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Black Girls Vote is a nonpartisan organization designed to represent the concerns and interests of Black women.

The mission of the Black Girls Vote Advocacy Committee (#BGVAdvocacy) is to organize our membership and community around issues that disproportionately affect Black women and girls. We do this by organizing education events, utilizing partnerships and demanding policy changes from elected officials. The Black Girls Vote Advocacy Committee is dedicated to using Black women's collective vote and voice to improve the conditions of their lives and the lives of others.

The Black Girls Vote Research Network (#BGVRN) is a collaborative system of top political and social science scholars, community stakeholders, and policymakers working together for the enrichment and advancement of the grassroots advocacy work and scholarship of Black women and politics.

#BGVAdvocacy aims to cultivate a community of well-informed citizens to support policies that align with BGVs strategic aims to:

Advance Education
Advance Economic Development, and
Advance Health and Wellness
Advance Voting Rights

Black Girls Vote 2023 Advocacy Strategic Focus Areas

Voting Rights
Reproductive Justice
Health Disparities
Violence Against Women
Black Women's Equal Pay
Student Debt Relief

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Executive Summary

Following the Democratic 2020 presidential election win, we began to see conservative backlash occur at the state level. One of these tactics included targeting education, particularly, the diversification of school curriculums that emphasize the significance of racial and gender identities in the United States. Though the initial target was to regulate the distribution of specific literature that historically examines how laws impact social norms and standards with social concepts such as race and ethnicity, many legislators across the nation have arguably used this opportunity to ban a significant amount of literature that discusses the complexities of Black life in America, particularly from Black women authors. These efforts have been called into question by numerous scholars and activists who have called these actions an attempt to discourage the education of Black history.

This resource guide serves as our way to bring awareness to the stifling of academic freedom. Black women scholars and authors' writings have become a pinnacle target of these state and local directed efforts to limit knowledge on race in America. In response, this resource guide is our form of solidarity with Black women and femme scholars whose work and livelihoods have been targeted by relentless, misogynoir-led ideological attacks, both politically and socially. We provide a brief history and timeline of the issue, resources to support efforts to combat it, the names and works of the Black women and femme scholars being targeted, and practical ways to get involved—both nationally and locally—to push back against these heinous attacks. As Black Girls Vote continues its mission of advocating and protecting the political rights and well-being of Black women and girls on all fronts, we unwaveringly join the fight to protect and ensure academic freedom for all!

| Some of the people directly impacted by the attack on The Freedom to Learn |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers | Students | Parents |
| Professors | School Boards | Elected Officials |
| Libraries | Archives | Activist/Organizers |
| Lobbyist | Media/Journalist | Researchers |
| Political Scientist | Black Feminist | Womanist |
| Administrators | Scholars | Everyone! |

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# Black Feminist Censorship and Book Bans at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1,269</th>
<th>1,900</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the amount of attempts to ban books in 2022. (<a href="#">link</a>)</td>
<td>Is the amount of times Fox has mentioned “Critical Race Theory” from March to June 2023 (<a href="#">link</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<th>670</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the amount of different attempts of anti Critical Race Theory legislation at the federal, state and local levels of government (<a href="#">link</a>)</td>
<td>States have some sort of plan to introduce Anti-Critical Race Theory legislation (<a href="#">link</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<th>71%</th>
<th>30%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of voters oppose removing books from public libraries (<a href="#">link</a>)</td>
<td>of the top banned books of 2021 were written by Black people. (<a href="#">link</a>)</td>
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<th>60,215,948</th>
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<tr>
<td>is the estimated amount of ppl live in states (Idaho, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Arizona, and North Dakota) that have active Anti Critical Race Theory bills!</td>
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Academic Freedom Debate Timeline

1973
Derrick Bell established Critical Race Theory under a different name.

1977
The Combahee River Collective coined the term and theory Identity Politics.

1980's
Dr Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term Critical Race Theory.

1989
Dr Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term and theory Intersectionality.

2019

2020
The nation experienced its first Insurrection in Washington DC.

2021
President Trump issues an executive order barring any training by federal agencies that would suggest that the United States was fundamentally racist.

2021
Parents begin to complain at school board meetings about race and sexuality based lessons and discussions. (link)

2023
A white Tennessee public school teacher is fired for saying white privilege is real. (link)

2023
Ron DeSantis criticizes the AP African American Studies curriculum and threatens to ban it from being taught in Florida.

2023
Arkansas, Iowa, Idaho, Oklahoma, Tennessee, New Hampshire, and Florida banned CRT from being taught in public school classrooms.

2023
The African American Policy Forum and various organizations came together to organize a Freedom to Learn Day of Action against black feminist erasure and censorship.

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The Freedom to Vote is the Freedom to Learn

The right to a historically accurate and culturally relevant education is directly linked to the right to engage in civic life and voter participation. Direct action, teach-ins, and voting have been some of many ways our movements have preserved our civil rights and liberties, which includes access to free speech, accurate history and civic education. Sadly across the nation, social studies have been reduced and much of the progress made to develop more curriculums that reflect the racial and cultural diversity being attacked. Those that want to keep people subordinate depend on false realities of our herstory. Those that oppose progress depend on our true stories being buried. And those that want to redefine our contributions to the foundation of this nation, depend on refining concepts like “woke” and liberal. And still, the fight to protect our legacies goes on.

It is no coincidence that the most recent attacks on Black feminist scholarship are happening in the midst of Black women's rise in collective political power. The United States Congress and State Legislatures across the nation are experiencing a higher number of elected Black women. This is due in part to the rise in the public's understanding of intersectionality and identity politics. Both of these concepts call for our political leaders to reflect all communities and urge these same leaders to center the needs of those at the margins, especially Black women, femmes and girls. In the same halls where we have fought for equity in policy and representation, another delegation of elected leaders are attacking this progress in the name of a false sense of patriotism that aims to move us all backwards.

Our stories are what inspire us to fight for our lives and fight for our future. Making informed decisions depends on the strength of our democracy's ability to properly name and address social issues. Erasing our stories via book bans, redefining of key Black feminist theories and censorship create a dynamic that fosters fake news, disinformation and voter disenfranchisement. These efforts directly infringe on progress. In order to develop civic leaders, we must have access to correct records of our past in hopes of building from the good and not repeating the bad. This is a moment to continue to speak truth to power and make sure that every community has the tools to learn on their own terms and study without threats of censorship. We must continue to secure the freedom to learn and the freedom to vote!
What does this moment mean?

The contours of academic freedom are being defined at this moment, generally, the concept is rooted in students and professors, right to listen, learn and engage in a marketplace of ideas and standpoints. Specifically, at the moment, the standpoints contained within Blackness are being targeted. Bills opposing academic freedoms are making their way to state legislatures at a time when marginalized students are already squinting to see themselves in the curriculum. Students’ right to learn is being eroded and classrooms have become unsafe spaces for marginalized students who cannot learn about or discuss their unique lived experiences and the struggles contained within those experiences. These bans specifically make it harder for Black students, as they are the most vulnerable to these attacks. Black Minds Matter.

The desire to prevent discourse on America’s racist past has placed the pedagogical freedoms of Black women scholars under attack. These shameless attacks are undergirded by conservative political aspirations and as usual are sustained on the backs Black women who already struggle to define and make visible their intersectional existence. If successful, this moment would suggest to Black women scholars, who have labored to unearth and illuminate the histories of Black women, that their academic labor is not valued. The integrity that is thought to be prioritized in academia is at stake as we bear witness to institutions’ willingness to support Black women scholars and their resistance to academic violence in the form of erasure. This moment must be met with intense rejection.

Allowing Black women’s instrumental contributions to be reduced to nothing more than “woke rhetoric” shrinks the scholastic value of American academic institutions. The suppression of Black women’s history will widen the literary gap in a way that places learning barriers on society as whole since the sacrifices, accomplishments and contributions of Black women have largely defined American democracy.

Washing away the footprints of Black women also washes away the abolitionist maps that continue to pave the road to future Black liberation. This must not be tolerated.
### Actions you can take to protect the Freedom to Learn!

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Support Banned books!</th>
<th>Reach out to your school board!</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are thousands of books that have been banned across the country. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we support Black women and femme authors that are under attack. Make sure you do your best to shop with your local Black-owned book retailer and encourage others in your community to do the same! It starts with us all, one banned book at a time.</td>
<td>Elected officials across the country have the power to protect scholars against censorship. Call, write and email your elected officials at every level of government and demand that they protect our freedom to learn!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Get familiar with Banned Authors and their work!</th>
<th>Support the organizers and organizations fighting against censorship!</th>
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</table>
| The current climate creates a unique opportunity for the country, and the world, to co-learn about Black women and femme scholars. Whether you are in college or in community with people, you can learn all about these writers and explore the importance of their work! Some engagement ideas are hosting a teach-in, starting a book club, planning a speaker series, or facilitating grassroots organizing trainings! | - Sign the Open Letter on Fighting “Anti-Woke” Censorship of Intersectionality and Black Feminism on African American Policy Forum website!  
- Check out the Unite Against Book Ban Action Toolkit!  
- Check out the #TruthBeTold Campaign on the African American Policy Forum Website! |

### Vote, vote, vote!

Voting is one of many ways to ensure that your voice is heard regarding the freedom to learn. Voting from the top of the ticket to the bottom of the ballot can help ensure that the right to access diverse kinds of literacy are secured for generations to come!
Freedom to Learn Reading List

☐ The Hate That You Give by Angie Thomas
☐ The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
☐ Beloved by Toni Morrison

Their Eyes Were Watching God by
☐ Zora Neale Hurston
☐ Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison

Critical Race Theory by Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas

☐ The Color Purple by Alice Walker
☐ The 1619 Project by Nikole Hannah-Jones

☐ Monday's Not Coming by Tiffany D. Jackson
☐ Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

☐ Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall
Notable Scholars, Activists and Organizers!

Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw  
Alice Walker  
Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole  
Dr. Patricia Hill Collins

Barbara Smith  
Toni Morrison  
Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall  
Zora Neale Hurston

Dr. Marietta Collins  
Angie Thomas  
Junauda Petrus  
Jewell Parker Rhodes

Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor  
Nikki Giovanni  
Audre Lorde  
Dr. Cathy Cohen

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Key Organizations

African American Policy Forum
American Political Science Association
Black Women's Studies Association
National Women's Studies Association

National Conference of Black Political Scientists
National Organization for the Advancement of Colored People
Black Caucus of the American Library Association
NAACP LDF

National Black Justice Coalition
Unite Against Book Bans
People for the American Way
American Civil Liberties Union

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Key Definitions

- **Black Feminism** - Black feminism centers the experiences of Black women, understanding their position in relation to racism, sexism, and classism, as well as other social and political identities. Black women have been excluded from mainstream feminism because of their race, while simultaneously being excluded from Black liberation movements because of their gender. Black feminism highlights and engages with the many aspects of identity that women have, which was significant because it gave them the opportunity to talk about being Black along with gender inequality. Despite the prejudice and discrimination they faced, Black women were and still continue to be critical to the Black liberation and gender equality movements. ([Link](#))

- **Censorship** - Censorship, the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are "offensive," happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal political or moral values on others. Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure groups. Censorship by the government is unconstitutional. ([Link](#))

- **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** - Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is part of American society — from education and housing to employment and healthcare. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is embedded in laws, policies and institutions that uphold and reproduce racial inequalities. According to CRT, societal issues like Black Americans’ higher mortality rate, outsized exposure to police violence, the school-to-prison pipeline, denial of affordable housing, and the rates of the death of Black women in childbirth are not unrelated anomalies. ([Link](#))

- **Democracy** - System of decision making in which power is exercised by the people. Democracy depends not only on the structures that allow decision-making by the people but also on whether those people are free, informed, and safe to have input into and control over decisions that impact their lives. For feminists, questions of democratic participation in the household, sexual realm, media, knowledge creation, and the economic sphere are as important as the quality of participation in the public arena. ([Link](#))

- **Fascism** - a governmental system led by a dictator having complete power, forcibly suppressing opposition and criticism, regimenting all industry, commerce, etc., and emphasizing aggressive nationalism and often racism. ([Link](#))

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• **Identity Politics** - In many societies, sexual and racial or ethnic minorities are systematically excluded. Vibrant social movements such as the Dalit movement in South Asia, the US civil rights movement, and the global movement for lesbian, gay and transgender rights focus on bringing people together to build pride, reclaim dignity and identify common interests based on a collective identity, and to make political demands and fight discrimination. These movements have built solidarity and active citizenship among many formerly socially and politically excluded groups. The risk of identity politics is that the complexity of human identity is reduced to labels that exclude or marginalize people, such as “HIVpositive” or “migrant worker,” even as every individual has multiple identities defined by race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and the like. Identity politics can also lead to discriminatory forms of politics that focus narrowly on the self-interest of a particular group, rather than building alliances with others around common interests to advance rights and build inclusive societies. ([Link](#))

• **Intersectionality** - An analytical tool that helps to understand and respond to the ways in which multiple aspects of each person’s social identity and status intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. The concept evolved in part as a response to a critique that “women” as a political category over-generalized women’s experiences, privileging white, middle class women, while making invisible the ways that race, class, colonialism, and other factors of discrimination contribute to the experience of oppression. Intersectionality aims to move beyond overly simplified conceptions of identity – such as “working class” or “indigenous” – to examine complexities of multiple sources of privilege and subordination. ([Miller et al 2006](#)) ([Link](#))

• **Misogynoir** - the specific hatred, dislike, distrust, and prejudice directed toward Black women ([Link](#))

• **Misogyny** - The hatred of women. It is a psychological manifestation of sexism that is expressed socially in discrimination, denigration and humiliation of women, violence against women and sexual objectification of women. ([Link](#))

• **Patriarchy** - Literally means “rule of the father.” Historically, patriarchy refers to systemic and institutionalized male domination embedded in and perpetuated by cultural, political, economic and social structures and ideologies. These systems explicitly make women inferior and subordinate and confer control and decision making on males while making values associated with masculinity the norm or ideal. Patriarchy has many particular forms in different stages of history and in different cultures. The concept, as it has been developed within feminist
writings (because it has existed in anthropology far longer), is not a single or simple concept but has a variety of different meanings. (Link)

- **Patriotism** - feeling of attachment and commitment to a country, nation, or political community. Patriotism (love of country) and nationalism (loyalty to one’s nation) are often taken to be synonymous, yet patriotism has its origins some 2,000 years prior to the rise of nationalism in the 19th century. (Link)

- **Surveillance** - close watch kept over someone or something (as by a detective) (Link)

- **White Supremacy** - the belief that the white race is inherently superior to other races and that white people should have control over people of other races; the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races (Link)

- **Woke** - having or marked by an active awareness of systemic injustices and prejudices, especially those involving the treatment of ethnic, racial, or sexual minorities (Link)

- **Womanist** - Author and poet Alice Walker first used the term "womanist" in her short story, "Coming Apart", in 1979, and later in In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose (1983). Walker defined a "womanist" as a "Black feminist or feminist of color. From the Black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish'", referring to grown-up behavior. The womanish girl exhibits willful, courageous, and outrageous behavior that is considered to be beyond the scope of societal norms. She goes on to say that a womanist is also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility ... and women's strength. ... Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health ... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit ... Loves struggle. Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (Link)
Relevant News, Articles, Blogs etc.

- Education Week- Map: Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack
- CNN-At least 50 groups in the US advocated to ban books in the past year
- CNN-Book banning efforts are inspiring readers to form banned book clubs
- CNN-A Texas lawmaker is investigating 850 books on race and gender that could cause ‘discomfort’ to students
- CNN-Opinion: How to fight back against the ‘anti-woke’ movement
- Education Week-Florida’s Ban on AP African American Studies, Explained
- Education Week- Here’s What Florida’s ‘Don’t Say Gay’ and Anti-‘Woke’ Bills Actually Say
- NPR- Florida’s AP African American studies ban should raise alarm elsewhere, lawmaker says
- NAACP LDF- Eleventh Circuit Affirms Decision to Preliminarily Block Unlawful “Stop W.O.K.E.” Censorship Law
- Insider- 12 contemporary books by Black authors that are banned for writing about race, sexuality, and police brutality
- Metro Weekly- David Johns: DeSantis is Offering a Master Class in White Nationalism
- The Atlanta Voice- Opinion: What’s really behind Florida’s attack on African American Studies
- Time- The Real Reason Florida Wants to Ban AP African-American Studies, According to an Architect of the Course
- Readers Digest- 30 Banned Books You Should Probably Read Right Now
- Education Trust- Censorship is About Power, Not People
- MSNBC- Black History, Uncensored: Why Florida’s GOP targeted bell hooks
- National Black Justice Coalition: Message To College Board Leadership: Stand Up To DeSantis Or Step Down
- Florida Courier: Open Letter from Dr. Thelma Hart Johnson
- American Library Association: More than 25 organizations join forces with the American Library Association to Unite Against Book Bans
- Education Weekly: The Evolution of the Anti-CRT Movement: A Timeline
- The Road to May 3: How a Growing Coalition of Feminists and Activists Are Fighting the Right’s Anti-Woke Agenda
- 19th News: Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work was cut from AP African American Studies. Now she’s fighting back.
- AFRO News: Commentary: National Women's Studies Association won't be overshadowed by White nationalism
- NAACP: NAACP Files New Lawsuit Alleging Pickens County School Board Book Ban is Unconstitutional and Politically Motivated
- NBC: DeSantis criticized for mandating Asian American history while banning courses on 'systemic racism'
Relevant References, Resources and Further Readings

- AP African American Studies Curriculum in Florida
- National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Statement About the Anti-Woke Agenda and Legislative Actions
- American Library Association- Banned & Challenged Classics
- American Political Science Association Statement on Challenges to AP African American Studies Curriculum
- American Political Science Association Statement on Florida’s HB999
- National Conference of Black Political Scientists Open Letter In Defense of AP African American Studies
- Just Associates- Feminist movement Builder's Dictionary
- Movement for Black Lives Statement on Defending Our Freedom to Learn Statement
- CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS OFFICIALLY ENDORSE THE FREEDOM TO LEARN CAMPAIGN- NUL, NAACP, NCNW, NAACP LDF, NCBCP, NAN, BWR, LCCRH, LCCRUL
- African American Policy Forum Open Letter on Fighting “Anti-Woke” Censorship of Intersectionality and Black Feminism
- Freedom to Learn Report-When Racial Reckoning and “Anti Wokeness” Collide
- Banned in the USA: Rising School Book Bans Threaten Free Expression and Students’ First Amendment Rights (April 2022)
- African American Policy Forum #TruthBeTold: Attackers’ Three-Pronged Strategy to Stop the Racial Reckoning
- African American Policy Forum #TruthBeTold: Resist Trump's Equity Gag Order
- African American Policy Forum How the attack on CRT and Anti-Racism is a threat to Our Democracy
- Lake Research Partners- FREEDOM TO LEARN Demanding Accurate, Honest and Fully Funded Public Education messaging guide and Digital toolkit
- National Education Association- School Me: Know your rights, teach the truth - Alice O'Brien
- National Education Association- The Legal and Pedagogical Case for Culturally Responsive and Racially Inclusive Public Education for All Students
- African American Policy Forum Book Bans Infographic

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- Resolution: Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory
- State of America’s Libraries, Special Report Pandemic Two Year
- UCLA Review- This Is Not A Drill: The War Against Antiracist Teaching in America
- Montgomery College- Critical Race Theory Timeline
- Brooking: Why are states banning Critical Race Theory?
- “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” by Kimberle Crenshaw
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