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Pláticas on Struggle and Resistance: Understanding the Impact of Censorship Legislation on Ethnic Studies Teachers in Texas

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Abstract

In this paper, we offer a glimpse into the impact of censorship legislation on K-12 Ethnic Studies teachers in Texas, highlighting themes that emerged from pláticas with 17 high school and middle school Ethnic Studies teachers from across the state. Pláticas provide a means of co-constructing knowledge with participants through more informal conversations. Through a lens of racial realism (Bell, 1992), we examine this particular era of censorship in the state of Texas, contextualizing it within the broader national political climate where white supremacy is recentered through censorship legislation that restricted the discussion of race and gender. Key themes that emerged through the pláticas include censorship in the classroom, undue pressure placed on teachers, and an environment of fear for Ethnic Studies teachers. At the same time, there was also an increased dedication to fight for Ethnic Studies statewide. Overall, the themes from these pláticas demonstrate a continued need to support educators in building resistance to censorship legislation at both a state and national level.

Keywords: Censorship legislation, Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Studies, Texas

Introduction

In 2020, during the height of COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd provided the tipping point for an increase in mass protests against police violence and white supremacy in the United States (Fortin, 2021). Legislators reacted to these protests by advancing bills that restricted how gender and race could be discussed in schools. In 2021 alone, there were at least sixty-one bills proposed to restrict "divisive" teaching in the United States, many utilizing the language of an Executive Order from Trump that restricted diversity trainings (Tripodi, 2022). The Texas version of this legislation, Senate Bill 3 (SB 3), was implemented in the Fall of 2021 (Texas Senate Bill 3, 2021).

Amidst the divisive political climate, Ethnic Studies continued to grow in Texas with over twenty thousand students enrolled in these courses in the 2023-2024 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2023). The present study emerged through a recognition of the potentially deleterious

impact of this legislation on Ethnic Studies teachers. Through this paper, we provide initial insight into the impact of SB3 on Mexican American Studies (MAS) and African American Studies (AAS) teachers, as well as emerging resistance to academic censorship.

Literature Review

Ethnic Studies in Texas

Ethnic Studies is a decolonial project that aims to dismantle white supremacy while centering the histories of people of color (Escobar, 2014; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Valenzuela, 2019). In states where Ethnic Studies courses are offered in K-12 schools, the curriculum has been shown to increase student engagement, literacy skills, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, community engagement, social skills, academic achievement, empowerment, critical thinking, social activism, and self-identity, as well as enhance student-teacher relationships with both white students and students of color (Bonilla et al., 2021; Dee & Penner, 2017; Nojan, 2020; Sleeter, 2011;Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

The process to approve Ethnic Studies courses in Texas began in 2014. The National Association of Chicano and Chicana Scholars (NACCS) Tejas Foco Committee led the organizing efforts, from 2014-2018, to establish MAS as a K-12 course. MAS was approved in 2018 and AAS was approved in 2020 (Scott & Perez-Diaz, 2021). The AAS course was piloted in Dallas Independent School District and an advisory council of 41 members developed the curriculum over seven months (Scott & Perez-Diaz, 2021). Although there has not been legislation to restrict Ethnic Studies in Texas, SB 3 restricted how race could be taught within all Social Studies classrooms.

Censorship and Critical Race Theory

Prior censorship legislation nationally included Arizona's HB 2281, passed in 2010, which effectively eliminated the MAS program in Tucson. HB 2281, like more recent censorship laws, was rooted in claims that Ethnic Studies promoted "terroristic" and "rebellious" acts (Cacho 2010; Jensen, 2013). Previous court cases, including the federal court case that found HB 2281 unconstitutional in 2017, have set precedent to demonstrate that recent censorship legislation may be unconstitutional, violating the fourteenth amendment right of equal protection and the first amendment right of free speech (Cao, 2022; Kim, 2021).

Trump's Executive Order 13950, from September 2020, laid the groundwork for many of the state laws that followed. Legislation in many states mirrored Trump's executive order, but was not implemented until after Biden reversed the executive order (Tripodi, 2022). Christopher Rufo, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, shaped the rhetoric of the executive order and later advised on language for educational laws like SB 3 in over ten states (Friedman & Tager, 2022). The purpose of these laws went beyond restricting curricular content, to effectively silence the voices of students and educators of color (Kim, 2021). Within this, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been co-opted as a catch-all for a broader rightwing agenda (Richmond & Charnley, 2022; Tripodi, 2022), as evidenced by Christopher Rufo's tweet:

> We have successfully frozen their brand—"critical race theory"into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put

> all of the various cultural insanities under the brand category. The goal is to have the public read something crazy in the newspaper and immediately think "Critical Race Theory." (Rufo, 2021)

Rufo's tweet demonstrates the insidiousness of this type of legislation in seeking to create chaos and promote censorship by falsely conflating any conversation around race with a distorted representation of CRT. Although many of these bills do not specifically mention CRT, these laws have been highlighted in the media as "anti-CRT" (Ray & Gibbons, 2021).

What is Senate Bill 3?

SB 3 in Texas and similar legislation nationwide can be seen as a continuation of previous restrictive laws. SB3 has restricted academic freedom under the guise of promoting patriotism, modifying the state standards and education code, as well as creating a civics training program. Modifications to the state Social Studies standards included removing certain standards that highlight the histories of communities of color while changes to the Education Code provided stipulations-related discussions of race in the classroom (Texas Senate Bill 3, 2021). One example of this is included below:

> (4) a teacher, administrator, or other employee of a state agency, school district, or open-enrollment charter school may not: (A) require, or make part of a course, concepts that serve to inculcate (B) teach, instruct, or train any administrator, teacher, or staff member of a state agency, school district, or open-enrollment charter school to adopt [...] (vi) an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of the individual's race or sex. (Texas Senate Bill 3, 2021)

Through this example, the subjectivity of the bill is clear. No one's emotions can be controlled, but such subjective language leaves room for differing interpretations. SB3 can be interpreted broadly, but it "is designed to control and limit the free speech and ideas of teachers, students and state agency employees" (IDRA, 2022). The bill restricted discussing current events and prohibited students from receiving course credit for civic engagement activities (IDRA, 2022), effectively stifling the ability to provide relevant and equitable civics education by preventing students from interacting with community leaders and participating in social advocacy with legislators in connection to school (Blevins, 2022). Many district leaders have interpreted the law more broadly out of fear of repercussion, which has translated to further restrictions and fear for educators in teaching about the histories of communities of color.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

According to Derrick Bell (1992), racial realism postulated that racism had become the norm in the United States. Although race and racism are central to this analysis, we also recognize the importance of viewing them in connection to their intersection with other forms of subordination, such as gender, language, and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). There are four major themes in racial realism: First, racial history in the United States has demonstrated "a pattern of cyclical progress and cyclical regression" (Bell, 1992, p. 98). Second, socioeconomic power is the true force in this country, through which Black Americans have always been close to the bottom. Third, struggle is essential. Fourth, we must understand this reality of

racism in order to create a shift away from this cyclical pattern of subjugation. Dave Stovall (2022) noted that, within the lens of Critical Race Theory, we should expect attacks that stem from white supremacy, such as the censorship legislation. The pattern of cyclical regression would hold that these attacks will continuously happen in different forms until there is substantial resistance to shift away from these cycles of subjugation.

Through this study, we will examine the impact of this moment of regression on Ethnic Studies teachers, as well as the resistance that has emerged in response to the legislation. SB 3 has villainized teachers by creating a narrative that they are somehow harming students by teaching the histories of communities of color. Although this narrative creates notable stress for teachers, many educators continue to advocate for the expansion of Ethnic Studies courses.

Data Collection

In centering experiential knowledge, *pláticas* were used, a Chicana methodology that provided a more intimate way of engaging in dialogue (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Plática as a method emerged in the late 20th century to document the struggles of oppressed people in Latin America (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). Pláticas can be data sources, as well as spaces of theorization, with the *platicadores* as co-constructors of knowledge (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Central to a plática methodology are relations of reciprocity, where both researchers and platicadores share their personal experiences and make space for vulnerability (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Our identities as women of color on the research team served as a point of departure in sharing experiences as teachers and students in racialized contexts, building rapport through the conversations. Pláticas have been used more in higher education research, particularly to examine the intersectional experiences of women of color (Flores Carmona, et al., 2021). Educational researchers have also leveraged pláticas to center the voices of parents (Durán et al., 2020), pre-service teachers (Ingram & Palmer, 2023), and in-service teachers (Orozco & Moriña, 2023). We continue in this tradition through pláticas with Ethnic Studies teachers in Texas.

Prior to the pláticas, we reviewed the websites for all schools in the state of Texas, across all districts in the 20 Texas Education Agency regions, to identify Ethnic Studies teachers. We sent a request to complete an initial survey to all publicly listed Ethnic Studies teachers, as well as administrators for schools where they noted they had Ethnic Studies, but no teacher was listed. The survey consisted of questions about which Ethnic Studies course they taught, how long they had taught, their ethnic/cultural identity, their knowledge of SB 3, and the effect of the bill on their classes.

We sent emails to 67 teachers, comprising all of the Ethnic Studies teachers whose emails were publicly listed. We received no responses from our outreach to administrators. We also posted the survey on the Facebook and Twitter accounts for the Ethnic Studies Network of Texas. Overall, 28 teachers completed the survey, a 42% response rate of all teachers publicly listed, representing 38% of the districts that offered Ethnic Studies statewide. However, a limitation emerged in the inability to reach out to the majority of Ethnic Studies teachers, who are not publicly listed on school websites.

We reached out to all teachers who expressed interest in a more in-depth conversation and held pláticas with 17 educators, spending approximately an hour conversing with each one over Zoom

or Google Meets. At the end of each plática we asked all the platicadores to choose their own pseudonyms, which will be used below. Some chose a first and last name, while others just chose a first name. The purpose of the pláticas was to delve deeper into each participant's experience teaching Ethnic Studies and the impact of SB 3 on their pedagogy and curriculum. Data below draws from the surveys with the 28 educators and the pláticas with 17 educators. Statistics provided are from the surveys, whereas quotes are all from the pláticas.

Participants

Of the platicadores, six identified as White, six identified as Chicanx or Latinx, one identified as White and Mexican American, one identified as Afro-Latino, one identified as Louisiana Creole, and two identified as Black. Ten participants taught Mexican American Studies (MAS), six taught African American Studies (AAS), and one taught a general Ethnic Studies course. Twelve participants had taught for 10 or more years, three had taught for six to eight years, one had taught for two years, and one was a first-year teacher. Ten participants taught in Democratic leaning areas of Texas and seven taught in Republican areas.

Data Analysis

Our qualitative analysis was rooted in grounded theory, using MAXQDA to code. Grounded theory was first developed in the late 1960s, and it is a process in which the data guides the qualitative analysis (Saldaña, 2011; Salinger et al., 2008). We initially coded using words or short phrases that encompass each point the participants made, using the platicadores' words when possible through in-vivo codes, guided by some of the initial themes identified by the platicadores themselves (Saldaña, 2022). Once we completed this process, we noted initial categories, which we used in the second round of coding to revisit the participants' words. We then identified themes to organize the categories, which are used to organize the data below. Each transcript was coded by two members of the research team to validate the findings.

Impact of Senate Bill 3 on Ethnic Studies Teachers

For the most part, Ethnic Studies teachers were familiar with Senate Bill 3 (see Table 17.1), with 42% of teachers surveyed saying that they were very familiar with the bill and 25% saying that they were moderately familiar with the bill. Of those surveyed, about half said that the bill did not impact their classroom, while half expressed that it had a negative impact (see Table 17.2).

Table 1. Familiarity with Senate Bill 3 (HB 3979 was the house bill version of the bill proposed and then send to the state senate to be passed as SB 3)

How familiar are you with SB 3 and HB3979?					
N=28	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar
	12	7	6	2	1

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Table 2. Survey responses on the impact of Senate Bill 3

How has this law impacted your classroom or school?				
N=28	Not at all	Positively impacted	Negatively impacted	Unsure
	13	0	13	2

The first theme was that many teachers expressed that they felt censored in the classroom. The second theme, connected to the first, was that teachers felt that undue pressure was placed on them through the law. This led to the third theme of an environment of fear, particularly connected to teaching Ethnic Studies. Teachers who felt that the bill had no impact were often veteran teachers who were willing to push back against some of the restrictions, which will be examined through the final theme of an increased determination to fight for Ethnic Studies. Prominent in-vivo codes from each section can be seen in image 1, highlighting elements of each theme.

Figure 1. Example in-vivo codes for principal themes.

Censored in the classroom	*Undue pressure placed on teachers*
- every single word needs to be just right and calculated - I have to censor a little bit what I can say - only what's palatable for white students - Dangerous for our country - We shouldn't be restricted - Changes the way history is taught - Very careful about how I'm presenting things - I've been limited - Can't say the words Black Lives Matter	- Walking on eggshells - It gives me anxiety - It's restraining us - You can't teach like that - Kids have questions - Guard is always up - It's a hard class to teach because there's a lot of stipulations - If I use anything from the 1619 project they're going to come after me - I don't feel like I'm being respected
An environment of fear	*The fight for Ethnic Studies*
- This law is detrimental and dangerous - Even more difficult in a conservative area - Law is a scare tactic - Put my job in jeopardy - Educators are not safe - Road to authoritarianism - Educators are very policed	- Makes me want to fight more for Ethnic Studies - Gave me the confidence to give them what they deserved - I'm not going to be deterred - It's made me more determined - I'm not going to stop teaching what I'm teaching

- Don't want to end up on the news	- I'm actually trying to collect [banned books] - I feel more empowered to empower my students - I want my kids to be the best they can be - Metaphorical middle-finger up to them

Censored in the Classroom

As noted above, about half of the participants in this study cited SB3 as negatively impacting their classroom. Even participants who stated in the initial survey that the bill did not impact their classroom later reflected through the pláticas on ways that they felt that their classroom or teaching were indeed negatively impacted. Teachers expressed feeling censored in what they could say and in how history could be taught (see example codes in Figure 17.1). One teacher, T'Challa, expressed his frustration about the censorship in teaching AAS:

> Between the amount of times that I heard that I cannot teach critical race theory, and how many times I heard, I can't say the words Black Lives Matter in the classroom, it was ridiculous. I almost wanted to do it just because of that. Just because I was told what to do so many times, it was annoying.

T'Challa's comment reflected the frustration that he felt at being censored in his teaching. This was particularly problematic considering that there was not specific language in SB 3 that would prohibit teachers from talking about "Black Lives Matter" or "Critical Race Theory". Although the bill is often cited as anti-CRT, the theory is mentioned nowhere in the law (Texas Senate Bill 3, 2021). Districts have interpreted the bill in vastly different ways, which extend beyond the language of the bill (Lopez, 2021). This particular teacher, along with one other, expressed how the district now required their textbooks be approved and many of the ones they provided were rejected. Such interpretations often promote a further whitewashing of history, illustrating the normalizing of racism as racial realism posits.

Even for teachers who have read the bill, the broad language created additional problems, which Antonio highlighted:

> Nobody in public school talked, especially now, about the Texas Mexican War was about slavery. At the end of the day, that's what it was about. Nobody teaches that. Why not? That's my biggest problem with this bill. You don't want to make kids feel uncomfortable. Which kids and what do you not want to tell them? Based on whose perspective and why? You know, what makes one group of kids more important than the other?

Antonio, a MAS teacher, asked important questions about the language of the bill, referencing the section of the bill that modified the Education Code. This portion of the bill is highly subjective in considering what might make a student feel distress based on their race or sex. Antonio's questions highlighted the implication that white children's discomfort is centered more than the discomfort of youth of color. The broad language of the bill has also led to certain books being banned in

several districts, particularly books discussing slavery (Mendez, 2022). One teacher, Kelli, compared this censorship to an authoritarian regime:

> We're banning books and as a history teacher I'm like, this is the road to authoritarianism, like we're headed to Nazi era like, what is happening in America? It's frightening. So my guard is always up now you know, I don't feel like I'm being respected as a professional but I think that I can articulate myself enough to where I can defend myself if I have to. But I'm always feeling like I may have to do that.

Kelli referred to the fact that Texas banned the most books of any state between July 2021 and March 2022, prior to legislation enacted (HB 900) in 2023 that created further restrictions on school libraries (PEN America, 2022). She problematized these book bannings, referencing this form of censorship as one that was often part of authoritarian regimes. Although this form of censorship might seem striking, book bans have continuously occurred in the United States for decades. One study conducted in 1963 with 600 teachers and administrators in Wisconsin demonstrated that 22% of teachers had experienced book bannings in their schools (Buttress, 1963), thus further exemplifying the cyclical nature of oppression of the first tenet of racial realism. More broadly, Texas teachers were self-censoring their curriculum and pedagogical practices out of fear, particularly in relation to how race was discussed (Pendharkar, 2022).

Undue Pressure Placed on Teachers

The censorship noted above, as well as additional restrictions, led to teachers feeling undue pressure was being placed on them. This pressure often came through struggles in figuring out how to modify the course to meet the law, while still trying to be an effective teacher (see example codes in Figure 17.1). As with the prior section, the majority of teachers who expressed these sentiments were experienced teachers with ten or more years in the classroom. Kelli expressed this frustration in relation to her AAS course:

> Before these laws were passed, I've never felt restricted in my classroom in terms of what I could talk about. Conversations, honest conversations that I could have with my students and then what type of material that I could bring into the classroom, that I would be trusted as a professional in order to do that. What frustrated me about this bill is that it's a lie, [...] we don't teach CRT in K–12 education. What they have done is co-opted the [...] critical race theory label and applied it to anything that is Ethnic Studies essentially you know, it's just history. And you cannot teach Black history, Mexican American history, Asian American history without talking about oppression, white supremacy, all of those things it's, it's what happens. And I have never in the entirety of my career taught in a way that would make a child feel guilty because we use skills.

Kelli highlights the shifts before and after the law was passed, which reflect the patterns of cyclical regression within racial realism. Kelli also cited the section of the law that Antonio referred to, which focused on making a student feel discomfort on the basis of their race or sex. Kelli acknowledged the ways that she felt limited from having honest conversations with students about history. As noted previously, Ethnic Studies is a decolonial project that seeks to center the histories of communities of color (Escobar, 2014; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Valenzuela, 2019). Kelli referenced her frustration related to the narrative that CRT was being taught in Social Studies

classrooms, noting that this wasn't the case. However, as mentioned previously, this particular bill did not actually mention CRT and the premise of other legislation that does mention CRT is an intentional misuse and weaponizing of the theory.

A MAS teacher, Pelón, expressed that students appreciated teachers who were honest. He felt that the law restricted teacher's ability to teach honestly: "It's restraining us. They're trying to shield kids from talking about controversial issues, but the kids know." Research has demonstrated that discussing civic and political issues in class correlated to a higher commitment to civic participation as adults (Kahne & Sporte, 2007), as well as higher academic engagement (Cohen et al., 2021). Ethnic Studies teachers in this study recognized that the censorship and restrictions that they were experiencing had a negative impact on their teaching. Many felt that they weren't able to be as effective teachers with the law in place. T'Challa expressed this sentiment:

> In a truly educationally organic environment, you can't teach like that. You have to allow your students enough space to explore not just their intellectual thoughts, but also their emotional spaces. Especially in the Ethnic Studies classroom. Now, that's easy enough, but the thing that you run into, and if you truly want to be a good facilitator of that class, is that you have to be vulnerable enough to allow the space that your students are going to take up to move you into a different place. And that's where you can get in trouble, because if you allow yourself to totally go, then you can end up in a place where some people are raising eyebrows.

T'Challa emphasized that in an "educationally organic environment" teachers do not have to constantly consider what can or cannot be said and students can engage in authentic inquiry, which is not limited by the law. A central element of Ethnic Studies courses is creating a space to authentically affirm student identities, building off students' own experiences (Dee & Penner, 2017; de los Rios et al., 2015). This becomes difficult to do when teachers feel restricted in what they can say about race and historical inequities. Overall, it was clear that these restrictions created undue pressure for teachers, as they grappled with how to be effective educators within the constraints of the law, further illustrating the impact of structural racism through legislation. This pressure came at a time when many educators were already leaving the field. Data from a survey conducted in 2022 demonstrated that 55% of teachers were considering leaving the profession, with rates even higher among Black (62%) and Latinx educators (59%) (GBAO Strategies, 2022).

An Environment of Fear

The constraints mentioned above contributed to an environment of fear for students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Various Ethnic Studies teachers spoke about not feeling safe and about potential backlash in their schools (see example codes in Figure 17.1). Although most teachers in the study were Black or Latinx, one of the six white teachers also emphasized feeling this fear. This teacher, Joe Smith, also the only non-binary educator within the group, expressed the following: "I would say just in general right now, […] educators are not safe. Educators are very policed in every way, especially as an Ethnic Studies teacher in a public school." This sentiment of a lack of safety and feeling policed is poignant. After SB 3 was passed, news sources reported that teachers generally felt that the bill created fear and uncertainty (Zou, 2021), with many new educators feeling even more unsure of what they could teach (Ramirez, 2022). An AAS teacher, T'Challa, expressed his concerns:

> I'm concerned about what could be said in this class from a student perspective, instructionally? To the other end of the spectrum, I'm concerned about what's going to be said in this class from a lawsuit perspective, I don't want to end up on the news.

T'Challa's concern emerged from what students might say in the class or about the class. Thus, the bill created a fear of students, with teachers now concerned about how the course might be perceived, which could even extend to how students perceived what other students say in the class. Barbie, a MAS teacher, expressed how this influenced her considerations for teaching the course:

> I do feel in some ways, not necessarily discouraged to teach it, but I don't want to have that negative aspect because some people see Ethnic Studies as indoctrination or they see that negative aspect to it. So in some ways, I don't want to be associated with it, but at the same time, I think it is important for all perspectives of history to be taught.

Despite the concerns with teaching Ethnic Studies in this political climate, Barbie still recognized the importance of ensuring that diverse perspectives were taught in History. Thus, she ultimately said that she did plan to continue teaching MAS. However, it was clear that the law placed Ethnic Studies in a more vulnerable position, weaponizing language related to race. Teachers recognized that this was a fear tactic and there seemed to be an understanding of the racist roots of the legislation, reflecting the fourth tenet of racial realism.

The Fight for Ethnic Studies

A final theme that arose through the pláticas was an increased determination to fight for the expansion of Ethnic Studies courses in Texas. As mentioned previously, 46% of participants stated that the bill did not impact their classrooms. When delving into this further, it was clear that there was concern about the bill for all teachers, but these teachers had made no changes to their curriculum or classroom as a result of the bill. There was a clear resistance in this, following with the third theme of racial realism in resisting oppression. Teachers who felt able to resist SB 3 were often very familiar with the bill and had been teaching for over ten years (with the exception of one teacher who had only taught for two years), reflecting the fourth tenet of racial realism in understanding racism as a precursor to resistance. This resistance arose through a recognition of the importance of Ethnic Studies for students, a confidence that there wouldn't be substantial backlash in continuing to teach critically, and a commitment to expanding Ethnic Studies. One MAS teacher, Jessica, expressed her reasons for resisting:

> I'm not going to not teach this lesson because some people are making a fuss about learning about things like this. I think it's important that everybody learns history. As uncomfortable as it is for some, it's even more uncomfortable for those who have had people in their lives experience this. So, you might feel uncomfortable, but these people are uncomfortable because this is how their grandma's lived. So, I'm not going to stop teaching what I'm teaching, just because our governor says so.

Jessica referenced the previously cited section of SB 3 that stated that teachers cannot teach in a way that would cause distress. Similarly to Antonio, Jessica emphasized that the discomfort that

we should be concerned with was that of students or family members who experienced individual and/or structural oppression. This point was also emphasized by Stovall (2022) in noting that traditional Social Studies curriculum has made young people of color feel bad about themselves "since time immemorial" (p. 425). In continuing to pursue a critical Ethnic Studies curriculum, highlighting histories of oppression and resistance, there was a clear activism enacted within the classroom. Ethnic Studies aims to dismantle white supremacy, centering the histories of communities of color (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Understanding oppression, as well as resistance, are often a part of this process. Lore Amor, a MAS teacher, emphasized the importance of teaching the truth:

> And just knowing that they knew I was teaching them the truth and that they chose to learn this with me knowing that this isn't what I was supposed to teach them. The fact that they either intuitively or honestly through experience with me knew I was telling the truth, knew that this was the truth, it gave me the confidence to give them what they deserve.

For Lore, her confidence to continue teaching Ethnic Studies emerged through student responses. Lore had co-constructed her classroom with students, leveraging their input in how and what she taught. She highlighted an element of student resistance to the law, which was present in three other teachers' pláticas, through which students continued to advocate for critical Ethnic Studies. One white AAS teacher also emphasized the importance of Ethnic Studies courses as her reason to continue teaching the course, mentioning that she had been questioned by other teachers about why she taught the course in the current political context. Allowing student responses to guide the course and content, as well as centering critical thinking in the curriculum, demonstrate some of the ways that these educators enacted a form of organizing within their own classrooms.

Overall, the resistance to right wing attacks on culturally sustaining education, particularly Ethnic Studies, is not new. In 2011, teachers founded UNIDOS (United Non-Discriminatory Individuals Demanding Our Studies) to defend Ethnic Studies in Arizona after House Bill 2281 banned courses (Cabrera et al., 2012). Teachers, community members, and students all played a key role in this resistance (Sargent & McGinnis, 2011). In Texas, Ethnic Studies has not been banned, but SB 3 created an environment of fear in teaching real history. Through this research, it was clear that most Ethnic Studies teachers were continuing to resist, had educated themselves on the law, and recognized that there was room to continue teaching real history. Three of these teachers also continued to organize locally and statewide to expand Ethnic Studies. Several of these teachers more directly enacted racial realism within their classroom in continuing to talk about oppression and resistance with students, as well as engaging in dialogue with students about this moment of cyclical regression, and continuing to push for the expansion of Ethnic Studies.

Conclusions and Implications

In examining the impact of censorship bills nationwide on Social Studies education, but particularly within K-12 Ethnic Studies, it was essential to recognize that the resistance to these bills was about defending historical accuracy (Stovall, 2022). In returning to the lens of CRT, this legislation emerged through the clear patterns of cyclical regression that we continuously experience in regard to white supremacy within the United States. The language of SB 3 was subjective, but the power of the bill emerged through the confusion that it caused, as well as the environment of fear generated through this uncertainty. Teachers recognized that interpretation of the bill was largely

left to districts and thus teachers in more urban and politically liberal districts felt more confident in resisting these laws. Nonetheless, even experienced teachers felt pressured to censor their teaching and curriculum.

Despite the deleterious impact of SB 3, Ethnic Studies teachers continued to recognize the value of these courses, and many teachers did not shift their curriculum. Teachers also recognized the racist intent of the bill, reflecting the fourth tenet of racial realism in recognizing the reality of racism in this current moment in history. These teachers emphasized the goals of Ethnic Studies in seeking to center the histories of communities of color (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Valenzuela, 2019). Stovall (2022) noted that "teaching is the most political activity in which you could possibly engage" (p. 433). This is particularly true for Ethnic Studies teachers in states with censorship legislation. These teachers have demonstrated a commitment to authentic social justice through continuous struggle, in the face of legislation that restricts historical accuracy, thus reflecting the third tenet of racial realism.

There is a continued need for community members and district administrators to support Ethnic Studies in Texas, as well as in other states with censorship legislation. Although this legislation primarily impacts teachers, it is essential to consider the impact on students in limiting authentic inquiry and critical thinking in the classroom. In Texas, individuals can also request that these courses be brought to their districts, increasing the overall support and valuation of the courses, which provide essential spaces for all students to learn the histories of communities of color, which are still not equitably included in U.S. history courses.

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