

# WHOLESTORY EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

## At a Glance



*Across the country, our ability to learn history truthfully and have honest discussions about diversity, racism, and sexism is under attack. This opposition directly impedes our ability to tell the whole histories of Asian American, Black American, Indigenous, and Latino/Latinx American communities in schools which is necessary to build a more inclusive future for all.*

### What to know about the attacks on diversity, history, and truth?

Laws are being passed in states across the country that threaten our children's right to learn about our history honestly and without censorship. These laws often explicitly call for the banning of "Critical Race Theory" or other "divisive concepts." In reality, these bills seek to co-opt certain terms and concepts to undermine the teaching of diversity, history, and truth.



In the context of these bills and broader disinformation campaigns, the phrases "Critical Race Theory" or "CRT" are intentionally misused as catch-alls to malign anything related to race, equity, or diversity. Critical Race Theory is a framework that helps us understand how racism is embedded within U.S. institutions, such as our court systems and the labor market, resulting in [disparities in outcomes](#) by race. But this is an academic and legal theory that is often taught in law schools and universities. **What's actually under threat is truthful history, critical thinking, and equity.**



### Why is the honest learning of our history now under attack?

As the nation is coming to reckon with the history of race and racism in our country, those opposed to efforts to build a more inclusive society have begun to label anything they deem "woke" or "reverse racist" as "Critical Race Theory." **Most Americans are not familiar with what CRT actually is, making it an easy scapegoat.** In the lead up to the 2020 election, the Trump Administration issued an [Executive Order](#) prohibiting federal agencies from conducting [trainings](#) to address racism and sexism. Although the Biden Administration [rescinded](#) that Executive Order, states then began passing copycat bills to censor the honest learning of our whole histories in our schools.

## What is happening in the states?

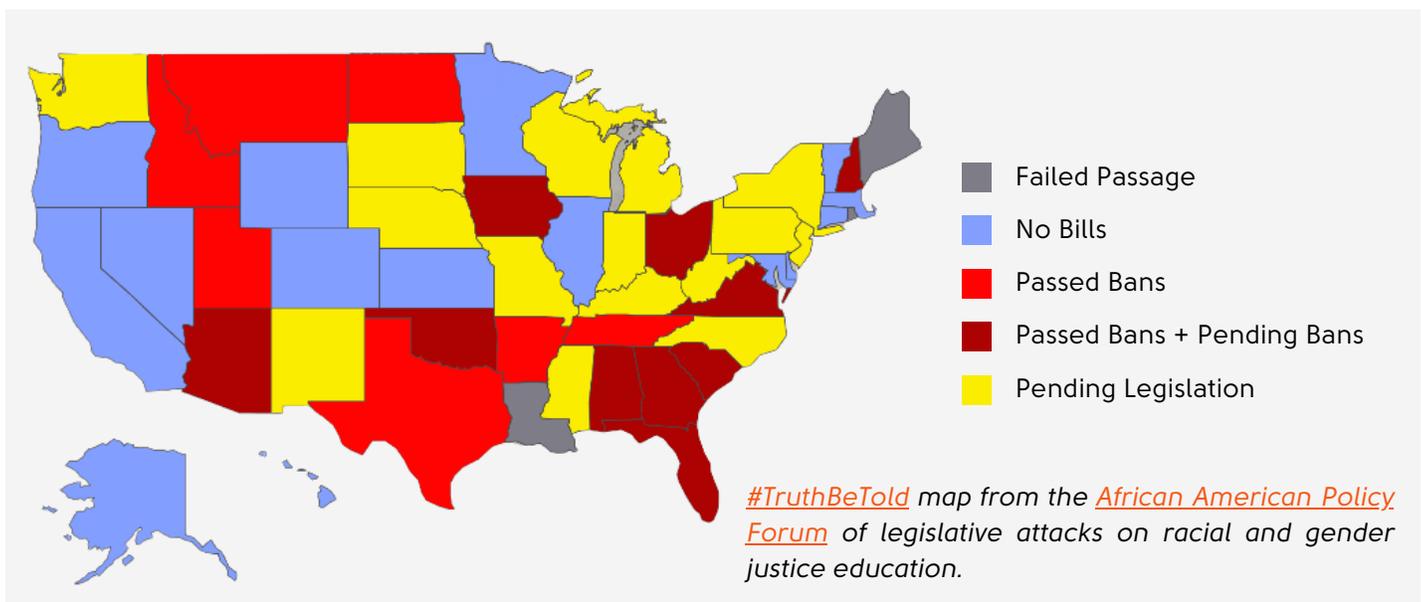
As of January 2022, at least [122 state-level bills](#) aimed at restricting the teaching of diversity, history, and truth have been pre-filed or introduced around the country; such measures have already [become law](#) in Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and several other states have implemented similar regulations (Florida), measures, or executive orders (Virginia).

### These bills target efforts to teach history holistically, often banning things like:

- Curriculum that identifies certain people, entities, or institutions as “sexist,” “racist,” or “privileged”
- Teaching of the [1619 Project](#)
- Use of words like “diversity, equity, and inclusion”
- Teaching “controversial issues” and giving deference to one side
- [“Anti-American ideologies”](#)

In addition, these bills are not focused exclusively on race; they often target concepts related to gender, with some going as far as to [prohibit honest discussions](#) about gender and sexism. **Over time, these bills have gotten bolder in their attacks**, including targeting speech in higher education and allowing parents to sue school districts and [recover legal costs](#) if they win.

At the local level, some school boards have [passed resolutions](#) to ban anything that those opposed to honest learning deem to be “CRT” (or concepts related to “CRT”); banned books teaching about racism, sexism, or other “divisive concepts;” attempted to recall progressive school board members; and passed other measures severely restricting what educators are able to teach in classrooms.





### Why does this matter for Asian American communities?

Future generations of Americans should be able to learn about the discrimination and violence communities of color have experienced and still face today, including the rise in anti-Asian hate that Asian American communities are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, today's youth deserve to learn the truth about colonialism, slavery, racial segregation, and other historical injustices such as the Trail of Tears, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and Japanese American incarceration. **If we are to heal and move forward as a country, we need a society that respects diverse cultural backgrounds, fosters equitable opportunities for everyone, and does not shy away from the truthful telling of our history.** Together, we can build intercommunity solidarity and a more inclusive future.



Learning about Asian American history as an integral part of American history allows everyone to see the impact Asian Americans have had in building our country, from constructing the transcontinental railroad, to mobilizing the farm labor movement, to defining what citizenship looks like in the U.S. It also provides the opportunity to learn about historical figures such as **Wong Kim Ark, Grace Lee Boggs, Ibrahim Chowdry, Larry Itliong, Fred Korematsu, and Yuri Kochiyama**, who have defined pivotal moments in American history that we should study and understand.

### What is at stake if these attacks go unchecked?

If we do not address these attacks, state bills targeting honest learning of our whole history will continue to be introduced, and even more will be passed. These laws chill speech in schools and undermine our ability as a society to have honest conversations about race and history.

Without learning about the wrongs of the past, we are allowing for them to be repeated or forgotten. If our histories are censored, children will learn a muted and distorted version of history that does not reflect the current or projected diversity of this country. Teachers will fear that teaching certain aspects of American history will cost them their jobs. **These chilling effects and impacts are already taking hold in our classrooms.**



Learning our histories also helps break down the model minority myth, the perpetual foreigner trope, and other harmful stereotypes about Asian Americans. Knowing our whole history, even the difficult facts, is necessary to combat anti-Asian hate, racial profiling, and other instances of Asian Americans being othered or not viewed as completely American. Knowing our past informs our continued efforts on the important issues affecting the Asian American community, including immigration, voting, census, racial justice, access to technology, and representation ([more information in our Message Guidance](#)).

## What are some ways to promote teaching about our whole stories so that all children can learn from our past?

All children deserve to see themselves and their stories represented in our history. Being able to fully learn about Asian American history and tell our stories will also help diverse Asian American communities to learn more about each other, fostering intercommunity empathy and understanding among groups of people that are often treated as a monolith, yet carry with them generations of historical tensions, stereotypes, and misunderstandings. **All Americans benefit from greater cultural understanding.**

Across the country, youth, parents, educators, and advocates are calling for diverse histories and experiences to be included in the curriculum—including Asian American studies. The [TEAACH Act](#) made Illinois the first state in the country to mandate the teaching of Asian American history in public school curriculums. New Jersey passed a [similar law](#) and other states such as Maryland and Michigan have introduced similar legislation. Other states, including [California](#), [Oregon](#), and [Nevada](#), have mandated the inclusion of ethnic studies in K-12 curriculum so that students can learn a more holistic picture of American history. **These laws represent pivotal first steps in ensuring that American history books reflect the diversity of the students who read them.**

*For more information, read our [message guidance](#), [talking points document](#), and visit our [WE Campaign webpage](#) for additional resources.*

*To learn more on how to get involved, contact us at [wholestoryeducation@advancingjustice-aaajc.org](mailto:wholestoryeducation@advancingjustice-aaajc.org).*

Top row (L to R): Vincent Chin, Kala Bagai, Fred Korematsu, Kitty Tsui, Kalpana Chawla  
Bottom row (L to R): Grace Lee Boggs, Philip Vera Cruz, Afifa Karam, Yuri Kochiyama

