

# House Committee Lawmakers Discuss Replacing Critical Race Theory in Schools

Experts tell a House education subcommittee that returning to traditional civics curriculum can foster civil debate to help heal divisions in society.

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A panel of experts, (L-R) Ian Rowe of the American Enterprise Institute, Jed Atkins of the University of Chapel Hill in North Carolina, Brian Kennedy of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, and Michael Weiser of the Jack Miller Center, addressed the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early



By Michael Clements

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Republican members of a House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Wednesday said at a hearing that public school curricula based on critical race theory should be replaced with history and civics curricula that cover all aspects of American history.

Democratic members of the subcommittee counter that the federal government is prohibited by law from setting public school curricula.

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They said critical race theory is not taught in K-12 schools, and the federal government should be focused on public school infrastructure and safety.



Critical race theory is based on the perception that racism and white supremacy continue to be systemic in American institutions and



categorizes people into oppressors or oppressed based on race. Critics said the theory distorted American history, portrayed white people as



inherently racist, and encouraged dependent mentality among minorities.

During a hearing of the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood Elementary and Secondary Education in Washington on Wednesday, education experts testified that curricula focusing on racial disparities in society give students a one-dimensional view of history, foster divisions, and discourage open and honest discussion and debate in the classroom.

Ian Rowe, a senior fellow with the American Enterprise Institute, said that race in 21st-century America is not as significant a factor as some claim.

He said that a majority of white students are not reading at grade level, so raising black students to the same level as their white peers

in the name of equity would not address the root issue.

“All we will achieve is creating universal mediocrity,” Rowe said.

Rowe is also the founder and CEO of the Vertex Partnership Academies, a public charter high school in New York City. He said the Vertex curriculum is “virtue-based,” so students take responsibility for their lives rather than see themselves as victims.

He said Vertex teaches American history “warts and all.” For example, students learn that segments of the black community prospered during the Jim Crow era despite oppressive laws meant to subjugate them. This then leads to questions about the present day.

“Why can’t that same level of success be achieved today?” Rowe said.

Rowe agreed that no subject labeled “critical race theory” is being taught in schools. However, he said, there are teachers devising lessons and curricula influenced by the theory.

“Unfortunately, examples abound, such as the discredited New York Times ‘1619 Project,’ and the Pulitzer Center’s curriculum like ‘Reparations Math,’ which promotes black dependency,” he said.

Michael Weiser is the chairman of the Jack Miller Center’s board of directors. According to its website, the Philadelphia-based non-profit is a “national coalition of scholars, K-12 teachers, philanthropists, and civic leaders who are passionate about advancing civic education in America.”

Weiser told the subcommittee that America’s founding principles were “prepartisan.”

He said the current political climate disregards those principles, making it difficult for teachers to broach political subjects in the classroom.

“Civics teachers were steering clear of the [presidential] election or really any current political issue in their classrooms,” Weiser said.

He said that in 1976, there was a surge in interest in civics education. Jack Miller Center hopes to use America's upcoming 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026, to spur similar interest in civics, Weiser said.

The subcommittee's ranking member, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.), agreed that civics should be taught. She said it is important that students know their history and can engage in civil debate and discussion.

However, she said the claim that critical race theory is being taught in K-12 schools only politicizes education. She said selecting a curriculum is a job for local leaders.

"We are not a school board," she said. "Instead of spending time talking about interfering with state and local decision-making, we should talk about issues that Congress does have the power to influence."

Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-Conn.) agreed with Bonamici. Hayes said she taught history in public schools for 15 years, and critical race theory was never part of the curriculum. She said the federal government is prohibited by law from being involved in curriculum selection.

"This is a solution looking for a problem," she said.

## **Schools Need Fixing**

Bonamici said the average public school building in America is about 50 years old, and many districts report that their buildings need to be fixed. Failing to address those needs tells those communities how their leaders in Washington feel about them, she said.

"It sends a message to low-income students that we don't care about their community," she said.

In response to a claim that several Baltimore public schools were low-performing, she said that several of those closed because their heating and air conditioning systems failed.

“We can’t expect teachers to provide quality education in buildings that are falling apart,” she said.

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Michael Clements is an award-winning Epoch Times reporter covering the Second Amendment and individual rights. Mr. Clements has 30 years of experience in media and has worked for outlets including The Monroe Journal, The Panama City News Herald, The Alexander City Outlook, The Galveston County Daily News, The Texas City Sun, The Daily Court Review,

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