What do Bans on CRT in Education mean for Native education? Two Teacher Educators Share their Counterstories

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Abstract

Despite the recent anti-CRT (Critical Race Theory) movement within U.S. education, teachings of Native histories and perspectives have never been accurately taught, or even taught. From their perspectives as teacher educators in predominantly white institutions (PWI), the authors share counterstories from their existing IRB-approved research projects to explore the impacts of CRT bans on teacher education and how the bans continue to perpetuate systemic erasure of Native perspectives. They review how legislators in the Western U.S. passed anti-CRT laws as well as its impact on teacher education. Using the TribalCrit framework with an emphasis on the first tenet, "colonization [being] endemic to society" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430), the authors discuss how Native invisibilization and erasure are perpetuated in predominantly white classrooms by silencing Native perspectives in policy making and curriculum implementation, banning Natives in public education, and explicit refusal of white teachers to learn culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). While erasure and colonization may no longer be explicit U.S. federal policy aims in the education of Native youth, the subjugation of Native rights, cultures, knowledges, and histories remains a contemporary feature of state-sanctioned public education. Telling these stories of structural violence toward Native peoples reflected in the ignorance enforced by mainstream teachers and educational policymakers makes salient the overwhelming need to teach Native history and content at all levels of public education.

Keywords: *TribalCrit, Teacher Education, Native Erasure, Counterstories, CRT bans, Colonial Unknowing, Native Perspectives*

Introduction

We envision an education that upholds a multicultural democracy. As scholar-educators of Native American education, Native struggles for sovereignty and self-education remind us that since time immemorial, the land currently known as the United States has consisted of diverse peoples and spaces of difference. Mvskoke scholar Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty (2002) stress this reality with their concept of critical democracy founded on the critical construct of the democratic ideal, which "demands that the United States be a nation of educational opportunity for all, not merely a homogenizing and standardizing machine, unable to draw strength from diversity" (p. 281). The

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hysteria and censorship surrounding anti-CRT campaigns do not uphold a critical democratic approach to education and threaten the opportunities all K-12 and higher education students have to learn about and benefit from the rich diversity of their communities and nations. As such, we agree with Shear et al. (2015) and Knopp (1997) that teaching of Native histories, past and present, has never been accurately taught in U.S. public education. As a Native scholar and non-Native collaborator, debates around the teaching of race and racism in public education shine new light on the settler colonial history of the United States.

This article draws from our experiences as teacher educators at predominantly white public institutions (PWI) in the West (Utah and Idaho) and experiences as public educators in tribal, urban, and rural K-12 schools in Arizona. We use data sources—stories, interviews, and observations –from our multiple IRB-approved research projects to critically address the impacts of CRT bans on teacher education at PWIs. We center ethnographic stories as an intentional act of relationality into research to call attention to the contested ways of including Native perspectives in teacher education. We situate our analysis of teacher education within lessons from schooling in Native America—the fight to protect and conserve sovereignty—to illuminate and enrich the national debate surrounding educational issues that affect us all.

To examine the current anti-CRT movements in our states and region, we utilize Lumbee scholar Bryan Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) to address the question: *What are the impacts of a ban on CRT on Native content instruction in teacher education?* We focus on the primary TribalCrit tenet that states that "European American thought, knowledge, and power structures dominate present-day society in the United States" (p. 430) and that "educational policies toward Native peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (p. 429). The application of TribalCrit assists with understanding how Native peoples remain invisibilized or erased in teacher education curricula and how bans on CRT further perpetuate the colonial unknowing deeply rooted in teacher education and the American collective memory.

Our analysis reveals how bans on CRT impact mainstream understanding of Native peoples and Native content instruction through 1) the continued silencing of Native perspectives and content, 2) the perpetuation of invisibilizing Natives in public education, and 3) the refusal to learn culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). We close by continuing a call to examine how teacher education is a foundational space of struggle toward a critical and socially just democracy.

Anti-CRT Bans in Idaho, Utah, and Arizona: Context

Idaho, Utah, and Arizona are all states where hyperbolic debates as to whether teaching American history that includes facts of race-based enslavement, Native land dispossession, and institutionalized racial segregation are to be considered "unpatriotic" or in some way "discriminatory" to white people. Proposed legislative bills in these states exemplify how many white-dominated state governments in the U.S. attempt to formally codify teaching American history that includes colonization and race as un-American. When writing this article, 42 states had introduced or passed anti-CRT legislation (Greene, 2022). Research shows that the initial impact of such legislation has a chilling effect directed at educators and emboldens white supremacist ideologies (Pollock et al., 2022).

Here, we briefly profile anti-CRT legislation in the three states where we live, work, and teach. In 2021, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed HB 2898 into law; however, the Arizona Supreme Court found these restrictions unconstitutional. The law would have prevented schools

from teaching that certain race groups were superior and that certain individuals were racist because of their race (Newfield, n.d.). In 2022, a proposed amendment to the state constitution called the "Stop Critical Race Theory and Racial Discrimination in Schools and Other Public Institutions Act" was introduced for a public vote in the 2022 election (Center for Arizona Policy, 2022), however, the proposal did not make it onto the ballot.

In 2021, Utah legislators passed S.R. 901 and H.R. 901Utah Legislative Resolution on Critical Race Theory in Public Education. The resolution "strongly recommended" the Utah State Board of Education to assure that the state curriculum excluded "that one race is inherently superior or inferior to another race; that an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of the individual's race; or that an individual's moral character is determined by the individual's race" (Senate Resolution on Critical Race Theory in Public Education, 2021). The Resolution required the State School Board to make recommendation on how teachers could discuss racism (Tanner, 2021).

In April 2021, Idaho Governor Brad Little (Republican) signed HB 377, Dignity and Nondiscrimination in Public Education, into law. HB 377 limits how teachers can discuss race and gender and bans what the legislation calls tenets of critical race theory. Following the passage of HB377, the State's Lt. Governor assembled a task force to investigate indoctrination in Idaho public education based on claims that schools pushed critical race theory, socialism, communism, and Marxism on Idahoans in K-12 and higher education.

The task force, paid for by taxpayer monies, met for three months and presented no consistent evidence of specific instances of indoctrination in K-12 classrooms or higher education. A bill proposed in January 2022 would amend the law to allow private citizens to file a civil suit against a district that teaches the banned concepts. If the court finds that the district violated the law, the state will withhold a portion of its funding.

Teacher Education

In the 2017-2018 school year, 79.3% of elementary and secondary public-school teachers in the United States were white, and 1% were American Indian. During that school year, white teachers comprised an overwhelming majority of teachers in Idaho, Arizona, and Utah.

Table 1: *Reduced Data of Percentage Distribution of School Teachers by Race/Ethnicity 2017-2018*

	White	Hispanic	Black	American Indian
United States	79.3	9.3	6.7	0.5
Arizona	76.2	13.9	2.7	2.8
Idaho	95.2	2.4	‡	0.8
Utah	93	3.6	‡	‡

Note: Data gathered from National Center for Educational Statistics https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_fltable01_t1s.asp

‡ The reporting standards were not met.

Research on the perceptions of a predominantly white teacher workforce finds that fear and discomfort with reconciling whiteness constrain teachers' ability to talk and teach about race in the classroom (Brown et al., 2017). Additional research shows teachers rarely come into the classroom with knowledge of Native peoples and nations or a sense of how Native peoples operationalize their knowledge in relation to land and landscapes (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2020; McInnes, 2017). Little to no professional development is available to pre- or in-service educators on designing or applying Native-centered teaching and learning nationwide (Castagno et al., 2015; Jojola et al., 2011). An (a)VOID(ance) of Native content exist in teacher education prior to the CRT bans.

Recent changes to state education standards in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Arizona require teachers to build understanding and respect for Native histories, ways of knowing, and tribal sovereignty in classroom curricula and schools (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2020; Benally, 2019; Sabzalian et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2011; Stanton et al., 2019). However, few of these policies have explicit support for teachers in the form of funding for professional development or credentialing mandates for demonstrating competency in tribal histories. Even well-intentioned Native inclusion standards, such as Montana's Indian Education for All, do not require teachers to engage in direct relationships with tribes as equal partners in visioning how school curriculum and pedagogy should include Native history and knowledge (Hopkins, 2020).

Our Positionalities

We both hold faculty appointments in schools of education and teach in teacher education programs. We approach pedagogy and curriculum informed by the tenets of CRT, particularly TribalCrit. Cynthia is a citizen of the Navajo Nation. She taught kindergarten through sixth-grade students in tribal and urban areas and their teachers as an academic coach. Before age eight, Cynthia lived in the Navajo culture and learned that way of being. However, after that age, she lived in numerous middle-class white households in the Southwest. As such, settler schooling indoctrinated her into white society. Because education was void of Native histories or content, her research and teaching focus on ways teachers and other educators can incorporate Native content into their curricula.

Vanessa has over 20 years of experience in educational programming in urban, rural, multilingual, and international settings. She was a K-8 teacher of Native students in Arizona and a director of Native teacher education programs that support Native teachers in the Northwest, USA, and Mexico, respectively. Vanessa is white and identifies as a settler-scholar committed to cultivating relationships for socially just education. She was born and raised in the Chicago region, homelands to many Native peoples, including Potowatami, Peoria, and Miami. However, she had little to no education on the Great Lakes Native histories and presence in her childhood. Vanessa married into an Apache family and is the mother to Native daughters. Vanessa is the principal investigator, and was the founding director of a Native teacher education program in Idaho called IKEEP.

Theoretical Framework

TribalCrit

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) emphasizes that "colonization is endemic in society while also acknowledging the role played by racism" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). Grounded in

the lived realities of Native communities, ways of knowing, and tribal philosophies, TribalCrit consists of nine tenets that underscore the unique legal, political, and racialized identity category of Native peoples. The TribalCrit tenets privilege Native conceptualizations of culture, knowledge, and power; they join story with theory and bring intergenerational transmission of Native knowledge and experience to the forefront as foundational sources of strength in tribal identities. Brayboy (2005) outlines the nine tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory:

> 1. Colonization is endemic to society
> 2. U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
> 3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
> 4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
> 5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens
> 6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Native peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation
> 7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.
> 8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
> 9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change (p. 429 – 430).

We focus on the primary tenet that states that "Colonization is endemic to society" (p. 430) and that "Governmental policies and educational policies toward Native peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (p. 429). The application of TribalCrit assists with understanding how Native peoples and nations remain invisible in teacher education curricula and how bans on CRT further perpetuate the colonial unknowing deeply rooted in teacher education and the American collective memory.

Colonial Unknowing

Talking about the invisibility of Native people in teacher education is an act of rejecting colonial unknowing. Colonial unknowing is the willful ignorance deployed over and against relational modes of study or knowing. Colonial unknowing, a term, applied by Dolores Calderon and Luis Urrieta in their 2019 work theorizing critical Latinx Indigeneities, helps to unpack the salience of a hegemonic and sanctioned ignorance that allows colonial domination to be nearly invisible in the teacher education curriculum. Colonial unknowing is a practice that renders relational and Native ways of knowing as otherwise, unthinkable, and illegitimate (Vimalassery et al., 2017). Pushing back against or disrupting colonial unknowing is necessary to de-center whiteness and to reject the siloing of knowledge and bodies. What would disrupting colonial unknowing look like as a practice in teacher education?

The study of American Indian struggles for sovereignty and self-education reminds us that the U.S. has always consisted of diverse peoples and spaces of difference. We agree with Lomawaima and McCarty (2002), who argue that democracy and diversity are inextricably linked. The persistence of Native communities to share their cultural, historical, and linguistic knowledge with the next generation of citizens is a vital piece of critical democratic engagement. As tribes have sovereign legal statuses in the U.S. that predate the U.S. Constitution and are recognized by the U.S. Constitution (Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001), the rights of Native communities to maintain their "spaces of difference" are unique to American Indians. However, as Lomawaima & McCarty (2002) contend, maintaining places of differences, such as the rights of tribes to self-education, does not need to undercut equality of opportunity. Whitewashed settler narratives of U.S. history present whiteness as unmarked and "allowed to represent all that is normal, natural, objective, and privileged" (Dennison, 2014, p. 163). This narrowness thwarts the construction of critical democratic values, the ability to grow critical thinking, and the affirmation of Native personhood. We contemplate the ideal of critical democracy as an ideological blueprint of educational opportunity for all, not merely some (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002). As we analyze critical resistance to tribal sovereignty and the settler-colonial whitewashing of Native knowledge and experience, we keep in mind the rebuttals to anti-CRT legislation offered by leading educational researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings (2021) that participation in a deliberate democracy involves deliberate conversation—talking—and often that must occur across differences. Understanding the critical democratic persistence of Native communities to share their cultural and linguistic knowledge with the next generation of citizens is a vital piece of democratic engagement.

Methods

CRT in education recognizes the importance of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), so we use data sources – stories, interviews, and observations – from our multiple research projects and experiences in Idaho, Arizona, and Utah to critically address the impacts of CRT bans on teacher education at PWIs. Our ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methods center story, a critical act that (re)emplaces relationality into research and makes visible diverse and messy human interaction for understanding the contested space of teacher education and the inclusion of Native truths in U.S. democracy. Brayboy (2005) states that storytelling has a significant role in theory building: "Locating theory as something absent from stories is problematic…Stories serve as the basis for how our communities work" (2005, p. 427). As Cynthia (2020) writes, storytelling is a way to engage with and demonstrate reciprocity to the Native communities we are accountable to.

Our selection of stories counter majoritarian stories in education – stories from racial or social privilege. Our counterstories collectively form a clear pattern about the erasure of Native peoples and histories from K-12 and teacher education and the ubiquity of whiteness, settler colonialism, and internalized investments in a racial hierarchy that dominate the U.S. school curricula. We draw from our IRB-approved research and everyday observations in teacher education. We situate our analysis of teacher education within lessons from schooling in Native America—the fight to protect and conserve sovereignty—to illuminate and enrich the national debate surrounding educational issues that affect us all. We reviewed our collective data from the past decade and selected stories that speak to the role of Native content instruction in teacher education. We share

the stories from K-12 classrooms, teacher education courses, and interactions with educators, policymakers, and tribal leaders who discussed the needs and desires of Native people in public education.

Our Stories

The Continued Silencing of Native Perspectives and Content

In the summer of 2021, Vanessa was involved in the Idaho Indian Education Summit held on the campus of the University of Idaho. The two-day summit highlighted the innovative and diverse work of Native educators from around the state and region to center Native knowledge in teaching and learning and to disrupt deficit, colonial, and assimilationist tactics in education at all levels. While the sessions spoke of hope and persistence, an attendee representing a tribal cultural resources department voiced in the public session, "When are we going to talk about how this state is trying to keep us from teaching our history?" Vanessa and her colleagues, equally frustrated but attempting to maintain focus on desire-centered frameworks for education (Tuck, 2009), emphasized the importance of not becoming distracted by conflict campaigns and re-framed persistence by stating, "anti-CRT campaigns are nothing new. Just the same old practices of undermining tribal sovereignty bundled in new tactics." Out of deep concern for what was to come in the 2021-2022 academic school year, Vanessa spent the remaining months of the summer in discussions with law professors, teacher education administrators, and legal aid directors to gain a better understanding of how to both directly address the implications of HB377 and avoid making colonization and racism the only story of Native education. By the fall of 2021, Vanessa was in conversation with a Tribal Education Department director about a local public school that served students from the respective tribe. They shared that in school administration meetings and teacher professional development sessions, the district superintendent, a non-Native, stated there will be "no more culturally responsive or tribal history training" this academic year. The superintendent cited HB377 as evidence that culturally responsive teaching was CRT. The school district serves a 70% Native population.

Experiences such as Vanessa just told underscore the persistent silencing of Native perspectives from educational policymaking and content. While they are urgent, they are not new. As stated in TribalCrit, "European American thought, knowledge, and power structures dominate present-day society in the United States" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430), so much so that teachers and school administrators act as everyday policymakers to further the assimilationist goals of education and schooling by the refusal to implement state mandates that require respectful Native content instruction (Benally, 2019).

Because Cynthia's educational experience in Arizona included silencing Native histories, she researched how students attending urban schools could obtain a different reality, including a respectful and truthful retelling of Native perspectives. She discovered two long-forgotten laws in Arizona that mandated the instruction of Native history in all Arizona schools (Benally, 2019). The then Arizona Democrat legislator and former Navajo Nation President, Albert Hale, proposed the laws based on his childhood schooling experiences and those as the president of the Navajo Nation. He told Cynthia of one experience as the Navajo Nation President meeting with the Arizona legislators,

> I said, "You come to me saying, 'I will respect you.' But you don't know what you are talking about. One simple thing out of that statement says to me is you will respect me, but how can you respect me when you know nothing about me? In return, I know everything about you. I know why you came across the Big Water. I know all your sacred documents. I know your laws. In return, what do you know about me? I know your language. What do you know about me? Absolutely nothing. So, how can there be mutual respect? When you say you are going to respect my treaty, have you read my treaty? Heck no, you haven't. So, you don't know what you are talking about." (Albert Hale, interview, November 21, 2012)

Later, when he became a senator, he explained to the state legislators why he wanted the law passed,

> What I want to do through this is, I want to ensure that your children, when they are sitting here 20 years from now, as leaders, and my child is standing here as the leader of the Navajo Nation, I don't want them to be saying the same thing that we are saying to each other now. I want there to be true mutual respect and understanding, and a step in that direction is to start teaching your children about me. (Albert Hale, interview, November 21, 2012)

About ten years later—the State is not implementing the laws. The State Indian Education website (https://www.azed.gov/oie) does not mention the laws.

Albert Hale introduced the bill that became the Arizona Native American history instruction laws to instruct on Native governments, Native sovereignty, Native cultures, and Native histories. However, after deliberations over the bill, the state lawmakers narrowed it to instruction about Native history. Representative Carruthers thought tribal sovereignty was a concept beyond the intellectual ability of Arizona students to conceptualize. He asserted, "I have one point to emphasize, which is that I believe that sovereignty, while it's important to tribal entities, is not the most important aspect of this…it's a very sophisticated issue to address" (House Committee of Education Hearing, March 31, 2004). The legislators silenced tribal sovereignty in the state curriculum. These laws that mandate teachers to teach Native American history in all existing content are disregarded resulting in Hale's vision for a relational futurity between Native and settlers remains unrealized.

The Perpetuation of Banning Natives in Public Education

When Vanessa joined the faculty at the University of Idaho, she was assigned to teach a course titled Teaching Culturally Diverse Learners (TCDL), one of four core education courses required of all teaching majors, PK-12. In 2015, the course exemplified what Villegas (2007) critiques as a "treatment" of diversity that positioned teaching as a technical activity of "transmitting" skills and knowledge from teacher to student, void of critical analysis of personal bias and underlying assumptions about behavior, content, or the broader social and cultural context of education. Vanessa began to re-design the theoretical framework and applied sequence of the course over a five-semester revision process (2015-2017) centered around Ladson-Billings' (1995) concept of culturally relevant competencies. The readings complemented guest speakers from diverse groups in Idaho and the Northwest region, such as advocates for migrant education, tribal education leaders, and local teachers of color (among others). Pre-service teachers were also required to attend

two "diversity events" outside of class, which offered a previously unfamiliar perspective. The practicum consisted of a 20-hour internship in a local classroom and two half-day practicum field trips to regional schools within a 75-mile range of campus, including schools in tribal nations and rural towns of under 1,000 people.

Over the years, Vanessa paid acute attention to how faculty, school practitioners, and teacher education students received the course and programmatic changes. Some students expressed enthusiasm for the new course content each semester and the opportunities to unpack interpersonal structural inequalities as aspiring teachers of color and white students. However, throughout, some teacher education staff and faculty shared concerns in program meetings about the integrity of the overall sequence and evaluation of the program if students are spending so much time talking about "diversity." Statements such as, "pre-service teachers just really need to learn the nuts and bolts of lesson planning and classroom management," or "we just don't have access to diverse populations," underscoring logics of colonization in teacher education's "problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429).

Each semester, Vanessa listens to predominantly white students reflect on disruptions to ingrained colonial unknowing. One semester, Linda, an Early Childhood/Elementary Education major, veteran, and single mother, wrote a journal reflection on the process of re-evaluating whose identity and personhood counted in the rural region she lives and grew up in and planned to teach in. After listening to an in-class presentation given by the Nez Perce Tribe's director of education programs and a panel of in-service teachers serving in high-density Native schools, Linda described the mundane, everyday practice of invisibilizing Native people in her life:

> …a shameful reality that I have come to learn about myself this semester. I grew up mostly in Idaho near [Collegetown] and to get anywhere you have to pass through Native American Reservations. Growing up, the stereotypes were there and jokes were made by kids and adults alike. The drinking, poverty, laziness, unemployment, stereotypes were unintentionally ingrained in me. It's almost as if we would look away when driving through these towns.

Through conversations and other assignments, Linda went on the implications of her new consciousness by vocalizing ideas such as, "It is important to examine our own privilege and entitlement and understand that it is our responsibility to do so as educators" (interview, 2017). Linda's reflection critically reviews the normative practices of settler-colonial erasure and racist ideologies of "othering" practiced among white communities toward neighboring American Indian communities. Demonstrates how the structure of settler-colonialism manifests through the logic of symbolic elimination of Natives from the landscape. Referring to Wolf (2006), Diné scholar Hollie Anderson Kulago (2019) states that the practical elimination of the natives "is a requirement of settler society in order to establish itself on Native territory" (p. 242).

The persistent willful ignorance of Native nations and communities is an infinite regress in which it is difficult to determine what causes the invisibilization—everyday interactions or school curricula. Much like Vanessa's story in which pre-service teachers and staff maintain ignorance of present-day Native presence, children learn that Natives no longer exist. In December 2011, Cynthia attended an Indian Arts festival in an affluent suburb of a large Southwestern metropolitan city about five miles from a large Native reservation. While admiring a Native artist's crafts, she conversed with a Navajo artist in Diné about their roots in Navajoland. While in conversation, a young white girl about 12 years old interrupted their dialogue. She asked what language they were

speaking, and they explained it was Navajo. She replied, "What is Navajo?" The artist explained they were Native Americans (Indians), to which the young girl exclaimed, "I thought the Indians were all dead." This interaction is not an unusual experience. The Arizona social studies standards referencing Native Americans included 32 American history standards. Of those, twenty-five, or 78%, were standards before 1860. Of those 25 standards, 17 history standards focused on the period before the 1700s, many on extinct societies such as the Anasazi (Benally, 2021). The vicious circle of colonial unknowing and sanctioned ignorance in state schools perpetuates the invisibilization of Native existence and presence in public schools today.

Refusal to Learn Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

In fall 2021, Vanessa was in the second week of a teacher education course on diversity and learning. The class of 35 students examined how policy impacts what goes on in schooling, including a discussion of Idaho's HB 377 from multiple perspectives. A white male student shared that he did not see anything wrong with banning the teaching of race since "that's what most Idahoans want." Vanessa probed the student to offer evidence to support his claims, especially given he was assigned to read over 1,000 public comments about "indoctrination" in Idaho public schools submitted to the Lt. Governor's office (which overwhelmingly produced evidence Idahoans did not see a need to ban race from classrooms). The student became confrontational. After redirecting his comments in the moment, the student came up to Vanessa after class and stated he had more to say. He had detailed notes picking apart a reading of Ladson-Billings' 2006 article *From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools.* That evening, the student emailed a three-page single-spaced document to explain his objections to being required to take a course on diversity and being forced to read what he called "dribble." Notably, the student shared that his children are 5% Salish and that any critique of the Federal Indian Policy stance of forced child removal and Christianized boarding schools improved Native people and the U.S. His position included claims such as: "by standards of the time, school was mandatory and found to be more humanitarian than some conditions young [Native Americans] faced" and "those schools saved some of those kids from so much worse, and the research I have extensively done paints a hopeful side of these schools on so many fronts…[Native American] people pulled themselves out of the oppression and were able to speak and fight for themselves in a new society because of Richard Henry Pratt." Rattled and upset, the student's vocal refusal to engage in critical thinking about the course material demanded Vanessa's emotional and intellectual energy. Two primary thoughts ran through Vanessa's mind as she considered how to respond to unsolicited communication and unsupported and racist comments from this student: Who in our institution and program is protecting the emotions and well-being of our Native students as such claims are vehemently, and baselessly expressed? And, do I, Vanessa, need to wear a bulletproof vest to the next class? Following a few days of the student holding meetings with department administrators, the student decided he could not continue to pursue teacher certification if it meant classes such as Vanessa's and exited the program.

From 2018 to 2020, Cynthia taught a required course, Introduction to Multicultural Education. This course meets the diversity requirement for pre-service teachers. Her goals for teaching the course were to expose future teachers to content that introduced a more complete history that included Native experiences in contemporary society and those contrary to American exceptionalism. However, the students resisted the course and the content. The most confrontational resistance occurred when she attempted to move past the human relations approach to multicultural

education (which focuses on conviviality, cultural unity, and cultural universalism) to the social justice approach of multicultural education (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). In this unit, she critiqued the "America as a melting pot" mythology by introducing concepts such as tribal sovereignty, Native erasure, colorblindness, and meritocracy. Many white students conspired to dismiss the unit content presented by the Native professor. For example, one white student told other students and the white teaching assistant that she thought "none of [the course content] makes sense" and asked them if they thought the same. The student said she could confide in the T.A. because she was "nice," but not the professor because the professor was "scary and mean." This conversation disrupted the class and upset other students of color.

Conclusion

Our experiences as teacher educators at PWIs in Utah and Idaho, coupled with our work and life experiences in Native education indicate a persistent reality in K-12 and higher education: whitewashed setter narratives of U.S. history present whiteness as unmarked and "allowed to represent all that is normal, natural, objective, and privileged" (Dennison, 2014, 163). Over the past decade, we have witnessed how European American thought, knowledge, and power structures dominate present-day society in the United States (Brayboy, 2005) through sanctioned colonial unknowing. This reality is a new phenomenon because "Colonization is endemic to society" (Brayboy, 2005).

The preparation of teachers in major public universities and the everyday interaction in and around schools speak to the enduring legacy of settler-colonial ideologies and logics in public institutions. Erasure and colonization are no longer the explicit policy aims of the U.S. federal government in the education of Native youth, yet the subjugation of Native rights, cultures, knowledges, and histories remains a contemporary feature of state-sanctioned public education (Benally, 2019; Sabzalian, 2019). For us, telling the countless stories of structural violence toward Native peoples reflected in the ignorance voiced and enforced by mainstream teachers and educational policymakers makes salient the overwhelming need *to teach* Native history and content at all levels of public education.

Critical democratic education must include recognizing and providing space for Native nationhood and sovereignty as essential to supporting non-Native and Native students and citizens in becoming democratic citizens who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions to uphold democracy and defend tribal sovereignty (Sabzalian et al., 2022).

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