.
  - b. **Changes to the Board of Education:** A number of vacancies on the Mississippi Board of Education are due in the months ahead. The governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker, who are responsible for filling these vacancies, should ensure new appointees to the Board have the outlook and character needed to provide the department with clear strategic direction to combat critical race theory. The Board needs to run the department and not be run by the department.
  - c. **Ensure that publicly funded universities teach a balanced curriculum:** Mississippi’s Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) Board oversees our public universities. The IHL’s Office of Internal Audit is required to make sure that our universities fulfill their “moral and educational responsibility to ensure that talent is developed in all our citizens, and that our universities, individually and collectively, are strengthened by diversity in student bodies, faculties, administration.”<sup>6</sup> The Office of Internal Audit should look at the extent to which

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mississippi.edu/board/downloads/policiesandbylaws.pdf> (pages 14–15)

university departments teach students a range of ideas and differing viewpoints as part of that requirement.

- d. **Pass a law to combat critical race theory in our schools:** It is easy for politicians to pass laws. It is much harder to draft legislation that delivers the desired outcome without unintended consequences. Attached as an appendix to this paper is a draft bill that would combat critical race theory in Mississippi *without imposing restrictions on what can be taught, discussed, or thought*. Our draft bill would ensure that students in K-12 public schools are introduced to a broad range of ideas and that there is no forced affirmation of ideas.
- e. **Stop donating to a divisive ideology:** Universities in Mississippi receive generous donations from their alumni, many of who want to ensure that young Mississippians are able to benefit from a good university education the way they did. As such, alumni are in a good position to help combat critical race theory. Rather than taking assurances at face value from university administrators, donors need to be proactive in withholding donations until specific steps have been taken to guarantee intellectual freedom and diversity on campus.
- f. **Ensure a better understanding of the universal ideals that unite all Americans:** Bad ideas cannot simply be banned by the passing of laws. Bad ideas need to be defeated by good ideas. The best way to defeat critical race theory as an ideology is to teach young Americans about the US Constitution, free markets, and limited government.

## 1. What is critical race theory?

Critical race theory is an ideology that maintains that the United States is founded on racial supremacy and oppression. Critical race theorists argue that the US Constitution, legal system, and institutions are inherently racist. Unequal outcomes, they suggest, are a reflection of systemic racism.

America's material achievement and economic growth, critical race theorists argue, has only been achieved through exploitation and coercion. The free market, far from elevating the condition of all Americans, is a tool of extortion.

Critical race theory is best thought of as a form of Marxism. Old-school Marxists divided the world by class—capitalist oppressor versus oppressed workers. Critical race theory is a new variant of Marxism that divides the world instead by race—race oppressors versus oppressed races.

The old-school Marxist solution was revolution. The workers, they advocated, should unite to overthrow an inherently exploitative system and build instead a new socialist society with top-down design. In pursuit of this idea, the twentieth century saw a series of Marxist revolutions, including those in Russia (1917), Cuba (1959), Ethiopia (1974), and Cambodia (1975), in which millions of people died. The workers' paradise never emerged. It was instead in the free market Western economies that workers prospered.

Critical race theorists in America today also seek to overturn the existing order. In the space of only a few years, this radical idea once confined to university campuses has started to take hold in mainstream society, including among big corporations, HR departments, government bureaucracies, and even the US military.

Critical race theory is profoundly harmful. It invites Americans to lose confidence in their own country. Instead of celebrating the founding ideals and their universalist appeal, critical race theory teaches that America is built on hate.

Rather than viewing America as an exceptional republic, established as an experiment in self-government, critical race theory encourages us to see the United States as a conspiracy against people of color.

Martin Luther King dreamt of an America in which every individual was judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin. Instead of celebrating the enormous achievements made since the Civil Rights Movement, critical race theory specifically rejects King's color blind ideal and seeks to racialize every aspect of culture, sport, and public discourse.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the practical steps that we can take here in Mississippi to combat this dangerous ideology and ensure that public money is not spent promoting it.

## 2. Spotting the signs of critical race theory

The term critical race theory is often used by those that oppose it. This means that even if educators are teaching this ideology, they might not always characterize what they are doing as teaching critical race theory.

To recognize whether critical race theory is being taught, rather than just looking for educators admitting that they teach critical race theory, we need to look for signs that some of the underlying ideas and assumptions on which this ideology is built are being promoted:<sup>7</sup>

- I. **Systemic racism:** Are students being invited to believe that racism is not just a result of individual behavior and actions but is “systemic” or “structural”? Are they being taught that the system, including the free market, is “rigged” to produce unequal outcomes between the races? If a school or college has curricula, training programs, or administrative processes that teach that racism is systemic, then that is critical race theory.
- II. **Race defines beliefs and behavior:** Critical race theorists claim that American culture is a conspiracy to maintain white privilege. Minority groups, they claim, must reject habits and ideas practiced by other cultures, even if such behavior is socially good. Critical race theorists champion programs for diversity, equity, and inclusion, which while innocuous-sounding, often do little more than categorize individuals by race. If students are taking courses or are subject to administrative processes based on these ideas, they are likely being exposed to critical race theory.
- III. **White privilege:** Critical race theorists claim that white people are born with unearned privilege. Any teaching that requires students to accept this notion of privilege is critical race theory.
- IV. **Meritocracy is a myth:** Critical race theorists maintain that whites rigged the system to such an extent that the curriculum, university admissions, and administrative processes should not be color blind. They advocate for the elimination of color-blind standardized testing, including that for admissions and grading. This is all indicative of critical race theory.
- V. **Equity replaces equality:** These two terms sound similar but their meanings are almost polar opposites. Equality means treating everyone the same. Equity means treating people differently, according to their race, to supposedly ensure equal outcomes. If a school or university advocates or facilitates any kind of differential treatment in the name of equity, they are promoting critical race theory.

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<sup>7</sup> Critical Race Theory—knowing it when you see it and fighting it when you can. Heritage Foundation, 2021

### 3. How widespread is critical race theory in Mississippi's education system?

#### 3.1 Evidence of critical race theory at Mississippi universities:

Evidence that critical race theory is being taught within certain departments at certain publicly funded universities is clear-cut. For example:

- **Mississippi State:** The Department of Sociology at Mississippi State website refers to “white violence,” which it claims exists “in our everyday interactions and social institutions.” This article is presented not as an opinion or viewpoint but as the corporate view of the department in a statement issued by the department.<sup>8</sup>

Mississippi State's English Department has similarly issued statements making claims directly supportive of critical race theory and presenting them not as an opinion or a subject viewpoint but as a fact.

The English Department website claims that “white supremacy” is endemic in America and that America is “systemically racist” and “demanding structural changes.”<sup>9</sup>

The English Department has, in their own words, “begun re-envisioning our curriculum to address its emphasis on white authors and literary traditions, and we commit ourselves to carrying through the work to produce the anti-racist, fully representative curriculum that our students deserve.”

The changes to the curricular are needed, the department claims, to address the fact that the department's “demographics and dynamics” are those of a “Predominantly White Institution (PWI).”<sup>10</sup>

The university's Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion has also made an open effort to expand the inclusion of the critical race theory ideology. For instance, in September 2020, the Office hosted a workshop for students and faculty titled, “Implicit Bias: What It Is and What We Can Do About It.”<sup>11</sup> According to the MSU website, the workshop sought to increase the knowledge about so-called implicit bias and microaggressions.

- **University of Mississippi (Ole Miss):** Critical race theorists champion diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Those that run the University of Mississippi seem to have an

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sociology.msstate.edu/articles/2021/03/challenging-racialized-and-gendered-violence-against-asian-americans/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.english.msstate.edu/news/mississippi-state-department-english-statement-protest-against-racism-and-police-violence/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.english.msstate.edu/news/mississippi-state-department-english-statement-protest-against-racism-and-police-violence/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.msstate.edu/events/2020/08/implicit-bias-what-it-and-what-we-can-do-about-itb>

insatiable appetite for such programs. The university has created a dedicated Division of Diversity and Community Engagement committed specifically to the goal of equity rather than equality.

The university defines equity as “directly addressing the social, institutional, organizational and systemic barriers that prevent members of marginalized groups from thriving in our community. We commit to be both proactive and responsive in mitigating barriers so that all members of our institution are able to reach their full potential.” Proactive and responsive measures necessarily require the university to not treat all students equally.

The university characterizes this unequal treatment of its students somewhat euphemistically when they state that their approach involves “identifying and removing barriers, improving fairness in systems and outcomes, and creating a more inclusive understanding of how opportunities for success and achievement can be made available to all people.” Opportunity at the university is presumably unequally distributed to try to achieve equal outcomes.

Rather than pledging to treat every student equally, the university’s “Pathway to Equity”<sup>12</sup> plan seeks to address “the social, institutional, organizational and systemic barriers that prevent members of marginalized groups from thriving in our community.”<sup>13</sup> This commitment to equity and inclusion extends into what is taught and has been “integrated into the core of our institutional research, teaching, service and public mission.”<sup>14</sup>

These ideas shape not only how the university is administered but also what is taught. The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and the Center for Inclusion and Cross-Cultural Engagement “collaborate with faculty from a wide range of disciplines and envision way to support inclusive teaching practices.”

Furthermore, upon enrolment, University of Mississippi’s students are provided with online training courses by a firm called Everfi that lectures them on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The content of these courses seems to promote key concepts associated with critical race theory, introducing students to the idea of privilege, equity, and oppressed versus oppressor narratives to explain unequal outcomes in society. This could almost be viewed by some as a form of indoctrination of the students on their arrival.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://chancellor.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/310/2021/01/UM\\_Pathways\\_to\\_Equity\\_Jan2021.pdf](https://chancellor.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/310/2021/01/UM_Pathways_to_Equity_Jan2021.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://chancellor.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/310/2021/01/UM\\_Pathways\\_to\\_Equity\\_Jan2021.pdf](https://chancellor.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/310/2021/01/UM_Pathways_to_Equity_Jan2021.pdf)  
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<sup>14</sup> [https://chancellor.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/310/2021/01/UM\\_Pathways\\_to\\_Equity\\_Jan2021.pdf](https://chancellor.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/310/2021/01/UM_Pathways_to_Equity_Jan2021.pdf)  
(page 18)



- **University of Southern Mississippi:** The University of Southern Mississippi’s Division of Student Affairs appears to actively promote critical race theory.<sup>15</sup> In bold print at the top of the webpage appears a graphic that states, “Silence Is Not an Option;” it also has a picture of a man holding a sign that states, “White Silence is Violence.”<sup>16</sup>

The university also recommends a number of books, podcasts, petitions, and organizations that advocate critical race theory. Such content includes the 1619 Project,<sup>17</sup> *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race*,<sup>18</sup> *How to Be an Antiracist*,<sup>19</sup> and others. In addition, the university recommends that students support and donate to organizations such as the Marxist organization Black Lives Matter<sup>20</sup> and other critical race theory–based organizations.

### 3.2 Diversity of thought:

Critical race theorists place a great deal of emphasis on the need for diversity. But what kind of diversity is it that exists on campus?

Because critical race theorists tend to view the world through the prism of race and gender, they see diversity in terms of immutable characteristics. Where is the emphasis on ensuring that universities are places where there is diversity of thought?

Students at universities ought to be introduced to a range of different ideas, however controversial.

In 2016, Mississippi State’s Department of Sociology’s Gender Studies hosted Black Lives Matter activist and key founder, Alicia Garza, as a keynote speaker in honor of Women’s History Month.<sup>21</sup> We make no criticism of the fact that students were invited to hear her share her views on intersectionality. What concerns us is that those students are not being given the opportunity to listen to a range of activists and intellectuals that repudiate intersectionalism.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.usm.edu/student-affairs/waysyoucanhelp.php>

<sup>16</sup> <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/514251-how-silence-is-violence-threatens-true-free-speech-and-public-civility>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cato.org/commentary/1619-project-autopsy>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/06/why-im-no-longer-talking-to-anyone-about-anything/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.city-journal.org/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/black-lives-matter-leader-resigns-radical-marxist-agenda-will-continue>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.cas.msstate.edu/media/newsandaccomplishments/black-lives-matter-figure-calls-more-inclusive-feminism/>

### 3.3 Evidence that critical race theory is being taught in Mississippi’s K-12 public schools:

The prevalence of critical race theory in K-12 public education in other parts of America is well-documented.<sup>22</sup> But how widespread are these ideas in Mississippi’s K-12 education system? Are these ultra-progressive ideas really a problem in Mississippi, which is often considered a more conservative state?

It is often difficult to know precisely what is being taught in Mississippi classrooms because there is no obvious mechanism to determine the precise content of different lessons in different schools and in various school board districts.

Moreover, with critical race theorists often reluctant to describe what they are teaching as critical race theory, we should not take claims that critical race theory is not being taught at face value.

In a recent radio interview, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carey Wright claimed that critical race theory was not a problem in Mississippi schools.<sup>23</sup>

Before accepting such claims, it is perhaps important to recognize that Dr. Wright’s own department specifically recommends Mississippi teachers to use professional development resources that explicitly promote the teaching of critical race theory in the classroom.

- **Use of teaching materials and professional development resources:** Mississippi’s state superintendent might be quoted in an interview as saying she had not heard anything about critical race theory in Mississippi schools, but her own department recommends that teachers use professional development resources that encourage the teaching of critical race theory.

The job of the Mississippi Department of Education is to provide resources and technical support to Mississippi’s public school system. The department also functions as a resource for federal education requirements and funding.

As such, the department provides guidance as to what materials teachers should use to educate students and for their own professional development (see APPENDIX A). As part of that guidance, the Mississippi Department of Education recommends that for “social

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/critical-race-theory-schools-racism-origins-classroom>

<sup>23</sup> “I have not heard anything about that in K-12,” she said. “That’s not risen its head; I’ve not had letters; I’ve not had emails about that. We’ve got our standards, our Social Studies standards, which are based on the history of the United States, and that’s already been out there; it’s been out for public comment. It’s pretty black and white in terms of facts. I’ve not had anybody express concern about that being taught.”

<https://www.supertalk.fm/state-superintendent-says-critical-race-theory-isnt-in-mississippi-schools/>

studies teachers, schools, and districts” to “effectively implement the 2018 Social Studies Standards,” they should use the following teaching resources:<sup>24</sup>

- **The Zinn Education Project:** Named after Howard Zinn, author of *People’s History of the United States*, this teaching resource recommended by the Mississippi Department of Education provides guidance for “progressive educators” on what and how to teach. The Zinn Project offers material on the following:
  - How students can draft a reparations bill: Students are invited to take on the role of activist experts to “improve upon a Congressional bill for reparations for Black people.”
  - Abolishing Columbus Day: The Zinn Project describes Columbus as “a person who enslaved and murdered people,” “destroyed cultures,” and “terrorized.”
  - Climate justice: The Zinn Project offers guidance to teachers on how to “Teach Climate Justice.” According to the Zinn Project, this should include teaching children about how to “confront racism, economic inequality, misogyny, militarism and xenophobia.”
  - What students should know about the struggle for the ballot: Under the guise of teaching history, the Zinn Project offers teachers advice that is explicitly political and partisan, stating, for example, how “Republican legislatures across the country balk [at reforming the voting system], citing logistical barriers and the dangers of voter fraud.”

For more details of the Zinn Project, click here: <https://www.zinnedproject.org>

- **Facing History and Ourselves:** This teaching resource encourages people to believe that the “bigotry and hate that we witness today are the legacy of brutal injustices of the past.” Far from celebrating the American founding, this program insists that we face “our collective history and how it informs our attitudes and behaviours allows us to choose a world of equity and justice.”

For more details of this recommended professional development resource, click here: <https://www.facinghistory.org>

Rather than taking claims about the teaching of critical race theory at face value, we should ask if some of the underlying ideas behind this academic discipline are being promoted in Mississippi classrooms.

- **The curriculum:** Mississippi state curriculum mandates what is taught in public schools in our state. Much of what the curriculum requires is robust, balanced, and

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[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/Secondary%20Ed/Social%20Studies/social\\_studies\\_resources.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/Secondary%20Ed/Social%20Studies/social_studies_resources.pdf)

unobjectionable. However, there are a number of requirements within the social science and history school curriculums that appear to show a bias in favor of radical progressive ideas.

- **Progressive bias:** According to the Secretary of State’s website, Title 7 of the student performance level descriptions for the Mississippi US history curriculum<sup>25</sup> requires that children be able to:
  - Cite “evidence that the United States Constitution is a ‘living’ document.” The claim that the Constitution is a “living document” is a highly contentious point of view and not one that should be taught as objectively true. Those that argue that the Constitution is a “living document” hold that the Constitution holds a dynamic meaning that adapts to new circumstances even if the document is not formally amended. The Constitution, according to this viewpoint, can and should be developed to reflect the contemporary needs of society and to provide a more malleable tool for governments. Opposed to this interpretation are those that take a more literalist view of the Constitution. They maintain that the Constitution cannot be molded to reflect the desires of governments and that the very purpose of the Constitution is to guard against such attempts. Rather than requiring both viewpoints to be taught, the curriculum only asks that students be able to cite evidence in favor of a progressive viewpoint.
  - Learn about “the continuing advancement of government regulations over laissez-faire capitalism.” The curriculum requires children to be taught about the move toward a more statist political economy as if it were a positive advance rather than a repudiation of American exceptionalism.
  - Analyze how social policies such as welfare reform and public health insurance are influenced by the persistence of poverty. This again shows an implicit bias in the curriculum. When demanding that children be taught about welfare reform to tackle poverty, the descriptors put the cart before the horse. Expanded welfare and social policies are presented as solutions to tackle persistent poverty. Nowhere does this allow for the possibility that persistent intergenerational poverty, like that found in parts of our state, might in fact be caused and perpetuated by expanded welfare programs.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.sos.ms.gov/ACCode/00000408c.pdf>

- **Innocuous-sounding ideas:** We are concerned that critical race theory could be being taught under the auspices of a number of innocuous-sounding curriculum requirements. The social studies curriculum requires that students be taught:
  - To “examine the role of race” in creating our identity and as a “defining characteristic.”<sup>26</sup> This encouragement in the social studies curriculum to focus on race as a defining characteristic could be a cause for concern if taken out of context. Critical race theory encourages Americans to believe that they are defined by immutable characteristics, such as race. This conflicts with the idea that Americans are defined instead by their possession of inalienable rights as individuals.
  - To use geographic perspectives, knowledge, and skills to engage in ethical action with regard to self, other people, other species, and Earth’s diverse cultures and natural environments.<sup>27</sup> They are also expected to understand how “globalization has changed the rights and responsibilities of citizens in relation to economic disparity and equity.”<sup>28</sup>

Equity sounds similar to equality. It is only when one reflects on the fact that equity necessitates treating people differently that the differences between equity and equality become apparent. Yet here is a requirement to teach children about equity—one of the core ideas behind critical race theory—embedded in the curriculum.

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[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Page\\_Docs/final\\_2018\\_mississippi\\_ccr\\_social\\_studies\\_standards\\_2.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Page_Docs/final_2018_mississippi_ccr_social_studies_standards_2.pdf)  
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27

[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Page\\_Docs/final\\_2018\\_mississippi\\_ccr\\_social\\_studies\\_standards\\_2.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Page_Docs/final_2018_mississippi_ccr_social_studies_standards_2.pdf)  
(page 10)

28

[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Page\\_Docs/final\\_2018\\_mississippi\\_ccr\\_social\\_studies\\_standards\\_2.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Page_Docs/final_2018_mississippi_ccr_social_studies_standards_2.pdf)  
(page 37)

#### 4. How to combat critical race theory

A young person growing up in Mississippi, much like a young person growing up anywhere else, will seek to make sense of the world around them. Why, they might wonder, is the United States so much more materially successful and prosperous than other nations? How is it, a young Mississippian might ask themselves, that the Magnolia state is relatively poor compared to other states? What accounts for the income inequalities they see around them?

A rounded education ought to offer some answers. The trouble is that critical race theory offers a superficially plausible, if deeply flawed, set of explanations.

If we do not challenge critical race theory, young Mississippians will grow up indoctrinated to believe that America's material achievements have been gained through exploitation. They will grow up believing that Mississippi's relative poverty is attributable to a lack of government intervention rather than a consequence of federal programs and a lack of liberty. Young Mississippians will be taught to believe that the government is the solution to improving society rather than frequently serving as an obstacle.

Here is a series of practical steps that Mississippi's political leaders could take to combat critical race theory:

- a. **Step One: Changes to the curriculum:** Mississippi's Board of Education should conduct an urgent audit of the curriculum with an aim to remove from the curriculum requirements to teach both critical race theory and the divisive ideas behind it. In particular, the Department of Education should cease recommending teachers to utilize teaching resources provided by organizations that promote critical race theory and teaching resources that offer student course content that is highly partisan and aggressively progressive. This is inappropriate and should cease immediately. Both the social studies and the history curriculum should be amended to ensure that if and when students are taught ideas that are conducive to critical race theory, they are also taught alternatives.
- b. **Step Two: Changes to the Board of Education:** The Mississippi Board of Education oversees the Department of Education and appoints the state superintendent of education. The Board is made up of nine members, five of whom are appointed by the governor, two by the lieutenant governor, and two by the speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives.

The current Board either is unaware of the extent to which critical race theory is being taught in Mississippi—and indeed explicitly promoted by their own department—or is aware and complicit.

Either way, the composition of the Board needs to be changed to ensure that the Board of Education takes steps to combat, rather than to facilitate, critical race theory in the classroom. A number of board members' terms are coming to an end. It is essential that the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker use their power of appointment to place effective individuals on the Board.

- c. **Step Three: Force universities to end the promotion of critical race theory:** Students should be introduced to a range of different ideas as part of a balanced education. Instead of indoctrinating young Americans about equity, our universities should encourage intellectual freedom. Diversity on campus should mean a diversity of thought. Inclusion should mean including different points of view.

The IHL's Office of Internal Audit has a legal obligation to ensure that "institutions of higher learning have a moral and educational responsibility to ensure that talent is developed in all our citizens, and that our universities, individually and collectively, are strengthened by diversity in student bodies, faculties, administration."<sup>29</sup> The IHL should ensure that as part of its requirement to meet those obligations, the Office of Internal Audit ensures that there is a genuine spectrum of opinion and diversity of thought within the different departments of Mississippi's public universities.

The Office of Internal Audit already has the full authority to audit the universities and report the findings to the Board. If the Board found the institutions to be in violation of state legislation, the Board would have the authority to take the following actions based on Section 37-101-15 of the Mississippi Code:<sup>30</sup>

- Withhold funding from non-compliant universities due to the Board's authority over funds and appropriations going to the universities<sup>31</sup>
- Terminate the employment of non-compliant university administration or faculty<sup>32</sup>
- Reject any administrative plans not in accordance with state law<sup>33</sup>

- d. **Step Four: Enact a law to combat critical race theory:** APPENDIX B is a draft of a potential bill that would counter critical race theory in Mississippi's public schools. Based on legislation enacted in Idaho,<sup>34</sup> this bill would:

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.mississippi.edu/board/downloads/policiesandbylaws.pdf> (pages 14-15)

<sup>30</sup> <https://codes.findlaw.com/ms/title-37-education/ms-code-sect-37-101-15.html>

<sup>31</sup> Mississippi Code, Section 37-101-15 (a)

<sup>32</sup> Mississippi Code, Section 37-101-15 (f)

<sup>33</sup> Mississippi Code, Section 37-101-15 (b)

<sup>34</sup> <https://legislature.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sessioninfo/2021/legislation/H0377.pdf>

- Prohibit public K-12 schools and institutions of higher learning to direct students to adopt the idea that any sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin is superior or inferior and should be treated differently. The legislation would also prohibit the shifting of responsibility onto individuals in the present for what has been committed in the past by others.
  - Prohibit funding for any of the prohibited activities specified above.
- e. **Step Five: Stop donating to a divisive ideology:** Universities in Mississippi receive generous donations from their alumni, many of who want to ensure that young Mississippians are able to benefit from a good university education the way they did. As such, alumni are in a good position to help combat critical race theory. Rather than taking assurances at face value from university administrators, donors need to be proactive in withholding donations until specific steps have been taken to guarantee intellectual freedom and diversity on campus.
- f. **Step Six: Hearts & Minds—defeat bad ideas by teaching good ideas:** Bad ideas cannot be abolished by legislative fiat or government decree. Although we support the passing of an anti-critical race theory law in Mississippi, we recognize that bad ideas need to be driven out of the public realm by good ideas.

That is why we recommend the following steps to inform and educate the wider public, especially younger people, about the alternatives to critical race theory.

Critical race theory is, like orthodox Marxism, a way of viewing the world. It provides its adherents a prism through which they can look at the past, present, and future in terms of race conflict.

Critical race theory offers superficial explanations as to why America is materially successful, why Mississippi is relatively poor, and why there are such great income inequalities in our society.

Here are some of the countervailing ideas that we believe need to be taught:

- Why America is such a success: America's material achievement is accomplished not at the expense of others but because of the free market and limited government. America is therefore not only a material achievement but also a profoundly moral achievement, having elevated the condition of not only her citizens but also the greater part of humankind.
- Why Mississippi and the south are relatively poor: Mississippi is relatively poor not because of the past but because there is a lack of economic liberty in the present. Plenty of other states that experienced slavery have achieved far greater economic growth in recent decades because, unlike



Mississippi, their economies are not regulated and controlled by local bureaucrats.

- Why there are so many income inequalities: Poverty in Mississippi has persisted because, not in spite, of federal programs designed to eliminate it. Rather than eradicating poverty, federal programs started in the 1960s entrenched dependency from one generation to the next.

APPENDIX A

Mississippi Department of Education. Recommended social studies resources.

## Social Studies Resources

The Social Studies Resources document serves as a centralized tool to provide social studies teachers, schools, and districts with the resources to effectively implement the 2018 Social Studies Standards.

Conferences/Trainings	Mississippi Department of Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Social Studies Teachers Workshop presented by The MS Dept of Archives and History</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Making Connection Conference</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">MS Economic Council Meeting</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">National Council for the Social Studies Conference</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> MS Dept of Education Social Studies <a href="#">Homepage</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> MS Dept of Education <a href="#">Listserv</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> MS Dept of Education Textbook Adoption <a href="#">List</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Literacy in History <a href="#">Standards</a> K-12 p. 102 &amp; 126</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> MS Dept of Education <a href="#">Professional Development Calendar</a></li></ul>

Professional Development (online)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">National History Day</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Facing History and Ourselves</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">National Council for History Education</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Zinn Project Education</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">National Council for Public History</a></li></ul>

Mississippi Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">MS Dept of Archives and History</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">MS History Now</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">MS Historical Society</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Delta Blues Museum</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Museum of MS History</a></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">MS Blues Trail Curriculum</a></li></ul>

## APPENDIX B

### Draft Bill to combat critical race theory

**DIGNITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION.** (1) It is the intent of the legislature that administrators, faculty members, other employees, and students at public schools, including public charter schools and institutions of higher education, respect the dignity of others, acknowledge the right of others to express differing opinions, and foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and freedom of speech and association.

(2) The Mississippi legislature finds that tenets outlined in subsection (3) (a) of this section, often found in “critical race theory,” undermined the objectives outlined in subsection (1) of this section and exacerbate and inflame divisions on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, or other criteria in ways contrary to the unity of the nation and the well-being of the state of Mississippi and its citizens.

(3) In accordance with section 6, article IX of the constitution of the state of Mississippi and the Mississippi Code:

- a) No public institution of higher education, school district, or public school, including a public charter school, shall direct or otherwise compel students to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to any of the following tenets:
  - (i) That any sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin is inherently superior or inferior;
  - (ii) That individuals should be adversely treated on the basis of their sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin; or
  - (iii) That individuals, by virtue of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin, are inherently responsible for the actions committed in the past by other members of the same sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin.
- b) No distinction or classification of students shall be made on account of race or color.
- c) No course of instruction or unit of study directing or otherwise compelling students to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to any of the tenets identified in paragraph (a) of this subsection shall be used or introduced in any institution of higher education, any school district, or any public school, including a public charter school.

(4) Nothing in this section should be construed to prohibit the required collection or reporting of demographic data by public schools or public institutions of higher education.

**PROHIBITION ON THE EXPENDITURE OF MONEYS FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES.** No moneys shall be expended by the state board of education, any entity under the state board of education’s jurisdiction, or any school district, public charter school, or public institution of higher education for any purpose prohibited in the Mississippi Code.

**SEVERABILITY.** The provisions of this act are hereby declared to be severable, and if any provision of this act or the application of such provision to any person or circumstance is declared invalid for any reason, such declaration shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this act.

## About the Mississippi Center for Public Policy

This Mississippi Center for Public Policy is the leading free market advocacy organization in our state, with over 55,000 online subscribers and an unparalleled record of achieving real change.

### OUR MISSION

To advance the constitutional ideals of liberty and justice for all Mississippians by employing an evidenced-based approach to public policy whereby we advocate for and advance real conservative ideas with policy makers, members of the media, business leaders, the academic community, and private citizens.

### OUR VISION

For Mississippi to be a place where entrepreneurs are free to pursue their dreams, parents are free to direct the education and upbringing of their children, citizens are free to express their conscience, government is limited, personal liberty and responsibility are treasured, free market solutions are preferred, and as many people as possible are free from dependence on government.



President & CEO of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, Douglas Carswell, at a press conference with Governor Tate Reeves.