



RESIST!

#TRUTHBETOLD



What Are These Attacks Really About

Efforts to end CRT, posed as the quest to “end racial indoctrination,” actually [seek to indoctrinate students by whitewashing the historical truths about white supremacy in the United States](#) and banning any discussion of systemic racism or other forms of subordination..

The point of the gag laws is not to debate CRT but to set it up as a boogeyman for racial anxieties. A leading voice in this disinformation campaign publicly admitted as much, tweeting: “a goal is to have the public read something crazy in the newspaper and immediately think critical race theory.” The vagueness of the gag laws combined with harsh penalties is intended to chill all talk of systemic forms of discrimination in public school classrooms.

What we are witnessing now is the culmination of a decades-long attack on public education via the school choice agenda which dates back to the resistance to the desegregation of public schools after *Brown*.

How is the Backlash to CRT Historically Situated: Race, Reform, & Retrenchment Revisited

The history of retrenchment and the way that anti-racism reforms have been framed as racism that “violates the civil rights of whites” is as old as the republic. This narrative tells us something about the nature of racial reform – that it is not a continuous upward onward march to an evermore open and equitable society. Actually, racial reform is a continuous battle – one in which hard-fought victories in one generation can be reversed and set back in the next.

Racial reform has often been depicted as two steps forward, one step back. But historically, it has been more like one step forward, seven steps back, as one decade of progress during Reconstruction was followed by seven decades of Jim Crow in the “redemption” era – a violent re-institutionalization of white supremacy and racial tyranny that amounted to utter and complete exclusion. During the Civil Rights Movement, there was a decade and a half of active civil rights reforms, immediately met by “Massive Resistance” to undermine *Brown v. Board of*

Education and then three to four decades of conservative retrenchment and reactionary responses to these reforms.

The battle over CRT reminds us that the struggle over thought, over knowledge, and over narrative has been a foundational dimension of the struggle over racial power in this country. More fundamentally, CRT grapples with how conceptions of equality and limits of reform remain grounded in the politics of retrenchment. CRT points to the way that this battleground has been shaped by cumulative injustices from the past – the ways that patterns of reform and retrenchment have been facilitated, amplified, and fortified by law.

CRT explores the uninterrogated baselines, and the conditions of possibility. Why, then, does a process of retrenchment continue? What are we recommending to break this cycle? How do we promote the ideas that racial justice, anti-racism, and the interventions necessary to dismantle white supremacy are in no way forms of “preferential treatment,” illegitimate, and un-American? Critical Race Theory explores these concerns, and in so doing it is an indispensable tool in dismantling systematic forms of discrimination.