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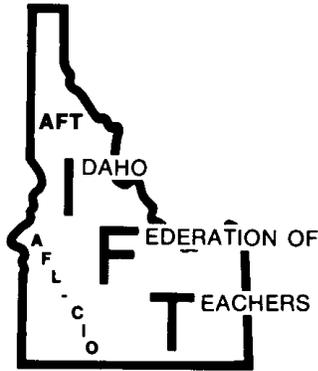
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The “Social Injustice Agenda” for Education in Idaho

by Martin Orr, IFT President

Some in the Idaho Legislature believe that Idaho’s teachers have the most sinister of motives. Kindergarteners in some dystopian future might be prohibited from using racial slurs. Their older siblings might be informed about gender equity and the crime of sexual assault. Adult learners might be assigned to read something other than ... it’s not quite clear what exactly.

Some in the Idaho Legislature would, among other things, deny college faculty academic freedom. They would censor ideas that make them uncomfortable. While my colleagues and I strive to provide a cutting-edge curriculum, they would, ironically, in the name of “preserving Western culture,” cordon off key moments in the intellectual history of Europe and the United States.

If discussion of oppression is off limits, that takes out a lot of theology, a big chunk of Greco-Roman thought, and much of Shakespeare. If acknowledging the unaccountable power of privileged minorities is *verboten*, is it acceptable to discuss Machiavelli’s *The Prince*? That would require banning political science, and would leave a really big gap in Western intellectual history.

What some in the Idaho Legislature should be afraid of, and what they can’t control, is that my students, your children, will be teaching the

teachers. Students will drive the curriculum as they always have.

Over my career, key moments in my continuing education were when students recommended a book or article, gave me a mix of a tape of a musician or comedian, or a link to a YouTube video. If it weren’t for your children, I still might not know about YouTube.

Most important was when they asked me “Why aren’t you teaching this topic, or about this scholar, or referring to this research?”

Critical Race Theory, the latest bugaboo, has become too mainstreamed to serve that purpose. Most college students are exposed to this – maybe not by name – by celebrities, athletes, and other “influencers” in popular culture well before they might encounter it in school. Trevor Noah is a bigger threat to them than a mere teacher.

With supreme irony, the Idaho Freedom Foundation has also probably done more to motivate people to look up Critical Race Theory than any professor on any campus in Idaho.

The problem isn’t Critical Race Theory *per se*. The problem, for them, is that few people accept the premise that this is a perfectly just society, and that racial and ethnic minorities—and women—are disproportionately impoverished and marginalized because they are less meritorious than white people, especially men. That’s why the Idaho Freedom Foundation brought in *Bell Curve* co-author Charles Murray. This radical biological determinism is the foundation of what they believe.

No, for them the problem isn't theory, but the stubborn facts. The problem, for them, is that 58 percent of white people in the U.S. acknowledge that "the legacy of slavery affects the position of black people in American society today," according to a 2019 Pew Center Survey.

Moreover, 43 percent of *white Republicans* think blacks are treated less fairly by police. That's what's keeping them awake nights, not the teachers. I understand that many are upset by these modest shifts in the opinions of white people, but that is a broader trend that can't be reversed by defunding education.

Ironically, the IFF and anti-RINO Republicans overstate the power of formal education. Even under confinement and torture, people aren't readily indoctrinated beyond childhood. Adults can certainly be fooled (witness QAnon) but that isn't coming from the schools. Blame advertising by self-interested hucksters and profit-driven social media for that.

The anti-RINO Republicans need to realize that young people will be encountering Marxism, communism, socialism, fascism, Critical Race Theory and RINO Republicanism whether they go to college or not, whether education is funded or not.

However, if you come to an Idaho institution of higher education, I am confident that you will leave politically and historically literate, better able to participate in political debate, and more likely to be the culturally-competent team player who can have a successful career in your chosen field. If you decide that Critical Race Theory or Marxism or Ayn Rand or Charles Murray are nonsense, and can articulate and defend your understanding of the strengths and limitations of each, that's a win for you, for me, and for Idaho.

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