

Far-right Temecula school board in California sued over critical race theory ban

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The school board of the Temecula Valley Unified School District (TVUSD) in California has been sued by the Temecula Valley Educators Association, individual teachers and groups including the American Civil Liberties Union in a suit that is receiving support from California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom. The lawsuit demands a court order declaring that a ban on "Critical Race Theory or other similar frameworks" is unconstitutional under California Law.

The Temecula Valley Unified School District serves the city of Temecula, which is located between San Diego and Los Angeles. In December 2022, the school board voted to pass Resolution 21, which prohibits the teaching of "Critical Race theory or other similar frameworks."

This is a part of a broader attack on public education and democratic rights by the fascistic Republican Party. Notwithstanding the Trotskyist movement's fundamental opposition to the anti-rationalist philosophy and racist politics of critical race theory, which interprets history and all social interactions from the standpoint of race, we condemn the attempts of the far right to censor school curricula. Such censorship is part of a frontal attack on democratic rights, as, for example, Florida's "Don't say Gay" bill and the attack on the works of Shakespeare.

The school board's move sparked student walkouts early this year in protest against the ban. The board has remained intransigent in the face of a broad backlash. Following a closed-door board meeting in June, in which the superintendent was fired, the school board brought in police to threaten an outraged crowd of teachers, parents and students.

The right-wing majority on the TVUSD school board face a recall effort initiated in June. In July, the board voted to ban the *Social Studies Alive!* textbook

following an openly homophobic tirade by board President Joseph Komrosky, who stated, "My question is, why even mention a pedophile?" He was referring to Harvey Milk, the San Francisco Democratic Party politician and gay rights advocate who served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and was assassinated in November 1978.

On August 2, the school board was sued for voting to ban the textbook. The filing reads, in part:

As the first major action by the Board's newly elected majority, the Resolution follows an openly ideological campaign to stop the indoctrination of ... children by placing candidates on school boards who will fight for Christian and Conservative values.

It states further:

The Board has called for the removal from school libraries of books that express ideas with which members disagree. At the July 18 Board meeting, Defendant Komrosky read a list of 16 books that "are in our libraries," including *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, and *Looking for Alaska* by John Green, before demanding to know "who put these books [there]."

A week after the lawsuit was filed, the school board passed new guidelines for public meetings making it easier for the board to bar dissenting opinions and eject

community members who express oppositional viewpoints.

The ban on critical race theory is intended to suppress left-wing thought, with the principle target being Marxism. In a revealing comment, TVUSD board President Komrosky said that his liberal opponent on the school board was “probably a communist.”

However, it must be made clear that while the far right utilizes the controversy over critical race theory to attack Marxism, critical race theory and Marxism are irreconcilably opposed. Critical race theory emerged from the Frankfurt School and postmodernism—middle class trends that are hostile to any perspective based on the working class. Critical race theory is a fundamentally anti-rationalist world view, which examines all of history through the prism of race. In so doing, it shares basic premises with the far right and facilitates the latter’s reactionary agitation.

Both the Democrats and the Republicans support the banning of books and censoring of curricula. A Biloxi, Mississippi, school board in 2017 removed Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, set in the Jim Crow South, on the grounds that it included language (reflecting race relations of that time and place) which made students “uncomfortable.” Similar bans were carried out in 2018 by a Duluth, Minnesota, school board, which, in addition to Lee’s novel, targeted Mark Twain’s classic *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), set in the South before the Civil War.

As the 2024 presidential election nears, both parties will do all they can to keep the question of race and critical race theory central. This is done in large part to divert attention from the US-NATO war with Russia in Ukraine, the impact of inflation on working class living standards, mounting cuts in social programs such as food stamps and Medicaid, and the suppression of strikes and working class struggles to reverse decades of cuts in real wages and the gutting of working conditions, as in last year’s bipartisan ban on a strike by rail workers.

In the midst of a “hot labor summer,” the working class’s organic striving for unity faces opposition from the state, the corporations and the trade union bureaucracy. The pseudo-left, in its defense of capitalism and the Democrats, utilizes critical race theory to confuse and divide the working class. Workers must reject this ideological poison and fight to

unite across industries—from actors and writers to UPS workers, autoworkers and teachers.

The fact that Newsom and the Democratic Party supports critical race theory must be taken as a warning to workers and youth interested in fighting against inequality. Newsom oversees a state with monumental levels of social inequality, child poverty, homelessness and repression of immigrants and poor people.

The democratic right of teachers to compose their own lesson plans free of state censorship can be defended only on the basis of a united and international struggle of the working class.



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