



Testimony

HB 28

Testimony in Support Submitted to the Texas House Public Education Committee

by Dr. Richard A. Johnson III, Director, Booker T. Washington Initiative

Chairman Dutton and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Richard Johnson, and I am the director of the Booker T. Washington Initiative with the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 28. We also supported HB 3979 during the regular session. With that being said, I would like to thank Representative Toth for authoring this bill and continuing the fight against racism and discrimination.

I am a native Houstonian, born and raised in **House District 142** (Chairman Dutton's District), where I attended public school and later went on to achieve my BA in history and government, MA in clinical psychology and my doctorate in education administration from Wiley College and Texas Southern University (HBCUs). I have served 8 years in the United States Army and have been in the education and policy sphere for the last 30 years.

HB 28 seeks to preserve the education of Texas public school students by protecting our students from divisive, inaccurate teachings; by providing educators with access to civics training programs; and by requiring curriculum transparency.

During the 50s, 60s, and the early parts of the 70s, racism, segregation, and discrimination were daily parts of our lives. The fight for equal opportunity, access, and integration were the main goals of the struggle. We thank God for great Americans like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was willing to sacrifice his life to advance the Civil Rights Act of 1964, striking down racial discrimination in all its forms. I thank God for leaders like James Farmer—the founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—who, after conversing with me, said, “It’s your time now to change the world.” These men and many others across the cultural spectrum of humanity have given their lives working to crystalize the idea that “all men are created equal.” The fight against racism took place in every area of American life, but Thurgood Marshall and a dynamic team of lawyers knew that the most important battleground was in the education system. Hence, *Brown vs. Board of Education*.

Mr. Chairman and Members, those battles were fought and won by brave Americans in their day. But today is your day! Because of the modern-day tools of racism like critical race theory (CRT) emerging across the country, infiltrating our schools, and poisoning the minds of young students, you do not have to wonder what you would do if you were Dr. King, James Farmer, or Thurgood Marshall. It is your turn to fight racism—in all of its forms.

Your vote and support for HB 28 will:

- Strengthen the civics training programs for teachers and administrators;
- Provide parents with greater transparency of their children’s teaching materials and classroom content;
- Ensure that curriculum content and the manner of teaching do not include racism. For example, the bill bans the teaching that “one race or sex is inherently superior” or inferior to another and that children are to blame for behaviors that they did not commit, solely or partly because of their race or sex;
- Make sure that civics is appropriately taught to our students and that they are not taken advantage of by groups with partisan political leanings, but the bill will also allow them to participate in community-based volunteerism like food banks;

- Most importantly, ensure that our children and their children will continue to live in a world where they are “judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Mr. Chairman and Members, this bill does not transform, alter, or exclude history from being taught in our schools, but what it does is safeguard our children’s education from racist propaganda. I applaud your efforts in continuing to fight the good fight and thank you for allowing me to testify as I urge you to pass HB 28. ★

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Richard A. Johnson, EdD, is the director of the Texas Public Policy Foundation’s Booker T. Washington Initiative, which examines the effects of public policy on African-American communities.

Previously, Johnson served as a chief of staff in both municipal and state governments. As chief of staff for a Houston City councilmember, he played a significant role in drafting and navigating policies related to public safety, public works, and housing and community development. During the 85th and 86th Texas Legislatures, he served as a chief of staff and a senior policy analyst for a House member and worked on education, public safety, healthcare, and workforce development

legislation.

An educator for more than 20 years, Johnson has extensive experience in teaching and research. He worked as a research assistant at the University of Texas Mental Science Institute, studying the efficacy of counseling and pharmacological therapy on cocaine and heroin addicts. He began counseling inner-city adolescent males and founded an academy for troubled boys which provided education, discipline, and residential substance abuse treatment. In 2007 he began teaching and researching in the areas of psychology and academic performance.

Johnson was the president of the Louisiana Prison Chapel Foundation for nearly two decades, building more than 20 churches inside prison walls. In addition, Johnson served as the co-founder and second president of 100 Black Men Metropolitan Houston, vice president of development for 100 Black Men San Antonio, and co-chair of the education committee of the NAACP, Houston.

Johnson served in the U.S. Army after college, obtaining the rank of sergeant. He was selected to play for the All-Army basketball team.

A Texas native, Johnson has an EdD in education administration and an MA in clinical psychology from Texas Southern University. He received a BA in history and government from Wiley College.

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