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Editors' Introduction: Memory Laws or Gag Laws? Disinformation Meets Academic Freedom

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This new volume of the *Journal of Academic Freedom* engages with recent political challenges to academic freedom, which have mobilized the antidemocratic notion that academic knowledge—whether in the United States or elsewhere—can be scripted by outside agencies such as a legislative body, a board of trustees, a ministry, or a governmental commission. In our call for papers, we contextualized the ongoing frenzy in many state legislatures to ban or censor references to centuries of racialized oppression and expropriation as part of “the recent upsurge in white ethnonationalism in the United States,” predicated on nostalgia for “white-settler narratives of the nation’s founding.” The resulting laws openly vilify “histories that call attention to the historical realities of genocide, slavery, oppression, and dispossession,” and their advocates have deployed “many disinformation tactics, including the production and dissemination of a counterfeit version of critical race theory (CRT).”¹ We explicitly sought to investigate the impact that this exaggerated form of prescriptive historiography is having on K–12 schools and college and university campuses. The contributors to this volume have offered a chilling panorama of the ongoing struggle between legitimate scholarship and nostalgic propaganda—between informed discourse seeking to enlighten and expand knowledge about past and present and dogmatic

¹ For a discussion of critical race theory, we refer readers to a few sources, including an introduction by Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris (2017) and more systematic engagements by Crenshaw (2010, 2019).

ensorship. This escalating onslaught against academic freedom ironically confirms in prime time the arguments against the exceptionalist reading of the United States as a unique experiment with freedom, or as an alleged libertarian utopia immune to tyranny and authoritarianism.

The open season on CRT and the call for a “patriotic history” have thus become key components in the political agenda of right-wing US ethnonationalists seeking to script through memory laws a lopsided account of the country’s history. This censoring movement is at the center of a renewed culture war in which the results of research and the activities of academics are monitored and judged as “anti-American” whenever they do not fit the narrow views of those seeking an epic account of American exceptionalism. Yet the results of archival and material research hardly ever seem to fit that script neatly (Waymer and Heath). The debate is biased from the outset around the notion of patriotism as a fixed, unquestionable epic narrative of American greatness—a narrative that white Christian nationalists have claimed as theirs alone (Gorski and Perry).

For nationalists the world over, a nation’s history is an article of faith, a tale of heroes, deliverance, and unity that adheres to the conventions of the epic literary genre (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1983). In the United States, the trigger-happy epic tales of white-settler colonialism portrayed, for instance, at the height of popularity of the Hollywood Western movie genre have long been questioned and replaced—both in popular culture and in the academic arena—by more nuanced and complex accounts of various forms of racial, class, and gender oppression and of the nation’s history of dispossession, enslavement, and outright genocide. These latter accounts often result in a more inclusive and diverse view of the many actors and participants in the formation of modern US society (Slotkin; Phillips). Indeed, as several of the contributors to this volume make clear, a multicultural society demands a more accurate representation of its multicultural lineages, its contradictions, and its many protagonists.

Over the past few years, an inquisitorial impulse reminiscent of the 1940s and 50s McCarthyite House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) has been unleashed on public libraries, schools, colleges, and universities. The “inquisitors” seek to identify books, classes, syllabi, and

lectures that appear to threaten or undermine the tale of America's greatness. Much like HUAC, ironically branding its victims as "Un-American," the banning of books and the censoring of academics carried out by the latest authoritarian nationalists has also been described as deeply flawed and un-American, and over 150 US academic associations signed a June 2021 statement opposing such legislation (AAUP 2021b). Encroachment on academic freedom and on freedom of speech often takes the form of a blanket condemnation of CRT, critical theory, critical thinking, and any cultural product deemed "subversive," with the accusers needing little evidence to substantiate their suspicions and allegations as they claim full proprietorship over the nation's essence. In this respect, today's inquisitorial impulse follows dictionary definitions of McCarthyism as (1) "the practice of publicizing accusations of political disloyalty or subversion with insufficient regard to evidence" and (2) "the use of unfair investigatory or accusatory methods in order to suppress opposition" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, fifth edition, 2016). Lack of evidence, on the one hand, and the political aim to "suppress opposition," on the other, seem to sum up well the current movement to repress "identity politics" and any other discourse that may counter the white supremacist account of American "greatness." This effort openly reveals the white supremacist subtext of the slogan "Make America Great Again" as a racialized effort to "Make America White Again," to write out of US classrooms and history books its complex multicultural, and often multilingual, histories. The enraged prosecutors of alternate ways of understanding the nation's past are, in effect, ethnonationalist historiography vigilantes.

Already in the stormy closing days of the divisive Trump administration—months before supporters staged an actual attempted coup against the institutions of democracy, bearing confederate flags and other offensively racist paraphernalia while illicitly storming their way into the US Capitol—the 1776 Commission had unfurled the banners of white supremacist patriotism by calling for an active program of censorship of any critical account of US history. The stated purpose of the advisory committee, and the December 2020 report it issued, with bans

and corrective measures but without the input of professional historians of the United States, was to enshrine “patriotic education in our nation.”

The 1776 Commission summarily dismissed as “unpatriotic” archival and material evidence, thousands of peer-reviewed books and articles, and decades of detailed research demonstrating the practices, biases, and track record of institutionalized racism. Their report is a backlash against the New York Times 1619 Project, launched in 2019 by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, who eloquently and persuasively proposed the arrival of enslaved African captives in colonial Virginia in May 1619 as a foundational landmark in the country’s story of “national origin.” In her lead essay for the project, “The Idea of America,” she offered a scathing summary of the conflicted historical record of US interethnic relations as a “caste system . . . maintained through wanton racial terrorism” (Hannah-Jones 2019). This public denunciation of the ways white supremacy has for centuries sought to monopolize the national record while erasing the agency of African Americans—and other ethnic minorities—from its accounts was too much to take for the vigilantes protecting the alleged national essence.

In the final months of his flawed administration, the New York confidence man turned leader of the so-called free world projected his own historiographic vigilantism onto the public debate in identifying the targets of his “patriotic education” agenda: “Critical race theory, the 1619 project, and the crusade against American history is toxic propaganda, ideological poison that if not removed will dissolve the civic bonds that tie us together,” he said. “It will destroy our country. That is why I recently banned trainings in this prejudiced ideology from the federal government and banned it in the strongest manner possible” (Perez and Gaudiano). The contradiction in this quote between Trump’s stated intent of defending the “civic bonds that tie us together” and his venomous depiction of alternate narratives as “poison” or “toxic propaganda,” along with his intent to ban any alternate rendering of the nation’s history, characterizes well a white supremacist, authoritarian worldview. It also epitomizes the discordant policies carried out by his fraught administration to allegedly “unite” or salvage the country’s “civic bonds” when the United States has rarely seen such levels of civil and political

discord. The ripple effects of his incendiary program can still be felt across the country today. Criminalization of alternate views in the name of unifying the country in fact had a more divisive effect than the alleged “divisive language” it sought to censor. After four months, the 1776 Commission published its forty-page report in the fateful month of January 2021, just two days before the inauguration of Joe Biden and less than two weeks after the unpatriotic display of disregard for the rule of law and democratic processes, the infamous January 6 insurrection at the US Capitol. The report is a mixture of insipid summaries of the founding principles of the republic followed by a tirade—in an unsigned appendix—disparaging “identity politics” and equal opportunity programs. There is no citation apparatus, and the work has been described by the executive director of the American Historical Association, Jim Grossman, as a “hack job” and as “outright lies” by others (Brockell). As a piece of academic writing, it does not meet customary expectations even for undergraduates.

Nonetheless, as a disturbing but predictable ripple effect of the 1776 Commission and the culture war fed by Trump and many of his supporters, Republican state legislators across the United States have introduced dozens of new laws targeting curricula related to race and racism since the spring of 2021. A number of states have already passed laws or established administrative requirements to restrict the teaching of US history, while others are set to follow suit. This is what we described in our call for papers as a form of “doublespeak,” as “Orwellian limitations on speech in the name of free speech.”

Gag orders, such as bans on teaching critical race theory or Florida’s “Stop WOKE Act” signed into law in April 2022, are aggressive efforts to restrict education about racism, bigotry, and US history. Under the guise of prohibiting students from exposure to “divisive concepts,” these politically orchestrated initiatives—although the details vary by state—seek to politicize curriculum, punish faculty who exercise academic freedom, and demonize teachers, schools, colleges, and universities. At their core, these gag orders and legislative bans infringe on the right of faculty to teach the results of current research and students to learn.

Academic Freedom Is Unlike Free Speech

Academic freedom is informed speech, and as a recent book by Michael Bérubé and Jennifer Ruth asserts, “It’s not free speech.” Politicians, pundits, and public bullies are not necessarily held to rigorous standards of expertise for their opinions, claims, and assertions. They may exercise free speech, but it is not academic freedom. Opinionated rants are not the same as scholarly publications or a curriculum that must adhere to standards and expectations among a field of experts. This is what separates the claims of scientists, historians, and literary critics from opinions exercised as free speech. The former are bound to peer review at multiple levels and subject to refutation and rebuttal, contributing over time to a body of knowledge established and sustained with checks and balances. Formed through a recursive vetting process, legitimate academic claims arise in the context of scholars and scientists exercising academic freedom. A claim is not “right” because someone has the loudest mic or the most money or the greatest power but because their argument maintains validity within a larger community of people whose claims are also subject to scrutiny and vetting. Teachers trained in a field of expertise draw from that body of vetted knowledge. In this way, knowledge produced by and accountable to academic freedom should not be dismissed as mere opinion. This credibility is what makes academic freedom so central to the functioning of a free and democratic society, and distinct from free speech. The exercise of academic freedom is both a guarantee and a buffer against the routine harm that comes to democracy, social inclusion, and public knowledge through belligerent partisan attacks, calculated and profit-seeking manipulations of opinion, or deliberate disinformation campaigns.

It warrants repeating: academic freedom does not thrive under authoritarian governments (Dubrovsky and Kaczmariska 2022; Scott 2019). Routinely we witness the effects of censorship in crushing critics, smothering dissent, and forcing scientists and scholars to flee authoritarian states (Scott 2019). Certain historical and social conditions are necessary for academic freedom to persist and flourish, which in turn creates the space for innovative inquiry, exploration, and dynamic scientific and academic communities. The *Journal of Academic Freedom* and

the AAUP more broadly have contributed to greater fluency in our collective understanding of the connections between and among history, democracy, and academic freedom.

To situate academic freedom in the institutional milieu of a free society is not arbitrary. It is instead a recognition of the contingency of academic freedom, much as any variant of national democracy is also historically contingent. Consequently, the practice of academic freedom by scholars, scientists, and educators is imbued with and constrained by social and political struggles over knowledge, memory, and identity. As the articles in this volume demonstrate, academic freedom within a state or nation is not static; it is an institutionalized value system tenuously built into modern universities, colleges, and a larger, often contested, system of education. Joan Wallach Scott explained this perhaps better than anyone (2019).

Democracy and Academic Freedom

One of the most underappreciated factors necessary for a minimally functioning democracy is a civil society with a robust knowledge sector. Knowledge sectors include a variety of institutions and organizations, from nonprofits to formal public and private schools, colleges, and universities. Within that sector, educational institutions must not be hampered by violence, institutionalized discrimination, or interference from powerful political or economic interests. This is why colleges and universities and their accrediting bodies must protect academic freedom from outside political, ideological, or economic interests. Of course, when powerful political or economic interests attempt to shape or control the agenda of educational institutions, academic freedom is at risk of being hollowed out. The current wave of conservative reaction is about silencing critics and censoring honest discussions about bigotry, race, and racism. More starkly, violence or threats of violence target teachers and faculty, especially underrepresented faculty and those who teach topics that white nationalist want to silence. Teachers and faculty encounter these threats in the form of doxing, graffiti, and vandalism, which further erode their sense of safety and trust—and, ultimately, the promise of inclusive teaching, learning, and dialogue. The oppressive shadow of

bigotry, discrimination, bullying, and inequity similarly threaten trust and safety. Democracy suffers when such assaults hamper or encumber the knowledge sector in civil society. Democratic societies require a highly open flow of information, discourse, and perspective-taking, which in turn facilitate the conditions for accountability with checks and balances. The free press is obviously a part of this equation. But educational institutions and nonprofits play a key role in bolstering the connective tissues between and across communities in a larger deliberative, complex, and inclusive society.

Volume 13 Articles

The first article in this volume, "The Authoritarian Big Chill," by **John R. Wood**, reviews the way debates about the teaching of US history have become front and center in the authoritarian movement's onslaught on academic freedom. Wood presents a bleak panorama of liberticide legislation featuring censorship, book bans, and what he calls a "war on truth." An array of examples centered around Oklahoma's House Bill 1775 showcases a pattern of legislative challenges to the notion of open critical discussions in K-12 and higher education. Like "memory laws" in Vladimir Putin's Russia and Viktor Orbán's gender studies ban in Hungary, HB 1775 "blocks teachers' ability to inquire into subjects that evoke their concern while presenting critical thinking to their students, thereby nurturing higher learning skills." Here, the key notion is *interference*: legislators are interlopers proscribing a set of banned narratives and challenging education as an outlet to present the results of research. By outlawing any discussion of race or sexual orientation, legislators are seeking to turn education into indoctrination, ironically the very process they allegedly are attempting to prevent. Wood cites the 2021 *Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism* (AAUP et al. 2021), which contends that such "memory laws are inappropriately attempting to 'transfer responsibility for the evaluation of a curriculum and subject matter from educators to elected officials.'" Tying state legislative efforts to authoritarianism as an ideology bound by the suppression of a diversity of viewpoints and the free deliberation of citizens and scholars, Wood writes that "memory laws are ways for an

authoritarian government to impose sanctions and uphold a single mandatory interpretation of history, leading to self-censorship.” As the *Joint Statement* notes, these types of initiatives “essentially legislate ignorance.”

Lori B. Martin’s article “Black Out” examines how there is a perceptible pattern of backlash that follows periods of racial awakening in recent US history. The author places the current attacks on critical race theory (CRT) and racial enfranchisement in general as an aftermath of and reaction against the Black Lives Matter movement—particularly the period of heightened awareness and public commitment to addressing racial violence and injustice that followed the outrageous public murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officer Derek Chauvin in May 2020. Martin considers, for instance, the academic upsurge of faculty positions that she describes as “George Floyd hires,” serving in effect the advancement of the administrative and academic careers of white administrators who once again deployed “white savior” rhetoric. The repression of CRT is couched within a process of “reneging on a racial reckoning” and what Martin describes as a “betrayal of the momentum, breaking the efforts and the expectations of “building toward better race relations after Floyd’s murder.” The anti-CRT movement exposes the desires of “parents not wanting their children to learn about the truth of America’s racial past and present,” but it also reveals a process of co-optation of the language intended to draw attention to ongoing racial injustices. Citing Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Martin posits that within the logic of this racial backlash, the terminologies and discussions of racial oppression have been usurped and used to “support claims about the victimization of white people in America.”

Libby Lewis’s article “The War over the Future of Academic Freedom” reminds readers that academic freedom is a collective project bound up with larger societal conflicts, inequalities, and power structures. Her analysis addresses the contraction of academic freedom amid white reactions to the incremental gains in cultural and historical representation by “people rich in melanin.” White reactionaries consequently galvanize a recurring conservative political bloc that fights to preserve white supremacy and sustain national myths in a political war over education.

Lewis locates these dynamics in recent struggles, including the highly politicized effort to deny tenure to Nikole Hannah-Jones, the reactionary 1776 Commission, and efforts to stifle California's legislation requiring an ethnic studies course for graduation in the California State University system. Institutional struggles are one thing, but Lewis recaps several forms of white threats and violence directed at college and university campuses and K–12 schools that establish terror in the political context of white supremacy.

Historian **Harvey Graff** likewise argues in his article “The Nondebate about Critical Race Theory and Our American Moment” that it is not a debate we are witnessing over critical race theory but a political battle over racial inclusion. Graff locates the rise of the “second big lie” — a well-funded disinformation campaign to promote fictitious debates about teaching critical race theory in US elementary and secondary schools—in right-wing authoritarianism, pointing to the emergence of this specific disinformation campaign following Christopher Rufo's 2021 *USA Today* op-ed titled “Critical Race Theory Is State-Sanctioned Racism.” This conservative polemicist compressed white grievances into claims that the state and public schools are using CRT to promote racism directed at white students. With deliberate distortion and fabrication, the campaign quickly turned to the right-wing echo chamber to fuse the “issue” to other white right-wing resentments. Graff cites many examples of how pundits, politicians, and parents endorsed the disinformation campaign. Like other contributors to the volume, Graff concludes by meditating on the way white fears build up opposition, through well-funded disinformation campaigns, to more inclusive and open teaching and learning about US history that includes both achievements and shortcomings.

In her article “Do Bans on Teaching ‘Divisive Concepts’ Interfere with Students’ Right to Know?” **Juliet Dee** identifies the very specific manner in which recent legislation in at least a dozen states stifles and squashes already tenuous academic freedom for K–12 educators. First, in identifying how courts have used the US Supreme Court's 2006 *Garcetti v. Ceballos* decision to stifle the academic freedom of public-school teachers, Dee presents examples of the impact of new state laws on further restricting curricula and teachers' academic freedom, beginning with the

2010 statute that eliminated the Mexican American studies program in Tucson's public schools. Dee's analysis further integrates a summary of litigation in five states that have banned teaching of critical race theory, expressly linking these legislative tactics to the Trump administration's 2020 executive order banning the teaching of "divisive concepts." Legislation in several states borrowed heavily from Trump's order, and some even copied language verbatim. The trajectory and sequence of events described by Dee outlines a political movement targeting public education with manufactured grievances. There are glimmers of hope, according to Dee, and these should inspire readers.

The next two articles introduce case studies of Texas's far-right attacks on academic freedom. The Republican government of Texas has proven that bans on teaching the 1619 Project or CRT are not just threats to K-12 but to higher education and the tenure system. The AAUP responded to the state attorney's request for an opinion about the teaching of CRT with an amicus brief arguing that education "plays a vital role in our democratic society, and the free exchange of ideas about race in American history and contemporary society is crucial to the ability of universities to fulfill their proper function" (AAUP 2021, 6). The brief establishes logical and statutory precedents to further argue that academic freedom is essential to education for a free society; therefore, the efforts of the Texas state government to ban, censor, and indoctrinate are "antithetical" to that freedom. In February 2022, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick escalated the conflict at a press conference: "What we will propose to do is end tenure, all tenure for all new hires," he said, and for currently tenured professors he proclaimed that "the law will change to say teaching critical race theory is prima facie evidence of good cause for tenure revocation." Indicating the scope of the threat, the AAUP quickly responded, warning that changing the law to make teaching CRT an offense subject to termination is "an extremely dangerous authoritarian precedent" (AAUP 2022). The struggle continues, and the two articles we describe next give us a ground-level view.

Tabitha S. M. Morton's article "Separate and Unequal Again" reveals how recent gag orders in Texas bring disparate impacts on institutions of higher education in the state. She focuses on an innovative program at the

historically black Prairie View A&M University. We learn how the Broadening Global Learning Opportunities Building Academic Leaders (B-GLOBAL) program has a successful track record in cultivating a global competencies education that disproportionately serves underrepresented students. Examining recent gag laws in Texas, Morton explains the threats now facing this program as well as similar programs. Because recent legislation seeks to restrict teaching about racism and history of marginalized populations, programs developed to serve historically underrepresented groups will see their curriculum under greater threat from the spate of bans.

Another critical case study examines reactions to the antiracist Kids Against Racism project (GoKAR!) at the University of Texas at Austin. In their article “Research, Teaching, Both, or Neither,” **Z. W. Taylor, Patricia Somers, and Joshua Childs** reveal how legislative and ideological attacks on critical race theory in Texas harm not only K–12 classroom instruction but also innovative antiracist programs. They apply a multifaceted conception of academics to address the complexity of programs like GoKAR! that entail teaching, research, intramural, and extramural speech. The authors remind us that future research, theory, and policy on academic freedom must consider these intersections as well as the extension of academic work into areas of action-based research and community education. This article problematizes conceptions of academic freedom that attempt to neatly confine its practice and application to either teaching or research. GoKAR! is research, but it is also a project that implements curriculum at multiple levels through a cadre of caregivers to white children. Political attacks on the project and its funding source undercut antiracism education and research but also demonstrate the need to embrace a multifaceted conceptualization of academic freedom and work to better institutionalize it.

As news of book bans, disciplinary action against teachers, and restrictive gag orders increased from 2019 to 2021, faculty affiliated with the Hofstra University teacher-education program organized a conference panel to discuss next steps for preparing teachers for the heightened conservative attacks on education. In their article “Teaching about Contemporary Controversies in High Schools and in University Teacher

Education Programs,” **Alan Singer, Chris Dier, Adeola Tella-Williams,** and **Cynthia Vitere** contextualize and recap their important panel discussion. We learn about the repercussions of gag orders not only on teachers and students in the K–12 environment but in the halls of higher education, where teachers get their initial training.

In the article “Pride and Prejudice,” **Ricardo Phipps** locates contemporary bans on LGBTQ+ books and curriculum along a larger historical trajectory of censorship, discrimination, and prejudice. Phipps’s review of literature identifies the manifold ways that curriculum and instruction about LGBTQ+ history, identities, and issues helps students on a number of fronts. Bans on the use of LGBTQ+ themed literature exacerbate already discriminatory environments toward students who identify as LGBTQ+ or have friends and family who do. Further, these bans on curriculum and literature also exacerbate harmful cultural stereotypes and biases. Phipps concludes with a discussion of how teacher-education programs run into new difficulties in meeting expectations for nationally recognized multicultural competencies because of the recent spate of literature and curricular bans on LGBTQ+ content.

In “Public Memory Generates Disinformation on 9/11 in Public Schools,” **Amaarah DeCuir** describes some of the dangers underlying the lack of preparation of educators for multicultural classrooms with the key example of the public memory of the September 11 terrorist attacks. She claims that “educators are not equipped with sufficient resources to effectively teach racial literacies” and that “annual attempts to address 9/11 in classrooms generate anti-Muslim racism that marginalizes the experiences of Muslims in the public memory and reproduces bias and discrimination targeting Muslims and Arabs in schools.” Here again, the issue of faculty who identify as nonwhite being targeted for their “lack of national allegiance” becomes all-important and confirms what we called in this introduction “ethnonationalist historiographic vigilantism” — exposing the underpinnings of 9/11 curricula as openly white supremacist and xenophobic. DeCuir concludes her article by asking for educational institutions to demonstrate in practice their “commitments to disrupting racism by publicly condemning racist censoring.”

The next two articles offer some comparative insights into the debates about historiography and racial policies outside of the United States by looking at cases in France and Spain, respectively. In “Denial of Denial,” **Iseult Mc Nulty** draws on US critical race theory and the work of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva to frame French republicanism and its obsessive denial of race and racism as categories that need to be accounted for. Here, the notion of “color-blindness,” as well as postcolonial and decolonial theory, allow Mc Nulty to “unpack the epistemological violence at play in this controversy.” The case of France offers a sobering example of how the denial of racism, the “refusal to acknowledge the structural nature of racism,” limits the democratic promise of the French Republican ideals. Resonant of the accusations against “unpatriotic” ideas that some of the other authors have tackled in the US political context, Mc Nulty posits that “the denunciation of racism is seen as an attack on France itself,” thus raising the question of the self-serving limitations imposed by French republican nationalism—and the mostly white bourgeoisie that it has come to represent— on the notions of race or of the postcolonial legacies of French imperialism.

In “Blocking Access to the Recent Past,” **Sebastian Faber** examines the ways in which diverging definitions of academic freedom operate in a postdictatorial society like Spain, a country that is still coming to terms with the legacies of four decades of the hypernationalist Catholic dictatorship of Francisco Franco from 1936 to 1975. Faber takes issue with the juridical protections that former torturers and collaborators of the Francoist regime continue to enjoy as they are immune from prosecution under the amnesty law that pardoned opponents of the regime. The protections offered also by the peculiarity of the Spanish “right to individual honor” has allowed some descendants and former torturers to try and juridically prosecute those who attempt to “defame” them, even if they are referenced in the context of academic historical research. One of the enduring legacies of the 1936–39 Civil War and the lengthy fascist-Catholic control of universities as sites of patriotic indoctrination is both the “almost autocratic authority” yielded by the top ranks of the professoriate and what Faber describes as a “deep politicization” of the

profession, both of which continue to undermine the prestige, rigor, and independence of its scholarship.

We close this volume with **William Horne's** article "Towards an Unpatriotic Education," an in-depth analysis of the writings of the towering Black thinkers W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter Woodson, searching for lessons and language that can be applied to today's backlash against CRT. Horne's argument could not be more pertinent as he claims Du Bois and Woodson signaled "mis-education" as a "political project," "a form of sabotage and propaganda designed to facilitate and expand white power under the guise of "patriotism."" Horne cites Du Bois to compare the present with the "white erasure movement of the Jim Crow era" and its supremacist mythologies that sought to "legitimize their own power at the expense of Black Americans." Similarly, contemporary Republican memory laws "are not about education . . . but about power"—they are "designed to standardize education as white mythology." Horne's assessment of the parallels between the present and the Jim Crow era that animated Du Bois and Woodson's writings offers an insightful image of the perverse dynamics of a contorted historiography, its nationalist mythologizing, and its white supremacist act of resistance to change: "White Americans were ashamed of their actual history and sought to cover it up rather than to relinquish white supremacy and the systems of power and plunder it animated."

In closing, the legislations and political incursions into the realm of academia that we review in this volume clearly usurp the rights of academics to freely and ethically conduct research and to share it through their teaching. If allowed to continue, the recently inaugurated racial censorship and its legislated limitations on knowledge production will have a lasting impact on generations of Americans who will grow up ill-prepared to live in a multicultural republic, uninformed about its complex histories, and unable to truly strengthen its civic bonds.

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