

From: Dennis Fogland [Redacted]
Sent: Thursday, July 15, 2021 3:51 PM
To: Barbara Weitz
Subject: Proposed Resolution on "Critical Race Theory"

Non-NU Email

Dear Ms. Weitz,

I wish to express my opinion on the recent news reports that Regent Pillen is proposing a resolution on "critical race theory" for consideration by the Board of Regents.

I am an UNL Alumni, graduating with a B.A. (Summa Cum Laude) in Philosophy in 1976. After graduating from University of Virginia Law School I returned to Nebraska to practice corporate/securities laws in Omaha the past 40 years. I retired at the end of last year.

I strongly object to the Regents interjecting themselves into this issue for several reasons:

(1) Regardless of the academic issue, the Regents should not be interjecting themselves into what should or should not be taught by the professors in academia. Academic freedom is the cornerstone of higher education. Political interference should not occur, whether from the right, left or middle of the political spectrum.

(2) I cannot imagine how such a matter would be enforced. As a Philosophy major, we studied thinkers from every corner of philosophical and political thought, from Karl Marx to Nietzsche to Ayn Rand. I wrote my 399H Honors Thesis on 20th century Christian theologians reacting to Karl Marx and his economic constructs, in some cases looking favorably on Marx's critique of western capitalism. That certainly didn't make me a Marxist! (And I'm not even sure how helpful such labels are.) Looking back, we could have used more investigation into the role of race, slavery, prejudice, etc. in Western philosophical thought - I don't remember any. I hope that progress is being made in this area - in Philosophy departments and across the board. How and where one would draw a line regarding the teaching of "critical race theory" is hard to imagine when you put it into a day to day teaching perspective.

(3) This seems to me to be the interjection by Regent Pillen of Nebraska State Republican politics into the middle of the Board of Regents world for his personal political gain, which is totally inappropriate. Even if that is Regent Pillen's position when he runs for Governor, it is wrong to throw the issue onto your laps so he can score political points.

(4) On the substance of the issue of critical race theory, in my opinion this is simply a way for the far right politicians to create a straw boogeyman they can use to whip up fear and red meat for the right wing base, in order to win the Republican primary (which, unfortunately, in this State, means they win the general election).

On a personal note, my wife and I are the parents of two daughters adopted from China in 1997 and 2001. Only after our adoption did I study and learn about Asian-American history, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited most Chinese immigration until World War II. So at the same time my Swedish great-grandparents were coming to America and settling in Nebraska (ca. 1880) looking for economic opportunity, America/Congress prohibited Chinese immigration. But for these laws (based on horrible and open racism at the time), Nebraska might have been settled by Swedes and other Europeans from the East and Chinese from the West! (And how different would Nebraska look today!) I learned none of this at North Platte High School where I graduated, or UNL as an undergraduate. This is just one example. It is time to take a studied look at America's past and the role racism has played in our history. Maybe, hopefully, we can learn something for the future.

Thanks,

Dennis Fogland

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