

# THE MELTING POT

**GSG'S ONGOING LOOK  
AT RACIAL POLITICS  
IN AMERICA**



# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Global Strategy Group surveyed 600 Black registered voters, 100 Hispanic registered voters and 100 Asian registered voters nationwide, along with 600 white registered voters in the Senate battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Wisconsin and Nevada. The survey was conducted October 18 through October 24, 2021.

Despite the fact that Joe Biden won 5 of the 7 Senate battleground states where we sampled white voters, we chose to interview these voters because Donald Trump won almost 60 percent of all white votes cast across these states in 2020. Additionally, Republicans are targeting white voters across the country with messages about critical race theory (CRT) that are similar to the Abolish I.C.E. and Defund the Police attacks they employed in 2018 and 2020, respectively. We queried these voters under the assumption they would prove particularly skeptical of CRT and difficult to persuade on this racially charged policy issue.

Given the relentless assault Republicans have mounted against CRT in 2021 and the way the party weaponized Defunding the Police in 2020 against Democratic candidates, we hope to help guide the Democratic coalition as we prepare for the GOP's ongoing racial dog-whistle strategy heading into 2022. To be clear, our messaging research in this poll was intended not to change the minds of white battleground voters about CRT, but rather to identify frames that effectively turn down the temperature on the issue and create room for a more rational conversation among voters.

## IN THIS REPORT



# DEFUND THE POLICE

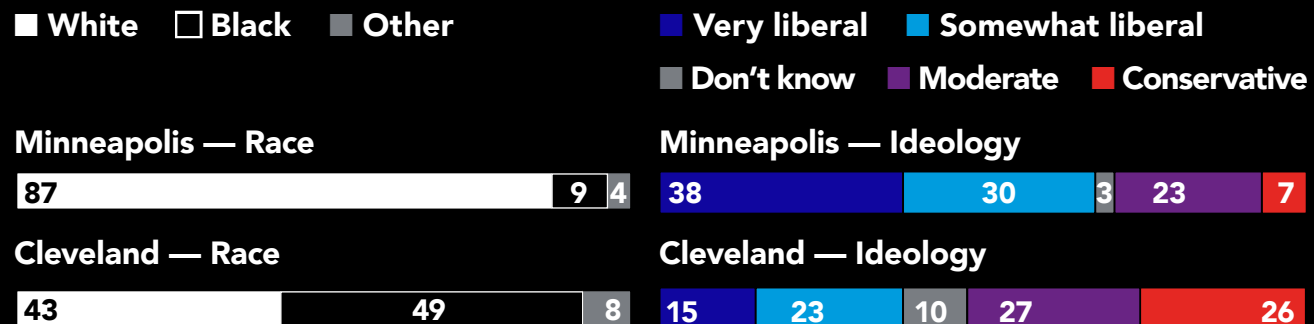


# DEFUND THE POLICE: A TALE OF TWO CITIES.

The 2021 elections sent mixed messages when it comes to police reform in America. Minneapolis, one of the most progressive cities in the country, defeated a reform initiative while Cleveland, less progressive ideologically but more diverse racially, overwhelmingly passed their reform initiative.

In Minneapolis, voters rejected a ballot initiative which would have replaced the Minneapolis Police Department with a Department of Public Safety, and would have ended a requirement to employ a minimum number of officers. Cleveland passed an initiative giving citizens final say in disciplinary action by granting a Civilian Police Review Board authority to investigate complaints from the public against officers and to order disciplinary action if deemed necessary. Both of these Midwestern cities have experienced recent spikes in violent crime.

## Demographics of likely voters in Minneapolis and Cleveland



## What explains the difference in outcome?

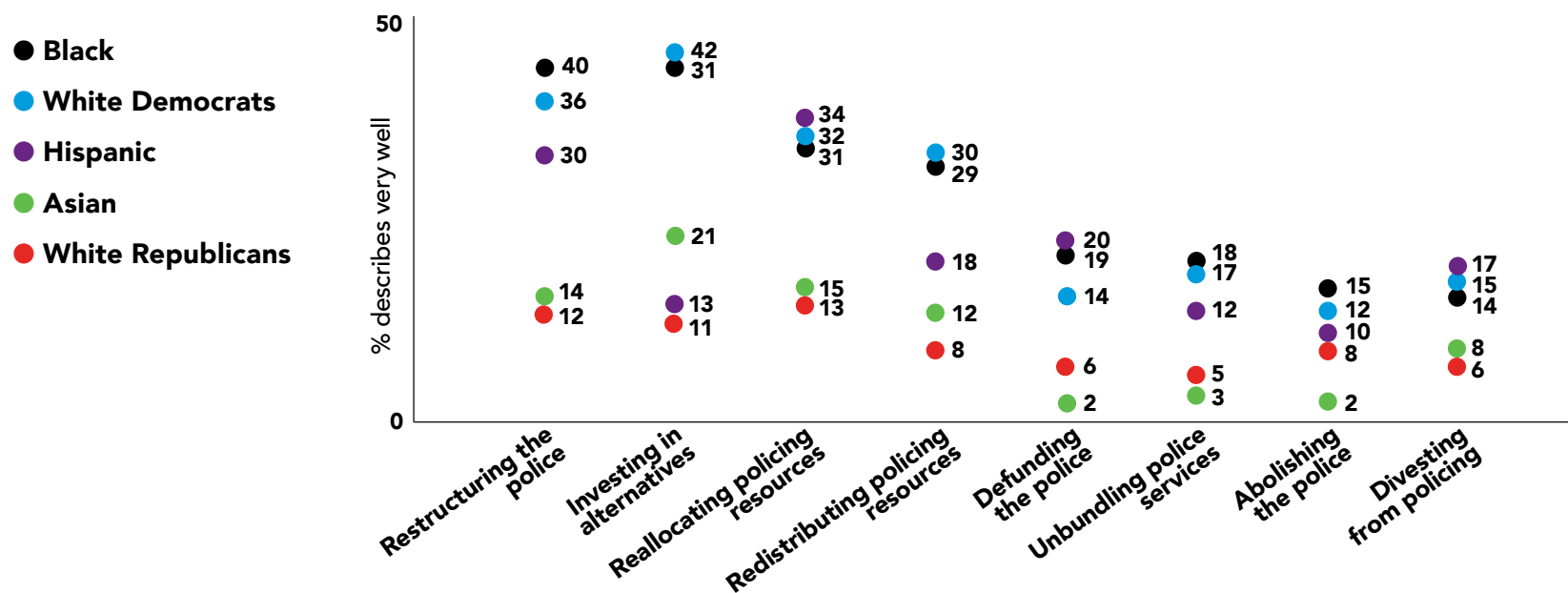
Final Results from the two high profile 2021 police reform ballot measures



Ironically, the outcome in Minneapolis hinged on the widespread popularity of the city's Black police chief, Medaria Arradondo, who residents feared would lose his job if the measure passed and who opposed the ballot measure. In addition, the Minneapolis ballot measure was widely referred to as the "defund the police" initiative by opponents in the local and national press, stigmatizing the campaign from its inception. At the end of the day and in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the jury is still out – even in progressive, urban areas – on how far voters are willing to go to institute real policing reforms in their communities.

Part of this blowback in Minneapolis may be due to poor framing. Even among white Democrats, "defunding the police" is seen as a poor descriptor of police reform. If candidates want to carry this cause forward into 2022, they should consider using alternative frames, depending on target audience.

For each, please indicate whether it describes the kind of police reforms you would like to see



# CRT UNIFIES REPUBLICANS

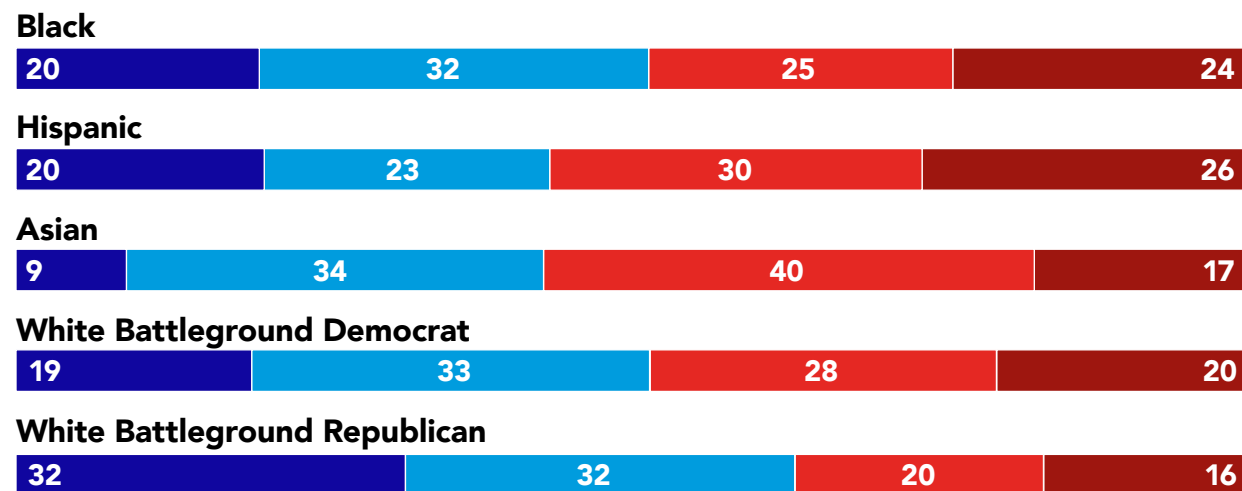


# CRT UNIFIES REPUBLICANS. IT DOES NOT HELP UNITE OUR BASE.

At this point, CRT is poorly defined and even more poorly understood. Across race and ethnicity, only around half of voters have heard of the term. White battleground voters are slightly more likely to be familiar with CRT than voters of color. When white battleground voters consider CRT, left-leaning whites think of it as teaching “true American history,” but right-leaning whites default to thinking that CRT is about slandering white Americans. Voters of color think about the teaching of accurate history as well, but they also think about ‘racism’ more broadly when the topic is raised.

## How much have you heard about Critical Race Theory?

■ A lot ■ Some ■ Not much ■ Nothing at all



## What comes to mind when you hear the term Critical Race Theory?

### Voters of color



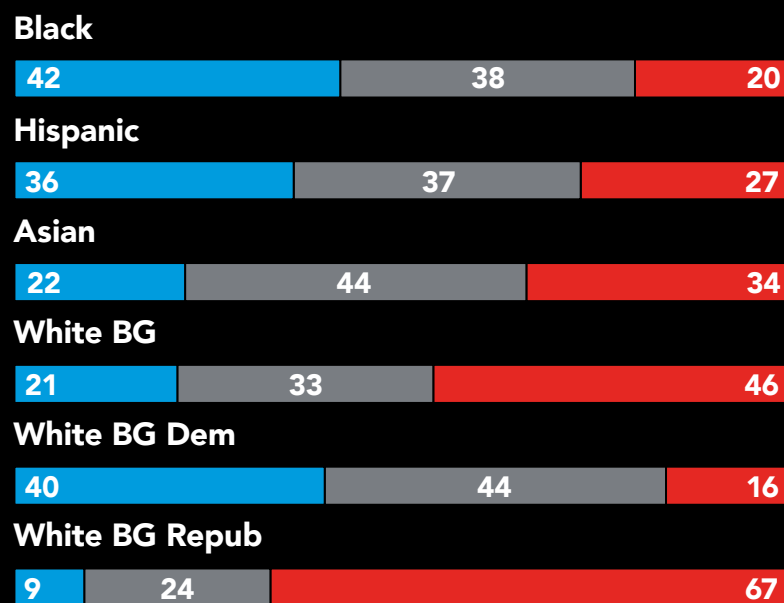
### White battleground



White battleground voters overall skew toward holding negative views of CRT. White battleground Republicans have a profoundly negative view of the concept, with three-in-five saying they are very unfavorable. And despite CRT not being taught in schools, over half strongly support banning it from American curriculums. Just as significantly, it does not appear to unify voters of color either, with most racial demographics evenly split on whether it should be banned or not.

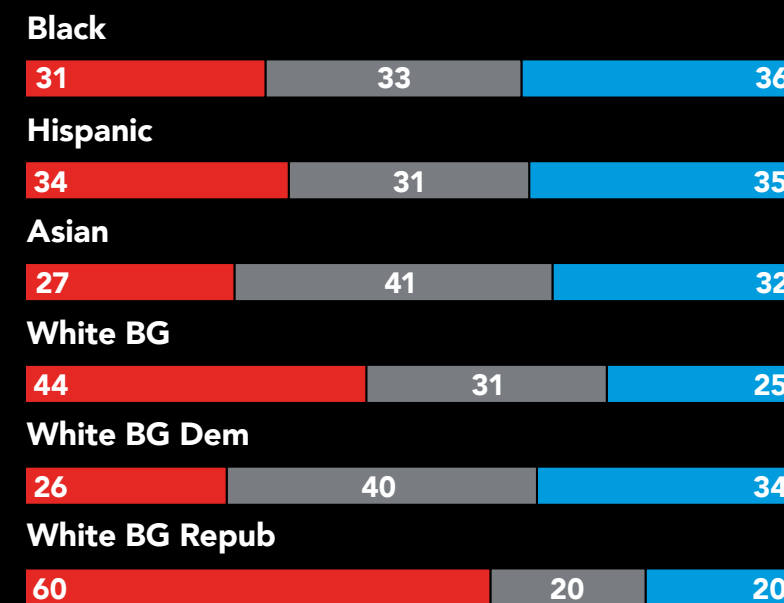
## Favorability Toward Critical Race Theory

■ Favorable ■ Not sure ■ Unfavorable



## Do you support or oppose a ban on the teaching of Critical Race Theory in American Schools?

■ Support ■ Not sure/Never heard of CRT ■ Oppose



Because CRT is poorly defined and intensely disliked by Republicans, it can be used as a catch-all bludgeon that mobilizes white Republicans in battleground states.



# CRT COUNTER-MESSAGING

A photograph of a person holding a large, rectangular sign made of corrugated cardboard. The sign is held horizontally and features the text "STOP CRITICAL RACE THEORY NOW!" written in black, hand-drawn capital letters. The person holding the sign is wearing a dark-colored shirt and a purple fanny pack. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be an outdoor setting.

STOP  
CRITICAL RACE THEORY  
NOW!

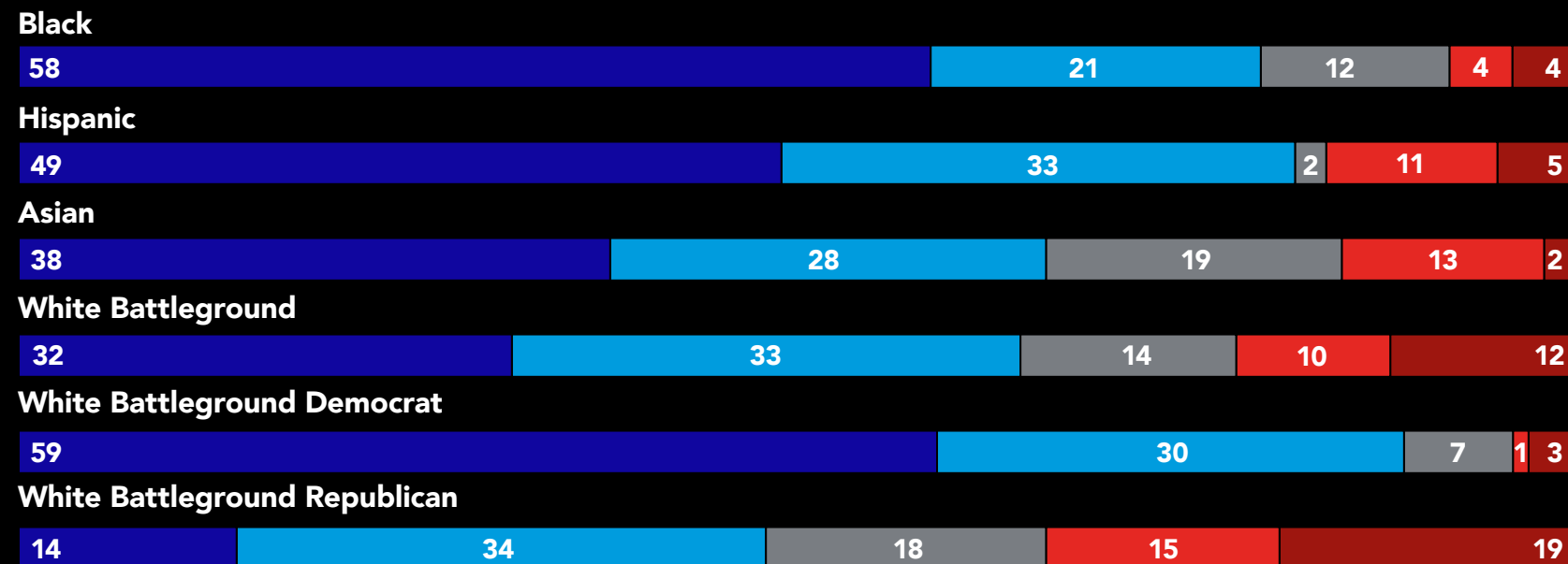
## CRT COUNTER-MESSAGING CAN LOWER THE TEMPERATURE ON THE ISSUE.

The topline numbers on CRT are cause for concern, but stripping away the inflammatory term reveals a more egalitarian and inclusive reality, even among many white battleground voters.

Commanding majorities of Black, Hispanic and Asian voters support (with most strongly supporting) “diversifying the curriculum taught in American schools to include the perspectives of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.” Surprisingly, nearly half of white Republicans in the battleground share this view – although their support is not particularly intense.

**Do you support or oppose diversifying the curriculum taught in American schools to include the perspectives of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Native Americans?**

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Not sure ■ Somewhat oppose ■ Strongly oppose





Majorities of our coalition believe “teachers should have the freedom to teach the honest, complete facts about historical topics like slavery and civil rights without being censored by politicians.”

Engaging voters in a conversation about what CRT is and what it isn’t proves to be less effective than framing the subject as classroom censorship. The exception is among Democrats’ strongest supporters. However, when not preaching to the choir, arguing that teachers should have the freedom to present their students with accurate facts about historical events is much more compelling to Asian voters, white battleground independents, and even white Republicans.

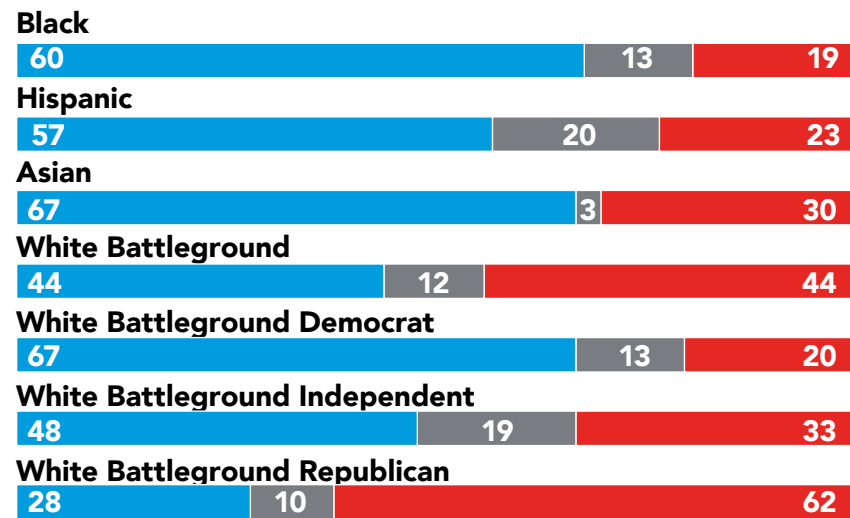
Positioning the discussion about schools as an effort to diversify the curriculum rather than as an attempt to introduce critical race theory to K-12 students completely changes the terms of the debate and appeals more specifically to voters’ mostly positive feelings about inclusion. Further, broadening the conversation beyond the experience of African Americans to include topics like Japanese internment during World War II and America’s treatment of Native Americans also serves to turn the temperature down.

Which of the following do you agree with more?

■ Not sure

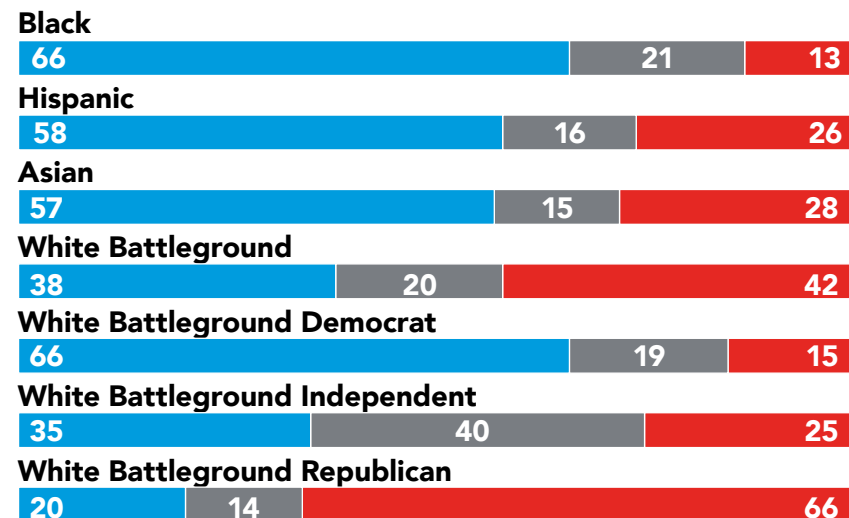
Teachers should have the freedom to teach the honest, complete facts about historical topics like slavery and civil rights without being censored by politicians

Those who want to teach critical race theory in our schools are trying to further divide us and teach our kids to be ashamed of our country or for being white



Critical race theory is studied in law schools and graduate programs to help students understand the history and impact of biased public policies on things like housing, school segregation or policing. It’s not about making people feel guilty for being white

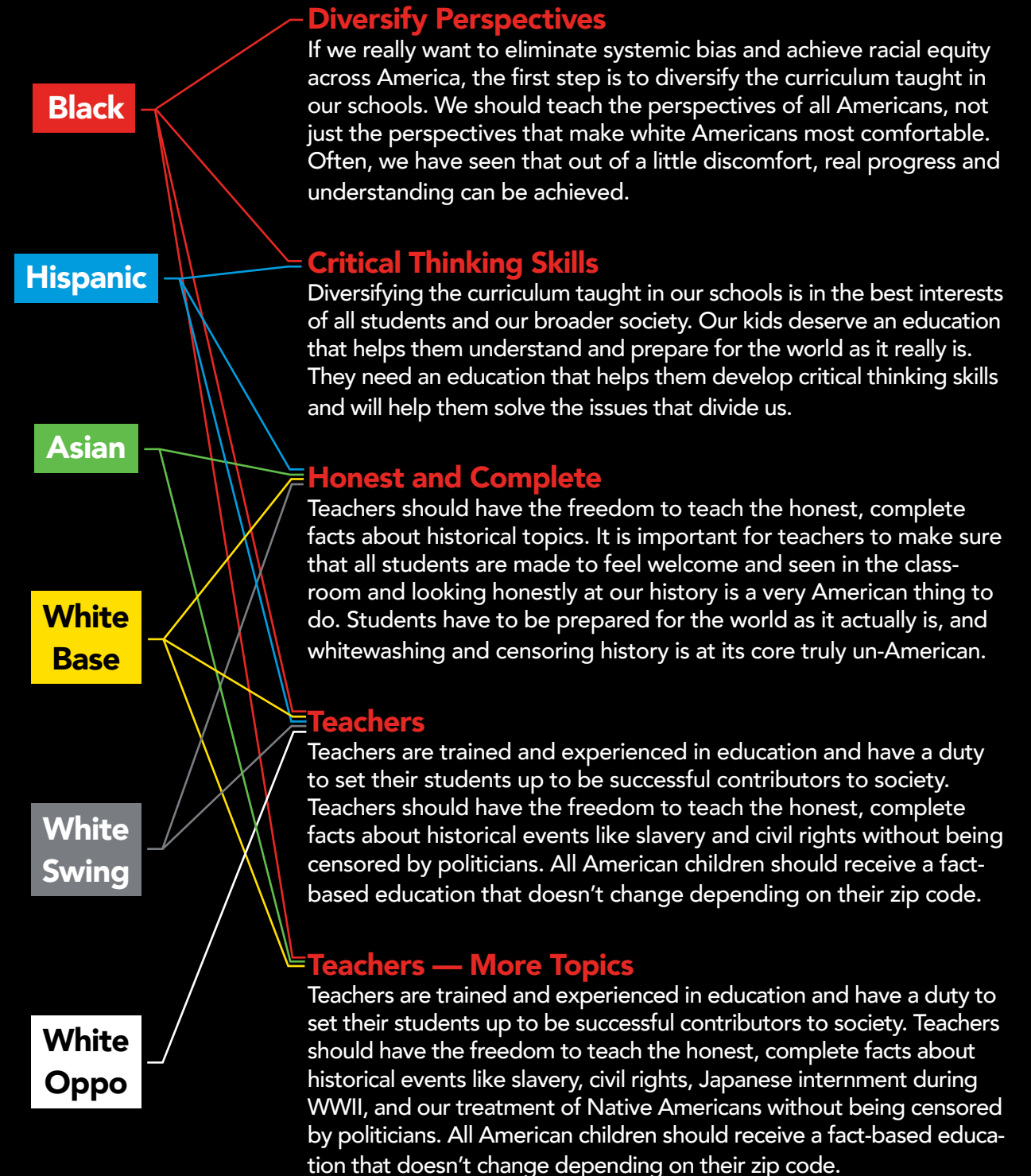
Those who want to teach critical race theory in our schools are trying to further divide us and teach our kids to be ashamed of our country or for being white



It is worth noting that with white battleground voters, dismissing CRT as a “made up issue” and framing the debate as “a political distraction” by right-wing extremists are among the least effective approaches to countering CRT attacks by the GOP and lowering the temperature on the issue. See the chart to the right to understand which message frames work best with different voter groups.

# WHAT WORKS, AND WITH WHOM?

While there is no silver bullet for CRT, the following messages are the most convincing reasons to oppose a ban on what material, including topics of race and historical discrimination, can be taught in K-12 classrooms:



## ABOUT THE STUDY

Global Strategy Group's bi-annual series, *The Melting Pot: GSG's Ongoing Look at Racial Politics in America*, is intended to take the temperature of Black America on political issues, social attitudes, and voting behavior. Observing the way race-infused issues have infected our national politics over the past 2 years and given our confidence that Republicans will continue to use a racial dog-whistle strategy aimed at dividing the electorate based on race and white racial anxiety, we intend to use our Fall installment each year as a public opinion laboratory (of sorts) with the primary goal of providing political and messaging guidance for Democrats to push back against and reframe these GOP culture war issues. Sometimes that will entail only interviewing Black voters, while at other times complete understanding may demand a broader look at the overall electorate. We are hopeful that as Democratic political practitioners you will find these trips into the dog-whistle laboratory as important and useful as we do.

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## ABOUT GSG

Global Strategy Group is the go-to public affairs, communications, and research partner for companies, causes, and campaigns. We work with our clients to build their reputations, tackle big challenges, and win.

### Specifically, we:



**Understand & Reach**  
audiences



**Advance**  
legislative, regulatory,  
and political goals



**Change minds**  
and influence public opinion



**Build & Protect**  
reputations



**Champion**  
issues and leaders

### What sets us apart?

**We are data-driven.** We have decades of experience deriving insights from research, and interpreting that data to make its implications clear to our clients. We leverage this expertise into innovations across the data, analytics, and digital spaces, always finding better ways to measure, target and persuade diverse audiences.

**We are politically-attuned.** We operate at the intersection of business and politics. Being in both of these increasingly connected worlds gives us an edge.

**We are results-oriented.** Going for the win is in our DNA. Driven by our experience on political campaigns and crisis assignments, we measure our success through our outcomes.