

DePaul University Faculty Council

RESOLUTION TO DEFEND ACADEMIC FREEDOM TO TEACH ABOUT
RACE & GENDER JUSTICE AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

(submitted September 22, 2021)

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS state legislative proposals are being introduced and enacted across the United States that target academic discussions of racism, sexism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities.

WHEREAS these legislative proposals vary but all seek to prohibit or restrict what they often call “divisive concepts” in the teaching and education of students.

WHEREAS the term “divisive” is indeterminate, subjective, and chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics based on subjective criteria that are inapposite from the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills;

WHEREAS educating about systemized barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy based on race or gender should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century to produce engaged and informed citizens;

WHEREAS DePaul has a stated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and to mitigating inequities related to diverse populations.

WHEREAS DePaul University’s newly revised mission statement affirms that “DePaul compassionately upholds the dignity of all members of its diverse, multi-faith, and inclusive community” and is committed to “promoting peaceful, just, and equitable solutions to social [...] changes.”

WHEREAS the Message of Solidarity from DePaul University Officers acknowledges that “Racism is woven into the fabric of this country. It is the legacy of slavery, colonization, and the taking by force of lands and peoples to create power and privilege for some while marginalizing many. Despite the efforts of many, the principal objectives of the past decades to combat racism and racial discrimination have not been attained and to the present day, countless human beings continue to be victims of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.”

WHEREAS in light of the ongoing reality of violence and discrimination committed against the BIPOC community, DePaul University has committed itself to a sincere reconsideration of policies and practices at DePaul that perpetuate racist patterns.

WHEREAS The American Association of University Professors and DePaul’s AAUP chapter affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities, citing the

American Association of University Professors' 1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure .

WHEREAS Section 1.2.1 of the Faculty Council Handbook states that “the faculty is vested with primary governance responsibility of academic and scholarly activities... including Curriculum matters, including establishment, dissolution, and substantial changes of degree programs...”

WHEREAS over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), issued the Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History (June 16, 2021) stating their “firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities . . . In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning.”

WHEREAS in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of BIPOC and LGBTQIA history and the policies that contributed to inequities, DePaul University has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice.

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Council rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Boards of Trustees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Council stands with our K-12 colleagues in Illinois and throughout the country who may be affected by this restrictive legislation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Council calls upon President A. Gabriel Esteban and Provost Salma Ghanem to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Boards of Trustees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Council affirms the Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism, authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.

Background:

- Scholarly Groups Condemn Laws Limiting Teaching on Race

- (New York Times, June 16, 2021)
- Texas 'critical race theory' bill limiting teaching of current events signed into law (ABC13, June 16, 2021)
 - Republicans Want Federal Funding Cuts to Schools Using '1619 Project'—But There's a Twist (Education Week, June 15, 2021)
 - Critical race theory battle invades school boards — with help from conservative groups (NBC News, June 15, 2021)
 - Teachers across the country protest laws restricting lessons on racism (Washington Post, June 12, 2021)
 - 'Children deserve to be taught': Teachers in 22 cities are planning protests over laws restricting racism lessons in schools (USA Today, June 11, 2021)
 - Florida bans use of critical race theory, "1619 Project" in teaching history
 - Uncovering Who Is Driving The Fight Against Critical Race Theory In Schools (LISTEN) (Fresh Air, June 24, 2021)
 - 'Critical Race Theory Is Simply the Latest Bogeyman.' Inside the Fight Over What Kids Learn About America's History (TIME, June 24, 2021)
 - How the media's helping GOP fuel critical race theory hysteria (Press Run, June 23, 2021)
 - Critical race theory has been around for decades — why's it a powder keg now? (LISTEN) (Marketplace, June 22, 2021)
 - VIDEO: Creator of term 'Critical Race Theory' Kimberlé Crenshaw explains what it really is (MSNBC/The Reid Out, June 21, 2021)
 - VIDEO: The truth about 'critical race theory': co-founder breaks down GOP gaslight (MSNBC/The Medhi Hasan Show, June 20, 2021)
 - Fox's anti-"critical race theory" parents are also GOP activists (Media Matters, June 17, 2021)
 - Critical Race Theory: What It Means for America and Why It Has Sparked Debate (Wall Street Journal, June 17, 2021)
 - Why are states lining up to ban critical race theory? (University World News, June 12, 2021)
 - The New York Times' Culture-War Definition of Free Speech (Melissa Gira Grant, The New Republic, June 8, 2021)
 - Guest Blog: Where Does the Bizarre Hysteria About 'Critical Race Theory' Come From? Follow the Money! (Inside Higher Ed, June 3, 2021)
 - Opinion: Why Conservatives Really Fear Critical Race Theory (Christine Emba, The Washington Post, May 26, 2021)
 - (VIDEO) What critical race theory is really about (CNN/Don Lemon Tonight, May 17, 2021)
 - The War on Critical Race Theory