

Human Rights and Diversity Committee Statement in Solidarity with Black Youth, Young Adults,
Families, Teachers, and Faculty

“White rage” is often used to describe the oppressive and discriminatory response on systemic- and individual-levels that occur when groups of minoritized people gain rights and freedoms that bring them closer to equitable treatment in the eyes of society. Dr. Carol Anderson describes white rage as imperceptible to what a nation can see. In her analogy, white rage is not the flame of a fire, but the smoldering coals of the logs that produce the intense heat for fire to exist. It is the existence of systemic discrimination in all aspects of life that perpetuate oppressive practices and acts of violence. What triggers white rage is Black advancement and the demand for full and equal citizenship (Anderson, 2017). White fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) is the systemic and individual fear that when *others* gain rights, those in the dominant category will lose rights.

The concepts of white rage and white fragility help us gain insight into the incredible influx of far right, white supremacist, and terrorizing behaviors that have become normalized in media; yet, strike continued fresh fear in the groups that are targeted. It helps us understand that it is not only about these specific horrible acts but that there has been a societal and cultural environment (i.e., coals) that has fueled these acts.

For many of us, we stand as bystanders, thinking “how awful, how terrible” without the self-awareness that the experiences of the communities that are terrorized are part of our own community. The people that were terrorized and murdered are our neighbors, our extended family, and civil servants that contribute to the society we live. The quote, “Silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor,” by Ginetta Sagan, a human rights activist, recenters the discussion of action not on those who committed the act and not on those who were on the receiving side, but on those who looked on.

In the United States, we are in the midst of not only a self-appointed silence, but a forced silence. Seven state governments have banned the discussion of critical race theory, and 16 other states have considered or drafted legislation to ban or partially ban education on critical race theory (Stout & Wilburn, 2022). This act of silencing not only silences teachers, but also students. This act of silencing removes opportunities for learning and growing. This act of silencing perpetuates white supremacy by removing the discussion of all people’s history by allowing only one people’s history.

As our committee processes these acts, we are attempting to examine our own bystander status. We are reminded that if we continue with business as usual we will continue to maintain the environment for these acts to persist (Tatum, 2017). HRDC members are still coming to terms with our feelings as we look on and see limited consequences for white supremacist actions and the continuation of disproportionate consequences for the actions taken by white people compared to those of other races (Alexander, 2020). We not only see this in society but in our schools. We continue to see discriminatory policies and procedures enacted upon that negatively and disproportionately impact students of color (Tatum, 2017).

As the Human Rights and Diversity Committee, we stand in support for the teaching and inclusion of all of our students' histories. We stand for seeing racial and cultural differences as strengths that contribute to a thriving school community. We stand for equitable treatment of our students in school buildings. We stand for recognizing the intersecting identities of our students. We stand for recognizing and addressing the ways in which our education system has not met the education and transition needs of these youth and has suppressed their dreams.

We firmly believe our strength as special educators comes from seeing each student for whom they are. We see value in diversity and inclusive opportunities for students to learn about and from each other. We advocate centering each student's culture and family into the transition process, focusing on the myriad strengths they possess while also addressing the systemic inequities they experience and owning and changing the ways in which our system and we have been complicit.

Alexander, M. (2020). *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press.

Anderson, C. (2017). *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*. Bloomsbury.

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Penguin Random House.

Stout, C., & Wilburn, T. (2022, February). CRT map: Efforts to restrict teaching racism and bias have multiplied across the U.S. *Chalkbeat*. Retrieved from <https://www.chalkbeat.org/22525983/map-critical-race-theory-legislation-teaching-racism>

Tatum, B. D. (2017). *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* Basic Books.