

To: QCC Academic Senate  
From: QCC Academic Freedom Committee  
RE: Resolution: Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory  
Date: February, 2022

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

**WHEREAS** both the [Collective Bargaining agreement of the City University of New York](#) with the Professional Staff Congress and the [Policy \(1.02\) of the CUNY Board of Trustees](#) affirm in 1973 the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities, and

**WHEREAS** the American Association of University Professors' [1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) affirms Academic Freedom, and

**WHEREAS** faculty have responsibility for the curriculum at their universities, as stated in both AAUP policy and the CUNY BOT Bylaws [8.5, 8.6], and

**WHEREAS** the term “divisive” used in reference to teaching matters involving race in the history and institutions of the United States and its states and territories is indeterminate, subjective, and chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics based on subjective criteria that are inapposite from the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills, and

**WHEREAS** educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy based on race or gender should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to produce engaged and informed citizens, and

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

**WHEREAS** CUNY Chancellor, Félix V. Matos Rodríguez [describes CUNY](#) as having “ its historic mission of diversity, inclusion, opportunity and social justice” and

**WHEREAS** CUNY Chancellor, Félix V. Matos Rodríguez has [stated that](#) “It is incumbent on all of us to champion diversity and support society’s contributions to advancing racial and social justice”, and

**WHEREAS** most recently the CUNY Board of Trustees of the University adopted [a resolution that further supports the Governor’s Executive Order No. 204](#) that “observance of Juneteenth honors the history, perseverance, and achievements of African Americans, and celebrates America’s progress and continuing commitment to realizing the principles of liberty and equality upon which our nation was founded;”

**WHEREAS** in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of BIPOC and LGBTQI history and the policies that contributed to inequities, Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that QCC Academic Senate resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate college curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the state legislature, city council, any outside entities or even the Board of Trustees, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Academic Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by this pernicious legislation when they seek to teach the truth in U.S. history and civics education,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Academic Senate calls upon CUNY Chancellor, Félix V. Matos Rodríguez and University Provost, Dan Lemons to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the state legislature, city council, any outside entities or even the Board of Trustees,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Senate affirms the [Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism](#), (see below) authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.

Background:

- Scholarly Groups Condemn Laws Limiting Teaching on Race (New York Times, June 16, 2021)
- Texas 'critical race theory' bill limiting teaching of current events signed into law (ABC13, June 16, 2021)
- Republicans Want Federal Funding Cuts to Schools Using ‘1619 Project’—But There’s a Twist

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

*At a time when the country is confronting deep-rooted racial inequity and having overdue conversations about our history, legislators in a number of states have moved to restrict teaching about oppression, race, and gender.*

*We strongly oppose these efforts to stifle education about racism and American history in schools, colleges, and universities. Along with more than seventy other organizations who have signed on to a statement authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, we affirm that Americans of all ages deserve nothing less than a free and open exchange about history and the forces that shape our world today. Read the joint statement below.*

### **Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History**

June 16, 2021

We, the undersigned associations and organizations, state our firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities. These efforts have taken varied shape in at least 20 states, but often the legislation aims to prohibit or impede the teaching and education of students concerning what are termed “divisive concepts.” These divisive concepts as defined in numerous bills are a litany of vague and indefinite buzzwords and phrases including, for example, “that any individual should feel or be made to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological or emotional distress on account of that individual's race or sex.” These legislative efforts are deeply troubling for numerous reasons.

First, these bills risk infringing on the right of faculty to teach and of students to learn. The clear goal of these efforts is to suppress teaching and learning about the role of racism in the history of the United States. Purportedly, any examination of racism in this country’s classrooms might cause some students “discomfort” because it is an uncomfortable and complicated subject. But the ideal of informed citizenship necessitates an educated public. Educators must provide an accurate view of the past in order to better prepare students for community participation and robust civic engagement. Suppressing or watering down discussion of “divisive concepts” in educational institutions deprives students of opportunities to discuss and foster solutions to social division and injustice. Legislation cannot erase “concepts” or history; it can, however, diminish educators’ ability to help students address facts in an honest and open environment capable of nourishing intellectual exploration. Educators owe students a clear-eyed, nuanced, and frank delivery of history so that they can learn, grow, and confront the issues of the day, not hew to some state-ordered ideology.

Second, these legislative efforts seek to substitute political mandates for the considered judgment of professional educators, hindering students’ ability to learn and engage in critical thinking across differences and disagreements. These regulations constitute an inappropriate attempt to transfer responsibility for the evaluation of a curriculum and subject matter from educators to elected officials. The purpose of education is to serve the common good by promoting open inquiry and advancing human knowledge. Politicians in a democratic society should not

manipulate public school curricula to advance partisan or ideological aims. In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning.

Knowledge of the past exists to serve the needs of the living. In the current context, this includes an honest reckoning with all aspects of that past. Americans of all ages deserve nothing less than a free and open exchange about history and the forces that shape our world today, an exchange that should take place inside the classroom as well as in the public realm generally. To ban the tools that enable those discussions is to deprive us all of the tools necessary for citizenship in the 21st century. A white-washed view of history cannot change what happened in the past. A free and open society depends on the unrestricted pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

Signed,

American Association of University Professors  
American Historical Association  
Association of American Colleges & Universities  
PEN America

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
ACPA-College Student Educators International  
African American Intellectual History Society  
African Studies Association  
Agricultural History Society  
Alcohol and Drugs History Society  
American Academy of Religion  
American Anthropological Association  
American Association for State and Local History  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of Geographers  
American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education  
American Catholic Historical Association  
American Classical League  
American Council of Learned Societies  
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages  
American Counseling Association  
American Educational Research Association  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
American Folklore Society  
American Humor Studies Association  
American Library Association  
American Philosophical Association  
American Political Science Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Society for Engineering Education

American Society for Environmental History  
American Society for Theatre Research  
American Society of Criminology Executive Board  
American Sociological Association  
American Studies Association  
Anti-Defamation League  
Association for Ancient Historians  
Association for Asian American Studies  
Association for Asian Studies  
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision  
Association for Documentary Editing  
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies  
Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies  
Association for the Study of African American Life and History  
Association for the Study of Higher Education  
Association for the Study of Literature and Environment  
Association for Theatre in Higher Education  
Association of Academic Museums and Galleries  
Association of African American Museums  
Association of College and Research Libraries  
Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning  
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges  
Association of Research Libraries  
Association of University Presses  
Association of Writers & Writing Programs  
Berkshire Conference of Women Historians  
Business History Conference  
Center for Research Libraries  
Central European History Society  
Chinese Historians in the United States  
ClassCrits, Inc.  
Coalition of Urban & Metropolitan Universities (CUMU)  
College Art Association  
Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender History  
Comparative & International Education Society  
Conference on Asian History  
Conference on Faith and History  
Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes  
Contemporary Freudian Society  
Coordinating Council for Women in History  
Council on Social Work Education  
Czechoslovak Studies Association  
Dance Studies Association  
Executive Committee of the American Comparative Literature Association  
Forum on Early-Modern Empires and Global Interactions  
French Colonial Historical Society

German Studies Association  
Higher Learning Commission  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
Historical Society of Twentieth Century China  
Immigration Ethnic History Society  
International Studies Association  
International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation  
Italian American Studies Association  
John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education  
Keats-Shelley Association of America  
Labor and Working-Class History Association  
Middle East Studies Association  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
Midwestern History Association  
Modern Language Association  
NAFSA: Association of International Educators  
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
National Association for College Admission Counseling  
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education  
National Association of Dean and Directors Schools of Social Work  
National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education  
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Coalition for History  
National Council for the Social Studies  
National Council of Teachers of English  
National Council on Public History  
National Education Association  
Network for Public Education  
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives  
National Women's Studies Association  
New England Commission of Higher Education  
North American Conference on British Studies  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
Ohio Academy of History  
Organization of American Historians  
Pacific Coast Branch-American Historical Association  
Peace History Society  
Phi Beta Kappa Society  
Popular Culture Association  
Radical History Review  
Rhetoric Society of America  
Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media  
Scholars at Risk  
Shakespeare Association of America  
Society for Austrian and Habsburg History

Society for Classical Studies  
Society for Community Research and Action  
Society for Ethnomusicology  
Society for French Historical Studies  
Society for Historians of the Early American Republic  
Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and Gender  
Society for the Study of Social Problems  
Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States  
Society for US Intellectual History  
Society of American Historians  
Society of Architectural Historians  
Society of Civil War Historians  
Society of Transnational Academic Researchers (STAR Scholars Network)  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges  
Southern Historical Association  
The Authors Guild  
The Freedom to Read Foundation  
United Faculty of Florida - University of Florida, NEA/AFT/FEA, AFL-CIO  
University Film and Video Association  
Urban History Association  
WASC Senior College and University Commission  
Western History Association  
Western Society for French History  
Women in French  
World History Association

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