

RENMUN VIII

The Restoration of Serenity



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Chair Report

Chair Introduction

Hello Senators!

Welcome to RENMUN's United States Senate council! As an intermediate council, we expect to have delegates with a diverse range of experience levels. Whether you're still a relative newbie, or you've had a plethora of conferences under your belt, we know that your time here will be exciting and fruitful. Shiv Agarwal will be your head chair, and Evan Zhang will be your deputy chair.

The US Senate is one of two equal legislative bodies in Congress, the legislative (law-making) branch of the US government. Although separate, the Senate works together with the House of Representatives to pass 'bills'. There are 100 Senators in the real Senate, however, we will obviously **not** have 100 people crowded in a room together for this MUN. As Senators, you have the duty and ability to enact federal legislation in the US, something you definitely cannot do as a lousy UN delegate. As such, we hope that you will make the most of this power in debate!

This chair report is written as a guide to assist you in your research, though we strongly recommend each delegate perform individual research specific to your country to prepare ahead of the committee session. We also just wanted to explain, if it was confusing, that bracketed things such as "(R-FL)" show the party and state of the Senator in question. The first letter, in this case "R", stands for Republican, and the code "FL" stands for Florida. We understand that the rules of procedure and lingo of the US Senate will likely be different to what many of you will have experienced in the past, so please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns!

See you at RENMUN!

Best Regards,
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Reevaluating the approach to the education of race, gender and sexual orientation related topics in the education system

Although the term 'critical race theory' (CRT) was first officially organized in 1989, it has only recently gained popular attention, and is one of the main terms used in the description of race education. In essence, CRT investigates and theorizes on the causes of persisting racial discrimination even after institutional equality, often suggesting that racism is upheld by social hierarchies and institutions even if the people within have good intentions. CRT has been an academic framework at tertiary institutions for decades, however, in recent years, its introduction into education in lower years (US high schools, middle schools and even elementary schools) has sparked fierce debates in the US political scene.

We, the chairs, understand that there are a number of different acronyms used in the topic of gender and sexual orientation. For the purposes of this chair report, we will be using the acronym 'LGBTQ'.

The LGBTQ community has continued to face challenges in today's society, and educators are now educating children in the US about what gender identity and sexual orientation means. Much of this education seeks to de-stigmatize the LGBTQ community and promote inclusivity and equality for all. However, due to religious and moral concerns, many parents have challenged this education. Some parents believe that it is the duty of the parents to teach their children about sexuality and gender, and that some schools have been using unsuitable methods to do so. In response, conservative lawmakers have made attempts to regulate and ban LGBTQ education in some schools.

Currently, there are 2 main sides present in the debate over CRT and LGBTQ, mostly split based on party or ideological lines: conservatives vs liberals. Generally, the Republican party is seen as more conservative, and the Democratic party is seen as more liberal. In short, conservatives tend to be more ambivalent towards education on these topics, feeling that they are pushing a political agenda or are simply unsuitable to be taught to children of a certain age range. Liberals, on the other hand, are much more open in their support of the education of such topics. It is important to note that none of the parties openly support discriminatory policies.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Critical Race Theory (CRT)	An academic framework investigating race in society. It is also often used to refer to curricula in schools that teach children about race-related issues.
Public schools	A school that is funded by local, state and/or federal governments.
Private schools	A school that is generally not supported financially by any government body.
Federal Law/Policy	Federal law or federal policy are pieces of legislation which are implemented nation-wide and instituted by a federal body (such as Congress).
Institutional racism	Institutional racism, also known as systemic racism, is a form of racism that is embedded in the laws and regulations of a society or an organization.
Gender Identity	"A person's deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender, which may or may not correspond to a person's sex assigned at birth."
Sexual Orientation	"A component of identity that includes a person's sexual or emotional attraction to another person and the behavior that may result from this attraction"

Background Information

Although the US Constitution does not give Congress authority over education, and has left the issue of education and teaching curricula to state and local governments and the respective local school boards, there has been precedent of the federal government influencing educational policy. This has been done through implementing conditions for which federal funding can be provided to schools. However, it is important to note that the Senate cannot directly pass regulations on education. Of course, the Senate is still able to push state governments to take certain actions.

Race In Schools

The issue of race and racial discrimination has been taught in US schools for a while, but in the past few years, the issue of critical race theory has sparked controversy. It is universally agreed upon that racism is a force that must end, and also that children should be taught an accurate history about their own country, the United States. Critical race theory, originally a college and university level concept, was introduced to secondary and primary schools. Because critical race theory theorizes that racism is structural, and people unintentionally and subconsciously enforce it regardless of intention, many theorists push for education to remove subconscious biases. This has caused some to believe that CRT imposes upon non-minority children (namely white children) that they are subconsciously or naturally racist.

1619 Project

The 1619 project is a journalistic project started by Nikole Hannah-Jones and the New York Times which "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of the United States' national narrative." It makes a number of claims which even left-leaning historians have rebuked and challenged, such as that the American colonists fought the revolutionary war to protect slavery, and said historians have accused Hannah-Jones of replacing historical fact with ideology. Schools or school districts in Chicago, IL; Newark, N.J.; Buffalo, N.Y., and Washington, D.C. have all reportedly announced 1619 Project-related programs.

LGBTQ in Schools

In recent years, multiple surveys and studies have found that inclusion of LGBTQ topics in curricula create environments that are more safe, welcome and inclusive for all students. Bearing in mind the issue of LGBTQ acceptance in society at large, and the potential disapproval of parents regarding the LGBTQ community, it may be important for children to learn such information at school. In 2011, California became the first state to require the social studies curriculum to include important LGBTQ figures. However, teachers are split about whether or not they should include LGBTQ issues in their curriculum due to the political and legal conflict in this realm.

Controversial Teaching Methods

Many schools have been introducing different methods to educate students on LGBTQ matters. For example, Francis W. Parker School, a private school in Chicago, had an event where students were given adult toys during the school's Pride Week. A separate nationwide program called Drag Queen Story Hour, started in 2015, organizes reading events which are geared towards audiences aged 3-11, which are hosted by drag queens. These methods of education are highly controversial, and have caused backlash by parents.

Potential Clashes

Banning of CRT

Currently, 7 states have banned CRT through state laws. These states are largely Republican dominated. The legislators which pushed for these bans believe that CRT is a form of indoctrination, pushing 'neo-Marxist' ideologies on students, and it is a method of which teachers impose their beliefs on children. They believe that it is harmful for students to be taught that they are 'victims' or they are 'oppressors' based on their skin color, and they believe this is causing children to hate their country and their country's institutions. Furthermore, conservatives believe that the very idea of viewing social issues through the lens of racism is racist in itself, because they believe there is no institutional discrimination in the US, and that any inequalities that occur are due to other social reasons.

On the other hand, Democrats have supported the teaching of race theory in classrooms as a way to prepare the next generation to combat the systemic challenges facing certain communities. By banning CRT and anything to do with race, they fear that teachers may no longer be able to adequately teach about the social issues facing America, and that it 'whitewashes' US history. They disagree that CRT teaches children that they are 'victims' or 'oppressors'. Instead, they want to promote the idea that all citizens may subconsciously prop up racism and that white citizens still receive many benefits unavailable to black citizens (the idea of white privilege).

Alternative Race Teaching Methods

Bearing in mind that many conservatives want to ban the teaching of CRT in schools, there is now a clash as to how American children should be taught about the issue instead of CRT. Mainly, conservatives lean towards teaching the 'Six Basic American Values', which revolve around equality and individual freedom. However, liberals believe that this is 'running' from the issue of structural racism, and the conservative-favored racial colorblindness philosophy (treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity) is a way of shielding white people from their moral responsibility to combat structural racism.

Legislation on Parental Rights and LGBTQ education in schools

Proponents of the Florida Parental Rights law (known as the "Don't Say Gay" law by critics) generally have the view that the education of young children on LGBTQ issues, including the promotion of the development of children's gender identities and sexualities, is a step towards the sexualization of children. They further believe that it is the role of parents to educate their children on these matters. Therefore, there has been support of initiatives to support parents in petitioning their school

boards and increasing parent influence on curriculum planning. On the other hand, there are also individuals who support greater education of the youth on LGBTQ issues, and support children in expressing and discovering their gender identities or sexualities.

Suitability of Programs For Children

It is largely agreed upon by both sides of the political aisle that individuals have the freedom to determine their own gender identity or sexuality. However, there has been controversy about the methods used by some schools to educate their students on the LGBTQ community. As mentioned above, programs such as drag queens in schools, or the provision of books in school libraries instructing on 'queer sex', are highly controversial. Some voices argue that these programs and books normalize the sexualization of children, and are unsuitable for children to interact with. Other voices argue that these events are not harmful, and instead open the eyes of children to the LGBTQ community and promote inclusivity.

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Involvement with the Issue
Parents of Students	<p>Bearing in mind that parents are the ones who elect school boards that make decisions on teaching curricula, parents have the most important role in dictating the education system's methods of teaching race and LGBTQ issues. Many parents have gone to school board meetings to petition and speak out about the issue.</p> <p>The chairs would recommend Senators to watch videos such as this to understand more about the points of view of parents.</p>
Local School Boards	<p>Local school boards are the ultimate governing/decision making bodies which determine the curricula of schools under their jurisdiction. School boards must determine whether or not to include race or LGBTQ teachings in their curricula, and in what form.</p>
Social Activists	<p>As the main driving force for the implementation of race and LGBTQ related</p>

educational material, and the main source of out-of-school interactions with race and LGBTQ issues for students, social activists have a huge role to play in how these issues are taught in schools.

Key Senator Positions

Senator	Involvement with the Issue
Blackburn (R-TN)	Senator Blackburn is one of the main opponents of CRT in the Senate. She has made multiple media appearances denouncing CRT, and has sponsored and pushed for legislation against the 1619 project, teaching of CRT in K-12 schools and teacher training programs
Cotton (R-AR)	Senator Cotton is seen as the 'leader' in the charge against CRT in schools. He introduced the "Stop CRT Act" in 2021, and successfully introduced and passed an amendment to a budget reconciliation bill that prohibited federal funding for CRT teachings in Pre-K and K-12 schools.
McConnell (R-KY)	Senator McConnell is the Senate Republican leader, and has co-introduced the Saving American History Act, along with Senator Blackburn and others, in order to make schools which teach Project 1619 programs ineligible for federal funding.
Booker (D-NJ)	Senator Booker was strongly opposed to Former President Trump's executive order regarding anti-racial bias training for federal employees. He has worked with his Democrat colleagues in the House to push for the African American History Act, seen by some as a counter to anti-CRT legislation.
Warren (D-MA)	Senator Warren is seen as one of the most racially progressive white politicians. Much of

	her work is around racial justice and equality for minority groups. She introduced a bill which confronts the public health impacts of structural racism, which is a key aspect of critical race theory.
Manchin (D-WV)	Senator Manchin is the only Democrat Senator who voted in favor of Republican Senator Cotton's amendment to prohibit the teaching of critical race theory in prekindergarten programs and elementary and secondary schools.

Possible Solutions

- The Office for Civil Rights enforces federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in education programs or activities that receive federal funding. Senators can consider creating legislation that raises awareness of the abilities for parents to file complaints to The Office in order to challenge or combat any school's curriculum that may discriminate.
- Senators can consider creating a method of providing assistance to parents to petition, challenge or sue local school boards, or to support those wishing to be elected to local school boards.
- Senators can consider using the method that can create the largest effect: blocking federal funding to schools if they do not comply or adhere to regulations that the Senator so wishes to set.
- Senators can consider commissioning the US Department of Education to generate federal guidance on a proper education method for the pertinent issues. Although this guidance will not be legally binding, it offers a clear statement of expectations.
- Senators can, if they believe the status quo is the most desirable, affirm that it is up to the school boards and state legislatures to decide on educational policies.
- Senators may consider the creation of LGBTQ safe zones and discrimination free zones in educational institutions.

Past Actions

Race-related Actions

- In 2021, **Senators Scott** (R-FL), **Braun** (R-IN) and **Blackburn** (R-TN), introduced a resolution (S. RES. 246) which condemned Critical Race Theory in K-12

schools. The text of the resolution stated that CRT "serves as a prejudicial ideological tool, rather than an educational tool, and should not be taught in K-12 classrooms as a way to teach students to judge individuals based on sex, race, ethnicity, or national origin."

- On September 22, 2020, former President Trump issued an executive order , which can be seen as a ban on CRT, that prevented federal employers and contractors from conducting training or promoting information that claims:
 - One race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex or that an individual,
 - By virtue of his or her race or sex, someone bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex,
 - And other claims.
- On July 14th, 2021, **Senator Tom Scott** (R-AR) the "Stop CRT Act", which would:
 - Bar federal funds to K-12 schools that promote Critical Race Theory, hire consultants to promote Critical Race Theory, or compel faculty members, students, or any other individual to affirm the tenets of Critical Race Theory
 - Bar federal funds to colleges and universities that compel faculty, students, or any other individual to profess or affirm the tenets of Critical Race Theory
 - Codify President Trump's Executive Order on Preventing Race and Sex Stereotyping to prohibit the federal government and federal contractors from indoctrinating employees or any other individual using trainings that advocate Critical Race Theory

LGBTQ-related Actions

- In March 2022, Florida passed the Parental Rights in Education bill, also known as the "Don't Say Gay" law to critics. Most agree that it limits LGBTQ discussion in schools, but it also focuses on the right of parents to dictate their children's educations. It bans instruction or classroom discussion about LGBTQ issues for children in kindergarten to third grade, and that discussion for older students has to be "age appropriate". It also empowers parents to sue school districts over curriculum contents they do not see appropriate
- In October 2022, House Republicans introduced legislation, the "Stop the Sexualization of Children Act", that is very similar to the Florida "Don't Say Gay" law, and bans instruction on gender identity and sexual orientation in kindergarten through third grade classes. It includes not just instruction in schools, but also any sexually oriented event, literature or program at any federally funded organization.

Guiding Questions

- Should we ban the teaching of critical race theory in schools?
- What does critical race theory actually teach?
- Should children at a young age be encouraged to determine their genders or sexualities by educators?
- Should educators have the decision on educating their students on these topics, or should the parents make the decision?
- Is it harmful for children to be exposed to potentially sexualizing topics such as 'queer intercourse' or individuals such as 'drag queens'?
- What action can be taken to promote/condemn such teachings?
- Should the federal government take action, or should this be left entirely to state and local bodies?

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