Dave Donley: Critical Race Theory does not belong in the Anchorage School District

By Suzanne Downing – Must Read Alaska April 15, 2021

By DAVE DONLEY

I support the Anchorage School District’s existing strong anti-discrimination policies and our constitutional guarantees of equal justice under the law. Racism of any kind against anyone should not be tolerated.

But, the political left’s control of labels and narratives gives it an extraordinary advantage. For example, liberals have become “progressives.” Illegal aliens are now “undocumented persons.”

“Critical Race Theory,” a form of reverse racism, is already in the Anchorage School District with a vengeance. New proposed “equity” and “anti-racism” policies to be voted on April 20 may officially empower the District’s use of this discriminatory pedagogy.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a radical pop culture movement based on Marxist theory of society and race. CRT is found is books such as “White Fragility” and “How to be an Anti-racist.”

It typically includes the belief that white supremacy exists and maintains power through culture and law. CRT is anti-traditional family, anti-capitalism, anti-individualism, anti-merit-based success, and teaches that all white people are racists.

“White Fragility” is one of the books that promotes Critical Race Theory. The core message of “White Fragility,” that all white Americans are racist, is by definition racist. It teaches that all white Americans are a product of white supremacy and are actively or unwittingly complicit in maintaining this power structure. If you are white and say you are not racist, that is only proof that you are racist.

To quote from “White Fragility”:

Page 22: “When I say only whites can be racist, I mean that in the United states, only whites have the collective social and institutional power and privilege over people of color.”

Page 27: “Whites also produce and reinforce the dominant narratives of society – such as individualism and meritocracy – and use these narratives to explain the positions of other racial groups.”

Page 61: “The romanticized “traditional” family values of the past are also racially problematic.”

Page 83: “While a white person may have been picked on – even mercilessly – by being in the numerical minority in a specific context, the individual experienced race prejudice and discrimination, not racism.”

To quote from “How to be an Anti-Racist”:

Page 19: “the only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.”

Page 163: “To love capitalism is to end up loving racism. To love racism is to end up loving capitalism. The conjoined twins are two sides of the same destructive body.”

Page 222: “They were reacting to the same moderate and liberal and assimilationist forces that all these years later still reduce racism to the individual acts of White Klansmen and Jim Crow politicians and Tea Party Republicans and N-word users and White nationalist shooters and Trumpian politicos.”

Critical Race Theory advocates radically changing existing law and culture to discriminate against all people who, happen to be what they would describe as the race in power, to advantage people of some other races. It is critical of civil-rights scholarship and anti-discrimination laws as mere tools of white supremacy. It advocates a revisionist negative interpretation of American civil rights law and progress against racism in the United States.

However, CRT proponents struggle to explain the success of some minorities and Asian Americans within what they argue is a structurally unfair system. Some CRT theorists group all Asian Americans within the “white” category to justify racial discrimination against them.

This has led to strong opposition to CRT among many Asian Americans. The Trump Justice Department brought suit against Harvard University for race-based discrimination against Asian Americans, but President Biden dropped the case. On the first day of his presidency, President Biden issued an executive order to rescind President Trump’s ban on Critical Race Theory training for employees in federal agencies.

So, what has this got to do with the Anchorage School District? Last year, the ASD began coordinating with the University of Alaska to train ASD teachers in Critical Race Theory. When I requested to be allowed to attend a class, the superintendent refused to let me even observe.

Also last year the ASD’s Director of “Equity and Compliance” announced the intent to use CRT to develop new training. A few months ago, a suggested reading list appeared on the ASD website of the Office of Equity and Compliance. “White Fragility” and “How to be an Anti-Racist” are among other CRT publications as recommended reading for “self understanding.” These books, based on Marxist philosophy, contain bias partisan attacks on Republicans.

I have objected to the District endorsing these books on a taxpayer-funded website without any listing or recognition of opposing thought literature. I submitted a list of books and publications that present opposing opinions, but the District refused to list them. I objected to the lack of any disclaimer to the political and partisan content of the books. Only recently, under public pressure, did the ASD add a very weak and inadequate disclaimer and several non-CRT books, but none in opposition to CRT.

In response to growing parental opposition, the superintendent has stated “Critical Race Theory is not being considered for ASD curriculum nor taught. The discussion of the term arose with self-interest courses teachers participated in on their non-work hours to gain an understanding of the present national discussion.”

But School Board now faces huge pressure to adopt new “equity” and “anti-racism” policies that will authorize the District administration to adopt “administrative regulations” that can impose Critical Race Theory on students and families. At a recent townhall, ASD administrators seemed excited to start the work of instructing parents and ensuring that you are discussing these issues in at home with your children in a District approved manner.

The State of Florida recently banned the use of CRT in public schools. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said, “Teaching kids to hate their country and to hate each other is not worth one red cent of taxpayer money.” In Idaho, a proposal to ban CRT from public schools is in the State House. Schools in other states that have instituted CRT are having huge problems, as parents stand up to imposing its racism and warped philosophies on their children.

The new “equity” and “anti-racism” policies are scheduled to be voted on at the April 20 Anchorage School Board meeting before newly elected members are seated.

To be clear, equality means equal treatment, unbiased competition, and impartially judged outcomes. Equity can mean equal outcomes, achieved if necessary by unequal treatment, biased competition, and preferential judging.

Elements of such policies wrongly applied can attack America’s foundational principle that people should be treated equally and judged as individuals, not as members of groups.

At the April 20 meeting, I will offer amendments to the proposed policies to prevent the administration from using them to justify imposing Critical Race Theory on our children and discriminating against any student based on race. If that is not the intent then the advocates of these new policies should support such protections.

I anticipate loud opposition to any amendments to the proposed policies. That opposition will tell you all you need to know about how dangerous these innocent sounding policies may truly be.

Anyone can testify at School Board meetings in person, by telephone or Zoom. To sign, up to testify contact the Board Secretary at SchoolBoard@asdk12.org by 2 pm the day of a meeting or calling 907-742-4315.

Your voice can make a difference.

This communication is from Dave Donley as an individual and not on behalf of any elected, appointed, or military position he may hold including the Anchorage School District and School Board. Donley is a lifelong Alaskan, parent of 13-year-old twins, and served in the State Legislature for 16 years.