

Testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee

SB 2003 – UND

Andrew Alexis Varvel

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Chairman Holmberg and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel. I live in Bismarck, and I am an alumnus of UND.

I would like to congratulate President Armacost for saying, “As an institution, UND remains committed to civil dialogue, free speech, and respect for others.”¹ These sentiments would appear to be in accord with Section 1 of Article VIII of the North Dakota Constitution which mandates that state funded schools must be free from sectarian control. Sectarianism should include dogmatic assertions masquerading as theory that would stereotype and scapegoat people by race, sex, or religion.

In this context, you may wish to familiarize yourself with the following campus-wide book study about Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's book [How to Be an Antiracist](#).

<http://blogs.und.edu/und-today/2020/09/fall-book-study-centers-on-how-to-be-an-antiracist/>

<http://blogs.und.edu/uletter/2020/09/sept-2-letter-from-debbie-storrs-and-cara-halgren-invitation-to-book-study/>

<https://und.edu/academics/ttada/files/docs/kendi-book-read-guide.pdf>

On the face of it, there would appear to be nothing wrong such a book study until one reads the study guide. Far from attempting to deconstruct this book or analyze it from a critical perspective, UND's *Companion Guide* (a copy of which is included as a separate .pdf file as testimony) has an appearance of being indoctrination.

We need to understand that *Antiracism* as proposed by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi would require a constitutional amendment to create a “Department of Anti-racism” with powers analogous to the Guardian Council of the “Islamic Republic of Iran” – a totalitarian department with powers to countermand all policies it disagrees with, suppress all ideas it disagrees with, and discipline all people it disagrees with.²

1 Official UND Facebook post, 9:18 AM, January 7, 2021

2 Here is Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's proposal *Pass an Anti-Racist Constitutional Amendment* in full:

“To fix the original sin of racism, Americans should pass an anti-racist amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enshrines two guiding anti-racist principals: Racial inequity is evidence of racist policy and the different racial groups are equals. The amendment would make unconstitutional racial inequity over a certain threshold, as well as racist ideas by public officials (with “racist ideas” and “public official” clearly defined). It would establish and permanently fund the Department of Anti-racism (DOA) comprised of formally trained

Higher education ought to teach about “Critical Race Theory” and “Antiracism”, just as higher education ought to teach about other religions such as Marxism, Academic Racism, Apartheid, Fascism, Buddhism, and Islam. The problem comes from sectarian control – or even an appearance of sectarian control – by any of these religions. My objection is also to any regime of managed uniformity where a vision of equality, uniformity, and sameness gets imposed from the top down.³

Although we should be wary of any ideology that would institutionally thrust the people of North Dakota into subservience rather than equality with other states,⁴ my principal concern is that we need to keep North Dakota's higher education strong.

Higher education needs a relationship of trust with the people of this state. The budget cuts of four years ago negatively affected trust between the Legislature and state higher education, so I dread how future legislators would react if they were to become aware of these sectarian developments long after they have become fully institutionalized. So, it is important for legislators to be aware of these concerns as they come up.

Thank you.

Andrew Alexis Varvel
2630 Commons Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-255-6639
mr.a.alexis.varvel@gmail.com

experts on racism and no political appointees. The DOA would be responsible for preclearing all local, state and federal public policies to ensure they won't yield racial inequity, monitor those policies, investigate private racist policies when racial inequity surfaces, and monitor public officials for expressions of racist ideas. The DOA would be empowered with disciplinary tools to wield over and against policymakers and public officials who do not voluntarily change their racist policy and ideas.”

<https://www.politico.com/interactives/2019/how-to-fix-politics-in-america/inequality/pass-an-anti-racist-constitutional-amendment/>

- 3 A term once used in Germany for “Managed Uniformity” was *Gleichschaltung* to impose a uniformity of message and outlook throughout an organization. *Architectural Gleichschaltung* would include a campaign of selective demolition of nonconforming buildings to ensure that a college campus conforms to a preconceived ideal. *Linguistic Gleichshaltung* would include *Newspeak* from George Orwell's *1984*.
- 4 From my point of view, “critical race theory” would appear to function as a hegemonic discourse to effectively entrench and promote the established class privilege of existing academic metropolises over elected officials and entire regions including peripheral states such as North Dakota. This particular hegemonic discourse would divide the people of this state with the false consciousness of race in order to ensure that developing any effective counter-narrative to ruling class hegemony becomes more difficult.

Put into vernacular English, I think “critical race theory” functions to keep North Dakota in a state of subservience to out-of-state interests. Far from decolonizing our state, it would recolonize our state.