

Race theory critic sees victory from Trump

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An occasional interview series with every-day Americans who are challenging the status quo.



Christopher Rufo doesn't work at the White House, but it sure seems like he gets results there.

Just days ago, Mr. Rufo appeared on Tucker Carlson's Fox News Channel program and boldly declared a oneman war on critical race theory. He denounced as nefarious and expensive the ways it had begun to intrude on taxpayers' wallets. He urged President Trump to take action against the trend and end what he described as "White privilege" indoctrination within federal agencies.

On Friday, Mr. Trump signed

an executive order doing just that.

Wearing his warrior's cap, Mr. Rufo saw the move as a victory in a battle, not the war.

"On Tuesday, I called on the president to abolish critical race theory in the federal government," he tweeted. "Tonight, he delivered. This executive action is the first successful counterattack against critical race theory in American history.

"Tonight, we celebrate; tomorrow, back to war."

Like all other major conflicts, the one playing out over whether taxpayers should foot the bill for training sessions that denounce "whiteness" did not begin with a single shot, Mr. Rufo said.

And, like so many other ideas, critical race theory began in an ivory tower, removed from real life consequences and contemptuous of alternative explanations, Mr. Rufo told The Washington Times.

He sees critical race theory as an ignoble successor to the tradition of other left-wing intellectual fads, such as the radical Frankfurt School and the postmodern French theorists of the late 20th century.

"Critical legal studies, that swept Harvard Law School, is a branch of it, just as the '60s and '70s French intellectuals are," he said. "What they did was take critical theory, essentially an intellectual and literary notion, and applied it to law, public policy, race. They created a manyheaded monster." Critical race theory is a philosophy that argues, in general, that racism is a structural system created by embedded cultural assumptions and ideas rather than merely a set of specific laws or individual actions with malicious intent. In practice, it almost always

describes the U.S. as a racist society to the core rather than as a society in which racism once existed or now exists as an anomaly.

Mr. Rufo, 36, conducts his war on two fronts: public records searches and sources.

Through both, he has exposed how Seattle trained White public employees on “Interrupting Internalized Racial Superiority and Whiteness,” which showed the workers their “complicity in the system of white supremacy.”

After reviewing the material, Mr. Rufo, who lives in Seattle, wrote in City Journal that it framed the discussion “around the idea that Black Americans are reducible to the essential quality of ‘blackness’ and White Americans are reducible to the essential quality of ‘whiteness’ — that is, the new metaphysics of good and evil.”

Such reductionist reasoning with its emphasis on skin color and its insistence on universal applicability is, Mr. Rufo said, racist.

He compares it to discredited sociobiological theories such as those of Cesare Lombroso, which held that criminals had distinctive physical features.

“It revives all the most horrific concepts from the racism of a century ago, this pseudoscientific idea people are reducible to this essential quality of race,” he said. “Now it’s segregation all over again — with training sessions, dorms, workforce participation. We used to recoil in horror at the prospect of ‘Whites only’ bathrooms. Now it’s a sign of progress?”

Mr. Rufo was involved in another project last month that may have caught Mr. Trump’s attention more than the dubious Seattle training. As an employee at Sandia National Laboratory, the federal government’s biggest nuclear weapons research facility, he exposed critical race theory running rampant there.

Executives at the labs last year wrote letters of apology to marginalized groups after reciting mantras about “White privilege” and “male privilege,” part of their mandatory workshop run by the “White Men’s Caucus on Eliminating Racism, Sexism and Homophobia in Organizations.”

Casey Peterson, an engineer

GOT IT DONE: Christopher Rufo asked President Trump on TV to take action against critical race theory within federal agencies.

at Sandia, wrote an internet post that went viral and revealed the critical race theory material given to employees at the labs.

Mr. Peterson found the arguments about systemic racism and the de facto assumption of guilt among all members of a race to be a fundamentally political argument and objected to management's push of the belief.

When he approached Sandia's human resources department with his concerns, Mr. Peterson said, he was given the Orwellian response that he needed to check his thinking. After he published the material in a podcast, he was placed on administrative leave.

"This is an ideology that is political in nature, grafted onto a Marxist structure," Mr. Rufo said. "This whole oppressed-oppressor narrative has no place in our public institutions. Can you imagine the same thing being done with an anti-abortion stance or gun rights? It's unthinkable because these are private, political matters."

Mr. Rufo does not do the kind of work usually associated with a modern documentary filmmaker, but that is what he hopes to do.

He has produced four documentaries for PBS, and he said his politics about 15 years ago could have been described as "progressive."

Since then, they have followed an arc from libertarian to conservative. Mr. Rufo said the transitions were triggered by what he saw as the creeping monolithic thinking in the documentary industry.

"If you look at the Sundance Festival for the last five years, with really no exceptions, the documentaries are all very progressive in their political orientation," he said. "They touch on CRT, [critical gender theory], queer theory. It is no longer a business about making entertaining films that will reach a broad audience. It is about work that supports the dominant ideology."

Mr. Rufo said his career has suffered from the crusade against what he considers, at root, a racist ideology.

"I've definitely encountered some people, even some former colleagues, who have said, 'I can't work with you anymore because you are a conservative,'" he said. "There are now some doors pretty tightly closed to me with people who have funded my work in the past."

The cost of critical race theory to taxpayers is also growing. Mr. Rufo highlighted that spending, which also could have contributed to Mr. Trump's action.

One critical race theory training guru, Howard Ross, has raked in more than \$5 million in federal contracts for workshops that tell White people they are inherently racist and impediments to "racebased growth."

Mr. Rufo's work has unearthed contracts for workshops on "Difficult Conversations About Race in Troubling Times" at the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve, the Federal

Deposit Insurance Corp., the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the National Credit Union Administration.

Mr. Ross even landed a \$500,000 contract with NASA to guide employees through issues of sexual orientation, power and privilege.

“I don’t know. Is that a good use of taxpayer’s money?” he asked. “Should a plumber in Omaha be paying for astronauts to explore their sexual identity in outer space? It’s completely insane, and I think it’s a scam.”