

August 24, 2021

The Children's Literature Association endorses the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism in American History \(June 2021\)](#). This statement, authored by the American Association of University Professors, the American Historical Association, the Association of American Colleges & Universities, and PEN America, and co-signed by over 120 scholarly organizations, states "their 'firm opposition' to legislation, introduced in at least 20 states, that would restrict the discussion of 'divisive concepts' in public education institutions." This statement is relevant to the mission of the Children's Literature Association for a number of reasons.

First, as an academic organization, we categorically reject the restriction of academic freedom that such legislation entails. As the statement makes clear, "these bills risk infringing on the right of faculty to teach and of students to learn."

Second, as an organization fundamentally concerned with equity in education, we find any effort to restrict student access to knowledge at odds with our mission and with the rights of students. Again quoting from the statement: "these legislative efforts seek to substitute political mandates for the considered judgment of professional educators, hindering students' ability to learn and engage in critical thinking across differences and disagreements."

Finally, such legislation runs counter to the [core values](#) of our organization. The values of inclusivity, diversity, integrity, development, and celebration demand that we look critically and inclusively at the past in order to create a more just and inclusive future. Those who teach, study, and serve children and their literature recognize the vital importance of open and honest dialogue about America's racial history.

In addition to endorsing the statement authored by other academic organizations, ChLA is committed to supporting our own membership, as well as our colleagues outside the organization whose work on children's literature informs our own, who are particularly invested in teaching and producing works of scholarship employing Critical Race Theory and other related work involving the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Belonging. We recognize that graduate students, junior scholars, BIPOC scholars, and precariously employed scholars are particularly at risk for silencing, retaliation, microaggressions, and other infringements on their academic freedom. As we embark on a year of strategic planning, ChLA reaffirms our commitment to our [Core Values](#) of Inclusivity, Diversity, Integrity, Development, and Celebration by aligning our budgeting principles to these values. We will therefore empower our committees to develop specific action plans for supporting CRT and increasing diversity, equity, and inclusivity in their specific areas of focus, with a goal of developing such action plans by Dec 31, 2021.