

DECONSTRUCTING EQUALITY: AN ANALYSIS OF TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Written by: A. Anderson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
ISSUE	3
a. Ending “Radical Indoctrination”	3
b. Ending DEI in the Federal Government Sector	5
c. Dismantling the Department of Education	7
ANALYSIS	8
a. “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling”	8
b. “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing”	10
c. “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit Based Opportunity”	10
d. “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities” ...	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	13
a. Ensuring an Education with Critical Thinking	14
b. Protecting DEI Initiatives and Racial Equity	15
c. Keeping Institutions Intact	15
CONCLUSION	16

I. INTRODUCTION

Students, employees, and people of the United States have the right to be racially inclusive, gender inclusive, and have a culturally responsive education. At the end of January 2025, Donald Trump and the Executive Branch began to remove all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) infrastructure from the federal government and the public education system. He also seeks to dismantle the Department of Education which will greatly affect minorities. This rollback of DEI efforts echoes a long history of educational exclusion in America. Marginalized communities have had to fight for decades for equal access to education.

The first Historically Black College/University (HBCU) was Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, created in 1837. Most Black people and people of color could only get an education at an HBCU, and not at public universities with their white counterparts. Before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there were many battles that had to be fought to get there. In 1890, Louisiana was the first state to pass a Jim Crow Law that required separate accommodation for whites and blacks. By 1896, the Supreme Court of the United States held that Louisiana's "separate but equal" law is constitutional and provided legal justification for many other states to follow.¹ In 1908, the Supreme Court upheld a state's authority to require private colleges to operate on a segregated basis even if the college did not want to.²

In 1948, the Supreme Court heard the case *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, where the Court decided to allow the admission of a single Black student in an all-white law school at the University of Oklahoma.³ The reason the Court allowed for this is because there was no law school for Black students, so there were no separate but equal facilities. Law schools were not facilities that Black people had access to in majority of states, and by 1950, the Supreme Court ruled that learning in law school could not be effective in isolation from the individuals and institutions with which the law interacts.⁴ The Court of course, fell short of overturning *Plessy*.

On April 23, 1951, Barbara Johns, a 16-year-old high school girl in Virginia, led her classmates on a strike to protest the substandard conditions at her high school.⁵ Just like other majority black schools in the United States, the classrooms had run down facilities, old equipment, and out of date textbooks. In South Carolina, that same year, the state spent \$179 per white student and only \$42 per Black student, even though Black and white parents paid the

¹ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896)

² *Berea College v. Kentucky*, 211 U.S. 45 (1908)

³ *Sipuel v. Board of Regents*, 332 U.S. 631 (1948)

⁴ *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*, 339 U.S. 637 (1950)

⁵ *Biography: Barbara Rose Johns Powell, 1935–1991*, Robert Russa Moton Museum (last accessed Apr. 1, 2025), <https://motonmuseum.org/learn/biography-barbara-rose-johns-powell/>

same in taxes.⁶ Black Americans were tired of being treated as second-class citizens. These two cases were a part of the infamous court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (I)* (1954). Finally, in a unanimous opinion, the Supreme Court overturned *Plessy* and declared that separate schools are "inherently unequal."⁷ This was a step in the right direction for Black Americans to get an adequate education, but the decision changed nothing because the Court delayed deciding on how to implement the decision and asked for another round of arguments. A year later in 1955, *Brown v. Board of Education (II)*, was heard and the Court ordered the lower federal courts to require desegregation "with all deliberate speed."

To get this country to move towards integration, violence was the price Black people had to pay. When reviewing the history of what happened after the *Brown* decision, people only talk about the peaceful protests of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. What is not discussed, is the anti-desegregation movements by white people. Across the South, white political leaders viewed advocacy for racial desegregation and nonwhite voting rights as the very definition of communist treason. By 1956, Southern states launched a coordinated effort to outlaw and destroy the NAACP through organizations called the White Citizens Councils.⁸ The organizations captured membership lists of the NAACP and fired any Black teacher that was on it, filed legal malpractice suits against the NAACP, and established a Sovereignty Commission to act as the state's secret political police and guardian of white-supremacy.⁹ Even though this failed, it made white people in the South comfortable to riot whenever a school tried to desegregate, putting young Black students in danger. In 1956, the University of Alabama admitted Autherine Lucy, its first African American student.¹⁰ White students rioted, but Lucy was the one expelled for criticizing the University for not protecting her.¹¹ In 1957, more than 1,000 paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division and a federalized Arkansas National Guard protected nine Black students integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.¹² Riots and protests by white people would continue for more than a decade after the *Brown* decision.¹³

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in 1979, the federal government officially founded the Department of Education through U.S. Congress further the goal of anti-poverty and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴ This was a commitment to ensure

⁶ *Briggs v. Elliott*, National Historical Park Kansas (Dec. 6, 2024), <https://www.nps.gov/brvb/learn/historyculture/socarolina.htm>

⁷ *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 348 U.S. 886 (1954)

⁸ *Civil Rights Movement History 1956*, Civil Rights Movement Archive: A project of Bay Area Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement (last accessed March 25, 2025), <https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis56.htm#1956naacp>

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *50 Years Later: 'Brown v. Board'*, Teaching Tolerance Magazine, Issue 25, Spring (2004), <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2004/brown-v-board-timeline-of-school-integration-in-the-us>

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Gabrielle Healy, Robin Young, *How the Department of Education Came into Existence*, OPB (Feb. 6, 2025, 8:10 PM), <https://www.opb.org/article/2025/02/06/how-the-department-of-education-came-into-existence/>

access to equal educational opportunity for every individual in the United States.¹⁵ Fast forward to 2003, the Supreme Court upheld diversity as a rationale for affirmative action programs in higher education admissions, making sure there is equal opportunity for people of color.¹⁶ After the Black Lives Matter Movement became popular with the death of George Floyd, the federal government and corporations moved to have DEI structures in the workplace to further inclusion and equality for all.

The country was moving in the right direction as it seemed like the consciousness of this country was becoming more aware of inequities that people of color had to face for centuries. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end. There was major pushback arising from people in opposition to ideas such as affirmative action and DEI initiatives. The Supreme Court, the highest Court in the land, had decided to side with the opposition. When Donald Trump was in office during his first term, he appointed Justice Neil Gorsuch in 2017, Justice Brett Kavanaugh in 2018, and Justice Amy Coney Barret in 2020, giving the Court a conservative majority.¹⁷ In 2023, the issue of whether race-based affirmative action is constitutional was back in the courts, less than 20 years after it was last heard and decided. In the case *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, the Court held that affirmative action violates the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by discriminating against Asian American applicants and white applicants in favor of “underrepresented” minority applicants.¹⁸ A new frame has been presented and made to be accepted by the public; that white and Asian people are now being discriminated against.¹⁹ The Court alongside the President, now have made it their goal to establish this mindset in the American people and think any infrastructure that points to race is inherently bad and detrimental to educate. This frame of thinking takes away the progress of integration, equity, and equality for Black people and people of color within the United States.

American citizens have fallen prey to the rhetoric of Donald Trump. He has successfully hidden the true implications of the consequences with the ideologies he is pushing. There are four executive orders that Donald Trump has published that discuss removing “radical indoctrination” in public schools, restoring “merit-based” opportunity, ending DEI programs in the federal government, and dismantling the Department of Education. This is blatant erasure of the progress Black people have made in the last few decades.

II. ISSUES

a. Ending “Radical Indoctrination”

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003)

¹⁷ A Mark, *How Many Supreme Court Justices Did Trump Appoint?*, The Court Direct, (Aug. 11, 2023), <https://thecourtdirect.com/how-many-supreme-court-justices-did-trump-appoint/>

¹⁸ *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harv. College*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023).

¹⁹ *Id.*

Donald Trump’s executive order titled “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling” was released to the public on January 29, 2025.²⁰ This executive order is meant to remove “radical”, “anti-American” ideologies out of elementary, middle, and high schools.²¹ The issue with this executive order is that it is correlating “radical ideologies” with critical race theory (CRT) and identity studies. The misrepresentation of these topics has allowed far-right politicians to weaponize these topics and use them to push their agenda that schools are teaching children to hate their country. This is dangerous because it is important to highlight the history of this country and give students a worldview of how America came to be. Black Americans pushed heavily for schools not only be equal physically, but to have the same opportunity at getting a good education. This policy limits academic freedom and is taking away the right to a great education for students in the present time.

An example of a policy that limits schools on how to teach history and current issues is the Stop WOKE Act, which was enacted on July 1, 2022, in Florida.²² Governor DeSantis ran his entire campaign on planning to regulate how schools would teach about race and gender and achieved his goal through this bill. “We won’t allow Florida tax dollars to be spent teaching kids to hate our country or to hate each other,” he said at the time, while calling critical race theory “state-sanctioned racism.”²³ The law prohibits subjecting any student or employee to training or instruction that promotes or compels such individual to believe specified concepts that constitutes discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin.²⁴ It also sets a curriculum for how African American History is taught within Florida public schools.²⁵ This law has a chilling effect in the classrooms because teachers will fear lawsuits if students’ parents object to how they present subjects like slavery, segregation, lynchings and the continued presence of racism in the U.S.²⁶ The Stop WOKE Act is a prominent example of how our history is being white-washed and no longer including the senseless acts of violence our ancestors had to go through to get here.

Another example of a policy that limits the right to academic freedom is book bans that are enacted across the country. The goal of banning books is to remove discussions around race, racism, and inequality. PEN America has documented nearly 16,000 book bans in public schools nationwide since 2021, a number not seen since the Red Scare McCarthy era of the 1950s.²⁷ The censorship is being pushed by conservative groups across the country, and aim to ban books that

²⁰ Exec. Order No. 14190, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 8853 (2025)

²¹ *Id.*

²² Fla. CS for HB 7 (2022) (Individual Freedom)

²³ Katie Reilly, *Florida’s Governor Just Signed the ‘Stop Woke Act.’ Here’s What It Means for Schools and Businesses*, TIME (Apr. 22, 2022, 6:04 PM), <https://time.com/6168753/florida-stop-woke-law/>

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Brendan Farrington, *Florida Gov. DeSantis signs bill to limit discussion of race*, AP News (April 22, 2022, 6:20 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/education-florida-discrimination-campaigns-presidential-elections-942f021c3070e7d1cdfb59d2351b6a75>

²⁷ Lisa Tolin, *Banned Books List 2025*, PEN America (Feb. 4, 2025), <https://pen.org/banned-books-list-2025/>

discuss racism, individuals of color, and LGBTQ+ topics.²⁸ This hinders critical thinking and makes it easier to spread misinformation to the upcoming generations of students.

Texas House Bill 3979 was enacted in May 2021 and restricted how teachers discuss controversial issues.²⁹ It bans educators from saying that slavery constitutes the true founding of the United States and prohibits schools from awarding credit for students engaging in any kind of political advocacy.³⁰ This law creates gaps within Black history, minimizes the impacts of racism, and teaches students that any type of political action is wrong. This is the definition of indoctrination because it teaches students what they are allowed to be under the guise of neutrality.

Policies such as the Stop WOKE Act, book bans, and Texas House Bill 3979 affects more than the history of people of color. It also affects how students of color view themselves within the classroom. Students feel invalidated or silenced when their history and lived experiences are deemed “radical. Natasha Capers, the coordinator for the Coalition for Economic Justice, observed, “When children are not seeing themselves represented by curriculum, it sends them a message.”³¹ Multicultural content in the classroom is critical to helping children construct their identities and feel like valued members of society.³² With the removal and whitewashing of history, this will lead to Black students and students of color to be disengaged within their education and may lead to worse performance in the classroom. It is important to not let this policy pass through country-wide because it defeats the purpose of fighting for integration of schools.

b. Ending DEI Programs in the Federal Government Sector

The White House’s executive order titled “Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing” was executed on January 20, 2025.³³ This order seeks to remove DEI structures from the federal government.³⁴ On January 21, 2025, Donald Trump also released an executive order titled “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” which removes past executive orders that are aimed towards racial equity within the federal government.³⁵ In the absence of this structure, federal and educational institutions would become more hostile or exclusive without internal accountability mechanisms.³⁶ This includes

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ Tx. H.B. No. 3979 (2021)

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ Rachel Samuel, Why It’s Critical for Students to “See Themselves” in Classroom Materials, Read to Lead (Feb. 19, 2020), <https://readtolead.org/why-its-critical-for-students-to-see-themselves-in-classroom-materials/>

³² *Id.*

³³ Exec. Order No. 14151, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 8339 (2025)

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Exec. Order No. 14173, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 8633 (2025)

³⁶ Solange Charas, *DEI Under Threat: The Workforce Risks Of Project 2025's Policies*, Forbes (Jan. 19, 2025, 12:56 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/solangecharas/2025/01/19/dei-under-threat-the-workforce-risks-of-project-2025s-policies/>

eliminating offices, staff positions, and training programs dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion.³⁷ The White House already gutted offices such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, the CDC, and the IRS.³⁸ Data from fiscal 2023 shows that 60% of the federal workforce is white, 19% of federal employees are Black and 10% are Hispanic.³⁹ By comparison, for the nationwide workforce, 76% of employees are white, 13% are Black and 19% are Hispanic.⁴⁰ The federal workforce has more people of color and Black people employed than non-governmental businesses, proving that this will be costly to minority communities. This is only the beginning, and this country will not see the extent of the damage until it's too late.

Protection and progress gained through civil rights movements will be eroded. Black people and people of color already face challenges within their careers because of race and gender biases. The elimination of DEI initiatives not only amplify the barriers faced but can implicate new ones such as widened pay gaps, limited career development opportunities, reinforced workplace discrimination, and microaggressions.⁴¹ The federal government sets an example for states and corporations to model their structures after, and the removal of DEI has led them to do the same.

Corporate and public sectors have reduced commitment to inclusive hiring and workplace practices. The moment Donald Trump became the president-elect in November 2024, corporations such as Meta, Amazon, Target, Walmart, Google, Deloitte, and IBM have removed their DEI initiatives.⁴² Trump vowed he would “end the government policy of trying to socially engineer race and gender into every aspect of public and private life,” stating he would “forge a society that is colorblind and merit-based.”⁴³ This strategy is working and has successfully seeped into the corporate world. Surprisingly, even big law firms are bending at the knee of Trump and removing their DEI structures in response to the threat of having government contracts cancelled.⁴⁴ Firms such as Kirkland & Ellis, A&O Shearman, Simpson Thacher and

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ Drew Friedman, *Federal workforce diversity still lagging in more senior roles*, Federal News Network (Jul. 4, 2024, 11:44 AM), <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2024/07/federal-workforce-diversity-still-lagging-in-more-senior-roles/?readmore=1>

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *The Anticipated Impacts of DEI Program and Policy Rollbacks*, All Together (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://alltogether.swe.org/2025/02/the-anticipated-impacts-of-dei-program-and-policy-rollbacks/#:~:text=The%20Long-Term%20Effects%20of%20DEI%20Rollbacks&text=The%20reduction%20or%20elimination%20of,Reinforced%20workplace%20discrimination%20and%20microaggressions>

⁴² Conor Murray, Molly Bohannon, *IBM Reportedly Walks Back Diversity Policies, Citing 'Inherent Tensions': Here Are All The Companies Rolling Back DEI Programs*, Forbes (Apr. 11, 2025, 11:27 AM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/conormurray/2025/04/11/ibm-reportedly-walks-back-diversity-policies-citing-inherent-tensions-here-are-all-the-companies-rolling-back-dei-programs/>

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ Sara Merken, Mike Scarella, David Thomas, *Law firm targeted by Trump sues as five other top firms make deals*, msn (Apr. 14, 2025), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/law-firm-targeted-by-trump-sues-as-five-other-top-firms-make-deals/ar-AA1CLOpE?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

Latham & Watkins removed diversity-based employment practices the administration deems illegal and work on pro bono projects approved by the president.⁴⁵ The message is clear. Corporations will always put money before the interest of the public.

c. Dismantling the Department of Education

Donald Trump’s executive order “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities” was released on March 20, 2025.⁴⁶ This order seeks to dismantle the Department of Education and “return” their functions to the state.⁴⁷ The issue with this order is that it affects the most impressionable people in our society: children. The Department of Education provides funding to fill in gaps that state governments cannot provide, and future generations will be deeply affected if this is changed.

Dismantling this system will inflict irreparable harm on low-income students. 90% of students in the United States are enrolled in public schools and 95% of students with disabilities are as well.⁴⁸ National Education Association President Becky Pringle stated, “Gutting the department would mean less resources for our most vulnerable students, larger class sizes, fewer special education services for students with disabilities, and less civil rights protections.”⁴⁹ Many of the low-income students are minorities and without the proper funding and protection, they will be left behind. Title I, a program funded by the Department of Education, directs money to schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty to provide more teachers and make it possible for smaller class sizes.⁵⁰ According to the Center for American Analysis, removing Title I, 180,300 teaching positions could be gone, which serve more than 2.8 million students in low-income communities.⁵¹ This would lead to an even more fragmented, unequal system across the United States, but even more for minority students that are in public schools that rely on federal funding.

The dismantle of the Department of Education also means the destruction of their Office for Civil Rights. This will severely weaken the Department’s ability to protect students against discrimination based on race, gender, and disability.⁵² This in turn leaves minority students vulnerable to discrimination leading to lower levels of motivation and academic achievement and a higher risk of dropping out.⁵³

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Exec. Order No. 14242, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 13679 (2025)

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ Tim Walker, *How Dismantling the Department of Education Would Harm Students*, neaToday (March 20, 2025), <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-dismantling-department-education-would-harm-students>

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ Walker, *supra* note 48

⁵¹ Colin Seeberger, *Project 2025’s Plan To Gut Checks and Balances Harms the American People*, American Progress (Aug. 8, 2024), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/project-2025s-plan-to-gut-checks-and-balances-harms-the-american-people/>

⁵² Walker, *supra* note 48

⁵³ *Id.*

For the Department of Education to be dismantled, it requires an act of U.S. Congress. Although that has not happened, it has not stopped the Executive branch from draining resources and funds out of the Department. The White House has officially laid off more than 1,300 employees within the Department of Education, which has led to questions about the agency's ability to continue operations.⁵⁴ The Department of Education was made to continue the mission of integration and equitable education. Removing this agency removes the decades of work civil rights movements did to get here. These actions cause Black people and people of color to have less opportunity in the educational space which in turn causes them to be less educated.

III. ANALYSIS

a. “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling”

The purpose of executive order 14190 “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K–12 Schooling” is to ensure that recipients of Federal funds providing K–12 education comply with all applicable laws prohibiting discrimination in various contexts and protecting parental rights, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁵⁵

Section 1. Purpose and Policy states:

“Parents have witnessed schools indoctrinate their children in radical, anti-American ideologies while deliberately blocking parental oversight. Such an environment operates as an echo chamber, in which students are forced to accept these ideologies without question or critical examination. In many cases, innocent children are compelled to adopt identities as either victims or oppressors solely based on their skin color and other immutable characteristics.”⁵⁶

Donald Trump uses phrases like “indoctrinate”, “radical” and “anti-American ideologies” to limit what educators can teach regarding history, race, and social structures. This language politicizes education which causes academic discourse and undermines the trust citizens have in public institutions. These concerns are emotionally charged assertions rather than evidence based. The phrase “compelled to adopt identities as either victims or oppressors solely based on skin color” simplifies and misrepresents how issues such as race and systemic inequality are taught in schools. This leads to invalidating students’ and educators’ efforts to address inequities and promote inclusion. Civil rights leaders have pushed for the ability to have conversations about discrimination, history, and lived experiences. With this type of ideology, there will be an injustice to those who fought to have their voices and experiences heard in an educational environment.

⁵⁴ Collin Binkley and Moriah Balingit, Education Department cuts half its staff as Trump vows to wind the agency down, AP News (Mar. 11, 2025, 7:03 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/education-department-layoffs-job-cuts-linda-mcmahon-ce9f6a8a63972aede0d8bfd057ab788>

⁵⁵ Exec. Order No. 14190, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 8853 (2025)

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 8853.

Section 1 also states:

“Imprinting anti-American, subversive, harmful, and false ideologies on our Nation’s children not only violates longstanding anti-discrimination civil rights law in many cases, but usurps basic parental authority.” ... “Similarly, demanding acquiescence to “White Privilege” or “unconscious bias,” actually promotes racial discrimination and undermines national unity.”⁵⁷

Terms like “anti-American”, “subversive”, “harmful”, and “false ideologies” do not clarify what specific teachings or concepts are being condemned, which could lead to broad and arbitrary enforcement of policies. Civil rights law prohibits discrimination, not the discussion of systemic racism, white privilege, or unconscious bias. This is a blatant mischaracterization of civil rights law that suggests teaching about inequality itself is a civil rights violation and will distort the purpose and application of these laws. This executive order erodes pedagogical independence because it implies that any curriculum addressing systemic racism or inequality will be interpreted as illegal, which impacts the ability to teach and discuss real-world social issues. True unity requires truth-telling and inclusion, not silence on systemic injustices.

Section 3. Ending Indoctrination Strategy states:

(a) Within 90 days ... agencies shall provide an Ending Indoctrination Strategy to the President, through the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, containing recommendations and a plan for:

(ii) Each agency’s process to prevent or rescind Federal funds, to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law, from being used by an ESA, SEA, LEA, elementary school, or secondary school to directly or indirectly support or subsidize the instruction, advancement, or promotion of gender ideology or discriminatory equity ideology in:

(A) K–12 curriculum, instruction, programs, or activities; or

(B) K–12 teacher certification, licensing, employment, or training⁵⁸

This “strategy” poses a serious risk to educational equity because it uses financial coercion to restrict the content of public education based on ideological criteria. Teachers will be punished for discussing systemic inequality and other concepts which set a precedent for government censorship within education. The fear of losing federal funding will cause schools to self-censor and abandon diverse practices, training, and support programs catered to students. Federal agencies will begin policing local schools’ curriculum and teacher training, which leads to a

⁵⁷ *Supra* note 55

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 8854. disruption of local control.

The White House does not want our students to think for themselves, they want to only promote that America is “great” and racism does not exist.

b. “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing”

The purpose of executive order 14151 “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing” is to remove all DEI infrastructure from all sectors of the federal government.⁵⁹

Section 2(b): Each agency, department, or commission head, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Director of OMB, and the Director of OPM, as appropriate, shall take the following actions within sixty days of this order:

(i) terminate, to the maximum extent allowed by law, all DEI, DEIA, and “environmental justice” offices and positions (including but not limited to “Chief Diversity Officer” positions); all “equity action plans,” “equity” actions, initiatives, or programs, “equity-related” grants or contracts; and all DEI or DEIA performance requirements for employees, contractors, or grantees.⁶⁰

This is a far-right radical agenda that dismantles programs that are created to ensure representation, access, and fairness within the federal government. Staffing, performance requirements, grants, and contracts are all affected which shows that the goal is to wipe out the entire infrastructure that was built to promote equal opportunities. DEI offices track disparities, develop inclusive hiring practices, monitor demographics, and help agencies stay committed to their equity goals. The removal of these offices means that the government will have fewer internal checks on bias in hiring and contracting. Removal of performance requirements related to DEI removes the incentives for anti-racist behavior and reduces the transparency in personal evaluations. The rapid dismantle of the programs has led to confusion about how agencies will address any equity issues and has created administrative instability. The political targeting of these values contradicts the understanding of public service. This sends the message loud and clear: pursuit of equity is not a legitimate governmental function.

c. “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity”

The purpose of executive order 14173 “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” is to only consider individual merit, aptitude, hard work, and determination when selecting people for jobs and services in key sectors of American society.⁶¹ It also reinforces the idea to remove DEI from the federal government and suggests corporations to do the same.⁶²

⁵⁹ Exec. Order No. 14151, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 8339 (2025)

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ Exec. Order No. 14173, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 8633 (2025)

⁶² *Id.*

Section 3. Terminating Illegal Discrimination in the Federal Government states: The following executive actions are hereby revoked:

- (i) Executive Order 12898 of February 11, 1994 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations);
- (ii) Executive Order 13583 of August 18, 2011 (Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce);
- (iii) Executive Order 13672 of July 21, 2014 (Further Amendments to Executive Order 11478, Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government, and Executive Order 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity); and
- (iv) The Presidential Memorandum of October 5, 2016 (Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the National Security Workforce).

(b) The Federal contracting process shall be streamlined to enhance speed and efficiency, reduce costs, and require Federal contractors and subcontractors to comply with our civil-rights laws. Accordingly:

- (i) Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1965 (Equal Employment Opportunity), is hereby revoked. For 90 days from the date of this order, Federal contractors may continue to comply with the regulatory scheme in effect on January 20, 2025.⁶³

This section of the executive order revokes major executive orders and memoranda that form the foundation of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion within the federal government. These orders that were put in place represent commitments of past presidents to civil rights across the government sectors. For example, repealing a landmark civil rights order within the federal contracts space would eliminate the legal basis for holding federal contractors accountable for discriminatory hiring practices. Revoking these orders leads to an unprecedented rollback of decades of progress that was made.

Section 4. Encouraging the Private Sector to End Illegal DEI Discrimination and Preferences states:

- (a) The heads of all agencies, with the assistance of the Attorney General, shall take all appropriate action with respect to the operations of their agencies to advance in the

⁶³ *Id.* at 8634.

private sector the policy of individual initiative, excellence, and hard work identified in section 2 of this order.⁶⁴

Donald Trump wants corporations to fall in line and get rid of any DEI initiatives. This rhetoric frames DEI as being a block to finding employees with merit. DEI initiatives are designed to remove systemic barriers that prevent qualified individuals from having equal opportunity. This pushes a dangerous mindset that suggests increased representation for minorities is somehow incompatible with success and excellence. The executive order encourages federal agencies to influence how the private sector behaves, even though these programs put in place were voluntary. The intimidation and threats of pulling government work from certain corporations has caused a chilling effect on corporate speech, hiring practices, and the removal of DEI within these spaces.

d. “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities”

The purpose of the executive order 14242 “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities” is to fully dismantle the Department of Education and “return” authority to the states.⁶⁵

Section 1. Purpose and Policy state:

Closure of the Department of Education would drastically improve program implementation in higher education. The Department of Education currently manages a student loan debt portfolio of more than \$1.6 trillion. This means the Federal student aid program is roughly the size of one of the Nation’s largest banks, Wells Fargo. But although Wells Fargo has more than 200,000 employees, the Department of Education has fewer than 1,500 in its Office of Federal Student Aid. The Department of Education is not a bank, and it must return bank functions to an entity equipped to serve America’s students.⁶⁶

The comparison between the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) and Wells Fargo is promoting a false equivalence that undermines federal financing for education. Wells Fargo is a for-profit bank whose mission is to maximize shareholder value, while the FSA is a public service agency whose mission is to expand access to education, not generate a profit. The Department of Education makes college accessible for Americans through Pell Grants, federal student loans, and work-study programs. Removing these programs will threaten access for low-income, first-generation, and students of color. More Black students than white students fall into all three categories showing they will be affected the most. This executive order does not list an

⁶⁴ *Supra*, note 61

⁶⁵ Exec. Order No. 14242, FR Vol 90 C.F.R. 13679 (2025)

⁶⁶ *Id.*

alternative entity that would take over federal aid, making this proposal truly vague and impractical.

Section 2. Closing the Department of Education and Returning Authority to the States, states:

- (a) The Secretary of Education shall, to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law, take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education and return authority over education to the States and local communities while ensuring the effective and uninterrupted delivery of services, programs, and benefits on which Americans rely.
- (b) Consistent with the Department of Education's authorities, the Secretary of Education shall ensure that the allocation of any Federal Department of Education funds is subject to rigorous compliance with Federal law and Administration policy, including the requirement that any program or activity receiving Federal assistance terminate illegal discrimination obscured under the label "diversity, equity, and inclusion" or similar terms and programs promoting gender ideology.⁶⁷

If the Department of Education is closed, committing to ensure the "uninterrupted delivery of services, programs, and benefits" is contradictory because there is no alternative agency or entity named for who would take over the Department's functions. Leaving the functions to the states would create widespread inconsistencies which will violate federal obligations to protect students' civil rights and access to education. The federal government is the only institution who has constitutional and legal obligations to enforce the Department's anti-discrimination laws, provide equitable funding to schools with low-income students, and ensure students with disabilities get an education that is obtainable.

Many DEI initiatives are designed to comply with existing civil rights laws, so stating that it is "illegal discrimination" is dangerous rhetoric because if equity and inclusion is outlawed, then there will be no opportunity for minorities to flourish in educational environments and feel safe. The same idea for equal education that was being fought for in the 1900s, is now being fought for again.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has demonstrated why America should not fall in line with any of these executive orders created by Donald Trump. The false narrative of taking an approach that is color blind, repealing any law or structure that promotes anti-racism, and dismantling institutions that have

⁶⁷ *Supra*, note 65

been around for decades is a danger to the country. The citizens of the U.S. deserve a world where ideas can freely be exchanged without the threats of being punished for them.

The civil rights laws that are federally protected today, did not come without a price. Black people have put their bodies on the line and experienced decades of violence for the idea of equity to even be accepted. The removal of these civil rights protections is a promise to increase racism. It is a promise to continue the ideology of white supremacy. Attacks on the infrastructure itself such as the Department of Education increases inequities that directly affect race and class. With the Civil Rights Act of 1964 being weaponized to remove critical and diverse thinking, I must write in complete opposition to these executive orders. Destroying any progress that has been made in the last few decades demonstrates this current administration does not care about the repercussions it will have on its own people.

a. Ensuring an Education with Critical Thinking

I strongly oppose the characterization that public schools are “indoctrinating” children with “radical, anti-American” ideologies. This way of thinking is not supported with evidence, and it severely undermines the professional integrity of educators and introduces censorship into public education. The distortion of how social science, equity research, and civil rights law is taught is withholding any progress that can be made in the next years. Educators do not assign “victim” or “oppressor” to students based on race. Educators examine systems of power and inequality to prepare students for situations in the real world, such as the workplace.

Education that includes a curriculum with critical race theory promotes empathy and historical literacy. Students obtaining these skills is essential when in a diverse democracy with people from different backgrounds. Educators must be empowered to present a range of perspectives that are supported by academia. In return, Black students and students of color are free to discuss their personal experiences without feeling as if they will be restricted by a specific ideology that pretends their experience is non-existent. National unity should not come at the cost of historical accuracy. Vagueness in what constitutes a violation for “anti-American” ideologies within education raises due process concerns because it is unknown how teachers and students will be penalized for engaging in that “type” of speech. The Supreme Court of the United States have repeatedly affirmed that public schools have First Amendment protections when dealing with matters of current social issues.⁶⁸

I urge policymakers to promote inclusive curricula, free expression, equal opportunity, and respect for legal protections that govern education. A free society cannot thrive when its schools are forced to sanitize truth or suppress differences. Federal policy should empower states, support student well-being, and protect the constitutional and civil rights of the people.

⁶⁸ *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969).

Censorship disguised as oversight only will serve to narrow minds and divide us. Too many people have put their lives on the line for an education that includes students of every color.

b. Protecting DEI Initiatives and Racial Equity

I strongly oppose the executive orders that terminate all federal DEI, revoke executive orders on equity and civil rights, and discourage the ongoing removal of DEI initiatives in the private sector. These actions threaten to reverse decades of progress in advancing equal opportunities for Black people and people of color. Eliminating these structures also remove legal and institutional accountability that prevents discrimination. This opens the door to discriminatory practices and sends a message that diversity is incompatible with merit. Diversity, if anything, enhances innovation within the federal and private sector. Many inventions would not be here today if it weren't for Black people breaking down the barriers.

Since it has been proven difficult to get the executive branch to change their course of action for the federal government, I urge that businesses within the private sector reverse their course and preserve commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The federal government needs to respect the autonomy of the private sector. These corporations must continue to implement voluntary DEI practices. We must preserve DEI office and roles that will reflect and serve the public today. It is important to retain equity action plans and performance requirements that promote accountability and transparency. Without these protections, minorities will be driven away from wanting to participate and this will reinforce the idea that they are not valued or important. At a time of deep division within our country, it is important to push the affirmation of values that are for inclusion for all, not abandon them.

c. Keeping Institutions Intact

Lastly, I strongly oppose dismantling the Department of Education. This action would also represent an unprecedented and harmful rollback of federal responsibilities in ensuring equitable, quality education for Americans, but especially for those within the marginalized communities. The elimination of federal financial aid for higher education, no enforcement of important civil rights laws such as Title I, and no oversight of these institutions will not "improve implantation". It will create chaos, inequity, and inconsistency across the country. The most affected will be those students within low-income and rural districts. The issue is not the Department of Education's structure, but the congressional underfunding and lack of support for the FSA's operations. There must be balance with federal support and their safeguards or else existing disparities between the wealthy and low-income will deepen. There will be no way for students to have access to education if there is no support coming from financial aid or money coming into their communities for education. The weaponization of funding against DEI is discriminatory and will result in a chilling effect on inclusive educational practices. This invites unequal treatment into the classrooms, particularly affecting students in institutions with weak equity protections. This will only do more harm to students that are already at a disadvantage. I urge policymakers to fight for investment within the Department of Education, not to dismantle

it. It is important to promote educational access, opportunity, and equity for all to have a healthy, flourishing society. Closing the Department of Education is reckless that comes with long-term consequences for student achievement. We cannot let the executive branch decide who will be deemed “worthy” enough to get a higher education. Educators must also feel safe in expressing their ideas to students so there can be an inclusive and nondiscriminatory learning environment. Teaching history in an accurate way should not be politicized in the classrooms. We must persevere and strengthen the right to spread ideas.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined dangerous executive orders that Donald Trump has implemented into our society. First, this paper has given a glimpse into what Black civil rights leaders and movements had to overcome to reach their goal of equality. In hostile times like these, it is important to acknowledge and commemorate the milestones made by the people who have shown that change can happen. Second, this paper dives into the four executive orders that are problematic to the educational, federal, and private sectors of this country. There are numerous issues outlined, such as losing access to an equitable education, losing protection in the workplace, and a continuation of white supremacy. The removal of programs meant to help marginalized communities and loss of academic freedom cannot be normalized as it is right now. This will only deepen the disparities in every aspect of life that Black people have fought to reconcile for decades. Lastly, this paper provides recommendations on what educators, students, employees, and employers can do to fight this injustice. This is a call to action to pay attention to and understand the consequences these executive orders will have on this country. The rhetoric of Donald Trump is harmful because it is pushing the narrative that racism is solved, and no one needs protections anymore. This will keep dividing our country and lead to where only a selective few will be able to have access to education and jobs. The generations to come will be affected by what is happening today, so to secure a great future for our families, we must act now.