

ONE TEACHER'S FIGHT AGAINST CRITICAL RACE THEORY

By Kali Fontanilla

Two years ago, I decided to take a public stance against the divisive critical race theory (CRT) when I saw lessons containing CRT in a required ethnic studies class for 9th grade students at the high school where I worked at in Salinas, California.

The reactions were disturbing:

“You and all these white people literally don't know what CRT actually is.”

“I guess she identifies as being white. Claims her district is teaching Critical Race Theory but don't know about the one drop rule.”

“So sorry that you're a white-washed house negro.”

“The left knows what CRT is, conservative dumbsh*ts like you don't.”

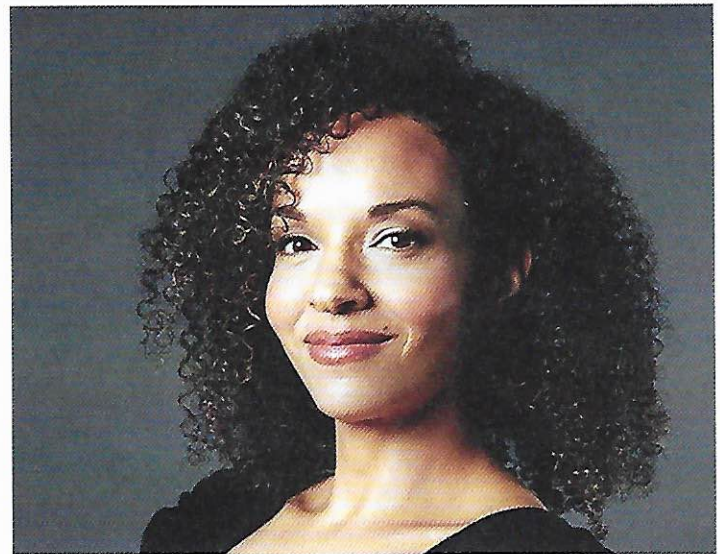
“Why are you fighting so hard against progress? You like the taste of boots? Stomping in your face.”

“CRT is teaching college students and high school students about structural racism. You may be black but your policy positions are pasty white and rotten just like the white men you seek to please.”

“Critical Race Theory isn't taught in schools below the post-graduate level you lying psycho.”

These racist and hate-filled comments are real examples of the treatment I have received as a black teacher speaking against critical race theory.

I decided to expose these lessons publicly because the majority of the mainstream media and the two largest teachers unions in the nation—the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers—were being dishonest with the American people about CRT in our K–12 schools. Rather than be transparent about what is happening in American classrooms, they demonized parents speaking against CRT being taught to their children. The NEA recently adopted a \$56,000 measure to “research the organizations attacking educators doing anti-racist work.” If there



Kali Fontanilla

is no critical race theory in our K–12 schools, why are they fighting so hard not to get it banned from the classroom and targeting parents speaking against it?

Exposing CRT Teaching

How did I find these divisive lessons being taught in my district? Rewind to March of 2020 when there were rumors that our schools would shut down because of the COVID-19 virus. I was content teaching my 9th and 10th-grade students at Rancho San Juan High School in Salinas, California. In my 15-year career as a teacher, it is rare to shut down the entire school on a regular school day. Usually, it takes some

Kali Fontanilla is a former public school teacher of 15 years. Her rebuttal statement to Proposition 16 in California helped to stop the push for legal reverse racism and a new extreme version of affirmative action in 2020. She is the co-founder of Exodus Institute, a K–12 online school with a nationally accredited program: Thinkexodus.org.



It usually takes some sort of natural disaster or tragic event on campus to shut down the entire school on a regular school day.

sort of natural disaster or tragic event on campus. In one incident, we had no working toilets, and portable toilets were delivered so the regular school day could continue. Another time there was a gas leak, and the school day continued despite teaching in potentially very hazardous conditions. When we were told that the schools were going to shut down for two weeks to “slow the spread,” you can imagine that all the teachers and students were in shock over the shutdowns. Two weeks eventually turned into 14 months. My district did not reopen the school for students to attend in-person classes until May of 2021.

I taught English language learners and students severely behind in reading. It was a challenge to deliver instruction online to a population of students who struggled in regular in-person classes. I went from blissfully walking around my classroom while watching my students complete well-thought-out group projects and activities to all of us glued to the computer screen at the mercy of our internet connections. I had some students attending their Zoom classes

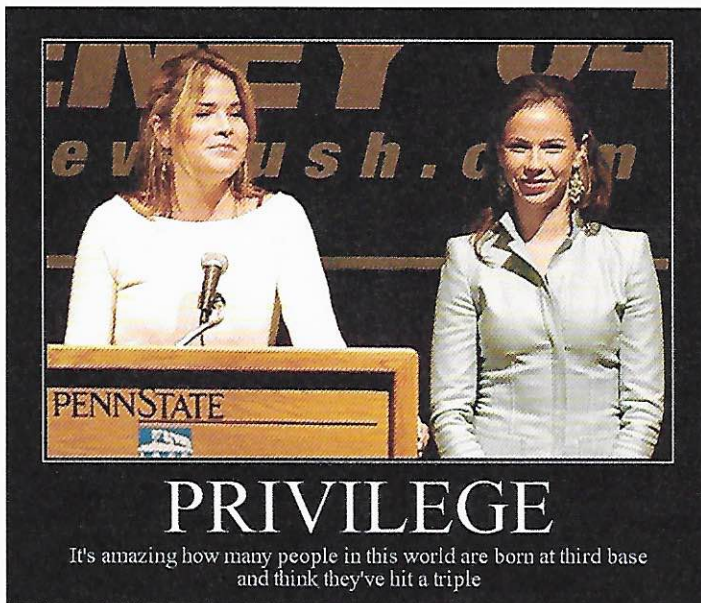
with their young siblings in their laps because many became babysitters for their working parents. We are just now seeing the detrimental effects of the school shutdowns.

While teaching online, I noticed a pattern in my home-room students’ grades. Every week I had them check all their grades in every class. Since I was teaching the English learners, many of whom were behind in reading skills, I wanted to ensure they were successful in their other classes as well as mine. In checking their other class grades, I saw that about 50 percent of them were failing their newly required Ethnic Studies course. Gov. Gavin Newsom had recently signed into law that all high school students were required to take an ethnic studies course to graduate. Several of my homeschool students had Fs in the course. When I asked them why they were not doing well in that particular class, they told me that they thought the class was “stupid” or “a waste of time.”

When you hear the words “ethnic studies,” you may have visions of a course where students learn about other cultures. Perhaps they would be learning about their various histories, music, cuisine, etc. Well, get that picture out of your head because that is not even remotely what the required class in California is like, regrettably.

I decided to look at the course materials since I shared the same online platform with the Ethnic Studies teachers. I was shocked by what I found. The course introduction stated that students would learn how to “be woke.” The students were then instructed to take a privilege quiz and asked to reflect on their privilege compared to their classmates. They were taught about “white privilege” and shown a meme with two white girls graduating college with the caption, “Some people are born on third base and think they hit a triple.” Imagine those words spoken about any other race and the outrage that would cause. The words “critical race theory” appeared several times as I continued combing the class materials. Not only were students taught the definition of CRT, but they were also taught why it was important and to analyze school policy through the CRT lens. They were taught its key tenets like intersectionality, hegemony, the four Is of oppression and dominant ideologies. A whole class period was dedicated to the Black Lives Matter movement, including a video glorifying the self-proclaimed Marxist founder Patrisse Cullors. This wasn’t education; this was indoctrination!

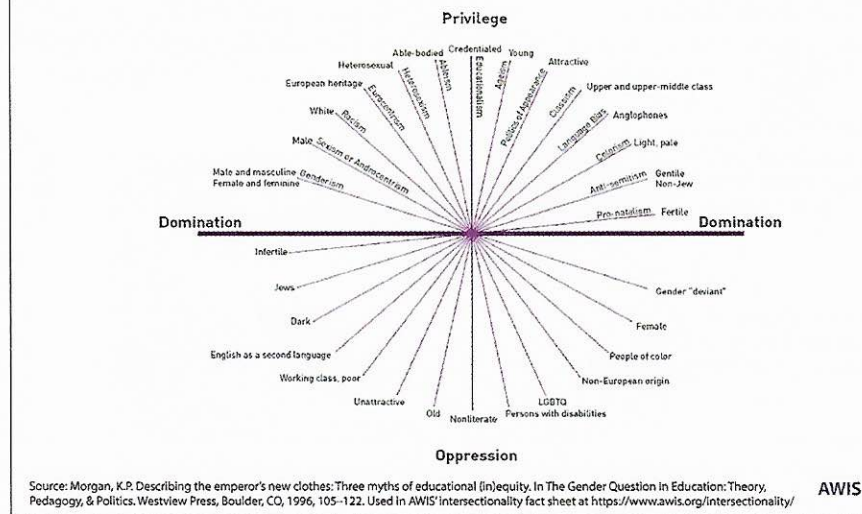
Source: Rancho San Juan High School, Ethnic Studies, 2020.



Students were taught about “white privilege” and shown a meme with two white girls (Jenna and Barbara Bush, daughters of President George W. Bush) graduating college.

While investigating these lessons in my district, I noticed that CRT had become a hot topic in the mainstream news. I saw several news programs telling the American people that CRT is not in our K–12 schools. Then, I saw

Intersectionality



Credit: Rancho San Juan High School, Ethnic Studies, 2020.

Students learned about the concept of intersectionality, a fancy word for “counting your oppressions.” Intersectionality is “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”

the campaign by the two largest teachers unions to silence parents speaking against it. Even the National School Board Association wrote a letter to the Biden administration requesting that concerned parents be investigated as domestic terrorists.

Imagine my shock hearing this “it’s not in our K–12 schools” narrative in the news while at the same time witnessing my students failing their Ethnic Studies course containing CRT! I had to do something.

America currently has a literacy crisis, which was only exacerbated by the shutdowns of our schools. My former district in Salinas had only 47 percent of its high school students reading at or above grade level. That means that over half the students were reading below grade level. Why do we spend precious classroom time on these woke theories when our students struggle to read?

I decided to defy the teachers union and expose the lessons with critical race theory in my district online. I knew that I would receive hate from the left for exposing, but I had no idea that they would threaten my career, with some even contacting my district to get me fired. How counterproductive is that? Those in favor of CRT believe that America

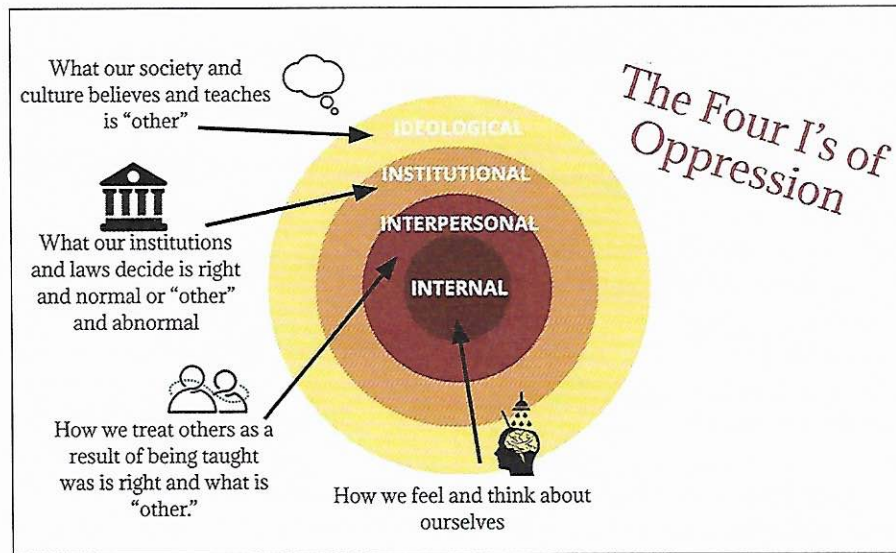
is systemically racist and want to push critical race theory lessons in our schools while actively trying to get a black teacher fired just for exposing their narratives.

So why is there this effort to hide the truth about critical race theory in our schools from the public? Because when you look closely at what is being taught to our impressionable young minds, most sane Americans would be against it. That’s why I am against it.

Key Tenets of CRT

I mentioned earlier the key tenets of CRT being taught to the 9th grade students in my district but let’s examine them a little more closely.

They learned about the concept of intersectionality, a fancy word for “counting your oppressions.” Intersectionality is “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.” The students were asked to write down or analyze their various forms of oppression or lack thereof based on their race, sex,



Credit: Rancho San Juan High School, Ethnic Studies, 2020.

Then came the "4 I's of Oppression," where students were taught about four different ways they could be oppressed.

sexual orientation, religion, etc. They were shown charts that ranked every trait as either in a place of "power and privilege" or in a place of "oppression and discrimination." Heterosexual, white male Christians were shown as receiving no oppression and always in a place of domination or power. How ironic, as it's hard to think of any other group with a government-funded forced curriculum demonizing them more to children than white men. But a black, lesbian female has multiple oppressions and is always heavily marginalized. Students were asked to reflect on their intersectionality and bask in their various forms of oppression. Too bad if they are white males in the class, they are left out of the oppression Olympics; they don't even qualify.

Another core tenet of CRT the students were taught about was hegemony, the domination by one country or group over others. They were taught that all systems in America were built to benefit the white male and oppress people of color. Of course, the history of various Native American tribes oppressing each other, like the Aztecs, is conveniently left out. This lesson on hegemony was when Marxist concepts were introduced. Yes, you heard that right, Karl Marx for 9th graders. They were given a presentation on "Marxist Philosophy" and introduced to a "two-class society" and "the ruling class." This included learning about the oppressive "dominant ideologies" of the ruling

FOURTEEN YES/NO QUESTIONS

- English is your first language?
- Either one of your parents graduated from college?
- You have visible or invisible disabilities?
- You were encouraged to attend college by your parents and family?
- Your family has health insurance?
- Your religious holidays are celebrated in this country?
- You studied the culture or the history of your ancestors in elementary school?
- You have been bullied or made fun of based on something you cannot change (gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, etc.)?

- You have been stopped or questioned by the police because they felt you were suspicious?
- You are a citizen of the United States?
- There are more than 50 books in your house?
- You have felt unsafe walking alone at night?
- You have felt uncomfortable about a joke or statement you overheard related to your race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation?
- Your teachers look like you?

REFLECTION

- How did it feel to be one of the students at the bottom?*
- How did it feel to be one of the students on the top?*



Graffiti as resistance

Graffiti is also a vehicle of resistance. ... social actors engage in a resistance movement whose main weapon is written words and images. It is a form of intervention in public spaces.



This class also included a lesson on “Graffiti as Resistance,” teaching students that graffiti can often be “protest art” and should be normalized.

Credit: Rancho San Juan High School, Ethnic Studies, 2020.

class, like capitalism, family, the patriarchy, the gender binary, and marriage. Yep, marriage is labeled as an oppressive dominant ideology of the “ruling class.”

Does this sound like a fun class to you? It is no wonder so many of my traditional Mexican students were failing this course! These kids don’t want this garbage.

Then came the “4 I’s of Oppression,” where students were taught about four different ways they could be oppressed. Again, heterosexual white males are left out of this one, too. In fact, when you see the words “dominant group,” it refers to them.

All the concepts were classic Marxist class warfare rhetoric, repackaged for our American tastes and force-fed to my innocent students. “Ideological oppression” is the *idea* that one group is somehow better than another and has the right to control the other group. “Institutional oppression” is the societal structures that benefit the *dominant group* while suppressing or mistreating the nondominant groups. “Interpersonal oppression” is the personal negative interactions or disrespect from the *dominant group* toward those in the more marginalized groups. Notice how white men can’t be victims of interpersonal oppression because they are the dominant group. This is also part of the left’s attempt to redefine racism as only toward those that don’t have power. Lastly, they were taught about “internalized oppression.” This means that those who are in marginalized groups will begin to internalize the dominant group’s unjust messages, leading to unconscious beliefs about themselves. Marginalized groups are always placed in the role of *victim* to the dominant group,

even in their own internalized feelings about themselves. The students were given a list of oppression examples and asked to reflect on their own ways they are oppressed.

And let’s not forget the privilege quiz. On Day 5 of their lessons, the students in the Ethnic Studies class were given a quiz of 14 questions to rank their privilege against their other classmates. Afterward, they were asked these reflection questions:

How did it feel to be one of the students on the bottom? How did it feel to be one of the students on the top?

How has your identity impacted you? What are some privileges and disadvantages you have because of your identity?

Imagine having 14 loaded questions be what determines if you are privileged or not against your own classmates!

This class also included a lesson on “Graffiti as Resistance,” teaching students that graffiti can often be “protest art” and should be normalized. They were shown examples of various graffiti art on the boarded-up stores whose windows were busted out during the George Floyd protests. The assignment that went with the lesson was to create their own art as a protest piece. Did you think ethnic studies would include a pro-graffiti lesson?

There has been an effort to hide the fact that critical race theory is being taught to our students in K–12 schools. These woke teachers have found ways to teach the theory

without saying the actual words shown in the many examples from the lessons I saw in my district. But the lessons I saw were introduced in early 2020, right before the media covered the theory. The 9th grade students in my district were taught critical race theory explicitly. They were taught the definition, told of its importance, and asked to analyze school policy through the CRT framework. There was even a KQED article where our social studies curriculum specialist admitted that CRT is included in the lessons in an interview. Most of the mainstream media and the teachers unions lied about CRT in our schools, but I have the smoking gun.

Even if critical race theory isn't explicitly taught in your city or state like it was in my district (16 states have banned the theory from the classroom) the essential ideas and concepts of the theory are still there. In fact, 5,000 teachers vowed to continue to teach critical race theory in their states where it is banned. The National Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers have given them their support. "The backlash [to teaching about race] that you see in these radicalized circles is going to hurt kids," said American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten in an interview. "I felt the need to make it crystal clear to teachers ... that I honor their professional responsibilities and that their union will have their back." Not only are they waving the banner of support for teachers who want to include CRT pedagogy in their classroom, but they are also introducing measures to include CRT in the fight to eradicate institutional racism. One measure will support and lead campaigns that "result in increasing the implementation of culturally responsive education, critical race theory, and ethnic ... studies curriculum in pre-K-12 and higher education." First, they deny that CRT is in our schools and then spend over a half million dollars on measures that ensure it will be in the K-12 classroom.

When I first took a public stance against critical race theory, I prayed if it was the right thing to do. I had a sneaky suspicion that God doesn't want us to solve racism with more racism, and I was seeking His blessing in this fight. Even if you aren't a believer, I think we all desire a colorblind, equal society, like Martin Luther King's dream. That same day, I was scrolling through social media when I saw a video of a middle school-aged white girl tearfully speaking to her school board. "How can a child born into an abusive drug and alcohol home, who lost her entire biological family, and has experienced all forms of abuse, be privileged? When I was told that, I was so upset, I cried myself to sleep." She spoke about when her teacher told

her she had *white privilege*. This was the sign I needed to carry on and fight.

It isn't enough to prove that CRT is in our schools; we must make an effort to get this divisive theory out of the classroom and keep it out. But what do we do?

I recommend focusing on these three strategies:

- **Academic Transparency.** Academic transparency laws require the district to post all curricula on a public website for parents to see what is taught in the classroom. This may not stop woke teachers from having these divisive race-based conversations with their captive audience in the classroom, but it will slow them down.
- **School Choice.** Think about the students in my district who were required to take the Ethnic Studies class to graduate. School choice allows just that choice. If a parent doesn't want their child in a school that pushes critical race theory, they have the option to pull them out and have the financial support through state vouchers to do that. This is why I founded Exodus Institute, to give parents another option.
- **Fight the Teachers Union.** Continue to support organizations like the Capital Research Center that expose the teachers unions' one-sided interests. It has become clear that the unions' priority is not the safety and well-being of the students or even the teachers. Their priority is to fund and promote far-left woke ideologies and teachers, ensuring that they continue in the classroom.

It's shocking the amount of racist hate I have received since I have exposed the lessons containing CRT. Do you think that proponents of CRT are justified in telling a black teacher that she is a "white-washed house negro?" You would think that those in favor of CRT in our schools would rejoice to see evidence that it is in our K-12 classrooms, but instead, they attack the messenger. Even if you favor critical race theory being taught to our young people, no one deserves the racial abuse and threats I have received since exposing the lessons in my district and the lies being pushed by the media. But it should be no surprise that a theory full of "reverse racism" leads its defenders to lash out with racial slurs when exposed.

If anything, judge the theory by its fruit. ■

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