

The Money Behind the Critical Race Theory Outrage Machine

While groups involved in the pushback against critical race theory (CRT) claim the movement is formed by grassroots parents' organizations, large right-wing donors and media figures have accelerated, guided, and supported the effort from the beginning.

The Kochs and their network of conservative organizations have been instrumental in kickstarting and growing the anti-CRT movement.

The conservative blogger who brought the term “critical race theory” into the mainstream is connected to the Kochs. Christopher Rufo, appeared on Tucker Carlson in September of 2020, and [is largely credited](#) as the person who brought the term critical race theory into the everyday lexicon. Rufo writes for City Journal, a publication for the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, a Koch-network funded thinktank. Rufo is now a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

Koch-connected organizations continued pushing anti-CRT messaging and fueled outrage by publishing articles, and hosting talks. Conservative groups within the expansive Koch network, like the Heritage Foundation and the American Legislative Exchange Council, [appear to be responsible](#) for fueling the anti-CRT outrage. [These Koch-funded groups have been](#) publishing articles, and hosting talks and webinars on critical race theory. They have also been providing guidance to grassroots groups and having talks with lawmakers.

Many so-called grassroots groups have received guidance and support from—or have ties to—the Kochs, other right-wing donors, the Republican establishment, and right-wing media.

Parents Defending Education was founded by a Koch political operative. Its founder and president, Nicole Neily, puts herself forward as a concerned parent but [is actually a well-established Koch political operative](#).

No Left Turn in Education received support from Tucker Carlson and a Koch organization. Although this group appears to have been started by normal concerned parents, they received a massive popularity boost after their founder appeared on Tucker Carlson's show and she [attended a private conference](#) hosted by The Heritage Foundation in May.

Moms for Liberty has ties to the Republican establishment and was boosted by prominent right-wing media figures. The wife of the vice chair of the Florida Republican Party [was listed](#) as one of the original co-founders and multiple leaders of the group have ties to big right-wing figures. The group also received very early boosts from major right-wing media outlets. A few weeks after they were founded, when they were still a small group, Rush Limbaugh had one of their founders on his show, and they continue to receive attention from outlets like Fox and Breitbart.

Chapters of these groups have been active in Michigan. A chapter in Hillsdale County recently [filed a lawsuit](#) over school mask mandates. The Livingston County chapter Facebook group admin has been [making threats](#) for political violence. The Livingston County chapter group has now [had restrictions placed](#) on its Facebook page.

Michigan right-wing figures and organizations
have also been involved in furthering the anti-CRT movement.

The DeVos and Prince families have provided financial support. Both their family foundations [have donated](#) to Koch groups who are wrapped up in this effort. They have donated hundreds of thousands to [The Leadership Institute](#), a Virginia-based group that has been hosting online courses for people looking to stop the teaching of CRT in schools.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy is connected to the Kochs and has pushed the anti-CRT movement. The Mackinac Center [is a member](#) of a large Koch network of similar thinktanks called the State Policy Network. The Mackinac Center receives regular funding from the State Policy Network. And the Heritage Foundation provided panelists to the recent Mackinac Republican Leadership Conference, [where they gave a talk](#) linking CRT to any diversity and inclusion efforts schools might make.

Hillsdale College has also played a role. Larry Arnn, president of Hillsdale College, is the chairman of Trump's 1776 Commission, which was formed in response to the NYT's 1619 Project. The 1776 Commission's executive director was Matthew Spalding, who is also the head of Hillsdale College's D.C. operations. Hillsdale College [produced a book](#) version of the Commission's 1776 Report in April 2021, and in May of 2021 [issued a statement](#) encouraging parents to stand up against CRT.