



Another Chapter in The War On “Woke”: Banning Ethnic Studies and The Anti-CRT Movement by The Unseasoned Elites

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Master’s Thesis
Submitted to the College of Education and Human Development

University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

In Fulfillment of the Requirements
For a Master’s Degree

May 2023

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Acknowledgements

Words cannot express my gratitude to my professor and chair of my committee Dr. Nathaniel Stewart for his invaluable patience and feedback. I also could not have undertaken this journey without my defense committee (Dr. Peter Demerath & Dr. Elizabeth Huaman), who generously provided knowledge and expertise.

I am also grateful to my classmates and cohort members for making the experience feel like we were a family and for their moral support.

Lastly, I would be remiss in not mentioning my family, my parents, my partner who supported and encouraged me, and my siblings and nieces and nephews who inspire me. Their belief in me has kept my spirits and motivation high during this process. I would also like to thank my cat and dog for their emotional support through it all.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my son, Quincy Baldwin and to my nieces and nephews who inspire me to continually keep learning and to never stop fighting for an equitable and just education system where they can see themselves not only in the curricular content, but in the faces of their teachers and administrators so that their lived experiences may be validated and affirmed, and cultures celebrated year round.

This is for the Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian students who don't know their rich histories and think that all there is to their cultures is what they are shown in school textbooks. This is for those students who are led to falsely believe people like them have made no significant contributions to American history.

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"Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Introduction

Yo soy Joaquín,

perdido en un mundo de confusión:

I am Joaquín, lost in a world of confusion, caught up in the whirl of a gringo society, confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes, suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society. My fathers have lost the economic battle and won the struggle of cultural survival.

And now! I must choose between the paradox of victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger, or to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis, sterilization of the soul and a full stomach. (Gonzales, 1972, p.1)

In this paper I will be engaging in critical historicism through tracing Arizona educational policy created to halt/undermine ethnic studies efforts, the lead up to the ethnic studies ban, examine language in the bills and their political implications, and the response from the community. Then, I will conclude by stating implications for modern iterations (i.e., "CRT" bans) that demonstrate past and present connections examining how the ban on ethnic studies led to the anti-CRT movement. This work is important because if education and policy can be weaponized to keep marginalized groups

subordinate in the social hierarchy by intentionally suppressing information; information that could be used to liberate a group of people from the shackles of white supremacy and make for a more just and equitable society, then it is important for people to learn and understand the history and tactics used to better combat colonial tactics like marginalization or the obfuscation of language. By recognizing these types of tactics then youth in the future can speak up against injustices they see and experience within our education system.

I believe it is important to make note that the current iteration of the “woke” or #staywoke movement began online, Twitter specifically (Vis et al., 2019). The term *unseasoned* is a colloquial term used online to describe white people based on their alleged enjoyment of unseasoned foods. Often said in jest, it is an example of how Black people use comedy and laughter as a coping mechanism for living in a racist oppressive system and are able to use language, African American Vernacular English or AAVE (Hill, 2009) to create epistemic contributions to the cultural zeitgeist as this colloquial language used by African Americans is often co-opted and appropriated online. To honor that cultural element of our time I’ve utilized language in the title (unseasoned elites) to incorporate language to capture a moment in time.

My Positionality

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

– Dr. Seuss

Having been adopted when I was four, since I can remember I’ve always been interested in connecting with different cultures. Growing up in an interracial family or blended family means that there are multiple cultures present. There are harmful logics that are normalized growing up in mostly predominantly white spaces. The structural violence inflicted on youth by disconnecting them from their culture and their history harms anyone who does not fit into the white heteronormative box.

When I was working in the Chicago Public School system while I was finishing my undergraduate degree, I remember one very poignant moment that had me questioning so many things about my life and what I knew to be true about myself and my Blackness. During my undergraduate research fellowship, I was investigating the impact of culturally responsive curricula on students of colors’ academic success in Chicago Public Schools. One day I was speaking with some of the students I worked with, a group of about five black boys, one Chinese boy, and one Latina girl between the ages of seven and twelve about what they knew about their own cultures. Some of the black boys answered first, and I remember my heart shattering and their statement in a sense turning my world upside down. They told me they thought our history as Black people began with European enslavement. When I asked them why they thought that,

they told me that's what they had been taught in school. The other students had similar stories about their own cultures and not knowing enough about their cultures. When this happened I took some time to process what had been said and that night when I went home, I did a lot of thinking about my own experience growing up and why exactly kids might come to believe that their culture's history is nothing beyond suffering and pain.

When I was in middle school, I was placed in an advanced placement group with other students, midway through the year I was taken out along with the other Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and put into a separate advanced placement group just for students of color; not in addition to the other group I was in with all of the other students but segregated and put in a different advanced placement group where the entirety of what we learned focused on the suffering of the different ethnic groups represented. I remember distinctly watching The Middle Passage (Deslauriers, 2000) and being traumatized by the gruesome and disturbing things I had seen done to the enslaved in the movie. I was not alone in learning about the subjugation and suffering of my people at the hands of European colonists. Being our group was Black, Indigenous, and Latin American we read and learned about each group's subjugation. Never did we learn about the intellectuals and activist's and their perspectives from any marginalized group like leader and founder of the Rainbow Coalition in Chicago, Fred Hampton who sought to bring together different groups, or writer and author Amiri Baraka who wrote to elevate Black consciousness, or post "I have a dream" Martin Luther King Jr.; or Jose "Cha Cha" Jiménez of the Young Lords in Chicago who turned a gang into a civil and human rights group that fought for the rights of Puerto Ricans and Latino residents in

Chicago, or Chicano activist Dolores Huerta who was an American labor leader who fought for Mexican farmers rights, or Latina feminist activist Gloria Anzaldua who fought segregation; or Chrysto's of the Menominee tribe who was a two-spirit poet and activist, or Zitkala-Ša of the Yankton Dakota who was a writer and political activist who co-founded the National Council of American Indians in 1926, or Madonna Thunder Hawk who was a leader in the American Indian Movement? Instead, we learned about our cultures through a Eurocentric lens that elevated and illuminated suffering as the foundation of marginalized people and perpetuated stereotypes. I think about us in this separate group watching Dances with Wolves (Costner, 1990) as a film to learn about Indigenous history, and although it was a groundbreaking film for using the Lakota language and employing many Indigenous actors and consultants; there were still problematic elements in the movie from stereotypes being present in the representation of the characters, the white savior trope, the changing and misrepresenting of the story; and I think the more important point being that a Hollywood film that centers the white character was in a way the epitome of coloniality being alive and well in our education system.

While working in the Chicago Public Schools I often would speak with students about their experiences with representation in education since that was something I was curious about and had begun researching. Most of the children I spoke to, regardless of their race, if they were Black, Brown, Indigenous or other people of color they learned what I called “the greatest hits” (Borom, 2019), which were the topics that taught about Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, Indigenous or other people of color's cultures;

for Black people it was slavery & civil rights. I remember thinking back on my childhood and the people I remember who looked like me that I learned about and most of what I learned about Black culture affirmed what those children thought: that Black people's history is JUST slavery and civil rights. This is a sweeping generalization, because there are teachers out there who do put in the extra effort to go outside of the fragmented “greatest hits” and ensure their students learn more than just the violence subjected to racialized and marginalized groups. In having conversations with other Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous people while in college and working in the Chicago Public School system about their experiences there were many similar stories of people not knowing until around college how much they didn't really know, when there was the option to take a course such as African American Studies, or Latin History, or history pertaining to LBGTQ history or gender studies; where people were truly able to realize how much had been kept from them.

Since graduating high school back in 2008 there has been a great deal of work done in states across the country to help address some of the inequities found in education, utilizing new theoretical frameworks like Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2000) or Social Emotional Learning (Goleman & Growald, 2007), as a way to recognize that different students have different needs and lived experiences and incorporating these frameworks in addition to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work on the administrative and educator level, there have been great strides made but there is still so much work to do to address disparities in education. Again, for many Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students share a similar experience of their

histories being relegated to the “greatest hits” which are what are deemed as acceptable by white elites. Additionally, I would like to make a note that I feel it important to say Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous versus BIPOC so that we’re not lumping together different cultures and homogenizing diverse groups of people’s histories and cultures.

Methodology: Critical Historicism

For this paper my data collection method was to utilize some of our university databases to search for articles I could use to piece together the timeline and find information and important data to support my thesis through historicization. My thesis being that through tracing Arizona state and educational policy created to ban/halt/undermine ethnic studies efforts I will be able to illustrate a pattern of suppressing knowledge to marginalized groups that threaten the established power base built into the social hierarchy meant to perpetuate white supremacy. Then, I will conclude by stating implications for modern iterations (i.e., “CRT” bans) that demonstrate past-present connections.

When searching for articles for my paper utilizing primarily Jstor’s database through our university to collect data from articles. When searching for articles my process began with finding the statute information, public figures who played a part in the passing of the legislature as well as who this bill impacted, being the Latino/Hispanic community in Arizona. Then when searching for articles I first entered my query strictly

putting in the statutes name and state. From there I sought to find articles who could give historical accounts of the moment in history, but furthermore if there were articles that have the perspective of someone from marginalized groups; I found a few but most academic articles were written from a Eurocentric perspective.

I also searched for articles pertaining to key players, response from the community, reactionary laws, school & census data, as well as legislative summaries.

For legislative information, the best source of comprehensive information relating to the legislative and legal happenings was Arizona's justice.gov and az.gov, but I also understand that the state is just another extension of the machine that supports white supremacy so the lens in which certain topics were covered I felt sometimes it's best to find local media outlets or schools who had student perspective. In the data collection process, it's extremely hard to find data or academic articles from those who were affected by the laws so for those I searched for news outlets, some local and others outside Arizona to try and have a balance of outside perspective along with those in the community HB 2281 impacted most.

Regarding anti-CRT being that that's a newer movement I was able to use academic articles but also had to utilize other sources like Edweek or The Guardian to find out more about the anti-CRT movement that is still currently underway and examine the issue from different perspectives. I also found it important to utilize local news outlets to get a more localized perspective on the issue.

History of Ethnic Studies

The ethnic studies movement has been around since the early 1900's but kicked off in the 1960's & 1970's in the Bay area colleges and universities (Depenbrock, 2017), evolving out of the Civil Rights Movement which helped bring awareness and enlightenment to Black, Brown, Indigenous and Asian & Pacific Islander communities. Led by the Third World Liberation Front, a coalition of student groups such as the Black Student Union, Latin American Students Organization, Asian American Political Alliance, Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor, and Native American Students Union at San Francisco University in 1968 where students demanded the establishment of ethnic studies courses and held the longest ever strike in the nation's history at the time in which resulted in the establishment of the School of Ethnic Studies at the university (Saul, 2023). A true show of the power communities of color wield when they come together and stand against injustice. It shouldn't be a radical ideal to teach students about their culture, when there are educational inequities teachers and schools must be innovative and there is demonstrable evidence that including students' cultures and lived experiences improves academic success. Educators like Curtis Acosta, the founder of Tucson Unified School District's ethnic studies program saw issues like this and was proactive in using innovative ways to connect the curriculum with the students.

History of Ethnic Studies in AZ

Mexican American Studies (MAS) began in 1998 with the intention of addressing inequities in education, but also to increase motivation for learning and to give students the tools to foster change within their community and achieve higher academic success; as Latino students made up about a third of the state's population (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Tucson Unified School District by no means was the first district to include ethnic studies into their curriculum, but TUSD became the first district to implement it district-wide (Gonzalez, 2020).

Over the next decade plus the program grew and the program brought in staggering numbers of students into the program, about 1300 students enrolled in the course. The districts high school dropout rate for Latinos dropped down to 2.5% in comparison to 56% nationwide in 2010, and TUSD also observed improvements in Latino students' academic performance with higher state testing results and college enrollment (Gonzalez, 2020).

Students learned about art, history, literature, government, and modern issues through a Mexican American lens within the context of the United States. The curricular content and lesson plans included reading literature and poetry by Chicano authors, analysis of music and hip hop, and writing essays regarding contemporary issues like poverty, segregation, and other social justice related subject matter. In 2008, the success of the program and the program itself caught the attention of republican legislators led by

then Superintendent of public Instruction Tom Horne who began to decry the program was meant to indoctrinate students and sew discord and hate between other races by breeding ethnic solidarity (Gonzalez, 2020). Meanwhile, two states over Texas was about to make history that would influence the American education system for the foreseeable future and neighboring state of Arizona was poised to follow suit with the political tension building and rhetoric ramping up by politicians and public figures.

Lead up to Ethnic Studies Ban

The political landscape in Arizona around 2010, and historically, has leaned conservative and Republican with much of the population in the state around Phoenix and is rather analogous. Maricopa county houses 62% of the states republicans with the rest spread out over the state in much lower numbers, but enough to keep the state red (Cohen, 2012). Maricopa country anchors Arizona's vote as republican, with the East Valley with white establishment conservatives who are pro-business, with a large number of members of the Church of Latter-day Saints who make up about 4% of the state's population and whose votes made up 11% of the electorate vote; in the North and West there is the Tea Party Republicans, evangelical Christians, and blue collar workers, and a large retirement communities. This is significant because Arizona residents over 65 make up about 31% of the electorate vote and tend to vote white & republican (Cohen, 2012).

The tenets of political conservatism reflect an old and universal divide between conservatism and liberalism, in that conservatism is more for "stability and order"

whereas liberalism is for “progress and innovation” (Malka & Soto, 2014). One might argue there’s nothing wrong with stability and order, but I would question the validity of that argument with bills like SB 1070 which allowed for racial profiling and questioning someone’s immigration status based on their skin color (ACLU, 2014). The tenets of political conservatism also support sociocultural preference, meaning there would be support for legislation that supports restrictive immigration policies, punitive measure to address crime, as well as moral and social traditionalism. But within the context of the United States, social and moral traditionalism have allowed for some of the most egregious injustices to occur and be justified if not in the eyes of the law, then within the dominant cultural group whose ideology permeates through every layer of government and society. The reason I’m correlating whiteness with political conservatism and republicanism is because white people accounted for 89% of Republican voters in the United States around the time of the banning of ethnic studies (Newport, 2021), so I believe it’s important to note that for context.

With Arizona’s shrinking white population, despite being the majority population in the state, one could argue that laws such as SB 2281 were inevitable because from a colonial perspective it could be argued that with Arizona’s growing Hispanic population could be seen as a threat to power to whites in power and that is why there has been legislation targeting the Hispanic population.

To understand why the banning of ethnic studies happened we’ve got to look back to about five decades to the Fisher-Mendoza vs. TUSD cases which were filed in 1974 &

1975. Initially, the NAACP had filed a lawsuit on behalf of the African American students in the district, charging that the district was segregated and was engaging in unconstitutional discrimination against Black elementary and middle school students (*Fisher v. Tucson Unified Sch. Dist., 1974*), and a later that year the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund filed a separate suit making a similar charge of segregation and discrimination against Mexican American students. The case was then consolidated with Fisher and Mendoza then given the position of class representatives for both groups of people. In 1977 the cases were tried, and the court issued their ruling that the districts had been acting previously with segregative intent, effects of those choices were still visible and to remedy the situation. In 1978 the district court gave their approval for the desegregation plan (*Fisher & Mendoza v. Tucson Unified School District, 1977*). This being a major blow to white supremacy in schools and to white elites who had helped continue to subjugate others and prop themselves up.

In the following years, a tactic utilized by white elites was the idea of colorblindness to stifle progress regarding racial equity in the post-Civil Rights Movement era. Rather than move change forward, the idea of colorblindness was used by whites and white elites to constrain any kind of forward movement and choosing to quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “to not judge a man by the color of their skin, but the content of their character”, selectively appropriating his idea to subvert and muddy its true meaning. In the coming years white conservative politicians helped construct a nationwide ethos of colorblindness, putting confederate monuments next to black heroes to muddy the waters and continue their “both sides” narrative which in effect rid of the

feeling of urgency for change among whites, which would require them to acknowledge color and continued racism that was pervasive everywhere (Cirillo, 2020).

Passing of Prop. 203

With Latino expansion happening in the southwest many whites, specifically the right-wing segment felt the white population was diminishing in what they believed to be a traditionally European-American state. Despite the state's history Arizona's always had an issue with respecting the languages and cultures of other groups and in 2000 passed Prop. 203, which prohibited bilingual education in public schools and targeted the teaching of curricular materials in Spanish, constituting a major setback for Latino's in the state (Kunnie, 2010, p.3).

Twenty-five years after the second major desegregation ruling in the state, the case was given to a new judge and the district court *sua sponte* (Used to indicate that a court has taken notice of an issue on its own motion without prompting or suggestion from either party) issued their order directing parties to show why they felt the court's jurisdiction should not be terminated; meaning the district court took it upon themselves the first opportunity with a new judge, without being prompted by another party to argue why the court's ruling shouldn't be overturned. Then in 2005, the district court for Tucson schools filed for unitary status. Unitary status for schools is given when it has "eliminated the effects of past segregation" to the extent practicable. When districts are declared unitary, the court system can no longer supervise the school systems student

assignments or other decisions (*Pitt County Schools Unitary Status Overview 2021*).

However, the standard and reality don't necessarily align as members of the communities that were impacted by segregation continue to push for an education system that includes their voices and perspectives; one of those individuals was Dolores Huerta, who spoke out to students at Tucson Unified School District.

Dolores Huerta and TUSD

(1) When you are organizing a group of people, the first thing that we do is we talk about the history of what other people have been able to accomplish - people that look like them, workers like them, ordinary people, working people - and we give them the list: these are people like yourself; this is what they were able to do in their community. -

Dolores Huerta

*(2) Let's teach kids, at the kindergarten level, what the contributions of people of color were to building the United States of America. - **Dolores Huerta***

One could see this to eliminate oversight from the state and federal government by white elites in Arizona. This along with other legislative actions stoked the flames of racial tension in the state and in 2006, Chicano activist Dolores Huerta gave a speech at Tucson High School in Tucson, Arizona, in which she criticized the Republican Party for its lack of support for Latino issues, specifically around the problems that Latinos have

faced around US immigration policy. News of her remarks quickly reached the ears of the now former Superintendent of Public Instruction for Arizona schools, Republican Tom Horne, who recently won the position of Attorney General by 52 percent in the 2010 state election (Kunnie, 2010, p.1). Horne's nomination to his position appealed to racist inclination regarding immigration, crime, and other social issues; issues that particularly impacted Latino's in the state, considering they're the largest ethnic group in the state besides whites with growing numbers and political power nationwide. While Horne was Superintendent of Instruction for the state of Arizona, he was quick to criticize her comments. Comments that were taken out of context and used by the media and conservative public figures as an example of political attacks on the Republican party in a public-school setting. Tucson Highschool's principal was on the receiving end of Horne's fury and was made to explain Huerta's comments. From there white conservatives and republicans ran with this to criticize and attack what they deemed a "political" role that the schools Raza-Mexican American Studies played within the district. Calling the curricular content "Marxist" and further decried the program, going as far as describing the program as "ethnic chauvinism" and said it created resentment towards whites (Kunnie, 2010, p.2).

Arizona Educational Landscape circa 2009/2010

In 2010, according to Arizona state records there were about 6,392,017 residents with white people making up about 53.2% of the population; the Latino population making up about 32.3% of the state's population with Black/African Americans at about

5.4%, Indigenous Americans at 5.3%, and Asian or Pacific Islander at 4.1%; the Latino population was substantially larger than other ethnic groups in the state (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

In Arizona schools there are more Hispanic/Latino students at all grade levels than all other ethnic groups in Arizona schools, with English Language Learners (ELL) decreasing over the past decade as well (Milem et al., 2016). As educators, the responsibility of connecting students lived experiences with the curricular content is important for improved academic success. Consequently, leadership in Arizona went the opposite direction and chose to politicize and demonize an educational praxis that supports marginalized students learning, not as a cure all, but merely one piece of the larger pie that is addressing educational inequality.

Arizona Bans Ethnic Studies

“Preservation of one’s own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures.” – Cesar Chavez

“We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community — and this nation.” – Cesar Chavez

On May 11, 2010, after the election former Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne, and predecessor John Huppenthal sent HB 2281 to Republican Governor Jan Brewer who signed the bill legislation which banned the teaching of ethnic studies in the state of Arizona, specifically Hispanic and Latin ethnic studies or “la raza” studies. It’s

not lost on me that Arizona didn't ban African American or Native American studies, although I would question the quality of said programs considering Arizona's history with Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous populations; but it still perpetuates white supremacist culture nevertheless; and it also doesn't mean that white elites haven't weaponized the education system against African American, Native American, Asian American or any other marginalized group. For the sake of this historical examination, we will be focusing on the Hispanic population specifically considering the legislation specifically targeted programs like Chicano Studies at Tucson Unified School District. The two Republican lawmakers, Tom Horne, and John Huppenthal, when penning the law claimed that the ethnic studies courses were "stoking racial tensions and radicalizing students", also pointing to curricular content in TUSD like Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and a poster of Che Guevara (Depenbrock, 2017). This shouldn't be a radical ideal, connecting the curricular content to be representative of the student population, especially if there is data supporting ethnic studies improve academic success, like in California at Stanford University they were able to show that ethnic studies were able to show gains in engagement, attendance, and GPA for at risk students of color (specifically Asian & Latino students) (Donald, 2016). Therefore, with data supporting these types of transformative educational praxis the leadership on the state level should investigate investing in possible solutions to address stark discrepancies in academic success for their students of color.

Banning Ethnic Studies: Laws/Gag Orders

In the following months Tom Horne and John Huppenthal worked in collaboration to pen what would be the catalyst for a spark that would catch the attention of the entire nation. On May 11th, 2010, Governor Jan Brewer signed into law HB 2281 which would ban ethnic studies courses in the state of Arizona (Kunnie, 2010).

HB 2281 states that no school district or charter school can include courses or classes that promote the overthrow of the United States government or promote resentment towards another race, are designed for a particular ethnic group, and advocate for ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals. Stating the legislature finds students should be taught to treat and value each other as individuals and not be taught to resent or hate another race or class of people (Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) § 15-701).

In the bill there is a section that gives stipulations on what the act cannot restrict or prohibit:

- “Courses or classes for Native American pupils that are required to comply with federal law.” (Smaller population in state at 4.6% so no direct threat to power (Census: Arizona Profile, 2010))
- “The grouping of pupils according to academic performance, including capability in the English language that may result in a disparate impact by ethnicity.”

(Disregard for English learners and ELL students - seems directed at the Latino population - largest group in the state, biggest threat to power for whites)

- “Courses or classes that include the history of any ethnic group and that are open to all students, unless the course or class violates this act.” (Black students make up 4.1% of state population, Asian population at 2.8%, and whites at 73% of population, so other groups aren’t populous enough to be any kind of legitimate threat to power for whites in the state) (Census: Arizona Profile, 2010)
- “Courses or classes that include the discussion of controversial aspects of history” (subjective, which leaves open to interpretation)
- “The instruction of the Holocaust, any other instance of genocide, or the historical oppression of any particular group of people based on ethnicity, race, or class.”

Inflicting Cultural Violence: Examining Language in HB 2281

As benign as these provisions may sound on the surface what the bill truly does, coupled with other bills like proposition 203 which prohibits bilingual education, is force assimilation to Western epistemological standards. Regarding Galtung’s “Cultural Violence” this bill’s stipulations are a form of direct violence, in that by disallowing the use of native tongue in school, ridding of bilingual education, and banning of ethnic studies this is in many ways desocialization from the original culture and resocialization into American culture by erasing significant elements of the culture regarding identity needs (Galtung, 1992).

One of the first provisions of the bill is that no school district or charter school can teach courses or classes that promote the overthrow of the government. The first issue with this provision is that it assumes that ethnic studies courses inherently promote the overthrow of the government, which also implies that by learning outside of the framework of white supremacy is a threat not only to the government but the people. The use of fear is not an uncommon tactic used to garner public support.

When the bill was passed the Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne spoke specifically about the Raza-Mexican American studies program stating that the educational approach in education in Tucson Unified School District subscribed to the Freirean approach to education, citing the book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” as a “Marxist” tool that promoted, as he called it “ethnic chauvinism” and promoted “racial resentment towards whites” (Kunnie, 2010).

This distortion of Paulo Freire’s work is nothing new, as in Freire’s home country of Brazil the government has also taken part in the obfuscation of progressive pedagogical theories and praxis. Since the 1960’s dictatorship it is commonplace that there have been accusations of “left-wing indoctrination” through the educational system (Bianchi et al., 2021). Freire’s critiques of the status quo and the systems in place that cause inequities caught the attention of Brazilian public figures like Olavo de Carvalho who was critical of Freire, equating “counter-hegemony” to brainwashing and the undermining of Western values. This is important to remember because within the context of the US specifically the “right” or conservatives, who are overwhelmingly

white and male (Pew Research Center, 2021), view education and culture as integral to the consolidation and control of public consensus. It's especially helpful to push the public's attention away from the economic policies they're enacting, along with material troubles. Instead, the right chooses to keep fighting against an ideology that would even the playing field (Bianchi et al., 2021). Which is ironic because the United States played a role in the overthrowing of the government of Freire's home country of Brazil and helped depose the left leaning President Joao Goulart, who was labeled a "socialist threat" by conservative sectors of society and the military; and install a dictator who was politically aligned with the United States of America (Chirio, 2018). Obfuscation of critiques of the white supremacist system in which we operate is critical to the delegitimization of those critiques and maintaining the white supremacist system. It also allows for the oppressors to also in a sense control the narrative surrounding the topic, and fear is often injected to stoke the flames.

The second provision states that no school district or charter school can have a class or course that promotes resentment towards a race or class of people (A.R.S § 15-843). Historically, not just in Arizona but all over the United States the depiction of people of color in textbooks for secondary school specifically has come a long way, but even more recent publications of texts often mischaracterize groups, minimize accomplishments or contributions to American history, and treats the diaspora as a monolithic entity which in that of itself is problematic. In textbooks by Berkin and Wood, *Land of Promise: A History of the United States to 1877* and *Land of Promise: A History of the United States from 1865*, which gave a historical account of the expansion of the

United States, in the account it portrays then American president James Polk as an aggressive expansionist who continued the tradition of “Manifest Destiny”. In *Land of Promise: A History of the United States from 1865* when the textbook went over a chapter about expansion Polk offered to buy half of Mexico’s territory and when Mexico turned it down Polk stated that force would be necessary to achieve their expansive and capitalist goals. Polk is the one who instigated the war and yet the Mexicans were characterized as welcoming war, minimizing the violence inflicted by white men looking to expand the Americas (Salvucci, 1991, p. 11). Mexican war for independence isn’t mentioned in detail in comparison to the developments happening in Texas during the 1830’s & 40’s. The rebellion in northern Mexico is more significant than the downfall of two of the most extensive and persistent empires the hemisphere has ever known because citizens of the United States were involved. When giving account of the rebellion Texans are described as “dutiful citizens of Mexico who adopted the Roman Catholic faith”. There are several textbook authors who question the validity of Mexican laws once the government began more strict enforcement. In a textbook by Daniel Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley describe settlers during the time in Texas as “not free and missing the Bill of Rights and the guarantees written into the U.S. Constitution (Salvucci, 1991, p.7). When speaking about this rebellion, once the fighting between settlers and the indigenous Mexicans of that region, Mexicans are described as “blood thirsty people bent on subduing the ‘brave’, ‘inspired’ and ‘outnumbered’ Texans. Not only were Mexicans depicted as the enemy of a group of settlers, but also as an enemy of the United States (Salvucci, 1991, p.8). The Eurocentric view on Mexican and Mexican Americans in many ways was reductive of accomplishments to American history, but also fails to recognize the nuances

between cultures and groups within the Latino diaspora. The Eurocentric lens also tends to highlight more frequently about Mexico and Mexican American culture is farm workers coupled with the twin problems of poverty and housing within the overall Latino community (Salvucci, 1991, p.11). Now while I could continue to go into the failings of these textbook companies and education systems, I think it would be more productive to highlight that within the context of education and teaching about other cultures. If Mexico is worth mentioning at all in the greater conversation of world history and their contributions, Mexico is only generally mentioned regarding American interests. This reinforces the view that there is only one side worth mentioning regarding the conversation about foreign policy, and that side is the United States and Western countries. Which then suggests that other countries lack any kind of significant past of their own. American ethnocentrism is pervasive within textbooks even to this day. (Salvucci, 1991, p.11).

The final two provisions bar any class that are primarily designed for a particular ethnic group or advocates for ethnic solidarity instead of individualism (A.R.S § 15-843). These provisions are almost misleading in that most of American history is told through the lens of Western/Eurocentric cultures, with the historical accomplishments, figures, and events given great levels of respect and detail, while minimizing the histories of others. This bill also uses structural violence in that, the provisions stating there are no courses designed for any specific group or promotes ethnic solidarity as a justification for not teaching courses like the ethnic studies course in a sense denies the individual and the group their need for identity, segmenting and “othering” the nonwestern culture. This is

also an act of direct violence as well in that other cultures are treated as secondary and although there is teaching of other cultures the manner in which they're handled is reductive and shallow (Galtung, 1992). When you think about the idea of barring any classes or courses that are for any specific ethnic group and that promote ethnic solidarity it begs the questions, well then why is the curriculum taught from a Eurocentric? First there is the idea of race vs. ethnicity and how ethnicity is something that can be traced, but race is a social construct. Knowing this makes me think that this is something that is very intentional because "white" is a race not an ethnicity, so when schools center white European perspectives and give a great deal more depth to instruction on European cultures in comparison to other groups districts can say that they are teaching about other groups as well, but HOW those other groups are taught about isn't specified, so centering white European perspectives is the status quo. There is also the notion of what role the federal and state government play as well in all of this, and when you go back and look at old testimonies or bills/statutes you can see more specific language on how the government's role is integral in upholding white supremacist culture. The federal government in the past has stated that their purpose is as a mechanism to replace Indigenous (or marginalized peoples) cultures with that of the United States which is a western ideology. Stating as "advisable" and the cheapest and safest way to subduing (indigenous) peoples and providing a safe habitat for the country's white inhabitants, helping whites acquire land... Education was a weapon by which these goals were to be accomplished (Office of the Secretary & Newland, 2022, p.25).

Examining the Language in Bill Restrictions

Examining language further Title 41, Chapter 6, article 10 of the bill under its restrictions stipulates topics that the bill cannot infringe upon. The first bullet states that any courses or classes for Native American pupils cannot be impacted by this bill. Although, it is a positive that Indigenous education is not touched by this bill it shows the duplicity and inconsistency of the standards to be held by. The bill specifically states that there can be no classes our courses for any specific ethnic group, but Indigenous or Native Americans are made up of specific ethnic groups, and when you look at their population in comparison to other ethnic groups in the state like the Latino population at 29.6% the Indigenous population is significantly smaller at 4.6% in 2010 (Census: Arizona Profile, 2010). The second stipulation being the bill cannot impact courses or classes that include the discussion of controversial aspects of history (A.R.S § 15-843), but in examining how history and other topics are discussed by other ethnic groups like African Americans or Asians the consensus is generally that majority of ethnic groups are presented in ways that create a hierarchal structure with Western/American culture being at the top and all others beneath it (Salvucci, 1991). Again, if you look at the population of other ethnic groups in the state, the numbers are staggeringly low in comparison to white and Latino populations. African American's make up 4.1% of state population, Asian American & Pacific Islander population are 2.8%, and whites at 73% of population, so other groups aren't populous enough to be any kind of legitimate threat to power for whites in the state (Census: Arizona Profile, 2010). Which again, gives credence to the notion of this bill targeting the Latino population because their numbers

and political influence are continuing to grow. So, it would seem Latino's would be a group that is a threat to the white supremacist establishment in Arizona, so whites have utilized legislation as a mechanism to curtail any efforts by this group. It's also important to note that what is controversial is something that is subjective and is intentionally vague so that it can remain open to interpretation and leaves enough room for educators to make decisions at their own discretion, which in theory sounds progressive, but the implications of this are that anything the school or parents don't want taught can be deemed controversial. Being that there are no universal parameters on what constitutes as controversial this can be used as a blanket stipulation to remove any content white elites deem unacceptable.

Another one of the provisions included that also points to how those in power chose to exclude those populations smaller in number from this bill is that schools cannot restrict teaching of the holocaust or any other instance of genocide or the historical oppression of any particular group of people based on ethnicity, race, or class (A.R.S § 15-843). Again, all other ethnic groups besides Latino's are in the single digits whereas Latino population is almost a third of the population. Being that it is important to learn about atrocities in our history, I can't say that I remember learning about the massacres of black and brown people in this country. Why? Because that would require our country to reconcile with things that would threaten white elites' credibility as a whole, it would threaten the power they covet, it would threaten their identity that is so closely tied to their delusion of superiority because then all the talk of merit and meritocracy goes out the window. So, instead white elites in positions of power, and I mean real power, the

power to make change or the power to destroy, instead choose to gaslight and use legislation to impose a status quo, and to force assimilation through cultural erasure in our education system. Although, the bill stipulates it cannot bar from teaching certain historical events schools generally have taught about historical atrocities as morally neutral in many cases and ignore the significance of how white European settler colonizers inflicted immeasurable violence in order to achieve where we as a country are positioned globally (Salvucci, 1991, p.1-3). Why have we not learned about King Leopold II and his genocide of almost 15 million Congolese, or the massacres of thousands of African Americans in places like Chicago in 1919, or Washington DC in 1919, or Tulsa in 1921? Why don't we learn about massacres of Latino's in Texas in the early 1900's or about the lynching of Mexican Americans by whites across the southwest in the United States (Beckett, 2019)? It's the audacity in which conservative white elites in power use the education system to inflict so much violence and erasure of cultures and history that is so problematic because it's always under the guise of faux inclusivity, American exceptionalism, and unity under the banner of white supremacy.

The final stipulation under bill restrictions is the bill cannot restrict the grouping of pupils according to academic performance, including capability in the English language that may result in a disparate impact by ethnicity. Meaning schools can legally segregate students by academic performance and with legislation like proposition 203 that bans bilingual education this puts a specific population at a disadvantage, especially considering that ELL students made up about 12% of the student population in public schools (Gambles, 2011). The intentional disregard for English learners and ELL

students seems directed at the Latino population who are the largest nonwhite group in the state (*2010 Census: Arizona Profile 2010*), meaning the biggest threat to power and the status quo.

At the end of the bill there is an additional section that states that this bill prohibits rules pertaining to the discipline, suspension, and expulsion of pupils from being based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or ancestry (A.R.S § 15-843). This in theory sounds noble but data shows that students of color, with the exception to AAPI students, are disciplined, suspended, and expelled at a staggeringly higher rates than white students (Altavena, 2019). In this next section I will be examining the punitive measures in the bill and their political implications.

Punitive Measures and Implications

Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) § 15-701 [HB2281] states that: “if the State Board of Education or Superintendent determines that the *school district or charter school has failed to comply within 60 days after a notice has been issued by the Superintendent, the SBE or Superintendent may direct the Arizona Department of Education to withhold up to 10% of the monthly apportionment of state aid that would otherwise be due to the school district or charter school* and requires ADE to adjust the school district or charter school’s apportionment accordingly.

The statute also states that if the Arizona Department of Education, the Auditor General, or the Attorney General determines that a school district is substantially and deliberately not in compliance with pupil disciplinary actions and if the school district has failed to correct the deficiency within 90 days after receiving notice from the ADE, the Superintendent may withhold the monies the school district would otherwise be entitled to receive from the date of the determination of noncompliance until the ADE determines that the school district is in compliance (Arizona Legislative House, 2010).” No specific number or percentage given so this is subjective and could significantly impact a school who doesn’t comply with bill. This is coercive considering Arizona ranks near the bottom in school funding and educational investment (Hanson, 2022) and teacher pay (Arizona PBS, 2021).

Violation of this law could result in the district losing 10% of its state funding (A.R.S § 15-843), which is substantial; especially considering the stark differences in academic success between white and nonwhite students. So, any loss of funding is therefore considered an act of structural violence (Galtung, 1992). The duplicity of this bill is clear, it posits an educational system that is just and equal, while at the same time inserting stipulations that will further deepen the inequity between whites and nonwhites, and in examining census data it would seem the reason other groups aren’t targeted specifically; although past legislation has in fact targeted other ethnic groups, is because their numbers are so small they’re no real threat to the white supremacist establishment.

Historical Context: Response from the Community

Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world. - Dolores Huerta

In response to the passing of HB 2281 the city of Tucson along with student activists, teachers and other political organizers and activists all over the state of Arizona became a beacon heard across the nation in protest of this bill. There was community organizing and student led protests filling the streets of Tucson in response to legislators.

On April 26th, 2011, nine students part of a grassroots youth collective named United Non-Discriminatory Individuals Demanding Our Studies (UNIDOS) chained themselves to chairs at a TUSD board meeting in an act of civil disobedience to show their disdain for the legislation. Students chanted “when our education is under attack, what do we do...Fight Back!” (Gonzalez, 2020).

The teacher response was equal in its intensity and impact. Curtis Acosta, one of the original teachers who piloted the Mexican American Studies program (Depenbrock, 2017), along with educator Anita Fernandez took the program and, in the beginning, offered it as a Sunday school course. Then Fernandez requested students be able to receive credit at Prescott College where she taught, and it was approved. From there they formed XITO as a way to take the program to school districts across the country (Gonzalez, 2020).

News of the injustice spread nationwide and in California teachers recommended the program be incorporated with their own Mexican American Studies programs within LA school districts which then spread all over California. In Texas, a group of Chicano writers, artist, and activists, with the help of author and professor Tony Diaz formed Librotraficante Banned Book Caravan which traveled city to city in Texas and Arizona handing out banned books to communities and libraries (Gonzalez, 2020). A revolutionary act by the people to show white elites/white supremacists that they will not be silenced.

Arizona's Potential Solutions

If the people of Arizona are able to come together to address these inequities there is plenty of literature out supporting different educational praxis that promote positive student growth for students of color that could be incorporated into curriculum. Altschul, Oyserman & Bybee (2008) examined the benefits of bicultural identities in Latino students' academic success who identified little or exclusively with their cultural origin. Wiggin & Watson-Vandriver (2017) conducted a case study examining the benefits of ethnic studies regarding academic achievement, critical thinking, and the importance of identity for multicultural student populations at a predominantly African American school. The school's curriculum focused on critical multiculturalism, antiracism, and Afrocentric perspectives. In interviews with students and teachers both expressed the curriculum produced cultural empowerment and translated to academic

success. Halagao (2004, 2010) examined the benefits of ethnic studies regarding critical thinking, identity, and empowerment for AAPI students (specifically Filipino). In Halagao's (2004, 2010) study they examined the impact of Pinoy Teach, which was a curriculum that focused on Philippine and Filipino American history and culture, using problem solving pedagogy to encourage students to think critically through various perspectives on history. Vasquez's (2005) study, like Halagao's; examined the benefits of Chicano literature courses in higher education, highlighting students felt they identified with the materials, developed a sense of community with other Latino students, prompting feelings of confidence and empowerment in academic institutions. These educational programs help improve academic success by offering academic programming that builds students up and gives them a voice. Considering the academic discrepancies, one approach to addressing the inequities would be to take a restorative approach to education, focusing on repairing and reducing harm done through inclusive processes that bring together students and educators. *Restorative practices* aim to combat a pipeline of disengaged students by recognizing and elevating their sociopolitical context and learn from their lived experiences. One such practice is called Culturally Responsive Teaching. *Culturally Responsive Teaching* is the pedagogical practice of contextualizing the curricular content to include or take into consideration things such as ecological factors like prior lived experience, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students are included in the implementation of curriculum (Gay, 2000). When you look at the data on academic success of minorities in Arizona, much like the rest of the country there are stark differences in the success of students of color and white students. This shows that the educational outcomes are a complex issue that

require a multitude of interventions to help address discrepancies within the education system. Ethnic studies are just one approach to Culturally Responsive Teaching, one approach to addressing the egregious educational disparities in the state of Arizona. But with the passing of the bill HB 2281, it sends a clear message that white elites are still pushing colonial tactics to weaponize the education system as a way to uphold and perpetuate white supremacy. Indeed, if Arizona leadership were truly about the academic success of all their students, then it is of the utmost importance to explore new ways of teaching and engaging with students, testing out different approaches to student success.

How the Overturning of the Ban of Ethnic Studies Birthed the Anti- “CRT” Movement

Modern Arizona Context

In 2017, U.S. District Judge A. Wallace Tashima made his judgement on permanently banning HB 2281 or the ban on ethnic studies finding it unconstitutional (Associated Press, 2017) and that the “enactment and enforcement” of the law were “motivated by racial animus” (Deppenbrock, 2017). Tashima wrote that because the law was enacted and enforced, not for any legitimate educational purpose, but instead for an invidious discriminatory racial purpose, and a politically partisan purpose the law could not be enforced. Lawyers, politicians and even the Arizona’s Attorney General’s office fought to defend the bill, stating that race played no role in the bill’s intention (Associated Press, 2017). This is a position that is being defended by some of the most powerful

people and institutions in the state, led by white elites who are in positions of power and use that power and influence to perpetuate white supremacy under the guise of American exceptionalism and conservative platitudes that are used to justify the continued attack on the global majority in the state of Arizona.

In recent years, the push for more inclusive education has gained traction despite the state's deep red roots. With pushes for more inclusive education there have been several educational wins in the years after HB 2281 was enacted and overturned. Overturning xenophobic bills attempting to ban learning about anything pertaining to the LBGTQ community, different religions being taught about in school, sex ed, etc. has been at the forefront several different legislative battles in Arizona's schools for over a decade. In the words of Chicano poet Pablo Neruda, "You can cut all of the flowers, but you cannot keep spring from coming." Finally, after years of legislative battles marginalized communities in Arizona were seeing bills targeted at specific communities such as the ethnic studies ban being or the "no promo homo" law overturned. Equally important, with these victories and defeats came lessons learned on how to strategize, organize, and come together in the fight against white supremacy and those lessons would come to use in the not-so-distant future with the anti-CRT crusade.

Modern Victories

It's worth noting as well that the Arizona decision came during the boom of social media and on the heels of the #staywoke movement that was everywhere on Twitter and

other social media platforms. With the killing of so many unarmed Black Americans at the hands of police and vigilante whites, the use of social media was crucial in pushing forward these movements and allowed groups to organize and come together.

Being “woke” or politically correct (Vis et al., 2019) is a term that was brought into the cultural forefront during the protest and by activists DeRay Mckesson on Twitter in 2019 and started a movement that permeated through all marginalized communities to be aware of the colonial practices and tactics being employed and to fight back against oppression in all forms (Cherry-McDaniel, 2017, p.3). This movement was the first time I remember really seeing the internet and social media platforms being used to help organize and bring to light many things that some people of color had been saying been going on forever and using it to bring together people all over the country.

AZ Victories Leading to Backlash

These victories were during the presidency of Donald Trump, who utilized so many different tactics to signal to whites across the country of his racist ideologies, pro capitalist agenda, and his war on “woke”. In a sense he embodied white supremacy and America in so many ways. His xenophobic language towards the Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous communities, Latino immigrants, the Muslim community and really any marginalized community with white conservative republicans vitriol going unchecked, emboldening whites and white elites to commit acts of violence against different communities. He painted the Hispanic/Latino community as violent,

lazy, wanting to drain the economy (Canizales & Vallejo, 2021). This led to reactionary laws all over the country targeted at the Hispanic/Latino community. Arizona being one of the states who employed some of the most racist and restrictive immigration laws in the country with Latino's as the largest non-white population in the state. During Trumps presidency there was also the attacks on laws protecting immigrants and the repeal of DACA, which overwhelmingly impacted the Latino community. In addition to legislation attacking Latino's and immigrants, people's right to peacefully assemble was also under attack as well with legislation popping up all over the country restricting rights for public assembly as well as the president of the United States advocating for violence against protestors by police officers and vigilante groups, and enabled and encouraged police brutality (Venook, 2020), even signing an executive order removing limits on military surplus to police essentially allowing for the militarization of police (Alexander et al., 2017) and further deepening the attitude of 'us vs them'. Under former President Trumps administration police shootings of Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous citizens increased (Jenkins et al., 2022). Consequently, it would be the death of a handful of African Americans by the hands of police that would birth a movement so powerful people from all over the world were participating and supporting.

Movement for Black Lives as a Catalyst for Change

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly,

affects all indirectly.” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

1963

In 2020, in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic with all of the political chaos with continued attacks upon Latino’s and marginalized communities civil liberties being threatened there was the murder of Ahmad Aubrey by three white men who chased him down in their truck and murdered him and the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police officer’s Derek Chauvin who kneeled on George Floyd’s neck for nine minutes, while Alexander Kueng, Tou Thao, and Thomas Lane stood by (Bates, 2022). In the wake of these egregious acts there were nationwide protests for Black Lives Matter, the movement; not to be confused with the organization. The movement came in response to both of their deaths and for months there were demonstrations around the country pushing for the discontinuation of state sanctioned killings of unarmed black men and women; and as much as the movement is about Black lives, it’s also meant to really bring light to the injustices that people of color have been saying for decades or more because although Black lives were being lost at a significantly higher rate than other groups, Brown bodies (Latinos), Indigenous, and Asian bodies were also being lost to police. Black Lives Matter was supposed to be another iteration of #staywoke, because the movement’s purpose was to illuminate injustices experienced by people at the hands of a system working exactly as its intended to and for people to be aware of what’s going on around them. The movement eventually permeated to different facets of society like education and people began pushing for a more inclusive and honest education about the United States history, not just for Black students but for all students.

With there being so much attention on these events and the push for decentering and decolonizing the educational space opposition was expected, but seeing the extent that states went to placate and coddle whites who felt uncomfortable discussing honest history in classrooms was discouraging. In the coming months there were school board meetings and protests by angry white parents who would make threats of all kinds to push back on a more inclusive education. Historian Carol Anderson, in her 2016 book *White Rage*, argues, “The trigger for white rage, inevitably, is Black advancement. It is not the mere presence of Black people that is the problem; rather, it is Blackness with ambition, with drive, with purpose, with aspirations, and with demands for full and equal citizenship.” This statement holds true not only for Black people and black students, but any group who is a threat to white supremacy and its ideals.

Giving context as to why this matters is because all of the hysteria, the misplaced and misguided faux outrage, the calls for school choice, attacks on school board members and school faculty in schools all over, and the campaign against public education was part of a broader strategy that was being executed around the country by conservative white elites whose crusade against the public school system was led by Betsey DeVos. Similarly, to Arizona’s repeated attempts by Tom Horne, John Huppenthal, and Doug Ducey to weaponize the education system and use as a political tool, Betsey Devos used the education system as a political tool and was instrumental in the perpetuation of the anti-CRT movement.

Renaissance of the “War on Woke”: The Anti -“CRT” Movement

Critical Race Theory or CRT is defined as an academic and legal framework that holds systemic racism is part of American society — from education and housing to employment and healthcare. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is embedded in laws, policies and institutions that uphold and reproduce racial inequalities (Legal Defense Fund, 2023). When the anti-“CRT” movement began it was about history and social studies standards; with politicians and parents arguing that programs like ethnic studies were “divisive” and that teaching about historical events like slavery from a non-Eurocentric or sanitized manner was “divisive” and made white kids and families feel uncomfortable therefore schools shouldn’t teach these things, completely ignoring the voices of Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students and parents. Then slowly the anti- “CRT” movement started encompassing things like DEI trainings in schools or different educational theories and praxis like SEL. At the Center for Renewing America, they wrote that SEL has been the Trojan horse for CRT to be spread in classrooms for decades (McWilliams, 2022).

Prior to the anti-CRT movement and even now white elites have taken terminology and perverted it through use of dog whistle’s to use as coverall words or phrases that encompass anything they don’t like, and while it may not always make sense to those who believe it shouldn’t be radical to care about others or to respect peoples

lived experiences; it definitely does to those who have adopted the same ideologies that perpetuate and push white supremacy. This counter movement led to at least thirty-six states introducing or passing legislation blocking “CRT” (Stout & Wilburn, 2022) with Arizona having some of the harshest penalties in the country including up to a \$5,000 fine and the revocation of their teaching credentials (Birzer & Baker, 2023) while being one of the states who pay their teachers the least, tying with Florida and Mississippi (NCES, 2021).

The Miseducation of America: The Media Machine in the Time of Misinformation

“All Americans value freedom of speech and the freedom of press, and I believe this is essential to our continued way of life. But with this freedom comes responsibility. That responsibility has been abdicated here by some in the media and some in the government.” – Steven Hatfill (The Associated Press, 2016)

It’s important to note that the media is an incredibly important tool to perpetuate white supremacy by attacking groups and marginalizing them through control of public narrative. Whether its back in the 1900’s with Henry Ford using his newspaper The Dearborn to attack Jewish people (McGraw, 2019), Jeff Bezos buying Washington Post to silence unions (Streitfeld, 2021) and try to make us feel bad for billionaires, or Elon Musk buying Twitter to attack any opposition and spread misinformation, the use of the media is known to be extremely powerful tool.

There's also Fox News, an opinion network masking as a news network. They're an important cog in the propaganda machine run by Rupert Murdoch, who owns hundreds of news networks around the world under his company News Corp. During the Covid-19 pandemic Fox News with then President Trump and his political and business allies utilized the media network to co-produce systemic misinformation and inaccurate narratives about CRT going on and having toxic discussions on live television going unchecked, but Fox isn't alone. Journalists all over were allowing for opponents of inclusive education to spread misinformation without questioning the validity of their statements with panels of all white pundits and reporters, columnists, and Online personalities on platforms like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc. discussing the topic ad nauseam. In a similar fashion to the royal "we", the perspective centered in media of all forms is white. During Trump's presidency the rise of fringe media, which went from the fringes to being coopted by news stations, politicians, and public figures sharing stories from fringe outlets like Breitbart whose articles were steeped in racial animus and xenophobia (Cantú, 2019). One might ask themselves what is there to gain by spewing conspiracies, racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic stories in the news, why spread misinformation? Just as former U.S. Attorney Henry E. Peterson mentioned in the Watergate case, "Follow the money."

In 2016, former CBS CEO Leslie Moonves stated that although Trump was bad for America he was "damn good for CBS" despite Trump and his entire regime constantly spewing racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic rhetoric constantly for four years (Cantu, 2019). On a more local level we see this phenomenon permeate into the education system

where conservative think tanks, media outlets and law firms are collaborating to block or disrupt lessons on race, history, and gender; pouring money into campaigns to influence public perception on the issue (Gross, 2021). In the wake of unchecked misinformation, all over the country parents, particularly white parents, with the occasional Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous family sprinkled in here and there as a token figure to legitimize the cause in the eyes of whites were storming school boards, ousting liberal school board members and harassing parents, teachers, and administration alike if there was support for equity in education with many of the targeted schools being in rural or suburban school districts (Gross, 2021). With such a broad and encompassing definition of Critical Race Theory acting more of a catchall to include anything teaching students about systemic racism, any mention of white privilege, or sexism makes it difficult for educators to do their job when teaching about topics that impact students' lives. The definition that white conservative elites are using has expanded to include anything related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, even tossing in terms like social-emotional learning and queer theory.

Executing the Conservative Political Strategy: Contemporary Policy Response

In response to Trump's executive order regarding 'divisive concepts' in September of 2020 that prohibited funding for DEI training programs in the Federal Government states began crafting legislation all over the country that barred the teaching of the specified divisive concepts in schools all throughout the country. The first divisive

concepts laws were passed in Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas in May 2021 (Pendharkar, 2022), all three states with long histories of political conservatism. In early language in bills legislators suggested that any discussion of racism that makes students feel ‘guilt’ on account of their race or sex be prohibited. This was the fruit borne from a culture war birthed in Texas over a decade ago when the state rewrote their educational standards to more closely align with conservative values and beliefs.

Soon after teachers across the country began losing their jobs due to backlash against teachers teaching about race and racism, even prior to other states following suit legislatively. Again, Arizona would find itself in the national spotlight because days before their divisive concept’s laws were passed a judge ruled it violated the state’s constitution, citing its vague language and deceptiveness of trying to include the legislation in an omnibus bill. Arizona’s Supreme Court upheld their decision making Arizona the first and only successful state at the time to block divisive concept laws (Pendharkar, 2022).

Laws all over the country started popping up restricting curricular content on the basis of it being divisive. By 2022 there were thirty-six states who had introduced legislation to restrict education on racism, bias, the contributions of specific racial or ethnic groups to U.S. history, or related topics. While seventeen states had opted to increase funding to make education more inclusive (Stout et al., 2022). Consequentially, because the metaphorical flood gates had been opened bills attacking ways of life that did not adhere to heteronormative standards of white Christian values of conservatism have

since grown in number. In Florida the legislator signed into law the “Parental Rights in Education” law, which was also known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill as it restricts education about sexual orientation or gender identity for primary school students, and for secondary school students the topics are taught in a “developmentally appropriate way”, as defined by the state which resulted in similar bills popping up in other states banning books, or rolling back protections and restricting rights for transgender, LGBTQ, and Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students (Pendharkar, 2022).

Arizona Introduces HB2458P: CRT Ban

Of the thirty-six states that introduced anti-CRT legislation is Arizona, who went through this same fight a little more than a decade ago. Arizona introduced HB2458P (§§ 15-711.01, 15-717.02) which again limits instruction race and ethnicity in the classroom. With proponents calling for its removal from classrooms, despite Critical Race Theory is a graduate level legal course. Opponents in Arizona call this another teacher gag law, making it hard on teachers in a state that already is struggling and underfunded.

The provisions in the bill prohibit teachers from teaching that casts blame based on race or ethnicity in all Arizona schools, including the state’s three universities. Not only does the bill bar teachers from teaching about the judgement of a person or people based on their race or that one race is superior to any other, or that anyone bears

responsibility for actions of others of the same race, the bill also bars discussions on meritocracy as a method to oppress members of a different race (Sievers, 2023). Additionally, despite opposition of the bill from teachers, parents and grassroots groups, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne praised the bill, spouting more propaganda about how CRT is taught in schools and he and parents took notice during home instruction during COVID (Sievers, 2023). Which also during a time where our country again was reeling from the death of another unarmed Black person and many states couldn't continue to ignore what was right in front of us as a country. Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne saw that many states were reckoning with what many communities of color had been saying was going on for decades, and decided to double down on his position. At the same time many school districts were looking for ways to have conversations with students about the institutions and systems we live and operate in and to consider students lived experiences. Equally important, many school districts were unequipped but still made efforts, sometimes floundering, but making genuine efforts (Moss, 2022).

Implications of HB2458P

Despite the bill clarifying that the bill is not intended to preclude the discussion of racial animus or discrimination or topics like slavery, Indigenous removal, the holocaust, or Japanese internment camps the language in Arizona's bill utilizes the 'divisive concepts' drawn out by the Trump administration. As stated previously, the issue there is that even when those topics are taught, they are often sanitized, whitewashed, and present

many of the historical issues as neutral, negating any sort of responsibility of white elites in power who systematically oppressed, subjugated, and erased other cultures and histories (Salvucci, 1991).

There are also the further reaching implications if the bill were to pass, as the next step in the legislative process is being sent to the senate for vote before being sent to the Governor to be signed or vetoed. In Arizona, culturally relevant courses were reimplemented through a federal desegregation order, but this bill would put courses that teach through an African American, Latino, or Indigenous lens at risk. The bill also has the potential to impact Advanced Placement designation for courses if certain requirements are removed, meaning students would no longer be able to receive college credit (Sievers, 2023). Additionally, with the language being so broad and consequences being severe, it allows for subjective interpretation. Arizona legislators such as John Huppenthal go as far as claiming that incorporating hip hop into lessons promotes the overthrow of the US government. The song in question, Rage Against the Machines “Take the Power Back.” Although historically legislation has been targeted against Latino populations, with the new legislation (HB2458P) now is including courses from the African American perspective like “An Introduction to Hip Hop Presented by Master Teacher, KRS-One.” (Planas, 2015). Indeed, another example of legislation/education policy being used to suppress knowledge from a marginalized group, now including the suppression of elements of African Americans culture to perpetuate white supremacy.

In addition, to the broad and vague language in the bill there are also the provisions for punitive measures for violations of the bill include loss of up to 10% of the school or districts funding and additionally teachers or professors are subject to a \$5,000 fine if in violation allowing for students and parents to file complaints if they feel a lesson was in violation (Sievers, 2023).

Tactics Used To Disrupt Movements

On March 15th, 2021, conservative activist Chris Rufo tweeted, “We have successfully frozen their brand—“critical race theory”—into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put all the various cultural insanities under that brand category” (@realchrisrufo, 2021). This being one component of a larger strategy used by white elites to weaponize education, essentially making anything pertaining to DEI, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and other teaching praxis use to address the specific needs of marginalized populations “CRT”. Under the umbrella of “CRT” and its definition being so convoluted is an intentional choice that white elites can claim anything they don’t like. The idea of epistemic authority over who contributes to the pool of collective knowledge and whose knowledge is viewed as valuable is a colonial tactic used to devalue knowledge produced by nondominant cultures. Comparatively, both the ban on ethnic studies and the war on “woke”/anti-CRT crusade we see the connective tissue is that in both instances the core of the issue is controlling and suppressing certain kinds of knowledge to certain groups of people. In that, there is enough knowledge given to function and produce within and for

the established system but not enough to challenge or change the system, metaphorically freeing themselves from the shackles of capitalism & white supremacy. Technology as a tool to take language created by marginalized groups that were used as rallying cries or to inspire hope or even just to be aware of what's going on around you is an incredibly powerful mechanism to achieve the goals of white supremacy. Technology functions as a double-edged sword that allows people to bring light to injustices, but it also allows for people to twist it into something completely different and convoluted. It is a method used to confuse about terminology meaning that it can essentially mean whatever white elites want is nothing new but is seeming to happen more and more overtly. With the co-opting and colonization of black colloquial terminology by corporate entities and whites to dilute terminology like "woke" or actual frameworks like Critical Race Theory, epistemic contributions are turned into the equivalent of slurs. The blanketing of terms like CRT are then used to denigrate anything that goes against white supremacy, American exceptionalism, and pro capitalism.

In addition to media outlets and public figures playing a vital role in perpetuating white supremacy another incredibly powerful tool is using policy or law to pass legislation to create systems that keep certain groups locked into a social caste system. Policy or laws also help shape the public narrative around something as many use the law as a moral barometer on what is right and just. Policy and legislation can also impose punitive measures if someone falls out of line metaphorically speaking. In the case of Arizona's anti-CRT legislation, the penalties alone in a state that ranks near the bottom in teacher pay and investment in education (Arizona PBS, 2021) is something that is almost

coercive in the repercussions that come with failure to comply not only punishes the teacher, school, or district but it also imposes punitive measures that impact the students. In the state of Arizona, using legislation like Proposition 203, which prohibits bilingual education sends a clear message to the Latino and immigrant community that their languages and cultures are not a part of the collective identity of the state, despite continued growth of all Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous groups in the state (USAFacts, 2022). Legislation that targets a group that will have a substantial impact on the educational success and experience of nonnative English-speaking students. To knowingly, and even note in the bill that the state understands that the bill limits the type and quality of instruction for those students (Kunnie, 2010) gives the impression of malicious intent. The bill ignores the fact that the student could very well be smart but because they're not proficient in English or English isn't their first language their educational experience suffers, and as much as the state might argue this is about integrating students into the education system and that the bill wasn't meant to be punitive, it is. I would argue impact vs intention, and giving legislators the benefit of the doubt, even if what they're saying were to be true the impact of the bill has a punitive mechanism built in. Arizona has also introduced several bills to limit the rights of protestors and peaceful assembly. Since 2007, Arizona has passed successfully one bill making it a felony to wear any kind of clothing or attire that would keep you from being identified at any kind of protest, political event, or any other public event subject to up to a year in prison for violating the law (Page, 2022). Arizona also currently has two pending bills aiming to limit the freedoms of protestors, freedoms that are so often lauded as the foundation of what it is to be an American. The current pending legislation aims to

expand on defining a “riot” adding any group that disturbs the public peace, and any blocking of traffic to be defined as a riot. Making the offense punishable from two up to twenty-five years in prison. Including language where state and local officials can allow for law enforcement to “respond appropriately”, using vague language to allow for interpretation to be open. Over the past two- or three-years law enforcement has shown a propensity to respond heavy handedly to left-wing protestors and are three times more likely to respond with force with left wing groups than right wing groups (Beckett, 2021). So, the vague language in the bill raises some concerns about the disproportionate response to protests by marginalized groups by law enforcement. Legislation seems to be a tool to take away rights to curtail movements and stifle any progress, but there is always power in numbers. Despite legislation being pushed to penalize protestors, the youth always find a way to make their voices heard. In 2011, students in Tucson Unified School District school board meeting and took over the meeting handcuffing themselves to the board members chairs which prevented them from being able to take their seats. The group of students were named the Capitol Nine. In support of the student activists were crowd of supporters, Senator Steve Gallardo, and pro-immigrant icon Isabel Garcia. In response to the students action the district’s Superintendent John Pedicone rescheduled and moved the location to a high school so that more student voices could be heard (Lemons, 2011). In addition to legislation being a tool to stifle or curtail movements is the use of third-party groups to help push a public narrative on subject matter.

In Arizona, and all over the country the group Moms for Liberty are showing up in board rooms across the country to impose a conservative agenda in school districts and

who are seemingly opposed to public education. The group has been instrumental in the passing of conservative legislation in a number of states and helps shape the public narrative on subject matter in schools, often some of the loudest opposers of inclusive education (Jedeed, 2023). Equally as important as understanding the tactics of stifling and stopping movements is the knowledge of how to overcome these obstacles.

Connecting Themes Throughout History: We Shall Overcome

What many are currently experiencing within the broader context of the United States is not something new, something more akin to *déjà vu*. A theme throughout America's history has been to stall and stifle the progress towards an equitable society of Black, Brown, Indigenous and Asian American & Pacific Islanders, one of the main avenues being our education system; with the legislative win in *Brown vs. Board of Education* being the impetus to a decades long crusade to preserve and perpetuate white supremacy through the education system. The disdain towards the NAACP was something that permeated throughout the south as there were many white supremacist segregationists in southern states who were upset that the NAACP were the main organizers for school desegregation and that the ruling in *Brown* superseded states' rights (James-Galloway & Nixon, 2023). Similarly, to the political chaos surrounding integration there are parallels with the anti-CRT movement currently underway.

Back during the 1950's and 1960's there was legislation targeting groups like the NAACP for supporting desegregation, with the intention of deterring more involvement

with the movement. In Georgia the Georgia Board of Education had publicly noted they would nullify the credentials of any teacher affiliated with the NAACP (James-Gallaway & Nixon, 2023). Similarly, with the anti-CRT crusade we see states enacting similar punitive measures through legislation like in Arizona with their penalties of up to 10% of their school or districts funding could be withheld for violations of “teaching CRT”, even adding in Orwellian provisions similar to the Thought Police, where a student, parent, community member, or another teacher can report another person if they feel they’ve violated the law, despite the language in the bill being vague and broad.

In the more recent history, we can look to Arizona’s ban on ethnic studies as an example of the parallels throughout American history mirrored in the fight against or for “CRT” in schools. In the same fashion as previously with Arizona’s HB2281 which banned ethnic studies we see legislation pop up all over the country with similar language, similar arguments as to why this type of inclusionary education must be eradicated from our education system, and the same white rage that usually accompanies peoples of color fight for progress and having the audacity to demand equity. Similarly, there was also the use of third party or grassroots organizations who mobilize across the country stoking the flames of fear to push the white conservative narrative in our schools. Back then it was organizations like White Citizens Council who were fighting for segregation; contrasting with today’s Moms for Liberty who operate in the same fashion working to disrupt and delegitimize progress made for culturally responsive education (James-Gallaway & Nixon, 2023). Arizona is but a microcosm of the broader context of the United States.

Finally, there is the use of media discourse as a tool to destabilize and delegitimize liberatory social justice movements. During the time of desegregation there were politicians and community members who would use whatever media channel available to push discourse and to get more whites involved. Today, we see the use of social media and TV spread the message globally so that now you can have people on the other side of the globe invested in the goal of preserving white supremacy and to amass exponentially more supporters and agitators to the cause. Consequentially, it's a double-edged sword that works both ways in the fight for progress.

Conclusion and Recommendations

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

— Fred Rogers, Mister Roger's Neighborhood

One thing that is important to consider in today's political landscape is that since the nomination and presidential campaign, and during the presidential term of former president Donald Trump what the Republican party has shown what the party represents and stand for has been not just with just the words they say on their campaigns, or are on shows as pundits and experts, but with the ideology they push through policy and through legislation, which is white supremacy. The dog whistle's by politicians and public figures,

the both implicit and explicit racist, misogynistic, ableist, and xenophobic propaganda that is spewed online and in real life don't help with divorcing an extremely loud minority, but as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr stated regarding the great stumbling block in the fight for freedom wasn't the White Citizens Counselor or the KKK, but it is the white moderate (King, Jr, 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail"). I would offer to those who try to divorce themselves from the image of the Republican Party and that of white elites pushing white supremacy to remember one of the themes in much of what Martin Luther King, Jr talked about was that for good people, staying silent in the face of injustice isn't an option.

It's been said it's important to know your history so that you're not doomed to repeat it. White conservative elites are determined to perpetually live out Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, where everything we've ever done or will do will happen over and over again. But for those who are determined to break cycles of oppression from our everyday life it's important to be able to recognize colonial tactics used to perpetuate white supremacy and also how to combat the ideology within the academic arena, which is why it's incredibly important for schools to invest in resources and training for teachers to be able to properly teach heavier topics so that students can critically analyze. It's important to understand the legislative process from grassroots work done on the ground all the way up to passing of laws, so citizens can critically engage and organize to combat repressive policy and legislation. In today's day and age more than ever its paramount to have some sense of media literacy to differentiate and discern misinformation from social media, public figures, and pundits. It's important to be able to recognize deliberate

obfuscation and colonization of terminology to diminish their intended impact. Likewise, recognizing proxy organizations like Moms for Liberty or Moral Majority and understanding the semantic gymnastics they play, lauding themselves as defenders of individual liberties while simultaneously working to take away rights from students and citizens. So often youth are treated as though they cannot handle complex concepts or heavy topics for discourse, but I would argue that youth do in fact have the capacity and the wherewithal to continue the fight for epistemic equity. Legislation talks about education that is not American exceptionalism is promoting the overthrow of the government, but in reality, people want to know how to get free. How to remove the shackles of white supremacy and live in a world where other cultures ways of knowing and intellectual contributions will be incorporated into learning. If we as a country are serious about reckoning for past wrongs, then it's important to take real steps towards rectifying hundreds of years of inequity both in our country and education system.

It's also important for students, parents, schools, communities, teachers, and leadership to educate themselves and always be continually learning to be able to recognize colonial tactics being used to thwart progress, and also combat the tactics and ideology. This is especially important because policy can be and is weaponized, and in doing so use it as a mechanism to absolve an entire people of past atrocities and to be able to wipe their hands clean in a couple of generations because without understanding history we're doomed to repeat it, but maybe that's the point of blocking and banning educational content. Because if history were to repeat itself it would keep certain groups propped up and able to maintain power. School leadership recognizing the warning signs,

the language and rhetoric used, is important in getting ahead of an issue and being able to strategize with and for engaging the community. Knowledge is power, and an educated community is an incredibly powerful tool in fighting injustice.

The punitive measures in the legislation as a means to deter districts from teaching honest history need to be acknowledged and those who call for measures like that need to be called out in public forums because if leadership anywhere is serious about addressing inequities, then there need to be meaningful measures taken into consideration that don't focus on just Eurocentric perspectives. There are plenty of resources and literature out available to support these types of transformative educational praxis to improve student academic success. It's not enough to just talk about it, citizens need to hold elected officials accountable because policy and legislation are the linchpin in both the fight for justice and equity, as well as the political machine used to make movements stagnant.

The implications alone with the punitive measures built into the bill are coercive and force a state like Arizona, with a significant population of minorities but also ranking near the bottom in in school funding, spending (Hanson, 2022) and teacher pay (Arizona PBS, 2021) to adhere to policy that ignores the cultural contributions and students lived experiences when teachers want to do everything they can to support the needs of students. If there is substantial research and evidence supporting claims that incorporating culture and lived experiences into the curriculum has the potential to improve academic

success then state leadership should do what's best for students and not use the students as political pawns, especially when students are organizing to make their voices heard.

Policy considerations: Decentering Whiteness and Decolonizing Education

“A joyful rebellion is you living differently not because you're mad at how things are but because you are swelling with joy at the thought of how things could be.” — Brad Montague, Kid President's Guide to Being Awesome

As with tradition, it's imperative that Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous individuals in education and academia continue to critique the white supremacist system in which we operate and continue to research anti colonial practices within education by decentering white perspectives and including more epistemological contributions by other groups to the pool of knowledge.

With regard to policy considerations I think it's important for us to look back in history and learn from Arizona's Indian Education Advisory Council, which is mandated by law (A.R.S. 15-244) and is comprised of educators, community members and parents who are Native American themselves who come together to discuss issues pertinent to their community and advises the states Superintendent and the Department of Education regarding policies pertaining to their community collaborating with experts to equitably advance educational priorities and goals (Indian Education Advisory Council 2023). It's examples such as this that highlight the importance of learning history that includes the

voices of those whose story is being told. Likewise, it's important to consult the community and listen to the voices of those who are often overlooked.

When watching news coverage of the current anti-CRT movement one of the things that stood out the most to me was how I cannot recollect news outlets or school boards listening to the voices of the Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous communities that are impacted the most by the legislation, whose voices most often left out. So, I would say when writing policy, it's important to listen to the community, parents, but also students whose voices and stories are being ignored; because those are the voices who need to be heard because the policies impact those communities the most.

Finally, schools and districts need to invest in training and resources for educators so that they can support their students' academic success and ensure that school feels like it is for everyone and not just some. Schools should also invest in resources and practices that promote liberation pedagogy as a means to empower students and create a holocratic relationship where both teacher and student can learn from one another (Fischer, 2022).

Addendum

“The duty of youth is to challenge corruption.” - Kurt Kobain

When writing this paper and historicizing the policy choices to highlight the ways in which policy can be weaponized. I also feel it is equally important to understand how to insulate groups or people from oppressive policies through resistance and organizing. I believe this work could be a helpful contribution to work done that focuses on resistance movements and how to insulate ourselves from oppressive policies and laws through collective voice and movements.

I believe that our youth will be our salvation and it is important for us who are older to create a path for those who are our successors in the fight for racial equity in both our legal and education systems, but also in all levels of society from the ground up and learn the power of collective voice, of organizing for a cause you wholeheartedly believe in. Our youth need to be able to recognize and understand colonial tactics used in our everyday life that help normalize harmful ways of thinking and being.

As I stated a number of times in my thesis is that its important to understand our history so that we can recognize when things are happening in real time. Coming from a African American background and growing up with many different backgrounds around me, I learned the importance of storytelling in many BIPOC communities. This is how life lessons are taught often, whether the stories are cautionary tales, coming of age stories, or just family history the point is to pass down knowledge in a way that allows for

the younger mind to ponder and conceptualize and personalize so that they can take that lesson and use it later in life. So, I think staying true to my roots is an important reason why I chose historicization versus a traditional thesis. I think that stories help us learn from our past and inject kernels of knowledge for others to pick up and be aware of.

This thesis is something that could be used to help inform communities of ways in which the education system can be weaponized. It gives a historical example as well as a contemporary example that people can personalize because the anti-crt movement is happening all over the country. This paper also gives examples of the power of collective voice and the potential impact that can be had. Whether it be Third World Liberation Front bringing together students of different backgrounds to achieve a common goal, or Libroficantes in Arizona who resist by collectively working together to go into communities and share books and stories with diverse perspectives and voices banned in schools labeled as “woke”, or the Black Lives Matter movement as a catalyst to bring people together to organize for change it’s important to learn about examples where movements have brought about change whether through policy or through the inclusion of other voices in education. Arizona’s troubles and success were a microcosm of the larger United States and a potential case study on how education policy can be weaponized and how groups can insulate themselves from those oppressive policies by understanding the policy/legislative as well as organizing and resistance tactics through historicization.

I also believe that this work can be expanded on and there could be other states used as historical and contemporary examples of policy being used as an oppressive tool and then examine the resistance movements around those policies. There could be examples of when resistance worked and when it wasn't enough as there is just as much learned in losing so that the next generation of activists can learn from those before them.

When I think about how I can bring this work into practice I think this would be work that would be important to teach kids in a k-12 setting and use different historical or contemporary examples as a mechanism for participants to conceptualize and personalize the content so that they can use the content and lessons at their own discretion. Within the realm of academia I think contributing the epistemic pool of knowledge from a critical Black perspective continues the tradition of critiquing white supremacist systems. I believe the saying by the ancient Chinese General SunTzu, "Know thy enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be defeated." This quote illustrates the importance of knowing an understanding our history and WHY it is important and sheds light on why so many white conservative elites are against people knowing their histories, because there are hundreds of examples of resistance throughout history and those historical examples give important context as to why and how oppression was possible, but also how resistance was able to change the tides throughout history. The real life examples allow for us to personalize the information to conceptualize and comprehend what is happening around us, allowing for readers to #staywoke. Giving real life examples like this also help readers understand that their enemy may not be an individual person but a system that perpetuates inequities and knowing and understanding that

system can better help with finding solutions or inspiring someone to make change through organizing or through policy by utilizing the “tool kit” of knowledge to recognize and prepare.

In the below section I will have information that wasn't necessary for my argument but provides important context to better understand and have a fuller picture of the time, the political landscape and key players to better understand the what, why, and how movements were started:

Texas Rewrite of History

“Power is always dangerous. It attracts the worst and corrupts the best. Power is only given to those who are prepared to lower themselves to pick it up.”- Ragnar Lothbrook,

(Hirst, 2015)

In 2009 and 2010, there was national attention on the state of Texas, and how they successfully rewrote history. This was done by changing the state standards for social studies, science, English, history, and other subjects, effectively imposing a conservative ideology on curricular content, prioritizing the superiority of American capitalism and exceptionalism, questioning the validity of arguments of our country being a secular country and government, all the while presenting Republican and conservative political and religious ideologies in a more positive light (McKinley, 2010). In the following years the Texas State Board of Education changed their educational standards

in English, science, and history over the course of three years by placing seven religious conservatives who would change state standards that were reflective of what white elites felt was “true American history.” One would think that this would be just a Texas issue, but this had a significant impact on how other states were also able to learn about history. Being that Texas is one of the largest buyers and has one of the largest markets for textbook producers, aside from California (McKinley, 2010) publishers wanted their books approved in Texas so that their sales would be stronger across the country. Meaning, the conservative leaning, sanitized and whitewashed history was taught in classrooms across the country (Crocco, 2014). Texas can be seen as one of the originators of rewriting history curriculum.

Texas’ rewriting of history is something that sent ripples through the country with effects that are still felt today. With so many other states getting their textbooks from Texas many states also taught a revisionist version of history, English, and science through a Eurocentric lens that focused on American exceptionalism, often downplaying, or presenting many historical atrocities through a neutral lens. Black, Brown, and Indigenous cultures were often relegated to geography in primary school and world history in secondary school, with textbooks in secondary school giving a more robust and comprehensive look at a culture and its people, more specifically in this situation Mexican or Latino/Hispanic culture (Salvucci, 1991). Arizona, the focus of this study, is one of the states that followed Texas.

Arizona Follows Texas

In 2010 Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne was succeeded by John Huppenthal. At the time of Huppenthal's appointment, Horne was sworn in as the states Attorney General; both of whom were staunch Republicans. During the same time Republican Governor Jan Brewer was also in office, who during her term signed into law several bills that sought to limit freedoms and protections of certain marginalized groups. The Republican elected officials in Arizona in 2009/2010 ran on promises of stopping "La Raza" (Hispanic identity & culture), traditional academics, more discipline and being tough on crime, and "fixing the immigration issues" (Go, 2002). Accordingly, Arizona legislators penned and passed some of the country's most restrictive immigration legislation, priming residents for more egregious legislation perpetuating white supremacist ideology. With Arizona having such a large population of Hispanic citizens in the state these campaign promises seem to be targeted at a specific audience with the intent of inflicting cultural violence and using fear as a tactic for domination (Galtung, 1990). By that, meaning the use of fear to legitimize the violence in the eyes of white conservatives in the state.

Betsey Devos: Defunding Public Education as a Political Strategy

To add fuel to the political fire there was also the nomination of Betsey DeVos as the Secretary of Education for the US Department of Education, the first conservative

Secretary in her position (Eden, 2022). During her tenure as Secretary of Education she worked to impose a conservative agenda and pandered to religious private schools, being a product of private education herself. In her position she rolled back many of the Obama-era protections put into place for marginalized people, reallocating millions from public schools in the name of school choice (Ferguson, 2019). Although the first part of her tenure was marred with missteps and embarrassing media moments, many white elites felt she governed effectively and understood she was working to implement a conventional conservative policy agenda per a recent AEI report done by Robert Moranto at University of Arkansas (Eden, 2022). Many of the civil rights protections were rolled back under her administration, and in 2018 according to Harvard/politico poll 73% of Americans saw more funding in education as a top priority (Ferguson, 2019), but instead she opted to explore “starving the beast” in effect to curtail government spending on public education. Starving the beast historically and even in some contemporary contexts is a method utilized by conservative white elites to use tax cuts to punish government spending but also enrich their political fortunes (Bartlett, 2007). Despite her claims of the need for more innovation in education her actions send another message, this is what is called virtue signaling; the notion of sharing one’s opinion on a social or political issue to make it seem as though they care and to gain favor for having a certain opinion without actually doing anything meaningful to advance it (2023). Her focus being primarily on dismantling the public education and working towards privatizing the education system, deregulating the education system on a federal level, and changing guidelines (Ferguson, 2019). By working to move the education system towards privatization through changing guidelines and diverting funding from

public to private under the guise of “school choice”, which in many ways widens the inequality gap and diverts funds from public schools to private (News Editor, 1995 & National Education Association, 2021) perpetuates an inequitable educational system and widens the disparities between white and nonwhite students. The notion of a parent having choice of where their child is going is a noble one, but by taking students out of public schools and placing them in charter or private schools takes away dollars for schools and districts that are already extremely underfunded, while also taking into consideration that private schools do not have to abide by the state standards for curriculum as closely as public schools which gives a great deal more latitude on HOW and WHAT content is taught (Barrington, 2022), and that right there is the problem.

In the midst of all the political chaos there were efforts being made around the nation to make education for everyone and not just a few and Secretary DeVos’s efforts seemed to be a clear indication of what her and other white elites in the Republican Party were intending to do, and is further supported in the study done by University of Arkansas where it is stated that many conservatives felt she was governing well and working towards implementing a conservative policy agenda (Maranto, 2022).

Trump Gives Conservatives the Blueprint to Push Their Conservative Educational Strategy: Divisive Concepts

In 2020 states around the country had been doing work regarding DEI and other theoretical praxis being introduced into classrooms in an effort to address educational

disparities between white and Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students; despite Betsey Devos's campaign to divert dollars and starve public schools of desperately needed dollars. Businesses around the country were also participating in DEI efforts, whether performative or genuine, the idea of addressing inequities and using DEI as a tool to do so in different spaces encapsulated the zeitgeist of the time. Then on September 22, 2020, then President Donald Trump signed into law an executive order removing funding to any DEI programs for federal employees (Trump, 2020). In the executive order there were eight divisive concepts and from there you saw laws popping up all over the country utilizing those eight divisive concepts as the basis of their bills. The executive order was in a way a dog whistle to republicans and white elites to let them know the positionality of the presidential administration and that despite throughout our country's history the deliberate and intentional silencing of the histories and voices and narratives around Black, Brown, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Indigenous groups has gone unchecked with impunity. Now that there was substantial traction on several movements this is how white elites responded to destabilize the different movements. In the executive order the eight divisive concepts also operated as the blueprint for how this could be used on every level of government and in our education system.

Former president Trump had successfully given conservatives the blueprint to continue their educational crusade. This was the birth of a new counter movement, the "anti-CRT" movement that whites and white elites were participating in.

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Glossary

- **Coloniality:** coloniality is the “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007 , p. 243) Coloniality articulates the logical structure of power/knowledge relations that emerged with the formation and expansion of Europe as a civilized/civilizational complex from the fifteenth century to the present (Alcoff, 2007).
- **Conservative:** Conservatism is the domination of society by an aristocracy (Agre, 2004). Likewise, conservative is defined as "believing in the value of established and traditional practices in politics and society" or "not liking or accepting changes or new ideas (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)
- **Critical Race Theory:** Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is part of American society — from education and housing to employment and healthcare. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is embedded in laws, policies and institutions that uphold and reproduce racial inequalities. (Legal Defense Fund, 2023)
- **Cultural Violence:** defined here as any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form. By 'cultural' we mean those

aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence - exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science, and formal science (logic, mathematics) - that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. (Galtung, 1990)

Structural: Structural violence is more insidious in its nature, similar to social injustice. An indirect form of violence that is more akin to apartheid, racial segregation laws, legal provisions for the submission of the civilian population, in the form of unjust social conditions, unequal access to education / Education, degrading living conditions, and poverty.

Direct: This violence is visible and of a physical or psychological nature. There is a perpetrator and a victim. Direct violence is what is normally understood as violence (torture, murder, physical or psychological abuse, humiliation, discrimination, bullying, etc.

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** using students' customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction (Gay, 2000)
- **Elite/Elitist:** organizing a system, society, etc. so that only a few people have power or influence. (Oxford Dictionary, 2023)
- **Epistemic Equity:** An asset-based approach that values the inclusion of voices that have historically been discounted, delegitimized, and marginalized through academic cultures and practices (Saltmarsh, 2020).
- **Ethnic Chauvinism:** *a prejudiced belief in the superiority of a certain ethnic group [a cultural or social group with certain characteristics like religion, language, ancestry, or physical traits]* (Van Cleemput & Nieli, 1995).

- **Equity/Social Equity:** efforts to resist systemic forms of oppression and cultivate a more equitable world—one that centers democracy as a primary core value and in which everyone has equal opportunity to thrive regardless of their backgrounds and situations. Thriving is about access to opportunity, networks, resources, and supports—based on where we are and where we aspire to be - to reach one’s full potential (Saltmarsh, 2020).
- **Gag Order:** issued by a court, government, or private entity — require an individual to refrain from making public comments.
- **Jurist:** a jurist refers to a noteworthy influential individual such as a judge, a legal scholar, or a lawyer whose skill is so well renowned that the individual has attained such an authority that their writings and arguments are also seen as a source of law too. (Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, 2020)
- **Modernity:** an epistemological frame that is inseparably bound to the European colonial project. Modernity is presented as a rhetoric of salvation, it hides coloniality, which is the logic of oppression and exploitation. Modernity, capitalism and coloniality are aspects of the same package of control of economy and authority, of gender and sexuality of knowledge and subjectivity. (Quijano, 2007, Mignolo 2007)
- **Religious conservative/Conservatism:** conservatism as the tendency to treat the texts, teachings, and traditions of one’s religion as self-evidently true, strongly authoritative, and lacking the need for extensive human interpretation (Wuthnow 1988; Hunter 1991; Ellis and Stimson 2012)

- **Revanche/ist:** The policy of a state intent on regaining areas of its original territory that have been lost to other states as a result of war; a treaty signed under duress ([dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com))
- **The Right:** political ideology that view certain social orders and hierarchies as inevitable, natural, normal, or desirable, typically supporting this position on the basis of natural law, economics, authority, property, or tradition. Hierarchy and inequality may be seen as natural results of traditional social differences or competition in market economies. (*Bobbio et al, 1996*)
- **Unseasoned:** *Twitter slang for a person of Caucasian descent. Referring to the under seasoned or unseasoned food that white Europeans are assumed to enjoy.*
- **White Privilege:** A set of advantages and/or immunities that white people benefit from on a daily basis beyond those common to all others. White privilege can exist without white people's conscious knowledge of its presence, and it helps to maintain the racial hierarchy in the United States. (NEA Center for Social Justice, 2020)
- **White Supremacy Culture:** a form of racism centered upon the belief that white people are superior to people of other racial backgrounds and that whites should politically, economically, and socially dominate non-whites. While often associated with violence perpetrated by the KKK and other white supremacist groups, it also describes a political ideology and systemic oppression that perpetuates and maintains the social, political, historical and/or industrial white domination. Characteristics of white supremacy that manifest in organizational culture and are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or

chosen by the full group. The characteristics are damaging to both people of color and white people in that they elevate the values, preferences, and experiences of one racial group above all others. (NEA Center for Social Justice, 2020)