

COUNTERPUNCH

The True Problem With the GOP's Patricia Morgan

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Rep. Patricia Morgan, a state legislator and Rhode Island Republican Party leader who previously has run for Governor, made national headlines in the last week of December for Tweeting some undeniably racist blather that is to be expected from the Trumpkin patch:

I had a black friend. I liked her and I think she liked me, too. But now she is hostile and unpleasant. I am sure I didn't do anything to her, except be white. Is that what teachers and our political leaders really want for our society? Divide us because of our skin color? #CRT — Patricia Morgan (@repmorgan) December 28, 2021

Some very good Black writers at websites like The Root and The Grio have already dissected the racism of this strange missive and I cannot commend those readings enough.

Unfortunately, for whatever reason, there are two issues that are important to put emphasis upon as we move into the midterm elections, particularly because of the manifest ineptitude and flaccidity of the Democratic electoral strategy.

A-The entire astro-turfed scandal over “critical race theory” *is not just a typical Culture Warrior wedge issue*. Instead, it is the opening feint of the school vouchers lobby. I wrote about this in June at *Washington Babylon*:

[The group leading the anti-“CRT” charge] Parents Defending Education (PDE) merits further skepticism. In reality, PDE is an astroturfed nonprofit organization whose ultimate goal is further privatization of public education via the school voucher route. Democrats support charter schools and accuse teacher unions of sheltering racists, while

Republicans advocate for vouchers that can be spent at religious schools and claim that public education promotes a grand Secular Humanist Cultural Marxist woke ideology-cum-religion. It is rather obvious that this is yet another stunt seeking to turn millions of dollars in public property over to American oligarchs.

Andrew Ujifusa adds further detail in a May column for *Education Week*:

Parents Defending Education opposes what it calls “woke” curricula and efforts to divide students and others into “oppressor” and “oppressed” groups. The nonprofit organization highlights instances of parents and others opposing those and other initiatives in classrooms and schools. The group’s staffers work or previously worked at organizations such as the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank; the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a K-12 organization focused on accountability and school choice; and Coalition for TJ, a group that has opposed changes to admissions policies at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia [which would diversify the student body]. The group also filed a brief in the high-profile case about student speech before the U.S. Supreme Court, *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.* One of the brief’s authors, attorney William Consovoy, worked for former President Donald Trump on controversial ballot-access issues.

One of the opening jabs of this strategy was staged last summer in Rhode Island by Roger Williams Law School alumnus Nicole Solas, who cynically acted as a simple stay-at-home mom that had fallen into a scandal when she over-loaded the South Kingstown School Board with public records requests looking for any scent of “CRT” in literally *thousands of pages of curriculum materials and internal documents*. All of this is an assault upon academic freedom and free speech of public school teachers, underwritten by the same strands of McCarthyite paranoia and bigotry that have done tremendous harm to our society for decades.

The reason this was staged in Rhode Island is quite simple:

The Ocean State historically has one of the lowest public school enrollment rates in the entire US. For much of the past 150 years, the majority-Catholic population sent their kids to parochial schools, meaning there is a deeply-embedded cultural and political current that is in favor of tax dollars financing religious schools. Since the 1970s, when the Church hierarchy made a Faustian bargain with their old Evangelical nemeses in response to *Roe v. Wade* and the ascendancy of hardline anticommunist Pope John Paul II, the school vouchers lobby has found a very

comfortable ally in Rhode Islanders that begrudge their taxes financing schools they never would send their kids to in the first place. (Full disclosure: In 2018, I served as technical assistant/illustrations researcher to Dr. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Rhode Island College, as she published the Second Edition of her Critical Race Theory textbook *Race and Racism: An Introduction*. Dr. Fluehr-Lobban's institution of tenure, RIC, is the historic normal school of the state and has produced generations of public educators in its over 150 years of existence, including some educators, but by no means not all, who took her class upon which the book was based.)

B-Rep. Morgan has not only been the ring-master of the anti-“CRT” circus in the RI legislature. Her actions and behavior have been in tandem with PDE and the Koch-funded RI Center for Freedom and Prosperity, led by failed baseball player Mike Stenhouse.

These dark money goons have been fanning lunatic flames that have led to death threats and harassing phone calls to elected public officials on school boards and public school teachers. This is far beyond the realm of First Amendment Freedom of Speech and, were these individuals not white and Christian (perhaps instead Muslim?), they would be renditioned to GITMO promptly. (Predictably, pointing out this instance of white privilege will be mislabeled CRT...) I have spoken with several of these officials and teachers in the past year in my reporting, though I reserve the right to protect their privacy.

Morgan is completely aware of the fact she is playing with fire. It was just under a year ago when her fellow Trumpkins engaged in an act of domestic terrorism at the US Capitol. She should be held responsible for inciting similar violence against elected officials. It was less than 30 years ago when Catholic fundamentalist John Salvi launched a multi-clinic rampage against abortion providers in nearby Boston that left two people dead and five wounded. As I have followed this story over the past 6 months, the ghoulish, violent, and Lovecraftian ambience of that and similar anti-choice terror campaigns from the Nineties Culture War days was palatable. When I attended a June rally in Bristol opposed to these goons and their efforts, several cars drove by shouting obscenities and I could not help but flash to Charlottesville.

“CRT” has the potential to be a catalyst for political violence in the coming year. As I wrote in my two original reports for *Washington Babylon*:

Like religious fundamentalists, these people are on a crusader's warpath with a significant number of firearms. Many of them are completely unaware that anti-CRT astro-turf groups, like Parents Defending Education, are connected with the school

privatization lobby seeking to turn millions of dollars in public infrastructure over to the sector of private capital that favors the re-segregation of public education... Ex-Breitbart News chairman and former President Donald Trump's chief strategist Steve Bannon, and the sector of the GOP leadership he represents, are seeking to reintroduce Gilded Age scientific racism to public discourse. By manipulating unwitting parents with certain Trumpian allegiances, cynical political operatives like [Nicole] Solas and PDE are launching a scorched-earth campaign to prevent the success of anything that might hinder this –like teaching kids about the history of racism and racial stereotypes that marginalization and discrimination hinge upon.

The idea that Patricia Morgan has *any* friends strikes me as a bit of a laugh. Who would want to hang out with such a loud-mouthed know-nothing blowhard?

Ultimately, the greatest irony of all is the following:

Morgan's Tweet was not only a whiny racist self-pitying plea for attention (don't Trumpkins call these people snowflakes?) from a pretentious white lady, *it was an abomination in terms of grammar, style, rhetoric, and delivery!* She wants to implement harsh censorship and revoke the First Amendment for school teachers *but clearly would flunk out of the mandatory Writing 101 course at Rhode Island College! This is the prose of a cereal box!*