

# Critical Race Theory

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*A Lecture by Senator Ted Cruz*

*A lecture from the Leadership  
Institute's School Board  
Campaign Training*

# Critical Race Theory: A Lecture

## by Senator Ted Cruz

Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is a term that seems to have exploded onto the scene in the last couple of years, and it's taking our schools by storm. That is why I want to talk to you about what CRT is, where it came from, and how to spot CRT concepts in curricula.

I know many of you are planning to run for school board, and I applaud you for doing that. What I plan to talk about today will help you in that process. If you're not running for school board, but are thinking about it or are interested in learning about CRT, this is for you too. So let's dive in.

### The Origins of Critical Race Theory

I want to begin by telling you a story. It's a synopsis of a short story written by Derrick Bell, one of the key founders of Critical Race Theory.

It's December 1999. The American people have heard announcements that visitors from outer space called the "Space Traders" will be landing in America on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000, on 1,000 spaceships.

When they arrive on January 1<sup>st</sup>, they announce that they plan on coming back in 16 days and will bring three things with them -- enough gold to bail out federal, state, and local governments in the United States, special chemicals capable of unpolluting the environment, and a safe nuclear engine and fuel to relieve a diminishing supply of fossil fuel.

In return, the Space Traders want only one thing -- to take back to their home star all the African Americans who live in the United States. They give the American people 16 days to decide whether or not to take them up on the offer.

For 16 days, the American people argue back and forth over what to do. Finally, January 17<sup>th</sup>, the last Martin Luther King holiday the nation would ever observe, dawned on an extraordinary sight: the Space Traders had arrived from outer space and unloaded the gold, minerals, and machinery they promised.

Crowded before their ships were twenty million silent black men, women, and children. As the sun rose, the Space Traders directed them to leave behind all but one undergarment, then line up and board the ships.

With U.S. guards behind them, there was no escape. Black people boarded the ships, arms now linked by chains, leaving the New World as their forebears had arrived.

The story I just told you is deeply disturbing, and the fact that it was devised by one of the key founders of Critical Race Theory tells you a lot about what Derrick Bell thought about America. White people in America would choose, according to Bell, to send black Americans to outer space in exchange for material goods. That is cynical, and it is sick.

Derrick Bell was a professor at Harvard Law School in the 1970's and '80's when he developed an academic movement along with other scholars, notably Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. When you look at Critical Race Theory, their names pop up repeatedly. We'll get more into how they shaped Critical Race Theory, but first I want to delve into how CRT is based on Marxism.

## **CRT and Marxism**

So what's the relationship between CRT and Marxism?

Well, CRT is to Marxism what branches are to a tree trunk.

Marxism views society as a fundamental conflict between oppressors and the oppressed. Karl Marx viewed this dynamic through the lens of class, where the bourgeoisie were the oppressors and the proletariat were the oppressed. CRT takes that Marxist outlook and teaches that white people are the oppressors and people of color are the oppressed.

In the 1970's, many Marxists became law professors, and a group of Marxist professors at Harvard Law School developed what's known as Critical Legal Theory.

Critical Legal Theory teaches that American law favors the powerful, is resistant to change, and marginalizes groups who are not at the top of the power structure.

Derrick Bell, who started teaching at Harvard Law in the 1970's, looked at Critical Legal Theory and decided it didn't go far enough to address race. So he, along with other law professors, developed Critical Race Theory, which takes the Marxist dynamic of the oppressors and the oppressed and applies it to race.

## **CRT and the Marxist Critique of Capitalism**

When you dig into Critical Race Theory texts and interviews given by the founding fathers of CRT, you'll notice very quickly that they have a particular problem with capitalism and private property.

In a book titled Critical Race Theory in Education, which is a compilation of essays by Critical Race theorists on CRT's adaption in our education system, essay after essay takes issue with capitalism and private property.

The authors of one essay claim that American society is "based on property rights instead of human rights," and that the "intersection of race and property is a central construct in understanding a critical race theoretical approach to education."

Further, the authors also claim, "whiteness is the ultimate property," which echoes CRT founder Derrick Bell.

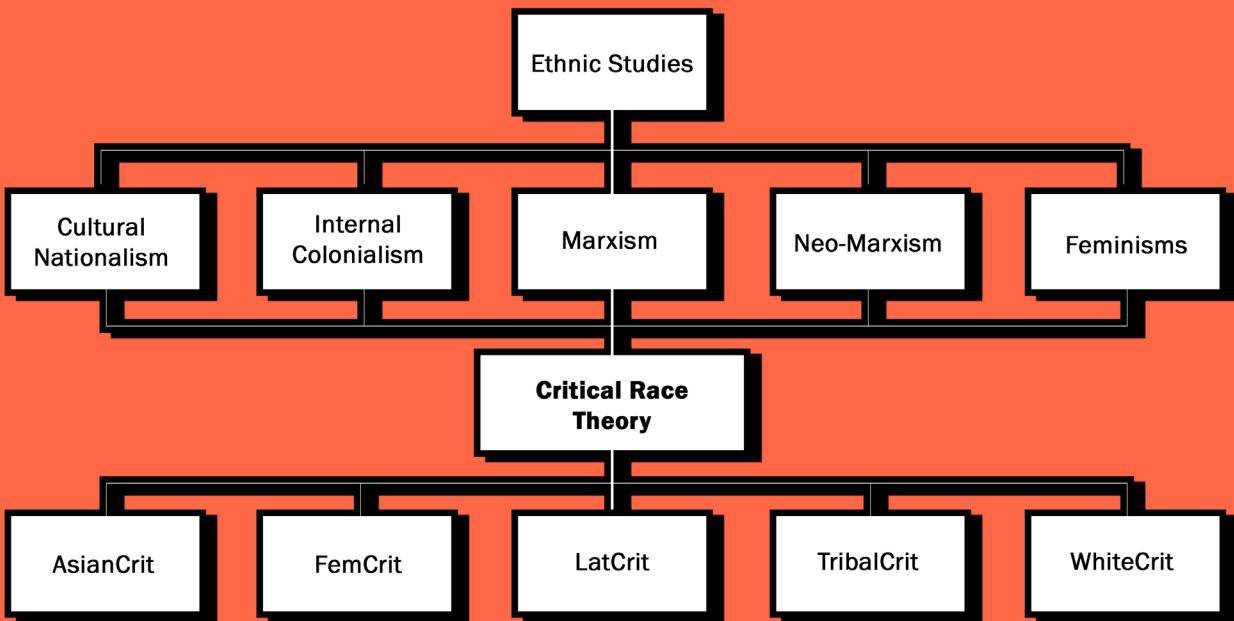
Critiques of capitalism and property have been threads in the CRT quilt since the very beginning, and they're still very much at the center of CRT today.

In his bestselling book How to be an Anti-Racist, Ibram Kendi, a proponent of CRT, writes that:

"To love capitalism is to end up loving racism. To love racism is to end up loving capitalism. The conjoined twins are two sides of the same destructive body," and that "Popular definitions of capitalism, like popular racist ideas, do not live in historical or material reality. Capitalism is essentially racist; racism is essentially capitalist. They were birthed together from the same unnatural causes, and they shall one day die together from unnatural causes."

You know who else hated capitalism and private property? Karl Marx. And Critical Race Theory so clearly borrows from Marxism that Critical Race theorists actually believe there is a direct line from Marxism to CRT.

What you're looking at is what Critical Race theorist Tara Yosso calls "an intellectual genealogy of Critical Race Theory." As you can see, there is a direct line from Marxism to Critical Race Theory.



**Figure 1. An intellectual genealogy of Critical Race Theory**

(Yosso, 2005, p. 71)

There's just no doubt about it—Critical Race Theory is based on Marxist ideas.

## **The Three Main Tenets of CRT**

Not only do Critical Race theorists look at American law and history through a Marxist lens, they believe the progress of the Civil Rights Movement stopped in the 1960's, and more needs to be done to deal with the more subtle manifestations of racism.

To address this, Critical Race theorists agree on three main tenets that Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic lay out in their book titled Critical Race Theory, An Introduction.

First, Critical Race theorists believe racism is so ingrained in America that it "is the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country."

Second, Critical Race theorists believe whites are the dominant racial group, which has two effects on American society -- whites, because they are the dominant racial group, don't tend to see or acknowledge racism so it's difficult to address, and whites have little incentive to change things because they are in a position of power.

Third, Critical Race theorists believe that race is a social construct with "no biological or genetic reality" and "races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient."

Further, in their definition of Critical Race Theory, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic have written that "Unlike traditional civil rights discourse, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law."

Let's unpack what they mean by this.

They're very clear that instead of addressing racial injustice with the kind of progress that led to the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments, and the progress the Civil Rights Movement achieved, we need to check our premises as a country based on authentic liberalism and Enlightenment thinking. They are saying the idea of equality and neutrality in law are obstructing racial justice, not leading to it.

Based on what Critical Race theorists have actually written, it is apparent that Critical Race Theory has a serious problem with the United States of America and the philosophical foundations on which our country was built.

## **CRT Migrates to K-12 Education**

So how did CRT go from a theory debated in law schools to an element of K-12 education, and why now?

Well, a few things have happened. We've had serious racial tensions in our country following the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The 1619 Project has emerged, setting off great debates about the history of our founding, and we are coming through a pandemic where schools closed and children were taking classes at home, which enabled their parents to overhear what their children were being taught.

## **1619 Project**

I want to dial in on the 1619 Project here, because it is Critical Race Theory at work.

The 1619 Project is a series of articles written for a special edition of the New York Times Magazine, led by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones. In the words of the New York Times, the 1619 Project "aims to reframe our country's history."

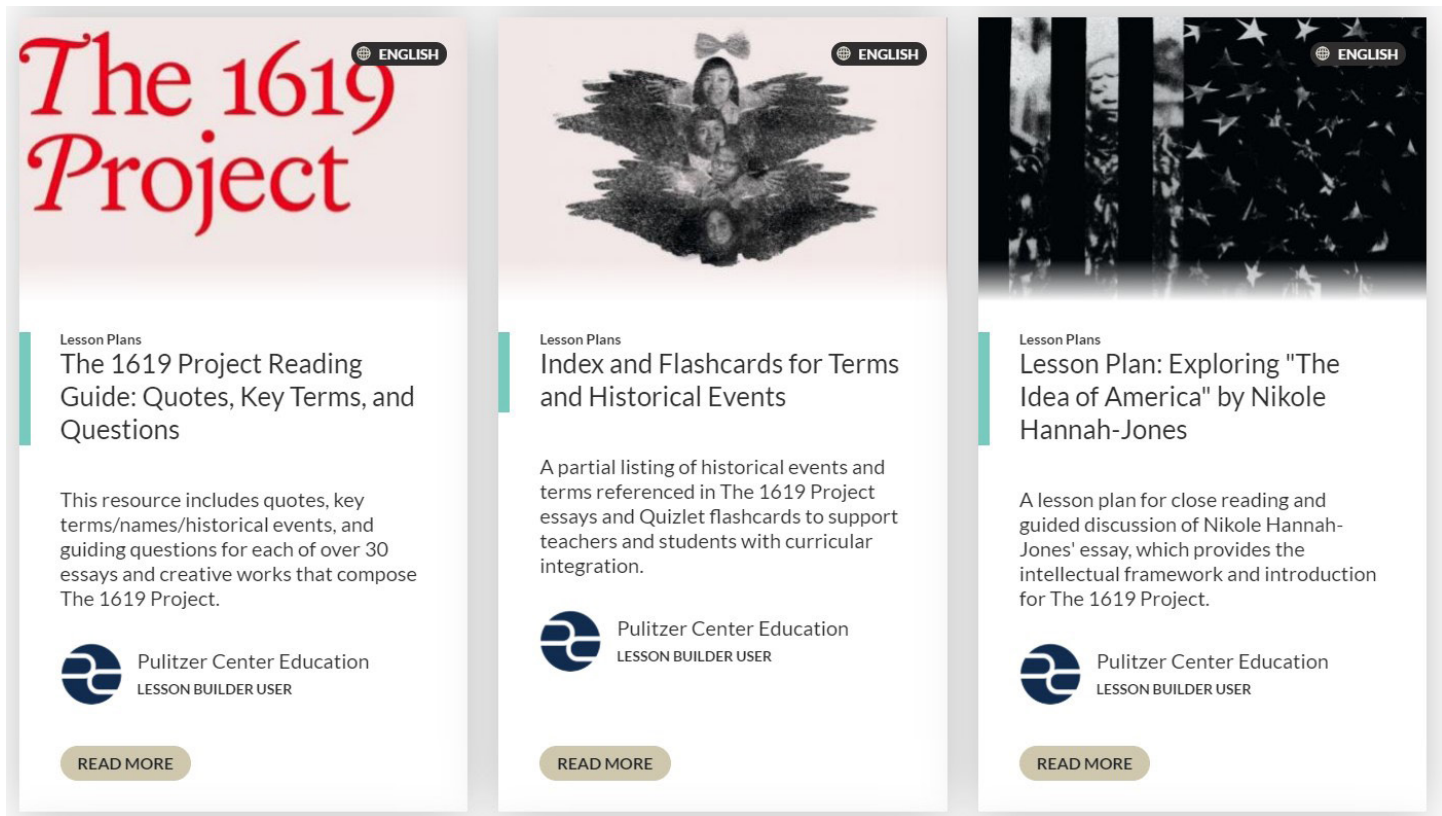
Nikole Hannah-Jones started the 1619 Project by writing, "Our democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written," and "Conveniently left out of our founding mythology is the fact that one of the primary reasons some of the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery."

Despite complaints by renowned historians about false claims in the 1619 Project and multiple corrections by the New York Times, Nikole Hannah-Jones won the Pulitzer Prize in 2020 and is now going to be teaching at Howard University.

The 1619 Project espouses the view of American history that CRT does, and one of its articles was even titled, "American Capitalism is Brutal. You Can Trace That Back to the Plantation."

But despite the 1619 Project's errors, it's being taught in schools in Washington, D.C., Buffalo, Newark, and Chicago.

In Buffalo, New York students in grades 7 through 12 have been taught the 1619 Project since February 2020, and the Chicago public school system is teaching the 1619 Project using the curriculum guides from the Pulitzer Center.



There’s no question that all students need to learn about the evil of slavery, about Jim Crow, and about the horrible racial discrimination we’ve had in our country. But to reinvent the story of the American founding from 1776 and the birth of the United States and characterize slavery as the beginning of America, is to distort what America is all about.

## **Teachers unions are pushing CRT in schools**

On top of all of this, liberal teachers union bosses are also in favor of teaching CRT in schools.

Just this year, the National Education Association, the largest teachers union in the United States, adopted a platform that states the National Education Association will push Critical Race Theory.

The National Education Association will “Provide an already-created, in-depth, study that critiques empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society, and that we oppose attempts to ban critical race theory and/or The 1619 Project.

Publicly (through existing media) convey its support for the accurate and honest teaching of social studies topics, including truthful and age-appropriate accountings of unpleasant aspects of American history, such as slavery, and the oppression and discrimination of Indigenous, Black, Brown, and other peoples of color, as well as the continued impact this history has on our current society. The Association will further convey that in teaching these topics, it is reasonable and appropriate for curriculum to be informed by academic frameworks for understanding and interpreting the impact of the past on current society, including critical race theory.”

## **How can you spot CRT concepts in K-12 school curricula?**

So how can you spot CRT concepts in K-12 curricula? There are a lot of buzzwords thrown around like “white



privilege,” “intersectionality,” “systemic racism,” “collective guilt,” and even “spirit murder.” But today, I want to focus on one word in particular: “equity.”

“Equity” sounds like “equality,” but different. And the difference is this—according to Critical Race Theory, “equality” means “equality of opportunity,” not “equality of results.”

CRT teaches that in order to obtain equality of results, we need to discriminate and take race into account when it comes to policy.

For example, in his book *How to be an Anti-Racist*, Ibram Kendi says “The defining question is whether the discrimination is creating equity or inequity. If discrimination is creating equity, then it is antiracist. If discrimination is creating inequity, then it is racist.”

Further, he says “To be an antiracist is to view the inequities between all racialized ethnic groups as a problem of policy.”

That’s why Kendi thinks we should pass a constitutional amendment to set up a Department of Anti-racism, which would “be responsible for pre-clearing all local, state, and federal public policies to ensure they won’t yield racial inequity, monitor these policies, investigate private racist policies when racial inequity surfaces, and monitor public officials for expressions of racist ideas.”

# Pass an Anti-Racist Constitutional Amendment

IBRAM X. KENDI

*Ibram X. Kendi is a professor of history, director of the Antiracist Research & Policy Center at American University, and author of [How to Be an Antiracist](#).*



To fix the original sin of racism, Americans should pass an anti-racist amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enshrines two guiding anti-racist principals: Racial inequity is evidence of racist policy and the different racial groups are equals. The amendment would make unconstitutional racial inequity over a certain threshold, as well as racist ideas by public officials (with “racist ideas” and “public official” clearly defined). It would establish and permanently fund the Department of Anti-racism (DOA) comprised of formally trained experts on racism and no political appointees. The DOA would be responsible for preclearing all local, state and federal public policies to ensure they won’t yield racial inequity, monitor those policies, investigate private racist policies when racial inequity surfaces, and monitor public officials for expressions of racist ideas. The DOA would be empowered with disciplinary tools to wield over and against policymakers and public officials who do not voluntarily change their racist policy and ideas.

You see, to Critical Race theorists, in order to achieve equity, local and federal government policies must discriminate so that the same results are achieved by all races. If policies don't meet that standard, CRT considers them racist policies.

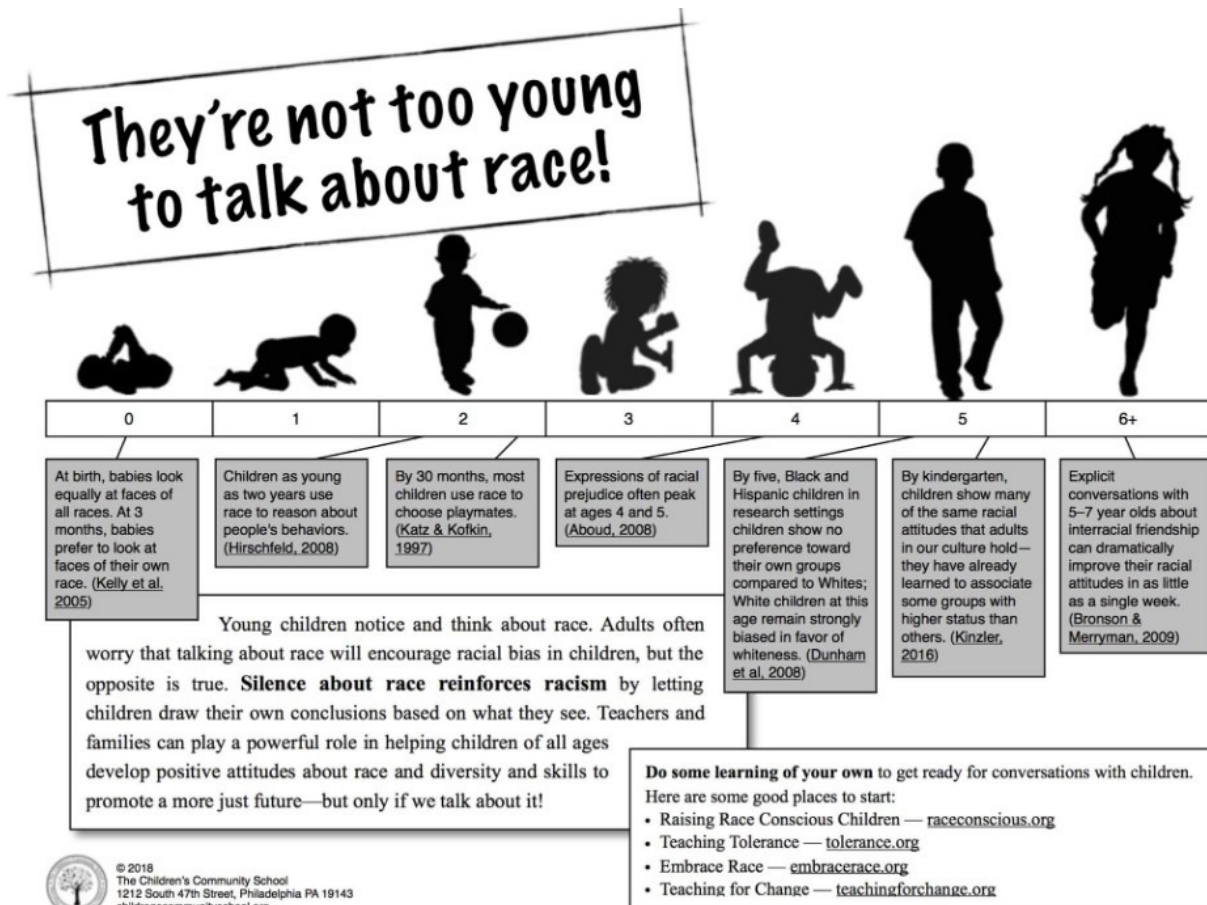
The truth is, equality is one of the founding principles of America. It's embodied in our Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

To be sure, the United States did not live up to the promise of equality for a long time, but that promise was laid out in our founding document. We fought a bloody Civil War to eradicate slavery and if you look at the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments that were passed after the Civil War, they are fundamentally about equality -- about equal protection under the laws, and about everyone having the right to vote.

Equality is a beautiful principle that America has championed to the world. There's no doubt that the United States has been imperfect, but the concept of equality was essential to our founding, and it is an ideal worth aspiring to.

Critical Race Theory rejects equality and instead wants "equity," which necessitates discrimination in order for everyone to achieve the same results. As CRT proponent Ibram Kendi says, "The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination."

In school curricula, equity can also be used as a catch-all term to explain why white people are racist -- even white babies. In an equity toolkit released by the Arizona Department of Education, a flyer explains that babies as young as three months display a racial preference in who they look at. "By five," the equity flyer states, "Black and Hispanic children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness."





And some CRT diversity, equity, and inclusion consultants are making a fortune off of taxpayers to promote equity in school systems.

The Eanes Independent School District, which is right outside of Austin, Texas, paid \$170,000 in taxpayer money to a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant for a year's worth of consulting.

And Manhattan Beach Schools in California have also hired outside diversity, equity, and inclusion consultants who are paid for by what's called "social inclusion grants."

As you prepare to run for schoolboard, or even if you're just a conservative who is interested in what Critical Race Theory is, it's important to look at the definitions of terms like "equity." Not only do they pop up in Critical Race Theory texts, but they are used by school board members and in teacher trainings. So arm yourself with the facts.

## **Polling on Critical Race Theory**

While Critical Race Theory concepts have infiltrated our education system, most Americans don't know what Critical Race Theory is.

A recent Reuters poll found that 57% of adults do not know what Critical Race Theory is.

And another recent Economist poll found that those who claim to understand what Critical Race Theory is think it is "bad for America."

What this shows is that most people don't know what CRT is, but when they learn about it, they don't like it.

Further, Rasmussen recently reported that 78% of likely voters think it's important to teach traditional values of Western Civilization in school.

### **POLITICS**

## **Most Voters Want Schools To Teach Traditional Values**

Thursday, July 08, 2021



At a time when many schools are embroiled in controversy over the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT), voters still think it is important that kids learn traditional values in school.

A new national telephone and online survey by Rasmussen Reports finds that 78% of Likely U.S. Voters say it's at least somewhat important for schools to teach the traditional values of Western Civilization, including 52% who say it's Very Important. This is virtually unchanged from [four years ago](#), and in line with surveys dating back to [2013](#).

So not only are most Americans not familiar with what Critical Race Theory is, when they learn about it, they don't like it, and a large majority of Americans want traditional Western values taught in our schools.

## **Conclusion**

That's where you come in. As more and more people like you research what Critical Race Theory is and develop a working knowledge of how it's being used in schools across the country, I believe we can activate and effectively push back against it.

And we're starting to see what can happen when conservatives stand up and act.

In Southlake, Texas, which is a suburb of Dallas, conservative parents rallied together to defeat a ridiculous Critical Race Theory initiative that the local school district's diversity committee had put forth. The conservative parents were able to band together to fight this, and they got three times as many people to show up and vote in the school board elections than usually vote. And guess what—they won the school board elections about 70 to 30—a huge margin.

That's what happens when we have grassroots leaders like you pushing back against Critical Race Theory.

Together, I think we can defeat Critical Race Theory in our schools and make sure that students learn the true history of America—the story of American greatness.