Site of Struggle & Site of Possibility:

Schools and Public Education

Created by Dignity in Schools Campaign California

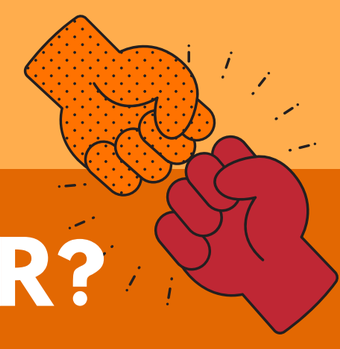
"Schools remain a symbolic and material common good—one of the last public institutions with the potential to shape collective life."

A visual breakdown of why public education is a vital battleground in our shared struggle for justice and liberation.

CC BY NC SA

Inspired by an essay written by Manuel Criollo for Dignity in Schools Campaign California & Organizing Roots

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN CALIFORNIA



WHO ARE WE?

Dignity in Schools Campaign California (DSCCA) is a statewide movement building alliance comprised of 14 grassroots organizations working to with the the most impacted youth and families across the state .



WHAT DO WE FIGHT FOR?

We are building a statewide movement to end the school-to-prison pipeline. We convene communities to build shared strategy, develop intergenerational leadership, and build the power of parents, students, and families to act as movement leaders. We act not only to transform schools, but to transform society.Our work strengthens organizing across California by building alignment, shared strategy, and collective power among grassroots organizations. Through regular peer learning, political education, and coordinated campaigns, we connect local struggles to a statewide movement. This statewide infrastructure allows regions to support one another, amplify impact, and move together with clarity and purpose—ensuring that community-led efforts are not isolated, but part of a broader push for systemic change.

WHY DO WE FIGHT FOR POLICE-FREE SCHOOLS?

Because a school-to-prison pipeline exists not just in individual districts but as a statewide , national, and global system of oppression. Because communities are criminalized — not only in schools, but through a larger system of policing, punishment, criminalization and deportation. Because we've won major reforms, but are still not free.

And because this work is creating real impact across California.

WHERE?

DSCCA is a stateiwide alliance in 5 regions across the state: Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Inland Valley, Central Valley, and the Central Coast — where our members live and organize — families migrate, kids get pushed out, and the same injustice shows up everywhere. We build bridges between progressive cities and under-resourced, conservative areas to build the bold, grounded movement California needs.



OUR MISSION STATMENT/NORTH STAR

We lead with study, humility, and deep accountability to those most impacted. We organize with the courage to speak truths before they are popular and maintain a vision beyond what seems winnable. Our purpose is to deepen grassroots understanding of the history of school discipline, the relationship between schools and law enforcement, and the dehumanizing impact of public education. We expand political opportunities to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, repair intergenerational harm, and build systemic alternatives for generations to come.And because this work is creating real impact across California:

WHEN?

The coalition was launched in 2017, but its philosophical and strategic roots stretch back decades, grounded in historical struggles for racial, gender, and social justice. We act with urgency and with the long view and collective strategy. We understand hat true transformation is a decades-long effort.

WE WERE MADE TO BE THE LEADERS OF THIS MOMENT

DSCCA is rooted in the liberation struggles of our ancestors, whose resistance shaped the path we walk today. Since our founding, we've organized intentionally across California—deepening political analysis, sharpening organizing practice, and building cross-sector solidarity with grassroots groups serving the most impacted communities. Our work has never been solely about dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline—it's about protecting public education as a vital site of struggle and possibility. In schools, we've fought, we've won, and we've shown that transformation is not only necessary—it's possible. Everything we've built has prepared us for this moment.



WE UNDERSTAND THE WAYS EDUCATION HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN LINKED TO CONTROL, CRIMINALIZATION, AND POLICING; WE'VE FOUGHT IT IN ALL THE WAYS IT SHOWS UP CURRENTLY - AND HAVE WON!

- **ADVANCING TRUTH AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH ETHNIC STUDIES AND HONEST HISTORY**
- **ENDING "NO EXCUSES" PUSHOUT**
- **POLICE REMOVAL IN OVER 11 SCHOOL DISTRICTS ACROSS CALIFORNIA**
- **BROADENING THE ROLE OF EDUCATION**
- **CUTTING LINKS TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**
- **CHALLENGE THE PUNITIVE STUDENT TESTING AND PUNISHMENT REGIME**

WE'VE CUT THE RACIAL GAP IN SUSPENSION RATES BETWEEN BLACK/LATINO/NATIVE/PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND WHITE STUDENTS IN HALF.

IN THE LAST 12 YEARS SUSPENSIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY 50%. FROM 700K IN 2011-2012 TO 340K IN 2022-2023.

$100 MILLION REINVESTED INTO DESPERATELY NEEDED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES.

EDUCATION'S COMPLEX REALITY

Historically, public education has existed as a complex and contradictory space. At its best, it functions as a community hub—where families feel welcome, young people feel safe and heard, and all are encouraged to build relationships, make mistakes, and grow through learning. Despite the tremendous progress we have made over the years, education remains a site of tension between liberation and control, possibility and limitation—which makes it a deeply contested and complex institution.

EDUCATION HAS BEEN A TOOL FOR LIBERATION. PUBLIC EDUCATION IS AND HAS BEEN A SITE OF STRUGGLE, WHERE OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES HAVE FOUGHT NOT JUST FOR ACCESS BUT FOR DIGNITY, HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS.

TOO OFTEN, EDUCATION HAS BEEN USED FOR ACCULTURATION, INDOCTRINATION, AND TALENT TRACKING OF THE MOST MARGINALIZED FOLKS.



DESPITE IT'S COMPLEXITY, SCHOOLS REMAIN A VITAL PLACE OF CONGREGATION- A CENTER OF COMMUNITY LIFE.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Punitive discipline practices deeply shape student's educational experience and result in a life trajectory of criminalization and confinement. Through education justice worm we are able to expose the links betwe en the playground and the penitentiary

COMMUNITY

Schools are powerful centers of community, where relationships are built across lines of race , class, and age.

HOUSING

Schools are not separate from the broader society–they reflect and often reproduce the racial disparities that exist in housing, healthcare, employment, and the criminal legal system.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Schools are essential to economic justice. Job losses–especially among union workers, women, and communities of color–have narrowed opportunities and deepened inequality. Public education is one of the few remaining spaces where investment can directly support economic security, racial equity, and community well-being. By funding justice-centered roles like restorative justice staff, culture keepers, counselors, health ambassadors, and legal advocates for families, we not only strengthen school communities–we create dignified, community-rooted employment. Investing in schools means investing in care, stability, and long-term economic justice for those most impacted by systemic harm.



RACIAL JUSTICE

Battle ground for systemic racism and the fight for educational justice; without a commitment to racial justice, public schools risk reinforcing cycles of oppression instead of disrupting them.

HEALTH

School sites are important to the healthy mental & physical development and success of young people. They can and have served as a health care centers & hub to fight off food insecurity.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Public education is an important last frontier of social welfare. It is important to protect this social institution as it directly affects students' ability to learn, thrive, and fully participate in their education. This institution has the potential to support wholistic child development.

DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE

Schools are not just places where students learn academic content, they are where young people first experience what democracy feels like in practice. Public education should prepare students to participate in civic life, understand their rights, and engage in collective decision-making. Schools themselves must reflect democratic values like voice, accountability, inclusion, and shared power.

WHY SHOULD WE KEEP FIGHTING?

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Alternative Practices & Policies.

Organizing and experimentation in schools have led to concrete victories, like the implementation of restorative justice and healing circles, and the elimination of wilful defiance.

1

Testing Society's Moral Compass.

Schools can and should be places where society's values of justice, accountability, and humanity are practiced. They are places where we have challenged policing and ended cycles of criminilization in schools..

2

We have fought and have won in this space.

We are still winning! There is a long and recent history that tracks the monumental wins and progress that organizers and change-makers have made. We challenged police in schools and ended cycles of criminalization in our schools.

3

Accountability in Action.

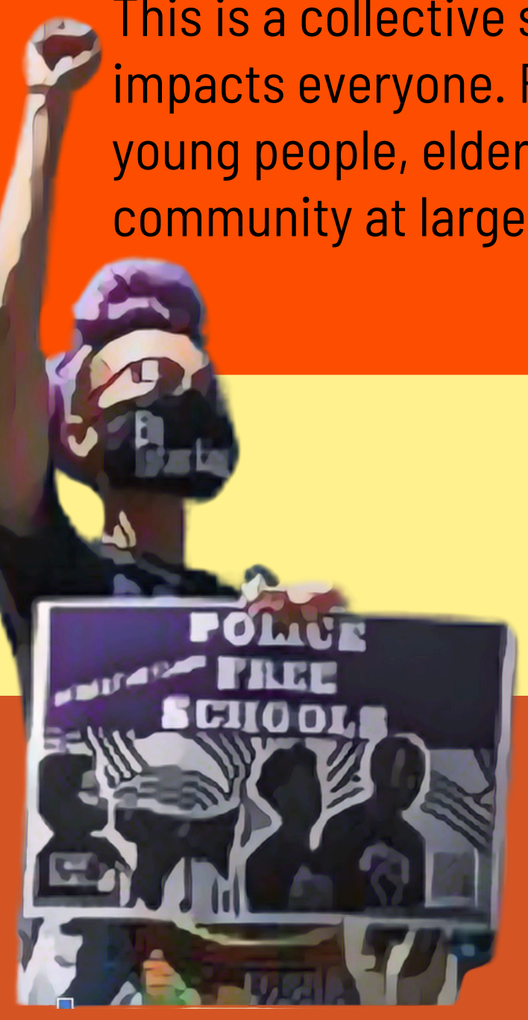
Schools serve as grounds for holding authorities accountable to the communities they serve. It is one of the last public institutions where decision makers and those in power have to respond both legally and ethically.

4

Collective Impact.

This is a collective struggle that impacts everyone. From workers, young people, elders, and the community at large.

5





6

Transformation

When we create good schools, we create thriving, healthy communities. When we win in schools, there is a trickle effect on the state and national level. When we transform schools we transform societies.

OUR FIGHT IS BIGGER THAN SCHOOLS. WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS .

WE ARE A PART OF MANY UNITED FRONTS!

DSC CALIFORNIA



UNITED FRONT FOR SOCIAL WAGE, EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE



UNITED FRONT FOR SURVIVAL AND POSSIBILITY



UNITED FRONT FOR LIBERATION





UNITED FRONT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

UNITED FRONT AGAINST MILITARISM, POLICING, INCARCERATION

THE BUSINESS MODEL OF EDUCATION :

TODAY'S ATTACKS ON PUBLIC EDUCATION—PRIVATIZATION, SCHOOL CLOSURES, UNION WEAKENING, AND EFFORTS LIKE TRUMP'S PROJECT 2025—ARE THE RESULT OF A DECADES-LONG AGENDA. THE PROMISES OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY MADE DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA WERE NEVER FULLY KEPT. INSTEAD, WE FACED A DOUBLE ATTACK OF WHITE BACKLASH FOR ENDING UNEQUAL EDUCATION. MARKET-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL REFORMS WERE IMPLEMENTED TO SUSTAIN EDUCATIONAL SEGREGATION, CONTINUED DIVESTTMENT, AND COMPETION DRIVES FOR OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS HAVE LED TO SCHOOL PUSHOUT, DECLINING ENROLLMENT, SCHOOL CLOSURES, ESPECIALLY IN BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES. WHAT WE'RE SEEING NOW IS THE ESCALATION OF A LONG-STANDING AGENDA TO DISMANTLE PUBLIC EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD.

A HISTORIC WIN FOR EDUCATION





FAILURE TO DELIVER ON PROMISES OF EQUAL PROTECTION AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY ESTABLISHED DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA.





CAPITALIST BENCHMARKS, PUBLIC HARMS

PRIVATIZATION

COMPETITION

DIVESTMENT

MARKETIZATION



PROFIT OVER STUDENTS & EDUCATION





SCHOOL PUSHOUT AND DECLINING ENROLLMENT





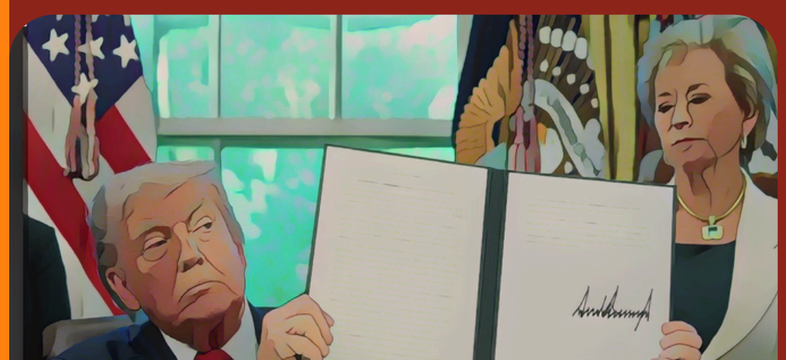
FURTHER DIVESTMENT, SCHOOL CLOSURES, A WEAKENING OF THE POWER OF TEACHER UNIONS & DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF SCHOOLS.





HOW DID WE GET HERE?

TRUMP, PROJECT 2025, & DISMANTLING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION





"THE TERRAIN FOR STRUGGLE IS SHAPED NOT ONLY BY DECADES OF NEOLIBERAL* POLICIES AND SYSTEMIC DISINVESTMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION, BUT ALSO BY THE WAYS COMMUNITIES OF COLOR HAVE OFTEN BEEN CONJURED—SYMBOLICALLY AND SELECTIVELY—TO JUSTIFY THESE VERY POLICY SHIFTS."

INCREASING FOCUS ON MARKET COMPETITION AND SHIFTING OVERSIGHT.



RISE OF TESTING REGIMENTS, CHARTER SCHOOLS, LOTTERY-BASED ADMISSIONS, HOMESCHOOLING, AND A GREATER RELIANCE ON AI-DRIVEN AND VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS.



EDUCATORS UNDERMINED, EDUCATIONAL BURDEN PLACED ON FAMILIES



MAGA 2.0 - WEAKENING THE STATE'S INTERNAL CHECKS/BALANCES/INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE NAME OF EFFICIENCY AND WASTE, & TESTING WAYS TO REDUCE CRITICAL PROGRAMS FROM THE SOCIAL WELFARE STATE.





*NEOLIBERALISM PROMOTES UNRESTRICTED FREE MARKETS, REMOVING GOVERNMENT CONSTRAINTS ON BUSINESS REGARDLESS OF SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES. IT SUPPORTS DEREGULATION, OPEN INTERNATIONAL TRADE, WEAKENED LABOR RIGHTS, AND THE ABOLITION OF PRICE CONTROLS. IT CLAIMS THIS WILL SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND BENEFIT ALL, ECHOING REAGAN-ERA 'TRICKLE-DOWN' POLICIES, THOUGH BENEFITS RARELY REACHED THE MAJORITY. IT ALSO CALLS FOR CUTTING PUBLIC SPENDING ON SERVICES, LIKE EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, AND INFRASTRUCTURE, WHILE MAINTAINING SUBSIDIES FOR CORPORATIONS. DEREGULATION REDUCES OVERSIGHT ON INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL AND WORKPLACE PROTECTIONS, TO MAXIMIZE PROFITS. PRIVATIZATION TRANSFERS PUBLIC ASSETS — FROM BANKS AND UTILITIES TO SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS — TO PRIVATE INVESTORS, OFTEN RAISING COSTS AND CONCENTRATING WEALTH.
FINALLY, NEOLIBERALISM REPLACES THE IDEA OF THE PUBLIC GOOD WITH 'INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY,' SHIFTING BLAME ONTO THE POOR FOR SYSTEMIC FAILINGS IN ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS LIKE HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION.

A CLOSER LOOK : MAGA ATTACK ON EDUCATION

MAGA 2.0 is waging a full-scale attack on public education—dismantling the Department of Education, gutting the Civil Rights Division, and reframing equity work as "reverse racism." Using language like "fairness" and "neutrality," these efforts center white grievance while fueling cultural and racial wars, especially in higher ed. The March 11th RIF cut nearly half of the Department's workforce, and state-run voucher programs are accelerating privatization. These attacks, combined with harmful rhetoric targeting LGBTQ+ students and their families, threaten students' rights, safety, mental health, and access to education—marking a dangerous rollback of hard-won civil rights protections.

On March 11th Secretary of Education Linda McMahon initiated a reduction in force (RIF) impacting nearly 50% of the Department's workforce.



Craig Trainor
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for the United States Department of Education

MAGA 2.0 is weakening the state's internal checks and balances and infrastructure in the name of efficiency and waste, and they are testing ways to reduce critical programs from the social welfare state, like education and social security.

Office for Civil Rights (OCR) OCR is now solely focused on reverse racism

Dismantle the Department of Education

This move coupled with the dehumanizing narrative on LGBTQAI+ students and their families will have detrimental impact on students mental health, safety & attendance of schools.

Gut Civil Rights Division



Ending protection of vulnerable students' civil rights

prioritizes the grievances of whiteness

Cultural, Racial, and Gender Wars on Higher Education

State's Rights and State Run Private Vouchers and Further Privatization of Education

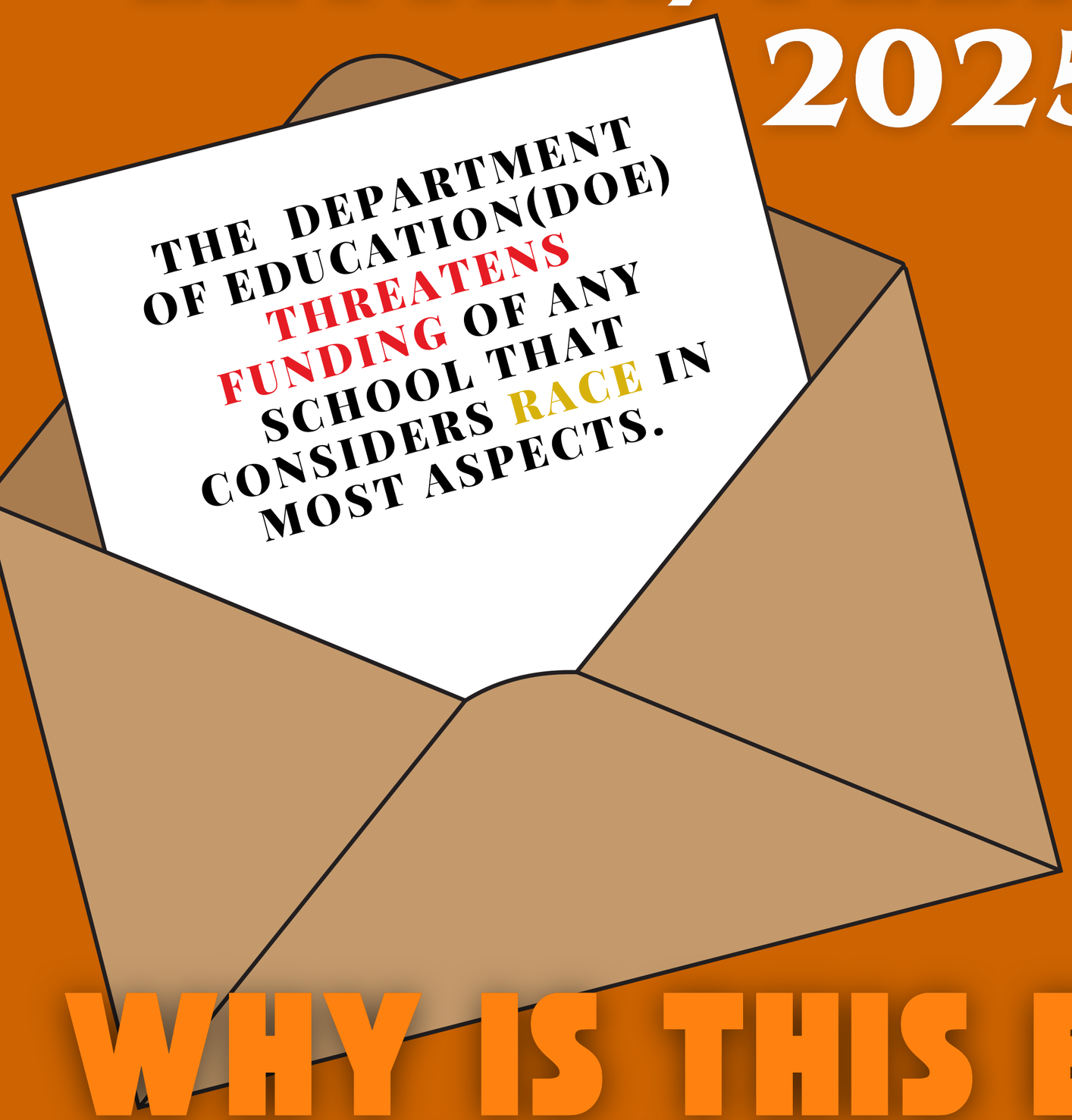
War on the poor



"fairness" and "neutrality,"

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S MOVES

DOE DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER, FEBRUARY 14, 2025



The letter — geared toward all preschool, elementary, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, as well as state educational agencies that receive financial assistance from the federal government — laid out a sweeping and controversial interpretation of federal law following the 2023 Supreme Court decision that gutted affirmative action.

WHY IS THIS BAD ?

Erases Racial Inequity

Ignores the ongoing impact of systemic racism and assumes all students start from the same place.

Threatens Equity Programs

Puts scholarships, mentorships, and support programs for marginalized students at risk of being eliminated.

Sets a Dangerous Precedent

Opens the door for broader attacks on civil rights across education, healthcare, housing, and beyond.

Silences Cultural Identity

Discourages cultural celebrations, affinity spaces, and race-based student organizing—undermining belonging and voice

Twists Civil Rights Law

Reinterprets civil rights protections to punish race-conscious equity work instead of advancing it.

REAL PLAN FOR TRUMP ADMINISTRATION:

REVERSE CIVIL RIGHTS AND EQUAL PROTECTION

ONCE AGAIN, SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION HAVE BECOME A CENTRAL BATTLEGROUND IN THE POLITICAL FIGHT OVER THE VERY FOUNDATION OF EQUAL PROTECTION.





The **1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision** established a significant precedent for challenging the separate and unequal segregation in United States, with education being a crucial focus in the struggle for rights and access among Black people and other racialized communities.

Trump's war on Civil Rights: The current administration now is openly questioning and reversing the foundations of equal protection under the law. DEI is being demonized, while affirmative policies and critical theories are reframed as "reverse racism." Gender justice and LGBTQ+ rights are being attacked.

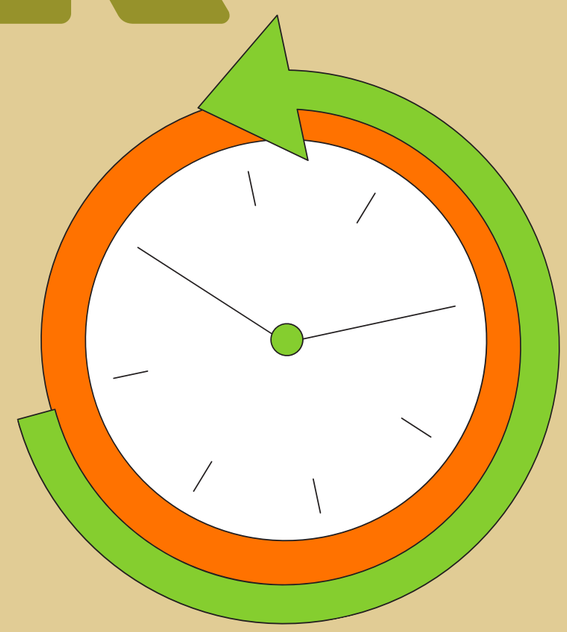


Enforcement Agencies become Attack Agencies: Agencies like the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) are being turned into tools to undermine social and racial justice initiatives rather than protect them. OCR is now solely focused on reverse racism, trans girls in sports, and antisemitism. The DOJ is shifting its focus away from fighting race-base discrimination, to keeping trans girls out of women's sports, fighting anti-Christian bias, and challenging gun control measures.

ROLLBACK

IN REAL TIME

Restructuring, Defunding, and Plans to Dismantle the Department of Education (DOE)



Department of Education:

It was created by an act of Congress in 1979 and could only be closed by an act of Congress. It has a $79 billion annual budget and 4,400 employees.

Key Areas of Oversight

The DOE manages $1.6 trillion in federal student loans, enforces the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and distributes $15.6 billion in Title I funds.

Student Reach

Martin Scorsese

DOE programs serve 50+ million students across 98,000 public and 32,000 private schools, and provide aid to over 12 million postsecondary students.

Program Reductions

Recent actions have cut programs, research, and data collection—particularly those related to DEI or lacking Congressional backing.

Workforce Cuts

On March 11, 2025, Secretary Linda McMahon implemented a Reduction in Force (RIF), eliminating nearly 50% of DOE staff.

Department Closure Directive

Executive Order 14242 instructs the DOE to begin transferring education authority to states, while maintaining essential services.

Data & Accountability Rollback

Federal data collection has been limited, reducing oversight capacity and hampering civil rights enforcement.

Student Loan Restructuring

Plans are underway to shift federal student loan management to other agencies or private financial institutions.

Grant Program Changes

Martin Scorsese

A move from federal grants like IDEA and Title I to general State Education Block Grants is being proposed.

Civil Rights Office Downsizing

The DOE Office for Civil Rights was cut in half, with proposals to move it to the Department of Justice to reduce its influence.

Civil Rights Weaponization

DOE investigations have increased against DEI programs, transgender student protections, and racial justice efforts in schools.

Disability Protections in Flux

DEA enforcement may shift to the Department of Health and Human Services, despite that agency also facing staffing and budget cuts.

Ideological Executive Orders

A wave of executive orders (EOs 14151–14242) targets DEI, gender identity, vaccine mandates, and perceived “indoctrination” in schools.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR CALIFORNIA?

A COUPLE THINGS VITAL THINGS CALIFORNIANS NEED TO REMEMBER

THESE ARE LIKELY ALMOST ENTIRELY NON-ENFORCEABLE CALIFORNIAN AND ARE BEING CHALLENGED IN THE COURTS





DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS CAN COMPLY OUT OF FEAR EVEN WHEN THEY KNOW THE STATE IS OPPOSING AND CHALLENGING ALL OF THESE

CALIFORNIA IS THE WORLD'S 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY WHICH PROVIDES SOME PROTECTION AND WIGGLE ROOM FROM POTENTIAL FEDERAL DIVESTMENT



WHILE WE CAN SAY THAT CALIFORINA IS FORTIFIED IN A SENSE DUE TO YEARS OF ORGANIZING AND HARD-FOUGHT LOCAL AND STATEWIDE POLICIES THAT PROTECT OUR MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND FIGHTS, WE WILL HAVE TO STRUGGLE AND FIGHT TO MAKE OUR RIGHTS REAL AND PROTECT OUR SCHOOLS

WHAT IF THIS HOSTILE MOMENT AND AGGRESSIVE POLICIES REFLECT A FEAR OF OUR STRENGTH?

Today, the Right's attacks on education reflect not just ideological backlash but a deeper recognition of its material power—of what schools could become if reclaimed. Instead of only experiencing and perceiving the current attacks on education as a sign of our weakness, we must understand The current administration's assault on the Department of Education, the moral panic over racial justice curricula, and the framing of critical pedagogy as a hegemonic threat—are not just reactionary moves.

THEY ARE REACTIONS TO THE POWER WE HAVE BUILT, TO THE SHIFTING CONSCIOUSNESS IN CLASSROOMS, COMMUNITIES, AND MOVEMENTS.

WE MUST ASK...



WHAT IF WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING IS NOT JUST REPRESSION BUT A SIGN OF CONTESTATION? IT REFLECTS THE FACT THAT THOSE IN POWER SEE EDUCATION AS A BATTLEGROUND THEY ARE NO LONGER FULLY CONTROLLING AND ONE WE MUST CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR.

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CRISIS

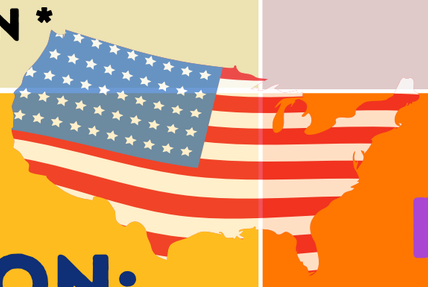
REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION TIMELINE



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1492: COUNTER REVOLUTION: COLONIZATION, CONQUEST, ENSLAVEMENT, CAPITALISM

AMERICA WAS BIRTHED AS A COUNTER-REVOLUTION *



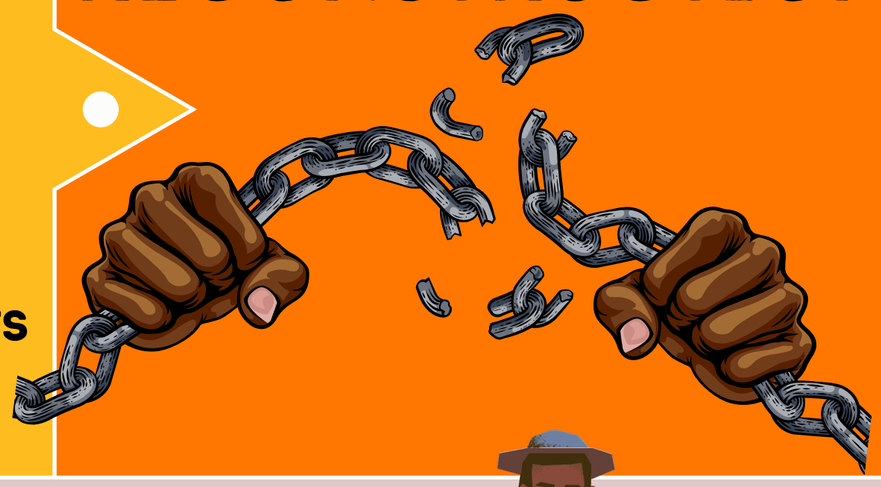
THIS PAGE MAPS OUT A TIMELINE OF STRUGGLES FOR FREEDOM–AND THE VIOLENT BACKLASH THAT HAS FOLLOWED EACH ONE. FROM 1492 ONWARD, HISTORY HAS MOVED IN CYCLES OF REVOLUTION (PEOPLE RISING UP TO CLAIM POWER AND DIGNITY) AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION (SYSTEMS FIGHTING BACK TO MAINTAIN CONTROL.

REVOLUTION: 1492 - PRESENT

INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE, UPRISINGS AND REVOLTS OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS, MAROON RESISTANCE, ABOLITIONISTS STRUGGLE AGAINST SLAVERY, NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



BLACK REVOLUTION RECONSTRUCTION





COUNTER REVOLUTION: JIM CROW APARTHEID



RUSSIAN REVOLUTION/ RISE OF SOCIALISM/ SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

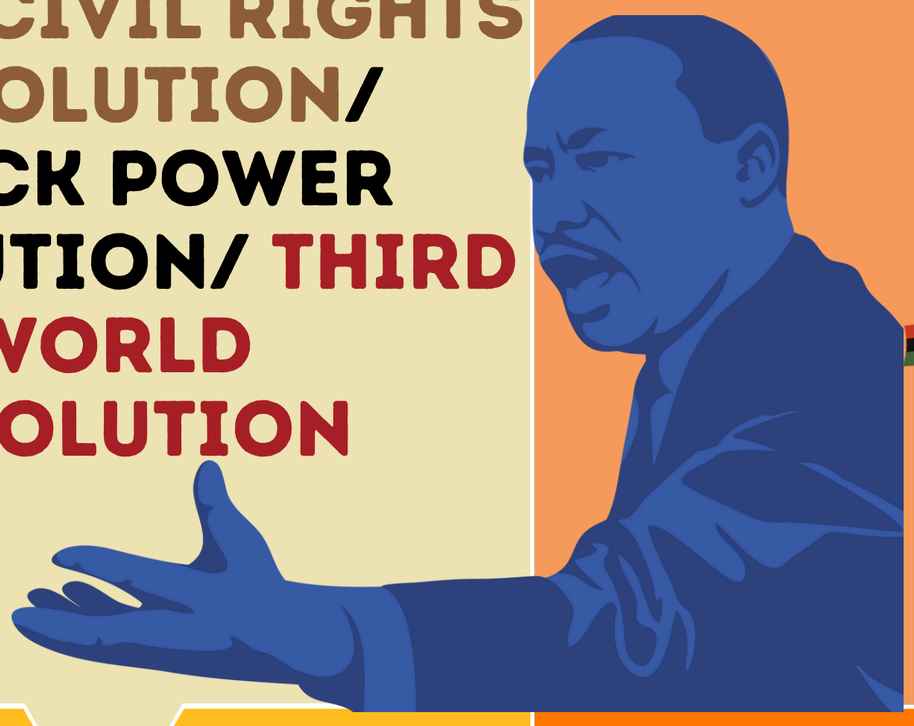
ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION'S TACTICS ARE FROM AN OLD PLAYBOOK --THIS IS A DISTINCT MOMENT IN TIME; WHILE THE TACTICS MAY RESEMBLE THOSE OF THE PAST, THE IMPACT ON US AND OUR FUTURE WILL BE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT.

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CRISIS

REVOLUTION AND REVOLUTION TIMELINE CONTINUED

BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS REVOLUTION/ BLACK POWER REVOLUTION/ THIRD WORLD REVOLUTION









LATE 1970S-2000S: WHITE BACKLASH/ NEOLIBERALISM*

2000 - PRESENT: ERA OF REIMAGINATION AND RESISTANCE/ POST-NEOLIBERAL INSURGENCY



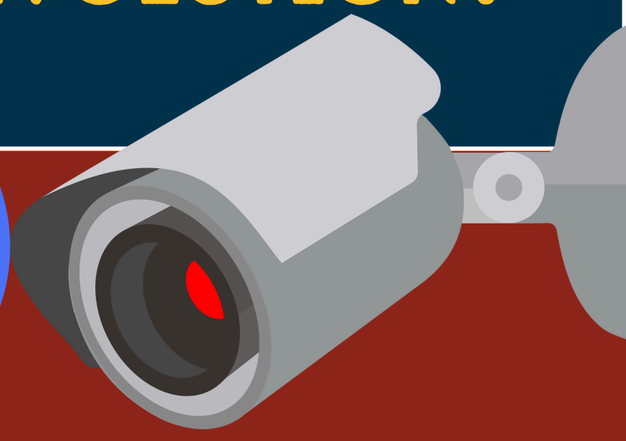
TRUMP 2.0 COUNTER-REVOLUTION



MOVEMENTS LED BY BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND THIRD WORLD PEOPLE HAVE RISEN IN RESPONSE TO GLOBAL CRISES, ECONOMIC ABANDONMENT, AND THE FAILURES OF NEOLIBERALISM. BUT THIS ERA HAS ALSO SEEN INTENSIFIED BACKLASH- FROM MASS SURVEILLANCE AND AUSTERITY TO TRUMP-ERA AUTHORITARIANISM.



2025 - PRESENT NEW CRISIS: REVOLUTION OR COUNTER-REVOLUTION?



"THE PEOPLE, AND THE PEOPLE ALONE, ARE THE MOTIVE FORCE IN THE MAKING OF WORLD HISTORY."

Deeper understanding of the

CRISIS

The crisis of capitalist accumulation, coupled with the declining economic power of the United States, has created a moment of deep instability—one that is further compounded by the absence of any coherent educational direction capable of responding to these shifting economic conditions.





The recent market fallout triggered by President Trump's aggressive tariff hikes has only highlighted this instability. The United States—along with much of the West—now faces an economic decline, deepened by the failure of education policy to evolve in response to a rapidly transforming global economic landscape.

In many ways, while many on the Right have spoken about the perceived economic disadvantage of U.S. commerce and trade, the reality is that U.S. transnational corporations have enjoyed a dominant economic position worldwide—often operating their manufacturing and assembly workforces abroad, seeking cheaper labor costs and extractive sourcing.



Deeper understanding of the CRISIS

The Economic Policy Institute states that

THE TOP 1% TAKE HOME 21% OF ALL INCOME IN THE UNITED STATES.



50–60 Years of Displacement: From Manufacturing to Marginalization

Massive de-industrialization and the exporting of manufacturing jobs abroad; in some communities, this has led to two or three generations experiencing permanent or unstable employment, especially among Black and U.S.-born Latinx young people.







Many families survive by tethering together two or three different full-time or part-time jobs, often without benefits and often still needing to seek food aid.



While the scapegoating of immigrant workers is a common social and political reaction, in many ways, the migrant and immigrant workforce serves as the backbone of a relatively low-wage labor market in the construction, farming, and restaurant industries.



Worker precarity, housing insecurity, and the rise of "hustle economies" (uber, doordash, etc) have led to the erosion of community and family stability—even as the billionaire class continues to amass unprecedented wealth.



Communities living in precarious economic conditions have been described in various ways by different frameworks: the so-called "underclass," the surplus population, the entrapped internal colonial subject, or the working poor.



These conditions have formed a pipeline into mass incarceration and criminalization.

A LOOK AHEAD : LIFE WITHOUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What a parent of a 5-year-old might face if public education is dismantled:



INCREASED ONLINE AND "HOME-BASED" LEARNING PRESSURE

Without physical schools and families priced out of options, a single working parent might be expected to oversee home learning while also working full-time, with no teaching support or childcare.



SOCIAL SAFETY NET FUNCTION OF SCHOOLS IS GONE (WELLNESS, HEALTHCARE, SHELTER FOOD, CHILDCARE GONE)



NO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OR LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Families have no vote, no voice, and no formal rights of appeal. There's no school board to attend or call to action–only the option to withdraw.

DEEPENED INEQUALITY AND MARKET CHAOS

Families will face enormous stress and confusion trying to find safe, legitimate, values-aligned education. Quality and access will vary by zip code, income, and identity. Predatory and fraudulent schools will increase.



LARGEST UNION SECTOR IS GONE

About 20% of all union workers in the country work in schools–this includes teachers, school staff, and support workers. If we lost public education, all of those jobs and protections would disappear. In other words, public schools are home to the largest group of unionized workers in the country–losing them would mean losing our biggest union.

INTENSIFIED HARM FOR BIPOC, POOR, WORKING-CLASS, AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

These families will face the worst impacts. with limited income or no legal status may find every nearby school unaffordable, discriminatory, or hostile–with no legal right to challenge it.

A LOOK AHEAD : LIFE WITHOUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What the parent of a 5-year-old might face if public education is dismantled :

VOUCHER-BASED SYSTEM - EDUCATION BECOMES A TIERED MARKETPLACE.

Wealthier families can top off vouchers to afford elite schools, while lower-income families are funneled into underfunded/low-quality schools or ideologically extreme options.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS (WHICH ARE FREE, NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED, AND PUBLICLY ACCOUNTABLE SPACES) WOULD BE GUTTED & WOULD DISAPPEAR

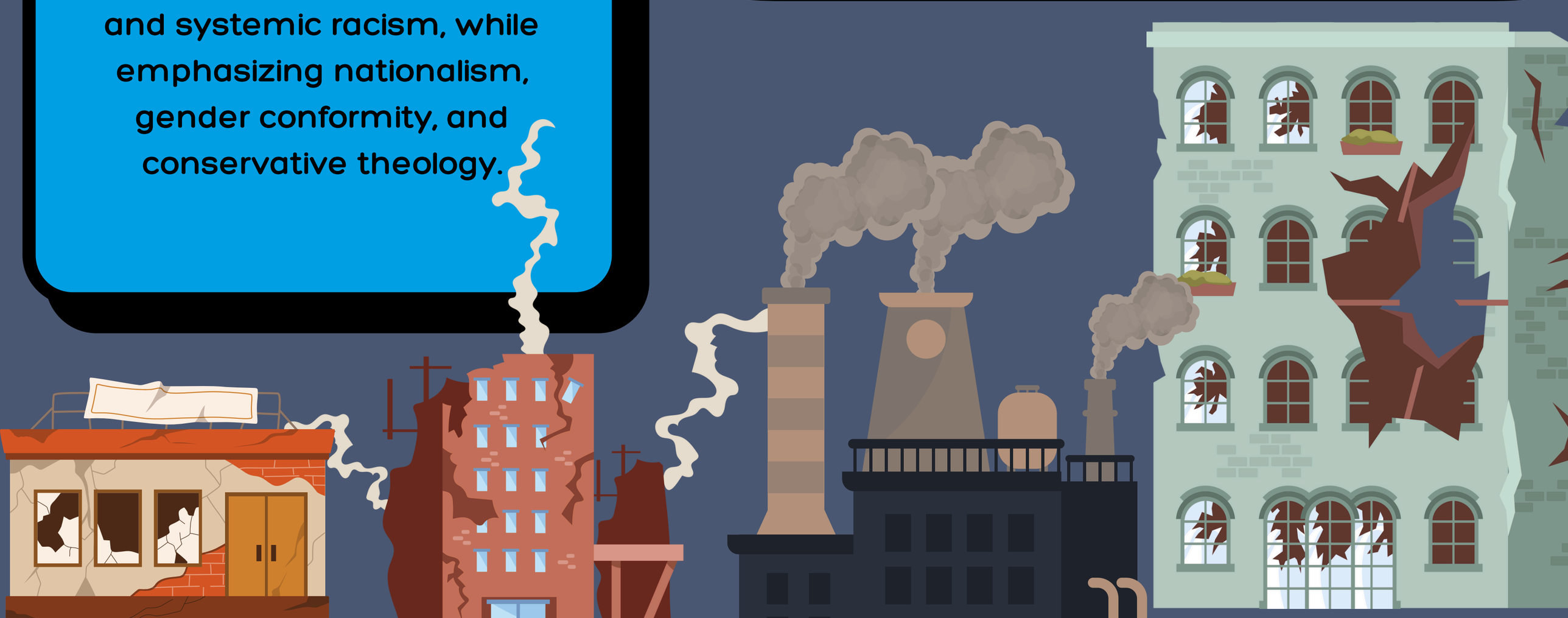
Instead of enrolling at a nearby school, parents have to apply and compete for seats. Many schools will not be free, and vouchers may only partially cover costs.

RELIGIOUS AND IDEOLOGICAL SCHOOLING

Many schools are explicitly religious or politically aligned. Curricula may exclude LGBTQ+ representation, climate science, and systemic racism, while emphasizing nationalism, gender conformity, and conservative theology.

DECLINE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION, BILINGUAL ED, AND INCLUSIVE SERVICES

Parents may find no school willing or able to serve their child's needs–or may be charged out of pocket for basic supports.



DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN CALIFORNIA is uniquely positioned to lead and build bridges across sectors and movements we've yet to engage deeply—because this moment demands it. As leaders rooted in community, we have a responsibility to assess the current political climate and activate our base, especially those most impacted, to both defend our hard-won gains and organize toward long-term structural change.

While we can say that California is fortified in a sense due to years of organizing and hard-fought local and statewide policies Our communities still bear the brunt of poverty, houselessness, unemployment, school pushout, criminalization, and incarceration. These conditions are not accidental—they are the direct result of systems rooted in anti-Blackness and racial capitalism.

THIS IS NOT JUST A MOMENT TO OBSERVE – IT'S A MOMENT TO MOVE. IF YOU'RE READING THIS, YOU'RE PART OF THE STORY, AND YOUR VOICE, YOUR ORGANIZING, AND YOUR RELATIONSHIPS MATTER. THE ATTACKS ON OUR PEOPLE, OUR SCHOOLS, AND OUR FUTURES ARE STRATEGIC – AND SO MUST BE OUR RESPONSE. SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR COMRADES, AND YOUR FAMILY. TALK ABOUT IT IN YOUR SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS. THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH OF THE CRISIS, THE STRONGER AND MORE UNITED OUR RESISTANCE CAN BE. OUR COLLECTIVE POWER HAS WON BEFORE – AND IT WILL AGAIN, IF WE RISE TOGETHER.



CC BY NC SA

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN CALIFORNIA
END THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Organizing ROOTS

An Epilogue

THE FIGHTS AGAINST THE POLICE, PRISON, WARFARE STATE

Schools are among the last public institutions that we must defend against the further encroachment of policing, incarceration, and militarization. Of course, this is in no way an attempt to uncritically claim that schools—or education more broadly—have not historically linked to colonial entrapment like the horrendous Indian Boarding Schools, the long arch of criminalizing learning and teaching against Black People and People of African Descent, punishing Mexican students for speaking their Language and enduring cultural alternating teachings. No surprise then, when our schools today serve for military inscription and recruitment, they have become major sites of the growing presence of police and probation in our people's lives and weaponized child and family protective systems to surveil and separate families. In fact, what we are witnessing today—immigrant disappearances, deportations without due process, university students picked up off the street for mere association or speech—is not new. This cannot be separated from the large, bloated local and regional police and prison budgets. Constitutional rights have been eroded to serve the interests of policing and criminal legal systems. These violations have been battered and normalized through the pre-existing precedents set by the so-called war on gangs, war on crime, war on terror, and the ongoing criminalization of immigrants. We are seeing the escalation of a legal and political framework built long before this moment. Under Trump and the broader right-wing agenda, its rhetoric and policy aimed at combating "wokeism" and promoting government "efficiency" are being weaponized—not only to dismantle Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, but to advance long-term legal and political strategies to undermine civil rights protections. All of this is being justified under the banner of eliminating so-called "government waste." Their ongoing assaults on the Department of Education are part of a broader agenda that will clear the path for even deeper cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and other foundational social programs.

The budget cuts to the Department of Education and other social welfare programs will not simply be subtracted—they will be redirected to fund policing, private prisons, deportation infrastructure, surveillance technologies, and the machinery of state violence.

keep reading →

ENDING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE MOVEMENT

Our sector of the movement to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline has never been monolithic. We come to this work through multiple entry points and from various political traditions. Some have entered through the lens of school climate and ending punishment and racial disparity, others have advocated for educational equity or educational achievement metrics through positive school discipline, and others have specifically targeted school policing with an end goal of abolishing the broader criminal legal system.There is not total unity—and that is not the point. What matters is that we exist at the intersection. We share the commitment to disrupting the systems that funnel Black, Brown, Indigenous, and poor youth from classrooms to cages. We come together in the shared understanding that the school is not neutral—it is a battleground. Furthermore, our work sits at the convergence of education justice, abolition, racial justice, disability rights, queer and trans liberation, and community control. To weave our own sense of possibility, we must recognize that many of the attacks on so-called radical history and critical race theory stem from the mass mobilizations of the summer of 2020, when millions of people, led by Black People, alongside people of all races, genders, ages, and abilities—including young white people—took to the streets in unison to challenge policing as we know it. In 2020, the Black Organizing Project and Dignity in Schools Campaign California and its member organizations, in addition to many other sister organizations and alliances across the state and country, organized and mobilized thousands, if not tens of thousands of young people, students, parents, teachers, educators, families, challenged police presence in our schools, many won, many fought valiant fights, many secured important protection for young people and redistributed police funds to expand restorative justice, counselors, and educational funds to support students of color.

Let us pray for fortitude, stand and follow the leadership of the grassroots, organize to end the attacks against our communities and schools, and dream and fight for a new world.

In Unity and Struggle,

Manuel Criollo

Organizing Roots

OPERATION ATTACK
EDUCATION & COMPLETE
WAR ON POOR

TRUMP ADMINSTRATION'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

the next 7 pages outline the targeted attacks to education and basic civil rights, led and implemented by the Trump Adminstration

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14280 - REINSTATING COMMON SENSE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES

The stated purpose of the order is to prevent schools from adopting policies intended to reduce the unequal rates of punishment for racial minority students.

Currently, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any federally-funded program, including schools. Previous federal guidance under the Obama and Biden administrations told school districts that they may be violating federal law if they suspend and expel racial minority students at significantly higher rates than white students.

T**his EO says the opposite:** racially unequal rates of school discipline are not proof of discrimination, and attempts to address racially unequal outcomes are themselves discriminatory and illegal. The EO claims to target the application of school discipline based on "equity ideology." It is not clear what, if any, actual school discipline practices would fall into this category.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14281 - CALLING FOR THE END OF DISPARATE IMPACT IN CIVIL RIGHTS LAW

Shifts educational control from the federal level to states and parents, a move that facilitates curriculum censorship and opens the door for restrictions on teaching race, gender, and historical injustice.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

DEI, Race, and Affirmative Action



EXECUTIVE ORDER 14148 – INITIAL RESCISSIONS OF HARMFUL EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ACTIONS

Revokes a range of previous executive orders, primarily those focused on diversity, equity, climate, and social justice, claiming they were ideologically driven or divisive.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14151 – ENDING RADICAL AND WASTEFUL GOVERNMENT DEI PROGRAMS AND PREFERENCING



Eliminates federal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and hiring initiatives aimed at correcting systemic bias, reframing them as discriminatory or financially wasteful.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14160 – PROTECTING THE MEANING AND VALUE OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP



Restricts access to citizenship-related benefits and narrows immigration pathways, under the guise of preserving national identity and values.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Affirmative Action and Job Access

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14173 – ENDING ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION AND RESTORING MERIT-BASED OPPORTUNITY (JANUARY 21, 2025)

Rebrands race-conscious programs and affirmative action initiatives as discriminatory, promoting a colorblind "merit-based" framework that disregards systemic inequality.



EXECUTIVE ORDER 14170 – REFORMING THE FEDERAL HIRING PROCESS AND RESTORING MERIT TO GOVERNMENT SERVICE (JANUARY 20, 2025)



Overhauls federal hiring to prioritize so-called "neutral" qualifications, effectively reversing diversity-based recruitment practices and sidelining historically underrepresented groups.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14253 – RESTORING TRUTH AND SANITY TO AMERICAN HISTORY (MARCH 27, 2025)

Mandates "patriotic education" in schools while banning curricula that discuss systemic racism, slavery, or colonialism in ways deemed "divisive" or "anti-American."



EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Reversal of Civil Right and Equal Protection is evident across multiple domains

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14191 – EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY FOR FAMILIES (JANUARY 29, 2025)

Promotes school choice and voucher programs, often at the expense of public education funding, enabling the diversion of taxpayer money to private and charter schools with less oversight or civil rights accountability.



EXECUTIVE ORDER 14201 – KEEPING MEN OUT OF WOMEN'S SPORTS (FEBRUARY 5, 2025)



Prohibits transgender women and girls from participating in female sports leagues, asserting biological sex as the sole criteria for athletic competition.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CUTS OVER $600 MILLION IN TEACHER TRAINING GRANTS

Defunds professional development programs focused on culturally responsive teaching and equity, labeling them as politically biased, which weakens support for educators in diverse classrooms.

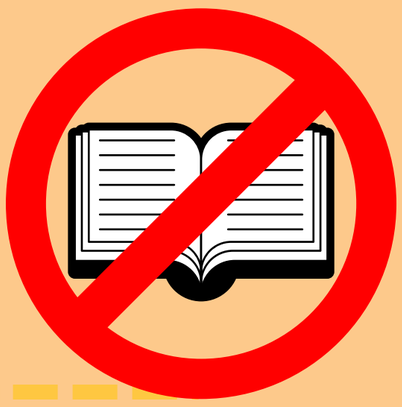


EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Reversal of Civil Right and Equal Protection is evident across multiple domains

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS (OCR) WILL NO LONGER INVESTIGATE BOOK BANS (JANUARY 24, 2025)

Officially ceases federal civil rights investigations into discriminatory book bans in schools, allowing local and state bans targeting LGBTQ+ and race-related content to proceed without oversight.



EXECUTIVE ORDER 14242 – IMPROVING EDUCATION OUTCOMES BY EMPOWERING PARENTS, STATES, AND COMMUNITIES (MARCH 20, 2025)



Shifts educational control from the federal level to states and parents, a move that facilitates curriculum censorship and opens the door for restrictions on teaching race, gender, and historical injustice.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Anti-Trans Rights and Ending Gender Justice

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14168 – DEFENDING WOMEN FROM GENDER IDEOLOGY EXTREMISM AND RESTORING BIOLOGICAL TRUTH TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (JANUARY 20, 2025)

Enforces a binary, biological definition of sex across federal policy, erasing recognition of gender identity and targeting transgender rights under the guise of protecting women's spaces.



"DEAR COLLEAGUE" LETTER ENFORCING TRUMP'S 2020 TITLE IX RULE



Signals a formal return to Trump-era Title IX policies that narrow the definition of sex and limit the Department of Education's role in investigating anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination in schools.